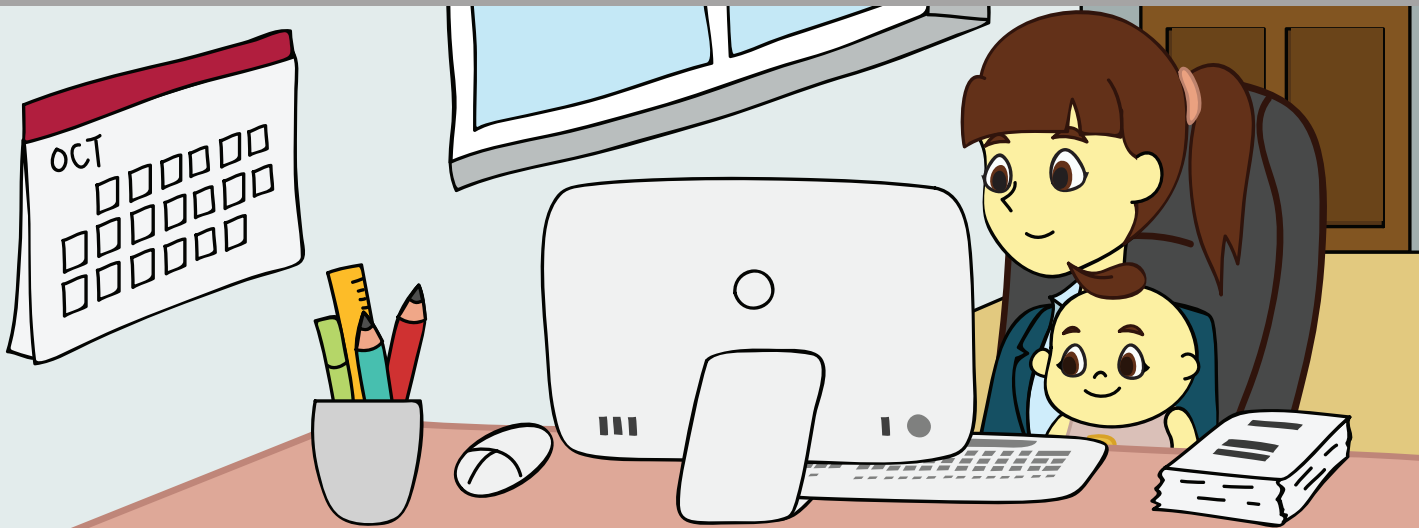


# WHAT INFLUENCES CHILD DEVELOPMENT FROM BIRTH TO 3 YEARS OLD?



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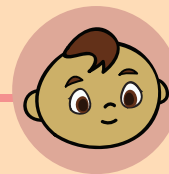
## The Study In Brief

We started this study to find out how caregiving arrangements, mother-child attachment, and child temperament would affect development among young children in Singapore.

Together with the KK Women's and Children's Hospital, we interviewed 439 first-time mothers when their children were:



**4 Months Old**



**18 Months Old**



**3 Years Old**

Our findings suggest that there is no one "best" caregiving type. Parents can decide on caregiving arrangements which best fit their children's needs, while keeping in mind their family circumstances and their available resources.

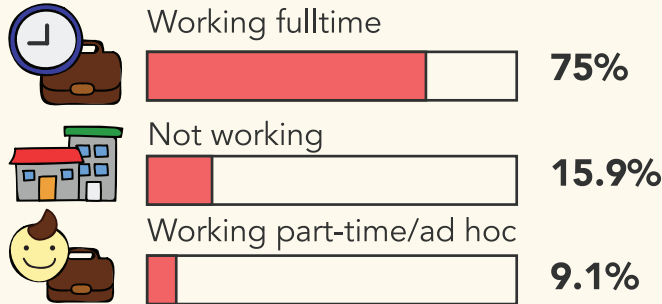
Mothers may wish to strengthen mother-child attachment by having a deeper understanding of and being more responsive to their child's needs.

