

**THE INVISIBLE PSYCHOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE HOME:
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND BOUNDARY SETTING AS DETERMINANTS
OF MATERNAL RESILIENCE**

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Abstract: *Maternal resilience—the capacity of mothers to adapt to the emotional, social, and practical demands of parenting—has emerged as a central construct in contemporary positive psychology and family research. While the visible aspects of parenting often receive scholarly attention, the internal psychological resources that sustain maternal functioning remain less explored. This conceptual article proposes that emotional intelligence and boundary setting constitute an “invisible psychological infrastructure” within the home that supports maternal resilience and psychological well-being. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature from positive psychology, parenting research, emotional regulation theory, and family systems theory, the article synthesizes existing empirical findings and develops a conceptual framework that explains how emotional intelligence facilitates adaptive emotional regulation and interpersonal functioning, while boundary-setting protects psychological resources and prevents role overload. The interaction between these two constructs is proposed to strengthen maternal resilience by enabling mothers to balance caregiving responsibilities with personal well-being. The paper also discusses practical implications for parenting support programs, psychological interventions, and future research directions. Understanding these internal psychological mechanisms is essential for promoting maternal well-being and fostering healthy family environments. The article also introduces a conceptual model that illustrates the dynamic interaction among emotional intelligence, boundary setting, and maternal resilience.*

Keywords: *Maternal resilience; Emotional intelligence; Boundary setting; Parenting; Psychological well-being; Positive psychology.*

Introduction

Motherhood represents one of the most emotionally complex and demanding roles within contemporary society. Beyond the visible responsibilities of childcare and household management lies a continuous process of emotional adaptation, interpersonal negotiation, and

psychological regulation. Mothers frequently navigate multiple roles simultaneously—as caregivers, partners, professionals, and individuals—while responding to their children's evolving developmental needs. Within this dynamic context, maternal resilience becomes a central psychological resource, enabling mothers to cope with stress, maintain emotional balance, and sustain supportive family relationships.

In recent decades, research in positive psychology has increasingly emphasized resilience as a dynamic process through which individuals adapt successfully to adversity and maintain psychological well-being despite significant challenges (Masten, 2014). Maternal resilience specifically refers to mothers' capacity to manage the emotional and practical demands of parenting while preserving personal well-being and fostering healthy family functioning. This capacity is influenced by multiple internal and external factors, including social support, socioeconomic conditions, personality traits, and psychological competencies.

Among these internal resources, emotional intelligence has received growing scholarly attention. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In parenting, emotional intelligence enables mothers to interpret their children's emotional cues, regulate their own responses to stress, and foster constructive communication within the family. Research suggests that parents with higher emotional intelligence demonstrate more adaptive parenting behaviors, greater emotional availability, and more positive parent–child relationships (Brackett et al., 2011).

Another psychological factor that has received comparatively less attention in parenting research is the capacity for boundary setting. Boundary setting involves establishing clear limits regarding emotional involvement, personal time, responsibilities, and interpersonal expectations within family relationships (Henwood & Proctor, 2003). Healthy boundaries allow individuals to protect their psychological resources while maintaining supportive relationships. Within motherhood, the ability to define and maintain boundaries can help mothers balance caregiving responsibilities with personal well-being, preventing chronic stress and emotional exhaustion.

Despite the importance of both constructs, emotional intelligence and boundary setting have rarely been examined together within a unified framework of maternal resilience. Most research has focused separately on emotional competencies in parenting or on family boundary dynamics, without investigating how these processes interact to support mothers' psychological adaptation. As a result, the internal mechanisms that enable mothers to sustain resilience in the face of daily parenting demands remain insufficiently understood.

The present article addresses this gap by proposing a conceptual model in which emotional intelligence and boundary setting function together as an “invisible psychological infrastructure” within the home. This infrastructure supports maternal resilience by enabling mothers to regulate emotional experiences, manage interpersonal relationships, and protect psychological resources from chronic overload. By integrating theoretical perspectives from positive psychology, emotional regulation theory, and family systems theory, the article aims to deepen understanding of maternal well-being and identify practical strategies for supporting mothers in their caregiving roles.

Literature Review

2.1 Maternal Resilience in Positive Psychology

The concept of resilience has become a central construct in contemporary psychological research, particularly within the framework of positive psychology. Resilience refers to the dynamic process through which individuals adapt successfully to adversity, maintain psychological stability, and continue to function effectively despite challenging circumstances (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2014). Rather than representing a fixed personality trait, resilience is increasingly understood as a multifaceted, evolving capacity shaped by interactions among personal resources, environmental conditions, and social support systems.

Within the context of family life, maternal resilience occupies a particularly important role. Motherhood involves ongoing emotional engagement, responsibility for children’s developmental needs, and negotiation among multiple social roles. These responsibilities often expose mothers to significant psychological demands, including emotional stress, time pressure, and competing expectations from family, work, and society. Consequently, maternal resilience can be conceptualized as the capacity of mothers to maintain psychological well-being while fulfilling the complex responsibilities associated with parenting.

Positive psychology has contributed substantially to the understanding of resilience by shifting the focus from pathology and deficit toward strengths, adaptive processes, and psychological resources that support well-being. According to Masten (2014), resilience emerges from what she describes as “ordinary magic”—the everyday psychological and social processes that enable individuals to navigate challenges effectively. These processes include emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, supportive relationships, and the ability to derive meaning from difficult experiences.

