

# MATERNAL STATUS AS A MODERATOR OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG MOTHERS

Akanksha Chaurasia<sup>1</sup> & Dharmendra Kumar Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Psychological Sciences, Central University of South Bihar, Gaya, <sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences, Central University of South Bihar, Gaya

**Correspondence:** Akanksha Chaurasia, E-mail: achaurasia705@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life has been studied in various populations. However, how maternal status is influenced by maternal status as a single mother versus a partnered mother has not been thoroughly investigated among mothers.

**Aims:** The current study examines the moderating role of mother status as a single mother versus a partnered mother in the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life in mothers. **Method:** The research design adopted was cross-sectional and correlational, and a purposive sampling technique was conducted on a sample of 150 parents from Uttar Pradesh and the adjacent areas of Bihar. **Result:** Findings indicate that while single mothers and partnered mothers do not significantly differ in emotional intelligence domains, partnered mothers report higher quality of life scores across various domains than single mothers. Moreover, a positive association is observed between emotional intelligence and quality of life among mothers. Maternal status moderates this relationship, with a stronger association among partnered mothers.

**Conclusion:** These results emphasise the importance of considering maternal status in understanding the complex interplay between emotional intelligence and quality of life among mothers.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Quality of Life, Mothers, Maternal Status.

## INTRODUCTION

Raising children is an arduous responsibility. Motherhood is often called the most challenging and most rewarding job. Having children gives mothers a sense of purpose and significance and places many demanding obligations on them throughout their adult years (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). The experience of motherhood involves a wide range of obstacles and moments of happiness, which significantly impact both the mothers and their families' overall happiness. In

today's society, the role of mothers has expanded beyond traditional domestic responsibilities, with a growing focus on their emotional intelligence and how it affects their overall well-being. However, in this complex network of factors, the impact of being a parent, whether as a single mother or a partnered mother, has been identified as an essential but not extensively studied variable. In India, the occurrence of single-parent families varies from 5% to 12%, as reported

by Kramer (2019), Pandit (2019), and the U.S. Census Bureau (2023). Single parents, especially single mothers, belong to a socially and economically disadvantaged category that faces the possibility of experiencing a range of physical and mental health issues. Single mothers exhibit inferior physical and mental well-being compared to parents who reside together as couples (Rousou et al., 2013).

Emotional intelligence (E.I.) is the capacity to perceive, comprehend, control accurately, and proficiently employ emotions within oneself and about others (Salovey & Sluyter, 1997). Prior studies have investigated the correlation between Emotional Intelligence (E.I.) and different factors, including marital status and parental roles. A study found that women's emotional intelligence level is low (Abdullah et al., 2019). Nevertheless, a distinct discovery indicated that solitary fathers exhibited robust emotional intelligence but encountered difficulties empathising and comprehending their adolescent children. Research also showed that parenting makes single mothers less happy, sad, stressed, and tired. However, employed single mothers report higher levels of emotional well-being (Meier et al., 2016).

Quality of life (QoL) refers to a thorough and personal evaluation of an individual's overall well-being and contentment with life. It includes both objective life circumstances and subjective emotional experiences. The impact of parents' quality of life on their well-being, children's development, and family dynamics is significant in the context of parenthood (Giannakopoulos et al., 2009). Prior research has indicated that single mothers encounter a notable decline in their overall quality of life compared to the broader population (Cook et al., 2009). Research consistently shows that single mothers have more mental health problems and problems balancing work and family life than mothers who are married (Dziak, 2010). A recent study by Kim and Kim

(2020) found that married mothers generally reported a higher quality of life than single mothers. However, the quality of life of single mothers by choice is significantly higher than that of married mothers, even after controlling for economic and paternal involvement variables (Segal Engelchin, 2005). Financial hardship and inadequate resources are key factors contributing to a reduced perception of quality of life in single-supporting mothers (Coyne, 2003). These results suggest that single mothers may face more significant problems. However, their quality of life can be affected by many things, such as their ability to afford things, their ability to balance work and family life, and their social support.

