

BEYOND COMMITMENT: IDENTITY AND BOUNDED AFFECTION IN SAPPHIC DIGITAL INTERACTION

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Abstract

This article examines how Indonesian sapphic communities build identity, affection, and social interaction through digital platforms while negotiating family pressure, selective visibility, and safety risks. Positioned within the Identity, Diversity, and Social Interaction subtheme, the study develops Bounded Affection Theory to explain friends with affection (FWA) as a relational category that enables care, comfort, daily communication, and romantic-light exchange without requiring ownership, formal dating, or full public legibility. The research was conducted from March 2025 to March 2026 and combines descriptive analysis of 104 anonymized informant responses, semi-structured Zoom interviews with 43 selected sapphic informants, thematic analysis of 385 FWA-related X posts, and contextual reading of 1,484 broader sapphic posts. The findings show that informants practiced selective visibility, being open in trusted circles or online while remaining cautious around family, religious settings, campus, work, and hometown contexts. Digital platforms functioned as safety infrastructure through pseudonyms, second accounts, closed groups, privacy settings, trace deletion, and platform migration. FWA circulated as an active relational category through which users negotiated affection, jealousy, limits, baper, relational labels, and the boundary between friendship and dating. The study concludes that sustainable digital futures require more than connectivity: they require social arrangements that protect identity, recognize diversity, and support ethical interaction under conditions of unequal recognition.

Keywords: Bounded Affection; Friends With Affection; Sapphic Intimacy; Identity And Diversity; Digital Social Interaction

1. Introduction

Romantic intimacy often enters theory through a story of movement. Two people meet, feel interest, communicate more often, invest time, become exclusive, claim a public status, and stabilize the relationship through commitment. This familiar sequence shapes research, clinical language, popular advice, and platform scripts. It gives scholars a vocabulary for attachment, investment, partnership, maintenance, and dissolution. It also hides relations that do not follow that route. In Indonesian sapphic digital spaces, friends with affection, or FWA, appears as one such relation. Users do not treat it only as failed dating or confused friendship. They search for it, refuse it, define it, mock it, defend it, and warn others about its emotional consequences.

The large theory challenged in this article is Joel and MacDonald's Progression Bias Theory. That theory argues that people show a general tendency to make pro-relationship decisions that initiate, advance, and maintain romantic relationships, including movement toward commitment (Joel & MacDonald, 2021). This article does not deny that progression pressure exists. The FWA corpus itself contains many signs that affection can drift toward love, jealousy, confession, or demands for clarity. The empirical challenge lies elsewhere. In this case, some participants make the meaningful relational decision to prevent progression. They want attention, comfort, daily talk, pet names, care, and romantic-light exchange, but they do not want those practices to become ownership, formal dating, or public couplehood.

This study names that counter-movement strategic non-progression. Strategic non-progression refers to the deliberate maintenance of intimacy below the threshold of formal commitment. The practice matters because Indonesian sapphic participants do not make relational choices in a neutral field. Their choices sit inside family expectations, religious surveillance, campus and workplace caution, hometown

gossip, and unequal access to public recognition. Research on queer Indonesian women and trans men shows how gendered invisibilities structure everyday life in Bali and Java, while Indonesian feminist media scholarship shows how women's bodies remain targets of patriarchal, religious, and postcolonial regulation (Dewi et al., 2026; Jansen, 2023). Under such conditions, formal dating can protect some people and expose others.

Digital media intensify this ambivalence. Scholars of mediated intimacy argue that media practices shape the presence of others rather than simply transmit messages (Cefai & Couldry, 2019). Postdigital intimacy research adds that digital and non-digital encounters now entangle so deeply that policy, safety, and research must treat them together (Evans & Ringrose, 2025). The informants in this study live that entanglement. They use X, Instagram, TikTok, Discord, Telegram, dating apps, WhatsApp, Line, Roblox, and second accounts to build sapphic life. These platforms allow users to speak, flirt, seek support, protect identity, and move sensitive talk elsewhere. The same platforms also create traceability, audience collapse, surveillance, deception, and harassment risks.

