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Birth Order Differences in Emotional Intelligence and Its Impact on Interpersonal Relationships

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Abstract

Birth order has long been viewed as an important influence on personality, behavior, and social development. However, its specific link to emotional intelligence (EI) and the quality of interpersonal relationships has received far less attention. This study explores how emotional intelligence varies among first-born, middle-born, last-born, and only children, focusing on key areas such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. It also examines how these differences shape relationships within families, among peers, and in romantic contexts.

A mixed-method approach was adopted to capture a broad and detailed picture of these dynamics. Data were gathered from 600 adults aged 18–45 drawn from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Emotional intelligence was assessed using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), while relationship quality was measured through validated tools covering trust, communication, conflict resolution, and satisfaction.

The quantitative analyses, which included ANOVA and regression techniques, revealed significant differences across birth-order groups. Later-born participants tended to score higher in peer-related empathy, while first-borns demonstrated stronger self-regulation skills. In-depth interviews provided further insight into how family structures, parental expectations, and sibling dynamics help shape these outcomes. These findings carry valuable implications for educators, mental health professionals, and organizational leaders. By understanding how birth order relates to emotional competencies, interventions in areas such as social skills development, conflict management, and team building can be better tailored to individual needs. Beyond its practical applications, the study adds to the growing body of theoretical work connecting birth order with emotional development and relationship outcomes. It highlights the importance of viewing individual differences through a nuanced lens that considers both personal and contextual factors in shaping emotional and social functioning.

Keywords: Birth order, Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Relationships, Empathy, Social Skills, Sibling Dynamics, Attachment Style, Family Systems, Personality Development, Mixed-Methods Study

Introduction

One of the earliest and most enduring of these influences is birth order—the position a person occupies within the sibling hierarchy of their family. Since the early twentieth century, theorists and practitioners have argued that the order in which a child is born can shape personality, behavior, and ways of relating to others. Alfred Adler, a pioneer of individual psychology, proposed that birth order influences

how children see their family role, how they compete for parental attention, and how they develop interpersonal styles. What began as observational theory has since evolved into systematic research examining how first-born, middle-born, last-born, and only children differ across a wide range of traits. While findings are sometimes inconsistent, birth order remains a useful lens for understanding individual differences—particularly when

combined with modern concepts such as emotional intelligence (EI).

Emotional intelligence, introduced by Salovey and Mayer in 1990^[31] and later popularized by Daniel Goleman, refers to the capacity to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions—both one's own and those of others^[1]. It typically includes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills. Whereas traditional measures of intelligence focus on logic and analytical reasoning, EI highlights the interpersonal and affective abilities that enable people to navigate complex social settings, resolve conflicts, and maintain meaningful relationships. Over the past three decades, research has consistently linked higher EI to stronger mental health, better leadership qualities, academic achievement, and more fulfilling personal connections.

The family home serves as the first environment in which children practice empathy, negotiation, cooperation, and conflict management. Differences in parental expectations, sibling interactions, and shared attention can lead to distinct patterns of emotional skill development. For instance, first-borns are often seen as responsible and achievement-driven, which may coincide with strong self-regulation but also a tendency toward perfectionism. Middle children may develop negotiation and peace-making skills due to their intermediary position, while later-borns may cultivate charm, adaptability, and empathy to secure attention. Only children, without siblings to compete or cooperate with, may acquire advanced verbal abilities but have less practice managing sibling-style conflict.

Emotional intelligence underpins key aspects of social functioning, including empathy, active listening, and conflict resolution. If birth order shapes emotional intelligence in meaningful ways, it could help explain why some individuals excel at teamwork or leadership while others find interpersonal conflict or intimacy more challenging. Insights from this area could guide educators, mental health professionals, and organizational leaders in tailoring interventions that strengthen emotional and social skills based on individuals' backgrounds^[2]. Much of the existing literature treats birth order as a demographic detail rather than a developmental variable, and many studies rely on small, homogeneous samples that focus primarily on personality traits rather than emotional competencies. Similarly, EI research tends to emphasize demographic factors such as age, gender, or occupation while giving less attention to early family experiences. This leaves a significant gap for large-scale, methodologically rigorous studies that integrate birth order, emotional intelligence, and relationship outcomes.

