

THE RELATION OF CHILD'S EMPATHY AND PARENTS' PREJUDICE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PARENTING STYLE

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ABSTRACT

This research presented the relationship between a child's empathy and parents' prejudice, which was mediated by parenting style. The purpose of this research was to determine whether parenting style could be a mediator between parents' prejudice and child's empathy and also what type of parenting style would be appropriate to increase empathy in children. The research respondents consisted of 233 parents who had children aged 6-8 years old and were measured using the Basic Empathy Scale-Parent Report (BES-PR), the Blatant Prejudice Scale, and the Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (PAQ-R). The data obtained were processed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression (Hayes process). The results show that parenting style can be a mediator between child's empathy and parents' prejudice. The parenting style that can increase empathy in children is authoritative parenting. It means that when parents have a low prejudice, they tend to apply authoritative parenting, and this has an effect on increasing empathy in children.

Keywords: child empathy, parents prejudice, parenting style

INTRODUCTION

Empathy is the core of morals where children are able to be more sensitive to what others feel, help others, and treat others well (Borba, 2001). Having empathy can foster prosocial behaviors (Cowell & Decety, 2015; Paulus, 2014), such as sincerely helping others (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Knafo-Noam, 2015). Prosocial behaviors can improve the ability of mental health and socio-emotional development in children (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). The transition period from early childhood to middle childhood is considered as the right time to develop children's prosocial behaviors as well as children's empathy. This is because at this period, children begin to have a wider social environment (Oliver & Pike, 2018; Daniel, Madigan, & Jenkins, 2016).

One recent research examines the ability of empathy in children; it shows that the younger they are given interventions regarding various emotions, the higher their understanding of various emotions, perspective taking, and having an empathy (Malti et al., 2016). There are two important elements of empathy, namely, cognitive and affective (Van Noorden et al., 2015). Cognitive trait means someone understands what others feel, while affective trait

means a person can feel what other people feel. Having empathy for others can make children understand about things that are right or wrong because they can acknowledge the emotional impact that others will feel when they are rude or behave negatively (Borba, 2001).

Based on current diagnostic, various criteria are classified as negative behaviors or disruptive behavior in children. Children with disruptive behavior disorders mostly have difficulty regulating their own emotions, tend to show excessive emotional arousal, and tend to have excessive sensitivity to social threats. On the other hand, children with disruptive behavior disorders may also have a low sense of sensitivity and tend not to be able to feel what other people feel, for example, they do not have guilt, empathy, and are not sensitive to someone's feelings. This attitude shows that children have no fear and are unable to understand the various emotions felt by others (Fanti et al., 2016; Frick et al., 2014).

One of the phenomena that occur associated with child disruptive behavior disorders and low empathy is bullying. The initiation of bullying and aggression towards someone is triggered by an intention to commit negative behavior towards others who are deemed to be inferior. The act of bullying happens because of the imbalance of

structural strength between the perpetrators and the victims. The imbalance of structural strength is not only limited to physical strength, but also psychological and social problems. The elements of imbalance are encouraged by perpetrators to intimidate victims physically (attacking), verbally (name calling), relational (social exclusion), and cyberbullying (social media) (Van Noorden et al., 2015). It is stated that cyberbullying can be defined as a form of bullying based on negative intentions, repetition, and power imbalances (Gladden et al., 2014). Bullying tends to have such low empathy or even has no empathy at all (Van Noorden et al., 2015). The emergence of behavioral problems in children can be due to extreme experiences related to emotional over-arousal or under-arousal in understanding various emotions (Johnson et al., 2017).

