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# Correlation Between Birth Order, Psychological Well-Being And Emotional Intelligence Among First Born, Middle Born, And Third Born Young Adults

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***ABSTRACT***
*This study explores the Correlation Between Psychological well-being, Emotional Intelligence among First Born, Middle Born, and Third Born Young Adults. The sample comprised 177 individuals aged between 18-25. First-borns were 60, Middle-borns were 29 and Third-borns were 88. The sample was purposively selected from Lucknow University, National PG college, Integral and Amity University. The Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale – 18-Item Version, developed by Carol D. Ryff in 1989 and EQ-37 Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire adapted by Belinda Davies, based on Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Framework was used. The result showed significant positive relation between emotional intelligence and psychological-wellbeing among first-born young adults. However, the study showed high significant positive relation between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being of middle-born young adults. Along with that it was found that there was also a high significant correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among third-born young adults. Moreover, there was significant difference in psychological well-being among first born, Middle-born and third-born young adults, and it was also found that there was significant difference in Emotional Intelligence among first-born, middle-born and third-born young adults. This work can contribute to in the field of Psychology and can help us understand the impact of birth order on emotional intelligence and psychological well-being and birth order may influence emotional intelligence levels, affecting how individuals manage stress, build relationships, and maintain mental well-being.*
***KEYWORDS:*** *Birth order, Psychological Well-being, Emotional Intelligence, Correlation, Young Adults.*

## INTRODUCTION

The present paper looks at how the order in which you are born in your family (firstborn, middle child, last-born, or only child) can shape your emotional health and psychological well-being.

Birth Order: Austrian psychiatrist, Alfred Adler (1990) who introduced the concept of birth order, talked about how our birth order influences our personality. Alfred argued that birth order can leave a lasting impression on individuals' style of life. According to Alfred firstborns are uncrowned when a second child comes along and this loss of their apparent superiority and privilege might affect them for a long time. Middleborns may feel ignored or leave unnoticed which can later on develop as a middle child syndrome. While younger children and only children might receive excessive attention and indulgence, which could shape their personalities as they grow older.

In a Meta analytic overview by Sulloway (1995) it was found that birth order builds personality through sibling competition for parental resources in which he discovered that first borns tend to be achievement oriented and responsible while later borns can be out going and sometimes rebellious. He stated that factors like environment and parenting can also play a huge role in shaping personality. Baer et al. (2005) examined how birth order and sibling structure influence the creativity. They discovered that later born children tend to be more creative than firstborns due to experiencing more flexible family dynamics and fewer parental expectations. Their research indicates that creativity develops through a mmix of sibling relationships, individual traits and upbringing rather than just birth order alone. This study also highlights that having more siblings and diverse interaction can strengthen creative thinking. However, birth order effects on creativity are not universal and it depends on social influences and family environment. Similarly in recent study of Xiao et al (2023) explored how sibling age gaps and birth order influence children's willingness to share. There findings suggests that first-borns are generally

less likely to share rather than laterborns possibly because they receive full parental focus during early childhood in contrast laterborns are more generous as they grew up in a more social environment with brothers and sisters, this study also discovered that a smaller age gap between sibling leads to higher sharing tendencies as siblings who are close in age engage more and improve their social and collaboration abilities. Their findings suggests that both sibling spacing and birth order influences children's social behaviors, shaping the way they engage with others.

Similarly, if we look at qualitative study of Coşkun et al. (2017) they explored how birth order influences peer relationships using a grounded theory approach. Their study discovered that birth order affects social behaviors, conflict resolutions, and communication style among peers they found that firstborns are often seen as more responsible and dominant while laterborns are tend to be more adaptable and sociable in group settings However, this study highlights that upbringing and family environment play a bigger role than birth order alone in shaping peer interactions. Their findings suggests that birth order is one factor among numerous others that influence social factor rather than a fixed determinant. If we look at biological perspective in research of Steven C. Hertler. (2017) he explored personality difference among siblings beyond traditional birth order theories. He stated that these distinctions arise from evolutionary and biological factors, rather than just parental treatment or societal positions. He emphasizes the role of parental care, environmental pressures and influence of genetics in shaping of personality. Hetler's work suggests that birth order effects are critical and they can't be described by simple stereotypes. Instead of that he believed that personality traits emerge from a mix of biology, contemplation, and adaption within the family dynamics. He believed that siblings develop distinct traits as adaptive survival strategies and assisting them in establishing distinct roles within the family and competing for resources.