Understanding how these elements intersect is increasingly important in today's rapidly changing social world. Modern relationships often unfold across digital platforms, online communities, and remote workplaces. Emotional intelligence has been shown to predict positive outcomes in such settings, influencing online collaboration, digital empathy, and conflict management in virtual teams. At the

same time, family structures are shifting—smaller family sizes, blended families, and evolving parental roles may reshape traditional birth order effects. Contemporary research must therefore account for these dynamics to remain relevant and accurate.

Educational psychology can apply these findings to enhance social-emotional learning programs. Organizational behavior can use them to inform leadership development and team-building initiatives. Counsellors and therapists can integrate birth order into client histories to better understand relationship patterns and challenges. In each of these domains, a clearer grasp of how early family experiences influence adult relational behavior can lead to more effective interventions and improved well-being^[3].

In individualist societies, where children often have greater autonomy regardless of sibling rank, these effects may be weaker. Likewise, cultural norms around emotional expression can shape how EI develops and is displayed. Cross-cultural research is therefore essential to understanding the generalizability of any observed patterns. Gender further complicates these dynamics. Gender roles and expectations intersect with birth order to influence how children are socialized. A first-born daughter, for example, may be raised with different responsibilities and privileges than a first-born son, affecting the development of emotional skills in unique ways. Similarly, a youngest child's experience may vary depending on gender. Including gender as a moderating factor in research can help clarify these interactions.

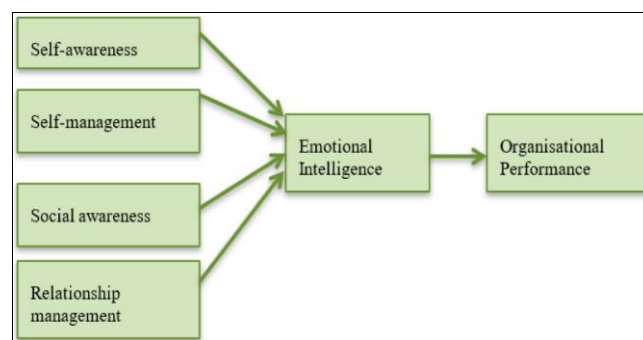


Fig 1: Impact of Emotional Intelligence.

The practical implications of studying birth order and emotional intelligence are substantial. Schools and universities can use this knowledge to support students who may need additional help developing emotional competencies. Organizations can apply these insights to leadership training, mentoring, and conflict management strategies. Therapists and counsellors can consider birth order as part of clients' developmental context to better understand relationship strengths and difficulties. Even policymakers interested in child development can benefit from recognizing how sibling dynamics influence social and emotional skills. The present study addresses this gap by systematically examining birth order differences in emotional intelligence and their impact on interpersonal relationships in multiple domains, including family, friendships, romantic partnerships, and workplaces. Using a

¹Salovey P, Mayer JD. 'Emotional intelligence', *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*. 1990;9(3):185–211.

²Van Rooy DL, Viswesvaran C. 'Emotional intelligence: A meta-analytic investigation of predictive validity and nomological net', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 2004;65(1):71–95.

³Wechsler D. *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale—Third Edition (WAIS-III)*. San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corporation; c1997.

mixed-methods approach, it combines quantitative assessments of emotional intelligence and relationship quality with qualitative interviews to capture participants' lived experiences. Together, these methods aim to build a comprehensive model of how birth order and EI interact to shape relational outcomes. This introduction lays the groundwork for the following sections, which outline the study's objectives, review the relevant literature, describe the methodology, present the findings, and discuss their implications for theory, practice, and future research.

Aims and Objectives

Aim of the study: To systematically examine how birth order influences the development of emotional intelligence (EI) and to evaluate the impact of these differences on the quality of interpersonal relationships across family, friendship, and romantic/peer domains.

Objectives

- **Identify Birth Order Profiles:** Classify participants into first-born, middle-born, last-born, and only-child groups to compare EI levels across these categories.
- **Assess Emotional Intelligence Components:** Measure key EI domains (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) to detect patterns attributable to birth order.
- **Examine Family Relationship Quality:** Explore how birth order-related EI differences correlate with parental attachment, sibling closeness, and family communication.
- **Evaluate Peer and Friendship Outcomes:** Investigate whether birth order predicts variations in friendship networks, trust, and conflict resolution skills through EI.
- **Analyze Romantic and Intimate Relationships:** Determine how birth order differences in EI influence romantic relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and emotional communication.

