

The Relationship between Parental Bonding and Emotional Intelligence: A Correlational Study among Indonesian Adolescents

Muhammad Wahyuda^{1*}, Winda Kristina², Yulina Eva Riany³

^{1,2}Family Science and Child Development Study Programme, Faculty of Human Ecology, IPB University

³Centre for Gender and Child Studies IPB University

Corresponding author:

*Muhammad Wahyuda

muhammadwahyuda@apps.ipb.ac.id

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Abstract

Background: Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by heightened emotional reactivity and increasing social demands, making emotional intelligence (EI) a critical factor for psychological and interpersonal adjustment. Parental bonding, defined through dimensions of care and overprotection, plays a central role in shaping adolescents' emotional development. **Objective:** This study aimed to examine the association between parental bonding and emotional intelligence among Indonesian adolescents. **Method:** A quantitative correlational design was used involving 100 adolescents aged 13–21 years selected through voluntary sampling. Data were collected using the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) and the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form (TEIQue–SF), both demonstrating strong reliability. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted after meeting assumptions of normality and linearity. **Results:** The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between parental bonding and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.438$, $p < 0.001$). **Conclusion:** Supportive and warm parental bonding is associated with higher emotional intelligence in adolescents, highlighting the importance of family-based strategies to strengthen socio-emotional competencies during this developmental period.

Keywords: Adolescents; emotional intelligence; parental bonding.

Abstrak

Latar belakang: Masa remaja merupakan fase perkembangan yang ditandai oleh peningkatan sensitivitas emosional dan tuntutan sosial yang semakin kompleks, sehingga kecerdasan emosional menjadi komponen penting dalam penyesuaian psikologis dan sosial. *Parental bonding*, yang mencakup dimensi kehangatan dan kontrol, dipahami sebagai faktor keluarga yang berperan signifikan dalam membentuk kompetensi emosional remaja. **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara *parental bonding* dengan kecerdasan emosional pada remaja Indonesia. **Metode:** Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional, melibatkan 100 remaja berusia 13–21 tahun melalui teknik *voluntary sampling*. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah Parental Bonding Instrument dan Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form. Analisis korelasi Pearson dilakukan setelah uji asumsi normalitas dan linearitas terpenuhi. **Hasil:** Penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif dan signifikan antara *parental bonding* dan kecerdasan emosional ($r = 0,438$; $p < 0,001$). **Kesimpulan:** *Parental bonding* yang hangat dan suportif berhubungan dengan tingkat kecerdasan emosional remaja. Namun, mengingat desain korelasional dan penggunaan *voluntary sampling*, hasil penelitian perlu diinterpretasikan secara hati-hati. Terbukti memiliki hubungan signifikan dalam meningkatkan kecerdasan emosional remaja, sehingga intervensi berbasis keluarga menjadi relevan untuk penguatan kompetensi sosial-emosional.

Kata Kunci: Kecerdasan emosional; Parental bonding; Remaja

Introduction

Adolescence is a complex developmental phase marked by rapid biological, cognitive, and social changes, creating a maturational imbalance that heightens emotional reactivity and vulnerability. Navigating growing demands for autonomy, social evaluation, and increasingly complex peer dynamics requires robust socio-emotional competence. Emotional Intelligence (EI), defined as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and express emotions in oneself and others (Davis & Humphrey, 2012), is a crucial capacity. High EI is consistently associated with better psychological well-being, reduced stress, and greater social competence in adolescents (Abdollahi et al., 2015; Mónaco et al., 2019; Sarrionandia et al., 2018).

Alongside internal developmental processes, modern adolescents face increasing external pressures from academic demands and intensified digital device use, which can exacerbate socio-emotional vulnerabilities (Fontana et al., 2022; Goel & Goel, 2024). Within this context, the parent-child relationship remains the primary environment for shaping emotional competence. The concept of Parental Bonding, often operationalized by dimensions of care/warmth and overprotection/control (Kullberg et al., 2020), plays a central role. Empirical evidence suggests that supportive parenting (high care) promotes better emotion regulation and self-confidence, while controlling or overprotective parenting is linked to higher risks of anxiety and depression (Avagianou & Zafiropoulou, 2008; Moretti & Peled, 2004). Thus, the quality of parental bonding is theoretically associated with adolescents' emotional development and subsequent EI.

