



THE INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON DATING BEHAVIOR WITH PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE

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Article Info

Article history:

Received :

Revised :

Accepted :

Available online

<http://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/analytica>

E-ISSN: 2541-5263

P-ISSN: 1411-4380

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effect of emotional intelligence on adolescents' dating behavior, with the parent-child relationship as a mediating variable. Adolescent dating behavior is influenced by emotional regulation abilities and the quality of relationships with parents. This research employed a quantitative approach using an explanatory survey design and mediation analysis. The participants consisted of 209 twelfth-grade students from SMK Imelda Medan. Data were collected using emotional intelligence, parent-child relationship, and dating behavior scales developed in a 4-point Likert format. The results of validity testing indicated that all items were valid, while reliability analysis showed Cronbach's Alpha coefficients exceeding 0.70, indicating good reliability. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence had a significant direct effect on adolescents' dating behavior. Furthermore, emotional intelligence also demonstrated a significant indirect effect on dating behavior through the parent-child relationship, confirming its mediating role. These results suggest that higher emotional intelligence, supported by positive parent-child relationships characterized by emotional closeness, open communication, and a sense of security, contributes to healthier and more adaptive dating behavior among adolescents. This study contributes to the field of adolescent developmental psychology by providing empirical evidence on the psychological mechanisms linking emotional intelligence and dating behavior, particularly in the context of vocational secondary education. The findings also have practical implications for schools, parents, and psychology practitioners in developing intervention programs that focus on strengthening emotional intelligence and enhancing the quality of parent-child relationships to promote healthy adolescent dating behavior aligned with prevailing social values.



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Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Dating Behavior, Parent-Child Relationships*

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a developmental period characterized by biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes. One of the important developmental tasks during this stage is the establishment of more intimate interpersonal relationships, including dating relationships. However, adolescent dating behavior does not always develop adaptively and is often marked by emotional conflict, jealousy, and risky behaviors.

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively. Adolescents with high emotional intelligence tend to be better able to manage conflicts and build healthier relationships. On the other hand, parent-child relationships constitute a primary environmental context that shapes adolescents' patterns of emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships. Warm and communicative parent-child relationships can serve as a foundation for more adaptive dating behavior.

Based on this description, the present study focuses on the influence of emotional intelligence on adolescent dating behavior, with parent-child relationships serving as a mediating variable.

The factors influencing adolescent dating behavior include internal and external factors. Internal factors encompass age and biological development, the need for affection, personality, and individual emotional regulation abilities. External factors include peer influence, the social environment and media, cultural values, and the family environment, particularly the quality of parent-child relationships (Santrock, 2018; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009). According to Goleman (2005), emotional intelligence plays an important role in individuals' ability to manage emotions, develop empathy, and establish healthy interpersonal relationships. Adolescents with high emotional intelligence tend to be able to control impulses, resolve conflicts adaptively, and exhibit more positive dating behavior. In this study, emotional intelligence comprises five main aspects: (1) self-awareness, defined as the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions; (2) emotion regulation, defined as the ability to control negative emotions and express them appropriately; (3) self-motivation, defined as the ability to use emotions to motivate oneself toward achieving goals; (4) recognition of others' emotions (empathy), defined as the ability to understand others' feelings and perspectives; and (5) relationship management, defined as the ability to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships.

In addition to emotional intelligence, parent-child relationships also play an important role in shaping adolescent dating behavior. Baumrind (1991) emphasized that the quality of parent-child relationships, reflected in parenting styles, warmth, and communication, forms the foundation of children's emotional regulation and relational patterns outside the family, including romantic relationships. In this study, parent-child relationships consist of three main aspects: (1) closeness, characterized by emotional bonding and mutual affection between parents and children; (2) communication, reflecting openness,

the ability to engage in discussion, and mutual listening; and (3) comfort, defined as feelings of safety, acceptance, and emotional support from parents. Meanwhile, adolescent dating behavior is understood as a pattern of romantic interaction expressed through two main dimensions: the psychological-affective aspect and the physical-intimacy aspect. The psychological-affective aspect includes behaviors such as valuing one's partner (keepsakes), maintaining the relationship (constant association), providing trust (confidence), and creative expressions of affection (creative expression). The physical-intimacy aspect includes touching, necking, petting, and premarital intercourse, which reflect varying levels of physical closeness in dating relationships. In line with this, the present study aims to construct, develop, and examine the validity and reliability of the emotional intelligence scale, the parent-child relationship scale, and the adolescent dating behavior scale used to empirically test the relationships among variables in the context of twelfth-grade students at SMK Imelda Medan.

