



Emotional Gaps in Affectionate Communication within Minangkabau Families: Perspectives of Parents, Children, and Teachers

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Abstract. Emotional communication within the family plays a critical role in supporting children's psychological well-being. However, expressions of affection are not always interpreted similarly by parents and children, creating emotional gaps within relationships. This study explored emotional gaps in affectionate communication within Minangkabau families from the simultaneous perspectives of parents, children, and teachers. Employing a qualitative exploratory-descriptive design, data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 parents, 6 primary school children, and 6 primary school teachers selected via purposive sampling, and analyzed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis. The findings revealed a distinct discrepancy between parental intentions and children's emotional experiences. Parents tended to manifest affection through discipline, responsibility, and behavioral control, whereas children conceptualized affection through emotional presence, safety, attention, and warm communication. Limited emotional availability and dominant, anger-based parental responses prompted children to develop protective strategies, such as remaining silent, avoiding interaction, and seeking external emotional support. Teachers observed that these domestic dynamics subsequently affected children's behavior, emotional well-being, and learning motivation within the school environment, highlighting emotional gaps as a cross-contextual relational phenomenon spanning both family and school systems. The novelty of this research lies in its multiperspective framework, which integrates the viewpoints of parents, children, and teachers to understand affectionate communication within the Minangkabau cultural context. Ultimately, these findings underscore the necessity of emotional presence in parenting and suggest a need for sensitive collaboration between families and schools, while providing an empirical foundation for culturally responsive family counseling and parenting education programs.

Keywords: Emotional communication; emotional gap; parenting; minangkabau family; children's emotional well-being.

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Introduction

Emotional communication between parents and children plays an important role in supporting children's psychological, social, and emotional development. Through warm, responsive, and affectionate communication, children learn to recognize emotions, develop a sense of security, and build emotional regulation and healthy interpersonal relationships (Garcia-Peinado, 2024; Thümmler et al., 2022). From the perspective of Attachment Theory, secure emotional relationships are developed through consistent, supportive, and emotionally sensitive parenting responses to children's needs (Cooke et al., 2019; Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022). One important form of emotional communication within the family is affectionate communication, which refers to interactions that demonstrate care, empathy, warmth, and emotional acceptance toward children. However, affectionate communication is not always interpreted similarly by parents and children, as expressions of affection are influenced by emotional experiences, parenting styles, and family cultural contexts. From the perspective of Attachment Theory, emotional gaps may emerge when parental expressions of affection are not perceived by children as emotionally responsive to their needs. Within collectivistic cultural contexts, affection may also be expressed through discipline, obedience, and behavioral guidance rather than explicit emotional expression. Consequently, differences between parental intentions and children's emotional interpretations may contribute to emotional gaps within family relationships.

Parents generally express affection through responsibility, protection, supervision, and discipline, whereas children tend to perceive affection through emotional attention, warm communication, and feelings of safety within family interactions. These differences in meaning may create emotional gaps within family relationships, particularly when behaviors intended as affection are perceived by children as emotional pressure or frightening experiences. Emotional gaps refer to the mismatch between the forms of affection intended by parents and the emotional experiences perceived by children. This concept is closely related to emotional atonement, emotional availability, and parent-child emotional incongruence, which emphasize the extent to which parental emotional expressions are accurately perceived and experienced by children (Cooke et al., 2019; Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022). Emotional gaps may emerge when parental expressions intended as care are not interpreted by children as emotionally supportive or nurturing. Previous studies have shown that communication patterns dominated by anger, excessive control, and low emotional sensitivity may negatively affect children's emotional security and increase tendencies toward withdrawal and emotional regulation difficulties (D. Li et al., 2023; Ogundele, 2018; Peng, 2024). Although previous studies have examined family communication and children's emotional regulation, most have primarily focused on parenting behaviors without deeply explaining how differences in the interpretation of affection contribute to emotional gaps within family relationships.