# WHO TOOK PART IN THE STUDY?

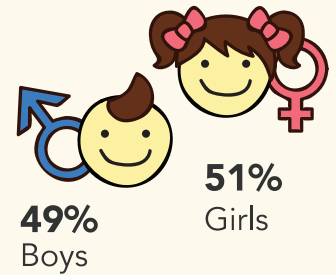


**439**  
Mothers  
Participated  
In Our Study

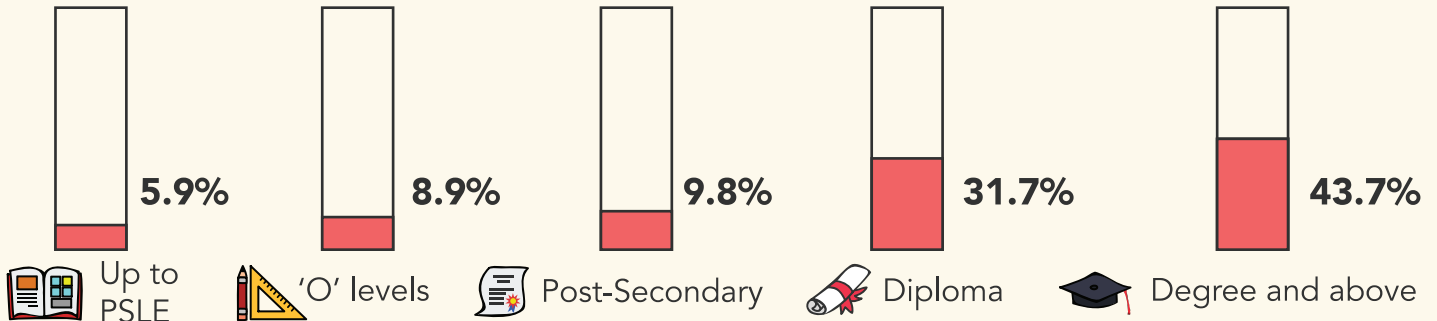
## Mothers' Employment Status When Children Are 3 Years Old



## Child's Gender



## Mothers' Education Level



# WHAT WE DID

Mothers were interviewed when their child was 4 months, 18 months, and 3 years old. They also completed questionnaires about:



### Caregiving Arrangements

Mothers' choice of main caregivers when their children were 4 months, 18 months, and 3 years old

The reasons mothers gave for their choice of caregivers



### Child Temperament

The way children react to people and their surroundings



### Child Developmental Outcomes At 3 Years Old

Areas of development in the following areas: fine motor, problem solving, personal-social, and social-emotional skills

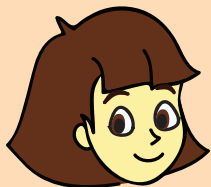


### Mother-Child Attachment

The bond between the child and mother

# THE MAIN CAREGIVERS: MOTHERS, GRANDMOTHERS, OR SOMEONE ELSE?

Mothers reported their choice of main caregivers when their children were 4 months, 18 months, and 3 years old. These main caregivers were categorised into the following types:



Parental



Grandmother



Nanny



Domestic Helper



Other Relatives



Childcare



Shared Care By Two Or More Caregiver Types

## FINDINGS

The most common main caregiver mothers chose for their children were:



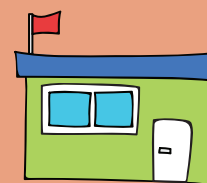
0 to 4 Months Old  
**Mother**

**Reason:** They felt they understood their children the most and were therefore the best persons to provide care.



5 to 18 Months Old  
**Grandmothers**

**Reason:** For practical reasons as both parents worked fulltime and grandmothers were a convenient choice, e.g., family lived with grandmother or grandmother lived nearby, etc.



About 3 Years Old  
**Childcare centres**

**Reason:** In order to give their children more opportunities for learning, making friends, and for children to learn how to take care of themselves.

# EASY OR DIFFICULT CHILD: DOES TEMPERAMENT STAY THE SAME?

Mothers completed a questionnaire on their child's behaviour in different situations when their child was 4 months, 18 months, and 3 years old. Based on mothers' report on their child's behaviour, temperament was categorised as:



## Easy Temperament

Easy to comfort, friendly, cooperative

Or



## Difficult Temperament

Tends to cry and be fussy, shy, bad-tempered



## FINDINGS

Child temperament was more difficult at 18 months compared to 4 months and 3 years old.

## TIPS

Each child's temperament is different. Based on caregivers' experience in dealing with the child in different situations, caregivers' can adjust parenting strategies to meet the needs of the child. For example, knowing that a child tends to fuss and cry uncontrollably during family occasions, be sensitive and take steps (e.g., distracting child with a favourite toy) to quiet your child before he/she starts to fuss and cry. This can help reduce parent-child conflicts.

# MOTHER-CHILD ATTACHMENT: DOES HAVING DIFFERENT CAREGIVERS MATTER?



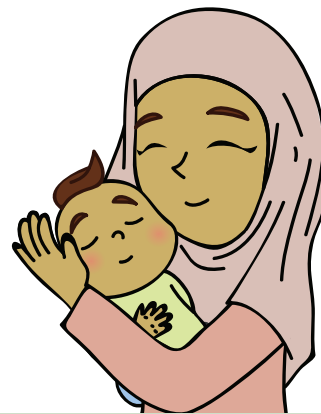
Mother-child attachment was measured by **comparing mothers' and experts' ranking of 90 statements, describing attachment related behaviours.**

This provided an attachment score for each child. Children who have secure attachments generally go to their mothers or main caregiver for comfort when they are upset or anxious.

