

Parenting and Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract: Parenting shapes how children learn to manage emotions, forming the basis of emotional intelligence, and different parenting practices differ across generations, culture, and family life. In this study, we examined how parenting styles and practices explain differences in emotional intelligence. A total of 360 participants took part in the study, equally divided across three generational cohorts (Partition, Transition, Post-Liberalization) and gender groups. Mediation analysis showed that parental responsiveness was a strong predictor of emotional intelligence ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). Participants from the Transition ($\beta = .06, p = .003$) and Post-Liberalization cohorts ($\beta = .09, p < .001$) reported higher responsiveness, which in turn predicted higher emotional intelligence. Parental control showed a small, nonsignificant effect ($\beta = -.09, p = .106$). Gender differences were very small and not significant ($\beta = -.004, p = .940$). The findings suggest that emotional intelligence is shaped mainly by responsive parenting and generational change. Parenting in Mizoram reflects both cultural traditions and historical shifts.

Keywords: parental responsiveness; parental control; emotional intelligence; generations; gender; Mizoram

1. Introduction

The idea that people differ in their capacity to understand and regulate emotions has, over time, matured into the construct of emotional intelligence (EI). Since the early definition by Salovey and Mayer (1990), and later refinements by Petrides (2011), EI has been shown to influence mental health, interpersonal effectiveness, and resilience. Yet, while many studies emphasize individual traits, emotional intelligence is not only a matter of personality — it is also learned, practiced, and transmitted through everyday socialization. Few contexts shape this process as deeply as parenting.

Parents teach children how to handle feelings both directly and indirectly: in the tone of a reprimand, in the warmth of encouragement, and in the structure of household rules. Scholars have often described these behaviours on two axes: responsiveness, which captures warmth, emotional availability, and listening, and control, which reflects discipline, boundary-setting, and monitoring. Responsive parenting consistently predicts more adaptive emotional development. Gao, Ding, and Zhong (2024), for example, found that parental warmth was strongly associated with emotional intelligence and self-concept among Chinese schoolchildren. Excessive control, on the other hand, tends to stifle expression and hinder autonomy, even if some level of structure is necessary (Yadav et al., 2021).

But parenting shifts with the times. Generational changes in education, global communication, and social values mean that older cohorts often recall stricter, more authoritarian homes, whereas younger ones describe parents who were more emotionally supportive. Comparative studies confirm that newer cohorts tend to score higher in EI, yet explanations often stop at generational labels rather than examining why. One plausible mechanism is that changing parenting norms mediate the relationship between generation and emotional intelligence (Liu et al., 2021).

Also, meta-analyses sometimes report that women outscore men on empathy and emotion recognition (Cabello et al., 2016), but these differences shrink once socialization is

considered (MacCann et al., 2020). Parents may use more emotional language with daughters, or demand toughness from sons, shaping distinct pathways into adulthood (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). The evidence is scattered and inconsistent, with few attempts to model gender alongside generational variation in a mediation framework.

Taken together, the literature points to a missing link: how parenting styles, specifically responsiveness and control, transmit the influence of generation and gender into the emotional intelligence of adults.

Objectives

- To examine whether generational differences in emotional intelligence can be explained by variations in parental responsiveness and parental control.
- To determine the mediating role of parental responsiveness and parental control in linking generation and gender to emotional intelligence.

Hypotheses

- Parental responsiveness will mediate the effect of generation on emotional intelligence.
- Parental control will mediate the effect of generation on emotional intelligence.
- Gender will exert both direct and mediated effects on emotional intelligence via parenting dimensions.

2. Methods and Procedure

Research Design

The study design was cross-sectional and was tested through a mediation framework.

Sample

A total of 360 participants were drawn using stratified sampling to ensure balanced representation across generation and gender. Each of the six demographic cells contained 60 participants, and the Partition cohort had a mean age of approximately 65 years ($SD = 5.8$), the Transition cohort averaged 48 years ($SD = 6.1$), and the Post-Liberalization cohort averaged 31 years ($SD = 4.7$). The gender distribution

was equal, with 180 men and 180 women. Educational attainment varied from less than high school to doctoral level, while all participants identified as Christian, reflecting the demographic reality of the region.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 360)

Characteristic	Categories	n	%	Mean Age (SD)
Gender	Male	180	50.0	–
	Female	180	50.0	–
Generation	Partition	120	33.3	65.0 (5.8)
	Transition	120	33.3	48.0 (6.1)
	Post-Liberalization	120	33.3	31.0 (4.7)
Education	Below High School	29	8.1	–
	High School	72	20.0	–
	Undergraduate	137	38.1	–
	Postgraduate	94	26.1	–
	Doctorate	18	5.0	–
	Other	10	2.8	–
Religion	Christian	360	100	–

Tools Used:

Parenting Style Scale (Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014).