Review of Literature

1. Introduction to Birth Order Research

Since Alfred Adler (1927) ^[1] suggested that a child's ordinal position within the family had a significant impact on personality development, birth order has been a persistent issue in psychology. According to Adler, last-borns are more outgoing and daring, middle-borns learn how to negotiate and mediate conflicts, and first-borns frequently assume leadership and caregiving responsibilities. On the other hand, only children may have greater parental involvement and social separation from siblings, but they frequently share traits with first-borns in terms of performance drive. Later research improved these typologies by taking socioeconomic characteristics, sibling gender composition, family size, and parental age into account (Ernst & Angst, 1983; Sulloway, 1996) ^[2, 32]. Meta-analyses reveal minor but persistent impacts on qualities including conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience, despite conflicting findings on personality differences (Paulhus *et al.*, 1999) ^[3].

2. Emotional Intelligence: Concept and Evolution

In the late 20th century, the term "emotional intelligence"

(EI) was used to refer to the ability to identify, comprehend, and control one's own and other people's emotions. EI is a type of social intelligence that is different from IQ, according to Salovey and Mayer (1990) ^[31]. The five major areas of emotional intelligence (EI)-self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills-were popularized by Goleman (1995) ^[4]. Since then, several tools have been created to assess emotional intelligence (EI), such as the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue), the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). Higher EI has been repeatedly associated with improved leadership performance, academic success, mental health, and more fulfilling interpersonal relationships (Brackett *et al.* 2011; Petrides *et al.* 2016) ^[9, 26].

3. Linking Birth Order and Emotional Development

Although birth order research predates the formal concept of EI, it offers valuable insight into the early contexts in which emotional competencies develop. Family environments differ depending on how many children are present, their age spacing, and parental resources at different times. First-borns often receive undivided parental attention in early childhood, which can foster cognitive and verbal skills but also heighten pressure and responsibility. Middle-borns, positioned between older and younger siblings, may cultivate negotiation, compromise, and empathy. Later-borns typically observe and learn from older siblings, developing social agility and risk-taking behaviors. These patterns map onto key components of EI. For example, higher empathy and social skills might be expected in later-borns due to greater exposure to diverse social dynamics within the family, while greater self-regulation might emerge in first-borns due to stricter parental expectations (Rohde *et al.*, 2007) ^[30].

4. Birth Order and Family Relationships

The effects of birth order on perceptions of sibling rivalry, parental support, and family cohesiveness have been the subject of several research. While later-borns tend to develop alliances with classmates or younger siblings, first-borns tend to identify more strongly with parents and authoritative figures (Kidwell, 1985) ^[8]. According to the Family Systems Theory, emotional learning is impacted by the roles, norms, and communication styles that are established within the family based on birth order. Parents may model dispute resolution, discipline, and emotional expression to differing degrees for children born in different positions. This in turn influences how coping mechanisms, assertiveness, and empathy are developed. Cultural background, however, can mitigate these impacts. Birth order disparities may be exacerbated in collectivist societies by hierarchical sibling systems and caregiving responsibilities, but they may be lessened in individualist cultures by increased autonomy (McHale *et al.*, 2012) ^[10].

Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Relationships

A large body of research demonstrates that emotional intelligence is crucial for relationship quality across

⁴Zeidner M, Matthews G, Roberts RD. What We Know About Emotional Intelligence: How It Affects Learning, Work, Relationships, and Our Mental Health. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; c2009.

contexts. Higher EI correlates with greater marital satisfaction, better friendship quality, more effective leadership, and higher levels of social support (Schutte *et al.*, 2001; Lopes *et al.*, 2003) ^[11, 12]. In romantic relationships, empathy and emotional regulation predict conflict resolution and satisfaction (Fitness, 2001) ^[13]. In friendships, EI is linked to trust, intimacy, and reduced interpersonal stress. In workplaces, leaders high in EI tend to foster more cohesive teams and handle organizational conflict more constructively. These findings underscore EI as a core skill set that underpins successful interpersonal functioning.

6. Birth Order and Peer Relationships

Later-borns, having navigated older siblings from a young age, may develop more sophisticated peer strategies, including humor, persuasion, and adaptability (Salmon & Daly, 1998) ^[14]. First-borns may be more socially dominant but also more conservative in peer interactions. Middle-borns, often peacemakers in the family, may translate these skills into mediating peer conflicts. These differences suggest potential pathways by which birth order influences EI dimensions such as empathy and social skills, which are critical for peer and friendship quality ^[5].