In parenting contexts, maternal resilience plays a crucial role not only for mothers' well-being but also for children's developmental outcomes. Research consistently demonstrates that parents with higher levels of resilience are better able to respond constructively to children’s

emotional needs, manage family stress, and maintain stable, supportive home environments (Gavidia-Payne, Tully, & Barrett, 2020). Children raised in such environments tend to develop stronger emotional regulation skills, greater psychological security, and more adaptive coping strategies.

Importantly, maternal resilience does not operate solely at the individual level but is embedded within broader relational and social systems. Ungar (2012) emphasizes that resilience should be understood within ecological contexts, highlighting the interaction between personal resources and environmental supports. Within family systems, mothers often serve as emotional regulators who shape the household's overall climate. Their capacity to manage stress, regulate emotional reactions, and maintain psychological balance can significantly shape family dynamics and children's emotional development.

Despite its importance, maternal resilience remains a complex and underexplored construct. Much of the existing literature has focused on external stressors affecting mothers—such as socioeconomic challenges, work–family conflict, or social isolation—while comparatively less attention has been given to the internal psychological mechanisms that sustain maternal resilience in everyday life. Specifically, limited research has examined how emotional competencies and interpersonal boundary management function together to support mothers' adaptive functioning.

Understanding the internal psychological processes that sustain maternal resilience is particularly relevant in contemporary societies, where mothers often experience heightened expectations and role complexity. Modern parenting frequently involves intensive emotional engagement with children, increased awareness of developmental needs, and societal pressures to perform multiple roles simultaneously. Under these conditions, psychological resources such as emotional intelligence and the ability to maintain healthy interpersonal boundaries may play an essential role in preserving maternal well-being.

Recent scholarship increasingly recognizes that resilience in parenting contexts emerges from the interaction between emotional regulation abilities and relational dynamics within the family system. Mothers must not only respond sensitively to their children's emotions but also manage their own emotional experiences while maintaining a sense of personal identity and well-being. This balancing process requires both emotional awareness and the capacity to regulate emotional involvement in ways that preserve psychological resources.

From this perspective, maternal resilience can be understood as the product of an internal psychological infrastructure that enables mothers to navigate emotional complexity without becoming overwhelmed. Emotional intelligence involves the capacity to recognize and

regulate emotional experiences, while boundary-setting processes help maintain balance between caregiving responsibilities and personal well-being. Together, these mechanisms may form a foundational structure supporting mothers' adaptive functioning in the face of everyday parenting challenges.

Although both emotional intelligence and boundary management have been examined separately in various psychological contexts, their combined role in sustaining maternal resilience has received limited scholarly attention. The present study, therefore, seeks to integrate these constructs within a unified conceptual framework, proposing that emotional intelligence and boundary setting operate together as core psychological mechanisms underlying maternal resilience.

2.2 Emotional Intelligence in Parenting

Emotional intelligence has become one of the most influential constructs in contemporary psychology, particularly in fields related to interpersonal relationships, mental health, and family functioning. Originally conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others. This framework conceptualizes emotions not merely as subjective experiences but as valuable sources of information that guide cognition, decision-making, and social interaction.

In parenting, emotional intelligence plays a fundamental role in shaping the quality of parent-child relationships and the emotional climate within the family. Parenting involves ongoing emotional exchanges between parents and children, requiring caregivers to interpret emotional cues, respond sensitively to children's needs, and regulate their own emotions in stressful situations. Mothers who demonstrate higher emotional intelligence are generally better equipped to manage these demands, thereby facilitating supportive and emotionally responsive parenting.

Research indicates that emotionally intelligent parents tend to exhibit greater empathy, improved communication skills, and more adaptive strategies for managing family conflict (Brackett et al., 2011). These parents are more likely to recognize subtle emotional cues in their children and respond in ways that promote emotional security and psychological development. As a result, emotional intelligence contributes not only to parental well-being but also to children's emotional competence and resilience.

From a developmental perspective, parents serve as primary models for emotional regulation. Through daily interactions, children observe how parents express, manage, and interpret emotions. When parents demonstrate constructive emotional regulation, children

gradually internalize these patterns and develop similar coping strategies (Gross, 2015). Consequently, emotional intelligence in parents can indirectly shape children's emotional development, influencing their ability to manage stress, maintain relationships, and navigate social environments.

Beyond its influence on child development, emotional intelligence also plays a critical role in protecting parents themselves from psychological strain. Parenting frequently involves situations that evoke frustration, fatigue, anxiety, or feelings of inadequacy. Without effective emotional regulation, such experiences may accumulate and contribute to chronic stress or parental burnout. Emotional intelligence allows parents to recognize these emotional reactions and regulate them in ways that prevent escalation and preserve psychological well-being.

Recent studies have linked higher emotional intelligence in parents with lower levels of parenting stress and greater overall life satisfaction. For example, parents who demonstrate stronger emotional awareness and regulation skills are better able to reframe stressful situations, maintain perspective during conflicts, and respond calmly to challenging behaviors (Jones et al., 2018). These capacities enable parents to navigate daily parenting demands without becoming emotionally overwhelmed.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence supports the development of supportive family environments characterized by trust, open communication, and emotional safety. Within such environments, children feel comfortable expressing emotions and seeking guidance from their parents. This relational climate fosters secure attachment relationships and contributes to long-term psychological well-being for both parents and children.

Importantly, emotional intelligence is not considered a fixed trait but rather a set of competencies that can develop over time through learning and experience. Research suggests that emotional skills such as emotion recognition, cognitive reappraisal, and emotional regulation can be strengthened through targeted interventions and reflective parenting practices. This perspective has important implications for parental support programs that aim to enhance family well-being through emotional skill development.

