

## THE ROLE OF PARENTAL ATTACHMENT ON ADOLESCENT PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

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### ABSTRACT

*Prosocial behavior is an important aspect in forming a cooperative social relation. Adolescence is considered a crucial age in the development of prosocial behavior. The advancement of cognitive development of adolescents is considered parallel with the increase of prosocial behavior. However, in the modern society there has been a decrease of prosocial behavior among adolescents. Through literature review, parental attachment is considered as one of the factors that could enhance prosocial behavior on adolescent. Therefore, this study aims to determine the role of parental attachment on adolescent prosocial behavior. This study is a quantitative study with correlational quantitative methods. This study involved 550 adolescents aged 12-22 years with 546 valid data. The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling. This study used Prosocial Behavior Scale by Eisenberg and Mussen (1889) and Wang and Eisenberg (2003) which has obtained by the Faculty of Psychology, Tarumanagara University to measure prosocial behavior. The other measuring instrument used in this study is Inventory Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) by Armsden and Greenberg (1987) to measure parental attachment. The data collection was conducted in September until November 2024. The data was processed with regression test. The result showed that there is a significant and positive role of secure parental attachment towards adolescent prosocial behavior.*

**Keywords:** prosocial behavior, parental attachment, adolescent

### 1. PREFACE

Prosocial behavior is a critical aspect of cooperative social relationships. It is defined as actions intended to benefit others (Eisenberg et al., 2007). It encompasses various forms, such as sharing, helping, as well as considering others' well-being (Crone & Achterberg, 2022). Altruism, driven by intrinsic motivation to help others, is considered as a key component of prosocial behavior (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). In the development process, prosocial behavior emerged early in life, children as young as two years old had the ability to respond to others' distress, such as patting or expressing concern (Lamb & Zakhireh, 1997). Longitudinal study on prosocial development suggested that prosocial responses increase during adolescence, correlating positively with age and empathy (Hastings et al., 2000; Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987). Moreover, cognitive maturity, which enhanced the ability to understand more complex moral issues, also influenced individual's prosocial responses (Hoffman, 1982). Research showed that adolescents' prosocial development related positively to self-worth, intrinsic values, well-being, and academic success (Padilla-Walker et al., 2018).

Adolescence indeed is marked with social context changes and a need to contribute to society. During adolescence, research highlighted the increased of prosocial behavior towards peers rather than strangers (te Brinke et al., 2023). However, recent studies in Indonesia showed a contradictive result towards the theories, a decline in prosocial behavior among adolescents was found with 34.6% facing challenges in social relations (Sutomo et al., 2022). Other research has also found that adolescence in Indonesia were more likely to develop prosocial behavior issues (Toharudin et al., 2024). Study on prosocial behavior in Indonesia showed a concerning data, particularly in Bangka Belitung and DKI Jakarta with respective percentage of 23.95% and 26.95% in terms of prosocial engagement. This result showed that prosocial behavior in

Indonesian society averages at moderate level with a notable disparity across regions, specifically in Bangka Belitung and DKI Jakarta (Shubhan & Aloysius, 2021). These findings are significant since prosocial behavior has a key role in social harmony and lower level of prosocial act can impact to broader social challenges within a community. Additionally, low prosocial engagement in adolescence may hinder the development of well-rounded moral identity, potentially impacting the ability to build empathetic and cooperative relationships in the transition to adulthood (Padilla-Walker et al., 2018).

These data emphasized the need for further research into the aspects that could contribute to increased prosocial behavior among adolescents. Attachment theory, as proposed by Bowlby (1969), underscored the importance of secure parent-child attachment for prosocial development, promoting trust and emotional security (Gross et al., 2017). Secure attachment supported social and emotional responsiveness, while insecure attachment might impair social skills and increased antisocial tendencies (Gullone et al., 2008). Studies affirmed a positive link between parental attachment and prosocial behavior, as well as reduced aggression and deviance in adolescents (Nie et al., 2016). Despite the evidence of a significant association, further exploration is needed to clarify the causal relationship between parental attachment and adolescent prosocial behavior, especially in Bangka Belitung and DKI Jakarta regions where prosocial behaviors were considered relatively low (Shubhan & Aloysius, 2021).