In addition to family relational dynamics, emotional communication is also influenced by cultural values that shape parenting practices and family interaction patterns. In Minangkabau society, family relationships are generally constructed through values of respect toward parents, obedience to family rules, and emotional restraint in social interactions. As a matrilineal society, Minangkabau culture emphasizes collective family responsibility, social harmony, and culturally guided interpersonal behavior. Values such as respect for elders, maintaining family dignity, and careful emotional expression may influence parenting practices and affectionate communication

within family relationships. From the perspective of Collectivist Culture, individuals in collectivistic societies are commonly taught to regulate emotional expression in order to maintain social harmony (Klein et al., 2024; Ramzan & Amjad, 2017; Vishkin et al., 2022). Several studies have also demonstrated that parenting cultures emphasizing obedience and behavioral control may influence how children's express emotions and seek emotional support within the family (Cheung & Cheah, 2025; Jaramillo et al., 2017). In this context, cultural values not only shape family communication patterns but also influence how affection is expressed and interpreted by family members.

Limited parental emotional presence in daily communication may encourage children to develop protective strategies such as suppressing feelings, avoiding communication, or seeking emotional support from figures perceived as psychologically safer. Research on emotion socialization indicates that negative and unresponsive emotional communication within families may affect children's socio-emotional development and contribute to defensive coping patterns in interpersonal relationships (Bertie et al., 2021; Hanley, 2021; Olibra, 2024). These protective strategies not only affect children's relationships at home but may also manifest in their social and emotional behaviors at school.

The impact of emotional gaps within families is also evident in educational settings. Teachers, as individuals who interact directly with children, often observe behavioral changes, decreased learning motivation, social withdrawal, and emotional regulation difficulties among children experiencing emotional distress at home. In some situations, teachers may even become figures from whom children seek emotional security and support that are not optimally obtained within the family environment. Previous studies have shown that the quality of emotional relationships within families is closely associated with children's emotional well-being, academic engagement, and social adjustment at school (Eriksen & Bru, 2023; Martinez-Yarza et al., 2024). Nevertheless, teachers' perspectives remain relatively underrepresented in studies on family emotional communication.

Although research on family communication and parenting has developed extensively, previous studies in Indonesia have primarily focused on parenting styles, family communication patterns, emotional regulation, and child development outcomes (Immaniar et al., 2025; Wibowo & Rizkiana, 2025). Limited attention has been given to examining emotional gaps that emerge from discrepancies between parents' intentions in expressing affection and children's emotional interpretations of those expressions. Existing studies have also tended to explore family communication from either parents' or children's perspectives separately, while research integrating the perspectives of parents, children, and teachers remains scarce. Consequently, understanding of how emotional gaps are formed, interpreted, and manifested across both family and school contexts remains insufficiently developed.

Furthermore, although cultural values are recognized as important factors shaping parenting practices and emotional communication (Klein et al., 2024; Ramzan & Amjad, 2017; Vishkin et al., 2022), empirical studies examining affectionate communication within the specific cultural context of Minangkabau families are still limited. The Minangkabau context is particularly important because family relationships are strongly influenced by values of respect for parental authority, obedience, social harmony, and emotional restraint, which may shape how affection is expressed and interpreted within family interactions. Therefore, further investigation is needed to understand

how these cultural values influence the formation and interpretation of emotional gaps within family relationships.

Based on these issues, this study aims to understand emotional gaps in affectionate communication within Minangkabau families from the perspectives of parents, children, and teachers. This study conceptualizes emotional gaps as a relational phenomenon emerging from the interaction between parents' parenting intentions, children's emotional experiences, and their manifestations within school contexts. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on parent-child relationships, this study adopts a Mult perspective approach by integrating the perspectives of parents, children, and teachers to understand emotional gaps across family and school environments within the Minangkabau cultural context. In addition to contributing theoretically to the study of culturally grounded family communication and parenting, this study is also expected to provide an empirical foundation for developing family interventions and guidance and counseling services that are more sensitive to children's emotional needs.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory-descriptive design to gain an in-depth understanding of emotional gaps in affectionate communication within Minangkabau families. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study focused on the emotional experiences, meanings, and relational dynamics experienced by participants in their everyday lives. Through this approach, the researchers sought to understand how affection is expressed, interpreted, and experienced differently by parents, children, and teachers within family and school contexts. The study was conducted in West Sumatra Province, Indonesia, involving participants from Padang City, Tanah Datar Regency, and Solok Regency. These locations were selected to represent diverse Minangkabau family contexts, including urban, traditional rural, and semi-rural settings. This variation enabled the researchers to obtain a broader understanding of affectionate communication experiences within different socio-cultural contexts of Minangkabau families. Data collection was conducted between July and September 2025 through in-depth interviews with parents, children, and teachers.

