

# A Study of Emotional Competence among ‘Only Children’ And ‘Children with A Sibling’

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## Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the differences in emotional competence between only children and children with siblings. The sample consisted of 200 participants (100 males and 100 females) aged between 18 and 20 years, drawn from Pune city, Maharashtra. The ‘Scale of Emotional Competence’ developed by Sharma and Bharadwaj (1995) was administered to assess emotional competence. Data were analyzed using an independent samples ‘t’-test to compare the mean scores of the two groups. The results revealed no significant difference in the emotional competence of only children and children with siblings.

**Keywords:** Emotional Competence, ‘Only Children’ and ‘Children with a Sibling’

Emotional competence refers to an individual’s ability to effectively recognize, understand, and manage pleasant or unpleasant emotions across various situations. Goleman (1998) defines emotional competence as a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that leads to outstanding performance at work. The concept of emotional intelligence can be traced back to the 1920s, when Thorndike introduced the idea of ‘social intelligence’, which involves the ability to understand and manage others. Later, Gardner’s (1983) theory of Multiple Intelligences expanded on this notion by identifying ‘intrapersonal’ and ‘interpersonal’ intelligences. Intrapersonal intelligence refers to the capacity to understand oneself, recognize one’s emotions, and appreciate one’s motivations, while interpersonal intelligence pertains to understanding others—their intentions, feelings, and desires.

Building upon these foundations, Goleman (1998) proposed a model of Emotional Intelligence comprising two primary domains: ‘Personal Competence’ (self-awareness and self-management) and ‘Social Competence’ (empathy and social skills). These domains highlight the integral role of emotional understanding and regulation in human effectiveness.

Sarni (1999) further contributed to the field by developing a ‘skill-based model of emotional competence’, emphasizing an individual’s self-efficacy, confidence, and ability to achieve desired outcomes. According to Sarni, emotional competence includes eight core skills: (1) awareness of one’s own emotions, (2) discerning and understanding others, (3) using the vocabulary of emotion and expression, (4) empathic involvement, (5) differentiating emotional experience from expression, (6) adaptive coping with distress, (7) awareness of emotional communication in relationships, and (8) emotional self-efficacy.

Wakeman (2006) suggested that emotional competence develops gradually through self-discipline and conscious awareness of one’s emotions. It is through recognizing and managing emotions step by step that individuals enhance their emotional competence. Vaida and Opre (2014) also emphasized that both emotional intelligence and emotional competence are essential for personal and professional development. They noted that emotional competence, which is crucial for effective performance and interpersonal functioning, is largely dependent on emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence and emotional competence are therefore vital for both personal and professional growth, as they enable individuals to handle emotional experiences constructively, build healthy relationships, and perform effectively in various roles.

The present study seeks to examine the emotional competence of only children and children with siblings against the backdrop of India's evolving family structure. In recent years, shifts toward nuclear families, urbanization, and reduced family size have influenced children's socialization experiences. Understanding how these changes affect emotional competence can offer meaningful insights into young adults' personality development, interpersonal relationships, and emotional well-being.

### **Objective**

1. To measure and compare the emotional competence of 'only children' and 'children with a sibling'.

### **Hypothesis**

1. There will be no significant difference in the emotional competence of only children and children with a sibling.
2. There will be no significant difference in the emotional competence of only boys and boys with a sibling.
3. There will be no significant difference in the emotional competence of only girls and girls with a sibling.

### **Research design**

**Present study is based on Ex post facto.**

### **Sample**

This study consisted of 200 participants studying in various senior colleges in Pune, Maharashtra. Sample was selected through purposive sampling. Participants were aged 18–20 years and comprised 100 males and 100 females. Of these, 50 males and 50 females were only children, while the remaining 50 males and 50 females had one sibling.

### **Tool**

#### **Emotional Competence Scale**

The Scale of Emotional Competence was developed by Sharma and Bharadwaj (1995). It consists of 30 incomplete sentences, each accompanied by five options for completion. The scale assesses five dimensions of emotional competence: (1) Adequate Depth of Feeling (ADF), (2) Adequate Expression and Control of Emotions (AEC), (3) Ability to Function with Emotions (AFE), (4) Ability to Cope with Problem Emotions (ACPE), and (5) Enhancement of Positive Emotions (EPE) and overall emotional competence.

Reliability of the scale has been examined using the test–retest and split-half methods, yielding coefficients of 0.74 and 0.76, respectively. Validity was established by correlating the scale with factors A and C of the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire, with validity coefficients of 0.64 and 0.69, respectively.

### **Procedure**

Permission to collect data was obtained from the college authorities. The test was administered in groups. A good rapport was established with the students and after that, they were given the general instructions and explained the purpose of the study. Taken the consent from the participants.

## Statistical Analysis

Table 1. Mean, SD, t-value of emotional competence of 'only children' (N=100) and 'children with a sibling' (N=100)

Variable	Only Children	Children with a sibling	't'
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Emotional Competence	100.69 (14.94)	101.62 (13.78)	.47

Table 1 presents the mean scores of overall emotional competence for only children and children with a sibling. The independent sample 't'-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, the first null hypothesis, which stated that there will be no significant difference in the emotional competence of only children and children with a sibling, is supported by the results.

2. There will be no significant difference in the emotional competence of only boys and boys with a sibling.

Table 2. Mean, SD, t-value of emotional competence 'only boys' (N=50) and 'boys with a sibling' (N=50)

Variable	Only Boys	Boys with a sibling	't'
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Emotional Competence	104.46 (13.53)	104.42 (11.29)	.01

Table 2. presents the mean scores of overall emotional competence for only boys and boys with a sibling. An independent samples 't'-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between the two groups. The results indicated that the difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there will be no significant difference in the emotional competence of only boys and boys with a sibling, is supported by the analysis.

3. There will be no significant difference in the emotional competence of only girls and girls with a sibling

Table 1. Mean, SD, t-value of emotional competence 'only girls' (N=50) and 'girls with a sibling' (N=50)

Variable	Only girls	Girls with a sibling	't'
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Emotional Competence	96.92 (13.97)	98.82 (13.49)	.64

Table 3 presents the mean scores of overall emotional competence for only girls and girls with a sibling. An independent samples 't'-test was conducted to examine the difference between the two groups. The results revealed no statistically significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there will be no significant difference in the emotional competence of only girls and girls, with a sibling is support by the results.

## Conclusion

The findings of the present study indicate that there is no significant difference in emotional competence between only children and children with a sibling. The study found that only children and those with siblings show similar levels of emotional competence.

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