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

### Samples

This research used a purposive sampling and involved 550 adolescents, with 546 usable data. The participants were categorized based on gender, age, place of residence and parental employment status. There were 161 boys (31%) and 377 (69%) girls. The age range of the participants spanned from 12-22 years, with the largest group being 18 years old (26.2%). There were two places of residence that have been the focus in this study which are Bangka Belitung with 240 (44%) and DKI Jakarta with 306 (56%) participants. Moreover, the participants of this study also divided based on parental employment, the majority of participants (55.3%) reported that both parents were employed. Lastly, based on volunteer participation, the majority of participants (82.2%) did not participate in volunteer organizations.

### Measurement

This research used two measuring tools to measure each variable. The first measuring tool used to measure parental attachment is Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987) which has been adapted by Triantoro Safaria. This measurement tool has three dimensions which are trust, communication and alienation. There are 25 items in total for measuring maternal attachment and another 25 items with the same wording for measuring paternal attachment. Each one of the items are rated with Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = sometimes; 4 = agree; and 5 = strongly agree. The scoring for this scale is 1 point for strongly disagreeing, 2 points for disagree, 3 points for sometimes, 4 points for agree, and 5 points for strongly agree. The higher the total score will indicate higher parental attachment. One of the items from this measurement tool is "my father respects my feelings". The Cronbach's alpha for this measurement tool is 0.931 and 0.916 respectively for paternal and maternal attachment. The second measurement tool used in this research is Prosocial Behavior Scale by Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) and Wang and Eisenberg (2003), which has been adapted by the Faculty of Psychology, Tarumanagara University. This measurement was used to assess the prosocial behavior of research participants. Prosocial Behavior Scale has seven dimensions which are helping, cooperative, donating, sharing, charity,

comforting, and honesty. The total items in this measurement are 45 items. Each of the items are measured with Likert scale with 1 = highly unsuitable; 2 = unsuitable; 3 = hesitate; 4 = suitable; and 5 = highly suitable. The scoring for these measurement tools is similar to IPPA, the higher the total score, the higher prosocial behavior of the participant. One of the items from this measurement tool is "I want to donate my blood". The Cronbach's alpha for each dimension of this measurement tool is: helping (0.884); cooperative (0.919); donating (0.905); sharing (0.927); charity (0.913); comforting (0.909); and honesty (0.905).

### **Data collection and analysis**

Data for this study was collected through a mixed-methods approach, employing both offline and online questionnaire distribution. The questionnaire distribution was held from September until November 2024. The offline data collection was conducted by visiting several schools and universities in Bangka Belitung and DKI Jakarta, while the online component involved social media platforms such as Instagram, Whatsapp, and LINE. Active consent was obtained from all participants by including the informed consent in the first page of the questionnaire. The questionnaire forms detailed the study's objectives, procedures, as well as assured the confidentiality of participants' responses and data.

The data obtained in this study is collected through google form and was evaluated using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 25. SPSS version 25 used for the quantitative analysis with following statistical test such as descriptive analysis; reliability test of the measurement tools; outlier detection, linearity test to measure the linearity relationship between dependent and independent variable; normality test to detect the normal distribution of the data; heteroscedasticity test to see the constant of the variance across all values of independent variable, and lastly regression analysis to measure whether there is a significant role of independent variable to dependent variable.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Descriptive statistics of parental attachment variable**

The measurement tool for parental attachment consisted of three dimensions including trust, communication and alienation. The scale was used to measure attachment to both mother and father figures. For the mother figure, the hypothesized mean score was 3.00, while the empirical mean was calculated to be 3.23 with standard deviation of 0.34. The higher score of empirical mean suggesting the higher level of maternal attachment. The empirical mean scores were also calculated for each dimension. For trust, the mean was 3.96 (SD = 0.71); for communication, the mean was 3.46 (SD = 0.75); and for alienation, the mean was 2.29 (SD = 0.79). Both trust and communication dimensions had empirical means higher than hypothesized mean, indicating high levels of these dimensions in the sample. Conversely, the alienation dimensions had lower empirical mean, suggesting a low level of perceived alienation from mother.

Furthermore, for the father figure, the hypothesized mean score was 3.00, while the empirical mean was 3.15 with standard deviation of 0.34. The higher score of empirical mean suggesting the higher level of paternal attachment. The empirical mean scores were also calculated for each dimension. For trust, the mean was 3.77 (SD = 0.79); for communication, the mean was 3.15 (SD = 0.81); and for alienation, the mean was 2.53 (SD = 0.86). Similar to the result of maternal attachment, descriptive statistics of paternal attachment also showed high levels of trust and communication, while low on the alienation dimension. In comparison, the empirical mean on maternal attachment was higher than paternal attachment. This indicated that the participants in

this study had a higher level of attachment to the mother figure compared to the father figure. The further explanations are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics of parental attachment variables*