This study addresses a critical gap in existing research by investigating how maternal status—whether a mother is single or partnered—moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence (E.I.) and quality of life (QoL) among mothers. With the expanding roles of mothers in society and the distinct challenges faced by single mothers, understanding how emotional intelligence interacts with maternal status to influence quality of life is vital. By shedding light on this dynamic, the study can offer insights into interventions and support systems tailored to different maternal statuses, ultimately enhancing the well-being of mothers and their families.

## OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To assess and compare emotional intelligence and quality of life among mothers based on their maternal status.
- ◆ To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life among mothers.
- ◆ To explore the moderating effect of Maternal Status (Single Mother vs. Partnered Mother) on the relationship between emotional intelligence and

quality of life among mothers.

## HYPOTHESES

- ◆ Ho1. There would be no significant difference in emotional intelligence among mothers, regardless of maternal status (single mother vs. partnered mother).
- ◆ Ho2. There would be no significant difference in quality of life among mothers, regardless of maternal status (single mother vs. partnered mother).
- ◆ Ho3. There would be no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life among mothers.
- ◆ Ho4. There is no significant moderating effect of maternal status (single mother vs. partnered mother) on the relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life among mothers.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study employs a cross-sectional and correlational research design, utilising a survey methodology with questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. A purposive sampling technique was utilised to select 150 mothers (50 single mothers and 100 partnered mothers) from Uttar Pradesh and adjacent parts of Bihar. The sample selection followed specific criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

#### Inclusion criteria

- ◆ The age range of the mothers must be between 25 and 50 years.
- ◆ They should have at least one child/children aged 6-18.
- ◆ Must be able to comprehend and respond to the questionnaire items.
- ◆ They have no history of any significant physical or mental illness.

#### Exclusion criteria

- ◆ Subjects who are not cooperative with the study.

## Study Measures

### Personal and Socio Demographical Data

**Sheet** was used to obtain information about the participants' sociodemographic characteristics, including age, gender, education, area of habitat, state, parenting status, Duration of Parenting in Years, monthly income, source of income, area of habitat, number of children and social support system.

### WHO Quality of Life (QOL) BREF scale (1995)- Hindi Version

is a widely utilised questionnaire designed to evaluate an individual's subjective perception of their quality of life. It comprises 26 items that assess four domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment. Research has consistently demonstrated the high reliability of this scale, with internal consistency coefficients ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 for each domain. Test-retest reliability coefficients have been reported to range from 0.69 to 0.80, suggesting that the questionnaire yields consistent results over time (World Health Organization, 1995). Moreover, the WHOQOL-BREF scale exhibits good construct validity, with each domain capturing a distinct quality of life. Additionally, it demonstrates good convergent validity, displaying substantial correlations with other measures of quality of life and related constructs (World Health Organization, 1995).

**Emotional Intelligence Scale:** This scale was developed by Arun Kumar Singh and Shruti Narain in 2014, is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess emotional intelligence across four dimensions: (a) Understanding Emotions, (b) Understanding Motivation, (c) Empathy, and (d) Handling Relations. The scale consists of 31 items rated on a two-point scale. Emotional Intelligence Scale test-retest reliability was  $\pm = 0.86$ ,

statistically significant at the  $p < .01$ . Additionally, the concurrent validity of the scale was established at  $\alpha = 0.86$ , also significant at the  $p < .01$  level (Singh & Narain, 2014).

### Procedure of data collection

A sample was collected strictly following all inclusion and exclusion criteria. Before collecting data from the participants, their informed consent was acquired, a robust rapport was established, and the ethical guidelines outlined by the APA were followed. Sociodemographic data were collected during the initial phase, while selected tools were administered during the subsequent phase, according to the subject's convenience.

### Statistical Analysis

The data was analysed using statistical methods such as T-test, Correlation, and Moderation analysis. The analysis was performed utilising Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 and Process Macro software.

