

Impact of Birth Order on Emotional Competence

Mr. Anup Yadav^{1*}, Dr. Rashmi Singh²

ABSTRACT

One of the most well-known theories about the relationship between birth order and emotional competence is Alfred Adler's theory of birth order. Adler argued that birth order can significantly impact a person's personality and social development. He proposed that firstborns are typically more responsible and self-sufficient, while later-born children are more likely to be cooperative and adaptable—the present study aimed to examine the effect of birth order on emotional competence in males and females. The total sample size was 90, consisting of 45 males and 45 females, 15 each from the First and Middle Born and Last Born categories. A purposive random sampling technique was used to collect the data. The sample was administered using the Emotional Competence Scale (EC-Scale) by R. Bharadwaj and H. Sharma. Descriptive statistics and t-tests were used to verify the hypotheses. The findings reveal that there were significant differences in Emotional competence in males and females at different Birth Orders. The result shows that in the female group, the first order has average emotional competence, the second order has lower mean scores on Interpersonal and Interpersonal management, and the firstborn has difficulty managing their emotions and other people's emotions too. The Middle born has a high score on the component of Interpersonal awareness, the middle born are well aware of other people's emotions. The last born has the lowest mean score on the component of Intrapersonal management.

Keywords: Birth order, emotional competence, interpersonal, intrapersonal management

The relationship between emotional competence and birth order has generated a lot of interest in developmental and psychological studies. It is believed that a person's birth order—defined as their ordinal position within their family—influences many aspects of their personality, behavior, and emotional development (Sulloway, 1996). On the other hand, emotional competence refers to an individual's ability to effectively regulate and express their own emotions as well as to understand and respond to the emotions of others (Saarni, 1999). More importantly, emotional competence is crucial as workplaces are increasingly shifting from strictly hierarchical structures to more collaborative organizations. Such individuals are confident, have a positive rapport with colleagues at all levels in an organization, cope well with stress, and manifest leadership when called for. Emotional competence among adults generally means to be in a position where one can understand emotions successfully, regulate, express, or respond appropriately to them, and do the same for others. This requires a highly sophisticated level of emotional intelligence and the

¹Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

*Corresponding Author

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application of these skills to enhance performance in various personal and social environments.

Emotional competence is crucial for personal welfare and healthy interpersonal interactions. six major elements:

1. **Self-Awareness:** Knowing and being aware of your own emotions and what provokes them will make you give thoughtful responses rather than instinctive ones (Goleman, 1995).
2. **Emotion Regulation:** Managing emotions is effective as it facilitates dealing with extreme emotions while remaining stable on the emotional scale (Gross, 2002).
3. **Empathy:** Responding to others on an emotional level fosters greater understanding and care for one another, thereby strengthening relationships (Davis, 1994).
4. **Effective Communication:** By effectively conveying emotions and attentively listening to the listener, one can trigger an open conversation and effectively resolve conflict (Rosenberg, 2003).
5. **Building Relationships:** Understanding many viewpoints and finding a solution through cooperation enhances trust and builds stronger connections (Friedman, 2006).
6. **Emotional resilience** is being able to bounce back from adversity with hope and optimism. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from life's adversities (Bonanno, 2004).

Self-reflection, practice, and learning can develop and build up emotional competence, which is not an inborn ability. Activities such as self-evaluation, writing a journal, mindfulness, and getting feedback may be considered ways that adults improve their emotional competence. Additionally, therapy, coaching, or training courses focused on emotional intelligence in adults can also enhance an individual's emotional competence.

Birth order refers to the chronological order in which individuals within the same family are born. For many years, it has been an intriguing and controversial subject within the domain of psychology. Researchers have thoroughly examined various aspects of birth order and its potential indirect impact on personality traits, cognitive abilities, and social development.

Emotional competence is the aspect that plays across different kinds of areas, such as personal relationships, work performance, and overall well-being. In adulthood, emotional competence relates to the effective management and regulation of emotions, clear expression of emotions, and full empathy for others.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fitniwilis et al. (2022) investigated how students' emotional intelligence differed according to their birth order, specifically between the youngest and oldest children. This study employs a comparative descriptive technique, which is combined with descriptive analysis. 231 Muhammadiyah 4 Jakarta high school pupils, comprising 122 oldest and 109 youngest children, made up the study's sample. The BarOn EQ-i_YV (Emotional Quotient Inventory Young Version), created by Reuven, is the tool utilized. SPSS 25's independent samples t-test was utilized for data analysis. Based on the eldest and youngest children's birth orders, the results demonstrated a considerable disparity in the emotional maturity of the students.

