

Attachment Styles and Internal Working Models of Children in *Takopii No Genzai*

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the attachment styles and the Internal Working Models (IWM) of child characters in *Takopii no Genzai*. This study utilizes a descriptive analytical method. The object of this study is the anime *Takopii no Genzai*, which is adapted from the manga by Taizan 5. According to John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, the results indicate that the inability of primary caregivers or parents to instill a sense of security leads to insecure attachment styles and the formation of negative Internal Working Models in three child characters, namely Shizuka, Marina, and Azuma.aw.

Keywords: Attachment, Internal Working Model, John Bowlby, *Takopii no Genzai*

INTRODUCTION

Griffith (2020) states that good literature is capable of providing pleasure by reflecting and ordering life, as well as giving us a new perspective on our place in the world. In other words, literature is a way to understand the dynamics of human experience and behavior. Literature often examines diverse human concerns, including psychological issues, as a reflection of reality. The psychological aspect is an essential element in literature because it relates directly to the depiction of the human psyche, which is represented through the characters within a narrative. Inas (2018) asserts that psychological aspects in literature are expressed through its characters.

The medium of literature has grown over time to include modern Japanese audio-visual literature known as anime. Anime can be categorized as literature because it has both intrinsic and extrinsic elements that build a story (Kurnia, 2018). Many anime today have characters with complex psychological conditions, which makes them suitable for analysis using a psychology of literature approach. The psychology of literature aims to comprehend the psychological phenomena present in a literary work (Lairabu et al., 2018). Maharani and Oemiati (2025) state that anime represents various aspects of social life, especially in Japan.

Takopii no Genzai is an anime that addresses complex psychological issues. Although it is a work of fiction, this anime deeply explores the psychological issues experienced by its child characters. The quality of emotional connection between children and their caregivers is often the root cause of mental

health problems in children. In psychology, this dynamic of emotional connection is referred to as attachment.

This attachment phenomenon is depicted in *Takopii no Genzai*, which illustrates how a stressful childhood can affect the way children see themselves, build relationships with others, and respond to their surroundings. Viewed from the perspective of John Bowlby's attachment theory, the three child characters in this anime, namely Shizuka, Marina, and Azuma, show indications of attachment disorders. They grow up in dysfunctional family environments where the relationship between them and their caregivers is insecure. This leads to a number of psychological conflicts in the story.

In light of this, the authors are interested in further examining how these dysfunctional family environments influence the characters' attachment styles and their Internal Working Models (IWM). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the attachment experienced by the three child characters in the anime *Takopii no Genzai*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attachment theory is a major way to study interpersonal relationships. It explains why parental relationship has such a strong impact on a child's personality (Jones, 2016). According to Bowlby (in Hidayah et al., 2025) attachment is rooted in a child's biological instinct to survive, which drives them to seek closeness and protection from their attachment figure. This bond is formed through the fulfillment of both physical and emotional needs, creating a personal emotional connection. This interpersonal relationship begins at birth, when the child first forms an emotional bond with their primary caregiver or parents. Because of this, mothers are frequently regarded as a child's most important attachment figures. Mary Ainsworth later built on Bowlby's work by concentrating on the responses of children and mothers to separation, and four attachment styles were found as a result of her research to determine the various working models of each child's reaction to separation. (Hidayah et al., 2025).

Secure Attachment, children with this attachment usually grow up with warm, responsive, and consistent caregiving. This environment allows them to feel safe while exploring, as they trust that their caregiver is always there for them when needed. They might feel anxious when separated, but they calm down quickly once their caregiver returns. This indicates that these children see themselves as people who deserve love and that their caregivers can be trusted.

Insecure Ambivalent Attachment, this type of attachment arises from inconsistent caregiving, where the caregiver is sometimes attentive but at other times unresponsive. This makes children both highly dependent and anxious. They tend to panic when separated from their caregivers, and when the caregiver returns, it can be hard to calm them down or they may even act out in anger. These children want closeness, but they are scared and unsure that their needs will be met. This condition reflects their inability to predict the caregiver's response and a constant fear of being abandoned.