Volkom et al. (2017) examined how birth order influences sibling relationships and personality traits in emerging adults. Sample size of the research was 296 and it was conducted on college students of age 18-25. Their study discovered that birth order does not have a major impact on how young adults see their own personality traits. However, both gender and birth order play a role in how people perceive their relationships with their siblings. This suggests that while personality development may be shaped by various factors beyond birth order, sibling dynamics are influenced by a combination of birth position and gender.

Psychological well-being: The first person who talked about Psychological Wellbeing was Carol Ryff. (1989) who proposed that well-being comes from meaning, personal growth and fulfilment. In order to explain this, she explained a six-dimensional model of psychological well-being which includes Personal growth, Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Purpose in life, Positive relations and Self-acceptance. According to her, mentally strong individuals build strong relationship, manage their surroundings well, accept themselves, peruse personal growth and have clear sense of purpose. Ryff emphasized that well-being is not just seeing pleasure (hedonic well-being), it is more about continuous self-improvement and fulfillment (eudemonic well-being).

Similarly, foundation of psychological well-being was laid by Jahoda, M. (1958). Her work shifted focus from mental illness to defining what constitutes positive mental health. Marie argued that mental health is not just the absence of illness but the presence of specific psychological strengths. Her work was ground breaking because it proved a structured way to recognize mental health beyond illness. Her work influenced modern psychology, particularly positive psychology and well-being research. Ed Diener. (1984) explored subjective well-being which refers to how people evaluate their own life satisfaction and happiness. Diener argued that well-being is not always about external factors like success or wealth but about how individuals perceive their own life. He emphasized that subjective well-being is personal and varies across personalities, culture and life circumstances. Diener's work helped shift psychology's focus toward understanding emotions, happiness, and quality of life, laying the foundation for the modern positive psychology and well-being research.

Later on, Wissing et al. (2002) studied psychological well-being to clarify its structure and meaning. Their work suggests that well-being is not just about life satisfaction, personal growth and meaning full living. They highlighted that well-being has cognitive, emotional and social aspects, meaning that individual flourish when they experience positive feeling, have optimistic thought, and nurture solid connections, and the importance of harmony between pleasure (hedonic well-being) and self-improvement (eudemonic well-being). Building on this perspective Seligman. (2011) elaborated the concept of psychological well-being by introducing the PERMA model which explores 5 key elements Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and Accomplishment. He argued that well-being is not just about happiness but about living a fulfilling and meaningful life. His model highlights that individual flourish when they experience positive emotions participate in activities they enjoy, cultivate strong relationships, find purpose and accomplish personal goals .by concentrating on strengths rather than just focusing on distress. Seligman's contributions have greatly impacted positive psychology, well-being interventions and mental health practices promoting a more comprehensive

approach to psychological well-being. Later on Joy et al. (2018) explored how birth order affects the emotional maturity and well-being of adolescents. Their sample size was 300 students between the age of 15-18 comparing first-borns and lastborns and only children. Findings of their study showed that there is a significant difference between emotional maturity and general well-being of adolescents. The study also highlighted a strong connection between emotional stability and overall well-being, suggesting that birth order may influence an adolescent's emotional and psychological growth.

In a ROL done by Huppert. (2009) shows the significance of psychological well-being in social behavior, creativity, and physical health. Early life experiences, especially maternal care, play a crucial role in shaping well-being, but improvements are possible later in life. While external circumstances influence well-being, personal attitudes and actions have a greater impact, making positive interventions valuable. A comprehensive method to well-being can help both individuals and society, decreasing mental health problems over time. The study emphasizes shifting focus from treating disorders to promoting overall flourishing and happiness. Kiang et al. (2006) explored how ethnic identity influences the daily psychological well-being of adolescents from Mexican and Chinese backgrounds with the sample size of 415. Their findings showed that adolescents with a strong connection to their cultural background experienced higher psychological well-being, including greater self-esteem, better mood, and overall life satisfaction. Having a strong sense of ethnic identity helped adolescents handle stress and negative emotions. The research indicates that a sense of connection to one's culture significantly contributes to fostering positive psychological well-being among young individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Emotional Intelligence: Concept of Emotional Intelligence was first coined by Salovey et al. (1990) defining that it is the ability to recognize, understand and manage emotions in oneself and others. They proposed that Emotional Intelligence (EI) involves four key abilities namely, perceiving emotions, managing emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, and managing emotions effectively. Their work suggested that individuals with high emotional intelligence can build stronger relationships, handle stress effectively and make thoughtful decisions. Their work laid the foundation for later research influencing areas like education, leadership, and mental health by emphasizing the role of emotion in daily life and success.