Ali et al. (2021) conducted research among 180 BS (Hons.) students of the University of Malakand to determine the differences between male and female students concerning their

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emotional intelligence. According to the survey research design, they randomly picked up the students from six different departments. In this study, they applied the Self-Report Measure of Emotional Intelligence (SRMEI) to extract data. SPSS was used to carry out the data analysis that depicted overall higher emotional intelligence of male students as compared to female students, mainly towards emotional self-regulation and consciousness, whereas there are no significant differences regarding interpersonal skills.

Tripathi (2016) conducted a study to assess the influence of gender on the emotional intelligence of 300 college students at Kumaun University. This study, using personal data schedules and a personally adapted scale from Tewari & Joshi's 1996 Emotional Intelligence Scale, revealed no gender differences in self-awareness, recognizing others' emotions, and managing relationships. In managing emotions, motivating oneself, and total emotional intelligence scores, males were significantly higher.

Rohrer et al. (2015) examined the potential effects of birth order on intellect and personality by examining data from sizable national samples in Germany ($n = 10,457$), the United States ($n = 5,240$), and Great Britain ($n = 4,489$). Even after adjusting for tested IQ, the study verified that an increase in birth-order position led to a 10th of a standard deviation decrease in self-reported intellect. The study did not, however, find any significant impacts of birth order on personality qualities, including extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, or imagination, when comparing children within and between families. The findings repeatedly point to the lack of a persistent impact of birth order beyond intellectual characteristics.

Kaur (2013) conducted a gender differences analysis by using 128 management students from the business school in Chandigarh (71 females, 57 males). Singh and Chadha (2006) developed the "Know Your EQ" scale for measuring emotional competency, maturity, and sensitivity used for data analysis via t-tests. The scores of the male population were higher compared to those of the females in emotional maturity. This outcome underscores the significance of social learning in enhancing socio-emotional competencies and thereby influencing parenting and workplace effectiveness.

Kotsou et al. (2011) investigated the possibility of increasing EC in adulthood and the potential positive impact on well-being. According to the hypothesis, a 15-hour program focused on enhancing self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills led to a significant increase in EC compared to a control group of participants. Better mental and social adjustment was also associated with the increases, and these positive changes persisted one year later, along with a reduction in stress hormone secretion.

Eckstein et al. (2010) reported the outcomes of 200 studies on birth order and lifestyle characteristics. Firstborns are typically high achievers, conscientious, and responsible; middle children often tend to be socially skilled and mediators; lastborn tend to be outgoing, risk-taking, and rebellious; and only children resemble firstborns but may be more independent. Males experienced stronger birth-order effects than females, and factors such as family size, parental style, and socioeconomic status shaped their personality traits and behaviors.

Ahmad et al. (2009) conducted a study on EI among 160 participants, with an equal split of males and females: 80 each from N.W.F.P., using a snowball sampling technique. The study employed a personal information sheet to gather demographic data and measured the EI

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level using the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). Findings show that males had a higher score than females regarding emotional intelligence.

Hopkins & Bilimora (2008) measured the relationship between SECs and success in 225 male and female executives of a financial services organization. The use of a 360-degree assessment for SECs and a rating based on performance criteria for success revealed no discernible gender difference. Conversely, both genders showed a positive correlation between SECs and success, with the correlation being significantly stronger for males than females.

Wong & Ang (2007) studied the relationships between four emotional competencies—improving intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, and stress management skills—and four maladjustment factors: antisocial behavior, anger control issues, emotional distress, and negative self-perception. The participants were 217 Singaporean students. The results showed that stress management skills significantly predicted all maladjustment factors, whereas interpersonal skills predicted only negative self-perception. Both intrapersonal skills and adaptability skills failed to predict any maladjustment factors. The results are concluded with a discussion on implications and limitations.

Hall, Church, & Stone (1980) studied the interrelationship between birth order and other personality variables in questionnaire form: trait anxiety, locus of control, and need for achievement in a special sample of 20 national caliber Olympic weightlifters. Firstborns (65%) outnumbered later born (35%). The findings showed that later-born lifters exhibited a significantly higher internal locus of control compared to their firstborn counterparts. Conversely, the firstborns demonstrated a significantly greater drive for achievement. Overall, the trait anxiety score was extremely low among both firstborn and later-born lifters. This implies that there are distinct personality characteristics associated with birth order in the context of competitive sports.