FWA emerges from this ecology. It gives a name to a relation that is more intimate than ordinary friendship, less formal than dating, and not necessarily sexual. It differs from friends with benefits because affection rather than sex sits at the centre. It differs from pacaran because ownership, public status, and full commitment remain limited. It differs from ordinary friendship because participants intensify emotional exchange through romantic-light practices. The category therefore unsettles a key assumption in commitment-centred intimacy theory: that affection becomes more meaningful when it moves toward commitment. In FWA, affection becomes possible because participants draw a boundary around commitment.

The article makes four contributions that align directly with the Identity, Diversity and Social Interaction subtheme. First, it identifies strategic non-progression as a relational mechanism that existing progression-based theory under-specifies. Second, it develops Bounded Affection Theory, a new data-grounded theory of intimacy regulated by boundary rather than by commitment. Third, it places FWA inside Indonesian sapphic digital life, where selective visibility, diversity of orientation, family pressure, and platform safety practices shape relational possibilities. Fourth, it contributes to human-centric digital social science by showing how online communities create relational language before institutions recognize the forms of life that language names.

The research question is: How does FWA operate as a relational category in Indonesian sapphic digital life, and how does it challenge progression-centred theories of intimacy? The answer developed across the article is direct: FWA works as bounded affection. People seek care and emotional presence, confront the risks or burdens of full commitment, enter an intermediate relational space, negotiate limits, and then experience either stability or injury depending on whether affection and expectation remain balanced.

2. Literature Review

Progression Bias Theory provides the sharpest theoretical foil because it names the direction of movement that this study complicates. Joel and MacDonald (2021) argue that people are biased toward decisions that start, advance, and preserve romantic relationships. The theory helps explain why people accept dates, continue uncertain relationships, invest in partners, and move toward commitment even when they present themselves as selective. Its strength lies in showing that relational life does not follow rational choice alone. Opportunity, attachment, anticipated regret, social reward, and the comfort of closeness can pull people toward commitment.

The Indonesian FWA data identify a boundary condition for that theory. Many FWA posts show affection without clear progression. Users ask whether FWA should stay below pacaran, whether an FWA can involve daily affection, whether jealousy is legitimate, whether someone with a partner can have an FWA, and whether confessing to a former FWA crosses the line. These questions do not simply reveal confusion. They show relational work. Users try to determine what affection permits when the relation does not promise ownership.

Existing digital intimacy research helps explain why this work matters. Dating app scholarship has shown that marketization does not remove uncertainty from romantic life; it can reproduce uncertainty by turning users into entrepreneurial actors who assess risk, reputation, and possibility (Bandinelli & Gandini, 2022). Networked intimacy research also shows that ambiguity, abundance, and profile-mediated interaction shape how gay men experience intimacy on apps (Chan, 2018). Young heterosexual dating research describes a related emotional stalemate in which attachment becomes a bargaining problem and vulnerability can appear as weakness (Denby & van Hooff, 2024). FWA shares this terrain of uncertainty, but the Indonesian sapphic case adds a minoritized visibility condition.

Research on same-sex attracted young people's app use shows that mobile phones and apps can

create safety, intimacy, and risk at the same time (Albury & Byron, 2016). Trans dating app users also describe sorting and filtering technologies as both restrictive and useful for avoiding harm and seeking connection (Albury et al., 2021). Studies from Pakistan and India show that queer dating platforms in restrictive social settings can open routes to same-sex intimacy while intensifying risks of exposure, violence, deception, and blackmail (Afzal, 2026; Bose, 2024). These studies make one point clear: digital intimacy in minoritized contexts does not unfold only through desire. It also unfolds through risk management.

Figure 1 is used to clarify the theoretical shift proposed in this study. It contrasts the progression-bias assumption, which treats intimacy as a movement toward commitment, with the bounded-affection mechanism, which explains how Indonesian sapphic users maintain meaningful affection through negotiated limits, selective visibility, and safety-oriented relational choices.