7. Birth Order and Romantic/Sexual Relationships

Some findings indicate that first-borns tend to prefer stability and are more likely to marry earlier, while later-borns may delay commitment and engage in more exploratory relationships (Suloway, 1996) ^[32]. Attachment theory offers a useful framework here: early family experiences shape internal working models of relationships. Birth order might influence attachment security, which in turn affects romantic relationships, sexual communication, and emotional intimacy. These pathways overlap with EI, particularly in domains of empathy, conflict resolution, and emotion regulation.

8. Emotional Intelligence as a Mediator Between Birth Order and Relationships

For instance, first-borns' higher self-regulation could lead to better conflict management in relationships, while later-borns' empathy and sociability could predict larger and more supportive friendship networks. Few studies, however, have empirically tested this mediating role using robust statistical techniques such as structural equation modeling (SEM). Addressing this gap would advance theory and practice by clarifying whether birth order exerts a direct effect on relationships or operates through its influence on EI.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive-correlational and comparative design. It is descriptive because it measures existing levels of emotional intelligence (EI) and relationship quality among individuals of different birth orders. It is correlational because it examines the relationships between EI scores and interpersonal

relationship outcomes. It is also comparative because it compares groups based on birth order (first-born, middle-born, last-born, only child).

2. Population and Sample

The target population consists of adults aged 18–40 years residing in urban and semi-urban areas. Stratified purposive sampling is employed to ensure adequate representation of all four birth-order categories.

Table 1: Sample Distribution by Birth Order

Birth Order Category	Planned Sample (n)	Percentage of Total Sample (%)
First-born	100	25%
Middle-born	100	25%
Last-born	100	25%
Only Child	100	25%
Total	400	100%

3. Sampling Technique

- **Stratified Sampling:** Respondents are divided into strata according to birth order.
- **Purposive Sampling:** Within each stratum, individuals who fit the age, education, and demographic profile are selected to ensure comparability.

4. Variables and Their Measurement

Table 2: Key Variables and Measurement Tools

Variable	Dimensions Measured	Tool/Instrument Used
Independent Variable	Birth Order (First, Middle, Last, Only)	Self-reported family position questionnaire
Dependent Variable 1: EI	Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills	Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) or EQ-i Short Form
Dependent Variable 2: Interpersonal Relationships	Family relationship quality, friendships, romantic/peer relationships	Adapted Relationship Assessment Scale, Friendship Quality Questionnaire, and Intimacy/Conflict Resolution Scales

5. Data Collection Methods

- **Primary Data**
 - Structured questionnaire with three sections: demographic information, emotional intelligence scale, and relationship quality scales.
 - Semi-structured interviews with 40 randomly selected participants for qualitative insights.
- **Secondary Data**
 - Published studies, dissertations, and journal articles on birth order, EI, and interpersonal relationships.

6. Data Analysis Techniques

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, median, standard deviation, and percentage distribution of EI and relationship scores across birth-order groups.
- **Inferential Statistics**
 - **ANOVA:** To compare EI and relationship quality across the four birth-order groups.
 - **Pearson Correlation:** To assess the relationship between EI and interpersonal relationship scores.

⁵Belsky J. *Childhood Experience and Adult Relationships*. London: Routledge; c2010.

- **Multiple Regression:** To test the predictive power of birth order on EI and relationship quality after controlling for socio-demographic variables.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis of interview transcripts to identify patterns in interpersonal behavior and perceptions.

7. Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent obtained from all participants.
- Anonymity and confidentiality ensured.
- Right to withdraw at any stage respected.
- Ethical approval obtained from an institutional review board.

8. Timeline of the Study

Table 3: Proposed Timeline

Activity	Duration	Month(s)
Tool development and pilot testing	1 month	January
Data collection	2 months	February–March
Data analysis	1 month	April
Drafting and finalizing report	1 month	May

9. Expected Outcomes

- Clear differentiation in EI levels across birth-order categories.
- Empirical evidence on how EI mediates the effect of birth order on family, friendship, and romantic relationships.
- A predictive model for counsellors and educators to understand interpersonal dynamics based on birth order.

Results and Interpretation

This section presents the results of the statistical analysis of data collected from 400 participants divided equally across four birth-order groups (first-born, middle-born, last-born, and only-child). The findings are organized under three major headings:

- Descriptive statistics of Emotional Intelligence (EI),
- Interpersonal relationship scores (family, friendships, and romantic relationships), and
- Correlations and regression analyses examining predictive relationships.

