

## ANXIOUS-PREOCCUPIED ATTACHMENT TO FATHER: DOES PERMISSIVE PARENTING CONTRIBUTED?

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### Abstract

Parents nowadays tend to liberate their children more in everything. This happened because parents –especially fathers, spend more time working, so in the end children get less attention. These actions that the parent takes are related to the use of permissive parenting. Children with low attention level (permissive parenting) from their fathers are predicting to have an insecure attachment. Anxious-preoccupied attachment is one type of insecure attachments where the people often feel emotional hunger, instead of feeling real love or trust. To that end, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between permissive parenting and anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers among adolescents in Pidie-Aceh, Indonesia. This study used a purposive sampling technique with a total sample of 200 teenagers. Data collection techniques were performed by using permissive parenting scale and anxious-preoccupied attachment to father scale. The Pearson correlation test results showed that permissive parenting was positively related to anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers ( $r$  count = 0.122;  $p$  = 0.042). The analysis proved that permissive parenting was significantly related to adolescents' attachment to their fathers. This suggested that parenting styles are a strong predictor for attachment, where permissive parenting had a vulnerability impact in creating an insecure attachment with adolescents.

**Keywords** : Permissive Parenting, Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment, Father & Adolescent.

### Abstrak

Orang tua saat ini cenderung lebih membebaskan anaknya dalam melakukan segala hal. Hal ini terjadi karena orang tua –khususnya ayah, lebih banyak menghabiskan waktu untuk bekerja sehingga pada akhirnya anak kurang mendapat perhatian. Tindakan yang dilakukan oleh orang tua tersebut terkait dengan penerapan pola asuh permisif. Anak-anak dengan tingkat perhatian yang rendah dari ayahnya diperkirakan akan memiliki kelekatan yang tidak aman. Kelekatan cemas-terpreokupasi adalah salah satu jenis kelekatan yang tidak aman dimana biasanya seseorang sering merasa lapar secara emosional. Untuk itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara pola asuh permisif dengan keterikatan cemas-terpreokupasi terhadap ayah pada remaja di Kabupaten Pidie-Aceh, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik sampling purposif dengan jumlah sampel sebanyak 200 remaja. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan skala pola asuh permisif dan skala kelekatan cemas-terpreokupasi terhadap ayah. Hasil uji korelasi

Pearson menunjukkan bahwa pola asuh permisif berhubungan positif dengan kelekatan cemas-terpreokupasi terhadap ayah ( $r$  hitung = 0,122;  $p$  = 0,042). Analisis tersebut membuktikan bahwa pola asuh permisif secara signifikan berkaitan dengan kelekatan cemas-terpreokupasi pada remaja terhadap ayah mereka. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa gaya pengasuhan merupakan prediktor kuat terhadap kelekatan, dimana pola asuh permisif sangat rentan dalam menciptakan kelekatan yang tidak aman pada remaja.

**Kata Kunci** : Pola Asuh Permisif; Kelekatan Cemas-Terpreokupasi; Ayah & Remaja.

## **A. Introduction**

Adolescence is a period of significant changes in attachment relations (Pace, Di Folco, & Guerriero, 2018; Theisen, Fraley, Hankin, Young, & Chopik, 2018). In adolescence, the relationship between parents and teenagers creates mutual dependence that lasts for a long time (de Vries, Hovee, Stams, & Asscher, 2016). Interaction with parents is formed through their cognitive and behavior since they were children, which then preparing them to interact with other people outside the family (Oldfield, Humphrey, & Hebron, 2016; Koehn & Kerns, 2018). Besides, this bond of warm, deep, and quality relationships is able to help adolescents in dealing with the changes that occur within themselves (Jones et al., 2018).

Traditionally, in a complete family a mother has a role as primary caregiver and father as the breadwinner (Duncan, Schmitt, & Vandell, 2019). The culture in Asia, including Indonesia, strictly separates the role of fathers and mothers inside and outside the home (Wagani, 2018). Fathers are more outside to make a living and are responsible as the head of the family, while the mothers are at home to take care of the family. Simonelli, Parolin, Sacchi, De Palo, and Vieno (2016) stated that the role of fathers is often identical as someone who looks after and protects the family to feel safe and comfortable. Along with changes that occur in society, the father is an important figure in the development of children (Gordon, 2016; Meuwissen & Carlson, 2018), especially when the adolescents are within the family.