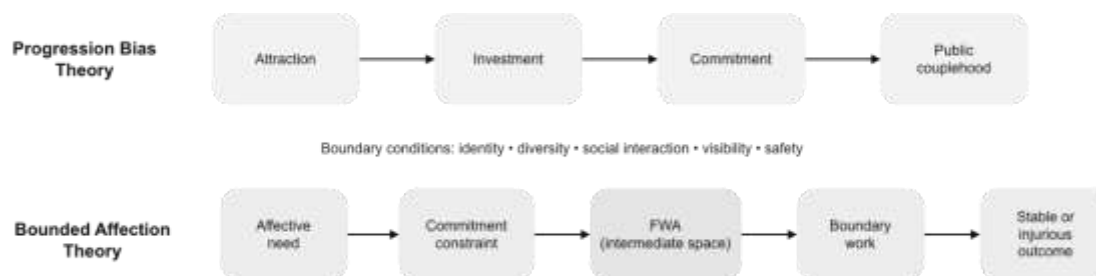


Figure 1. The theoretical contrast between progression bias and bounded affection. Source: Processed by the author from theoretical synthesis and research data (2025–2026).

Three strands of literature frame the study: mediated intimacy, queer digital safety, and relational alternatives to monogamous or commitment-centred scripts. The first strand treats intimacy as something people do through media. Acedera and Yeoh (2018) show that transnational couples use Facebook and mobile communication to perform intimacy across distance, reshaping marriage under spatial separation. Cefai and Couldry (2019) reconceptualize co-presence as mediated intimacy, emphasizing the ways media practices make others present in everyday life. Chen and Lai (2026) show how live streaming affordances on Lespark turn gifts, badges, leaderboards, and visibility into queer digital intimacy. These studies differ in topic, but they share one premise: media do not merely carry intimacy. They organize its rhythms, evidence, audiences, and obligations.

The second strand concerns safety, privacy, and visibility. Albury (2017) argues that public digital circulation does not erase sexual privacy or sexual rights. Power et al. (2024) similarly call for a less simplistic approach to sexual digital imagery, one that recognizes adults' agency and the multiple ways risk can be understood. Hamilton et al. (2024) propose that safer digital intimacy requires technical attention to privacy and security because intimate content often carries stigma and exposure risks. Petrosyan and Blank (2024) add a useful tension: dating app users may understand privacy risks as abstract when they value finding a partner. Campaioli et al. (2025) show how awareness cues on dating apps can help users interpret rejection while also exposing them to surveillance and stalking. Together, these studies help read the Indonesian data without reducing privacy practices to fear. Privacy can function as a condition of possibility.

The third strand centres queer and Asian digital worlds. Cavalcante (2019) describes Tumblr as both queer utopia and vortex, a site of expansive discourse and serious limitation. Ding and Song (2023) develop the concept of digital sexual publics to show how Chinese users create flexible spaces for queer desire under censorship. Chan et al. (2023) call attention to the specific challenges and opportunities of queer digital cultures in Asia. Bano and Banerjee (2026) read YouTube as an in-between heterotopic space for South Asian queer diasporic articulation. Li (2020) shows how Chinese queer women use Rela to maintain transnational ties, and Tao (2022) shows how Chinese lesbian users pursue online dating while avoiding scams and risk. Tang (2017) examines lesbian app use on Butterfly, while Rowlett and Chung (2025) show how language practices in a Hong Kong lesbian dating app foster intimacy and romance. These works allow this article to situate Indonesian sapphic FWA within a wider Asian digital field without erasing its local specificity.

