

# SYMPHONIA

## Journal of Theory and Research Output

Volume 1, Issue 1, January 2026



### Affection and Boundaries in Parenting: An Ethical Analysis from a Family Education Perspective

*Kasih Sayang dan Batasan dalam Pengasuhan Anak: Analisis Etis dari Perspektif Pendidikan Keluarga*

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Submitted : 2 January 2026

Revision : 3 January 2026

Accepted : 4 January 2026

#### Abstract

Parenting play an important role in shaping emotional regulation and character development in children. In everyday practice, affection is often understood as emotional support without clear boundaries, which can potentially hinder the development of children's self-regulation. This article aims to analyze the relationship between affection and boundaries in child-rearing patterns from the perspective of parenting ethics and family education. The article was written using a conceptual-analytical approach, drawing on a review of scientific literature from the past five years and reflecting on professional practice in the field of child development services. The analysis results indicate that parenting styles emphasizing unconditional love without consistent boundaries tend to be associated with poor emotional regulation, self-control, and child responsibility. Conversely, integrating affection, structure, and ethical values into parenting supports more adaptive emotional development and prepares children to face social and educational demands.

**Keywords:** Affection; Boundaries; Emotional Regulation; Family Education; Parenting

#### Abstrak

Pola asuh orang tua memegang peran penting dalam pembentukan regulasi emosi dan pengembangan karakter anak. Dalam praktik sehari-hari, kasih sayang sering dipahami sebagai dukungan emosional tanpa disertai batasan yang jelas, sehingga berpotensi menghambat perkembangan regulasi diri anak. Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis relasi antara kasih sayang dan batasan dalam pola asuh anak dari perspektif etika pengasuhan dan pendidikan keluarga. Penulisan artikel menggunakan pendekatan konseptual-analitis melalui kajian literatur ilmiah lima tahun terakhir serta refleksi praktik profesional di bidang layanan tumbuh kembang anak. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa pola asuh yang menekankan kasih sayang tanpa batasan yang konsisten cenderung berkaitan dengan lemahnya regulasi emosi, kontrol diri, dan tanggung jawab anak. Sebaliknya, integrasi kasih sayang, struktur, dan nilai etis dalam pengasuhan mendukung perkembangan emosi yang lebih adaptif dan kesiapan anak menghadapi tuntutan sosial dan pendidikan.

**Kata Kunci:** Kasih sayang; Batasan; Pengaturan emosi; Pendidikan keluarga; Pengasuhan anak



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## INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles are the primary context for children's emotional, behavioral, and value development. In modern family practice, affection is often understood as the fulfillment of emotional needs without clear boundaries. This condition has the potential to weaken a child's ability to develop self-regulation and behavioral responsibility, especially when the child is faced with increasingly complex social and educational demands. This phenomenon shows that warm parenting is not necessarily always educational if it is not accompanied by consistent structure. Contemporary developmental psychology literature emphasizes that the balance between affection and boundaries plays a significant role in shaping children's emotional regulation and self-control from an early age.<sup>1</sup> Responsive affection provides emotional security, while consistent boundaries offer the necessary structure for children to understand social rules and develop behavioral responsibility.<sup>2</sup> These findings position the relationship between affection and structure as a key component of adaptive parenting practices.

Within the framework of parenting theories, the integration of affection and boundaries is most often understood through authoritative parenting. Several studies indicate that this pattern is consistently associated with more mature emotional regulation, better social competence, and a lower risk of behavioral problems compared to permissive or authoritarian parenting styles.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, parenting styles that emphasize unconditional love without boundaries or boundaries without love are both potentially detrimental to a child's emotional development. Emotion regulation is understood as a key mechanism that mediates the relationship between parenting and child adjustment. Emotion regulation refers to the ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional responses to align with situational demands.<sup>4</sup> Longitudinal studies show that warm and structured parenting is associated with better emotional regulation and impulse control in children.<sup>5</sup> However, most of these studies still focus on psychological aspects, with limited attention to the ethical dimensions of parenting in the context of family education.

In contemporary family practice, the application of a balance between affection and boundaries also faces challenges due to changing social values, parenting pressures, and exposure to digital technology.<sup>6</sup> From an ethical perspective on parenting, this condition demands an understanding that parenting is not merely a psychological practice, but a moral one aimed at

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shaping a child's character and responsibility.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, this article aims to analyze the relationship between affection and boundaries in child-rearing from the perspective of parenting ethics and family education, positioning parenting as a value-based educational practice.

### Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a conceptual-analytical design. The research did not involve collecting field data, but rather focused on a conceptual analysis of theoretical studies and scientific discussions relevant to parenting practices. This approach was chosen to examine the relationship between affection and boundaries in childrearing from the perspective of parenting ethics and family education. The research data source is secondary data obtained from reputable scientific literature published in reputable journal. A literature search was conducted thru academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect, using keywords related to parenting styles, emotional regulation, executive function, parenting ethics, and family education. The selected literature is limited to journal articles that are directly relevant to the conceptual focus of the research.