Parental behaviour was measured using the Parenting Style Scale, which evaluates two broad dimensions: *responsiveness* and *control*. The 38-item scale draws from Baumrind's (1971) and Maccoby and Martin's (1983) frameworks. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Very wrong to 5 = Very right). Higher scores represent greater exposure to the respective dimension of parenting. Previous research has reported good psychometric properties, with subscale validity coefficients above .75.

Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10; Davies et al., 2010).

Emotional intelligence was assessed with the BEIS-10, a concise self-report instrument adapted from Schutte et al.'s (1998) original scale. It contains 10 items that align with Salovey and Mayer's (1990) conceptual model of EI. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores reflecting stronger emotional intelligence. The scale has been validated across populations and has consistently demonstrated reliability (Davies et al., 2010; Balakrishnan & Saklofske, 2015).

Note: In the present sample, Cronbach's α values for the parenting responsiveness and control subscales (.73 and .70 respectively), as well as for the BEIS-10 (.77), exceeded .70, showing adequate internal consistency.

3. Procedure

Participants were contacted through community and institutional networks. Rapport was established, and the purpose of the study was explained in clear, accessible language. Written informed consent was obtained. Participants were reassured that their responses would remain confidential and that withdrawal from the study was possible

at any time without consequence. Care was taken to ensure that instructions were understood, and participants were encouraged to ask questions if needed. Ethical safeguards were followed in line with APA guidelines (2002).

4. Data Analysis

Data were first screened for missing values, normality, and internal consistency. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis) were calculated for each variable. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α , with values above .70 considered acceptable.

To test the study objectives mediation analyses was carried out in Jamovi (Version 2.7.6). The GLM Mediation module was used to estimate direct and indirect effects, with both unstandardized (B) and standardized (β) coefficients reported. Confidence intervals for indirect paths were generated through the delta method. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. In addition to p-values, effect sizes were interpreted in line with conventional benchmarks to aid substantive interpretation.

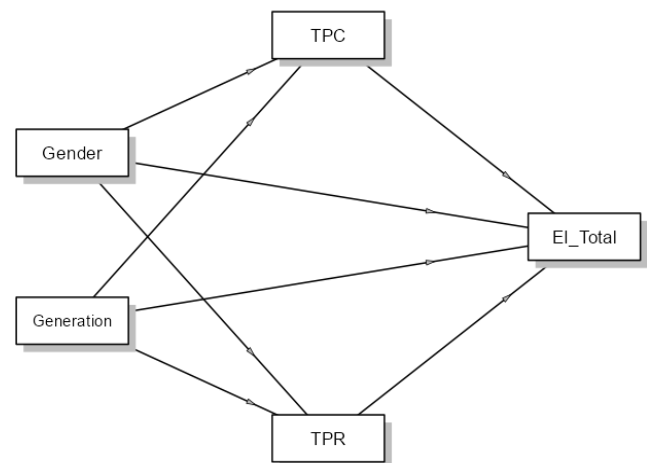


Figure 1: Conceptual Diagram

Note: TPR = Responsiveness, TPC = Controlling, EI_Total = Emotional Intelligence

5. Results of the Data Analysis

Direct Effects

The first step was to examine the direct contributions of gender, generation, and parenting dimensions to emotional intelligence. As shown in Table 2, parental permissiveness emerged as a significant positive predictor of emotional intelligence ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). In contrast, parental control showed a small negative but nonsignificant effect ($\beta = -.09, p = .106$). Direct effects of generation were modest: the Post-Liberalization cohort scored higher than the Partition group, although the effect was only marginally significant ($\beta = .13, p = .058$). The Transition versus Partition contrast did not reach significance ($\beta = .06, ns$). Gender showed no meaningful direct effect on emotional intelligence ($\beta = -.004, ns$).

