



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## A study on birth order, perceived parenting styles and emotional regulation amongst young adults

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### Abstract

The study investigated three variables that is Birth Order, Perceived Parenting Styles and Emotional Regulation amongst young adults. The aim of the study was to indicate the significant difference in Emotional Regulation amongst young adults across various Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles. The objectives of the study were to find whether there was an association between Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles as well as to see whether there is any significant difference in Emotional Regulation across Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles. A sample of 377 including First Born, Middle Born, Last child and Only Child were used. The present study had quantitative research design. The researcher used non probability convenience sampling. The tools that were used in this study were The Perceived Parenting Style Scale developed by Divya and Manikandan (2013) and Emotional Regulation Questionnaire was developed by Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2003). Chi square test of independence and ANOVA (Analysis Of Variance) were used for the analysis. The findings indicated that there was no association Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles, also there is no significant difference in Emotional Regulation strategies across Birth Order, but significant difference has been found in Emotional Regulation strategies across Perceived Parenting Styles.

**Keywords:** Perceived Parenting Style; Birth Order; Emotional Regulation; Young Adults; Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression

### 1. Introduction

Previous research has explored how perceived parenting styles, birth order, and emotional regulation influence subjective well-being. Birth order, categorized into first-born, middle-born, last-born, and only-born or twins, shapes personality traits like dominance and dependency. Adler emphasized how birth order prompts children to differentiate themselves and seek parental attention. First-borns often become assertive adults, while last-born may be more dependent and use low-power strategies. This study investigates the relationships between perceived parenting styles, birth order, and emotional regulation strategies. (Breining et.al 2021).

#### 1.1. Top of Form

Perceived parenting style shapes our view of parents. According to Adler, firstborns receive significant parental attention and are taught to be leaders and reliable. They develop independence and a traditional outlook to maintain their special position. Firstborns often take caregiving roles for younger siblings, value success and leadership, and are rule-followers and perfectionists with strong self-trust. (Sultan & Malik 2023) . According to Singh et.al 2021, every parent has a parenting style that they used to mould their child's behavior and personality. In the 1960s, developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind of the University of California at Berkeley conducted research that laid the groundwork for today's parenting styles. According to Baumrind (1991). Parenting style reflects how parents raise children and is crucial for child development, studied across disciplines for over 75 years. Researchers study parenting through

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practices and styles. (Kuppens & Ceulemans 2018). Perceived parenting styles reflect how children view their parents' behaviors. Baumrind, Maccoby, and Martin identified four types: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. Authoritative parents set clear expectations with warmth and communication, using positive discipline like praise. Children raised this way tend to become responsible and confident, with better emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. (Yadav et.al 2021). Authoritarian parenting means strict rules, little affection, and limited communication, focusing on obedience over emotional connection. Permissive parenting is characterized by few demands and minimal control, prioritizing responsiveness and affection but lacking boundaries, which can lead to academic challenges.