The ability to understand various emotions is related to having various skills in the individual. Those skills are being aware of one's emotions, understanding the emotions of others, having the knowledge of causes and effects of emotions, and understanding emotions that are felt by oneself. The development of these skills during early childhood allows children to communicate their feelings, acknowledge the role of emotions in social situations, and distinguish causal relationships between interpersonal and emotional (Tully, Donohue, & Garcia, 2015). Several studies identify emotions related variables, such as emotional regulation and empathy which can help children to build a relationship between individuals and adapt to the social environment around children (Llorca-Mestre et al., 2017). Children's social competence can be shown by how children are able to communicate and make connections with others, to be cooperative and adapt well to various social situations, to recognize a social situation around, and behave towards these social circumstances (Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016). Besides, there is research that proves to have an attitude of empathy and emotional regulation which are important factors related to psychological and social adaptation (Samper-García et al., 2015). The ability of children to learn social and emotions requires a consistent, predictable, and trusted environment (Hamre, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory has stated that the environment and the people around the child, along with the relationships or interrelationships with each other, can influence the learning process and the stage of child development (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). Parents play a role in helping children's cognitive and social development (Aunola et al., 2015). The child's ability to make the socio-emotional adjustment is very dependent on the relationship between the child and parents. Parents help children to label the types of emotions, explain children's emotions, and let children express their emotions. They are related to children's ability to understand emotions better and regulate their own emotions appropriately (Lamb & Lerner, 2015). In addition, the role of parents is critical in the period of psychological development of children from infants to adults (Grusec & Davidov, 2015).

Parents are important elements for a child (Mabuza, Thwala, & Okeke, 2014). Parent-child positivity is not only a driver of behavioral change but also a driver of interest when parent-child positivity plays a key moderating role for negativity (Browne et al., 2015; Jenkins, McGowan, & Knafo-Noam, 2016; Oliver, 2015). The warmth and response given by parents to children positively influence children's knowledge of emotions, whereas harsh parents will influence the child's low understanding of emotions

(Havighurst et al., 2015; Kujawa et al., 2014). This statement is supported by Spinrad and Gal (2018) who have said that the quality of the relationship between children and parents can have an impact on the high attitude of empathy in children. The results of research conducted by Meeusen (2014) show that parents' attitudes have an important role that greatly influences the social behavior of children.

One of those attitudes is parents' prejudice. Allport (1954) has emphasized that prejudice in children developed through a learning process that is strongly influenced by parents and there is conformity where parents unconsciously and unintentionally hold back their prejudices to children because they want their children to be like them. This is because parents have direct interaction with children in conveying their opinions, views, emotions, and ideas. In accordance with the social cognitive theory proposed by Bandura, parents are the role models for their children, so children learn things from their parents. Children capture parents' intentional and unintentional behavior. These whole learning processes make children imitate the behavior applied by their parents. The form of imitation carried out by children towards their parents influences their behavior in future social situations (Burdick, 2014). The parents' way in implementing their social skills in real practices may reflect the genetic makeup carried by them. This genetic makeup is passed on to children (Hastings et al., 2014 in Taylor, Eisenberg, & Spinrad, 2015).

Pirchio et al. (2018) have found that the higher the implicit prejudice the parents have, the higher the implicit prejudice of children. However, the explicit prejudice that parents have does not have a significant correlation with child prejudice, both implicit and explicit. Also, the results of the research conducted by Sinclair, Dunn, and Lowery (2005) have shown that parents' prejudice has an influence on children's explicit attitudes. However, the relationship is not significant between parents' prejudice and the implicit attitudes of children. Longitudinal research by Miklikowska (2016) has proved that parents' prejudice can predict children's attitudes. Furthermore, Odenweller and Harris (2018) can provide evidence that the messages conveyed in families, especially parents, play a major role in shaping prejudice in children. Parents' attitude is subconsciously implemented in their daily routine with their children. This daily routine with their children is called a parenting style.