Insecure Avoidant Attachment, this attachment forms when children have caregivers who are insensitive or often ignore their emotional needs. As a result, these children learn not to express their need for closeness. They look independent and unaffected when the caregiver leaves. When the caregiver returns, they don't even seem happy or comforted. However, this 'calmness' is actually their way of suppressing their emotional needs because they are used to not receiving a response from their caregivers.

Disorganized Attachment, children with this attachment style usually act in ways that are contradictory, confusing, or disorganized when they are separated from and then reunited with their

caregivers. This attachment style is often linked to children who have been through trauma, fear, or abuse.

According to Jones (2016), Internal Working Models (IWMs) are the most important part of attachment theory. These models are mental representations of oneself and others that begin to form at six weeks of age. They develop over time based on how a caregiver consistently responds to a child's distress. When children receive consistent and responsive care, they tend to develop positive internal working models of themselves and other people. On the other hand, children who are neglected or receive inconsistent care tend to develop less positive models and view themselves and others negatively. These models, once established in childhood, exhibit significant stability and continue to shape an individual's life into adulthood.

Previous literary studies have extensively analyzed the attachment styles developed by the characters. A study by Verlita (2024) examined the short story 'Samar' from Fiersa Besari's novel 11:11 using John Bowlby's attachment theory. The study indicated that the character developed an insecure attachment style, characterized by feelings of insecurity and difficulties in forming intimacy and trust. Moreover, the study demonstrated that the father-child relationship significantly influenced the character's psychological development. In a similar vein, Fajrianti (2018) analyzed the play script *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* by J.K. Rowling applying Bowlby's attachment theory. The study found that the character Albus Potter experienced changes in his attachment style, shaped by his relationship with his father, societal pressures, and the dynamics of friendship.

However, since the majority of studies focus on attachment styles, there remains a research gap. This study goes one step further by analyzing children's internal working models in addition to identifying the attachment styles in the anime *Takopii no Genzai*. In order to better understand these characters' actions and interactions throughout the narrative, this analysis examines how they see themselves and others.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive analytical method, which, according to Ratna (in Kasmarani, 2017), involves outlining the facts followed by a thorough analysis. This method is used to provide a comprehensive explanation of the data. Furthermore, this study utilizes a psychology of literature approach. Semi (Basuki et al., 2019) claims that this approach highlights the psychological aspects embedded within a literary work. In particular, this study applies John Bowlby's attachment theory to conduct the analysis.

The main source of data for this study is the 2025 anime adaptation of *Takopii no Genzai* produced by Kotaro Sudo, which is originally based on Taizan 5's manga. The selected scenes and dialogue collected through observation and note-taking constitute the data analyzed. based on the character's interpersonal interactions and actions, these data are then analyzed to determine the characters' attachment styles and their internal working models.

DISCUSSION

Shizuka Kuze

Shizuka's character presents a tragic case of an avoidant attachment style driven by chronic emotional neglect. Her dysfunctional family is the real cause of her trauma, despite the fact that she is primarily perceived as the victim of severe bullying by Marina at school. Growing up in a home with frequent parental conflicts and divorce, she experienced extreme emotional suppression as her need for affection was completely ignored.



Figure 1. The mother's cold words to Shizuka (Crunchyroll, 2025)



Figure 2. Shizuka witnessing parental conflict (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 2 Minute 08:40 and Episode 6 Minute 00:07

久世 しずかの母: 本当余計な面倒増やさないでよ。

Shizuka Kuze's Mom: Please don't cause unnecessary trouble for me.

Figure 1 reveals the root cause of Shizuka's avoidant attachment style. Individuals that are avoidant tend to put self-sufficiency and optimal distance, they actively avoid intimacy and interdependence (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). Even though Shizuka is hurt and sad because her dog is being taken away by animal control, her mother doesn't seem to care at all. Shizuka's emotional needs are completely ignored, as shown by her mother's cold words during her vulnerable time. This neglect is made even more apparent in Figure 2, which shows Shizuka witnessing her parents' argument. She does not cry or show any noticeable reaction, despite the fact that she holds her tears. This suggests that she has learned to hide her feelings. She realizes that showing her pain doesn't bring her the comfort or attention she needs, so she becomes emotionally numb.