Research Gap

The studies on birth order and its effects on emotional competencies could not provide any definite results as some have found significant relationships, while others did not. Alfred Adler was one of the earliest theorists to propound birth order as a huge role in developing personality and social development; he has even stipulated that firstborns are more responsible and self-sufficient, while later-born children are more cooperative and adaptable. However, not all research puts people on this wavelength, and, in many ways, these results do not mesh hand-in-hand. This lack of consistency provides another cause to study further ways birth order impacts emotional competency. In most studies, they focus only on the established variables but do not take into account contextual factors that may be important to an individual's relationship with birth order or family order which may include family dynamics, cultural influences, and a child's social position. These factors may mediate or moderate the effect of birth order, thus complicating the general understanding of emotional competence development.

Overall, the research on the impact of birth order on emotional competence is mixed. More research is needed to determine the extent to which birth order can influence a person's emotional competence. So, the goal of this study was to see the impact of birth on emotional competencies. This research on the impact of birth order on emotional competence is important for several reasons. First, it can help us to understand the factors that contribute to emotional competence. Second, it can help us to develop interventions that can help children

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and adolescents develop emotional competence. Third, it can help us to create more supportive environments for children and adolescents, regardless of their birth order.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

To find the significant difference between the emotional competencies compared to birth order (1st to 3rd) in male and female groups.

Hypothesis

H0 (Null Hypothesis)

There will be no significant effect of birth order on emotional competence in males and females.

Sample

A purposive sampling was used to collect data. The sample size was 90 in which there are 45 males and 45 females including 15 for the First birth order, 15 for second, and 15 for third in each group. For measuring emotional competence, we used Emotional Competence Scale (EC-Scale) by R. Bharadwaj and H. Sharma.

Research Design-

Group	Birth Order			Total
	First Order	Second Order	Third Order	
Male	15 (MF)	15 (MS)	15(MT)	45
Female	15(FF)	15(FS)	15(FT)	45

- MF – Male First Order
- FF – Female First Order
- MS – Male Second Order
- FS – Female Second Order
- MT - Male Third Order
- FT – Female Third Order

Variables

- **Independent Variable**
 1. Gender (Male/Female)
 2. Birth Order
- **Dependent Variable**
 1. Emotional Competence

Exclusion Criteria

- Single Child
- Age – below 18 and above 44

Inclusion Criteria

- Till 3rd No birth Order
- Age – 18-44

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Instrument

Emotional Competence Scale: Emotional Competency Scale developed by Dr. Harish Sharma and Dr. Rajeev Lochan Bharadwaj (1995) was selected. The scale has 30 items. The reliability of the scale has been derived by employing two methods. Viz. test-retest and split-half method. The test-retest and split-half reliability is reported to be 0.74 and 0.76 respectively. The validity of this scale has been determined with factors A and C of 16 Personality Factor questionnaires and reported to be 0.64 and 0.69 respectively.

Procedure

The test was administered to a group of males and females between the age group of 18-44. A good rapport was established with the participants and after that, they were given general instructions, and the purpose of the study was explained. The questionnaire on Emotional Competence was given to the participants. Then the following instructions were given:” You are given a questionnaire and it contains certain statements and under each statement, 5 alternative responses are given. Read each statement clearly and put a tick mark on the alternative that suits you the most. There is no right or wrong answers. There is no time limit but try to do it as fast as possible. Do not miss out on any statements. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used only for research purposes”. Then clarifications were answered and they were asked to start answering the questionnaire. And after finishing the questionnaire, they were collected back.

Statistical Analysis

The Descriptive statistics used for data analysis were Mean, SD, SEM, and t-test.

RESULT

Table 1 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 1st Order and Female 1st Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 1 st Order	15	103.67	3.922	1.013	3.662**
Female 1 st Order	15	97.07	5.775	1.491	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 1 shows the mean and t scores for male first order and female first order. Mean shows that male first order have higher emotional competency as compared to female first order. t value shows the significant difference between males and females about their birth orders that is first birth order.

Table 2 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 2nd Order and Female 2nd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 2 nd Order	15	129.07	2.685	.693	10.813**
Female 2 nd Order	15	106.60	7.586	1.959	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 2 shows the mean and t scores for male second order and female second order. Mean shows that male second order have higher emotional competency as compared to female second order. T value shows the significant difference between males and females in reference to their birth orders that is second birth order.

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Table 3 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 3rd Order and Female 3rd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 3 rd Order	15	99.20	2.704	.698	6.572**
Female 3 rd Order	15	85.00	7.919	2.045	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 3 shows the mean and t scores about male third order and female third order. Mean shows that male third order have higher emotional competency as compared to female third order. T value shows the significant difference between males and females about their birth orders that is the third birth order.