## RESULTS

**Table-1: Socio-demographic profile of the participant**

Socio-Demography	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Maternal Status	Single Mother	50	33.30
	Partnered Mother	100	66.70
Educational Level	10 <sup>th</sup>	37	24.70
	12 <sup>th</sup>	29	19.30
	Graduation	45	30.00
	Post-Graduation	39	26.00
Duration of Parenting in Years	0 to 5 years	7	4.70
	5 to 10 years	35	23.30
	10 years and above	108	72.00
Economic Status	0 to 20000	84	56.00
	20000 to 50000	24	16.00
	50000 to 1 Lakh	18	12.00
	1 Lakh and above	24	16.00

Table 1 presents the sample's socio-demographic characteristics, showing that 33.30% were single mothers and 66.70% were partnered mothers. The participants' educational attainment was as follows: 24.70% had completed 10th grade, 19.30% had completed 12th grade, 30.00% were graduates, and 26.00% had post-graduate qualifications. A small percentage of participants (4.70%) had been parenting for 0 to 5 years, 23.30% for 5 to 10 years, and 72.00% for ten years or more. Economic status: 56.00% of participants had incomes between 0 and 20000, 16.00% between 20000 and 50000, 16.00% between 1 Lakh and above, and 12.00% between 50000 and 1 Lakh.

**Table-2: Comparison of Single mothers and Partnered mothers in the domains and overall score of emotional intelligence**

Domains of Emotional Intelligence	Single mothers		Partnered mothers		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Understanding Emotions	2.88	1.17	2.85	1.09	0.16	0.87
Understanding Motivations	5.36	1.57	5.99	1.56	2.32	0.02**
Empathy	7.30	1.48	7.62	1.65	1.15	0.25
Handling Relationships	8.74	2.40	8.71	2.08	0.79	0.94
E.I. Total Score	24.28	5.13	25.17	4.99	1.02	0.31

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

A finding indicated that Understanding Emotions, Empathy, and Handling Relationships showed no significant difference between single and partnered mothers. Compared to single mothers, partnered mothers had a higher understanding of motivations ( $t = 2.32$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). Overall, EI total scores did not differ between single and partnered mothers ( $t = 1.02$ ,  $p = 0.31$ ). While single and partnered mothers have similar emotional intelligence, partnered mothers may better understand motivations.

**Table-3: Comparison of Single mothers and Partnered mothers in the domains and overall score of Quality-of-Life**

Domains of QOL	Single mother		Partnered mother		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Physical Health	22.40	5.83	25.28	4.60	3.36	0.01**
Psychological	19.39	4.85	21.19	4.49	2.36	0.02*
Social Relationship	9.71	3.16	11.08	2.43	2.98	0.01**
Environment	25.13	6.90	27.84	5.23	2.70	0.01**
WHOQOL-BREF Score	82.56	19.06	92.65	15.68	3.54	0.01**

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

The findings from Table 3 suggest that single mothers and partnered mothers differed statistically across domains and QOL scores. Single mothers scored significantly lower on physical health than partnered mothers ( $t = 3.36$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). Single mothers scored lower in psychology than partnered mothers ( $t = 2.36$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). Single mothers scored significantly lower in social relationships than partnered mothers ( $t = 2.98$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). Single mothers scored lower in the environmental domain than partnered mothers ( $t = 2.70$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). Single mothers had significantly lower WHOQOL-BREF scores than partnered mothers ( $t = 3.54$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). These findings indicate that partnered mothers report higher quality of life across multiple domains than single mothers.

**Table-4: Correlations for Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life Among Mothers**

	E.I.	P.H.	Psy	S.R.	Eni	Q.O. L
1	1	.222*	.302**	.327**	.260**	.301**
2		1	.637**	.575**	.648**	.856**
3			1	.611**	.732**	.869**
4				1	.616**	.760**
5					1	.896**

**Note:** EI= Emotional Intelligence, Overall Score, PH = Physical Health, PSY = Psychological, SR = Social Relationship, ENI = Environment, QOL=WHOQOL-BREF Overall Score

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

The results from Table 4 demonstrate a notable association between emotional intelligence and the individual dimensions of quality of life and overall quality of life. The results indicate that individuals with greater emotional intelligence are more prone to achieving favourable outcomes in different aspects of quality of life, highlighting the significance of emotional intelligence in enhancing overall well-being and satisfaction.