Research on relationship standards and formalization gives Bounded Affection Theory a necessary counterpoint. Baker and Halford (2020) show that same-sex attracted adults hold beliefs about what makes a good relationship, and those standards matter for relationship assessment. Bariola et al. (2015) report mental health benefits associated with relationship formalisation among lesbians and gay men in same-sex relationships. Guschlbauer et al. (2019) show that minority stress shapes emotional

intimacy, relationship satisfaction, and health among lesbian and gay couples. These studies warn against romanticizing informality. Commitment and formalization can matter, especially where recognition protects people. The present study does not claim that bounded affection is superior to commitment. It claims that bounded affection explains relations that survive when full commitment is not wanted, not safe, or not yet possible.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Object, Time, and Place

This study uses a mixed qualitative design that combines descriptive corpus mapping, thematic analysis, semi-structured in-depth interviewing, and abductive theory building (Vila-Henninger et al., 2024). The object of the research is the relational category friends with affection (FWA) as it circulates in Indonesian sapphic digital life. The study does not seek to estimate how common FWA is among all Indonesian sapphic people. It asks how FWA becomes meaningful as a relational category and what that category reveals about the limits of progression-centred intimacy theory.

The research was conducted from March 2025 to March 2026. The social location of the study is Indonesian sapphic digital space, especially X-based sapphic discourse, while the interviews were conducted through Zoom with informants who had relevant experience of sapphic identity, visibility, digital safety, family pressure, and relational boundary negotiation.

Table 1 clarifies the four empirical materials used in the study and the specific analytic role assigned to each source. It shows that the manuscript does not rely on a single dataset but integrates informant responses, interviews, FWA-related X posts, and broader sapphicfess posts to connect identity formation, platform practice, and relational boundary-making.

Table 1. Data corpus and analytic role

Data source	Size	Variables	Role
Informant responses	104	Identity, safety, family pressure	Mapped visibility constraints
Zoom interviews	43	Relationships, safety, boundaries	Interpreted lived meanings
FWA X posts	385	Text and engagement	Analyzed FWA discourse
Sapphicfess posts	1,484	Community digital talk	Contextualized FWA ecology

Sources: Fieldwork, Zoom interviews, and X corpus (2025–2026).

3.2. Data Collection Techniques

The first data source consisted of 104 anonymized informant responses collected through a structured form with 80 source questions. The responses covered identity and orientation, openness, gender presentation, hijab practice where relevant, community involvement, platform use, safety practices, family pressure, lavender marriage awareness, and sapphic experience narratives. From this corpus, 43 informants were selected for semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted via Zoom. Selection prioritized narrative richness, distinctive sapphic experience, relational detail, and analytic relevance to visibility, digital safety, commitment, and boundary.

The second data source consisted of 385 FWA-related X posts collected from two keyword sources. Of these, 275 came from the keyword “FWA sf” source and 110 from the keyword “FWA sapphicfess” source. The corpus covered posts from March 1, 2025 to February 28, 2026 and included full text, date, favourite count, retweet count, and reply count. The third data source consisted of 1,484 sapphicfess posts from September 30, 2025 to February 28, 2026.

Ethical care shaped the collection because the data concern sexual identity, minority status, family pressure, and traceable digital communities. The study received Reference Number 378242002. Informant data were anonymized and interview quotations are presented under codes only. Digital posts were not reproduced with usernames, URLs, or unnecessary searchable phrasing.

3.3. Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis proceeded in five stages. First, descriptive counts were produced for informant identity, openness, hijab practice, community involvement, platform use, safety practices, and family pressure. Second, Zoom interview notes and anonymized quotations were coded for selective visibility, family pressure, digital safety, affective need, boundary, and relational injury. Third, the FWA and sapphicfess corpora were mapped through frequency counts, monthly volume, engagement, and keyword-assisted thematic categories. The categories included relationship labeling, affection and emotion, boundary negotiation, risk and ambiguity, and seeking or relational market.

Fourth, close reading was conducted on high-engagement posts and posts that explicitly defined,

defended, criticized, or asked for advice about FWA. Fifth, the results were interpreted abductively against Progression Bias Theory. Mismatches between the theory and the data became the ground for Bounded Affection Theory. Interview quotations were translated into English when necessary and lightly edited for readability without changing their analytic meaning.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Results

The informant data show that Indonesian sapphic identity rarely appears through a simple visible-hidden binary. Most informants lived through selective visibility. Among 104 informants, 48 described themselves as semi-open, 35 were open in selected circles or migration contexts, 13 were open on social media, and only a small minority described themselves as fully closed or broadly open. This distribution matters because it places FWA inside a field of calibrated disclosure. A person may be open on a second account, honest with a small friendship circle, careful at home, and silent at work. The same relation may need different names in different rooms.