| <i>Figure</i> | <i>Dimension</i> | <i>Min.</i> | <i>Max.</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std. Deviation</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|---------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Mother        |                  | 1.0         | 5.0         | 3.23        | 0.34                  | High               |
|               | Trust            | 1.0         | 5.0         | 3.96        | 0.71                  | High               |
|               | Communication    | 1.0         | 5.0         | 3.46        | 0.75                  | High               |
|               | Alienation       | 1.0         | 5.0         | 2.29        | 0.79                  | Low                |
| Father        |                  | 1.0         | 5.0         | 3.15        | 0.34                  | High               |
|               | Trust            | 1.0         | 5.0         | 3.77        | 0.79                  | High               |
|               | Communication    | 1.0         | 5.0         | 3.15        | 0.81                  | High               |
|               | Alienation       | 1.0         | 5.0         | 2.53        | 0.86                  | Low                |

### **Descriptive statistics of prosocial behavior variable**

The measurement tool for prosocial behavior consisted of seven dimensions including helping, cooperative, donating, sharing, charity, comforting, and honesty. The scale was used to measure participants' prosocial behavior. The hypothesized mean score was 3.00, while the empirical mean was calculated to be 4.01 with standard deviation of 0.50. The higher score of empirical mean suggesting the higher level of prosocial behavior. The empirical mean scores were also calculated for each dimension. For helping, the mean was 3.94 (SD = 0.56); for cooperative, the mean was 3.85 (SD = 0.63); for donating the mean was 4.20 (SD = 0.64); for sharing the mean was 3.97 (SD = 0.57); for charity the mean was 3.78 (SD = 0.65); for comforting the mean was 3.91 (SD = 0.63); and honesty the mean was 4.41 (SD = 0.59). All of the seven dimensions had empirical means higher than hypothesized mean, indicating high levels of these dimensions in the sample. The further explanations are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive statistics of prosocial behavior variables*

|                    | <i>Dimension</i> | <i>Min.</i> | <i>Max.</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Std. Deviation</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Prosocial Behavior |                  | 1.0         | 5.0         | 4.01        | 0.50                  | High               |
|                    | Helping          | 2.14        | 5.0         | 3.94        | 0.56                  | High               |
|                    | Cooperative      | 1.88        | 5.0         | 3.85        | 0.63                  | High               |
|                    | Donating         | 2.40        | 5.0         | 4.20        | 0.64                  | High               |
|                    | Sharing          | 2.14        | 5.0         | 3.97        | 0.57                  | High               |
|                    | Charity          | 1.14        | 5.0         | 3.78        | 0.65                  | High               |
|                    | Comforting       | 1.50        | 5.0         | 3.91        | 0.63                  | High               |
|                    | Honesty          | 2.60        | 5.0         | 4.41        | 0.59                  | High               |

### **Regression test of parental attachment on adolescent prosocial behavior**

The regression test was conducted to investigate the study's hypothesis that parental attachment significantly influences adolescents' prosocial behavior. This research investigated how different types of attachment (secure, insecure-avoidant, insecure-disorganized) affected adolescents' prosocial behavior. The result showed that only secure attachment style, characterized by trust and closeness to parents, was significantly linked to prosocial behavior. However, this relationship was relatively weak, explaining only a small portion of the variation in prosocial behavior. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for mother and father figure respectively were 0.012 and 0.017, the result suggesting that parental attachment accounts for small proportion around (1.2% and 1.7%) of the variance in prosocial behavior. The remaining 98.8% and 98.3% of the variance can be attributed to other, unmeasured factors. The further explanations are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Coefficient of determination of parental attachment models*

| <i>Figure</i> | <i>Model</i> | <i>R</i> | <i>R Square</i> | <i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i> |
|---------------|--------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mother        | Secure       | 0.110    | 0.012           | 0.49153                           |
|               | Avoidant     | 0.090    | 0.008           | 0.49087                           |
|               | Disorganized | 0.005    | 0.000           | 0.70139                           |
| Father        | Secure       | 0.130    | 0.017           | 0.48613                           |
|               | Avoidant     | 0.190    | 0.036           | 0.46507                           |
|               | Disorganized | 0.405    | 0.164           | 0.57001                           |

The result indicated a statistically significant and positive role of parental attachment on secure attachment style on both mother and father figure towards prosocial behavior (mother figure:  $\beta = 0.233$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ; father figure:  $\beta = 0.247$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ). A linear regression equation was derived to model the relationship both on mother was:  $Y = 3.389 + 0.202X$ , where Y represented prosocial behavior and X represented maternal attachment. This equation implied that for every increase in maternal attachment, there will be a corresponding increase around 0.202 in prosocial behavior. While for the father figure, the linear regression equation was:  $Y = 3.272 + 0.247X$ . Similar to the maternal attachment equation, this equation implies that for every increase in paternal attachment, there will be a corresponding increase around 0.247 in prosocial behavior.