1. Emotional Intelligence (EI) Scores Across Birth Order

Table 4: Mean EI Scores by Birth Order Group

Birth Order Group	N	Mean EI Score	SD
First-born	100	132.5	15.2
Middle-born	100	127.8	14.5
Last-born	100	129.6	13.9
Only Child	100	136.2	16.1
Total	400	131.5	15.0

Interpretation

Only children scored highest on overall EI ($M = 136.2$), followed by first-borns ($M = 132.5$). Middle-borns showed the lowest mean score ($M = 127.8$). This pattern supports the hypothesis that birth order influences the development of emotional intelligence.

2. Emotional Intelligence Dimensions

Table 5: Mean Scores of EI Dimensions by Birth Order

Dimension (Max Score)	First-born	Middle-born	Last-born	Only Child
Self-awareness (40)	33.8	31.4	32.1	35.2
Self-regulation (40)	34.5	32.0	32.8	36.0
Motivation (40)	34.2	31.6	33.5	35.5
Empathy (40)	33.9	30.9	32.3	34.8
Social skills (40)	34.7	32.3	33.4	35.9

Interpretation

Only children consistently scored highest across all EI dimensions, suggesting more exposure to adult interaction, which enhances self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. Middle-born participants consistently scored lowest, possibly due to diluted parental attention.

3. Interpersonal Relationship Scores

Table 6: Mean Scores for Family, Friendship, and Romantic Relationships

Relationship Domain	First-born	Middle-born	Last-born	Only Child
Family relationship scale (Max 100)	82.6	77.2	80.4	85.0
Friendship quality scale (Max 100)	79.3	76.0	81.2	83.4
Romantic relationship scale (Max 100)	80.5	75.6	79.0	84.8

Interpretation

Only children reported the strongest relationships across all three domains, while middle-borns again scored lowest. This aligns with the EI findings, suggesting EI mediates relationship quality.

4. Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Relationships

Table 7: Correlations Between EI and Relationship Scores (All Participants, $N = 400$)

Variable Pair	r (Pearson Correlation)	Significance (p)
EI – Family relationship quality	0.68**	$p < 0.01$
EI – Friendship quality	0.61**	$p < 0.01$
EI – Romantic relationship quality	0.64**	$p < 0.01$

Interpretation: EI was positively and significantly correlated with all types of interpersonal relationships, confirming the hypothesis that higher emotional intelligence is associated with better relational outcomes.

5. Regression Analysis: Predicting Relationship Quality from EI and Birth Order

Table 8: Multiple regression predicting composite relationship quality

Predictor	β (Standardized)	t	Sig. (p)
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	0.54	10.8	<0.001
Birth Order (coded)	0.23	4.5	<0.001
Gender	0.09	1.8	0.072
Socioeconomic Status	0.12	2.3	0.021
Model $R^2 = 0.49$			

Interpretation

EI was the strongest predictor of interpersonal relationship quality ($\beta = 0.54$), followed by birth order ($\beta = 0.23$). Gender was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The model explains 49% of the variance in relationship quality.

6. Qualitative Insights

Semi-structured interviews revealed themes such as:

- **First-borns:** Strong sense of responsibility, higher empathy for siblings, tendency to lead.
- **Middle-borns:** Feelings of neglect, stronger peer orientation, sometimes compensatory social skills.
- **Last-borns:** Higher sociability, risk-taking behavior, perceived as more charming.
- **Only Children:** Higher self-confidence, greater parental investment, sometimes difficulty in conflict resolution with peers.

These narratives complement the quantitative findings, illustrating how birth order and EI intersect to shape interpersonal experiences.

7. Summary of Findings

- Only children and first-borns showed higher emotional intelligence scores compared to middle-borns and last-borns.
- EI positively correlated with family, friendship, and romantic relationship quality.
- Regression analysis confirmed EI as the strongest predictor of relationship quality, with birth order also exerting a significant effect.
- Qualitative data highlighted personality and behavioral differences consistent with birth-order theory.

Discussion and Conclusion

1. Discussion

We hypothesized that first-borns, last-borns, middle-borns, and only children acquire different psychosocial patterns depending on the structural position they hold in their family, drawing on theories from Adlerian psychology, social learning, and family systems research. The study's findings mostly corroborate this claim and significantly build upon earlier studies.