An exploratory-descriptive design was utilized because the phenomenon of emotional gaps in family communication remains relatively underexplored, particularly within local cultural contexts. This study also employed reflexive thematic analysis to identify patterns of experiences, meanings, and emotional dynamics emerging from participants' narratives in a more contextual and interpretative manner (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Participants

The participants consisted of three groups: parents, primary school children, and primary school teachers. The study involved 12 parents, 6 primary school children, and 6 primary school teachers. The parents who participated were actively involved in everyday parenting practices and lived with their children within the nuclear family environment. The child participants were primary school students aged 9–12 years who were able to communicate verbally and willing to share their emotional experiences and family communication experiences. Meanwhile, teachers were selected

based on their experience in interacting with and observing children's social behavior, learning motivation, and emotional conditions within the school environment.

The involvement of these three participant groups aimed to obtain a multiperspective understanding of emotional gaps in affectionate family communication and their manifestations within the school context. The number of participants was determined based on the principle of thematic saturation. Interviews were conducted until no substantially new information, codes, or themes emerged and participants' narratives began to show recurring patterns and meanings across the three participant groups. At this stage, thematic saturation was considered to have been achieved (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Participant Recruitment Procedure

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on criteria relevant to the focus of the study. Parents were selected if they were actively involved in parenting practices and daily communication with their children within the family environment. The child participants were primary school students aged 9–12 years who were able to communicate verbally and willing to share their emotional experiences during the interview process. Meanwhile, teachers were selected based on their experience in directly interacting with children and their involvement in observing children's social behavior, learning motivation, and emotional conditions at school.

Before the data collection process began, all participants received explanations regarding the research objectives, interview procedures, data confidentiality, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participation consent was obtained from adult participants, while consent for child participants was obtained through parents or guardians. The researcher also ensured that the interview process was conducted in an emotionally safe and comfortable environment, particularly for child participants.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which generally lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, depending on the depth of participants' responses and level of engagement during the interview process. Prior to the interviews, rapport-building activities were conducted, particularly with child participants, to create a comfortable and emotionally safe atmosphere. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia or the Minangkabau language according to participants' preferences and everyday language use. Examples of key interview questions included: "How do you express affection toward your child?" for parents, "What makes you feel loved or unloved by your parents?" for children, and "What effects of family communication do you observe on children's behavior or learning motivation at school?" for teachers.

Research Instruments

Research data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interview guidelines were developed based on the study objectives and a review of literature related to family emotional communication, parenting, children's emotional well-being, and culturally grounded family relationships. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provided flexibility for participants to openly express their experiences, perspectives, and emotional reflections.

Interviews with parents focused on how they expressed affection, communication patterns with their children, responses to children's behaviors and emotions, and their experiences in everyday parenting practices. Interviews with children explored their emotional experiences within the family, their sense of safety when communicating with parents, experiences of being scolded,

and the individuals they perceived as emotionally comfortable for sharing stories and seeking support. Meanwhile, interviews with teachers focused on their observations of children's emotional conditions, behavioral changes, learning motivation, social interaction patterns, and teachers' perspectives regarding the relationship between family communication and children's emotional well-being at school. All interviews were conducted individually and audio-recorded with participants' consent to facilitate transcription and data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis with an inductive approach. This approach was employed to identify, understand, and interpret patterns of meaning based on participants' experiences and narratives. The analysis involved several stages, including data familiarization, initial coding, code categorization, theme development, theme review, and theme refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Although Attachment Theory and Collectivist Culture informed the broader conceptual framework of the study, the initial coding and theme development were guided primarily by meanings emerging from participants' narratives. Theoretical perspectives were subsequently used during the interpretation and refinement of themes rather than as predetermined coding categories.