Table 2: Direct Effects of Generation, Gender, and Parenting on Emotional Intelligence (N = 360)

Predictor	B	SE	95% CI (LL, UL)	β	<i>p</i>
Gender (Male–Female)	–0.03	0.43	–0.88, 0.82	–0.004	.940
Generation1 (Post vs. Part)	1.14	0.60	–0.04, 2.33	0.13	.058
Generation2 (Tran vs. Part)	0.55	0.55	–0.53, 1.63	0.06	.316
Parental Control (TPC)	–0.04	0.03	–0.09, 0.01	–0.09	.106
Parental Responsiveness (TPR)	0.11	0.03	0.05, 0.16	0.20	< .001

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit; Part = Partition; Post = Post-Liberalization; Tran = Transition.

Indirect and Total Effects

The mediation model further tested whether parental responsiveness and control transmitted the effects of gender and generation on emotional intelligence. As presented in Table 3, significant indirect pathways were observed only through parental responsiveness. Both the Post-Liberalization ($\beta = .09, p < .001$) and Transition ($\beta = .06, p = .003$) cohorts showed higher responsiveness, which in turn predicted higher emotional intelligence. Indirect effects through parental control were nonsignificant. Gender did not

display significant indirect pathways through either responsiveness or control.

When direct and indirect paths were combined, total effects indicated that generational differences remained meaningful. The Post-Liberalization group scored significantly higher in emotional intelligence compared to the Partition cohort ($\beta = .26, p < .001$), and the Transition group also showed a smaller but significant total effect ($\beta = .13, p = .033$). Gender had no significant total effect.

Table 3: Indirect and Total Effects on Emotional Intelligence (N = 360)

Pathway	B	SE	95% CI (LL, UL)	β	<i>p</i>
Gender → TPC → EI	–0.00	0.04	–0.07, 0.07	–0.0002	.966
Gender → TPR → EI	–0.14	0.09	–0.31, 0.04	–0.02	.131
Gen1 (Post vs. Part) → TPC → EI	0.33	0.21	–0.08, 0.74	0.04	.115
Gen1 (Post vs. Part) → TPR → EI	0.83	0.25	0.34, 1.32	0.09	< .001
Gen2 (Tran vs. Part) → TPC → EI	0.10	0.08	–0.05, 0.25	0.01	.193
Gen2 (Tran vs. Part) → TPR → EI	0.51	0.17	0.17, 0.85	0.06	.003
Total: Gender → EI	–0.17	0.44	–1.04, 0.69	–0.02	.699
Total: Gen1 (Post vs. Part) → EI	2.31	0.54	1.25, 3.36	0.26	< .001
Total: Gen2 (Tran vs. Part) → EI	1.16	0.54	0.09, 2.22	0.13	.033

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit; EI = Emotional Intelligence; TPC = Total Parental Control; TPR = Total Parental Responsiveness; Part = Partition; Post = Post-Liberalization; Tran = Transition.