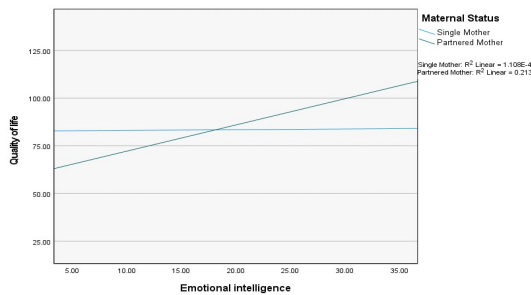
**Table-5: A moderating effect of maternal status between emotional intelligence and quality of life among mothers**

Predictors	Unstandardised coefficients	S.E.	t	95% CI		P
				LL	UL	
Model 1 ( $R^2 = .1888$ , $F = 11.325$ , $p < .01$ )						
Constant	107.01	22.09	4.84	63.34	150.68	.000
EI	-1.300	0.88	-1.46	-3.05	0.45	.145
Maternal Status	24.26	12.92	-1.88	-49.79	1.27	.062
Int_1	1.34	0.51	2.59	0.32	2.35	.010

**Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):**

	R <sup>2</sup> -chng	F	P
X*W	.0375	6.7457	.0104

**Fig.1 The Moderating Effect of Maternal Status between Emotional Intelligence and Quality of Life among Mothers**



A multiple regression analysis explored how being a single mother or a partnered mother affects the relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life among mothers. The findings show that emotional intelligence significantly impacts quality of life, implying that mothers with higher emotional intelligence have a better quality of life. Additionally, a trend suggested that partnered mothers generally experience a higher quality of life than single mothers.

Interestingly, the interaction between emotional intelligence and maternal status significantly predicted quality of life. This indicates that the effect of emotional intelligence on quality of life differs depending on whether the mother is single or partnered. Further analysis revealed that for partnered mothers, higher emotional intelligence is strongly linked to a better quality of life. However, for single mothers, emotional intelligence does not significantly influence their quality of life. These findings suggest that maternal status plays a crucial role in how emotional intelligence affects the quality of life, with partnered mothers benefiting more from higher emotional intelligence than single mothers.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the distinct experiences of single mothers and partnered mothers concerning emotional intelligence (E.I.) and quality of life (QOL), as well as the potential moderating role of maternal status in the relationship between E.I. and QOL. Firstly, concerning the components of emotional intelligence, our results indicate that while single mothers and partnered mothers do not significantly differ in their understanding of emotions, empathy, and handling relationships, partnered mothers demonstrate a higher understanding of motivations than single mothers. This finding is consistent with prior research that women's emotional intelligence level is low (Abdullah et al., 2019). The finding suggests that regardless of maternal status, women face common challenges in emotional intelligence.

Regarding quality of life, partnered mothers consistently reported higher scores across various domains than single mothers, including physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, environmental factors, and overall QOL. These findings align with previous studies that showed married

mothers generally report a higher QOL than single mothers (Kim & Kim, 2020). However, it is interesting to note that the quality of life of single mothers by choice is significantly higher than that of married mothers, even after controlling for economic and paternal involvement variables (Segal Engelchin, 2005). Findings highlight the complexity of factors influencing QOL among mothers, including personal choices and circumstances. Furthermore, our correlation analysis reveals a positive association between emotional intelligence and quality of life among mothers, consistent with prior research (Alibakhshi et al., 2018; Ebeid et al., 2021; Maharaj & Ramsaroop, 2022). This emphasises the importance of emotional intelligence in promoting overall well-being and satisfaction in several areas of life.

Importantly, our study also explores the moderating effect of maternal status on the relationship between emotional intelligence and quality of life. The results suggest that while emotional intelligence is positively associated with quality of life among partnered mothers, this relationship is insignificant among single mothers. The finding indicates that the impact of emotional intelligence on quality of life may be influenced by maternal status, with emotional intelligence being more strongly related to quality of life among partnered mothers than single mothers. In conclusion, these findings emphasise the necessity of customised interventions and support systems to tackle single mothers' distinct challenges in improving their emotional intelligence and overall quality of life. Additionally, future research could delve deeper into understanding the specific mechanisms through which emotional intelligence influences the quality of life among mothers, taking into account various contextual factors such as socioeconomic status and cultural norms.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study points out the unique experiences of single mothers and partnered mothers concerning E.I. and QOL. Partnered mothers show higher levels of understanding motivations and overall quality of life than single mothers. Furthermore, a positive relationship between E.I. and QOL for mothers identifies the significance of emotional intelligence in enhancing well-being. Importantly, maternal status moderates the relationship between E.I. Interestingly, this was more strongly linked to QOL among mothers who were partnered. These findings underline the need for tailored support interventions to enhance emotional intelligence and quality of life, particularly among single mothers, in promoting overall well-being.