Similarly, Cherniss, C. (2000) explores the importance of emotional intelligence in professional and personal success. He explains that emotional intelligence involves understanding, managing and using emotions effectively to navigate social interaction and challenge. Their paper explored how emotional intelligence contributes to leadership effectiveness, workplace performance, and mental well-being, He also emphasized that Emotional Intelligence can be developed through practice and training making it important skill for organization and individual. His work highlighted the significance of Emotional Intelligence in psychology, business and education.

Later on, Daniel Goleman (1998), in his book explained success at work is not just about intelligence or technical skills - it's also about how well people manage and understand emotions. Daniel believes that Emotional Intelligence plays a major role in leadership, career growth and workplace relationship. Goleman breaks Emotional Intelligence into five key skills Self-awareness (understanding your emotions), Self-regulation (controlling your emotions and staying calm under pressure), Motivation (using emotion to stay focused and driven), Empathy (understanding other's feelings) and social skills (building strong relationships and handling conflicts. He provides real life examples how individuals with elevated emotional intelligence collaborate more effectively in groups, make wiser decision and emerge as impactful leaders. A central theme of the book is that emotional intelligence is not just something people are born with. It can be cultivated and enhanced. The research done by Ankita et al. (2021) explored the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and happiness among young adults they also explored gender difference between Happiness and Emotional Intelligence. Sample size of their study was 103 (53 males and 53 females). Their findings shows that Emotional Intelligence and Happiness are positively linked, and no statistically significant difference was observed between genders concerning emotional intelligence and happiness.

Later on, Mayer et al. (2008) explores emotional intelligence as human ability, analysing how it helps individual recognize understand and manage emotions. They have explained that Emotional Intelligence is not just a personality trait but a measurable mental skill that effects relationship, decision making, and overall well-being. The authors have talked about different models of Emotional Intelligence, particularly focusing on Ability Model, which view Emotional Intelligence as a form of Intelligence similar to reasoning and problem solving. They highlighted researches indicating that individuals with higher Emotional Intelligence tend to have better workplace performance, social interactions, mental well-being. The study also addresses the difficulties in measuring Emotional Intelligence stressing the importance of standardized tests to assess emotional abilities

accurately. Ultimately, they argue that Emotional Intelligence is crucial aspect of human Intelligence that plays a key role in both personal and professional achievements.

**RATIONALE**

Emotional intelligence (EI) and psychological well-being (PSWB) are key factors in mental health, helping individuals manage emotions, handle stress, and build strong relationships. Many studies have explored how emotional intelligence contributes to well-being, but the role of birth order in this relationship remains unclear and only few studies have directly examined the relationship between birth order, EI and PWB. The present study aims to bridge the existing research gap.

**METHODOLOGY**

The current study was done with the objective of studying Correlation Between Birth Order, Psychological well-being, and Emotional Intelligence among First Born, Middle Born, and Third Born Young Adults wherein five hypotheses were constructed namely, H1 - There will be no significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological well-being among first-born young adults, H2 - There will be no significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological well-being among middle-born young adults, H3 - There will be no significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological well-being among third-born young adults, H4- There will be no significant corelation between Birth-order and Psychological well-being among young adults, and H5- There will be no significant corelation between Birth-order and Emotional intelligence among young adults.

The three variables, (Birth Order, Psychological well-being, and Emotional Intelligence) were studied using Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EQ 37) and Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS). The EQ-37 Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire is a self-assessment tool adapted by Belinda Davies based on Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Framework. It consists of 90 items designed to measure emotional intelligence across two main areas: Personal Competence as well as Social Competence. Personal Competence includes Self-Awareness (10 items), Self-Regulation (17 items), and Self-Motivation (13 items), while Social Competence consists of Social Awareness (25 items) and Social Skills (25 items). Participants rate themselves on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Underdeveloped to 5 = Excellent), with higher scores indicating stronger emotional intelligence in specific areas. The questionnaire does not explicitly mention reverse-scored items. It is primarily used for self-reflection and coaching purposes, rather than being a scientifically validated tool. It has been modified to help individuals identify their strengths and areas for improvement in emotional intelligence.

The Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale – 18-Item Version, developed by Carol D. Ryff in 1989, is a widely used tool to measure well-being across six dimensions: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance. Some items (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q8, Q9, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q17, and Q18) are reverse-scored to control response bias, ensuring more accurate assessments. Reverse scoring is calculated as (7 + 1) - respondent's answer, meaning a response of 3 would be scored as 5. Responses are measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater well-being. The scale has demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging between 0.70 and 0.85, ensuring its consistency across different populations. Additionally, construct validity studies have shown positive correlations between psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and mental health. Over time, the original 120-item version has been revised into 84, 54, 42, and 18-item versions, with the 18-item version being widely used for quick yet effective assessment. The scale was also used in MIDUS II (2004-2006), expanding its application in psychological research. Due to its high reliability and validity, the PWB Scale remains a valuable tool for assessing psychological well-being across various populations and research fields.