The phenomenon of adolescent dating behavior has become an increasingly relevant issue to examine in line with the growing intensity of social interactions and access to information through digital media. Changes in adolescents' communication patterns and lifestyles also influence the way they build romantic relationships, both emotionally and behaviorally. This condition requires adolescents to possess adequate emotional regulation skills in order to manage relationship dynamics in a healthy and responsible manner. Without well-developed emotional intelligence, adolescents are at risk of experiencing emotional conflict, psychological distress, and involvement in risky dating behaviors.

Within the family context, parents play a strategic role as the primary source of emotional learning for adolescents. The patterns of interaction established between parents and children shape interpersonal relationship schemas that are later replicated in relationships with romantic partners. Parent-child relationships characterized by warmth, openness, and emotional support enable adolescents to feel secure in expressing emotions, discussing personal issues, and receiving guidance regarding values and boundaries in dating. Conversely, less harmonious parent-child relationships may weaken adolescents' emotional regulation and increase the tendency toward maladaptive dating behaviors.

Previous studies have shown that emotional intelligence is closely related to the quality of interpersonal relationships; however, research that specifically positions parent-child relationships as a mediating variable in the relationship between emotional intelligence and adolescent dating behavior remains limited. Therefore, this study is important in addressing this research gap, particularly within the cultural and educational context of Indonesia. The selection of twelfth-grade vocational high school students as research subjects was based on the consideration that late adolescence represents a critical period in the formation of self-identity and more serious romantic relationships.

By integrating emotional intelligence and parent-child relationships within a single research model, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological factors influencing adolescent dating behavior. The findings of this study are expected not only to contribute academically but also to have practical implications for the development of character education programs, guidance and counseling services, and psychological interventions oriented toward fostering healthy and responsible dating behavior

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using the method of psychological measurement instrument development. The scale development process was conducted through the adaptation and modification of instruments based on Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence, Baumrind's theory of parent-child relationships, and Santrock's concept of adolescent dating behavior. The stages of instrument development included construct determination, indicator formulation, item writing, instrument try-out, and validity and reliability testing.

The research instruments consisted of three scales: the Emotional Intelligence Scale, the Parent-Child Relationship Scale, and the Dating Behavior Scale. The emotional intelligence scale was developed based on the five main aspects proposed by Goleman; the parent-child relationship scale was developed based on the aspects of closeness, communication, and comfort; and the dating behavior scale was developed based on the psychological-affective and physical-intimacy aspects. The total number of items was 85, presented in the form of a four-point Likert scale with the response options Very Appropriate, Appropriate, Inappropriate, and Very Inappropriate. The items consisted of both favourable and unfavourable statements.

Data collection was conducted directly with the respondents at the school through the following stages:

- a. Instrument Preparation, which included the development of scale items based on defined aspects and indicators, as well as item readability testing.
- b. Sample Determination, which was carried out using a cluster sampling technique among twelfth-grade students of SMK Imelda Medan.
- c. Data Collection Implementation, which involved distributing questionnaires directly to the respondents and ensuring that the completion of the questionnaires followed the given instructions.

Data analysis included the scoring of favourable and unfavourable items, the calculation of item-total correlations for validity testing, and the calculation of reliability using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient.

- a. Questionnaire Scoring: The questionnaire employed a four-point Likert scale with the following scoring criteria: for favourable items, a score of 4 was assigned to the response Very Appropriate, 3 to Appropriate, 2 to Inappropriate, and 1 to Very Inappropriate. Conversely, for unfavourable items, the scoring was applied in reverse order.
- b. Score Categorization: Respondents' total scores were subsequently categorized into three levels—low, moderate, and high—based on the mean and standard deviation values.

Validity refers to the accuracy of an instrument in measuring the intended construct. Validity testing was conducted using item-total correlation (Corrected Item-Total Correlation). An item was considered valid if the correlation coefficient exceeded the established critical value.

Reliability refers to the level of consistency of an instrument in measuring the same construct. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. An instrument was considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value was ≥ 0.70 . The data

were analyzed through validity testing using item-total correlations and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha. Mediation analysis was conducted using a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The results of data analysis on the dating behavior scale indicate that, in general, respondents fall into the moderate category. This suggests that most adolescents have been involved in dating behaviors encompassing both psychological-affective and physical-intimacy aspects, yet these behaviors remain within relatively acceptable limits.

In the psychological-affective aspect, the majority of respondents demonstrated relatively high scores on the indicators of maintaining the relationship (constant association), providing trust (confidence), and creative expressions of affection (creative expression). These findings indicate that adolescent dating behavior is more frequently expressed through emotional closeness, intensive communication, and efforts to maintain the relationship with a partner. Meanwhile, in the physical-intimacy aspect, the scale results show that touching and necking fall within the low to moderate categories. The indicators of petting and premarital intercourse tend to fall within the low category, indicating that most respondents have not engaged in high-risk dating behaviors. This suggests the presence of self-control and social norms that remain sufficiently strong in limiting the intensity of adolescents' physical intimacy. Overall, the results of the dating behavior scale reveal that adolescents predominantly exhibit emotional and affective dating behaviors rather than risky physical behaviors. These findings support the assumption that emotional intelligence and parent-child relationships play an important role in directing dating behavior toward more adaptive patterns.