Selective visibility changes the cost of commitment. A formal partner can bring comfort, recognition, and stability, but formalization can also require explanation. Public couple practices such as posting photos, holding hands, staying over, meeting family, or making long-term plans may draw attention from audiences who can punish, shame, or expose the participants. The informant narratives echo this pattern. Many participants did not reject love. They managed the risks attached to making love legible.

Several Zoom interviews describe early recognition through school friendships, emotional intensity with girls, confusion over labels, and the relief of finding language through social media. Others describe family discovery, religious pressure, heartbreak when a female partner chose a man, or the need to present a partner as a friend. These accounts show that sapphic intimacy often develops in ordinary scenes: school, dormitories, family homes, campuses, work settings, malls, group chats, and second accounts. FWA does not emerge outside daily life. It emerges where daily life makes some forms of closeness possible and other forms dangerous.

Table 2 presents the descriptive profile of the 104 informants and demonstrates the diversity of the research field. The distribution of identity, openness, hijab practice, community involvement, and marriage pressure confirms that Indonesian sapphic experience cannot be reduced to a single identity category or a simple open/closed visibility model.

Table 2. Descriptive profile of the 104 informant responses

Dimension	Main distribution	Interpretive implication
Identity	Lesbian 41; bisexual 36; pansexual 16; asexual 3; questioning, exploring, intersex, or other 8	The corpus captures a diverse sapphic field rather than a single lesbian-only population.
Openness	Semi-open 48; selected circles or migration 35; social media 13; closed 4; mixed or broadly open 4	Visibility is situational, selective, and audience-specific.
Hijab practice	No hijab 53; situational or frequent 19; always 18; occasional 12; former or removed 2	Embodied presentation intersects with safety, religion, family, and public legibility.
Community involvement	Occasional 45; active 32; wants but not involved 20; not interested 7	Sapphic belonging is present but unevenly accessible.
Marriage pressure	Implicit 52; clearly expressed 31; none 19; uncertain or no answer 2	Commitment decisions occur within family and heteronormative expectations.

Sources: Informant responses (2025–2026).

Digital platforms did not function only as communication channels. Informants used them as safety infrastructure. X/Twitter appeared in 97 of the 104 responses, followed by Instagram, TikTok, Discord, dating apps, WhatsApp or Line groups, Telegram, Roblox, and other spaces. Platform functions included daily talk, relationship maintenance, partner search, community information, arranging meetings, and emotional escape. Safety practices were central: pseudonyms or second accounts, privacy settings, limiting contact to trusted people, moving sensitive conversations to another platform, closed or

invitation-only groups, and deleting traces.

Digital safety infrastructure also creates a grammar of boundedness. Users decide who can see, follow, screenshot, message, archive, or know. They decide whether a conversation belongs on X, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, or a private group. They decide which name to use in which context. This grammar parallels FWA. FWA asks participants to decide how much affection can be exchanged, whether exclusivity is implied, whether jealousy has standing, whether physical affection is included, and whether the relation can become pacaran. In both platform practice and FWA, intimacy depends on access control.