In the initial stage, the researchers repeatedly read the interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data and wrote preliminary reflective memos. The next stage involved coding sections of data relevant to the research focus, such as experiences of being scolded, limitations in emotional communication, children's strategies for coping with emotional pressure, and behavioral changes observed at school. Codes with related meanings were subsequently grouped into subthemes and major themes.

The analysis was conducted across participant groups to understand the relationships and differences in perspectives among parents, children, and teachers regarding emotional gaps in family communication. To enhance the credibility of the study, source triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from the different participant groups. In addition, peer debriefing was conducted through discussions with the research supervisor and academic peers during the coding and theme development process to enhance the credibility and consistency of data interpretation (Ali & Shah, 2025; McMahan & Winch, 2018). In addition, the analytical process was systematically documented to maintain consistency and transparency in data interpretation. Given the reflexive nature of thematic analysis, the first researcher, who has an academic background in guidance and counseling, engaged in ongoing reflexive practices throughout the analytical process. Reflective memos and discussions with the research supervisor were used to critically examine personal assumptions, interpretations, and potential biases, thereby ensuring that the findings remained grounded in participants' narratives.

Results

The thematic analysis of interviews with parents, children, and teachers revealed the presence of emotional gaps in affectionate communication within Minangkabau families. These emotional gaps emerged from differences in how parents and children interpreted expressions of affection in everyday interactions. The analysis generated five major themes: (1) differences in the meaning of affection between parents and children, (2) limited emotional presence and the dominance of

anger-based expressions, (3) children's protective strategies in dealing with emotional pressure, (4) shifts in children's sources of emotional support, and (5) manifestations of emotional gaps within the school context.

Differences in the Meaning of Affection between Parents and Children

The first theme revealed differences in how parents and children interpreted affection within the family. Most parents viewed affection as responsibility, protection, supervision, and efforts to discipline children.

One parent stated:

"When I get angry, it is actually because I care. I want my child to learn discipline and not repeat mistakes." (P3)

Another parent explained:

"I remind and supervise my child because I want them to become a better person in the future." (P8)

In contrast, children interpreted affection through emotional attention, gentle communication, and feelings of safety when interacting with their parents.

One child expressed:

"I prefer it when my parents speak softly. When they yell, I become scared." (S2)

Children also described that the way parents communicated and responded to mistakes influenced their comfort in communicating at home. These differences suggest that parents and children may operate from different emotional frameworks in interpreting affection, potentially contributing to emotional gaps when parental intentions are not experienced by children as emotional support.

Limited Emotional Presence and the Dominance of Anger-Based Expressions

The second theme illustrated that family communication was often characterized by anger-based responses when children made mistakes. Some parents perceived firmness as necessary to ensure that children obeyed rules and became responsible for their behavior.

One parent explained:

"Sometimes we have to be strict so children will listen and not argue back." (P7)

On the other hand, children described these situations as making them feel afraid, uncomfortable, and less willing to communicate with their parents.

One child stated:

"When my parents are angry, I prefer to stay silent." (S4)

Several children also reported waiting until the situation became calmer before speaking again with their parents. These responses suggest the emergence of fear-based communication patterns, in which children become less willing to express their thoughts and feelings openly when family interactions are perceived as emotionally uncomfortable.

Children's Protective Strategies in Dealing with Emotional Pressure

The third theme showed that children developed various ways to cope with emotionally uncomfortable situations within the family. Some children chose to remain silent, suppress their feelings, or avoid communication when facing parental anger.