Table 4 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 1st Order and Male 2nd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 1 st Order	15	103.67	3.922	1.013	-20.697
Male 2 nd Order	15	129.07	2.685	.693	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 4 shows the mean and t scores about male first order and male second order. Mean shows that male second order have higher emotional competency as compared to male first order. T value shows the significant difference between male groups about their birth orders that is first & Second birth order.

Table 5 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 1st Order and Male 3rd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 1 st Order	15	103.67	3.922	1.013	3.631**
Male 3 rd Order	15	99.20	2.704	.698	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 5 shows the mean and t sores in relation to male first order and male third order. Mean shows that male first order have higher emotional competency as compared to male third order. t value shows the significant difference between male groups in reference to their birth orders that is first birth order and third birth order.

Table 6 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 2nd Order and Male 3rd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 2 nd Order	15	129.07	2.685	.693	30.352**
Male 3 rd Order	15	99.20	2.704	.698	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 6 shows the mean and t sores in relation to male second order and male third order. Mean shows that male second order have higher emotional competency as compared to male third order. t value shows the significant difference between male groups in reference to their birth orders that is second and third birth order.

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Table 7 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Female 1st Order and Female 2nd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Female 1 st Order	15	97.07	5.775	1.491	-3.873**
Female 2 nd Order	15	106.60	7.586	1.959	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 7 shows the mean and t sores in relation to female first order and female second order. Mean shows that female second order have higher emotional competency as compared to female first order. t value shows the significant difference between female groups in reference to their birth orders that is first birth order.

Table 8 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Female 2nd Order and Female 3rd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Female 2 nd Order	15	106.60	7.586	1.959	7.629**
Female 3 rd Order	15	85.00	7.919	2.045	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 8 shows the mean and t sores in relation to female second order and female third order. Mean shows that female second order have higher emotional competency as compared to female third order. t value shows the significant difference between female groups in reference to their birth orders that is second birth order and third birth order.

Table 9 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Female 1st Order and Female 3rd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Female 1 st Order	15	97.07	5.775	1.491	4.768**
Female 3 rd Order	15	85.00	7.919	2.045	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 9 shows the mean and t sores in relation to female first order and female third order. Mean shows that female first order have higher emotional competency as compared to female third order. t value shows the significant difference between female groups in reference to their birth orders that is first and third birth order.

Table 10 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 1st Order and Female 2nd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 1 st Order	15	103.67	3.922	1.013	-1.330
Female 2 nd Order	15	106.60	7.586	1.959	

Not significant

Table 10 shows the mean and t sores in relation to male first order and female second order. Mean shows that female second order have higher emotional competency as compared to male first order. t value shows no significant difference between male first order and female second order.

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Table 11 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 1st Order and Female 3rd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 1 st Order	15	103.67	3.922	1.013	8.181**
Female 3 rd Order	15	85.00	7.919	2.045	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 11 shows the mean and t sores in relation to male first order and female third order. Mean shows that male first order have higher emotional competency as compared to female third order. t value shows the significant difference between the male first order and the female third birth order.

Table 12 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 2nd Order and Female 1st Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 2 nd Order	15	129.07	2.685	.693	19.460**
Female 1 st Order	15	97.07	5.775	1.491	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 12 shows the mean and t sores in relation to male second order and female first order. Mean shows that male second order have higher emotional competency as compared to female first order. t value shows the significant difference between the male first order and female first order.

Table 13 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 2nd Order and Female 3rd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 2 nd Order	15	129.07	2.685	.693	20.410**
Female 3 rd Order	15	85.00	7.919	2.045	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 13 shows the mean and t sores in relation to male second order and female third order. Mean shows that males second order have higher emotional competency as compared to females third order. t value shows the significant difference between the male second order and the female third order.

Table 14 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 3rd Order and Female 1st Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 3 rd Order	15	99.20	2.704	.698	1.296
Female 1 st Order	15	97.07	5.775	1.491	

Not Significant

Table 14 shows the mean and t sores in relation to male third order and female first order. Mean shows that males third order have higher emotional competency as compared to females in the first order. t value shows no significant difference between male third order and female first birth order.

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Table 15 Comparison of Emotional Competence between Male 3rd Order and Female 2nd Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Male 3 rd Order	15	99.20	2.704	.698	-3.559**
Female 2 nd Order	15	106.60	7.586	1.959	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 15 shows the mean and t sores in relation to male third order and female second order. Mean shows that female second order have higher emotional competency as compared to male third order. t value shows the significant difference between male third order and female second order.

