# Parents and high school students' social interaction

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## Article Info

## ABSTRACT

Parenting style is an essential factor for social anxiety, but research from different countries showed inconsistent empirical evidence. Therefore, this research examines the influence of parenting style (parental demandingness and responsiveness) on social anxiety among high school students in Indonesia. Four hundred high school students in Palembang City, Indonesia, were involved, with girls ($n$=244, 61%) and boys ($n$=156, 39%). The results of path analysis using the M*plus* 7 showed that maternal ($\beta$=-0.123; $p$=0.001) and paternal demandingness ($\beta$=-0.149; $p$=0.020) significantly negatively influence social anxiety. For the responsive parenting style, the results found that maternal ($\beta$=0.035; $p$=0.026) and paternal responsiveness ($\beta$=0.649; $p$=0.000) positively influence high school students' social anxiety. Parenting styles explain 35.3% of social anxiety variance. This finding become a reference as a program to intervene in students' social anxiety based on demanding and responsive parenting styles.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

More than twenty percent proportion of adolescents in Indonesia are found to have social anxiety disorder [1]. Social anxiety among high school students could negatively affect various aspects, including education. Researchers have found that social anxiety among students is related to individual difficulties in communicating in academic activities, such as with teachers, friends, and academic staff at school, which will negatively affect students' learning processes [2]–[5]. This condition can lead to low student engagement in the learning process [2]–[5] and low academic achievement [6]–[8]. Being between the ages of 13 and 18, high school students are individuals in the adolescent stage of development [9], in which the development of self-identity is a major focus of their lives [10]. The social environment is essential in supporting the development of the adolescent's self-identity through self-exploration or a process of learning from the environment [10]. Disrupting adolescents' interactions with the social environment will disrupt their identity development.

Social anxiety disorder is the most common type of mental disorder among adolescents [11], [12]. One study found that the prevalence rate of social anxiety disorder in Indonesia reached approximately 22.9% or a quarter of the total research sample [1], which is higher compared to the findings of previous research at 15.8% [13]. Previous findings indicate that among high school students, who are obviously in the

adolescent age group, social anxiety is a problem that needs attention for treatment. Social anxiety disorder or social phobia is characterized by feelings of anxiety or fear and avoidance of social situations that allow others to judge [14], [15]. It occurs when an individual fears being insulted, observed, and embarrassed by others in certain situations because of their appearance [16]. Social anxiety consists of three aspects: i) fear of negative judgment by others, ii) avoidance and feelings of pressure when interacting with new or unfamiliar people, and iii) feelings of pressure when interacting with familiar people [16]. As with other psychological disorders, social anxiety can have detrimental effects on people, such as reducing individual well-being and quality of life and weakening social roles and career development [17]. Accordingly, there is a need for action to overcome this problem.

Parenting style consists of two dimensions: demandingness and responsiveness [18], [19]. In simple terms, parental demandingness can be thought of as the control, limits, and demands that parents place on their children. In contrast, parental responsiveness is an attitude or behavior that involves warmth and emotional closeness in caring for children [18]. In parental demandingness, excessive parental control, and protection can lead children to experience poor emotional regulation [20] as well as internalizing problems such as social anxiety [21]. In addition, this can also cause children to have poor social skills, avoid social situations [22], and even experience social anxiety [23], [24]. On the other hand, in parental responsiveness, parents' lack of emotional expression can lead to children having difficulty expressing their emotions, followed by failure to engage in social interactions [23]. This is also associated with behavioral inhibition in adolescents [19], which may be related to social anxiety [23]. High levels of criticism are associated with internalizing problems in individuals [25] and may foster a tendency to criticize oneself in adulthood [26]. In addition, parents who teach their children to be familiar with social situations can help children reduce behavioral inhibition to become more adaptive to social situations [27]–[29]. Some literature has provided an overview of the effects of parental demandingness and responsiveness on individual social skills. Previous research has provided empirical evidence supporting the relationship between parental demandingness and responsiveness and social anxiety [30]–[34].