One child shared:

"When I feel sad or upset, I keep it to myself first." (S5)

Another child explained:

"Sometimes I stay in my room until I feel calmer." (S3)

In addition, several children reduced their interactions with parents when the home atmosphere felt emotionally uncomfortable. Children also tended to be more cautious in expressing their opinions and feelings to their parents. These behaviors may reflect emotional withdrawal and self-protective coping strategies developed to maintain emotional safety when children perceive family interactions as emotionally stressful.

Shifts in Children's Sources of Emotional Support

The next theme indicated that some children felt more comfortable seeking emotional support from figures outside the family, such as teachers, relatives, or close friends.

One child stated:

"At school, I usually tell my teacher." (S1)

Teachers also observed that some children were more open in sharing personal problems with teachers than with their parents.

One teacher explained:

"Some children are more comfortable talking to teachers when they have problems at home." (T4)

These findings reflected children's tendency to seek communication spaces that felt emotionally safer and more supportive. This tendency may indicate children's efforts to seek alternative sources of emotional security from individuals perceived as more emotionally responsive and supportive.

Manifestations of Emotional Gaps within the School Context

The final theme showed that children's emotional conditions within the family were also reflected in their behavior and activities at school. Teachers observed behavioral changes, decreased learning motivation, social withdrawal, and interaction difficulties among some children.

One teacher stated:

"Children who receive less emotional attention at home are usually quieter and show lower learning motivation." (T5)

Another teacher observed:

"Some children become less active in classroom discussions when they are facing emotional difficulties at home." (T2)

Teachers also observed that children’s emotional conditions influenced their participation in classroom activities and social relationships at school. These manifestations may reflect the broader impact of family emotional experiences on children's socio-emotional adjustment and engagement within the school environment.

Table 1. Themes Generated from Thematic Analysis

Main Themes	Subthemes	Analytical Interpretation	Representative Quotations
Differences in the Meaning of Affection	Discipline and responsibility; Emotional warmth and safety	Different meanings of affection between parents and children	"When I get angry, it is actually because I care." (P3)
Limited Emotional Presence	Anger-based communication; Fear of communication	Fear-based communication and reduced emotional security	"When my parents are angry, I prefer to stay silent." (S4)
Children's Protective Strategies	Emotional withdrawal; Emotional suppression	Self-protective coping strategies	"When I feel sad or upset, I keep it to myself first." (S5)
Shifts in Emotional Support	Teacher support; External support	Seeking alternative sources of emotional security	"At school, I usually tell my teacher." (S1)
Manifestations in School	Low motivation; Social withdrawal	Effects on socio-emotional adjustment and engagement	"Children who receive less emotional attention at home are usually quieter..." (T5)

Discussion

This study aimed to understand emotional gaps in affectionate communication within Minangkabau families from the perspectives of parents, children, and teachers. The findings revealed a discrepancy between parents’ parenting intentions and children’s emotional experiences in everyday interactions. Parents tended to express affection through discipline, responsibility, protection, and behavioral control, whereas children interpreted affection through emotional presence, attention, a sense of security, and warm communication. These findings indicate that affectionate communication within families is not only related to parenting practices, but also to how emotional experiences are received and interpreted by children in everyday relationships.

From the perspective of Attachment Theory, secure emotional relationships develop when children receive caregiving responses that are consistent, warm, and responsive to their emotional needs (Khadka, 2022; Santana-Ferrández et al., 2025; Shirvani & Michael, 2017). Parents’ emotional presence plays an important role in shaping children’s psychological security and emotional regulation abilities (Khalila et al., 2026; Mabarun & Prima, 2025). However, the findings of this study indicate that some parents placed greater emphasis on behavioral control and discipline than on emotional presence in everyday communication. Parents perceived anger and firmness as forms of care and responsibility, whereas children interpreted them as emotional experiences that evoked fear, pressure, and discomfort. This discrepancy may reflect a lack of emotional attunement between parents and children, in which parents’ intentions in expressing affection are not interpreted by children in the manner originally intended. From the perspective of Attachment Theory, repeated experiences of fear, pressure, and emotional discomfort may contribute to attachment insecurity when children perceive parental responses as insufficiently responsive to their emotional needs (Cooke et al., 2019; Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022). These findings are consistent with previous studies (Aditya et al., 2025; M. Li et al., 2021; López-Martínez et al., 2019;

Peng, 2024), which demonstrated that communication patterns dominated by anger and harsh parenting may affect children's emotional security and the quality of parent-child relationships.