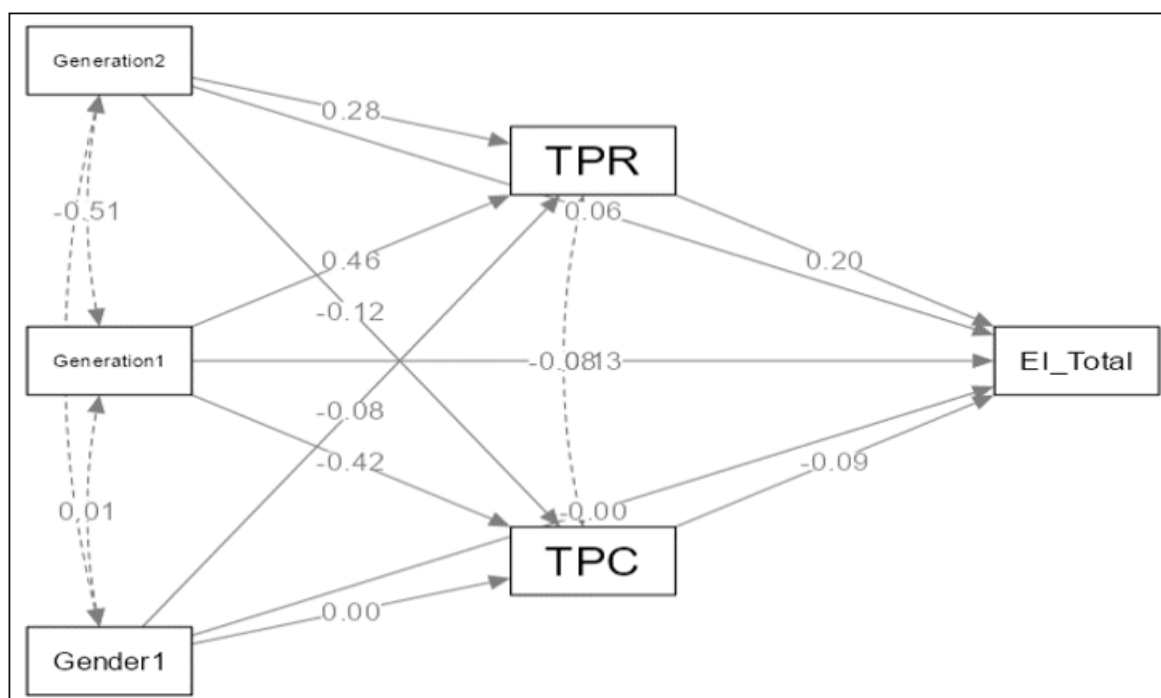


Figure 2: Mediation model of the effects of generation and gender on emotional intelligence through parental responsiveness (TPR) and parental control (TPC).

Note: Values shown are standardized path coefficients (β). Solid lines indicate significant paths ($p < .05$); dashed lines represent nonsignificant paths. Generation contrasts are coded relative to the Partition cohort (Generation1 = Post-Liberalization – Partition; Generation2 = Transition – Partition).

6. Discussion

This study investigated how generational difference and gender relate to emotional intelligence, by way of parenting practices. The analysis found that parental responsiveness is the pathway most clearly associated with generational variation in emotional intelligence. Participants from the Transition and Post-Liberalization cohorts recalled parents who were more emotionally supportive than those from the Partition cohort, and this support corresponded to higher emotional intelligence scores.

The idea that parental control would also serve as a mediator was not borne out in the results. Although control showed a negative association with emotional intelligence, its indirect path was not statistically distinguishable from zero. This may be because the control dimension, as measured, blends different elements—some of which may foster structure, others of which may restrict autonomy. It is possible that these contrasting effects cancel out, leaving no strong overall effect.

The hypothesis that gender would contribute directly or indirectly was not supported in this context. No meaningful gender differences in emotional intelligence emerged, nor did gender predict variation in parenting dimensions in ways that translated into differences in emotional intelligence. One possible reason is that generational changes in parenting have been sufficiently large to make gender-based variation less visible. Another is that cultural or social norms in the sample reduce gendered differences in emotional socialization. Also, relying on self-report may limit detection of subtle gender effects.

Overall, these results suggest that emotional intelligence in this setting is shaped more by generational shifts in parenting, especially in emotional responsiveness, than by control or gender. The pattern observed here indicates that when parenting is warm and supportive, its effects carry forward into emotional outcomes; where parenting is primarily controlling, those effects are less clear.

7. Implications

The findings indicate that parental responsiveness is the most important pathway through which generational change has influenced emotional intelligence. This carries implications for family life, education, and policy. For families, the results reaffirm the value of emotionally supportive parenting, suggesting that warmth and attentiveness may foster capacities that remain relevant across the life course. For educators and practitioners, the findings point to the possibility of strengthening emotional skills not only through direct instruction but also by encouraging parental involvement that models emotional availability. At a policy level, programs that support parenting practices—such as parental education initiatives and community-based guidance—may have long-term benefits for emotional development.

8. Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on self-report instruments means that the results

reflect perceived parenting and emotional intelligence, which may not fully correspond to observed behaviours. Second, the cross-sectional design precludes strong claims about causality, since generation, parenting, and emotional intelligence were measured at the same time. Finally, parental control was measured as a single construct, whereas future work may benefit from distinguishing between behavioural and psychological control to examine their distinct effects.

9. Conclusion

The study shows that differences in emotional intelligence across generations can be traced to variations in parenting, with responsiveness serving as the principal mediator. Control played little role, and gender was not a significant factor. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence is not only an individual characteristic but also an outcome shaped by the parenting climate of one's time. Within a generational and family context, the study points to responsiveness as the feature of parenting most consistently linked to emotional intelligence.

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