## REFERENCES

- Abdullah, S. S. B., Kosnin, A., & Jiar, Y. K. (2019). Emotional Intelligence Among Women: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology*, 8(5c), 967–970. <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijeat.E1137.0585C19>
- Alibakhshi, H., Mahdizadeh, F., Siminghalam, M., & Ghorbani, R. (2018). The Effect of Emotional Intelligence on the Quality of Life of Mothers of Children with Autism. *Middle East Journal of Rehabilitation and Health*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.5812/mejrh.12468>
- Cook, K., Davis, E., Smyth, P., & McKenzie, H. (2009). The Quality of Life of Single Mothers Making the Transition from Welfare to Work. *Women & Health*, 49(6–7), 475–490. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03630240903423980>
- Coyne, G. (2003). An investigation of coping skills and quality of life among single sole supporting mothers. *International Journal of Anthropology*, 18(3), 127–138. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02447541>
- Dziak, E., Janzen, B. L., & Muhajarine, N. (2010). Inequalities in the psychological well-being of employed, single and partnered mothers: The role of psychosocial work quality and work-family conflict. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 9(1), 6. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-9276-9-6>
- Ebeid, I., Elneblawi, N., Abdmaqsoud, A., Elshatarat, R., & Elkazaz, R. (2021). The Association Between Emotional Intelligence, Quality of Life and the Burden among Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Assiut Scientific Nursing Journal*, 9(26.), 10–20. <https://doi.org/10.21608/asnj.2021.92850.1228>
- Giannakopoulos, G., Dimitrakaki, C., Pedeli, X., Kolaitis, G., Rotsika, V., Ravens-Sieberer, U., & Tountas, Y. (2009). Adolescents' wellbeing and functioning: Relationships with parents' subjective general physical and mental health. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 7(1), 100. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1477-7525-7-100>
- Kim, G. E., & Kim, E.-J. (2020). Factors affecting the quality of life of single mothers compared to married mothers. *BMC Psychiatry*, 20(1), 169. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02586-0>
- Kramer, S. (2019). *U.S. has world's highest rate of children living in single-parent households*. Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/12/12/u-s-children-more-likely-than-children-in-other-countries-to-live-with-just-one-parent/>
- Maharaj, P., & Ramsaroop, A. (2022). Emotional intelligence as a contributor



- to enhancing educators' quality of life in the COVID-19 era. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 921343. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.921343>
- Meier, A., Musick, K., Flood, S., & Dunifon, R. (2016). Mothering Experiences: How Single Parenthood and Employment Structure the Emotional Valence of Parenting. *Demography*, 53(3), 649–674. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-016-0474-x>
- Nomaguchi, K., & Milkie, M. A. (2020). Parenthood and Well Being: A Decade in Review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 198–223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12646>
- Pandit, A. (2019, June 26). Single mothers head 4.5% of all Indian households. *THE TIMES OF INDIA*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/un-report-13-million-households-in-india-where-lone-mothers-live-alone-with-children/articleshow/69949845.cms>
- Rousou, E., Kouta, C., Middleton, N., & Karanikola, M. (2013). Single mothers' self-assessment of health: A systematic exploration of the literature: Single mothers' health. *International Nursing Review*, 60(4), 425–434. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inr.12044>
- Salovey, P., & Sluyter, D. J. (Eds.). (1997). *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications* (1st ed). Basic Books. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1997-08644-000>
- Segal-Engelchin, D., & Wozner, Y. (2005). Quality of Life of Single Mothers by Choice in Israel: A Comparison to Divorced Mothers and Married Mothers. *Marriage & Family Review*, 37(4), 7–28. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J002v37n04\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1300/J002v37n04_02)
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2023, March 21). *National Single Parent Day: March 21, 2023*. The Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/stories/single-parent-day.html>

**Conflict of interest:** None

**Role of funding source:** None