Being a parent is deemed as an achievement for a responsible individual. This is because the parenting process involves various kinds of challenges that parents will undergo in educating children (Mackler et al., 2015). Some researches have stated that there is a relationship between parenting style and behavior that will be formed in children (Newton et al., 2014). Parenting can be explained in two components; they are parental demands and responses (Fletcher et al., 2008). Parental demands can be interpreted as the extent to which parents set guidelines for their children and how they apply discipline based on these guidelines. Parental responses are emotional characteristics of nurturing. Responsiveness continues to the extent to which parents support their children and meet the needs of their children. Based on the concept of demands and responses from parents, Baumrind (1971) has identified three types of parenting styles carried out by parents; authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive.

Authoritative parenting is the attitude of parents who has high attention and high level of discipline. Parents behave logically is by setting limits and demanding obedience from the children. However, on the other hand,

parents are also warm, accepting the child's point of view, and encouraging children to make decisions. This type of parents monitors and disciplines their children fairly while being very supportive at the same time.

Different from authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting is the attitude of parents, who have low attention and a high level of discipline. Parents behave in a way that they demand something from their children without being accompanied by a warm attitude towards their children. They expect their children always to obey the orders given without looking at the child's side. So, the attachment tends to be low, and children do not have the opportunity to express their opinions. Authoritarian parents set high standards and guidelines for children and require the children to obey them.

While permissive parenting is the attitude of parents, who have high attention and low levels of discipline; they tend to ignore established rules and decisions are in the children's hands. They give children high levels of freedom and do not resist their behavior, except when there are physical hazards involved. Permissive parenting shows the attitude of parents who are too tolerant of the behavior raised by children. They nurture and accept without having control over children's behavior. They have little or even no hope for their children (Bibi et al., 2013).

Various studies in the field of early childhood education show that different parenting style gives different implications to children. The concepts of Vygotsky and positive parenting in Diana Baumrind's type of authoritative parenting is considered very effective for raising children. The authoritative parenting style is a parenting style that combines warmth with strict control, respect for individuality, and independence. It can help children develop competencies that enable them to transition without experiencing many behavioral problems (Brooks, 2011). Numerous researchers have been making a research about the relationship of positive parenting with positive manners towards children (Hastings, Miller, & Troxel, 2015 in Pastorelli et al., 2016). The warmth, support, and affection given by parents can shape the pro-social attitude in children (Spinrad & Gal, 2018). This is because of the cooperative attitude exemplified by parents to children.

Recent research has examined how parenting style can affect children's social development (Ramos & Martínez, 2015; Ramírez-Lucas, Ferrando, & Gomez, 2015 in Llorca-Mestre et al., 2017). Research has stated that an important factor in children's social and emotional development is the establishment of warmth and loving relationships between children and parents (Garthe, Sullivan, & Kliever, 2015; Ramírez-Lucas, Ferrando, & Gomez, 2015 in Llorca-Mestre et al., 2017). Meanwhile, authoritarian parenting style tends to inhibit children from being able to express themselves and have less self-confidence (Zupančič, Podlesek, & Kavčič, 2004). Laurin et al. (2015) have found that parents who overly control children in the form of coercion and overprotection increase the risk of anxiety in children, both externally and internally.

Therefore, it can be seen that in many cases, different types of parenting have different effects on children's attitudes. At the moment, there are no researchers who have specifically raised variations in parenting style in relation to parents' prejudice and child's empathy. The research objective is to determine whether parenting style could be a mediator between parents' prejudice and child's empathy and also what type of parenting style would be appropriate to increase empathy in children. Based on the explanation,

researchers have hypothesized that parenting style can mediate the relationship between parents' prejudice and child's empathy.

Meanwhile, there are theoretical and practical benefits of this research. The theoretical benefit of this research is that this is uncovering one of many factors effecting the child's empathy. One of the factors that is able to influence a child's empathy is parents' prejudice. On the other hand, the practical benefit of this research is to give information in order to accelerate the development of a child's empathy that needs to take parents' prejudice into account.

METHODS

Participants in this research involve parents of children aged 6-8 years old, totaling 233 people. The procedure to recruit participants comprises creating a proposal containing aspects related to the research such as background, purpose, and the benefit of the research. Afterward, the researchers give the proposal to a number of selected schools within South Jakarta area. This proposal is used as a tool to ask for each school's permission and approval in partnering up for the recruitment of parents who have at least one child aged 6-8 years old.

