

## Family Size and Construct of the Early Adolescent's Emotional Intelligence

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**Abstract:** Emotional intelligence is a set of abilities that include conception, emotion appraisal and expression, emotion management and regulation. The emotional intelligence structure is a concept with little empirical research, particularly in relation to the link between family environment and personality characters and with respect to family members of early adolescents. For this reason, the specific objective of this research is to determine the relationship between family size and early adolescent's emotional intelligence. The present research was carried out among 234 Iranian students in the second and grades of guidance schools (age 12-15) in Tehran, Iran. The students (girls and boys) were clustered through random and multistage sampling. Data were collected using the family background questionnaire and Schutte's (1998) Emotional Intelligence Scale. Results of multiple comparisons of LSD indicate that there is significant difference between groups of family size. Consequently, multi comparisons of LSD confirmed the results of the ANOVA. The findings indicate that the early adolescents, whose families have less members, have higher emotional intelligence.

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### 1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence refers to understanding the feelings of oneself and of others, is related to people, and one's ability to adapt to coping with the immediate surroundings to be more successful in dealing with environmental demands (Bar-On & Parker, 2006; Goleman, 1995). Among positive family factors for the adaptability of adolescents with life stresses are secured interest relations with caretakers during childhood, powerful family functioning and parents' effective attendance as a family subsystem. Thus, the family with multi-functional aspects serves as a fundamental dimension in the development of early adolescents' emotional intelligence. Hughes and Carolyn (2002) pointed that our first parents during childhood are our siblings. Our relationships with them, even during childhood, include components which will later become significant in our relationships as adults. Contrarily, Naghavi (2011) have shown that dysfunctional family affective responsiveness was related to difficulty in describing feelings.

Our first partners in our childhood are our siblings. Our relations with them, even during childhood, include certain components which will later become significant in our relationships with others as adults. These components include mutual dependence, role division, emotional communication, and problem solving, agreement and conflict, as well as cooperation and mental health (Hughes & Carolyn, 2002). There are many assumptions about emotional

intelligence and family size. Some existing research indicates a slight relationship between emotional intelligence and family size.

Ozabaci (2006) carried out a study on the effects of family size and the number of siblings on emotional intelligence among 274 parents who are mothers and fathers of elementary school students. As a result, he found out that the family environment in which the foundations of emotional intelligence are first laid is a setting the child grows up in and acquires information relating to life. In more specific, family environment bearing healthy and high quality characteristics affects the development of the child in many ways like the ego concept of the child and his/her emotional and social development. Meanwhile, the social status of the family, the residence, relations within the family, the number of siblings and the relations among the siblings determine the characteristics of the family environment and emotional intelligence.

Important variations in emotional intelligence exist based on family structure. For example, children in different birth-order positions may have different opportunities, such as the difference in the availability of their family resources, the availability of parental time, energy, and attention, the quality of the relationship with parents, and other family members who have influence on younger siblings' emotional intelligence outcomes (Cicirelli, 1994; Lu, Donald & Treiman, 2008).

According to Naghavi, Ma'rof, Asgari & Mirza (2012), family education of mutual learning would be provided to help students learn how to appropriately deal with people.

Ritcher, Ritcher, Eisemann & Mau (1997) have suggested that large families pose a risk factor for children's mental health and behaviour, which may have negative effects later in life. Fisher (1984) believe that a large family size is often related to undesired family conditions such as overcrowding and low financial status, poor parental behaviour, parental criminality and sibling delinquency, inadequate parental supervision and discipline, and lack of attention, affection and family interaction.

On the contrary, Zarinah, Rozumah, Krauss & Rumaya (2006) found that number of children was not significantly related to child's academic achievement. According to the study by Busard (1965), as the number of children increases in the family, parents' view toward raising children and circumstances in which their kids grow also changes. In crowded families, especially with over 6 children, family roles are specified more clearly, everybody's tasks are determined, and a more precise and authoritative discipline is exerted (Tahurian, 2005 cited in Khosravi, 2008).

Naghavi & Ma'rof (2012), demonstrate that For early adolescence, who learn most lessons about emotion from their family, it includes the ability to control impulses, delay gratification, motivate them, read other people's social cues, and cope with life's difficulties.

In fact, larger families having larger number of children and/or extended relatives living with them are thought to dilute family resources by spreading themselves among several children. These limit the quantity and quality of the interactions between the children and their parents, and they may affect some early adolescents' characters. In industrialized nations, having more siblings may reduce their opportunities of education (Lu, Donald & Treiman, 2008). In other words, children from large families benefit less than those from small families from parental resources even if the same resources are available for all of them (Powell & Steelman, 1999).