Figure 3. Shizuka dismissing her injuries (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 4 Minute 14:05

久世 しずか: 別にいい。

Shizuka Kuze: It's fine

Shizuka's internal working model (IWM) is significantly shaped by the constant neglect she experiences. She consistently suppresses her emotions and hides her distress, even when it reaches an intolerable level, because her negative IWM dictates that she cannot depend on others. Figure 3, where, despite being bullied and severely injured, she merely dismisses the incidents. She responds to physical abuse with a hollow indifference because she has trained herself to suppress her emotions. Shizuka tries to survive with the belief that she has to deal with every problem on her own by keeping her suffering to herself.

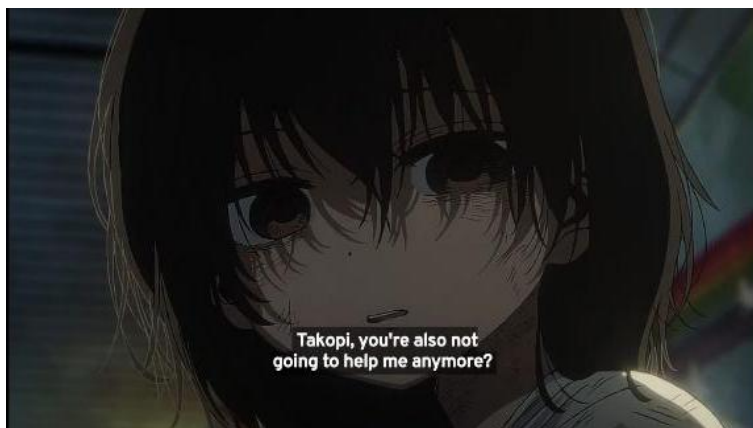


Figure 4. Shizuka feeling rejected by Takopii (Crunchyroll, 2025)



Figure 5. Shizuka hurting Takopii (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 5 Minute 04:45 and 05:45

久世 しずか: へえ、タコピも、もう助けてくれないんだ。私は考えるから。

Shizuka Kuze: Takopii, you're also not going to help me anymore? I'll figure it out myself.

Based on Figures 4 and 5, Shizuka's negative IWM causes her to violently reject Takopii. She pushes Takopii away when she feels her needs aren't being met, instead of asking for help. Mikulincer & Shaver (2018) argued that avoidant individuals tend to be more hostile and angry toward their partners when their partners unresponsive or if they feel rejected. She becomes cold and treats Takopii cruelly. This heartless action of roughly pushing Takopii away is a tragic trauma response. In an attempt to protect herself from the pain of being rejected again, she is desperately trying to convince herself that she doesn't need anyone.



Figure 6. Shizuka ending her own life (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 1 Minute 16:29

タコピー: 何で死んだ?

Takopii: Why is she dead?

The worst effect of Shizuka's avoidant attachment is shown in Figure 6. Takopii is completely confused when it discovers Shizuka's dead body. Because she never expressed her suffering to Takopii, it is unaware of the cause. Her broken IWM had fully persuaded her that no one would care and that her emotions were a burden. Consequently, she lived through her deep despair by herself. Eventually, her suicide is the final act of detachment in which she quietly escapes a world where she never felt like she belonged without saying a word.

Marina Kirarazaka

Marina experiences traumatic and extreme family dysfunction. Marina's family is extremely dysfunctional and traumatizing. At first, Marina grew up in a loving and supportive family. But when her father left Marina and her mother after having an affair with Shizuka's mother, her family fell apart. Marina's mother experienced severe depression as a result of this betrayal, which drastically changed her from being a nurturing protector into a perpetrator of emotional and physical abuse. This traumatic shift led to a disorganized attachment style in Marina. Bowlby (in Reisz et al., 2017) explains that the path of disorganized attachment relies on a source of safety that is also associated with a threat.



Figure 7. Marina's mother expressing her depression (Crunchyroll, 2025)



Figure 8. Marina's mother physically abusing Marina (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 5 Minute 16:47

雲母坂 まりなの母: ママがマリちゃんを傷物にしちゃったから。ママのこと、バカにしてるんじゃない!

Marina Kirarazaka's Mom: I'm a terrible mother. You look down on Mama, don't you?