Data analysis was conducted thru thematic and comparative analysis. The analysis stages include identifying key concepts, grouping themes, and comparing theoretical frameworks across studies to examine the evolving patterns of relationships and conceptual assumptions. The analysis also integrates empirical findings with ethical reflections on parenting to build a coherent conceptual framework. As a conceptual study, this article does not aim to make empirical generalizations or draw causal conclusions. The scope of the research is limited to a theoretical interpretation of contemporary literature and does not involve human participants directly, thus not requiring research ethics approval.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Love and Boundaries as the Foundation of Parenting

From various theoretical frameworks, the results of the conceptual analysis show that affection and boundaries are two fundamental and complementary components in child-rearing. Affection serves to provide a sense of emotional security that supports the development of a child's attachment and trust toward their parents.<sup>8</sup> However, the literature also suggests that affection without clear boundaries can potentially lead to behavioral ambiguity, especially in the context of establishing rules and responsibilities for children. In this case, boundaries serve as a structure that helps children understand social expectations and gradually develop self-control.<sup>9</sup>

Integrating love and boundaries has proven to be the most adaptive approach compared to predominantly applying either one. Several studies indicate that parenting styles combining emotional warmth with consistent structure are associated with better emotional regulation and social competence in children.<sup>10</sup> This finding strengthens the argument that the foundation of

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7 Kristjánsson, Kristján. 2025. "Recent Developments in the Field of Moral Education—and Some Prompts for Authors, Old and New." *Journal of Moral Education* 54 (4): 519–25. doi:10.1080/03057240.2025.2577606. and Walker, Lawrence J. "Morality, Religion, Spirituality—the Value of Saintliness." *Journal of Moral Education* 32, No. 4 (2003): 373–84. doi:10.1080/0305724032000161277.

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effective parenting lies not solely in the intensity of affection, but in the balance between affection and structure, which provides clear behavioral direction for the child.

### ***Emotion Regulation as a Key Mechanism in Parenting***

Analysis of the study results indicates that emotion regulation is the primary mechanism mediating the relationship between parenting practices and children's emotional and social adjustment. Emotional regulation develops thru a process of co-regulation, which is the repeated interaction between parents and children in responding to emotional experiences.<sup>11</sup> In this context, warm and structured parenting provides a supportive environment for children to learn to recognize, express, and manage emotions adaptively.

Empirical research shows that children raised with a combination of consistent warmth and boundaries have better abilities to delay impulses, manage frustration, and adapt to social demands.<sup>12</sup> Emotion validation accompanied by clear boundaries helps children internalize constructive emotion regulation strategies without neglecting behavioral responsibility.<sup>13</sup> Thus, emotion regulation is not only understood as an intrapersonal ability, but as a result of relational processes in parenting. Parental emotion regulation also plays an important role in the quality of co-regulation formed between parents and children, which subsequently influences children's emotional adjustment within family and social contexts.<sup>14</sup>

### **Limits, Self-Control, and Executive Functions in Family Education**

The study results also show that boundaries play an important role in supporting the development of children's executive functions, such as inhibition, attention, and behavioral planning. These functions are fundamental to self-control and children's readiness to meet academic and social demands.<sup>15</sup> Consistent boundaries help children understand the consequences of their behavior and practice controlling impulsive responses.

In the context of family education, boundaries do not merely serve as a tool for control, but rather as a means of learning self-regulation and behavioral responsibility. Dialogically and proportionally applied boundaries allow children to develop responsible autonomy without feeling pressured or losing their sense of security.<sup>16</sup> This finding confirms that the quality of boundaries, not just their mere existence, determines their impact on children's executive function development and self-control.

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### *Ethical Implications of Parenting for Values-Based Family Education*

From an ethical perspective on parenting, the analysis results confirm that childrearing cannot be separated from moral and value dimensions. Parenting ethics places children as dignified subjects who need to be guided toward responsible independence, not simply directed to obey.<sup>17</sup> Within the framework of value-based family education, the integration of affection and boundaries becomes the main foundation for character development and self-regulation in children.

Amidst the challenges of modern parenting, such as changing social values and exposure to digital technology, the balance between affection and structure is becoming increasingly relevant.<sup>18</sup> The conceptual findings in this article suggest that ethical and educational parenting requires consistency of values, role modeling, and the application of boundaries that are aligned with children's developmental needs. Thus, family education plays a strategic role in shaping generations that are not only emotionally competent but also possess moral and social responsibility. The process of children internalizing values and self-control is significantly influenced by how parents consistently and meaningfully apply boundaries within a supportive relationship.<sup>19</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This article asserts that affection and boundaries are two inseparable dimensions in child-rearing. The integration of both forms an important foundation for the development of children's emotional regulation, self-control, and moral responsibility. Affection provides emotional security, while fair and consistent boundaries offer a structure that allows children to understand the consequences of behavior and gradually internalize values. Emotional regulation emerges as a key mechanism bridging parenting practices with children's readiness to face social and educational demands.

The main contribution of this article lies in strengthening the ethical perspective of parenting within the framework of value-based family education. By integrating developmental psychology studies and ethical reflections, this article positions parenting as an educational and moral practice aimed at shaping children who are reflective, responsible, and dignified. This approach enriches the understanding of parenting by emphasizing the balance between affection, structure, and value modeling in family life.

As a conceptual study, the strength of this article lies in its interdisciplinary synthesis, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding balanced parenting. However, its limitation is that it does not involve empirical data, making it impossible to test the causal relationships between the concepts discussed. Therefore, further research is recommended to empirically examine the integration of compassion and boundaries in various cultural contexts and age groups of children, in order to broaden and deepen the development of ethical and effective parenting practices.

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