However, the key is, if negative resources like alcohol drinking and drug issues, or mental problems within the family are also diluted as a function of family size, it is plausible that under certain negative circumstances, having a larger number of siblings might be advantageous (Downey, 1995; Powell, Steelman, 1999). In this line; Golestan, Haslinda, Nobaya & Anjomshoa (2010), believe that Family interventions would be focused on family members; this is able to lead to less conflict and more positive family environment.

Consequently, some existing research has indicated a slight relationship between family size and their early adolescents' emotional intelligence. This indicates that family structure may influence positively and negatively on early adolescents' emotional intelligence. Meanwhile, the variables of the family background, such as the family size, are the important factors that affect emotional intelligence development of their children. Thus, with respect family size, it is one way of those emotional skills that can be developed in teenaged children. The present study explored the interaction between family's size and early adolescents' emotional intelligence.

In addition, the treatment by parents to their children and how they react to their interests and activities, as well as children treatment to one another, emotion and information exchange among them, emotional protection to one another, and the relationships of the family members' with outsiders may also influence the children's emotional intelligence (Naghavi, 2010). Although a body of relevant research literature is available, the findings of such research studies which investigated the effects of family's size on early adolescents' emotional intelligence were derived mainly from western-based samples that are socially and culturally different from the Iranian sample.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between family size and the early adolescent's emotional intelligence among Iranian guidance schools students in Tehran, Iran. The schools were chosen based upon their location and programs of study. The population of research involved in this study consisted of all the Iranian students who enrolled in guidance schools of Tehran (234 students, academic year 2010-2011).

The data were collected using (Schutte, 1998) Emotional Intelligence Scale for assessing early adolescence's emotional intelligence. To identify the difference between emotional intelligence and family size of early adolescents.

The emotional intelligence scales used to assess emotional intelligence, i.e. Schutte's Emotional Intelligence Self-measuring Scale (introduced by Schutte and her colleagues in 1998 and Mayer and Salovey's original emotional intelligence model, 1990), was used to measure emotional intelligence, which includes emotional conception and appraisal, emotion regulation and emotion utilization. This scale includes 33 self-report items. This scale includes 33 self-report items. Some examples of the items included in the scale are:

A. I can easily identify my emotions and feelings.

B. I can persuade myself by imagining success in work.

C. I admire others when they do something good.

The subject selected his/her degree of agreement or disagreement by any of these sentences in a five-point Likert scale, from strongly disagreed = 1 to strongly agreed = 5. In this study, the reliability for the emotional intelligence test was obtained by using Crombach's alpha,  $\alpha = 0.84$ .

In addition, the demographic questionnaire was also used to gather relevant background information of the subjects in this research.

Considering the question and research hypotheses, the following statistical method is used to analyze data: Descriptive statistics was provided to show the variation in the estimated means and standard deviations for each of the dependent and independent variables across the sample. In this research for multi comparisons of variables LSD "Least Significant Difference" test was used. The LSD test was used for determine the difference between the mean score of emotional intelligence of the groups of family size as the dependent variables.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Description of the participants

The study was among 7150 girls and boys Iranian students. After determining the sample gathering, 4 regions selected random among Tehran's 19 educational regions. Then, among the guidance schools of each region, 2 schools are selected by simple random method: one girls' school and one boys' school. In each school, pupils are selected from grade 3 and grade 2 by simple random method. The sample (234) consisted of the guidance schools pupils (12-15 years old). The respondents (234) for this study were the early adolescence with 116 boys and 118 girls.

This research studied the effects of family size on the early adolescents' emotional intelligence. Hence, a descriptive analysis of early adolescents' emotional intelligence with respect to family size was obtained. Table 1 presents the descriptive information of the early adolescent's emotional intelligence, according to their family size.

In this research, 3 groups of family size (being the only child, with one sibling in the family, and with two and more siblings in the family) were compared; however, the analysis for this particular hypothesis concerned with the question of the difference between early adolescents' emotional intelligence and the statistics dealing with the three samples mean by family sizes. The mean score for the emotional intelligence of early adolescents, with respect to their family size (being the only child, with one sibling in the family, and with two and more

siblings in the family), as presented in Table 2 are  $M=127.87$  ( $SD=5.94$ ),  $M=116.78$  ( $SD=1.73$ ) and  $M=109.78$  ( $SD=3.70$ ), respectively. The appropriate statistical method, i.e. the analysis of variance (ANOVA), was used to test the difference between emotional intelligence of early adolescents in relation to their family size. The ANOVA statistical method for the equally mean value scores of early adolescent' emotional intelligence was also conducted by using SPSS software. The obtained results indicated that there is a statistical significant difference between early adolescents' emotional intelligence in term of their family size ( $F=216.69$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Table 2 presents the results from the ANOVA which tested the difference between the mean of the early adolescents' emotional intelligence for the three groups of family sizes.