Despite the growing body of research on emotional intelligence in parenting, relatively little attention has been given to how these emotional competencies interact with other psychological processes that influence parental resilience. Emotional intelligence may help parents regulate emotional experiences, but maintaining long-term psychological balance also requires the ability to manage relational demands and protect personal psychological resources. One mechanism that may support this process is the ability to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal boundaries within family relationships.

Consequently, while emotional intelligence enables parents to understand and regulate emotional interactions, boundary-setting processes may help preserve emotional energy and prevent excessive psychological strain. Integrating these two constructs may therefore provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms that sustain maternal resilience.

2.3 Boundary Setting in Family Systems

The concept of boundaries occupies a central place in family systems theory and relational psychology. Boundaries refer to the psychological and behavioral limits individuals establish to regulate emotional involvement, personal responsibilities, and interpersonal expectations within relationships. Within family contexts, boundaries shape the structure of interactions among family members and influence the distribution of emotional and practical responsibilities. Healthy boundaries allow individuals to maintain both connection and autonomy, while poorly defined boundaries may lead to role confusion, emotional overload, and relational tension.

Family systems theorists, particularly Minuchin (1974), emphasized that functional family systems are characterized by clear yet flexible boundaries. These boundaries regulate the flow of emotional communication and determine the degree of closeness or distance among family members. When boundaries are appropriately balanced, family members can maintain supportive relationships while preserving individual identity and psychological independence. Conversely, excessively rigid boundaries may lead to emotional disengagement, whereas overly diffuse boundaries may result in enmeshment and excessive emotional dependency.

Within the context of motherhood, boundary setting becomes particularly complex. Mothers are often expected to prioritize the needs of their children and families over their own. While caregiving inherently involves emotional investment and responsiveness, the absence of clear psychological boundaries may lead to chronic emotional strain. Mothers who experience difficulty establishing boundaries may feel compelled to respond immediately to every demand, assume disproportionate family responsibilities, and neglect their own emotional well-being.

Research on parental well-being increasingly highlights the importance of boundary management in preventing parental stress and burnout. Boundary setting allows parents to regulate their availability, distribute responsibilities within the family, and maintain personal psychological resources. Mothers who are able to establish reasonable limits regarding time, emotional involvement, and personal responsibilities tend to report lower levels of parenting stress and greater overall well-being (Kusaka, Sadahiro, & Tsuboya, 2016).

One area where boundary setting becomes particularly relevant is the balance between caregiving responsibilities and personal identity. Modern parenting often involves intensive emotional engagement with children, with mothers expected to be consistently available and responsive to their children's emotional needs. While such involvement can foster strong parent-child relationships, excessive emotional immersion may also lead to role overload and psychological exhaustion. Establishing boundaries allows mothers to maintain a sense of individuality and personal autonomy while continuing to provide nurturing care.

Boundary setting also plays an important role in regulating emotional contagion within families. Emotional contagion is the process by which individuals absorb and internalize the emotional states of those around them. Within close family relationships, children's emotional distress may strongly affect parents' emotional states. Without effective psychological boundaries, mothers may become overwhelmed by their children's emotions, particularly during periods of behavioral challenges or developmental transitions. Maintaining healthy emotional boundaries allows mothers to respond empathetically while preserving emotional stability.

In addition to regulating emotional dynamics within parent-child relationships, boundaries also influence interactions between parents and broader family networks. Extended family members, partners, and social expectations often place additional demands on mothers' time and emotional energy. Mothers who struggle to assert boundaries in these relationships may experience increased stress and diminished psychological well-being. Conversely, mothers who can communicate their needs and set appropriate limits are better positioned to balance caregiving responsibilities with personal well-being.

Another important dimension of boundary setting involves distinguishing between supportive caregiving and over-involvement. Psychological research suggests that excessive parental involvement may unintentionally hinder children's development of autonomy and emotional regulation. When parents maintain appropriate boundaries, children are encouraged to develop independent coping strategies while still receiving emotional support. This balance supports healthier developmental outcomes for children while also reducing parental stress.

Despite the relevance of boundary management in family dynamics, the concept has received relatively limited attention in research on maternal resilience. Much of the existing literature on parenting focuses on emotional sensitivity, attachment, and communication, while comparatively little attention has been paid to how mothers manage emotional and relational limits within family life. As a result, the role of boundary setting as a protective psychological mechanism for mothers remains underexplored.

Integrating boundary-setting processes into the study of maternal resilience offers a valuable perspective on how mothers maintain psychological stability amid ongoing caregiving demands. Boundaries function as regulatory mechanisms that protect emotional resources, prevent role overload, and enable mothers to sustain caregiving over time without experiencing chronic emotional depletion.

From this perspective, boundary setting does not represent emotional distance or disengagement but rather a balanced approach to caregiving that supports both relational connection and personal well-being. When combined with emotional intelligence—the capacity to recognize and regulate emotions—boundary-setting skills may form an essential psychological infrastructure that enables mothers to maintain resilience in the dynamic environment of family life.

2.4 Emotional Labor and Maternal Burnout

The concept of emotional labor provides an important theoretical lens for understanding the psychological demands associated with caregiving roles. Emotional labor refers to the process through which individuals regulate their emotional expressions in order to meet social expectations or role requirements (Hochschild, 1983). Although the concept was originally developed in the context of service professions, it has increasingly been applied to family life and parenting, where emotional regulation is a central component of daily interactions.

Motherhood involves a substantial degree of emotional labor. Mothers are frequently expected to display patience, warmth, and emotional availability even when experiencing fatigue, stress, or frustration. These expectations arise not only from children's emotional needs but also from broader cultural norms that portray mothers as consistently nurturing and emotionally responsive caregivers. As a result, mothers often engage in continuous emotional regulation, adjusting their emotional expressions to support their children's well-being and maintain a harmonious family environment.