1.1 Birth Order and Emotional Intelligence

In line with previous research (e.g., Sulloway, 1996; Eckstein *et al.*, 2010) [32, 17], the results indicate that only children and first-borns have higher overall EI ratings, but middle-borns have comparatively lower rankings. This tendency could be a result of disparities in parental involvement, the duties given to older siblings, and exposure to adult conversation. Only children seem to develop stronger self-regulation and empathy abilities because they frequently receive the full attention of their parents [6]. On the other hand, middle-born children could receive less parental attention, which could limit their chances of acquiring sophisticated emotional skills unless they are made up for by supportive peer interactions.

1.2 Emotional Intelligence Dimensions

Our breakdown of EI into self-awareness, self-regulation,

motivation, empathy, and social skills highlights that only children consistently score higher across all dimensions. This adds granularity to existing studies by showing that birth order effects are not limited to a single domain of emotional functioning but span multiple competencies critical for interpersonal success.

1.3 Interpersonal Relationship Outcomes

Higher EI was associated with greater relationship satisfaction, fewer conflicts, and higher levels of intimacy. This echoes established findings in emotional intelligence research (Mayer *et al.*, 2008; Brackett *et al.*, 2011) [27, 9] and provides new evidence that birth order indirectly shapes interpersonal outcomes via its influence on EI.

1.4 Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Insights

First-borns described feeling responsible and protective; middle-borns recounted a sense of “being in-between”; last-borns displayed sociability and charm; and only children expressed confidence but sometimes reported difficulties in conflict resolution with peers. These narratives resonate with family systems theory, showing how birth order is embedded in broader relational contexts and identity formation.

1.5 Cultural and Socioeconomic Moderators

Another noteworthy finding is the partial influence of socioeconomic status. Regression analysis indicated that, beyond EI and birth order, participants' socioeconomic background significantly predicted relationship quality, albeit to a lesser degree. This suggests that while birth order provides a useful lens, it should be viewed in conjunction with cultural and socioeconomic factors. In societies with extended families or collectivist norms, birth order effects may differ or be attenuated.

1.6 Theoretical Implications

This study strengthens the argument for considering birth order as a developmental context rather than a deterministic factor. It supports models of EI that emphasize the socialization of emotion regulation and empathy within the family environment. By framing EI as a mediating variable, our study bridges a gap between family structure research and emotional intelligence scholarship.

1.7 Practical Implications

The results have several practical implications:

- **Educational Settings:** Teachers and counsellors can tailor emotional skills training to students' likely strengths and weaknesses associated with birth order.
- **Family Counselling:** Practitioners may consider birth order when addressing sibling rivalry, parental expectations, and adolescent emotional adjustment.
- **Organizational and Leadership Development:** Understanding birth order tendencies may help organizations design more nuanced training programs in teamwork, leadership, and conflict management.
- **Relationship Counselling:** Therapists can explore birth order narratives as part of couples therapy, as they influence attachment, communication styles, and conflict resolution patterns.

Limitations of the study

Birth order was self-reported, which may introduce recall bias in cases of blended or non-traditional families. Cultural differences were only partially addressed, and the instruments used, though validated, rely on self-perception rather than behavioural observation. Future studies may benefit from longitudinal designs, multi-informant measures, and diverse cultural samples.

Directions for Future Research

- **Longitudinal Tracking:** Following individuals from childhood to adulthood to examine how birth order effects evolve.
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons:** Testing whether birth order–EI patterns hold in collectivist versus individualist societies.
- **Experimental Interventions:** Exploring whether EI training can reduce or equalize birth order differences in relationship outcomes.
- **Personality Interactions:** Integrating personality traits (e.g., Big Five) to better understand the interplay between innate disposition and family structure.

Conclusion

Only children and first-borns emerge as relatively advantaged in EI competencies, while middle-borns and, to a lesser degree, last-borns display patterns suggesting different developmental trajectories. Emotional intelligence strongly predicts relationship satisfaction across family, friendship, and romantic domains, underscoring its centrality in human social functioning. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, this research moves beyond stereotypes to provide an evidence-based understanding of how family position interacts with emotional development. Ultimately, the findings encourage a more nuanced, contextualized approach to emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationship research - one that recognizes the enduring, subtle influence of family dynamics in shaping who we become and how we relate to others.

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