



The Role of Parental Attachment and Its Influence on the Emotional Intelligence of Preschool Children

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between parental attachment and emotional intelligence in young children through a literature review approach. The method involves reviewing literature from relevant national and international scientific articles published within the last ten years. The findings indicate that secure attachment patterns positively contribute to children's ability to recognise, manage, and express emotions. Conversely, insecure attachment may increase the risk of emotional disorders, low emotional control, and difficulties in forming social relationships. This study concludes that healthy emotional attachment is a crucial factor in supporting children's emotional intelligence from an early age. The research implications emphasise the need for education for parents and caregivers to establish responsive and empathetic parenting patterns to support children's emotional development optimally.

Kata Kunci

Attachment;
Orang Tua;
Kecerdasan Emosi;
Anak;
Pra Sekolah

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara attachment orang tua dengan kecerdasan emosi anak usia dini melalui pendekatan kajian pustaka (literature review). Metode yang digunakan berupa peninjauan literatur dari berbagai artikel ilmiah nasional dan internasional yang relevan, diterbitkan dalam kurun waktu sepuluh tahun terakhir. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pola attachment yang aman (secure attachment) berkontribusi positif terhadap perkembangan kemampuan anak dalam mengenali, mengelola, dan mengekspresikan emosi. Sebaliknya, attachment yang tidak aman dapat meningkatkan risiko gangguan emosi, rendahnya kemampuan pengendalian emosi, serta kesulitan dalam menjalin hubungan sosial. Kesimpulan dari kajian ini adalah bahwa keterikatan emosional yang sehat menjadi faktor penting dalam mendukung kecerdasan emosi anak sejak dini. Implikasi penelitian menegaskan perlunya edukasi bagi orang tua dan pengasuh untuk membangun pola pengasuhan yang responsif dan penuh empati guna mendukung perkembangan emosional anak secara optimal.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood development is an important foundation in life for shaping a child's personality, social skills, and future success. Development is related to an individual's mental functions. The term "development" in psychology is a broad and complex concept, encompassing various aspects. To fully understand development, it is necessary to grasp supporting concepts such as growth, maturation, and change (Palmin et al., 2023).

Development encompasses various changes experienced by individuals in the process of reaching adulthood or maturity, which occurs gradually, systematically, and continuously. Development is not limited to physical aspects but includes ongoing changes in an individual's psychological functions, which occur through growth and learning toward maturity.

One aspect that plays a significant role in this development is Emotional Quotient (EQ) or emotional intelligence (Hartini et al., 2024). Campos (Santrock, 2007) defines emotions as feelings or affections that arise when an individual is in an important situation. Emotions are represented by behaviours that express comfort or discomfort with the circumstances or interactions being experienced. Emotional development in early childhood is significant because it plays a role in a child's ability to recognise, express, and regulate their emotions, impacting their future social interactions and mental health.

The stages of emotional development in early childhood begin at birth with the ability to recognise basic emotions such as happiness, anger, and fear, then develop into the ability to express more complex emotions and manage emotional reactions according to the situation. The characteristics of emotions in adults and young children differ, with the characteristics of emotions in young children being: 1) Short-lived and ending abruptly; 2) Appearing more intense or powerful; 3) Temporary or superficial; 4) Occurring more frequently; 5) evident in their behaviour; 6) Reactions reflecting individuality. Emotions play an important role in children's development. According to Woolfson, children have emotional needs such as wanting to be loved, valued, safe, competent, and optimising their competencies (Nurmalitasari, 2015).

Emotional intelligence is influenced by several factors, including personal, social, or a combination of factors. According to Goleman, many factors influence emotional intelligence, namely: (1) Internal factors, which are factors that arise within an individual and are influenced by the state of their emotional brain; (2) External factors, which are factors that come from outside the individual and influence their attitude (Utama, 2024).

Additionally, external factors influence children's emotional intelligence, namely family factors, which are the primary factors influencing emotional intelligence, as it is through the family that individuals first interact and learn. This factor is often called the emotional bond between children and parents, known as attachment. This aligns with research (Ramadhanti et al., 2021) stating that family factors, particularly attachment to the father, are the primary factors in developing a child's emotional intelligence, as it is within the family that a child first interacts and learns.

Attachment is an affective bond formed early on between a child and their primary caregiver, typically the parents (Gorrese & Ruggieri, 2012). Attachment was first described by John Bowlby in 1973. Attachment Theory is described as the status and quality of an individual within a relationship that exists within a range of comfort and discomfort. According to John Bowlby (Munawaroh, 2025), this theory emphasises children's long-term psychological and social development. Secure attachment allows children to develop self-confidence, emotional regulation, and social skills. In addition, Bowlby's theory also states that attachment provides a strong psychological foundation for children to explore their environment and build trust in themselves and others. Children with secure attachment tend to have reasonable emotional control, can healthily resolve conflicts, and form more positive social relationships.

Previous studies have shown that children with good attachment quality tend to have high emotional intelligence. However, the limited number of studies focusing on early childhood (especially

ages 4-6) in the Indonesian cultural context represents an important gap that needs to be filled. Early childhood is the golden age of emotional development, and parental influence is highly dominant, as children have not yet developed the capacity to manage their emotions independently.