Despite the theoretical link, empirical findings on the direct relationship between parental bonding and adolescents' emotional intelligence remain mixed, with some studies reporting a direct association (Boullion et al., 2023) and others suggesting an indirect, mediated influence (Schwartz et al., 2018). This heterogeneity highlights the need to consider contextual factors, including the cultural interpretations of parenting styles and varying developmental dynamics. Specifically, the limited research using standardized instruments to examine this relationship within the Indonesian cultural context makes it difficult to generalize existing international findings, including those from neighboring Asian contexts (MacCann et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020). Therefore, this study aims to address this empirical gap by analyzing the relationship between parental bonding and emotional intelligence among Indonesian adolescents. This research is expected to contribute empirical evidence to the literature on socio-emotional development in this specific cultural setting.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design, as it aimed to examine the relationship between parental bonding and emotional intelligence among adolescents. A correlational design was selected to identify the extent to which the two variables are associated without manipulating them, making it suitable for a research objective focused on mapping naturally occurring relationships within a population. The study was conducted in November 2025 in Indonesia, taking into account the relevance of parental bonding and emotional intelligence to the current developmental context of Indonesian adolescents. All procedures adhered to ethical standards for human subjects research. Given the nature of this study as a mini-research/preliminary study and its low-risk nature. However, all participants were treated in accordance with the ethical principles of research, Informed Consent was obtained from every adolescent who voluntarily agreed to participate, and they were informed about the study's purpose, the confidentiality of their data, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The research protocol was internally reviewed by the supervisor to ensure ethical compliance.

Participant

The population of this study comprised adolescents aged 13–21 years, referring to the developmental range of adolescence described in the developmental literature (Santrock, 2013). A total of 100 participants were recruited using voluntary sampling, a non-probability technique that allows individuals to decide independently whether to participate. While voluntary sampling facilitated efficient recruitment, it introduces potential self-selection bias and limits external validity. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted cautiously and cannot be generalized to the broader and highly diverse population of Indonesian adolescents. The age range of 13–21 years spans early adolescence to emerging adulthood. Due to sample size constraints, subgroup analyses were not conducted. Consequently, potential developmental differences in the parental bonding–emotional intelligence relationship were not examined within this study.

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1 to determine the minimum required sample size for detecting a medium effect size ($r = .30$) at $\alpha = .05$ with statistical power $(1 - \beta) = .80$. The

analysis indicated a minimum sample of 84 participants. Therefore, the final sample of 100 adolescents exceeded the minimum requirement and was considered statistically adequate.

Data Measurement

Data were collected using two standardized psychological instruments that have been widely applied in research across various countries, namely the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form (TEIQue-SF) and the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI). The TEIQue-SF, developed by Petrides (2009), consists of 30 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale and covers four dimensions of emotional intelligence: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability. The PBI, developed by Parker, consists of 25 items measuring the dimensions of care/warmth and overprotection/control using a 4-point Likert scale (Parker et al., 1979).

The Indonesian version of the TEIQue-SF was utilized, following the adaptation and validation procedures conducted by Febriana et al (2021). This adaptation involved a rigorous process, including forward and back-translation by independent bilingual experts to ensure conceptual equivalence, followed by a validation study that confirmed the factor structure and psychometric properties for the Indonesian context with reliability 0.981. Similarly, the Indonesian PBI version was also utilized, based on existing validated adaptations by Putri (2021). The adaptation process in prior validation studies involved forward translation and back-translation by independent bilingual experts to ensure conceptual equivalence. Previous research reported acceptable construct validity and internal consistency within Indonesian samples which also followed a translation-back-translation protocol and demonstrated satisfactory evidence of reliability and validity in a local setting.

For the validity testing phase, item validity criteria were based on item-total correlation values with a cut-off of 0.30 as an indicator of adequate discriminative power in line with established guidelines (Saifuddin, 2020). A threshold of 0.20 was used during the exploratory stage to retain items that remained theoretically relevant prior to further analyses (Creswell, 1999; Saifuddin, 2020). After validity and reliability tests indicated satisfactory values, the instruments were used for the main data collection. All responses were compiled in digital format to facilitate subsequent statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The analysis began with assumption testing, including a normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test with Asymp. Sig > 0.05 taken as an indication of normal distribution, and a linearity test based on Linearity significance values < 0.05 as a prerequisite for a linear relationship between variables. Descriptive analyses were conducted to describe participants' characteristics and the score distributions of each research variable. Hypothesis testing was carried out using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) to determine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between parental bonding and adolescents' emotional intelligence. All analyses were conducted quantitatively to ensure objectivity, measurability, and replicability of the findings.