Neglectful parenting involves minimal demands, rules, affection, and communication, often due to parental challenges like mental health issues. This can result in self-esteem and behavioral issues in children. Research supports authoritative parenting as effective, with clear expectations, warmth, communication, and positive discipline. Middle-born children may perceive less warmth and responsiveness from parents, affecting their development. (Shrivastava & Shashi 2021) that is a permissive kind of parenting style. Although authoritarian parenting style has been indicative of excessively demanding and overbearing, as mentioned earlier, this type of parenting style has been found to have a positive impact on learning outcomes, especially visuals. Emotional regulation involves modifying the course of emotional responses, affecting the type, intensity, duration, and expression of feelings. This control can be conscious or unconscious, automatic or deliberate. (Mauss et al., 2006). It happens each time someone (either intentionally or inadvertently) engages the objective to affect the process that generates emotions (Gross et al., 2011). According to Gross and Jazaieri (2014), Emotion regulation involves controlling one's own or others' emotions. Two key techniques are cognitive reappraisal (reinterpreting situations to reduce emotional impact) and expressive suppression (inhibiting outward emotional expression when already aroused). This study explores how birth order, perceived parenting style, and emotional regulation in young adults are related, drawing on theories by Gross and existing research on parenting styles and birth order. Recent studies indicate that authoritarian parenting may foster better emotional regulation in adolescents than permissive parenting (Yadav et al., 2021). Authoritarian parenting is also beneficial for enhancing visual learning styles (Hashmi & Singh, 2023). Parenting styles in childhood influence adult well-being, with authoritative parenting linked to less child maladjustment and authoritarian parenting linked to higher levels of maladjustment (Delvecchio, 2021). Positive parent-child interactions promote prosocial behavior (Okada, 2021), and warm, responsive parenting leads to more positive emotion expression and regulation strategies (Tani et al., 2018). Authoritarian parents are associated with higher levels of online violence and control, and perceived authoritative parenting is linked to higher life satisfaction in young adults (Muniz & Rizva; Singh et al., 2021). Birth order significantly influences various aspects of development. For example, second-born boys are more prone to delinquency and violent crimes compared to older siblings (Breining et al., 2017), while educational attainment is higher among females born to first-born mothers (Havari & Savegnago, 2020). Birth order also affects voter turnout, with lower turnout associated with higher birth order (Bratsberg, 2020). Children's experiences of loneliness and dissatisfaction vary based on birth order, with first-borns and those receiving specific social support reporting less loneliness (Koukouriki et al., 2021). Later-born siblings may exhibit higher social development (Okada et al., 2021) but perceive less parental warmth compared to first and last-borns (Shrivastava & Shashi, 2021). Birth order influences decision-making styles, with first-borns prioritizing rational decisions, middle-borns leaning towards intuitive decisions, and last-borns showing a mix of rationality and compromise (Berisha et al., 2022). Parental warmth is crucial for children's emotional regulation abilities (Tani et al., 2020), and stress-induced authoritarian parenting can affect children's emotional regulation (Shaw & Starr, 2019). Positive parent-child interactions are linked to better emotion regulation (Morris et al., 2020). Cognitive reappraisal is associated with better psychological well-being compared to expressive suppression (Vally & Ahmed, 2020). Individuals develop greater knowledge of emotion regulation strategies with age, leading to increased use of cognitive reappraisal and reduced use of expressive suppression (Sims et al., 2015). Age-related reductions in negative affect are mediated by cognitive reappraisal among older adults (Nakagawa et al., 2017). Authoritative parenting promotes prosocial behavior and cognitive reappraisal among young adults (Kang & Guo, 2021). Gender differences exist in emotion regulation strategies, with cognitive reappraisal being more prevalent in males (Zhou et al., 2023).

### *Aim*

This study was aimed to find out the relationship between birth order and perceived parenting styles. Also to find out the significant difference of emotional regulation strategies across birth order and perceived parenting styles amongst young adults.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Research Design

The research design that was found to be appropriate to answer the research question was quantitative research design.

#### 2.1.1. Participants characteristics

The present study consists of a total sample of 377 (N=377) Young Adults from two major cities Bengaluru and Northeastern States of India such Meghalaya and Assam between the age of 18- 30 years.

#### 2.1.2. Inclusion criteria

- Young adults aged between 18-30 years.
- At least one parent is playing an active role in your life.
- Indian participants.

#### 2.1.3. Exclusion criteria

- non-English-speaking adults.
- diagnosed with psychiatric or cognitive disorders.

### 2.2. Sampling

The research began with data collection via Google forms, and QR code was generated and shared in order to collect the data, the data was collected mostly from Bangalore , Assam and Meghalaya. a non- probability convenience sampling was used to collect the data and it was circulated between the ages of 18-30 years young adults. The sample consisted of 377 participants.

### 2.3. Procedure

The researcher approached the participants from the Bangalore , Assam and Meghalaya .The google form was circulated and the QR code was shared in person. Participants who agreed with the consent form.