The researchers work together with elementary schools to collect data on parents using a booklet containing questions related to the variables used. Once the permission is granted, the booklet distributes along with informed consent to the participants where they are instructed to fill out personal information and sign the mentioned informed consent. It means that these parents agree to participate in this research. The booklet contains an explanation of the research, the respondents' personal data, and instructions for filling out the booklet. The researchers use convenient sampling as a technique to collect data from participants. Convenient sampling is a type of non-random sampling data collection where the researcher is selecting their participants based on the pre-determined criteria (Elfil & Negida, 2017).

The researchers' back-translates on the measurement tool are being used in this research into the Indonesian language. After having done the back-translate, this measurement tool will have to go through expert judgment by the people who are expert in psychology, education, and child. After obtaining the feedback from the expert judgment and revise the measurement tool, the next step is to perform the readability test on the parents with a child aged 6-8 years old. Finally, the researchers do validity and reliability test on this tool. The elaboration of the validity and reliability test performed on each measurement tool used in this research are the child's empathy, parents' prejudice, and parenting style.

The first measurement tool is the child's empathy. The attitude of empathy in children is measured using the Basic Empathy Scale-Parent Report (BES-PR), which is filled by parents (Sánchez-Pérez et al., 2014). This measuring instrument consists of two dimensions, namely cognitive empathy, and affective empathy. The researchers translate the questions into Indonesian language and use seven items that are adapted into a shorter form of the measure. The seven items in this measuring instrument are valid with a correlation value between 0,20 - 0,45, and Cronbach Alpha value of 0,57. Measurements on BES-PR measuring instruments use 6 Likert scales ranging from STS (strongly disagree) to SS (strongly agree). The participant is

asked to choose one option that is considered to be the most suitable for them from the six choices provided.

The second measurement tool is parents' prejudice. It is measured by using the Blatant Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), which has been adapted to the context of the Indonesian culture. The measuring instrument consists of two sub-dimensions, namely Threat and Rejection and Anti-intimacy with a total of six items. The six items on this measuring instrument are valid with a correlation value between 0,20 – 0,54. The Cronbach Alpha value in this instrument is equal to 0,65. Measurements using six Likert scales are ranging from STS (strongly disagree) to SS (strongly agree). The participant is asked to choose one option that is considered to be the most suitable for them from the six choices provided.

The third measurement tool is parenting style. It is measured using the Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (PAQ-R) measurement tool (Reitman et al., 2002). This measuring instrument consists of three dimensions, namely Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive that each dimension consists of seven questions. The total number of questions in this instrument is 21 questions. Adaptation to this measuring instrument is done by translating the questions into the Indonesian language. On the authoritarian sub-scale, seven items on this measuring instrument are valid with a correlation value between 0,40 – 0,53 and Cronbach Alpha value of 0,73. On the authoritative sub-scale, seven items on this measuring instrument are valid with a correlation value between 0,26 – 0,44 and Cronbach Alpha value of 0,65. On the permissive sub-scale, six out of seven items on this measuring instrument are valid with a correlation value between 0,25 – 0,38 and Cronbach Alpha value of 0,57. Measurements using six Likert scales are ranging from STS (strongly disagree) to SS (strongly agree). The participant is asked to choose one option that is considered to be the most suitable for them from the six choices provided.

