

The Relationship Between Secure Attachment of Parents and Children in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

The bond between parents and children is an emotional connection that begins from pregnancy and continues after birth, forming the foundation for a child's psychological development. Parenting practices by both the father and mother play a crucial role in shaping a child's character, especially during early childhood. This study employs a literature review method by analyzing 15 selected articles and book sources published between 2013 and 2023, which specifically discuss the concept of secure attachment between parents and children in early childhood. The inclusion criteria for reviewed studies include research focusing on the psychological and emotional development of children aged 0–8 years and those that explicitly examine secure attachment patterns and parenting styles. The purpose of this study is to enhance parental understanding of how secure attachment affects children's development. The findings show that secure attachment significantly supports children's cognitive growth, emotional resilience, independence, creativity, and social development. This reinforces the critical role of responsive and affectionate parenting in early childhood. The study highlights the importance of early intervention through secure parent-child relationships to foster well-rounded future generations.

Keywords: *Safe Attachment; Parents; Early Childhood.*

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INTRODUCTION

Children experience very significant growth, especially at an early age (Rosadi & Takim, 2022; Saracho, 2023). Children in early childhood are also called children with golden ages, because at this time children are very sensitive and grow quickly from all aspects, so children in their development really need optimal stimulation, because development during this period will have an impact until the child is in adulthood (Azijah I, 2022; Agustini, 2015; Conscience, 2013).

The National for the Educational of Young Children (NAEYC) categorizes early childhood as children aged 0 to 8 years, at that time they can receive guidance or education, which can be in the form of half-day or full-day activities (Suryana, 2016). Early childhood is a child in the golden age category or the Golden Age has very rapid development, so at this time children can also receive and manage information very quickly in themselves. The education received for early childhood can be the basis for development related to the development of children's self-actualization in the development of character, physical abilities, cognitive, language, art, social-emotional, spiritual, self-discipline, self-concept, and independence (Khodijah, 2021; Mulyasa, 2012).

The family has an important role as the main shaping of a child's character, because parental care at home for children greatly affects the development that occurs in children. This situation makes the relationship between the child and the parents very emotional and can

form a child's independence. This is because the role of the family for a child is not only in the fulfillment of biological needs, but also in the psychological and sociological needs of the child, so that the development of emotions such as a sense of security, love, affection, attention and appreciation can grow optimally in a child, but unlike children whose needs are not met, the child will become a "Vulnerable Child" or a child with a fragile personality, Vulnerable, weak, easily afraid, easily disappointed and easily sad, this situation shows the need for a real form of secure attachment for children with their parents, and this is very important for the growth of children, especially at an early age. (Rahmatunnisa, 2019; Nurhayati, 2015; Diananda, 2020).

The family plays a vital role in shaping a child's personality, especially through parenting styles that foster emotional bonds, particularly secure attachment. Children who develop secure attachment with their parents tend to demonstrate better outcomes in confidence, creativity, independence, and social competence (Nurhayati, 2015; Diananda, 2020). However, there is still a lack of synthesized research specifically addressing how secure attachment functions within the context of Indonesian parenting, especially in relation to cultural parenting norms and early childhood developmental outcomes. This represents a significant research gap that this study seeks to address.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between secure attachment and the developmental outcomes of early childhood using a literature review approach. This study is expected to provide deeper insights for parents, educators, and early childhood practitioners on the importance of building strong emotional bonds as a foundation for child development. The implications of this research aim to support more responsive, empathetic parenting strategies that foster children's readiness to face future developmental challenges.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question: "How does secure attachment between parents and children relate to early childhood development, and what are its implications for effective parenting strategies in the Indonesian context?"

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive literature review design. The type of research employed is a non-empirical study that aims to describe and analyze various scholarly works related to the secure attachment between parents and their children during early childhood. The data collection technique involves systematically identifying, selecting, and reviewing relevant scientific articles, books, and research reports published within the last ten years. The primary sources include empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and conceptual analyses related to parenting, emotional development, and attachment theory.

The data analysis technique used in this research is qualitative content analysis. This involves categorizing the findings from the selected literature into key themes, such as factors influencing secure attachment, outcomes of secure attachment on children's development, and parenting patterns that foster emotional security. The analysis was conducted by comparing, interpreting, and synthesizing the information to produce a comprehensive overview of how secure attachment contributes to early childhood development. This method allows the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions based on patterns found across various sources.

RESULTH AND DISCUSSION

The term attachment was first proposed by a British psychologist in 1958 named John Bowlby and later reformulated by Mary Ainsworth in 1969. Bowlby in Santrock's book states that attachment is a relationship between certain social figures and a certain phenomenon that is considered to reflect the characteristics of a unique relationship. According to Bowlby, attachment is the result of an active behavior system that requires closeness, so this situation makes the attachment figure very sensitive to the needs of children. Ainsworth said that attachment is a specific emotional bond, which binds individuals in the closeness formed by an individual to another person. (Sari, 2018; Nurhayati, 2015; Aryanti, 2015).