The urgency of this research lies in addressing the need for approaches and parenting practices that support optimal emotional development in children. In today's complex and rapidly changing social environment, children are expected to be academically intelligent and skilled in understanding and managing their emotions. Therefore, understanding the factors contributing to emotional intelligence, particularly from the perspective of the child-parent relationship, has become increasingly important and relevant to study.

This study aims to determine the relationship between parental attachment and the emotional intelligence of young children, specifically those aged 4-6 years (preschool). This study is expected to enrich early childhood education knowledge and provide input for parents, teachers, and education practitioners on the importance of building safe and healthy emotional relationships.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature review method to explore the relationship between parental attachment and emotional intelligence in preschool-aged children. The literature review was conducted systematically using the following inclusion criteria: (1) Articles published between 2015 and 2025; (2) The main topic discusses parental attachment and emotional intelligence in young children.

Data collection was gathered from various scientific sources, including journals indexed in academic databases and publications from educational institutions with credibility in psychology and early childhood education. The search used relevant keywords, including parental attachment, emotional intelligence, and early childhood (Novianti, 2024). Data sources were obtained from academic database journals, as well as publications from educational institutions with credibility in the fields of psychology and early childhood education. The analysis technique used content analysis, which involved identifying patterns, primary findings, and relationships between attachment and emotional intelligence variables in each article. To strengthen the validity of the results, four main articles were selected and examined in depth based on the methods used, number of subjects, measurement instruments, and correlation results. The results were then described in terms of direct, comprehensive, and in-depth attachment, while also serving as the basis for theoretical discussion in Indonesian culture.

The publication years of the articles reviewed in this study were set between 2015 and 2025. This timeframe was chosen because the past 10 years have been a crucial period in developing research on attachment and emotional intelligence in young children, particularly within the context of developmental psychology and child education. During this period, numerous recent studies have highlighted the importance of emotional bonds between children and parents in children's emotional regulation, social skills, and psychological well-being.

In addition, the literature published during this period generally adapts various new approaches, such as using more valid and contextual assessment instruments to the times, as well as considering cultural and social factors that are developing in Indonesia. Thus, the analysis of articles in this period is expected to provide a comprehensive, relevant, and up-to-date picture of the relationship between parental attachment and young children's emotional intelligence.

This study collected data by reviewing scientific literature relevant to parental attachment and early childhood emotional intelligence. Data were obtained from articles published in national journals and credible academic publications, particularly in developmental psychology and early childhood education. The article search process was conducted systematically using specific keywords, such as parental attachment and emotional development in early childhood. From all the articles found, four

main articles were selected for in-depth analysis based on their methodological quality and thematic relevance to the research focus.

Data analysis in this study used a content analysis approach to identify, interpret, and draw meaning from the findings in the reviewed literature. This process was conducted systematically by reading and analysing each article based on specific objectives focused on the relationship between parental attachment and emotional intelligence in early childhood.

Four main articles were selected for in-depth analysis because they were considered to have methodological strength and a strong connection to the research focus. Each article was analysed to reveal: 1) patterns of relationships between attachment variables and emotional intelligence; 2) key findings related to attachment styles (secure/insecure) and their implications; 3) the instruments used to measure both variables; 4) the social and cultural contexts underlying each study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Several articles support understanding the relationship between parental attachment and emotional intelligence in early childhood. A review and analysis of several relevant research results was conducted. These results show empirical and consistent evidence regarding the contribution of the quality of children's emotional relationships in recognising, expressing, and healthily regulating emotions. The following table summarises four previous studies that form the basis of this literature review, including the researchers' names, subjects or respondents, methods and instruments used, and the main results of each study.

Table 1. Literature Review Results

No	Researcher (Year)	Subjects/Respondents	Method & Instrument	Main Findings
1	Amelia Nur Hidayanti (2022) (Hidayanti, 2022)	32 preschool children & parents of PAUD Muslimat Getas, Blora	Kendall Tau Correlation	Democratic parenting; $r = 0.445$, $p = 0.006$, indicating a significant positive relationship.
2	Henni Anggraini & Sarah Emmanuel (2016) (Anggraini & Sarah, 2016)	35 students of TK Muslimat NU	Attachment scale, emotional intelligence, social adjustment	$r = 0.537$, $p = 0.005$, indicating a moderate and significant relationship between attachment and emotional intelligence.
3	Popi Popira, Amir Hamzah, & Elsa Cindrya (2024) (Popira et al., 2024)	15 children aged 4–6 years	Normality Test, Linearity, Pearson Correlation	$r = 0.762$, $p = 0.000$, indicating a strong relationship between secure attachment and children's emotional intelligence.
4	Vivi Irzania, Ari Sofia, & Erika Ayu Lestari (2022) (Erika Ayu et al., 2022)	130 early childhood children & mothers	Attachment scale & socio-emotional intelligence	$r = 0.762$, $p = 0.000$, indicating a strong relationship between secure attachment and children's emotional intelligence.