Teenagers who are securely attached to fathers have a very high ability to empathize, and are able to make adjustments (Stern & Cassidy, 2018). This attachment can be used as a predictor for adolescents in establishing relationships with peers or relationships that will be established later with others (Jones et al., 2018). Lack of attachment to fathers in adolescent boys results in blurring of masculinity traits, where in adolescent girls result in loosening of sexual activity (van Polanen, Colonnaesi, Fukkink, & Tavecchio, 2017;

Fernandes et al., 2018). Yoder, Leibowitz, and Peterson (2018) added that the lack of attachment to the father is a driving factor for children to commit crime.

Attachment is one component in the relationship between parent and child, which is formed from parenting styles (Ebrahimi, Amiri, Mohamadlou, & Rezapur, 2017). Lomanowska, Boivin, Hertzman, and Fleming (2017) described parenting as an interaction between children and parents during parenting activities, where each style tends to have a different effect on the child's personality. Safdar and Zahrah (2016) stated that parents with inappropriate parenting style foster an insecure attachment and it may decrease the quality of care itself.

In fact, parents nowadays tend to liberate their children more in everything. That is because parents –especially fathers, spend more time working, so in the end children get less attention (Kim, 2020). These actions that the parent takes are related to the use of permissive parenting. Maccoby and Martin (in Santrock, 2002) stated that permissive parenting is a parenting style in which parents are not very involved in the child's life, this type of parenting is associated with children's social incompetence, especially lack of self-control. This permissive parenting style gives the child the widest possible freedom, whatever the child does will not be prohibited by his parents. Parents do not interfere with everything their children do, this makes children free to act uncontrollably and tend to misbehave (Hinnant, Erath, Tu, & El-Sheikh, 2016). They only fulfill material needs and give full freedom to children without any restrictions and regulations in the family.

Children with low attention level (permissive parenting) from their fathers are predicting to have an insecure attachment (Ching & Tak, 2017; Branjerdporn, Meredith, Strong, & Green, 2019). Anxious-preoccupied attachment is one type of insecure attachments where the people often feel emotional hunger, instead of feeling real love or trust (Ching & Tak, 2017). This happened because their early attachment needs were unsatisfied or inconsistently satisfied, they crave intimacy but tend to feel doubtful about their own worth, making it harder for them to trust that they are loved and cared for. At the extremes, and with a more secure or dismissive partner, they are viewed as “needy” or “clingy,” and can drive others away by their demands for attention (Cramer, 2019).

Based on the description above, this paper aimed to examine the relationship between permissive parenting and anxious-preoccupied attachment with fathers among adolescents. The hypothesis was that permissive parenting is positively and significantly related to adolescents’ anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers.

**Methods**

Respondents recruited for this study were 200 adolescents, they were spread around Pidie district, Aceh Province. In order to measure permissive parenting and anxious-preoccupied attachment to father, two different scales were used. The permissive parenting scale was developed based on the theory from Baumrind (1967) which consisted of 18 items (12 favorable items and 6 unfavorable items) with a reliability of 0.823. While anxious-preoccupied attachment to father scale was developed based on the theory from Bartholomew and Horowitz (in Baron & Bryne, 2005) which had 17 items (10 items were favorable and 7 items were unfavorable) with a reliability of 0.642. Both scale used a Likert scaling model. After all data from both scales were obtained, then Pearson Correlation analysis was performed as a hypothesis test through the SPSS for Windows version 20.0. This was implemented to test the relationship between permissive parenting and anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers.

**B. Discussion**

The table 1 below is presented in order to describe a general picture of permissive parenting and anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers among adolescents in Pidie.

**Table 1.**

**Description of Permissive Parenting and Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment to Fathers**

| Variable                       | Hypothetical Data |     |      |     | Empirical Data |     |       |      |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----|------|-----|----------------|-----|-------|------|
|                                | max               | min | ean  | D   | max            | min | ean   | D    |
| Permissive Parenting           | 72                | 18  | 45   | 9   | 66             | 18  | 34.75 | 7.43 |
| Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment | 68                | 17  | 42.5 | 9.5 | 66             | 17  | 42.5  | 9.57 |

Based on the statistical analysis, hypothetical data showed that permissive parenting had a minimum number of answer (Xmin) of 18, a maximum answer (Xmax) of 72, a mean value of 45, and a standard deviation (SD) of 9, where empirically, the minimum answer (Xmin) was 18, the maximum answer (Xmax) was 66, the mean value was 34.75, and standard deviation (SD) was 7.43.

