

Factors Affecting the Emotional Intelligence of Children in Early Childhood in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Emotional intelligence (EQ) during early childhood forms the foundation for social, emotional, and behavioral competencies essential for lifelong development. Although previous studies have identified multiple factors influencing children's EQ, comprehensive investigations integrating parenting styles, parental expectations, family emotional environment, sociocultural context, and learning experience provision remain limited in Thailand. This study aimed to (1) examine the levels of these five influencing factors, (2) investigate the emotional intelligence levels of children in early childhood, and (3) analyze the extent to which these factors predict children's emotional intelligence.

Methodology: This quantitative study involved 360 early childhood teachers working in schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in Thailand, selected through multistage random sampling. Data were collected using a validated Likert scale questionnaire with high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81\text{--}0.91$ for influencing factors; $0.78\text{--}0.88$ for emotional intelligence). Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation coefficients, and stepwise multiple regression analysis were employed to address the research objectives.

Results: The five influencing factors—parenting styles, parental expectations, family emotional environment, sociocultural context, and learning experience provision—were all rated high (overall $\bar{x} = 3.68$, S.D. = 0.61), with learning experience provision receiving the highest score and parenting styles the lowest. Children's emotional intelligence was also rated high (overall $\bar{x} = 3.69$, S.D. = 0.71), with social skills scoring highest and self-management lowest. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between all factors and emotional intelligence ($r = .718\text{--}.778, p < .01$). Regression analysis indicated that the five predictors collectively explained 77.50% of the variance in emotional intelligence ($R^2_{adj} = .775$). The strongest predictor was the family emotional environment ($\beta = .490$), followed by parental expectations ($\beta = .247$), sociocultural context ($\beta = .127$), parenting styles ($\beta = .101$), and learning experience provision ($\beta = .063$).

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Discussions: Findings showed that all five factors—parenting styles, parental expectations, family emotional environment, sociocultural context, and learning experience provision—were at a high level, reflecting strong family–school–community support for children’s emotional development. Children demonstrated high emotional intelligence, especially in social skills, consistent with Thai cultural norms emphasizing social harmony. Regression results indicated that five factors predicted 77.80% of emotional intelligence, with family emotional environment as the strongest predictor, followed by parental expectations and sociocultural context. Although parenting styles and learning experience provision had lower predictive power, they remained significant, suggesting that emotional development stems from the combined influence of family systems, cultural context, and structured learning. Overall, the findings highlight the need for collaborative efforts across home, school, and community to foster holistic emotional growth in early childhood.

Conclusions: Children in early childhood in Thailand exhibit high emotional intelligence, supported by strong home, school, and sociocultural environments. The family emotional environment is the strongest predictor, followed by parental expectations and sociocultural context. These findings suggest that collaboration among families, educators, and communities is essential in promoting children’s emotional development. The results provide empirical evidence to guide policy development, parenting practices, and enhancement of early childhood curricula in Thailand.

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Introduction

Early childhood, defined as the period from birth to six years in the Thai educational context (Ministry of Education, 2017), is a developmental period characterized by rapid growth in physical, emotional, social, and cognitive domains. Among these, emotional intelligence (EQ) is particularly crucial, as it encompasses the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and express emotions appropriately as well as to form positive interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1995). Emotional intelligence has been widely recognized as a key competency that supports adaptation, learning, and long-term success—often exerting a stronger influence than cognitive intelligence alone (Denham, 2007). Emotional competence develops progressively from the preschool years and is related to children’s social competence, mental health, and academic success (Denham, 2007).

In the Thai context, the Ministry of Education has emphasized the importance of emotional and social development in the Early Childhood Curriculum B.E. 2560, encouraging parents and teachers to jointly foster children's emotional regulation, self-control, empathy, and positive social interaction (Ministry of Education, 2017). However, reports from the Department of Mental Health indicate that many Thai children continue to experience emotional difficulties, including aggression, anxiety, and poor social skills—problems often associated with parenting practices, family stress, and rapidly changing societal conditions (Department of Mental Health, 2023). Consistent with these concerns, Durbeej et al. (2024) found that children in Sweden who attended preschools located in socioeconomically disadvantaged contexts were more likely to experience emotional difficulties and peer relationship problems. These findings highlight that children's emotional and social development can be influenced by both family conditions and broader environmental contexts. These issues highlight the vulnerability of emotional development among young Thai children and the need for further empirical investigation.