## FINDINGS



Children with easy temperament at 3 years old were also more securely attached at 3 years old.



Children who were more securely attached at 18 months old were also more securely attached at 3 years old.

## TIPS

### Parents can promote secure attachment by:

Having close physical contact with their children (e.g., touching, cuddling, etc.).

Understanding and responding appropriately to their children's needs. For example, if the child enjoys an activity, a highly understanding mother would respond by showing delight. If the child is upset or is bored of an activity, a highly understanding mother would adjust accordingly by comforting the child and/or suggesting other activities.

# DEVELOPMENTAL STATUS AT 3 YEARS OLD: WHAT DID WE MEASURE?

Mothers completed questionnaires on their children's fine motor, problem solving, personal-social, and social-emotional skills when their children were 3 years old.

## Fine Motor



Children's hand and finger movement and coordination.

## Personal-Social



Children's ability to help themselves in daily routines and how they interact with others.

## Problem Solving



Children's ability to solve problems.

## Social-Emotional



Children's ability to manage their feelings, situations and how children relate to others.

# DEVELOPMENTAL STATUS AT 3 YEARS OLD: WHAT DID WE FIND?

## Fine Motor & Personal-Social

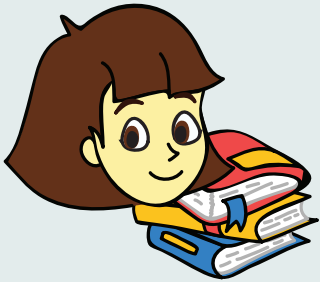


Girls at 3  
years old

Had better fine motor development

Had better personal-social  
development

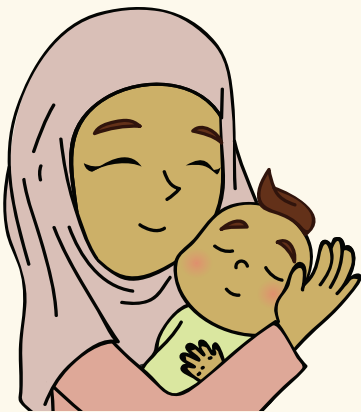
## Problem Solving



Children with  
mothers who had  
more education

Had better problem solving skills

## Social-Emotional



Children with  
more secure  
attachment



Children with  
mothers who  
had more  
education

Had better social-emotional development

# TIPS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Children gain developmental skills as they grow. Exposure to activities which helps enhance children's developmental skills at an earlier age can benefit children later.

Here are some tips for caregivers of children about 18 months old to enhance children's fine motor, personal-social, problem solving, and social-emotional development.

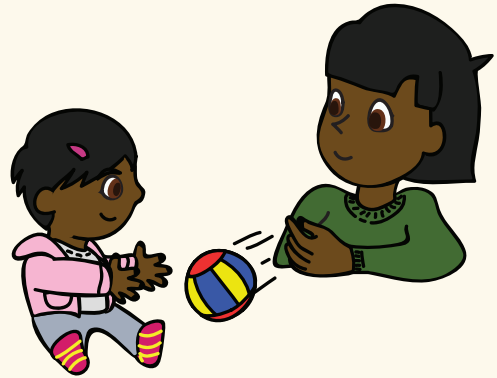
## Fine Motor



Let your child draw his/her own picture with child safe crayons or markers, while you draw one of your own.

Let your child help you squeeze water out of a wash cloth, soft bath toy, or squeezing ball.

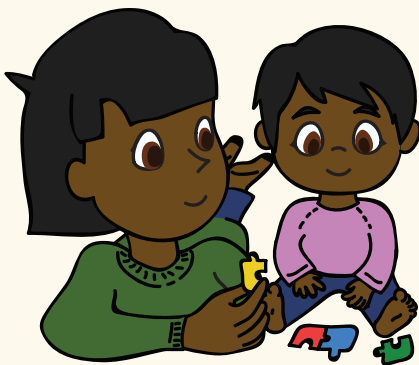
## Personal-Social



Play games such as rolling a ball back and forth to encourage your child to take turns.

Encourage your child to have a doll or stuffed toy. Include the doll or stuffed toy in daily activities and games and make them copy what he/she does, e.g., walk, go to bed, eat, dress up, etc.

## Problem Solving



Help your child sort objects into piles; for example, sorting laundry (put socks in one pile and shirts in another). Or play simple puzzles together.

Encourage your child to open lids of plastic containers to find surprises inside - beginning with simple lids that pop off easily, moving on to those with lids that unlatch, unscrew, or pop open with a button.

## Social-Emotional



Help your child identify his/her feelings by talking about feelings while reading a book or when he/she is very affected by anger, fear, sadness, etc.

Children like to have a regular daily routine: Talk to your child about what you are doing now and what will be happening next. Give him/her time to be active and time to be quiet.