Bowlby in a book written by Armsden and Greenberg in 1987 also stated that attachment can occur at any age level, such as in the developmental stage of infants to adolescents, because at that time attachment plays an important role, especially in the formation of behavior (Sari, 2018). Not only the physical body of children needs to grow properly, but also the growth of their soul (Montessori, 2020).

Attachment does not occur in children suddenly, but through a series of processes first experienced by children and parents as their attachment figures. Attachment is a direct interaction between parents and their children in activities together with love in the involvement of two parties that allows cognitive, emotional and social stimulation (Atmowiryo, 2008).

Bowlby formulated three basic concepts of attachment (Diananda, 2020), namely:

- a. Attachment functions as a form of defense against criminal behavior. This is due to the need for an individual's sense of security towards others and their environment.
- b. The feeling of security resulting from a positive attachment is closely related to the ability to develop creativity and exploration of the environment. This will have a positive impact on the individual because he will be able to have the ability to trust others, be able to get along, and be able to have better social relationships, even very good.
- c. Kelekatan merupakan kebutuhan mendasar dari pertumbuhan manusia sebagai individu, sehingga kelekatan akan selalu dibutuhkan sepanjang hidup manusia, tidak terbatas usia.

The attachment process that occurs in children is the beginning phase of the child's psychoemotional and cognitive development and as the basis for psychosocial development (Aryanti, 2015). Ainsworth stated that there are several special characteristics that show that there is an attachment relationship between a child and his or her attachment figure, this is shown from the long duration of the relationship, the relationship that creates a sense of security, the existence of a bond even though the attachment figure is not visible from the child's reach, and even if the attachment figure is replaced by someone else (Diananda, 2020).

Mary Ainsworth created an attachment observation measuring tool that was tested, with the intention that children can experience a series of introductions with strangers in a certain order and separation until reuniting with parents as their attachment figures, this measuring tool has three basic patterns of attachment aspects, namely Secure Attachment, Ambivalent Attachment and Avoidant Attachment (Nurhayati, 2015). Secure Attachment shows that children have confidence in their parents as attachment figures, because of the sensitive and responsive actions of parents so that children can feel calm and happy when parents are nearby.

In this attachment, children remain calm even when their parents are gone, and will show positive reactions in the form of happiness when their parents return (Nurhayati, 2015).

Zhang, et al. explain that early childhood is very susceptible to the influence of cognitive factors such as cognitive stimulus and parenting, so parents need to recognize, understand, and respond appropriately to children's cues in order to provide responsive parenting (Çetin, Z., & Ata, S., 2022). A secure attachment between parents and their children is a bond of affection and parental attitude in parenting, parents are able to respond, and meet the needs of children, so that this relationship forms a strong emotional bond and closeness of children to parents, from this relationship a sense of security is created (Sari, 2018). Safe attachment and responsive parenting can support children's cognitive, social-emotional, and independent development (Solikhah, 2023).

The results of research conducted by Dini, (2015) explained that the relationship between safe attachment and child independence shows that the high level of implementation of safe attachment of children to parents results in high child independence. Parents who consistently provide the responses that children need, will make children have a pleasant impression (secure attachment), so that children are able to complete challenging tasks and trigger maximum improvement in their cognitive development. This situation makes children have good self-esteem and maturity in thinking which can spur children to be able to build healthy and effective relationships in the future (Diananda, A., 2020).

Parents who establish attachment to their children and present themselves as figures that can be emulated by children have a great impact on children's social abilities, regardless of the child's environment (Rahmatunnisa, 2019). Children with secure attachment tend to be more courageous to explore their new environment, this is because even though children do not see their parents directly, children still have the belief that their attachment figure exists, so they still feel safe and feel that they are in a good state (Aryanti, 2015). A parent's secure attachment to their child also has a significant impact on the development of skills in children's creativity (Çetin, Z., & Ata, S., 2022).

Research conducted by Sari, S. L., Devianti, R., & Safitri, N. A. (2018) shows that parenting in the safe attachment of parents to their children is able to minimize criminal acts, violence and negative behavior of children that occur in the community and schools. Londerville & Main explains that the secure attachment between children and parents has been shown to have an influence on the level of obedience, cooperation, development of conscience and the ability of children to imitate, this suggests that the level of synchronization in the parent-child relationship is related to the development of children's intelligence (Ranson, K. E., & Urichuk, L. J., 2008).

CONCLUSION

Attachment does not occur in children suddenly, but through a series of processes first. This secure attachment is created from the existence of an affectionate relationship between parents as an attached figure, to their children. Parents recognize, understand, and respond appropriately to children's cues so that they can provide responsive parenting and create a sense of security for children. Children who have a secure attachment to their parents have excellent developmental potential in various aspects, such as their cognitive intelligence, independence, creativity, emotional, social, to the character development of their conscience.

This is very necessary for children, especially at an early age, to be ready to become adult individuals in the future.

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