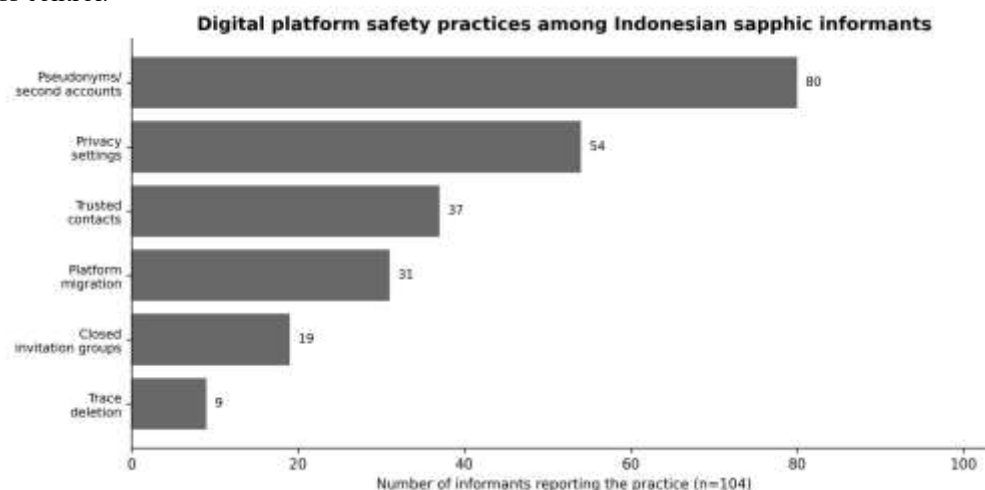


Figure 2. Digital safety practices used by informants to manage visibility, access, and traceability.

Source: Processed by the author from 104 informant responses (2025–2026).

Figure 2 explains how digital platforms operate as safety infrastructure rather than merely as communication tools. The visualization shows that pseudonyms, second accounts, privacy settings, trusted-contact filtering, platform migration, closed groups, and trace deletion are practical strategies through which informants manage visibility, access, and risk in everyday sapphic interaction.

The FWA corpus shows that FWA is an active relational category rather than a marginal phrase. The cleaned corpus includes 385 posts over one year. The term appears alongside FWB, HTS, pacaran, partner, friendzone, platonic, teman, mantan, and PDKT. This co-occurrence shows that users are not merely using slang. They are placing FWA inside a map of possible relations. They ask how FWA differs from dating, how it differs from sex-based arrangements, and how it differs from ordinary friendship.

The category works through contrast. FWA is not simply friendship because it authorizes intensified affection. It is not pacaran because it does not necessarily carry formal status, exclusivity, or future orientation. It is not necessarily FWB because many posts focus on affection, attention, daily communication, sleep calls, and emotional comfort rather than sex. It overlaps with HTS, but FWA centers the exchange of affection more explicitly. Users define it through closeness without the desire to possess. Other users reject the category and argue that people should either be friends or date. The dispute gives the label social force.

The corpus strongly associates FWA with affective need. Keyword-assisted mapping identified 87 of 385 posts that contained terms linked to affection and emotion, including affection, sayang, baper, feeling, attention, comfort, love, craving, loneliness, or needing someone to talk to. Close reading shows that this count is conservative. Users often describe affect without using those exact words. They ask for daily presence, reassurance, calls, pet names, emotional comfort, and someone who can make loneliness bearable.

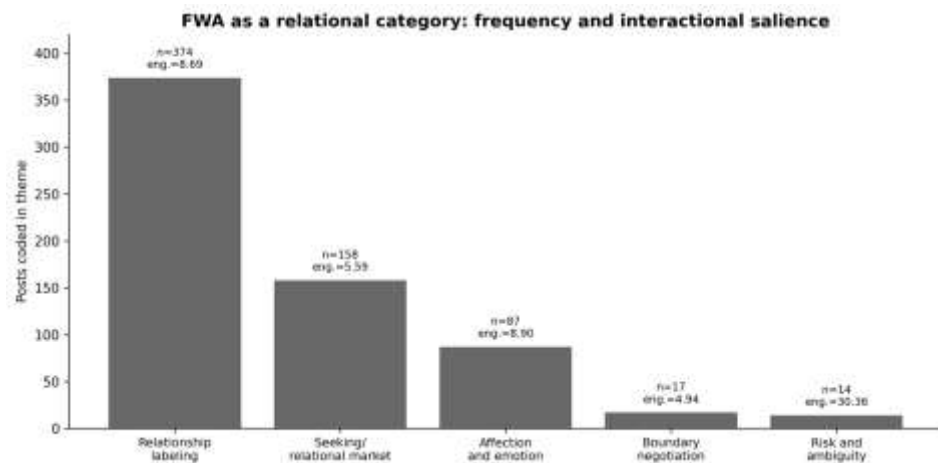


Figure 3. Thematic profile of FWA discourse in the X corpus. Source: Processed by the author from 385 FWA-related X posts (2025–2026).