Spokas and Heimberg [35] found a positive relationship between maternal and paternal overprotection and emotional warmth with social anxiety among students in the United States. Meanwhile, research on secondary school students in Saudi Arabia found that parental anger, criticism in front of others, overprotection, provocation, and abuse (physical or emotional) were significant predictors of social anxiety [36]. Research on children in Israel found that maternal and paternal autonomy had a negative significant relationship with social anxiety, but no significant relationship between maternal and paternal acceptance and social anxiety [34]. Research on European American children found a significant positive relationship between maternal control and paternal rejection and social anxiety, but no significant relationship between paternal control and maternal rejection and social anxiety [37]. A study of Chinese adolescents found a significant relationship between maternal overprotection and paternal emotional warmth and social anxiety, but no significant relationship between paternal overprotection, maternal emotional warmth, father and mother rejection, and social anxiety [38].

Inconsistencies in previous research may be caused by several factors, such as differences in population characteristics. The same parenting style may have different effects on communities with different cultures and norms [39]. Therefore, research on parenting styles must consider these issues [33], [39]. This study aimed to examine the contribution of parenting style to social anxiety, with the research hypothesis that parental demandingness and responsiveness significantly contribute to social anxiety. The results provide scientific evidence to consider the development of interventions to develop adaptive and supportive parenting patterns to overcome social anxiety in high school students.

## 2. METHOD
### 2.1. Participants and design

Participants in this study were 400 high school students, aged 13-18 years old ($M$=15.88, SD=1.04), consisting of 156 boys (39%) and 244 girls (61%). A total of 278 participants (70%) were high school students, and the other 122 (31%) were vocational high school students. The research was conducted by using accidental sampling at five high schools/vocational schools in Palembang City by asking the students that the participants met to fill out a questionnaire. This research used a quantitative approach. Before data collection, participants voluntarily completed informed consent, indicating that they agreed to participate in this study as research participants. This procedure followed the Declaration of Helsinki [40], the American Psychological Association [41], and the Belmont Report [42] regarding human subjects as research participants.

## 2.2. Measurement

Parental demandingness and responsiveness were measured using the short version of the perception of parents questionnaire (PPQ-20) developed by Pasquali *et al.* [43]. This measurement consists of 40 items representing the dimensions of maternal demandingness (9 items), maternal responsiveness (11 items), paternal demandingness (10 items), and paternal responsiveness (10 items) using a Likert scale (0=very unsuitable) to (4=very suitable). Cronbach's alpha value is ($\alpha$>0.70) in all dimensions, and it is valid (t-value>1.96) in all items. In detail, a fit model for maternal responsiveness is $\chi^2$(44)=139.485, *p*-value=0.00047, estimate root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.014, 90%-confidence interval (C.I) RMSEA=0.060-0.088, probability RMSEA=0.073, comparative fit index (CFI)=0.950, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI)=0.938, root mean square residual (SRMR)=0.035. Paternal responsiveness is $\chi^2$(32)=57.553, *p*-value=0.0037, estimate RMSEA=0.045, 90%-C.I RMSEA=0.025-0.063, probability RMSEA=0.661. Maternal demandingness is fit with $\chi^2$(22)=38.960, *p*-value=0.0143, estimate RMSEA=0.044, 90%-C.I RMSEA=0.020-0.066, probability RMSEA=0.646, CFI=0.980, TLI=0.967, SRMR=0.040. Lastly, for paternal demandingness, the fit model shows $\chi^2$(25)=47.080, *p*-value=0.005, estimate RMSEA=0.047, 90%-C.I RMSEA=0.026-0.067, probability RMSEA=0.567, CFI=0.980, TLI=0.964, SRMR=0.039.

Social anxiety was measured using the social anxiety scale for adolescents (SAS-A) developed by La Greca and Lopez [16]. SAS-A has 18 items consisting of 8 items representing the fear of negative evaluation (FNE) aspect, 6 items representing the social avoidance and distress new (SAD-N) aspect, and 4 items representing the social avoidance and distress general (SAD-G) aspect. All items are written in favorable statements using a Likert scale type (1=never) to (5=very often), with composite reliability (CR) value>0.70, t-value>1.96, and fit index $\chi^2$(135)=1030.920, *p*-value=0.0000, estimate RMSEA=0.029 (p<0.05), 90%-C.I RMSEA=0.122-0.136 (*p*<0.05), probability RMSEA<0.05=0.453, CFI=0.951, TLI=0.918, and SRMR=0.087.