The results of the validity test indicate that all items on the dating behavior scale have item-total correlation coefficients above the critical value and are therefore considered valid. The reliability test produced a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70, indicating that the dating behavior scale has good internal consistency and is appropriate for use in research. The validity test results further show that all items across the three scales have correlation coefficients above the critical value and are thus valid. Reliability testing revealed Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70 for all scales. Path analysis indicates that emotional intelligence has a significant effect on dating behavior, both directly and indirectly through parent-child relationships as a mediating variable.

Dating Behavior Blueprint

No	Aspect	Indicator	Item Distribution		Total
			Favourable	Unfavourable	
1	Psychologic al & Affective	KeePsakes (Menghargai)	1, 5,26	12	4
		Constant Association (Menjaga Hubungan)	8, 15,25	20	4
		Confidence (Memberi Kepercayaan)	3, 10, 17	-	3
		Creative Expression (Ungkapan Kreatif)	6, 13,27	-	3

		Touching (Menyentuh)	2, 9, 16	-	3
		Necking (Mencium Leher)	4, 11, 28	18	4
2	Physical & Intimacy	Petting (Menggesekan Alat Kelamin)	7, 14, 29	21	4
		Premarital Intercourse (Berhubungan Intim)	19, 22, 30	23, 24	5
		Total			
					30

Emotional Intelligence Scale Blueprint

No	Aspect	Indicator	Item Distribution		Total
			Favourable	Unfavourable	
1	Emotional Expression	Recognizing and understanding one's own emotions	1, 12	5	4
		Expressing emotions verbally	7	18	2
		Expressing emotions non-verbally	23	9	2
		Understanding others' emotions	14	27	2
2	Emotional Regulation	Managing one's negative emotions	3, 16	20	3
		Enhancing positive mood	10, 25	-	2
		Calming oneself under stress	6	29	2
		Helping others regulate their emotions	19	8	2
3	Emotional Utilization	Self-motivation through emotions	2, 15	22	3
		Using emotions to solve problems	11, 26	4	3
		Creative thinking facilitated by emotions	17	30	2
		Making decisions with emotional consideration	13	28	2
		Total			
					30

The findings of this study are consistent with the theory of emotional intelligence proposed by Goleman, which states that individuals' ability to recognize, manage, and express emotions adaptively plays an important role in the quality of interpersonal relationships. Based on the results of the dating behavior scale, respondents tend to display dating behaviors more dominantly in the psychological-affective aspect than in the physical-intimacy aspect. These findings indicate that adolescents with higher levels of emotional intelligence are better able to regulate emotional impulses and develop healthy emotional closeness with their partners.

In addition, the results of this study also support the theory of parent-child relationships proposed by Baumrind, which emphasizes the importance of the quality of parent-child relationships in shaping adolescents' emotional regulation and social behavior. Warm, communicative, and secure parent-child relationships function as a mediator that strengthens the influence of emotional intelligence on dating behavior. The low scores on risky physical dating behavior indicate the internalization of values and self-control influenced by parental roles.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that adolescent dating behavior is influenced not only by internal factors in the form of emotional intelligence but also by external factors in the form of parent-child relationships. These results reinforce the notion that strengthening emotional intelligence supported by positive parent-child relationships can guide adolescents toward more adaptive and healthy dating behavior patterns

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study and the data analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the dating behavior scale, the emotional intelligence scale, and the parent-child relationship scale used in this study are instruments developed through a process of adaptation and refinement grounded in relevant theories. The results of the validity and reliability tests indicate that all scales meet acceptable psychometric standards and are appropriate for use in psychological research. This study successfully demonstrates that emotional intelligence influences adolescent dating behavior, both directly and through the mediating role of parent-child relationships. The developed instruments can be used to identify tendencies in adolescent dating behavior and to understand the roles of emotional and relational factors that influence such behavior. For schools and parents at SMK Imelda Medan, the findings of this study may serve as a basis for the development of guidance and counseling programs, particularly those focusing on the enhancement of emotional intelligence and the strengthening of parent-child relationships in order to foster healthy dating behavior among adolescents.

For future researchers, it is recommended to extend this study by involving a broader range of participants and by testing these instruments across different cultural contexts and educational levels. In addition, future studies may incorporate other relevant variables to enrich the understanding of factors influencing adolescent dating behavior.

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