



## **The Influence of Avoidant Attachment to the Formation of Assertive Character in Early Childhood**

**Henny Puji Astuti<sup>✉</sup>, R. Agustinus Arum Eka, Tri Utami**

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Department of Early Childhood Teacher Education, Faculty of Science of Education,  
Semarang State University, Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

The assertive character in early childhood is the way of thinking and behaving honest, open to express their needs, honest feelings and thoughts. It also includes struggling for individual rights, and rejecting unreasonable requests including pressure from authority figures and also from standards that apply to the group as his feature. Attachment avoidance is vary of insecure attachment, where children choose to avoid from the presence of his parents. This study aims to get the facts of the effect of avoidant attachment to the establishment of the assertive character of early childhood. The hypothesis of this study is avoidant attachment have an influence on the establishment of the assertive character of early childhood. The experiment was conducted in the Bergas District, Semarang Regency with 42 early childhood as the subjects. The method of collecting data using assertive character Scale and Scale Avoidant Attachment, as well as data analysis using Simple Linear Regression using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) 16 for Windows. The results of this study are avoidant attachment has influenced on the establishment of assertive character in early childhood.

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## INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures that essentially requires the presence of other individuals. Without exception, our children will get the comfort and feel safe with their parents. Social relationships do not always go as expected. There are still many children who have closed behavior, withdrew themselves from friendship, avoid problems, afraid of expressing opinions and defend their rights. There are several case where children live under intimidation for a long term. According to Rathaus (1986), assertive person is a person that expresses his/her feeling by earnestly stating the truth. They do not insult, threaten, or belittle others. Assertive people are able to express feelings and thoughts appropriately and honestly without forcing it to others. The assertive character in early childhood needs to be considered so that the child can find knowledge or skills to socialize well.

Attachment behavior is the tendency and the desire for someone to seek closeness with others, to seek satisfaction in a relationship with another person (Monks et al., 2001). Attachment at an early age greatly affects a child's ability to make friends in young adulthood. Parent and child relationship pattern is often affected by the relationship of the parents as husband and wife. Its harmony will result in a well-built parents-children relationship and vice versa. In addition, the importance of understanding for parents on parenting and proper treatment of children is very essential, because upbringing behavior affects children's character until they come of adulthood age.

Basically, the family is a place to form the character and personality of its members, particularly young children who are still under the guidance and parental responsibilities. The family also plays an important role in meeting the needs of children both physical and psychological needs. Maslow (Joseph, 2001) stated that the psychological developmental stages of the life of an individual depend on their experience in the family. According to Kartono (2003) family is the smallest social unit that provides the primary foundation for the development of children. Children's assertive character is associated with their attachment to the family. Selection of attachment patterns in the family also affects the children's assertive characters. The pattern will be formed by itself, based on customs that are applied in a long time.

Avoidant attachment is a form of insecure attachment, in which the child was raised in

a state as it is, cold, unresponsive, sometimes rough, and taken for granted. The child was not consciously taken care of and feel disappointed. Children feel as if they always fail to draw the attention of parents and guardians. At some point, the child becomes desperate and choose the path to avoid the parents so as not to feel disappointed again. Children with avoidant attachment usually become independent prematurely. Researchers want to know the effect of avoidant attachment to the formation of the assertive character of early childhood, where children with avoidant attachment have more independence, though prematurely. The researcher expected that every child has an assertive character in early age, where children are able to express their opinions, defend their rights, responsibility, friendship, and respect for others.

The character is a real and different behavior exhibited by individuals, a number of attributes that can be observed in individuals (Sander, 1997). Assertive behavior according to Steven Howard (Hamzah, 2006) can be defined as the ability to clearly convey our thoughts and feelings, to defend themselves and their opinions. The assertive character is an open way of thinking and behavior to be able to express opinions, desires, feelings and beliefs they have in a direct, honest and open way to others. People who have the assertive behavior is the one who has the courage to express their thoughts, feelings, and personal rights, and may reject requests from others that are considered groundless.