While emotional engagement with children is a natural and meaningful aspect of parenting, sustained emotional labor may also generate psychological strain. Research suggests that when individuals repeatedly regulate emotional expressions without adequate opportunities for emotional recovery, they may experience emotional exhaustion, reduced psychological well-being, and decreased satisfaction with their roles (Gross, 2015). In the context of parenting, this dynamic may contribute to what has increasingly been described as parental burnout.

Parental burnout is defined as a syndrome characterized by intense emotional exhaustion related to the parenting role, emotional distancing from children, and a diminished

sense of parental efficacy (Mikolajczak, Gross, & Roskam, 2018). Unlike general stress associated with parenting, parental burnout reflects a more severe and chronic condition that develops when the demands of parenting consistently exceed the psychological resources available to parents.

Studies examining parental burnout indicate that it is associated with a range of negative outcomes, including increased parental irritability, reduced emotional availability toward children, and feelings of guilt or inadequacy among parents. Importantly, parental burnout does not necessarily reflect a lack of parental commitment or love for children. Rather, it often emerges when highly dedicated parents face prolonged stress without sufficient psychological or social support.

Several factors contribute to the development of parental burnout, including perfectionistic parenting expectations, limited social support, role overload, and difficulties in balancing parenting responsibilities with personal needs. Contemporary parenting cultures in many societies emphasize intensive parenting practices, encouraging parents—particularly mothers—to invest extensive time, emotional energy, and attention in their children’s development. While these expectations aim to support children’s well-being, they may also increase psychological pressure on parents.

Within this context, emotional regulation abilities become particularly important. Parents who possess stronger emotional regulation skills are generally better able to manage stressful parenting situations, recover from emotional strain, and maintain positive interactions with their children. Emotional intelligence, therefore, plays a protective role by enabling parents to recognize emotional stress early and apply adaptive coping strategies.

However, emotional intelligence alone may not be sufficient to prevent parental burnout. Even when parents possess strong emotional awareness and regulation skills, excessive emotional involvement or lack of clear relational boundaries may still lead to emotional depletion. For example, mothers who feel compelled to respond immediately to every emotional need expressed by their children may experience chronic emotional fatigue, even if they possess strong empathic abilities.

This highlights the importance of boundary management in parenting contexts. Boundary setting allows parents to regulate the extent of emotional involvement and to create the psychological space necessary for rest, reflection, and personal well-being. By establishing limits regarding availability and responsibilities, mothers can preserve emotional resources while still providing supportive caregiving.

Recent research suggests that maintaining a balance between emotional engagement and psychological autonomy is essential for sustaining long-term parental well-being. Parents who can remain emotionally responsive while preserving personal psychological resources are less likely to experience chronic exhaustion or emotional withdrawal from their parenting role.

Understanding the interaction among emotional labor, emotional intelligence, and boundary management, therefore, provides an important framework for examining maternal resilience. Emotional intelligence enables mothers to navigate emotional interactions effectively, while boundary setting protects emotional resources from depletion. Together, these processes may reduce the risk of parental burnout and support sustained psychological well-being within the parenting role.

From this perspective, maternal resilience can be understood as emerging from the ability to manage emotional labor in ways that maintain both emotional connection with children and psychological balance for the mother. Recognizing these processes is essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of the internal psychological mechanisms that sustain maternal well-being.

2.5 Integrating Emotional Intelligence and Boundary Setting

Although emotional intelligence and boundary setting have each received attention in psychological and family research, the relationship between these constructs has rarely been examined within an integrated framework of maternal resilience. Most studies have explored emotional competencies in parenting or family boundary dynamics separately, leaving an important gap in understanding how these processes interact to support mothers' psychological well-being.

Emotional intelligence enables individuals to perceive emotional signals, understand emotional dynamics, and regulate their responses effectively. In parenting contexts, these competencies allow mothers to interpret children's emotional needs, manage stressful interactions, and maintain supportive communication within the family. However, emotional awareness alone does not necessarily protect individuals from emotional exhaustion. In situations where emotional demands are continuous and boundaries are unclear, even highly empathic individuals may experience psychological overload.

Boundary setting, in contrast, functions as a regulatory mechanism that protects emotional and psychological resources. By establishing limits on emotional involvement, time commitments, and relational expectations, individuals can maintain a balance between caregiving responsibilities and personal well-being. Within family systems, healthy boundaries allow caregivers to remain emotionally present while preventing excessive role strain or emotional enmeshment.

When considered together, emotional intelligence and boundary setting appear to operate in a complementary manner. Emotional intelligence enables mothers to recognize emotional cues and respond with empathy and understanding, while boundary-setting allows them to regulate the extent of their emotional engagement in ways that preserve psychological stability. Without emotional intelligence, boundaries may become rigid or emotionally distant. Without boundaries, emotional intelligence may lead to excessive emotional involvement that ultimately results in exhaustion.

This interaction suggests that emotional intelligence may facilitate effective boundary management. Individuals who accurately recognize and regulate their emotional states are more likely to identify situations in which their emotional resources are becoming depleted. Such awareness can support the establishment of appropriate limits that protect psychological well-being. Conversely, maintaining healthy boundaries may help preserve emotional resources, allowing individuals to sustain empathic engagement and emotional responsiveness over time.

Within the context of motherhood, this interaction may be particularly important. Mothers are frequently required to balance emotional availability toward their children with their own psychological needs and personal responsibilities. Emotional intelligence enables mothers to remain attuned to their children's emotional experiences, while boundary-setting helps them maintain a sustainable level of involvement without compromising their own well-being.