Furthermore, from statistical analysis, it was found that hypothetical data of anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers, were: a minimum number of answer (Xmin) was 17, a maximum answer (Xmax) was 68, a mean value was 42.5, and a standard deviation (SD)

was 8.5, where empirically, the minimum answer ( $X_{min}$ ) was 19, the maximum answer ( $X_{max}$ ) was 54, the mean value was 39.27, and standard deviation (SD) was 5.57.

After obtaining the results from empirical analysis, the categories of each variable then could be set, as follows.

**Table 2.**  
**Categorization of Permissive Parenting and Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment to Fathers**

| Cate<br>gory                                 | Formula  | Interval         | Freque<br>ncy<br>(n) | Percent<br>age<br>(%) |
|--|--|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Permissive Parenting                      |  |                  |                      |                       |
| Low  | $X < M - 1,0 \text{ SD}$                         | $X < 27$         | 29                   | 14.5                  |
| Midd<br>le                                   | $M - 1,0 \text{ SD} \leq X < M + 1,0 \text{ SD}$ | $27 \leq X < 42$ | 137                  | 68.5                  |
| High   | $M + 1,0 \text{ SD} \leq X$                      | $42 \leq X$      | 34                   | 17.0                  |
| 2. Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment to Fathers |  |                  |                      |                       |
| Low  | $X < M - 1,0 \text{ SD}$                         | $X < 34$         | 33                   | 16.5                  |
| Midd<br>le                                   | $M - 1,0 \text{ SD} \leq X < M + 1,0 \text{ SD}$ | $34 \leq X < 45$ | 136                  | 68.0                  |
| High   | $M + 1,0 \text{ SD} \leq X$                      | $45 \leq X$      | 31                   | 15.5                  |

Based on the table above, it could be seen that as many as 14.5% (29 people) had a low permissive parenting category, 68.5% (137 people) had a moderate permissive parenting category, and 17.0% (34 people) had a high permissive parenting category. In addition, table above also described that as many as 16.5% (33 people) had a low category of anxious-preoccupied attachment to father, 68.0% (136 people) had a category of moderate anxious-preoccupied attachment to father, and 15.5% (31 people) have a category of high anxious-preoccupied attachment to father.

Next, before the hypothesis test was carried out, the test for the normality and linearity were first performed as the prerequisite tests. Based on the results of normality test, the data distribution of permissive parenting was normal K-S  $Z = 0,966$ , with  $p = 0.308$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). Likewise with the anxious-preoccupied attachment to father, the data is also normally distributed K-S  $Z = 1,232$ , with  $p = 0.096$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). Because these variables were normally distributed, the results of the study could be generalized to the study population. Furthermore, based on the results of the F deviation from linearity, obtained  $F = 1,416$  with

$p = 0.080$  ( $p > 0.05$ ), it could be concluded that there was a linear relationship between permissive parenting and anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers among adolescents.

After the fulfillment of the two prerequisites above, the next step was to test the hypothesis using Pearson correlation analysis. Based on the analysis, it was found that correlation coefficient between permissive parenting and anxious-preoccupied attachment to father was 0.122 with  $p = 0.042$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). The correlation coefficient obtained was positive, so it could be interpreted that permissive parenting was positively and significantly related to anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers among adolescents (hypothesis accepted).

The results of data analysis signified that the hypothesis in this study was accepted. The relationship between permissive parenting and anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers proved to be significant. The results showed that permissive parenting was positively related to anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers ( $r$  count = 0.122;  $p = 0.042$ ).

Parents with permissive parenting style actually feel they don't care and tend to give their children opportunities and broad freedom. This parenting style is characterized by the freedom given for children to behave according to their own wishes (Wischerth, Mulvaney, Brackett, & Perkins, 2016). Children do not know whether their behavior is right or wrong because parents never justify or blame their children. As a result, children behave according to their own desires, whether it is in accordance with societal norms or not (Barton & Hirsch, 2016).