Alberti and Emmons (2002) mentions some components of assertive behavior. These components are 1) Eye contact, when speaking, assertive individuals demonstrate eye contact by staring directly at his/her interlocutor, so it will help in communicating sincerity, showing concern and respect for others and to improve the continuity of the message being delivered. 2) Body posture, the posture shown by individuals who are assertive are firm and active. Bent and passive stance indicate the lack of assertiveness in someone. 3) Distance or physical contact, the assertive individual has the ability to keep a distance when interacting with others. The closeness among the people involved in a talk will have a considerable impact on communication. However, if the conversation goes too casual, it might offend others. 4) Gesture, gesture shown by an assertive individual can add sincerity, openness, warmth, confidence and spontaneity in communicating with others. 5) **Facial expression, in talking with others, an assertive individual is able to express using proper facial expression according**

to the message or subject that will be delivered. 5) Tone, modulation, and volume of voice. When expressing thoughts and feelings verbally, an assertive individual uses the right tone of voice. 6) Timing, assertive individuals are able to say something to others appropriately according to time and place. 7) Listening, assertive individuals have the ability to listen carefully when the interlocutor is speaking, so as to refrain from expressing themselves shortly. 8) Content, assertive individuals are able to express thoughts and feelings by choosing the right words to communicate with others

The factors affecting assertive character are as follows 1) Personality, Allport (Suryabrata, 1988) states that personality is a dynamic organization within individuals as psychophysical system that determines the unique way of adjusting to the environment. The personality of a person also influences the assertive behavior in interacting with other individuals in the social environment. 2) Gender, Fukuyama and Greenfield (1993) states that men are more assertive than women. Differences of this assertive behavior are especially if they are in a group. 3) Parents behavior, Bidulp (1992) states that both aggressive or passive parents will not yield assertiveness in the child's personality development. Instead, firm or assertive parents are the ones who likely have assertive children, because assertive parents are always open, steady, full of confidence and calm in educating their children. 1) Education, Hadjam (1998) states that the educational environment has a big influence on the formation of attitudes, particularly assertive behavior. Education has the objective to produce individuals who easily accept and adapt to the changes, express their opinion, have a sense of responsibility and opinion oriented, and future oriented. 2) Culture, Thoha (1993) stated that a particular culture and society is a strong factor in influencing attitudes, values and how individuals behave.

Bowlby (Haditono et al, 1994) state that attachment is a relationship that will last long enough in the span of human life that begins with attachment between the children with their mother or another mother figure. This understanding is in line with what was stated by Ainsworth in regard to attachment. Ainsworth (Hetherington and Parke, 2001) says that attachment is an emotional bond formed by an individual with others that are specific and bind their role in an eternal proximity all the time. Attachment is a relationship that is supported by the attachment behavior that is designed to maintain the relationship (Durkin, 1995)

According to Maccoby (Ervika, 2000), a child is attached to someone else if he/she has the following characteristics: 1) Has physical attachment to someone. 2) Being insecure when the figure whom the child is attached to is not around. 3) Being very happy and relieved when the figure whom the child is attached to figure is around. 4) Figure oriented even without interaction. Children pay attention to the movement, voice, and will always try to gain attention from their attached figure.

There are two kinds of attached figures, the main attached figures, and the replacement attached figures. According to Bowlby (Durkin, 1995) individual who is always ready to respond when a child cries but does not provide physical care tends to be chosen as replacement attached figures. As for the individuals who sometimes provide physical care but not responsive will not be chosen as the attached figure.

In this study, we discuss avoidant attachment, which is an unsafe form of attachment by avoiding the attached figure. Children protested on momentary separation and when there are people who come to them or hold them, the child will show inconvenient attitude such as restless, nervous, and scared. Attachment can only be formed when the baby is able to distinguish between his mother and a stranger as well as can understand that someone was still there although the child can not see him/her. It is a reflection of object permanence concept expressed by Piaget (Hetherington and Parke, 1999). Avoidant attachment occurs when parents are generally cold, unresponsive, or often refuse. The child may initially "protest" against the lack of attention to this, but later will be "away" from the caregiver. The shy child might suppress his/her needs and become independent prematurely (Taylor et al, 2009).

The Strange Situation method created by Ainsworth, et al (Dariyo, 2007) led to four patterns of attachment as follows: 1) Secure attachment, an emotional attachment which is characterized by feeling safe, quiet and comfortable experienced by a baby when he/she is with their mother. 2) Avoidant attachment, an emotional attachment condition characterized by the baby's behavior who does not cry when separated from his/her mother, and the baby will resist to see, turn or stare down when her mother came to her. 3) Ambivalent or Resistant attachment, an emotional attachment experienced by babies that are characterized by feelings of confusion, anxiety or insecurity before their mother left them. Babies also feel confused in dealing with their mother's

presence nearby, 4). Disorganized-disoriented attachment, babies can not organize their behavior clearly and are not focused when they see their mothers are approaching.