Figure 3 summarizes the thematic profile of the FWA-related X corpus. It demonstrates that FWA is primarily organized through relationship labeling, seeking practices, affective exchange, boundary negotiation, and risk or ambiguity, indicating that the category functions as a social language for managing closeness rather than as a simple synonym for casual dating.

Boundary negotiation appeared explicitly in a smaller subset of posts than relationship labeling or seeking, but it carried high theoretical weight. Terms such as limits, agreement, principle, control, rules, do's and don'ts, and commitment appeared when users tried to explain what makes FWA possible or dangerous. Some posts insisted that FWA requires self-control. Others called for clarity before feelings become uneven. Boundaries often appeared as questions: Can I be jealous? Can I confess? Can I have FWA if I already have a partner? Can daily sayang-sayangan remain non-dating?

Table 3. Thematic categories in the FWA-related corpus

Theme	Posts (n)	Share of FWA corpus	Mean engagement
Relationship labeling	374	97.1%	8.69
Affection and emotion	87	22.6%	8.90
Boundary negotiation	17	4.4%	4.94
Risk and ambiguity	14	3.6%	30.36
Seeking and relational market	158	41.0%	5.59

Sources: FWA-related X corpus (2025–2026).

Table 3 summarizes the thematic structure of the FWA-related corpus and indicates how frequently each theme appeared in the keyword-assisted coding. The high proportion of relationship labeling and seeking, together with the high mean engagement for risk and ambiguity, shows that FWA functions as an active relational category and a site of public negotiation about affection, limits, and expectation.

Risk and ambiguity posts generated the highest average engagement among the coded categories. The most discussed posts asked whether someone should confess to a former FWA, whether a person with a partner may have FWA, whether FWA with someone newly out of a breakup is wise, and whether falling in love with an FWA is wrong. These questions reveal the fragile edge of bounded affection. FWA promises affection without ownership, but affection often produces the desire to own, be chosen, or be named.

4.2. Discussion

The central theoretical move of this article is to treat non-progression as an active relational strategy. Progression Bias Theory explains why people often move toward relationship initiation, maintenance, and commitment (Joel & MacDonald, 2021). The Indonesian FWA corpus shows that some people also cultivate intimacy through deliberate limits. They do not merely fail to progress. They hold affection in a form that avoids full dating, public ownership, or exclusive status.

This distinction matters for intimacy theory. If scholars read all non-formal relations as

incomplete progression, they miss the social labour inside them. FWA users are not simply waiting for a relationship to become real. They are deciding what kind of reality the relation can have. Strategic non-progression allows them to preserve care, reduce exposure, manage emotional capacity, and avoid promises they cannot make. The decision not to progress can therefore carry ethical force when it prevents false commitment. It can also carry harm when someone uses non-progression to avoid accountability.

Bounded Affection Theory explains intimate relations in which people exchange care, comfort, attention, validation, and romantic-light gestures without necessarily moving toward ownership, exclusivity, or formal dating. The theory has five propositions. First, meaningful intimacy can occur outside formal commitment. Second, non-formal intimacy is not structureless; it requires boundaries. Third, boundaries do not only restrict intimacy; they enable it by defining what affection does and does not mean. Fourth, bounded affection becomes unstable when emotional intensity exceeds the agreed relational frame. Fifth, the ethical quality of bounded affection depends on mutual clarity, consent, and revision when feelings change.

Figure 4 presents the proposed mechanism of Bounded Affection Theory. It shows how affective need, commitment constraint, intermediate relational space, and boundary work may lead to either stable bounded intimacy or relational injury, depending on whether affection and expectation remain mutually aligned.