A total 177 young adults between the age of 18 to 25 years were sample population who were selected using Purposive Sampling technique. The inclusion criteria were: young adults with minimum two siblings, able to understand, read and write in English, and willingness to give responses to the questionnaire and scale. Young adult who are single child were excluded from the study. Moreover, inability to read and write in English along with respondents with mental health issues were also excluded.

Correlational Research design was used with the following procedure, topic was decided, variables were identified before selecting the appropriate data collection tools with which the consent letter was attached for the respondents to put their signature. The respondents were guided to read each question carefully before choosing the appropriate responses. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 27.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 showing product moment correlation co-efficient 'r' among First Born Young Adults (N=60)

| Variables | Psychological well Being | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional intelligence | 'r' | Significant (2-tailed) | Remarks |
| | .309* | 0.016 | Significant |
| * Significant at the 0.05 level (two tailed), **Significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed) | | | |

**Table 1** indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being among first born young adults. Thus, in this case, hypothesis 1 is rejected at 0.05 level of significance highlighting the fact that as Emotional Intelligence increases in first-born young adults so does the psychological well-being. So, there is a significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being among first-born young adults. Similar results were presented by Sakshi et al. (2023) and Ramya (2014) who established that increased emotional intelligence was closely associated with improved psychological well-being. However, these researches do not take into account the first-born individuals in the relation to Psychological Well-being and emotional Intelligence.

| Table 2 showing product moment correlation co-efficient 'r' among Middle Born Young Adults (N=29) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | Psychological well Being | | |
| Emotional intelligence | 'r' | Significant (2-tailed) | Remarks |
| | .507** | .005 | Significant |
| *Significant at the 0.05 level (two tailed), ** Significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed) | | | |

**Table 2** indicates that there is a highly significant positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being among middle-born young adults. Thus, in this case, hypothesis 2 is rejected at 0.01 level of significance. It was that there is a highly significant positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being among middle-born young adults. These findings suggest that if emotional intelligence increases in middle-born young adults, then there is high probability that psychological well-being will increase as well. These findings are contradictory to Laikhuram et al. (2022) and Cole. (2014) who found no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and birth order.

| Table 3 showing product moment correlation co-efficient 'r' among Third Born Young Adults (N=88) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | Psychological well Being | | |
| Emotional intelligence | 'r' | Significant (2-tailed) | Remarks |
| | .398** | .000 | Significant |
| *Significant at the 0.05 level (two tailed) ** Significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed) | | | |

**Table 3** indicates that there is a highly significant positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being among third-born young adults. Thus, in this case, hypothesis 3 is rejected at 0.01 level of significance, which indicates that if emotional intelligence increases in third-born young adults then there are higher chances that psychological well-being will increase as well. Although Shaheen et al. (2016), and Mancini et al. (2024) don't talk about birth order, they present that there is a positive significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological and overall Well-being.

| Table 4 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Measures | First-born(n=60) | Middle-born(n=29) | Third-born(n=88) | F value | df |
| | Mean | Mean | Mean | | 2,174 |
| Self-Acceptance | 15.50 ±2.90 | 15.17 ±3.07 | 14.09 ±3.22 | 4.407* | |
| Purpose in Life | 14.37 ±3.85 | 13.38 ±3.77 | 12.86 ±3.63 | 2.906 | |
| Environmental Mastery | 13.97 ±2.74 | 14.48 ±2.56 | 13.81 ±2.80 | .663 | |
| Personal Growth | 15.88 ±3.37 | 16.03 ±3.03 | 15.59 ±2.82 | .302 | |
| Autonomy | 13.90 ±3.36 | 13.34 ±3.27 | 13.60 ±2.96 | .334 | |
| Positive Relations | 13.62 ±3.17 | 12.62 ±3.09 | 12.60 ±3.91 | 1.607 | |
| Total | 87.23 ±10.46 | 85.03 ±12.12 | 82.56 ±11.69 | 3.054 | |
| *Indicates statistical significance at $p < 0.05$ **Indicates statistical significance at $p < 0.01$ | | | | | |