A significant difference only suggested that there is a significant difference between the group means. However, it does not identify the group means that are significantly different. Hence, to determine the groups that are significantly different, the LSD Test was used. Table 3 presents the LSD test for the analysis difference between early adolescents' emotional intelligence according to family sizes. The results of the multiple comparisons of the LSD indicated that there is a significant different between the group of family sizes ( $\text{sig}=0.000$ ).

Consequently, the multi comparisons of the LSD confirmed the result of the ANOVA (ANOVA's comparisons between the groups of family sizes). In other words, early adolescents' emotional intelligence is significantly different according to their family size, and this supports the findings obtained in the study by Ozabaci (2006) which suggested that the social status of the family, the residence, relationships within the family, number of siblings and their relationships determine the characteristics of the family environment and emotional intelligence.

According to a study by Fazelinia (2001), one of the social harming factors to a family is children's multiplicity. Decreases of parent-child interactions, decreases of the chances of being together, as well as listening and positive attentions in crowded families are probably some reasons for the decrease in emotional intelligence in such families. The result indicated that there is a slight difference between the levels of emotional intelligence of early adolescents according to their family sizes. Moreover, early adolescents' emotional intelligence showed a different ranking for the family size groups with the only child ( $M=127.87$ ,  $SD=5.94$ ) than those with more than one sibling in the family ( $M=116.78$ ,  $SD=1.73$ ), and more than two and more siblings in

the family (M=109.78, SD=3.70), respectively. This means that the early adolescents, who live in the

family with smaller size, have higher emotional intelligence.

**Table 1: A summary of samples for early adolescents by demographic variables**

<i>Demographic Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<b>Sample</b>	234	100.00
<b>Early Adolescent's Gender</b>		
Male (boy)	116	49.6
Female (girl)		
<b>Total</b>	118	50.4
<b>Family Size</b>	234	100
The only child	148	64.1
Has one sibling in the family	52	22.5
Has two and more siblings in the family	31	13.4
<b>Total</b>	231	100

**Table 2: Descriptive information of early adolescents' emotional intelligence in terms of family size**

<i>Family size</i>	<i>Emotional Intelligence</i>		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Being the only child</i>	127.87	148	5.94
<i>With one sibling in the family</i>	116.78	52	1.73
<i>With two and more siblings in the family</i>	109.78	31	3.70

**Table 3: Summary information of ANOVA for early adolescent's emotional intelligence by respect to family size**

	<i>SS</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Between Groups</i>	10935.34	2.00	5467.67	216.69	0.00
<i>Within Groups</i>	5753.09	228.00	25.23	216.69	0.00
<b>Total</b>	16688.42	230.00			

Note:  $P < 0.01$

**Table 4: The multiple comparisons of the LSD test between the mean of early adolescent's emotional intelligence summary according to the different groups of family sizes**

<i>Multiple comparisons for the LSD test, Dependent Variable = EI of early adolescents</i>						
<i>Being the only child, with one sibling in the family, and with two and more siblings in the family</i>		<i>MD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>95% co. Level</i>	
<i>I=family size</i>	<i>J=family size</i>				<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<i>Being the only child</i>	<i>One sibling in the family</i>	11.084*	.810	.000	9.49	12.68
	<i>Two and more siblings in the family</i>	18.090*	.992	.000	16.14	20.05
<i>With one sibling in the family</i>	<i>only child</i>	-11.084*	.810	.000	-12.68	-9.49
	<i>Two and more siblings in the family</i>	6.490	1.140	0.10	-4.76	9.25
<i>With two and more siblings in the family</i>	<i>only child</i>	-18.090*	.992	.000	-20.05	-16.14
	<i>One sibling in the family</i>	6.490	1.140	.010	9.25	-4.76

Note: The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level

**4. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the current research, has shown that a greater percentage of smaller family size of early adolescents' scores appeared in higher categories of social skills and emotional intelligence than those from bigger families. This means that

adolescents living in small family size have more emotional intelligence scores. According to Ozabaci (2006), the social status of the family, the residence, the relationships within the family, the number of siblings and the relationships among the siblings determine the characteristics of the family environment

and emotional intelligence. So, regarding to this finding, it is important to consider early adolescents' activities should be provided because providing a positive family environment is not only the responsibility of the parents. The interaction between parents and early adolescents would be increased to enhance life adjustment abilities; these include engaging them in the school's parenting activities to improve early adolescents' emotional intelligence and promote the ability to recognize and control personal emotions, understanding their early adolescents' personal characters and abilities, training their early adolescents to possess multiple capabilities and interests, development their early adolescents' learning activities, and understanding what they/he/she are/is learning by providing some help to them.

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