Figure 7 shows how Marina's mother's depression, in which she self-deprecates by saying, "I'm a terrible mother," is an impact of the family's breakdown. However, as can be seen in Figure 8, when she violently slaps Marina and accuses her, "You look down on Mama, don't you?", this guilt soon turns into severe paranoia and physical abuse. The collapse of Marina's secure base is perfectly depicted in this scene. Ironically, the mother, who is meant to be a source of comfort, has turned into a physical threat and a source of intense fear.



Figure 9. Marina begging her abusive mother not to leave her (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Figure 9. Marina begging her abusive mother not to leave her (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 5 Minute 18:23

雲母坂 まりな: ママ、一人にしないで。

Marina Kirarazaka: Mama, don't leave me alone.

Marina's response emphasizes the tragic core of a disorganized attachment, despite the horrifying abuse she has suffered. Main and Solomon (in Reisz et al., 2017) argued that a child with disorganized attachment constantly experiences a conflict between the need for attachment and the fear of their caregiver. Figure 9 shows Marina, covered in blood, sobbing and begging, "Mama, don't leave me alone". This phenomenon is referred to as fear without solution in attachment theory. Marina feels frightened of her mother, but she also fears being abandoned.



Figure 10. Marina bullying Shizuka



Figure 11. Marina beating Shizuka (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 2 Minute 16:25

雲母坂 まりな:お前がいなくなれば！

Marina Kirarazaka: If only you weren't here.

Figures 10 and 11 show the effect of Marina's negative and confused internal working model. Although Marina is terrified of her abusive mother at home, at the same time, she still deeply needs her mother. Because she is confused and does not dare to fight her mother, Marina suppresses a massive amount of anger and helplessness. As a result, she looks for an easier target to vent her feelings. By bullying Shizuka, Marina displaces her stress and pain onto Shizuka. Bowlby (in Reisz et al., 2017) states that unresolved anger will continually be misdirected towards the wrong targets. It is Marina's way of feeling strong and in control, something she never gets to feel when she is with her mother.

Naoki Azuma

In contrast to Shizuka and Marina, the dysfunction in Azuma's family is primarily psychological and emotional. Azuma grows up in an environment that values conditional love. His mother consistently evaluates him against the achievements of his genius older brother and demands academic excellence.

Azuma loses a secure base that embraces him without conditions as a result of this highly demanding and unappreciative environment. Ultimately, these conditions foster an insecure ambivalent attachment or anxious attachment style within Azuma.



Figure 12. Azuma's mother invalidating his genuine efforts (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 4 Minute 08:28

東 直樹の母: うんと悪い点取って気を引こうっていうのは、
いくらなんでもお母さん、幼稚だと思うな。

Naoki Azuma's Mother: and purposely get bad grades just to get attention. isn't that a bit childish?

In Figure 12, the dialogue does not reflect Azuma's true intentions, but rather his mother's cruel accusation and severe invalidation of her son's genuine efforts. Driven by his anxious attachment, Azuma has actually tried desperately to earn his mother's validation out of a profound fear that she will stop loving him if he fails. However, he certainly does not possess the genius level intellect of his older brother.



Figure 13. The explicit emotional abandonment of Azuma by his mother (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 4 Minute 08:38

東 直樹の母: お母さんも頑張らないことにした。

Naoki Azuma's Mother: I have decided not to put in any more effort.

Figure 13 shows Azuma's mother explicitly declares that she has decided to give up on him. This profound rejection actualizes Azuma's deepest fear of emotional abandonment. People with anxious attachment strongly crave closeness and support, but they are also always afraid of rejection and abandonment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018).

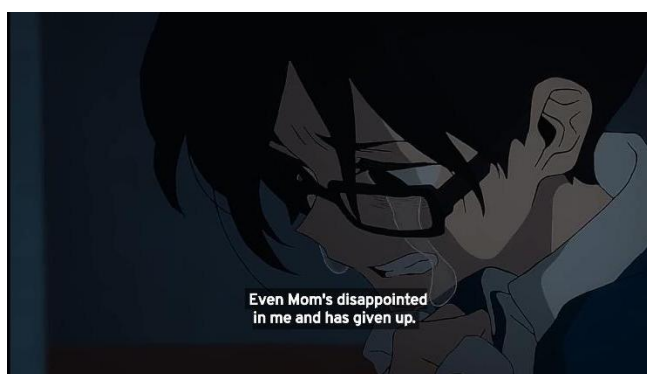


Figure 14. Azuma's emotional breakdown after being abandoned (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 4 Minute 18:54

東 直樹: 母さんにだって、失望されて、諦められて、誰も僕に興味なんかない。

Naoki Azuma: Even Mom is disappointed in me and has given up. Nobody is interested in me.