From this perspective, emotional intelligence and boundary setting can be conceptualized as two interrelated components of an internal psychological infrastructure that supports maternal resilience. Emotional intelligence contributes to adaptive emotional processing and interpersonal sensitivity, while boundary setting regulates the distribution of emotional and relational resources. Together, these mechanisms allow mothers to maintain emotional connection with their children without experiencing chronic emotional depletion.

Despite the theoretical relevance of this interaction, empirical research examining the combined influence of emotional intelligence and boundary management on maternal resilience remains limited. Most studies on parental resilience focus primarily on external resources, such as social support or socioeconomic factors, while comparatively little attention has been paid to internal psychological mechanisms that enable mothers to sustain caregiving over time.

Addressing this gap requires a conceptual framework that integrates emotional competencies with relational boundary processes. Such an approach allows maternal resilience to be understood not only as an outcome of external support systems but also as the result of internal psychological capacities that regulate emotional involvement and preserve psychological balance.

The present article, therefore, proposes that emotional intelligence and boundary-setting jointly constitute an “invisible psychological infrastructure” within the home. This infrastructure supports maternal resilience by enabling mothers to navigate emotional complexity, manage interpersonal demands, and maintain psychological well-being amid ongoing parenting responsibilities. The following section introduces a conceptual model that illustrates the dynamic relationship between these constructs and their role in sustaining maternal resilience.

3. Conceptual Framework: The Invisible Psychological Infrastructure

The present study proposes a conceptual framework that explains maternal resilience as the outcome of an internal psychological infrastructure composed of emotional intelligence and boundary-setting processes. While previous research has examined these constructs independently, the current model integrates them into a unified framework that illustrates how emotional competencies and relational regulation jointly support maternal well-being.

Within this framework, emotional intelligence is conceptualized as a foundational psychological capacity that enables mothers to perceive, understand, and regulate emotional experiences effectively. Emotional intelligence allows mothers to recognize emotional signals in themselves and in their children, manage stress responses, and maintain constructive interpersonal interactions within the family system.

However, emotional intelligence alone does not fully protect mothers from emotional overload. Parenting often requires continuous emotional engagement, and mothers who remain consistently responsive to others' emotional needs may gradually experience psychological strain if appropriate relational boundaries are not maintained. Therefore, the present model proposes that boundary setting functions as a critical regulatory mechanism that translates emotional awareness into sustainable caregiving practices.

Boundary setting refers to the ability to establish clear psychological and relational limits regarding emotional involvement, responsibilities, and expectations within family relationships. These boundaries allow mothers to maintain emotional connections with their children while preserving personal psychological resources. By regulating the distribution of emotional energy in family interactions, boundary-setting prevents role overload and supports long-term psychological well-being.

Maternal resilience emerges as the outcome of this interaction between emotional intelligence and boundary management. Mothers who can regulate emotional experiences while

maintaining healthy relational boundaries are better equipped to cope with parenting stress, maintain psychological balance, and sustain supportive relationships with their children.

The proposed model identifies three key pathways that explain the relationship between emotional intelligence, boundary setting, and maternal resilience.

Direct Pathway

Emotional intelligence directly contributes to maternal resilience by enhancing emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping strategies. Mothers with higher emotional intelligence are better able to interpret stressful parenting situations and regulate emotional responses, which supports psychological stability.

Mediated Pathway

The model further suggests that emotional intelligence facilitates effective boundary setting. Mothers who are emotionally aware are more likely to recognize situations in which emotional demands exceed their available resources. This awareness allows them to establish healthy relational limits that regulate emotional involvement and prevent role overload.

Feedback Loop

Finally, the model proposes a feedback loop illustrating the dynamic relationships between emotional intelligence, boundary setting, and maternal resilience.

. When mothers maintain healthy boundaries and sustain psychological well-being, their emotional resources are preserved and strengthened. These preserved resources may further enhance emotional intelligence capacities over time, reinforcing adaptive emotional functioning within the parenting role.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model linking emotional intelligence, boundary setting, and maternal resilience.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Emotional Intelligence, Boundary Setting, and Maternal Resilience

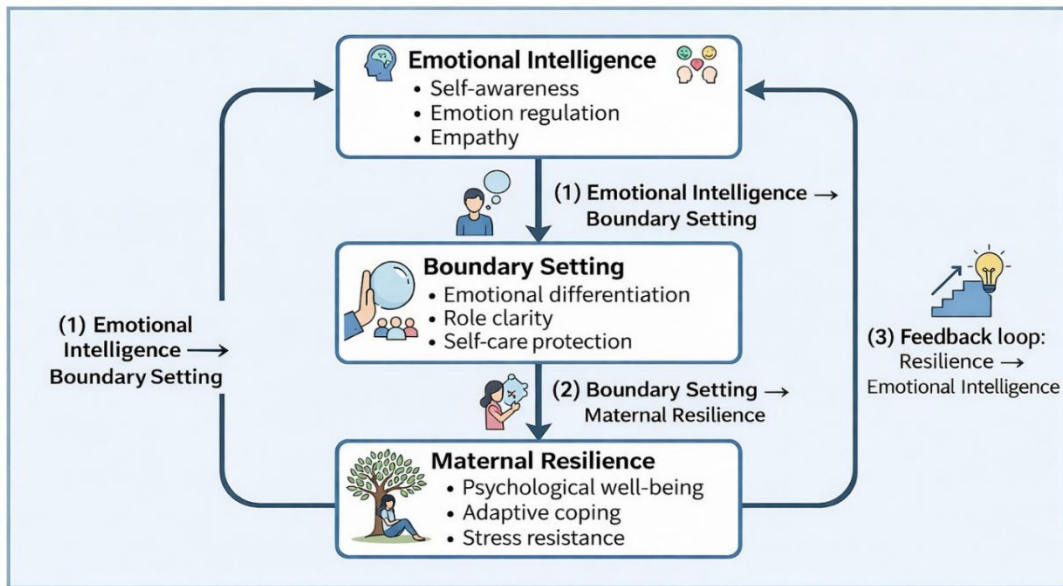


Figure 1. Conceptual model of emotional intelligence, boundary setting, and maternal resilience.