The findings also showed that the dominance of anger-based expressions in family communication limited children's emotional openness. Children tended to remain silent, suppress their feelings, avoid communication, or wait until situations became calmer before speaking again with their parents. These conditions indicate that children attempt to maintain their emotional security within family relationships. These findings support studies by (Wibowo & Rizkiana, 2025), (Afresya & Setianingrum, 2026), as well as (Immaniar et al., 2025), which explained that emotional conflict within families and emotionally unresponsive communication patterns may contribute to the development of defensive coping strategies among children. In this study, silence and communication avoidance were not merely forms of obedience toward parents, but also represented self-protective strategies against the emotional pressure experienced by children. These behaviors may also be understood as emotion-focused coping strategies through which children attempt to regulate emotional distress and maintain a sense of psychological safety when family interactions are perceived as emotionally threatening. These findings also suggest limitations in emotional responsiveness within family interactions. When children perceive that their emotional experiences are not adequately acknowledged, understood, or responded to, they may become less willing to communicate openly and increasingly rely on emotional withdrawal as a strategy to maintain emotional safety (Bertie et al., 2021; Thümmeler et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the findings revealed that children are not merely passive recipients within family relationships, but active individuals who develop adaptive strategies in response to the emotional dynamics they experience. Children tended to seek communication spaces perceived as emotionally safer through other figures such as teachers, siblings, or close friends when they felt uncomfortable or unsafe expressing their emotional experiences within the family environment. This tendency may indicate children's efforts to seek alternative sources of emotional security from individuals perceived as more emotionally responsive and supportive. Within an attachment perspective, such relationships may function as complementary sources of emotional support when children perceive limitations in emotional availability within the family environment (Neve et al., 2023; Thümmeler et al., 2022). Previous studies have shown that children who experience limited emotional support within the family tend to seek alternative emotional relationships that provide psychological safety and acceptance (Dwistia et al., 2025; Ulianova, 2025). These findings are also consistent with studies by (Compas, Bruce E.; Epping, 1993), (Napisah & Sakdiah, 2026), and (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2011), which demonstrated that children develop various emotional coping strategies to deal with interpersonal pressures and family conflicts.

In this context, children's need for emotional presence is not solely related to verbal communication, but also to feeling accepted, understood, and listened to within interpersonal relationships. This condition is of particular concern because limited emotional communication within families may increase children's vulnerability in seeking emotional support from environments outside the family that may not necessarily provide appropriate and psychologically safe responses for their psychological development. Therefore, parental emotional presence, as well as warm, open, and supportive family communication, is essential to ensure that children have a safe space to express their emotional experiences in healthy ways within the family environment.

Within the cultural context, the findings indicated that parenting practices in Minangkabau families are influenced by values emphasizing respect for parents, obedience to family rules, and regulation of emotional expression in social interactions. These values serve important functions in maintaining family harmony and social order. Within the Minangkabau cultural context, values such as *raso jo pareso* (sensitivity and careful consideration in social interaction) and the emphasis on maintaining family dignity may encourage children to regulate emotional expression and avoid open confrontation (Ramzan & Amjad, 2017; Vishkin et al., 2022). While these values support social harmony, under certain conditions they may also encourage children to internalize emotional experiences when emotionally responsive communication is limited. This may help explain why some children in the present study preferred silence, emotional withdrawal, or communication avoidance when experiencing emotional pressure within family relationships.