## 2.3. Data analysis

This study reports the descriptive analysis results. The process involved calculating the mean score, standard deviation, and correlation among variables. Additionally, a normality test was performed to see whether the data were normally distributed and to provide a foundation for the inferential statistic. The data is normally distributed with skewness and kurtosis values of ±2 [44]. Also, the measurement must meet the validity and reliability procedures. The indication of valid is with a t-value<1.96 [45] with a fit index (RMSEA<0.06, RMSEA 95% CI<0.05, probability RMSEA>0.05, CFI<0.95, TLI<0.95, SRMR<0.08) [45]. Then, the measurements are reliable with ($\alpha$>0.70) [46]. For the hypothesis testing, this study applied path analysis [47] with M*plus* 7 software [45].

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Descriptive analysis

Table 1 illustrates the results of the descriptive analysis. From Table 1, maternal demandingness shows (*M*=3.14, SD=0.68), paternal demandingness indicates (*M*=3.85, SD=0.81), maternal responsiveness results (*M*=3.10, SD=0.71), and paternal responsiveness is with (*M*=3.20, SD=0.87). The skewness and kurtosis are between ±2 (Skewness=From -0.56 to 0.23, Kurtosis=From -0.58 to 0.28). Also, data on the five variables show good reliability with Cronbach's alpha above 0.70 ($\alpha$=From 0.73 to 0.92).

Table 1 also presents the results of correlations between variables. In maternal parenting styles, maternal demandingness (*r*=0.066, *p*=0.188) and responsiveness (*r*=-0.092, *p*=0.066) are found to be not significantly correlated with students' social anxiety. However, paternal demandingness and responsiveness are found to be significantly correlated with students' social anxiety. Paternal demandingness is significantly positively correlated with high school students' social anxiety (*r*=0.209, *p*<0.001). This indicates that the higher the paternal demandingness, the higher the social anxiety. Meanwhile, paternal responsiveness is significantly negatively correlated with high school students' social anxiety (*r*=-0.121, *p*<0.05). This means that the higher the paternal responsiveness, the lower the social anxiety.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis results

| Variable | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | α | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maternal demandingness | 3.14 | 0.68 | - | | | | | 0.73 | 0.06 | -0.31 |
| Maternal responsiveness | 3.85 | 0.81 | 0.214** | - | | | | 0.90 | -0.48 | -0.56 |
| Paternal demandingness | 3.10 | 0.71 | 0.603** | 0.145** | - | | | 0.78 | 0.23 | 0.28 |
| Paternal responsiveness | 3.44 | 0.91 | 0.280** | 0.163** | 0.234** | - | | 0.90 | -0.27 | -0.58 |
| Social anxiety | 3.20 | 0.87 | 0.066 | -0.092 | 0.209** | -0.121* | - | 0.92 | -0.06 | -0.39 |

## 3.2. Path analysis

Table 2 shows the findings from the path analysis with CFI=1.000, TLI=1.000, SRMR=0.050 estimate RMSEA=0.040, and 90%-C.I RMSEA=0.240-0.600. We found that maternal demandingness ($\beta$=-0.123; $p$=0.001), paternal demandingness ($\beta$=-0.149; $p$=0.020), and maternal responsiveness ($\beta$=0.035; $p$=0.026), paternal responsiveness ($\beta$=0.649; $p$=0.000), has a significant effect on social anxiety. This model explained 35.3% of the variance from parenting style on social anxiety. Thus, it can be concluded that maternal and paternal parenting styles significantly influence social anxiety among high school students.