Explanation of the Model

The model illustrates the dynamic relationship between three core constructs.

Emotional Intelligence appears as the foundational psychological resource. It includes emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy. These competencies enable mothers to recognize emotional experiences and respond constructively to interpersonal situations within the family.

The second component, **Boundary Setting**, represents the relational regulation process through which mothers manage emotional involvement and family responsibilities. Boundaries allow mothers to maintain emotional connections with their children while preventing excessive emotional strain.

The final component, **Maternal Resilience**, represents the psychological outcome of this interaction. Maternal resilience encompasses psychological well-being, adaptive coping, and resistance to parenting-related stress.

The arrows within the model illustrate three mechanisms:

1. **Emotional intelligence supports boundary setting.** Emotional awareness enables mothers to recognize when emotional demands become overwhelming and to establish appropriate relational limits.
2. **Boundary setting promotes maternal resilience.** By regulating emotional and relational demands, boundaries prevent role overload and support psychological well-being.

3. *A feedback loop strengthens emotional resources. Sustained resilience preserves emotional energy, which may further enhance emotional intelligence over time.*

*Together, these processes form what the present study conceptualizes as an **invisible psychological infrastructure of the home**—an internal system that allows mothers to remain emotionally engaged with their children while maintaining personal well-being.*

The proposed framework contributes to the literature by integrating emotional competencies and boundary management processes into a unified theoretical model explaining maternal resilience.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The present article adopts a conceptual and integrative literature review design to synthesize theoretical and empirical insights into maternal resilience, emotional intelligence, and boundary-setting in parenting contexts. Conceptual research plays an important role in advancing psychological theory by integrating findings across multiple domains and proposing frameworks that explain complex psychological processes.

Unlike empirical studies that rely on primary data collection, conceptual research focuses on the systematic analysis and interpretation of existing scholarly literature. This approach allows researchers to identify theoretical relationships among constructs, evaluate patterns across studies, and propose new models that may guide future empirical investigations.

In the present study, this conceptual approach was particularly appropriate because the central objective was not to test a specific hypothesis using new data but rather to integrate knowledge from several research areas—including positive psychology, parenting research, emotional regulation theory, and family systems theory—in order to develop a theoretical framework explaining how emotional intelligence and boundary setting contribute to maternal resilience.

4.2 Literature Search Strategy

Relevant literature was identified through systematic searches of major academic databases, including PsycINFO, PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected for their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals in psychology, family studies, and the behavioral sciences.

The literature search employed combinations of keywords, including *maternal resilience*, *parental resilience*, *emotional intelligence*, *emotion regulation*, *boundary setting*,

family boundaries, parenting stress, parental burnout, and psychological well-being. Boolean operators (e.g., AND, OR) were used to combine search terms and ensure comprehensive retrieval of relevant studies.

The search process focused primarily on articles published in peer-reviewed journals. Priority was given to literature published between 2000 and 2024 in order to reflect contemporary developments in psychological research. However, several foundational theoretical works were also included to establish conceptual definitions and theoretical foundations of key constructs.

4.3 Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included in the analysis based on several criteria. First, the literature needed to address at least one of the core constructs relevant to the present framework: emotional intelligence, boundary management within family systems, maternal or parental resilience, parental burnout, or parenting-related emotional regulation.

Second, priority was given to studies conducted within psychological, developmental, and family research contexts. While some literature addressing emotional intelligence in broader caregiving or organizational contexts was considered when conceptually relevant, the primary focus remained on parenting and family dynamics.

Third, the review emphasized peer-reviewed empirical studies, theoretical papers, and systematic reviews in order to ensure the reliability and academic rigor of the sources included in the synthesis.

4.4 Analytical Approach

The analysis followed a thematic synthesis approach to identify recurring conceptual patterns across the literature. The selected studies were examined in relation to three main dimensions: emotional regulation competencies, boundary management processes within family systems, and indicators of parental psychological well-being.

Through iterative comparison and synthesis of findings, several conceptual relationships emerged linking emotional intelligence, boundary setting, and maternal resilience. Although these constructs have been studied independently across different research areas, the literature revealed a notable gap regarding their integrated role within parenting contexts.

Based on this synthesis, the present article proposes a conceptual model describing emotional intelligence and boundary setting as complementary psychological mechanisms that support **maternal resilience in parenting contexts**. Emotional intelligence contributes to adaptive emotional regulation and interpersonal sensitivity, while boundary setting regulates the distribution of emotional and relational resources within the family environment.

The methodological approach of this study, therefore, emphasizes theoretical integration rather than empirical testing. By connecting insights from multiple research traditions, the article aims to advance understanding of the internal psychological processes that sustain maternal well-being and to provide a foundation for future empirical research examining the proposed framework.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this conceptual article was to explore how emotional intelligence and boundary-setting interact to support maternal resilience within the family environment. By integrating insights from positive psychology, emotional regulation research, and family systems theory, the article proposed that these two constructs function together as an internal psychological infrastructure that sustains maternal well-being.