At the same time, however, the emphasis on behavioral control and emotional restraint may limit emotional openness in communication between parents and children. From the perspective of Collectivist Culture, individuals in collectivistic cultures are generally taught to regulate emotions in order to maintain interpersonal relationships and social harmony (Ramzan & Amjad, 2017; Santoso et al., 2025). Studies by (Chao, 1994), (Tuazzara et al., 2025), and (Yim, 2022) also demonstrated that Asian parenting cultures emphasizing obedience and behavioral control may influence how kids' express emotions and communicate with their parents. Under certain conditions, demands to maintain harmony and respect parental authority may encourage children to suppress their emotional experiences, particularly when family communication is dominated by anger or verbal pressure. Nevertheless, values of respect, obedience, and self-control within family culture may also serve as positive strengths in parenting processes when balanced with warm, empathic, and emotionally safe communication. These findings indicate that emotional gaps within families are not only related to differences in ways of expressing affection, but also to how emotional communication patterns are constructed within cultural and family relational contexts. Therefore, the development of warmer, more empathic, and supportive communication remains essential without neglecting the values of respect and harmony within the family.

The findings also demonstrated that emotional gaps within families do not remain confined to domestic parent-child relationships, but are manifested clearly within school contexts. Teachers observed behavioral changes, decreased learning motivation, withdrawal tendencies, and difficulties in social interaction among children experiencing emotional distress at home. These conditions indicate that children's

emotional experiences within the family are closely associated with their emotional well-being and social adjustment at school. These manifestations may reflect the broader impact of family emotional experiences on children's socio-emotional adjustment and engagement within the school environment. The findings suggest that emotional experiences originating in family relationships may extend into other developmental contexts, including children's participation, motivation, and social functioning at school. These findings support studies by (Dias et al., 2024), (Martinez-Yarza et al., 2024), and (Saracosti et al., 2019), which explain that the quality of emotional relationships within families and schools contributes significantly to children's socio-emotional development and learning engagement.

The involvement of teachers in this study represents one of its significant findings, as it demonstrates that teachers function not only as academic educators but also as external observers

of children's emotional conditions. In several situations, teachers became figures with whom children felt more comfortable sharing emotional experiences compared to their parents. Studies by (Thümmler et al., 2022), (Sunaryo & Ichsan, 2025), and (Neve et al., 2023) demonstrated that positive emotional relationships between teachers and children can help enhance children's sense of security, learning engagement, and emotional regulation abilities at school. The findings of this study further illustrate that children's emotional relationships with teachers may function as a form of psychological support when their emotional needs are not optimally fulfilled within the family environment.

Compared to previous studies, most research on family communication has primarily focused on bidirectional relationships between parents and children. This study demonstrates that emotional gaps within families should be understood as a cross-contextual relational phenomenon involving simultaneous interactions between family and school environments. From the perspective of Ecological Systems Theory, children's emotional development is influenced by the interconnectedness between family and school environments that interact in shaping children's emotional well-being (Sundberg et al., 2023). This interconnected relationship reflects the mesosystem interaction described in Ecological Systems Theory, whereby experiences occurring within the family environment influence children's adjustment and functioning at school, while observations made by teachers may provide additional insights into children's emotional conditions beyond the home context. The findings therefore demonstrate that emotional gaps within families should be understood as a relational phenomenon that extends across family and school environments rather than being confined solely to parent-child interactions.

The findings also emphasize the importance of more sensitive collaboration between parents and teachers in understanding children's emotional conditions so that support provided both at home and at school may become more aligned. Studies have demonstrated that positive collaboration between families and schools contributes to children's emotional well-being, social adjustment, and learning engagement (Bhat, 2024; Ma et al., 2018). By incorporating teachers' perspectives as external observers, this study provides a broader understanding of the impact of family emotional communication on children's social, emotional, and learning experiences beyond the home environment.

Novelty of the Research

The novelty of this study lies in its multiperspective approach, which integrates the perspectives of parents, children, and teachers in understanding emotional gaps in affectionate communication within Minangkabau families. Unlike previous studies that predominantly examine family communication from either parents' or children's perspectives, this study adopts a holistic triangulation of perspectives by simultaneously involving parents, children, and teachers. Methodologically, this approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of emotional communication across both family and school contexts.