The analytical method in this research uses the Pearson correlation and multiple regression (Hayes process). The Pearson correlation is used to examine the relationship between a child's empathy and parents' prejudice. Multiple regression is used to examine the role of parenting style in mediating the influence of a child's empathy and parents' prejudice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The total scores of the variables and related dimensions (minimum, maximum, and mean scores, and standard deviations) are shown in Table 1. According to Table 1, child's empathy is significantly correlated with parents' prejudice ($r = -0,22, p = 0,00$); authoritative parenting ($r = 0,26, p = 0,00$); permissive parenting ($r = -0,23, p = 0,00$) and not significantly correlated with authoritarian parenting ($r = -0,11, p = 0,09$). Child's empathy is negatively correlated with parents' prejudice and permissive parenting, which means that the higher the parents' prejudice and permissive parenting, the lower the empathy for children. While the child's empathy is positively correlated with authoritative parenting, which means that the higher the authoritative parenting style, the higher the empathy for children.

Parents' prejudice is significantly correlated with authoritative parenting ($r = -0,25, p = 0,00$) and authoritarian parenting ($r = 0,13, p = 0,05$) and does not correlate significantly with permissive parenting ($r = 0,04, p = 0,52$). Parents' prejudice is positively correlated with authoritarian parenting, which means that as high as parents' prejudice, the authoritarian parenting style is higher. While parents' prejudice is negatively correlated with authoritative parenting, which means that the higher the prejudice of parents, the lower the authoritative parenting.

Table 1 The Total Scores of the Variables and Related Dimensions

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Child's empathy	Parents' Prejudice	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive
Child's empathy	31,40	4,18	-	-0,22**	0,26**	-0,11	-0,23**
Parents' Prejudice	14,39	4,20		-	-0,25**	0,13*	0,04
Authoritative	36,16	3,10			-	0,30**	0,02
Authoritarian	29,66	5,11				-	0,12
Permissive	19,44	4,55					-

Note: ** $p < 0,01$, * $p < 0,05$

Table 2 The Regression Test

Antecedent	M1			M2			M3			Y		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
X	-0,17	0,05	0,00	0,16	0,08	0,05	0,05	0,07	0,50	-0,11	0,07	0,09
M1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,40	0,10	0,00
M2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0,14	0,05	0,01
M3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0,19	0,06	,000
Constant	38,65	0,73	0,00	27,27	1,23	0,00	18,76	1,10	0,00	26,67	3,67	0,00
	$R^2 = 0,06$			$R^2 = 0,02$			$R^2 = 0,00$			$R^2 = 0,17$		
	$F(1, 214) = 12,74, p = 0,00$			$F(1, 214) = 3,93, p = 0,05$			$F(1, 214) = 0,45, p = 0,50$			$F(4, 211) = 10,60, p = 0,00$		

Note: X = Parents' Prejudice; M1 = Authoritative Parenting; M2 = Authoritarian Parenting; M3 = Permissive Parenting; Y = Child's Empathy

Table 2 presents the regression test results that are showed parents' prejudice has a significant effect on child's empathy ($b = -0,21$, $p = 0,00$). This shows that parents' prejudice can decrease the level of the child's empathy. This means that when parents have negative prejudices towards a group, it can make their children less empathetic.

Among parents' prejudice, authoritative parenting, and child's empathy results show that the influence of parents' prejudice on authoritative parenting produces a value of $b = -0,17$, $p < 0,05$. The influence of parents' prejudice on child's empathy shows the number $b = -0,11$, $p > 0,05$, while the influence of authoritative parenting on child's empathy shows the number $b = 0,40$, $p < 0,05$. This research shows that the effects of parents' prejudice can be mediated by the type of authoritative parenting, where authoritative parenting can buffer the influence of parents' prejudice which is initially negative on child's empathy to be positive. Thus, parents with low prejudice will tend to have authoritative parenting, which will then increase a child's empathy.

Among parents' prejudice, authoritarian parenting, and child's empathy results show that the influence of parents' prejudice on authoritarian parenting produces a value of $b = 0,16$, $p < 0,05$. The influence of parents' prejudice on child's empathy shows the number $b = -0,11$, $p > 0,05$, while the influence of authoritarian parenting on child's empathy shows $b = -0,14$, $p < 0,05$. This research shows that the effects of parents' prejudice can be mediated by the type of authoritarian parenting, where parents with high prejudice will tend to have authoritarian parenting, which will then decrease a child's empathy.