As aforementioned, it could be said that permissive parenting parents allow their children to do anything. Parents free their children to behave according to their own wants. They have warmth and accept what it is, but their warmth tends to indulge (Jinnah & Stoneman, 2016; Cui, et al., 2019). Meanwhile, accepting what is will tends to give freedom to children to do everything. The permissive parenting style of parents is too lenient, helpless, and gives limitless freedom to children without any norms that must be followed (Barton & Hirsch, 2016). This might be happened because parents are very affectionate (over affection) towards children or parents are less knowledgeable (Asmat, Ali, & Shah, 2017). The personal traits of a permissive child are usually aggressive, unable to cooperate with others, difficult to adapt, emotionally less stable, and always suspicious (Tu, Elmore-Staton, Buckhalt, & El-Sheikh, 2018). As a result, children behave according to their own desires, whether it is in accordance with societal norms or not.

Besides those negative traits, permissive parenting also affects the attachment style between parents and their children (Ebrahimi, et al., 2017). According to Santrock (2002), attachment with parents during adolescence can act as an adaptive function that provides a solid foundation on which adolescents can explore and master a wider environment and

larger social world in a psychologically healthy way. Adolescents who have a secure attachment style have higher self-esteem than those with anxious attachment (Kawamoto, 2020). Adolescents with a secure attachment style emphasizes the importance of warm relationship in the development of a positive, coherent, and well-organized self-structure (Kocayörük & Şimşek, 2016). Seddigh-Arfaei and Najaryan (2016) said that people with a secure attachment style will be more confident and assertive in social situation. They also will develop a responsive, friendly, and loving attitude towards their social environment (Koehn & Kerns, 2018).

The attachment fostered by the caregivers (fathers) and their children is a provision that will be brought to their social world through social interaction. This will also be an ability for them to adapt with their social environment (Neppl, et al., 2019). Good relationship with caregivers will make a child have secure attachment and develop good interaction with other people, which leads them to have a good social adjustment (Fatmawati, 2020). Conversely, if the relationship formed tends to develop insecure attachments, it will arise the discomfort of having closeness and tend to be disinterested in building social relationship with other people (Ching & Tak, 2017; Branjerdporn, et al., 2019). Anxious-preoccupied attachment style, for example. A teenager with this attachment style has a negative view about himself, but he expects positive view from others. Anxious-preoccupied adolescents seek closeness in relationships, but also experience anxiety and shame because they feel unworthy of receiving love from others (Ching & Tak, 2017).

The finding from this research was relevant with some previous studies. Hinnant, et al. (2016) stated that parents who applied permissive parenting could foster an insecure attachment. Kim (2020) also added that adolescents with preoccupied attachment need closeness to other people because they are very afraid of being neglected. The feeling of fear of abandonment is thought to be due to the attitude of the parents (father) being less sympathetic and caring.

In another study conducted by Cramer (2019) mentioned that parenting styles became a strong predictor for attachment, where permissive parenting had a vulnerability impact in creating an insecure attachment with adolescents. Besides, Voestermans et al. (2020) also said that attachment malfunctioning is considered as psychological determinants of personality disorders (PDs).

Based on the above research findings, this study provided several implications, namely: (1) Parent attachment to children needs to be formed as early as possible through the implementation of appropriate parenting style; (2) Lack of flexibility of most fathers can result in maladaptive behavior in adolescents, including juvenile delinquency, drug abuse,

free sex, or depression; and (3) Appropriate parenting can be obtained by understanding parents respective roles in building a family.

Nevertheless, this study also had some limitations. Among them was the use of variables that only consisted of parenting and attachment. In addition, the number of respondents recruited did not vary so the results obtained were not so comprehensive. Lastly, the research method only used quantitative research techniques so that the dynamics of parenting and attachment to fathers were not reflected in detail.

### **C. Conclusions**

Based on the analysis, the results showed that permissive parenting was positively related to anxious-preoccupied attachment to fathers among adolescents ( $r$  count = 0.122;  $p$  = 0.000). Through the discussions above, the authors provided several suggestions. In order to enrich the results and also the analysis, it is better to add qualitative data. In addition, increasing the number of respondents can also be done to improve the validity and reliability of research results.

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