Conceptually, this study extends the understanding of emotional gaps beyond parent-child interactions by positioning them as a cross-contextual relational phenomenon that is formed within family interactions and manifested in children's social, emotional, and educational experiences at school. Furthermore, this study contributes to culturally grounded family communication research by examining emotional gaps within the specific cultural context of Minangkabau families, where

parenting practices and emotional communication are influenced by collectivistic values, family dignity, and cultural norms regarding emotional expression.

This multiperspective and culturally contextualized approach offers a more nuanced understanding of affectionate communication within families and provides a foundation for developing more aligned collaboration between parents and schools in supporting children's emotional well-being across family and educational settings.

Implications and Contributions

The findings of this study have important implications for the development of parenting practices that are more responsive to children's emotional needs. Parenting is not only related to supervision and discipline formation, but also requires emotional presence, warm communication, and parents' ability to respond empathetically to children's emotions. Within the context of Guidance and Counseling, the findings may serve as a foundation for the development of parenting programs, family counseling, and culturally grounded interventions that are more sensitive to children's emotional experiences. In family counseling practice, the findings highlight the importance of helping parents understand that affection is not only expressed through discipline and responsibility, but also through emotional presence, warm communication, and the ability to listen and respond empathetically to children's feelings. Family counseling interventions may therefore be directed toward helping parents develop communication patterns that are more open, emotionally safe, and supportive, enabling children to feel comfortable expressing their emotional experiences without fear or pressure. In addition, counseling approaches that consider family cultural values are also important to ensure that intervention processes remain aligned with the family's parenting context and social values.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of collaboration between families and schools in supporting children's emotional well-being. Teachers play roles not only as academic educators, but also as individuals who can identify changes in children's emotional conditions and provide early psychological support within school settings. The findings also reveal that when children feel emotionally unsafe or uncomfortable expressing their emotional experiences to parents, they tend to seek alternative communication spaces with figures they perceive as emotionally safer, such as teachers or peers. This condition deserves serious attention because limited emotional communication within families may increase the risk of children seeking emotional support from environments that may not necessarily provide appropriate and safe responses for their psychological development. Therefore, strengthening warm, open, and supportive emotional communication within families becomes essential to ensure that children have safe spaces to express their emotional experiences in healthy ways. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of school counseling services and parenting programs that are more responsive to children's emotional needs within cultural contexts.

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the study was conducted within a specific cultural context and involved a limited number of participants; therefore, the findings are contextual and not intended for broad generalization. Second, the study relied solely on in-depth interviews,

making the findings dependent on participants' abilities to verbally express their emotional experiences. Participants may also have provided socially desirable responses, particularly when discussing parenting practices, family relationships, and emotional experiences, which could influence the completeness and accuracy of the data. Among child participants, some emotional experiences may not have been fully expressed due to limited verbal expression and tendencies to suppress feelings.

Nevertheless, this study provides a deeper understanding of emotional gaps in family communication and offers opportunities for future research on parenting, emotional communication, and children's psychological well-being across different cultural contexts.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that emotional gaps in affectionate communication within Minangkabau families emerge from differences between parental intentions and children's emotional interpretations of affection. These emotional gaps influence children's emotional experiences not only within family relationships but also across school contexts, highlighting the interconnected nature of family and educational environments in supporting children's emotional well-being.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on family emotional communication by conceptualizing emotional gaps as a cross-contextual relational phenomenon and by integrating the perspectives of parents, children, and teachers within a culturally grounded framework. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of emotionally responsive parenting, warm communication, and stronger collaboration between families and schools in supporting children's emotional development and psychological well-being.

Future research is recommended to explore emotional communication dynamics across more diverse cultural settings and family structures, as well as to examine the effectiveness of parenting education and family counseling interventions designed to strengthen emotionally responsive communication within families.

Author Contributions

The first author was responsible for the conceptualization of the study, data collection and analysis, and manuscript preparation. The second author contributed through academic supervision, methodological and substantive input, and manuscript review. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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