### 2.4. Data collection

Participants were asked to answer all the statement given in the google form.The tools that were used for the study were *Perceived Parenting Styles* - The Perceived Parenting Style Scale, developed by Divya and Manikandan (2013), assesses children's perceptions of their parents' behavior across three dimensions: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. It consists of 30 items, with responses rated on a five-point Likert scale. The reliability of the scale was measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, which were found to be 0.79 for authoritative style, 0.81 for authoritarian style, and 0.86 for permissive style, indicating acceptable levels of reliability for all parenting styles assessed. *Emotional Regulation Questionnaire*: A 10-item scale developed by Gross, J.J., & John, O.P. (2003) measures individuals' tendency to control emotions through either expressive suppression or cognitive reappraisal. Responses range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) on a Likert-type scale. Scores for cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression are calculated by averaging all responses, where higher scores indicate greater use of the respective emotion management strategy. The Cronbach's alpha values for the total and subscale scores (ranging from 0.73 to 0.82) indicate satisfactory internal consistency, validating the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) as a reliable measure of emotion regulation. Age gender and birth order these demographic details were collected in google form.

### 2.5. Statistical Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 was used for conducting the statistical analysis on the data, Chi-square test of independence to check the relationship between the variables such as Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles as they were both categorical in nature and ANOVA (Analysis of the variance) to see the significant difference in Emotional Regulation strategies across Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles.

### 2.6. Ethical consideration

Participants were provided with an informed consent form and consented before completing the survey. They were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Participants had the option to withdraw from

the survey at any time. Data management was limited to researchers for research purposes only. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association.

### 3. Results

There were 377 participants in the current study, including 132 first born, 107 last born, 66 middle born and 72 only child between the age group of 18-30 years. The participants belonged mostly from city of Bengaluru and Northeastern States of India such as Assam and India

#### 3.1. Chi square Test of Independence outcome.

The table 1 indicates the Chi-square test of independence of Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles amongst young adults. The frequency of First Born across Authoritative parenting style is 33.9 with the total number of participants under this parenting style 107 (N=107, %= 33.9), the frequency across Authoritarian parenting style is 42.2 with the total number of participants under this parenting style 19 (N=19, %=42.2), the frequency across permissive parenting style the total number of participants under this parenting style 6 (N=6, %=37.5). The frequency of Middle Born across Authoritative parenting style is 17.4 with the total number of participants under this parenting style 55 (N=55, %= 17.4), the frequency of Middle Born across Authoritarian parenting style is 17.8 with the total number of participants under this parenting style 8 (N=8, %=17.8), the frequency across permissive parenting style 18.8 the total number of participants under this parenting style 3 (N=3, %=18.8). The frequency of Only Child across Authoritative parenting style is 19.3 with the total number of participants under this parenting style 63 (N=63, %= 19.3), the frequency across Authoritarian parenting style is 17.8 with the total number of participants under this parenting style 8 (N=8, %=17.8), the frequency across permissive parenting style 18.8 the total number of participants under this parenting style 3 (N=3, %=18.8). The frequency of Last Born across Authoritative parenting style is 29.4 with the total number of participants under this parenting style 93 (N=93, %= 29.4), the frequency across Authoritarian parenting style is 22.2 with the total number of participants under this parenting style 10 (N=10, %=22.2), the frequency across permissive parenting style 25 the total number of participants under this parenting style 4 (N=4, %=25). The Pearson Chi-square value is 1.671<sup>a</sup> ( $X^2 = 1.671$ ). The association between Birth Order and perceived parenting style is not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the null hypothesis is accepted, which states that there is no association between Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles.

**Table 1** Indicates the total number of participants (n) and frequencies in Birth Order, Perceived Parenting Styles, the Pearson chi-square value.