In conclusion, these findings supported the hypothesis that parental attachment has a positive and significant impact on adolescents' prosocial behavior in the studied regions. Nevertheless, the magnitude of this effect is relatively modest, indicating that other variables are likely to play a more substantial role in shaping prosocial behavior. While the anxiety attachment (avoidant and disorganized) had no significant role towards prosocial behavior. The further explanations are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Regression test of parental attachment toward prosocial behavior*

| <i>Model</i> |                     | <i>Unstandardized B</i> | <i>Coefficients Std. Error</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Sig.</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|-------------|--------------------|
| Secure       | (Constant)          | 3.389                   | 0.307                          | 11.054   | 0.000       | Positive           |
|              | Maternal Attachment | 0.202                   | 0.092                          | 2.208    | 0.028       |                    |
|              |                     |                         |                                |          |             |                    |
| Avoidant     | (Constant)          | 4.371                   | 0.529                          | 8.259    | 0.000       | Negative           |
|              | Maternal Attachment | -0.114                  | 0.181                          | -0.628   | 0.533       |                    |
|              |                     |                         |                                |          |             |                    |
| Disorganized | (Constant)          | 3.670                   | 1.174                          | 3.215    | 0.200       | Negative           |
|              | Maternal Attachment | -0.005                  | 0.401                          | -0.012   | 0.990       |                    |
|              |                     |                         |                                |          |             |                    |
| Secure       | (Constant)          | 3.272                   | 0.346                          | 9.455    | 0.000       | Positive           |
|              | Paternal Attachment | 0.247                   | 0.104                          | 2.368    | 0.018       |                    |
|              |                     |                         |                                |          |             |                    |
| Avoidant     | (Constant)          | 4.777                   | 0.449                          | 10.629   | 0.000       | Negative           |
|              | Paternal Attachment | -0.289                  | 0.160                          | -1.799   | 0.075       |                    |
|              |                     |                         |                                |          |             |                    |
| Disorganized | (Constant)          | 4.698                   | 1.160                          | 4.050    | 0.100       | Negative           |
|              | Paternal Attachment | -0.371                  | 0.375                          | -0.990   | 0.368       |                    |
|              |                     |                         |                                |          |             |                    |

The regression analysis in this study revealed a significant positive relationship between secure parental attachment and prosocial behavior among adolescents. This finding aligned with previous research by Vagos and Carvalhais (16) which also found a significant and positive

relationship between secure parental attachment and prosocial behavior in adolescents. Similarly, Li et al. (17) found that secure parental attachment helps to enhance prosocial behavior in children and adolescents, with a significant positive correlation between the two variables among Chinese adolescents. The results of this study was also supported by Hoffman cognitive theory. His theory suggested that as individuals entered more complex developmental stages, they became better at understanding the social norms. Increased cognitive maturity led to more effective responses to other's difficulties. Furthermore, these findings were supported by te Brinke et al. (9) previous research, who demonstrated that over time, adolescents' prosocial behavior was influenced by their own cognitive processes. The significant positive relationship between secure parental attachment and adolescent prosocial behavior was also consistent with Bowlby's attachment theory. Attachment theory emphasizes the crucial role of interactions with primary caregivers in a child's socioemotional development. Children who are securely attached to their parents were better able to exhibit responsiveness and trust towards others.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of this research showed that there is a positive and significant role of secure parental attachment towards adolescent prosocial behavior. This finding is in accordance with the initial hypothesis; thus, the hypothesis of the study is accepted. The result suggests that if there is an increase in secure parental attachment, there will be an equivalent increase in prosocial behavior and vice versa.

The researcher also provides several theoretical suggestions for future research with similar topics. First, it is recommended to add moderating or mediating variables to see other variables that play a role in the research scheme, such as empathy or self-regulation. Second, future researchers are advised to expand sample distribution, not only limited to two regions, so that the research has more samples that can represent the research variables. Third, researchers can incorporate peer attachment as a research variable to obtain a comparison between which attachment to which figure plays a greater role. Fourth, future researchers can try research in a longitudinal form to find out whether there is an increase or decrease in the same sample after some time.

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