A study conducted by H. Schaffer and Emerson P. on 60 babies in Scotland aged between the ages of 1 or 2 months to about 18 months along with their mothers found that there are three basic stages in the development of attachment. They are: 1) Indiscriminate attachment, at this stage, the baby may protest when being separated from physical contacts such as hugs. It does not matter whether that someone is the mother or a stranger. From Schaffer and Emerson observations, this period will last until the child is about 7 months old. Other observers say that this period is completed by the time the baby reaches the age of 5 months. 2) Specific attachment, the second stage begins when the baby was about 7 months or earlier will last for 3 to 4 months or more. At this time, the baby will be attached to just one person, usually the mother. Babies will show sadness when being separated physically from their mothers and will be happy staying in their mothers' arms. It is expressed with a smile and vocalization as a sign their pleasure or displeasure expression. 3) Multiple attachment, after several months in a specific phase of the attachment, the child begins to show its attachment to others. First of all on just one person, then in some people until the child is 18 months old. However, in certain children, it takes more time.

The hypothesis is a temporary notion/answers to be verified (Martono, 2010). The hypothesis proposed in this study is that there is the influence of avoidant attachment to the assertive character of early childhood. This study aims to get the facts of the effect of avoidant attachment to the establishment of the assertive character of early childhood.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The variables used in this study are as follows:

### 1. Dependent Variable:

Assertive character, ways of thinking and open behavior to be able to express opinions, desires, feelings and beliefs directly, honestly and openly to others. People who have the assertive behavior is the one who has the courage to express their thoughts, feelings, and personal rights and have the capacity to reject requests that are considered groundless.

### 2. Independent Variable:

Avoidant attachment is the unsafe

form of attachment by avoiding the attached object. Children protested on momentary separation and when there are people who come to them, they will respond with an insecure attitude such as restless, nervous, and scared.

The population is the entire population that is intended to be investigated, defined as a number of residents or individuals who have at least one thing in common. Samples are part of the population that should have the characteristics possessed by the population. In this study, the sampling technique used was purposive sampling technique. Selection of subjects was based characteristics or particular circumstances which will be examined (Martono, 2010). The subjects in this study were:

1. Kindergarten students
2. Aged 4-6 years old
3. Officially registered as students

This research was conducted in the Burgas subdistrict, Semarang regency. The research was conducted on October 9, 2015, until October 19, 2015. Data collection was carried out during the afternoon until the evening when parents are at home. The data collection process begins with an introduction, an explanation of the purpose of the study for 15 minutes. Furthermore, parents were asked to fill Assertive Character Scale and Scale Avoidant attachment. Of the 48 scale is given, there is 42 scales that can be analyzed for 6 scales is not filled completely.

The methods for collecting data to measure avoidant attachment and assertive character of early childhood used assertive character scale and avoidant attachment scale. Assertive character scale and avoidant attachment scale is a scale developed by the researchers. Assertive character scale value with the validity value of 0,355-0,849 with an alpha reliability coefficient of 0,901. Attachment Avoidant scale value with the validity value of 0,325-0,860 with the alpha reliability coefficient of 0,896. The high or low assertive character and avoidant attachment of the child can be seen from the scores obtained from the scale. The higher the score means higher assertive character and avoidant attachment, and the lower the score means lower assertive character and avoidant attachment.

The method of data analysis used to determine the effect of Avoidant Attachment to the formation of the assertive character of early childhood is the Simple Linear Regression by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) 16 for Windows.



**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The high or low value of the object can be determined by the categorization of the Avoidant Attachment Scale and Assertive Character Scale. Categorization is done based on an assumption that the subject scores in the group are an estimate of the subject scores in the population and in the population subject scores are normally distributed. Researcher used the following categorization, low ( $x = m + -1 SD$ ), medium ( $m + -1 SD < x = m + 1 SD$ ) and high ( $x > m + -1 SD$ ). The above subject categories were used to classify the scores of avoidant attachment and assertive character variables.

The obtained avoidant attachment scores are 9 children (21,428%) were in a low category, 10 children (23,810%) were in the medium category, and 23 children (54,762%) were in the high category. When viewed as a whole, it can be concluded that avoidant attachment scores obtained by the research subjects were in the high category.

The obtained assertive character scores are 10 children (23,810%) were in a low category, 18 children (42,857%) were in the medium category, and 10 children (33,333%) were in the high category. When viewed as a whole, it can be concluded that the obtained assertive character score by the research subjects are in the medium category.