Statistical analysis in table 4 shows that there is a significant difference in firstborns, middleborns and thirdborns on self-acceptance domain of the psychological well-being scale. It can be seen that eldest children have the highest self-acceptance among the three groups. Hence, hypothesis 4 stating that there is no significant effect of Birth-order on psychological well-being among young adults stands rejected at 0.05 level of significance. One reason for this finding could be that they may have become self-dependent at a younger age in comparison to the younger siblings. Similar result was found in the study by Joy and Mathew (2018) even though the paper does not talk about self-acceptance separately. Contradicting to the result of the current study, the research by Fullerton et al (1989) presented that first born males have lower psychological well-being in comparison to other groups. This research however does not talk about self-acceptance and it focuses on gender differences only.

| Table 5 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Measures | First-born (n=60) | Middle-born (n=29) | Third-born (n=88) | F value | df |
| | Mean | Mean | Mean | | 2,174 |
| Self-Awareness | 38.85 ±7.30 | 36.83 ±9.27 | 35.43 ±9.98 | 2.551 | |
| Self-Regulation | 60.37 ±11.92 | 57.48 ±10.86 | 53.55 ±13.62 | 5.295** | |
| Self-Motivation | 52.78 ±9.17 | 48.97 ±9.59 | 46.16 ±12.58 | 6.392** | |
| Social awareness | 64.63 ±10.70 | 61.45 ±14.22 | 58.50 ±15.87 | 3.414* | |
| Social Skills | 110 ±18.79 | 107 ±21.06 | 100 ±27.30 | 3.708* | |
| Total | 327 ±51.81 | 312 ±57.95 | 294 ±75.22 | 4.745* | |
| *Indicates statistical significance at $p < 0.05$ **Indicates statistical significance at $p < 0.01$ | | | | | |

From table 5 it can be seen that there is a significant difference in Emotional Intelligence among first-born, middle-born, and third-born young adults. Thus, hypothesis 5 is also rejected in this case at 0.05 level of significance which highlights that birth order seems to influence how well young adults understand and manage their emotions or interact with others emotionally. Studies by Laikhuram et al. (2022) and Rauf (2015) contradict these findings. Additionally, the study found that birth order (firstborn, middleborn, and thirdborn young adults) was linked to differences in several dimensions of emotional intelligence. The results showed that self-regulation varied significantly among the groups ($F(2,174) = 5.295$, $p < .01$), which means that children's ability to manage and control their emotions was not the same across positions in the family. There is a lack of research specifically addressing this area, which highlights the importance of the present study. Self-motivation also showed significant differences ($F(2,174) = 6.392$, $p < .01$) indicating that persistence and goal-directed behavior varied by birth order, similar findings were also found in a book by Sulloway, F. J. (1996) which specifically talks about how firstborns are more conscientious, achievement-oriented, and responsible than their later born siblings. In terms of social awareness, there was again a significant effect ($F(2,174) = 3.414$, $p < .05$) suggesting that some groups were better at recognizing and understanding the emotions of others. Result of Fukuya et al. (2021) also supports this finding which talks about how later-born children and adolescents tend to be more outgoing, popular, and adapt at making friends compared to firstborns, although it doesn't specifically talk about young adults. Finally, social skills also differed significantly ($F(2,174) = 3.708$, $p < .05$) pointing to birth order as a factor influencing how effectively children interact and build relationships, since previous research has not focused on this dimension, the result adds a fresh perspective. Future studies are required to validate and expand on this outcome.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this research was to study Correlation Between Psychological well-being, Emotional Intelligence among First Born, Middle Born, and Third Born Young Adults. The study collected responses from one hundred seventy-seven young adults in the age range of 18-25 (mean=20.4, sd =2.3). The study presented that there is a significant positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being among first born young adults which rejects our first hypothesis. Similarly, the second hypothesis is also rejected which was there will be no significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological well-being among middle-born young adults. It showed a highly significant positive relation between emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being among middle-born young adults. Additionally, third hypothesis is also rejected, which

was that there will be no significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological well-being among third-born young adults. It showed a highly significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-being among third-born young adults. Statistical Analysis implied that the fourth hypothesis, which was that there will be no significant difference in Psychological well-being among first-born, middle- born and third-born young adults, is rejected. The research also shows that here is a significant difference in Emotional Intelligence among first-born, middle- born and third-born young adults. Thus hypothesis 5 is rejected here which was 'there will be no significant difference in psychological well-being among first-born, middle- born and third-born young adults. Contribution of this study in the field of Psychology can help us understand the impact of birth order on emotional intelligence and psychological well-being and birth order may influence emotional intelligence levels, affecting how individuals manage stress, build relationships, and maintain mental well-being. This connection highlights the role of upbringing in shaping emotional and psychological resilience throughout life.

**Future Implications:**
There is a paucity of researches on middle born young adults. Hence, further work is needed. This line of research enables scholars to explore family dynamics through the lens of birth order, thereby enhancing the potential for deeper insights into personality development.

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