Table 2. Path analysis results

| Model | $R^2$ | $\beta$ | Standard error | Est./S.E. | $p$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maternal demandingness | | -0.123 | 0.322 | -0.383 | 0.001 |
| Paternal demandingness | 0.353 | -0.142 | 0.221 | -0.643 | 0.020 |
| Maternal responsiveness | ($p < 0.001$) | 0.033 | 0.148 | 10.220 | 0.026 |
| Paternal responsiveness | | 0.596 | 0.034 | 17.450 | 0.000 |

Figure 1 is a path model for maternal demandingness, paternal demandingness, maternal responsiveness, and paternal responsiveness to social anxiety. In this case, maternal demandingness, paternal demandingness, maternal responsiveness, and paternal responsiveness are exogenous variables for social anxiety (which is an endogenous variable in the study). From the regression model in Figure 1, it can also be understood that maternal demandingness and paternal demandingness contribute significantly negatively to social anxiety, and maternal responsiveness and paternal responsiveness contribute positively to social anxiety in senior high school students.
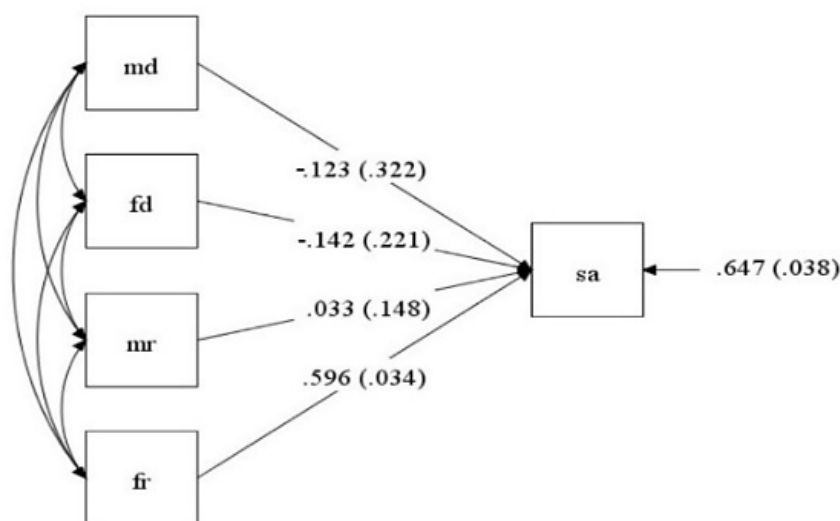


Figure 1. Path model for parenting styles and social anxiety among high school students (MD=maternal demandingness; FD=father/paternal demandingness; MR=maternal responsiveness; FR=father/paternal responsiveness)

## 4. DISCUSSION

This study aims to test the significance of parenting style on social anxiety among high school students. In detail, there are significant contributions of maternal demandingness, paternal demandingness, maternal responsiveness, and paternal responsiveness to social anxiety. Furthermore, maternal and paternal demandingness contribute negatively to social anxiety in students, and maternal and paternal responsiveness contribute positively to social anxiety among high school students.

Students with social anxiety are impaired in social interactions, both with peers and with teachers and academic staff at school [3]–[5]. These conditions affect students' learning and discussion processes [3]–[5]. Barriers to the learning process caused by social anxiety can reduce their academic performance [6]–[8].

Understanding the risk and protective factors of a mental disorder, both specific and non-specific, can help overcome mental health problems [48]. One of the critical factors of anxiety disorders is the family

environment, in which parents play an essential role in shaping social behavior [49]–[51]. In this regard, parenting style is one of the factors influencing social anxiety. Parents who support and encourage children to become familiar with the social environment will shape them to be socially confident. On the other hand, parents who provide excessive control and criticism and less emotional warmth will cause children to withdraw, feel anxious, and avoid social situations that involve new people, new things, and new or unfamiliar events [52].

When compared with previous research, the findings of this study are inconsistent with Çoban and Kisa [30], who found that demandingness parenting behavior increases social anxiety in students. In a sense, students with authoritarian and highly protective parenting will increase social anxiety [30]. In particular, students appear to fear negative judgment from others and feelings of social neglect and distress [30]. Similar to Çoban and Kisa [30], Garcia et al. [31] found that parenting with excessive control and low warmth can increase social anxiety.