Birth Orders	Frequencies	Authoritative	Authoritarian	Permissive	X <sup>2</sup>	p
First Born	%	33.9	42.2	37.5	1.671 <sup>a</sup>	0.93
	N	107	19	6		
Middle Born	%	17.4	17.8	18.8		
	N	55	8	3		
Only Child	%	19.3	17.8	18.8		
	N	61	8	3		
Last Born	%	29.4	22.2	25		
	N	93	10	4		

\* $p > 0.05$

#### 3.2. One way anova outcome

The table 2 presents the results of ANOVA, which depicts the difference between different parenting style with regard to the Emotional Regulation Strategies such as Expressive Suppression and Cognitive Reappraisal. For Expressive Suppression, the young adults who experienced Authoritative Parenting Style obtained a Mean of 17.90 (M=17.90) with standard deviation of 5.4 (SD=5.4). For Authoritarian Parenting Style a Mean of 20.27 with a standard deviation of 6.1. For Permissive Parenting Style A mean of 19.23 with a standard deviation of 4.5 (SD=4.5). The overall F value is found to be 3.790 (F=3.790). The result is significant at 0.05 level (P=0.05). Similarly, for Cognitive Reappraisal, the young adults who experienced Authoritative Parenting Style obtained a Mean of 29.50 (M= 29.50) with standard deviation of

6.2 (SD=6.2). For Authoritarian Parenting Style a Mean of 26.36(M=26.50) with a standard deviation of 8.1(SD=8.1). For Permissive Parenting style a mean of 25.88 with a standard deviation of 6.1(SD=6.1). The overall F value is found to be 6.334(F=6.334). The result showed significant difference in Emotional Regulation strategies amongst young adults across Perceived Parenting Styles ( $p<0.05$ ). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected, which states that there is no significant difference in Emotional Regulation strategies amongst young adults across Perceived Parenting Styles.

**Table 2** Indicates the results of difference in Emotional Regulation strategies across Perceived Parenting Styles.

Measures	Authoritative Authoritarian Permissive						F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Expressive suppression	17.90	5.4	20.27	6.1	19.23	4.5	3.790	0.023
Cognitive Appraisal	29.45	6.2	26.36	8.1	25.88	6.1	6.344	0.002

\* $p<0.05$

### 3.3. One way anova outcome

The table 3 presents the results of ANOVA, which depicts the difference between different parenting style with regard to the Emotional Regulation Strategies such as Expressive Suppression and Cognitive Reappraisal. For Cognitive Reappraisal, the young adults whose fall under the First-born Category obtained a Mean of 17.39(M=17.39) with standard deviation of 5.9(SD=5.9). For Last Born a Mean of 29.47 with a standard deviation of 6.1(SD=6.1). For Middle Born a mean of 29.46 (M=29.46) with a standard deviation of 6.2(SD=6.2). For Only Child a mean of 29.25(M=29.45) with a standard deviation of 6(SD=6). The overall F value is 1.969 (F=1.969). Similarly, for Expressive Suppression. The young adults whose fall under the First-born Category obtained a Mean of 17.38(M=17.38) with standard deviation of 5.9(SD=5.9). For Last Born a Mean of 18.31 (M=18.31) with a standard deviation of 4.87 (SD=4.87). For Middle Born a mean of 19.65 (M=19.65) with a standard deviation of 5(SD=5). For Only Child a mean of 29.25(M=29.25) with a standard deviation of 6(SD=6). The overall F value is 2.561(F=2.561). The result showed no significant difference in Emotional Regulation strategies that is Cognitive reappraisal and Expressive Suppression amongst young adults across the Birth Order( $p>0.05$ ). Hence the null hypothesis is accepted, which states that there is no significant difference Emotional Regulation strategies amongst young adults across Perceived Parenting Styles.

**Table 3** Indicates the results of difference in Emotional Regulation strategies across Birth Order.

Measures	First Born		Last Born		Middle Born		Only Born		F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Expressive suppression	17.38	5.9	18.31	4.87	19.65	5.0	29.25	6	2.561	0.055
Cognitive Appraisal	17.38	7.0	29.47	6.1	29.46	6.2	29.25	6	1.969	0.118