Results

Demographic Data

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of participants to provide a comprehensive overview of the respondent profile involved in this study. This information serves to assess the diversity of individual characteristics that may influence variations in experiences of parental bonding and emotional intelligence. The demographic variables include age, gender, educational level, region of residence, and living arrangement.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Participant Data	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	13-15 years	24	24%
	16-18 years	40	40%
	19-21 years	36	36%
	Total	100	100%
Gender	Male	33	33%
	Female	67	67%
	Total	100	100%
Educational Level	Junior High School (SMP/MTs)	24	24%
	Senior High School (SMA/SMK/MA)	10	10%
	Bachelor's Degree (S1)	66	66%
	Total	100	100%

Region	Kalimantan	34	34%
	East Java	50	50%
	West Java	3	3%
	Central Java	1	1%
	Jakarta and Banten	8	8%
	Sumatra	4	4%
	Total	100	100%
Living Arrangement	Living with both parents	45	44%
	Living with mother only	7	7%
	Living with father only	1	1%
	Living with a guardian (grandparent/uncle/aunt, etc.)	12	12%
	Other (living independently)	35	35%
	Total	100	100%

The demographic distribution is presented in Table 1, showing that the sample is primarily composed of mid-adolescents (16–18 years) and is predominantly female. The majority of respondents possess a bachelor's degree, indicating a sample of late adolescents transitioning to early adulthood. Data were collected from diverse geographic regions and living arrangements, reflecting heterogeneity in the family contexts that may influence parental bonding and emotional intelligence experiences.

Reliability Analysis

To ensure the instruments' suitability for the main analysis, reliability testing was conducted. Table 2 presents the internal consistency of both measurement scales.

Table 2. Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Reliability (α)
Parental Bonding	0.780
Emotional Intelligence	0.897

Table 2 presents the internal consistency of both measurement scales. The Cronbach's alpha values indicate that the Parental Bonding instrument has good reliability ($\alpha > 0.780$), and the Emotional Intelligence scale (TEIQue-SF) demonstrates very high reliability ($\alpha > 0.897$). Both instruments meet the statistical requirements for use in subsequent analyses.

Normality Test Results

Prior to correlation analysis, the assumption of normality was examined using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test.

Table 3. Kolmogorov–Smirnov Normality Test

Variable	Sig.
Parental Bonding	0.180
Emotional Intelligence	0.200

As shown in Table 3, the significance values for both variables were above 0.05, indicating that the data are normally distributed. This finding satisfies the assumption for conducting the parametric Pearson's correlation test.

Linearity Test Results

A linearity test was conducted to ensure that the relationship between parental bonding and emotional intelligence is linear, as required for Pearson's correlation analysis. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Linearity Test

Variable	F	Sig.
Parental Bonding → Emotional Intelligence	1.738	0.000

The very small significance value ($p < 0.001$) indicates that the relationship between the variables is linear. Meeting the linearity assumption is crucial because it ensures the validity of applying Pearson's correlation in the subsequent hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing: Correlation between Parental Bonding and Emotional Intelligence

To examine the relationship between the study variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed. Table 5 presents the correlation coefficient (r) and level of significance.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Coefficient Test

Variable	r	Sig.
Parental Bonding → Emotional Intelligence	0.438	0.000

The results in Table 5 show a positive and significant relationship between parental bonding and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.438$, $p < 0.001$). The correlation coefficient falls within the moderate range, indicating that the quality of the emotional bond between parents and adolescents makes a meaningful contribution to the variability of emotional intelligence. These findings suggest that warmer, more consistent, and more supportive parental bonding is statistically associated with higher emotional competence among adolescents. Thus, the results reinforce a linear pattern of association and highlight the relevance of parental bonding as an associated factor in the development of adolescents' emotional competence.

Discussion

This study identified a positive and significant association between parental bonding and emotional intelligence among Indonesian adolescents. While the relationship is statistically significant ($r = 0.438$; $p < 0.001$) between parental bonding and emotional intelligence among Indonesian adolescents. According to correlation strength criteria, this value falls within the moderate range. Rather than directly determining emotional outcomes, this suggests that adolescents who perceive greater warmth, support, and appropriate forms of control from their parents tend to have a foundational context associated with higher levels of emotional intelligence compared to those who experience lower levels of familial bonding (Karimi et al., 2024).