The findings from the literature synthesis suggest that emotional intelligence represents a critical emotional resource in parenting contexts. Mothers who possess higher emotional intelligence demonstrate greater awareness of emotional experiences, improved capacity to regulate emotional responses, and enhanced sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics within the family. These abilities allow mothers to respond constructively to children's emotional needs while maintaining stability during stressful situations. Emotional intelligence, therefore, contributes directly to adaptive coping and emotional regulation in parenting.

However, the analysis also highlights that emotional competence alone may not fully protect mothers from psychological strain associated with intensive caregiving roles. Parenting often involves ongoing emotional engagement, and mothers who remain consistently responsive to others' needs may gradually experience emotional fatigue if appropriate psychological boundaries are not maintained. Emotional intelligence may increase empathy and emotional sensitivity, but without mechanisms that regulate the distribution of emotional resources, this heightened responsiveness can lead to emotional overload.

This observation underscores the importance of boundary-setting processes within family systems. Boundaries regulate the flow of emotional energy, responsibilities, and expectations among family members. In the context of motherhood, boundary setting allows mothers to balance caregiving responsibilities with their own psychological needs. Rather than representing emotional withdrawal, healthy boundaries create a structured environment in which emotional engagement can remain sustainable over time.

The conceptual framework proposed in this article suggests that emotional intelligence and boundary setting function as complementary mechanisms that jointly support maternal resilience. Emotional intelligence enables mothers to recognize emotional cues and regulate

their responses, while boundary-setting protects emotional resources from excessive depletion. Together, these mechanisms create a balance between emotional responsiveness and psychological preservation.

Importantly, this interaction may help explain why some mothers are able to sustain high levels of emotional engagement with their children without experiencing chronic exhaustion, while others may struggle with emotional overload despite strong caregiving commitment. Mothers who combine emotional awareness with effective boundary management are likely to maintain more stable psychological functioning, allowing them to navigate parenting demands with greater flexibility and resilience.

The framework presented in this article also contributes to the broader literature on parental burnout. Previous research has identified emotional exhaustion and role overload as central predictors of parental burnout (Mikolajczak et al., 2018). The present conceptual model suggests that emotional intelligence and boundary-setting processes may serve as protective factors, reducing the likelihood of such outcomes. Emotional intelligence enables parents to regulate emotional reactions to stressful parenting situations, while boundaries regulate the intensity and duration of emotional engagement.

Another important implication of the proposed framework concerns the relational dynamics within families. Mothers often serve as emotional anchors within family systems, shaping the household's emotional climate. Their capacity to regulate emotional experiences and maintain psychological balance may therefore affect not only their own well-being but also their children's emotional development. Children raised in emotionally stable environments tend to develop stronger emotional regulation skills and greater psychological resilience.

From a positive psychology perspective, the framework highlights the importance of focusing on psychological strengths that enable individuals to adapt successfully to complex life roles. Maternal resilience should not be understood solely as resistance to stress but as the capacity to maintain emotional vitality, relational connection, and personal well-being while navigating the ongoing challenges of parenting. Emotional intelligence and boundary management may therefore represent key psychological competencies that support flourishing within family life.

The conceptual model proposed in this article also opens new directions for future research. Empirical studies could examine the interaction between emotional intelligence and boundary-setting processes in predicting maternal resilience and parental well-being. Longitudinal research designs may provide valuable insight into how these psychological

mechanisms develop over time and how they influence family functioning across different stages of child development.

Furthermore, intervention-based research could examine whether programs designed to strengthen parents' emotional intelligence and boundary-setting skills lead to improved psychological outcomes. Parenting support programs often focus on child development and parenting strategies, but relatively little attention has been given to strengthening parents' internal psychological resources. Integrating emotional intelligence training and boundary-management strategies into such programs may offer promising avenues for promoting maternal well-being.

In summary, the discussion highlights the importance of understanding maternal resilience as a dynamic psychological process shaped by both emotional competencies and relational regulation mechanisms. Emotional intelligence enables mothers to navigate emotional complexity within the family, while boundary-setting preserves the psychological resources necessary to sustain caregiving over time. Together, these processes form an internal psychological infrastructure that supports maternal resilience and contributes to healthier family environments.

6. Practical Implications

The conceptual framework presented in this article offers several practical implications for professionals in psychology, parenting support, family counseling, and community health. By identifying emotional intelligence and boundary-setting as central mechanisms supporting maternal resilience, the model highlights psychological competencies that may be strengthened through targeted interventions to improve parental well-being.

One important implication concerns parenting education and support programs. Many parenting programs primarily focus on behavioral strategies for managing children's behavior or promoting cognitive and social development. While these components are valuable, the present framework suggests that strengthening parents' internal emotional resources may be equally important. Training programs that enhance emotional awareness, emotion regulation, and reflective parenting practices could help mothers navigate emotionally demanding situations more effectively and maintain psychological balance.

Emotional intelligence training has already demonstrated positive outcomes in various psychological and educational contexts. Programs designed to improve emotional awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation may enable mothers to better interpret their children's

emotional signals and respond in supportive ways. In parenting contexts, such interventions may strengthen parent–child relationships and reduce parenting stress.

In addition to developing emotional intelligence, the framework emphasizes the importance of boundary-setting skills within family systems. Parenting support initiatives may benefit from incorporating discussions and practical exercises that help parents identify healthy relational limits. These skills may include learning how to regulate availability, negotiate responsibilities within the family, and maintain personal time for psychological recovery. Such practices allow mothers to sustain caregiving over time without experiencing chronic emotional exhaustion.