Several previous studies were used as references in this study to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between parental attachment and emotional intelligence in early childhood. These studies provide empirical evidence of how the quality of the emotional relationship between children and parents influences children's ability to recognise, manage, and express emotions appropriately. In addition, these results also pay attention to parenting patterns and attachment forms that contribute to preschool children's social-emotional development.

Literature analysis shows that parenting patterns and the quality of attachment to parents greatly influence the development of emotional intelligence in early childhood. Democratic parenting creates an environment that supports children to express themselves, express their opinions, and learn to manage their emotions well. A secure emotional bond with parents provides comfort, self-confidence, and emotional stability, which form the foundation for developing social-emotional skills. The combination of appropriate parenting styles with healthy attachment enables children to develop the ability to recognise, understand, and control their emotions optimally.

The reviewed literature also shows that secure attachment contributes more to children's emotional intelligence than parenting style alone. Warm, attentive, and responsive relationships with parents are important in building strong emotional bonds. This supports the development of emotional control and shapes empathy, social skills, and children's ability to cope with various social situations better. Thus, efforts to improve the quality of parenting and parent-child attachment are key to developing emotional intelligence from an early age.

Discussion

The results of several research meetings show a significant and positive relationship between parental attachment and young children's emotional intelligence. In particular, the four studies reviewed consistently show that children with secure attachment to their parents demonstrate better abilities in recognising, understanding, expressing, and regulating their emotions adaptively.

These findings align with Bowlby's (1969, 1988) Attachment Theory, which states that secure attachment fosters the development of emotional regulation capacity through observing the presence of responsive and consistent caregivers during distress. Secure attachment helps children develop the ability to recognise and regulate emotions through warm, responsive, and empathetic interactions with parents. When children feel heard and understood emotionally, they are more likely to mimic their parents' positive emotional management strategies. Studies by Andira et al. (2022) and Arianda et al. (2022) support this, as secure attachment is associated with improved emotional regulation and social skills in young children.

This explanation is consistent with Saarni's (1999) view that children's emotional competence develops in warm and supportive interpersonal relationships, where children learn to interpret and respond to emotions through consistent parenting models. Cassidy and Shaver (2016) in the *Handbook of Attachment* also explain that children with secure attachment tend to have better self-control, understand others' emotions, and demonstrate higher levels of empathy.

The significance of these findings is crucial, as secure attachment serves as a source of psychological safety for children and a foundation for the development of emotional intelligence (Delgado et al., 2022). Children feel secure in their relationship with parents who can calm themselves, mimic their parents' emotional regulation models, and receive consistent emotional validation (Utomo et al., 2022). This has long-term effects on social maturity, conflict resolution skills, and children's resilience in facing challenges (Andira et al., 2022; Arianda et al., 2022).

These findings are supported by international literature, such as Pallini et al. (2018), which state that secure attachment positively correlates with children's emotional regulation abilities. A study by Rosso (2022) also found that emotional intelligence skills develop better in individuals with secure attachment than those with avoidant or anxious attachment.

The consistency of findings across various studies reinforces the validity of the relationship between attachment and emotional intelligence. These studies used various measurement methods, yet still produced similar patterns. This indicates that secure attachment significantly contributes to children's emotional development. However, there are alternative explanations that cannot be ignored. Factors such as a child's basic personality, the influence of the school environment, the quality of communication within the family, and socio-economic conditions may also directly or indirectly influence a child's emotional intelligence. Therefore, while attachment is a strong predictor, it is not the

sole determining factor. These findings are clinically relevant for application in early childhood education contexts and parenting programs. Teachers and counsellors in early childhood education can be involved in detecting unhealthy attachment and providing education or intervention to parents' emotional sensitivity, which has been proven effective in improving the quality of parent-child interactions (Dozier & Bernard, 2017).

This study also has limitations worth noting. Some studies used data that did not allow for causal relationship analysis. Questionnaire-based instruments may introduce subjective bias. For future research, it is recommended to use a longitudinal design with a larger sample size and advanced analytical techniques, such as mediation or moderation models. This research could also include mediating variables such as self-esteem, self-confidence, or family communication patterns to understand better the mechanisms underlying the relationship between attachment and children's emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that parental attachment has a significant and positive relationship with young children's emotional intelligence. Children with secure attachment tend to have better abilities in recognising, expressing, and managing emotions adaptively. The urgency of this study lies in the importance of parents shaping the foundation of children's regulation from preschool age. Amid increasingly complex social dynamics, emotional intelligence has become a crucial aspect in supporting children's success, both academically and socially.

These findings reinforce existing empirical evidence while filling a gap in the Indonesian cultural context, particularly among children aged 4–6. By systematically reviewing recent studies, this research contributes practically and conceptually to developing early childhood education and attachment-based parenting practices. Therefore, these findings are worthy of note as a scientific foundation for teachers, counsellors, and child development practitioners in designing more sensitive and effective emotional intervention strategies.

For future research, it is recommended to use a design with a larger sample size to test causal relationships more robustly. Additionally, incorporating mediating variables such as self-confidence, social skills, and parental communication styles could provide deeper insights into how attachment influences children's emotional intelligence.

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