Table 16 Comparison of Emotional Competence between 1st Birth Order and 2nd Birth Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
1 st Birth Order	30	100.37	5.898	1.077	-6.823**
2 nd Birth Order	30	117.83	12.720	2.322	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 16 shows the mean and t sores in relation to first birth order and second birth order. Mean shows that the second birth order has higher emotional competency as compared to the first birth order. The t value shows the significant difference between the first birth order and the second birth order.

Table 17 Comparison of Emotional Competence between 2nd Birth Order and 3rd Birth Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
2 nd Birth Order	30	117.83	12.720	2.322	8.955**
3 rd Birth Order	30	92.10	9.271	1.693	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 17 shows the mean and t sores in relation to second birth order and third birth order. Mean shows that the second birth order has higher emotional competency as compared to the third birth order. The t value shows the significant difference between the second birth order and the third birth order.

Table 18 Comparison of Emotional Competence between 1st Birth Order and 3rd Birth Order

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
1 st Birth Order	30	100.37	5.898	1.077	4.121**
3 rd Birth Order	30	92.10	9.271	1.693	

** Significant at level 0.01

Table 18 shows the mean and t sores in relation to first birth order and third birth order. Mean shows that first birth order have higher emotional competency as compared to third birth order. t value shows the significant difference between the first birth order and third birth order.

DISCUSSION

The current study aims to investigate the potential influence of birth order on the emotional competence of males and females. The results indicate that males exhibit higher emotional competencies compared to females. Second-order born children demonstrate higher emotional competencies compared to their first- and third-order born counterparts. However, in a cross-comparison between first-order-born kids and third-order-born kids, first-order-born kids were better. The result also agreed with the previous study of Sulloway (1996), which stated that second-borns are nonconformist, imaginative, adaptable, and more liberal, and they are also more rebellious as well as open to experience. In contrast, Sulloway (1996) also found that middle-borns make excellent negotiators and are closer to friends than family. Blair (2011) asserts that middle-born children are diplomatic, requiring them to make compromises between their elder and younger siblings while also being independent and secretive about their feelings. Eckstein et al. (2010) also reported that middle-born children possess high interpersonal skills. In a study, Hall, Church, and Stone (1980) report that firstborns have more internal locus of control and responsibility; that means they hold themselves responsible for outcomes and exert efforts to change them as and when necessary, which are core skills to implement adaptability. Bass (1990) reported a high level of confidence among firstborns and proved that the probability of success in leadership will be higher among them. This confidence and self-assurance are indicators of intrapersonal skills such as self-regard and assertiveness. According to Eckstein et al. (2010), the literature supports the notion that firstborns are high achievers and highly motivated due to their parents' significant investment in their education and adherence to parental values.

When comparing emotional competence between males and females, the results indicate that males have higher emotional competence than females. This finding is intriguing because research on emotional awareness and expression usually focuses on the strengths of women. Males usually act with a wider range of emotional depth and better control over the expression of emotions, especially in a competitive environment that seems to be "more competent." Females form their feelings clearly but more often become emotionally overwhelmed. Men can effectively use affective information during decision-making under stress, while women may perceive their relational approach as less decisive. Moreover, typical masculine standards help them become more resilient and problem-solve better, whereas females' propensity toward rumination serves to make them emotionally aware but impairs problem-solving skills. Such a result could imply and reflect the differences in socialization, specifically the approaches to emotional regulation and decisions: males develop strategies that help them deal with emotions and make decisions, while females are more concerned with relational and expressive approaches. Several researchers have supported our findings by demonstrating that males possess greater emotional intelligence than females (Ahmad, S., Bangash, H., & Khan, S. A. (2009)). Additionally, a study revealed that male students exhibited higher emotional intelligence than their female counterparts. Ali, A., Saleem, N., & Rahman, N. (2021) found that male students had superior intelligence in emotional self-regulation and emotional self-awareness compared to female students. Rao and Komala (2017) discovered in their research on youth that boys exhibited greater emotional intelligence than females; nevertheless, the result was statistically insignificant. Naghavi and Redzuan (2011) have concluded that although females have shown greater emotional intelligence, other studies have shown contradictory results; Palmer et al. (2003) reported women as attaining higher levels of interpersonal skills and emotional awareness. Therefore, this area requires further research. There was also a significant difference in emotional intelligence between males and females.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that males display greater emotional competence than females, whereas second-born children possess stronger emotional skills relative to first- and third-borns. The results corroborate other studies emphasizing the impact of birth order on characteristics including flexibility, leadership, and interpersonal abilities. Variations in emotional competence between genders indicate that socialization patterns and emotional control mechanisms differ markedly between males and females.

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Conflict of Interest

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