The results found that maternal and paternal demandingness significantly have a negative influence on social anxiety. This finding illustrates that the higher the level of behavioral control, demands, supervision, and disciplinary efforts provided by the mother, the lower the level of social anxiety experienced by high school students. Overprotective parents who provide excessive protection and control are related to increased social anxiety [35], [36], [38]. This pattern applies to Western countries which are at the root of individualist societies, where they are more emphasis on how individuals can optimize their qualities [53].

The results of this study contradict to the notion that a strict parenting approach can help adolescences can feel less anxious about social situations. This fits into the context of indigenous psychology, wherein parents who make demands of their adolescents demonstrate a side of familial connectivity, according to Dwairy et al. [54]. This suggests that the Asian parenting style, which is characterized by demanding conduct toward children, applies a collectivist culture of parental participation and concern for children [55]. Moreover, persons in collectivist nations prioritize interpersonal ties above intrapersonal ones, meaning that people should be aware of their roles within the family [56].

Popa [57] discovered that there are benefits to the relationship between parents and teenagers. Students' good experiences correlate with a variety of outcomes, including academic success, interpersonal connections, cognitive growth, and social development [57]. Students who feel they are receiving social support from their family can benefit from stronger family ties when there are high-quality relationships between them [57]. This is what can boost students' self-confidence. Also, students' social and emotional development will therefore be impacted by their parents' lack of connection with them [57]. As a result, students who have weak social skills may even shun other students. Students may develop social anxiety as a result [23], [24].

The other previous studies also found that there is no significant relationship between paternal control and paternal overprotection (related to paternal demandingness), paternal acceptance, and paternal rejection (related to paternal responsiveness and social anxiety) [34], [37], [38]. However, several previous studies provide evidence that paternal demandingness (paternal overprotection, paternal anger, and paternal provocation) and paternal responsiveness (paternal autonomy granting, paternal rejection, paternal emotional warmth) are significantly related to social anxiety [34]–[38].

The findings in this study are not in line with previous findings, which state that parenting responsiveness contributes negatively to students' social anxiety. As Çoban and Kisa [30] found, that mothers and fathers with parenting behaviors that show warmth, love, care, attention, and support have a significant negative effect on students' social anxiety. Parenting with a positive parent-child relationship has an impact on how students can express emotions well, and this can improve students' social skills [31], [58].

This study also found that maternal and paternal responsiveness significantly had a positive influence on social anxiety. This finding explains that the higher level of warmth and emotional closeness provided by parents has an impact on the higher levels of social anxiety among high school students. This aligns with previous findings reported that parenting style with emotional warmth and autonomy granting are significantly related to increased social anxiety. This situation suggests that, within the framework of Indonesian culture, which is characterized by interdependence, responsive parenting toward teenagers may exacerbate social anxiety.

This situation suggests that, within the framework of Indonesian culture, which is characterized by interdependence, responsive parenting toward individuals may exacerbate social anxiety. Parenting practices differ between Western countries, which form the foundation of independent cultures, and Eastern countries, which are based on interdependent cultures (e.g., Asian) [39], [59]. The parenting approach stresses how teenagers can maximize their goals in an independent cultural environment [43]. Students should fulfill their family wishes, according to parenting practices in communities with an interdependent culture [43]. Students use their family and society as benchmarks to accomplish their objectives. Therefore, people are more likely to tolerate strict and controlling parenting practices in Asia [60].

## 5. CONCLUSION

Social anxiety in high school students is exacerbated by demanding and responsive parenting styles. It has been found that social anxiety is negatively significant and contributes to maternal and paternal demanding parenting styles. Meanwhile, maternal and paternal responsive parenting styles have significant positive effects on social anxiety. Consequently, the paternal parenting style has a greater impact on social anxiety compared to the maternal parenting style. This shows how Indonesian society implements a collectivist culture instead of an individualist one. In addition, these findings suggest that fathers play a significant role in adolescents in Indonesia compared to mothers. Thus, further research can focus on cultural values that form the basis of Indonesian parenting practices and how these affect students' mental health and academic performance.

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