Family counseling and therapeutic interventions may also benefit from incorporating boundary-focused approaches. Therapists working with families often address communication patterns and emotional conflicts within family systems. Integrating boundary-setting strategies may help mothers and other family members develop healthier interaction patterns that reduce emotional overload and promote mutual support.

Another important implication concerns maternal mental health services. Healthcare professionals frequently encounter mothers experiencing stress, anxiety, or symptoms of parental burnout. Understanding the role of emotional intelligence and boundary management may help clinicians identify protective psychological resources that support maternal resilience. Interventions that strengthen these competencies may complement traditional mental health treatments and contribute to long-term psychological well-being.

Educational systems and community organizations may also play an important role in supporting parental well-being. Workshops, support groups, and parenting seminars could incorporate modules addressing emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and boundary management. Such initiatives may create opportunities for mothers to share experiences, develop coping strategies, and build supportive social networks that reinforce psychological resilience.

Finally, the framework has implications for broader social policies related to family well-being. Contemporary parenting environments often place substantial emotional and practical demands on mothers. Policies that support work–life balance, parental leave, and access to family support services may reduce chronic stress and create conditions in which mothers can maintain healthy psychological boundaries while fulfilling caregiving responsibilities.

Taken together, these implications highlight the value of approaching maternal well-being from a strengths-based perspective. Rather than focusing solely on reducing stress or

preventing psychological difficulties, interventions may also emphasize the development of emotional competencies and relational skills that help mothers sustain resilience in complex family environments. Strengthening emotional intelligence and boundary-setting capacities may therefore represent promising strategies for promoting healthier families and supporting maternal well-being.

7. Limitations

Although the present article offers a theoretical framework integrating emotional intelligence and boundary setting as mechanisms supporting maternal resilience, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study is conceptual in nature and does not include original empirical data. While the proposed framework is grounded in existing literature, empirical research is necessary to test the relationships between the constructs described in this model.

Second, the literature reviewed in this article draws from multiple research domains, including positive psychology, family systems theory, and parenting research. Although this interdisciplinary approach provides a broader perspective, differences in theoretical traditions and methodological approaches across these fields may influence how constructs such as emotional intelligence and boundary setting are conceptualized and measured.

Third, the present framework focuses primarily on internal psychological mechanisms that support maternal resilience. However, resilience in parenting contexts is also influenced by numerous external factors, including social support, cultural expectations, economic conditions, and family structure. Future research should therefore consider how emotional intelligence and boundary-setting processes interact with broader environmental influences in shaping maternal well-being.

Finally, the discussion in this article primarily addresses maternal experiences within contemporary parenting contexts. Parenting experiences may vary across cultures, socioeconomic environments, and family structures. Cross-cultural research is therefore needed to examine whether the relationships proposed in the present framework operate similarly across different cultural and social contexts.

8. Future Research Directions

The conceptual framework presented in this article opens several promising directions for future research. First, empirical studies are needed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, boundary-setting processes, and maternal resilience using quantitative research designs. Such studies could explore whether emotional intelligence predicts mothers'

ability to establish healthy relational boundaries and whether these factors jointly contribute to psychological well-being.

Second, longitudinal research designs may provide valuable insight into how emotional competencies and boundary-management skills develop over time. Parenting experiences evolve as children grow, and the psychological demands placed on parents change throughout different stages of child development. Longitudinal studies may therefore help clarify how emotional intelligence and boundary-setting abilities contribute to maternal resilience across different phases of family life.

Third, intervention-based research may examine whether programs designed to strengthen parents' emotional intelligence and boundary-setting skills can improve maternal well-being and reduce parenting stress. Parenting support programs traditionally focus on child behavior management and developmental education, yet strengthening parents' internal psychological resources may represent an equally important area for intervention.

Another promising research direction involves examining the interaction between maternal psychological resources and family relational dynamics. Future studies may investigate how emotional intelligence and boundary management influence parent-child attachment, family communication patterns, and children's emotional development. Such research could deepen understanding of how maternal psychological well-being contributes to broader family functioning.

Finally, cross-cultural research may examine how cultural norms related to parenting, emotional expression, and family roles influence the relationship among emotional intelligence, boundary-setting, and maternal resilience. Parenting expectations and family structures vary widely across cultures, and examining these differences may provide valuable insight into how maternal resilience operates in diverse social contexts.

9. Conclusion

Motherhood represents a complex and emotionally demanding role that requires continuous adaptation, emotional regulation, and relational engagement. While parenting research has traditionally focused on external stressors and family environments, increasing attention is being given to the internal psychological mechanisms that enable mothers to sustain well-being while fulfilling caregiving responsibilities.

The present article proposed a conceptual framework suggesting that emotional intelligence and boundary setting function together as components of an internal psychological infrastructure that supports maternal resilience. Emotional intelligence enables mothers to recognize and regulate their own emotions, respond empathetically to their children's needs,

and manage interpersonal dynamics within the family. Boundary setting, in turn, regulates the distribution of emotional and relational resources, allowing mothers to maintain psychological balance and prevent emotional overload.

Together, these mechanisms create a dynamic system that allows mothers to remain emotionally engaged with their children while preserving their own psychological well-being. Understanding maternal resilience through this integrated perspective contributes to the broader literature on parenting, positive psychology, and family well-being.

By highlighting the complementary roles of emotional intelligence and boundary management, this article provides a theoretical foundation for future research and practical interventions to support maternal well-being. Strengthening these psychological competencies may help mothers navigate the emotional complexity of family life while sustaining resilience and fostering healthier family environments.

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