Critically interpreting this moderate association requires acknowledging the developmental stage of the sample. The majority of the respondents are in late adolescence (16–21 years old), a period characterized by a normative shift in attachment hierarchies from parents to peers. While attachment theory and emotion socialization models highlight parents as the primary agents for modeling emotional regulation (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2018), a moderate correlation accurately reflects that the parental role, though still salient, is no longer the sole or primary regulator of the adolescent's emotional world. The internalized working models of emotions established through early parental bonding likely act as a supportive baseline, enabling adolescents to navigate increasingly complex social evaluations independently (Kullberg et al., 2020).

From a theoretical standpoint, the association between parental bonding and emotional intelligence can be explained through two main frameworks: attachment theory and emotion socialization. Attachment theory posits that sensitive and responsive caregiving fosters secure internal working models, which in turn facilitate the ability to understand one's own and others' feelings, regulate emotions in interpersonal situations, and develop adaptive coping styles (Hodges & Tizard, 1989; Moretti & Peled, 2004). Meanwhile, emotion socialization models emphasize that parents, through their meta-emotion philosophy, emotion coaching strategies, and responses to their children's emotional expressions, influence the development of emotional awareness and regulation skills (Brenning et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2018; Smorti et al., 2024). In this regard, adolescents raised in warm and supportive family environments are more likely to perceive emotions as experiences that can be understood and managed, thereby developing higher emotional intelligence. Conversely, caregiving characterized by rejection, excessive control, or emotional inconsistency may hinder emotional learning and contribute to lower emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, the findings must be analytically contextualized within the Indonesian cultural landscape. Indonesia is predominantly characterized by collectivist values, where familial harmony, filial piety, and interdependence are highly prioritized (Riany et al., 2017). High parental care is not only viewed as nurturing but also reinforces the cultural values of respect (*hormat*) and family interdependence, which can translate into better social and emotional adjustment. The strong correlation found here may therefore be amplified by the cultural significance placed on maintaining harmonious family relationships, where an emotionally intelligent adolescent is better equipped to navigate these high-stakes family dynamics. This is consistent with the view that the expression and impact of emotional intelligence can be moderated by cross-cultural factors (Miao et al., 2020). However, in Indonesian and broader Asian contexts, certain degrees of parental control and monitoring are frequently perceived by adolescents as expressions of warmth, care, and involvement rather than rejection (Trommsdorff & Rothbaum, 2008). This cultural nuance may explain why the parental bonding construct remains a robust correlate of emotional intelligence in this demographic. The way Indonesian adolescents interpret parental behaviors likely buffers potential negative impacts of control,

meaning that emotional intelligence is fostered within a framework of relational interdependence rather than strict individual autonomy.

Given the moderate nature of the correlation, it is evident that a substantial portion of the variance in adolescents' emotional intelligence is shaped by factors beyond parental bonding. This highlights the necessity of deeply considering alternative explanatory variables that vigorously influence emotional development during this transitional stage. For instance, peer relationships and romantic partnerships become central arenas for emotional learning and regulation, often exposing adolescents to dynamic emotional stressors that parents cannot directly mitigate (Estevez-Casellas et al., 2021). Additionally, the broader ecological context, including school climate, academic pressures, and individual temperamental traits, significantly contributes to emotional variability. In the contemporary context, exposure to digital environments and social media also plays an outsized role in shaping self-esteem and emotional reactivity, introducing socio-emotional vulnerabilities that operate independently of family bonding (Fontana et al., 2022; Yang, 2024).

Limitation

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional correlational design precludes any causal inferences regarding the relationship between parental bonding and emotional intelligence. Longitudinal studies are required to determine the true directionality of this association over time. Second, the study utilized a relatively small sample size recruited through voluntary sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader, highly diverse population of Indonesian adolescents. Third, the reliance on self-report measures for both parental bonding and emotional intelligence introduces the potential for common method bias and social desirability effects; adolescents' perceptions of parenting may differ from actual parental behaviors. Future research should consider employing multi-informant approaches, such as including parent or teacher reports, and incorporating other ecological variables (e.g., peer influence, school environment) to build a more comprehensive model of adolescent emotional development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings confirm a positive and significant association between supportive and warm parental bonding and higher trait emotional intelligence in Indonesian adolescents. This association highlights the theoretical relevance of family-based support in shaping socio-emotional competencies during this critical developmental period. Based on this correlational evidence, family strategies focusing on fostering parental warmth and open communication may be considered as relevant, yet non-causal, pathways for strengthening adolescent emotional skills. While parenting interventions and family-based psychoeducation may serve as supportive frameworks, they should be cautiously integrated into broader, multi-systemic approaches that also account for peer, school, and digital environments. Future research employing longitudinal designs is necessary to establish directional impacts on adolescent emotional intelligence.

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