Data analysis was performed to test the hypothesis of the study. This analysis is done with the Simple Linear Regression. Previously, there

are several assumptions that must be met, namely the test of normality and linearity test. Therefore, it is necessary to test for these assumptions. Assumption tests and data analysis was performed using SPSS 16 for Windows.

Normality test to see the observation frequency deviation which is examined from the theoretical frequency. This test is necessary because a lot of symptoms are showing the characteristics of a normal distribution. On the contrary, if there are no characteristics of a symptom, it will not be possible to accurately predict the occurrence of these symptoms. The assumptions of normality test were carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov One Sample.

The above Normality test produces Z value of 0,176 with  $p > 0,05$  for assertive character and Z values of 0,179 with  $p > 0,05$  for avoidant attachment. Based on these results, it can be said that the scores distribution of both data is normal.

The above linearity test produces F value of 26,728 with  $p < 0,05$  for assertive character and Avoidant Attachment. Based on these results, it can be said that the data on these two variables are linear.

The normality and linearity test results show that the data collected met the qualification for subsequent analysis, using Simple Linear Regression. The results of testing the hypothesis in this study are as follows in Table 5.

**Table 1. Scale Score Avoidant Attachment**

No.	Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	$x \leq 60$	low	9	21.428 %
2.	$61 < x \leq 90$	medium	10	23.810 %
3.	$x > 90$	high	23	54.762 %

**Table 2. Assertive Score Scale**

No.	Score	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	$x \leq 66$	low	10	23.810 %
2.	$67 < x \leq 99$	medium	18	42.857 %
3.	$x > 99$	high	10	33.333 %

**Table 3. Normality Test Output**

No.	Variable	Normality Coef.	p	Dec.
1.	Assertive Character	0.176	0.178	Normal
2.	Avoidant Attachment	0.179	0.200	Normal

**Table 4. Linearity Output**

No.	Variable	F	p	Dec.
1.	Assertive Character -Avoidant Attachment	26.728	0.000	Linear

**Table 5. Hypothesis Test Output**

No.	Variable	R square	p	Dec.
1.	Assertive Character -Avoidant Attachment	.349	0.000	There is an influence

The above hypothesis test generates the R-square value of 0,349 with  $p < 0,05$ . Based on these results, it can be said that avoidant attachment influences the assertive character of early childhood. The hypothesis in this study is accepted. Avoidant attachment gives the effect of 34,9%.

There is the influence of avoidant attachment to the assertive character of early childhood as indicated by the value of R square of 0,349 with  $p < 0,05$ . This means that avoidant attachment gives a contribution of 34,9% to the formation of the assertive character of early childhood. The negative regression coefficient value means that there is a negative correlation between an assertive character with avoidant attachment.

Assertive is the decisiveness and courage of expression while still respecting and sensitive to the needs of others, so as to find a compromise that is mutually beneficial. According to Rathus & Nevid (2009) assertive behavior is behavior that displays the courage to honestly and openly express their needs, feelings and thoughts, defend individual rights, and reject unreasonable requests including pressure coming from authority figures and standards that apply to a group. In addition, assertive behavior is the result of emotional freedom that includes the knowledge of rights and then fights for it without feeling anxious about others.

Bowlby (Haditono et al, 1994) suggests that the long term relationship that can survive long enough in the span of human life begins with attachment of the child to the mother or another mother figure. This understanding is in line with what was raised by Ainsworth regarding attachment. Ainsworth (Hetherington and Parke, 2001) says that the attachment is an emotional bond formed by an individual with others that are specific, binding their role in an eternal proximity all the time. Basically, between mother and child, there is always attachment, only that it has a different type from one to the other.

Avoidant attachment occurs when parents are generally cold, unresponsive, or even full of refusals. The child may initially protest against the lack of attention, but then will be away from the caregiver. The shy child might suppress a sense of needs and become independent prematurely. Children tried to cover their unmet needs, but basically, dissatisfaction will form a new pattern of the character of the child. These conditions will affect the formation of assertive character in the negative direction. This means that avoidant attachment conditions will contribute to the formation of assertive character in a negative relationship.

Generally, in this study, children with avoidant attachment models will have an assertive character that tends to be lower. Child considers himself less accounted for and cherished, so the child as if to fend for themselves to survive emotionally. Children grow up and try to adapt to the environment. This character is formed of avoidant attachment pattern that has lasted for a long time. Children become less assertive, which means less capacity to fight for their needs.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the research that has been presented, it can be concluded that avoidant attachment gives significant influence in forming the assertive character of early childhood. Therefore, it is expected that we can choose an effective and suitable attachment model for children.

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