Based on Figure 14 where Azuma breaks down in tears as he realizes his mother has completely given up on him. From the perspective of an anxious attachment, this experience reinforces his negative Internal Working Model (IWM), specifically a negative model of self. As a result of internalizing his mother's rejection, he develops an overwhelming belief that no one else will ever be interested in or care about him and that he is inherently worthless.



Figure 15. Azuma trying to please Shizuka (Crunchyroll, 2025)

Episode 4 Minute 10:10

東 直樹: 僕が全部解決してみせるよ。

Naoki Azuma: I will solve everything for you.

The impact of his negative IWM is clearly seen in his interaction with Shizuka in Figure 15. Having been rejected by his mother, Azuma desperately seeks a new source of validation. Azuma demonstrates a typical anxious attachment style behavior by offering to do anything Shizuka requests. Mikulincer & Shaver (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018) suggest that people with anxious attachment styles often struggle to manage their strong need for affection and care, which can lead to intrusive behaviors. He thinks that Shizuka will depend on him and will never abandon him if he can solve her problems. He tries to make himself useful, hoping to finally regain the sense of being needed and loved that he failed to receive from his mother.

Although both use John Bowlby's attachment theory, the analysis in this study found several differences and similarities compared to previous studies. The difference can be seen in how the characters respond to their insecure attachment. In a previous study, Verlita et al. (2024) found that Samara in the novel *11:11* had an anxious attachment and responded to her past trauma by losing trust in other people. Meanwhile, this study found a different response in Azuma, who also had an anxious attachment. Azuma actually showed an extreme fear of abandonment. This fear pushed him to constantly seek validation and affection from his mother and his partner, even to the point of sacrificing himself to fulfill Shizuka's wishes.

Furthermore, Samara character in Verlita et al. (2024) and Albus character in Fajrianti (2018) responded to their attachment issues by withdrawing from their social environment. A similar avoidant attachment pattern was also found in Shizuka in this study, but with a much more extreme impact where she chose to end her own life. There is also a similarity in how the attachment style changes from secure to insecure, as seen in Albus character from a study by Fajrianti (2018) and Marina from this study. Initially, Marina had a secure attachment. However, because of her parents' affair and arguments that ruined her secure base, she ended up developing a disorganized attachment. Therefore, all findings from this study and the previous studies consistently prove one thing, that the role of caregivers or parents has a very important influence on the formation of a child's attachment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study indicate that the child characters in *Takopii no Genzai*, namely Shizuka, Marina, and Azuma, all experience insecure attachment. Each child developed a negative Internal Working Model (IWM) because they never felt secure in their dysfunctional families. Shizuka demonstrates an avoidant attachment style, totally suppressing her emotions and dealing with her intense suffering in complete silence because she never received the attention or care that she needed. Marina exhibits a disorganized attachment style driven by her high-conflict family's confusion and anger. Meanwhile, Azuma experiences an anxious attachment style that makes him always afraid of being abandoned and constantly looking to other people for validation. They use their IWMs as a 'broken lens' through which they view themselves and the world. Shizuka believes that she does not need anyone and no one will care about her. Marina believes the world is inherently cruel and requires her to be the aggressor. Azuma believes he is only valuable if he is useful to others. When children lack a secure emotional base at home, they project their inner pain onto each other, leading to mutual devastation.

In light of these findings, this study recommends that future studies in literary psychology research

expand and deepen the examination of children's psychological problems as depicted in modern literature, especially from the standpoint of attachment theory. It is intended that this study will be a useful resource for further related research. By doing so, literary studies can continue proving their value in demonstrating the significant influence that family environments have on child character development.

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