\* $p>0.0$

## 4. Discussion

The present study aimed to study the significant difference Emotional Regulation strategies amongst young adults in various Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles, it also demonstrated the association between Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles. The present study did not find any association between Birth Order and Perceived Parenting Styles. Previously, researches have provided a mixed variation in Perceived Parenting Styles across various Birth Order, for example in one such study First Born and Middle Born perceived their mother to be more authoritarian as compared to the third born (Sputa & Paulson 1995). Contradicting studies revealed otherwise that as Birth Order increased, mothers tended to practice more authoritarian and less authoritative parenting (Swaroopaa & Anuradha 2017). As we can see that there have been researches showing the variation in perception of the individual regarding the parenting styles under various Birth Orders, suggesting a variability in how an individual perceives the parents across various Birth Order, researches can show weak adherence to a particular perception towards a parenting style across various Birth Order, but did not show a no association. Suggesting that other factors need to be explored further in order to get a better understanding as to why the findings have been such. The present study did not find any significant difference in both the Emotional Regulation strategies across various Birth Order, suggesting that there is no difference in

Emotional Regulation strategies across various Birth Order. Although there have not been enough research studies which would indicate that there is no significant difference in Emotional Regulation strategies across Birth Order. Although there have been research studies which indicate that there is a no significant difference in Birth Order and other factors such as emotional intelligence amongst young adults (Venkateshwara & Warriar 2017). Similarly, there have been research studies which have shown a partial mediating role of Emotional Regulation strategies with other factors of emotion, such as, emotional intelligence and subjective wellbeing (Sha et.al 2021). Although these variables which were under study that is Birth Order and Emotional Regulation strategies have found to be impacted by other variables such as emotional intelligence, separately, although relationships between variables can be intricate and influenced by various not considered factors, indicating the absence of a direct relationship in a study inconclusive. This absence does not negate the possibility of indirect or moderating effects influencing the observed outcomes. Lastly, the present research found a significant difference in both the Emotional Regulation strategies that is Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression across various Perceived Parenting Styles, one such which was done by Yao et al. (2022), The study found that parenting styles play an important role in the development of Emotional Regulation and that a warm parenting style is more conducive to Emotional Regulation in undergraduate students compared to an overprotective parenting style. Specifically, the study found that a warm parenting style is associated with closer family relationships, more evident outgoing, pleasant, and emotionally stable nature, more autonomy support, and a greater sense of self-efficacy, which in turn leads to better Emotional Regulation in the face of complex tasks. On the other hand, an overprotective parenting style is associated with excessive attention and control over children's daily behavior, which is detrimental to individual independence and Emotional Regulation. Another study done by Skinner et.al (2022) showed that parenting styles characterized by overprotection hindered the growth of students' Emotional Regulation. Another study which contradicts the present was done by Das (2022), found that there was no significant difference in Emotional Regulation strategies that is cognitive reappraisal in the authoritarian parenting styles, also expressive suppression did not show any significant difference across all the parenting styles.

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## 5. Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship between birth order, and perceived parenting styles, and significant difference of emotional regulation strategies across birth order and perceived parenting styles. Data was collected using Google Forms from 377 participants over three months, and statistical analyses (including ANOVA and chi-square tests) were conducted using SPSS 25. The key findings of the study include. No significant association was found between birth order and perceived parenting styles, contrary to previous research suggesting variability in perceptions across birth orders. There was no significant difference in emotional regulation strategies across various birth orders, although previous studies have suggested a potential influence of factors like emotional intelligence. Significant differences in emotional regulation strategies were observed across perceived parenting styles, with warm parenting styles associated with better emotional regulation and overprotective styles hindering it. The implications of the study understanding how children perceive their parents can inform parenting practices and help promote effective emotional regulation skills. Educators and counselors can develop interventions tailored to different parenting styles to enhance emotional regulation abilities in young adults. Limitations of the study include not exploring the role of gender, potential sampling bias due to online data collection, and reliance on self-report measures. Suggestions for further research is to Investigate the role of gender in perceptions of parenting styles and emotional regulation. Use mixed-method approaches to delve deeper into individual experiences. Explore mediating and moderating factors (e.g., temperament, attachment styles, cultural influences) that may affect the relationship between birth order, parenting styles, and emotional regulation. In summary, the study contributes insights into the complex interplay between birth order, perceived parenting styles, and emotional regulation, with implications for parenting education and intervention programs aimed at promoting healthy emotional development in young adults.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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