Among parents' prejudice, permissive parenting, and child's empathy results show that the influence of parents' prejudice on permissive parenting produces a value of $b = 0,05$, $p > 0,05$. The influence of parents' prejudice on child's empathy shows the number $b = -0,11$, $p > 0,05$. While the influence of permissive parenting on child's empathy shows $b = -0,19$, $p < 0,05$. This research shows that the effects of parents' prejudice cannot be mediated by permissive parenting.

Based on the results of the research, parenting style has a role as mediator in the relationship between a child's empathy and parents' prejudice. Specifically, this research shows that the types of parenting style that have a role as a mediator are authoritative parenting and authoritarian parenting. On the contrary, permissive parenting cannot be used as a mediator for the two main variables of this research. Permissive parenting style is not suitable to be a mediator between parents' prejudice and child's empathy because parents with this type of parenting tend to pass their values onto their children. Parents give a certain degree of freedom towards their children without setting up any specific guidelines (Bibi et al., 2013). Meanwhile, authoritarian parenting provides strict parenting and tends to curb children (Bibi et al., 2013). This curb puts the pressure on the children, which resulted in the decrease of child's empathy.

According to the results obtained from the data processing, they state that authoritative parenting can increase a child's empathy, while authoritarian parenting can decrease a child's empathy. Positive parenting style can create cooperation in the family, both the relationship between parents and children; and the relationship between the two parents (Brooks, 2011). The warmth and response by parents positively influence children's knowledge of emotions, whereas harsh parents will affect the child's low

understanding of emotions (Havighurst et al., 2015; Kujawa et al., 2014). The quality of the parent-child relationship can have an impact on the high attitude of empathy in children (Spinrad & Gal, 2018). The concepts of Vygotsky and positive parenting in Diana Baumrind's type of authoritative parenting are considered an effective parenting style to apply in early childhood. The authoritative parenting combines warmth with strict control, respect for individuality, and independence, which helps children develop their competencies. The authoritative parenting style takes into consideration the role of conversation between parents and children. Conversations carried out in a family give direct information about values (Brooks, 2011).

Therefore, children can express their feelings to their parents through positive communication (McGraw, 2004). This is an opportunity for parents to understand the emotions that children feel and to teach children about various types of emotions and empathy. Togetherness between parents and children is capable of opening good communication with children and encourage empathy for the children's feeling (McGraw, 2004).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that parenting style plays a role as a mediator between a child's empathy and parents' prejudice. This is related to the time spent together between children and parents in daily life as outlined in the form of parenting style. The parenting style that is applied influences children's attitudes, in this case, is empathy. In this research, the types of parenting style that have the role of the mediator are authoritative parenting and authoritarian parenting. However, both have different roles. The result of the research shows that parents with low prejudice tend to apply authoritative parenting. Therefore, it influences the increase in child's empathy, whereas parents with high prejudice tend to apply authoritarian parenting that will decrease a child's empathy.

Looking from a broader perspective, it can be concluded that the formation of empathy on children is influenced not only by the parents but also by individuals around the children. This is related to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory where in his theory gives the idea of thinking that the environment and the people around the child along with the relationships or interrelationships with each other can influence the learning process at the stage of child development. Therefore, to create an ideal microsystem for the children, it is necessary to create an ideal macrosystem as well. This can be done by educating the public about the importance of instilling empathy early on in children.

The limitations from this research are that in order to measure the predictive percentage towards the child's empathy, it depends on another extraneous variable, one of them is parents' empathy. In future research, the data will be more robust when empathy for parents is also measured. This is necessary to strengthen data from research related to child's empathy. Another limitation of this research is the data collection which is done towards parents only; therefore, in future research, it is suggested to collect the data from the children to see the child's empathy and prejudice. So that in order to increase a child's empathy, some interventions can be done towards parents or individuals around the children for future research.

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