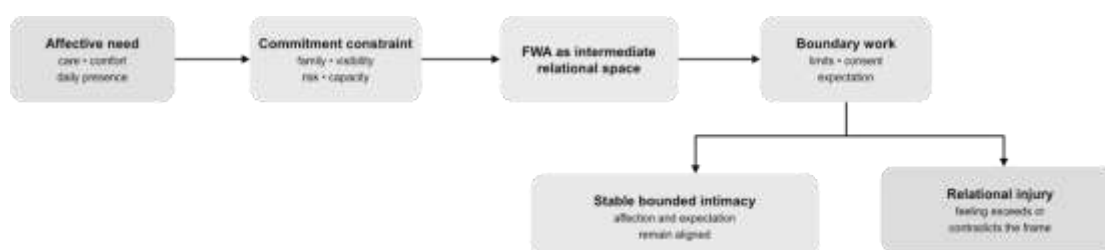


Figure 4. Mechanism of Bounded Affection Theory. Source: Processed by the author from abductive theoretical synthesis (2025–2026).

A status-based ethics asks whether a relation is clear: Are they dating? Are they exclusive? Are they partners? FWA shows why that question is necessary but insufficient. A relationship can have formal status and still harm participants. A non-formal relation can be ethical if participants understand limits, disclose constraints, and revise agreements when feelings change. The better question is: what have the participants agreed that affection means?

The FWA corpus also shows that digital sapphic spaces produce relational language. Users do not only consume platform affordances; they test names, compare categories, and create advice infrastructures. Language matters because relational categories allocate rights. Pacar authorizes some claims. Friend authorizes others. FWB, HTS, and FWA each create different expectations. When users ask whether an FWA can be jealous, they are asking whether the category authorizes jealousy. When they ask whether someone with a partner can have FWA, they are asking whether the category violates exclusivity. Digital sapphic spaces make these questions public and therefore allow the community to negotiate them.

The study has limitations. The digital corpus comes from X-based sapphic spaces and cannot represent all Indonesian sapphic experience. Platform cultures differ, and the FWA corpus is keyword-based, which means it captures explicit uses of the term FWA but may miss similar practices described through other language. Engagement metrics also require caution. A high reply count does not mean approval, prevalence, or importance; it means a post became interactionally salient. Nevertheless, the combined survey, interview, and corpus material provides a strong basis for mechanism-building.

4.3. Relevance to Research Objectives

The findings answer the research objective by showing that FWA is neither failed dating nor ordinary friendship. It is an intermediate social-affective arrangement through which Indonesian sapphic users negotiate identity, diversity, and interaction under conditions of unequal recognition. The data demonstrate how selective visibility structures relational choice, how platforms operate as safety infrastructure, and how users create vernacular categories to regulate affection.

The study fills the identified research gap by shifting intimacy theory from commitment as destination to boundary as mechanism. For the Social Sciences, Humanities & Behavioral Transformation – Identity, Diversity, and Social Interaction, the implication is that sustainable digital futures require more than technological access. They require social arrangements that protect identity,

recognize diversity, and support ethical interaction among users whose relationships remain vulnerable to exposure, family pressure, and unequal recognition.

5. Conclusion

This article has argued that Indonesian sapphic FWA challenges commitment-centred intimacy theory by showing that meaningful affection does not always move toward formal dating. The empirical evidence from 104 anonymized informant responses, 43 semi-structured Zoom interviews, 385 FWA-related X posts, and 1,484 broader sapphicness posts shows that FWA is an active relational category organized around affection, seeking, boundary negotiation, selective visibility, platform safety, and anxiety over uneven attachment. Bounded Affection Theory names the mechanism: affective need leads people to seek care; commitment constraint makes full dating risky or unwanted; FWA creates an intermediate space; boundary work regulates the meaning of affection; and the outcome becomes stable or injurious depending on whether feeling and expectation remain balanced. The theory shifts the analytic question from whether people commit to how they organize affection under constraint. This shift matters beyond FWA because it asks intimacy studies to stop treating commitment as the only sign of relational maturity, asks queer digital studies to treat online vernacular categories as sites of theory-making, and asks community practice to treat boundaries as ethical tools rather than emotional failure. Future research should compare FWA with FWB, HTS, queerplatonic relationships, consensual non-monogamies, and non-formal sapphic arrangements across Indonesian regions and diasporic communities.

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