A review of existing literature reveals several key factors that may influence the emotional intelligence of young children. Based on a synthesis of current research, five major factors have been prominently identified. The first factor is parenting style, referring to the patterns and approaches parents use in raising children, including control, discipline, warmth, and autonomy support. Parenting style influences children's emotional regulation, empathy, and social behaviors. Research has shown that authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and reasoning, is associated with better emotional regulation, whereas authoritarian or neglectful parenting is linked to emotional and behavioral problems among children aged 3–6 years (Leerkes & Bailes, 2019; Lin et al., 2023; Ranjith et al., 2025; Vintimilla et al., 2025; Wang, 2022). The second factor concerns parental expectations. Expectations that are excessively high or developmentally inappropriate may place emotional pressure on young children, thereby shaping their trajectory of emotional development (Alegre, 2011; Kim & Lim, 2014; Wang & Li, 2026; Weng, 2024). The third factor is the family emotional environment, which differs from parenting style in that it focuses on the overall emotional climate and relational experiences within the family rather than specific parenting behaviors. It includes emotional expression, communication patterns, emotional support, and the quality of relationships among family members. Children raised in families with positive communication and appropriate emotional responsiveness tend to demonstrate stronger emotional competencies, with greater abilities to understand and manage emotions effectively (Kim & Lim, 2014; Liu & Li, 2025; Morris et al., 2007; Wang & Li, 2026). The fourth factor involves sociocultural context, which shapes emotional norms, family practices, and the interaction patterns that children experience. Research across various countries demonstrates that cultural, economic, and social structures may either strengthen or weaken the influence of parenting practices on children's emotional intelligence, resulting in contextual variations in developmental outcomes (Chen, 2023; Dang, 2023; Vintimilla et al., 2025). The final factor is learning experiences designed to foster emotional development. Evidence suggests that structured experiences—such as inquiry-based science activities that allow children to explore and express feelings, or integrated school–family emotional development programs—can significantly enhance EQ by promoting emotional awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation skills (Foerch & Adelman, 2024; Siregar & Sit, 2024).

In summary, factors influencing emotional intelligence in early childhood include parenting style, parental expectations, family emotional environment, sociocultural context,

and learning experiences—all of which interact in a systemic manner. Understanding these factors holistically is essential for designing effective interventions that support the emotional development of young children in ways that align with diverse cultural contexts.

Despite the growing body of research addressing emotional intelligence, most studies have focused on isolated factors, leaving a gap in comprehensive, multidimensional investigations that integrate these five domains. This gap is particularly evident in Thailand, where cultural diversity and rapidly evolving family structures create unique developmental environments. Given that emotional intelligence serves as a foundation for school readiness, social competence, and long-term success in life, it is imperative to examine these influencing factors during the early childhood years. Such understanding will help identify systemic challenges and guide the formulation of developmentally appropriate practices for children, families, and early childhood institutions.

Therefore, this study holds significant value in advancing a holistic understanding of the factors that shape emotional intelligence in Thai preschool children. The findings are expected to serve as essential evidence for the development of policies, parenting practices, and learning experiences that support Thai children's emotional and social growth. Based on this rationale, the present research seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the current levels of the factors influencing emotional intelligence in early childhood—namely parenting style, parental expectations, family emotional environment, sociocultural context, and learning experiences?
2. What is the current level of emotional intelligence among early childhood children?
3. Which factors influence early childhood children's emotional intelligence, and which among them serve as the most significant predictors?

Research Objectives

1. To examine the levels of factors influencing early childhood emotional intelligence, including parenting styles, parental expectations, family emotional environment, socio-cultural context, and learning experience provision.
2. To investigate the level of emotional intelligence among children in early childhood.
3. To analyze the factors that influence emotional intelligence in children in early childhood.

Research Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that all five factors—parenting style, parental expectations, family emotional environment, sociocultural context, and learning experiences—significantly predict the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood.

Review of Literature

This literature review examines the concept of emotional intelligence in early childhood and synthesizes previous research on the factors influencing its development. The review serves as the theoretical foundation for the conceptual framework and the hypotheses of the present study.

Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood

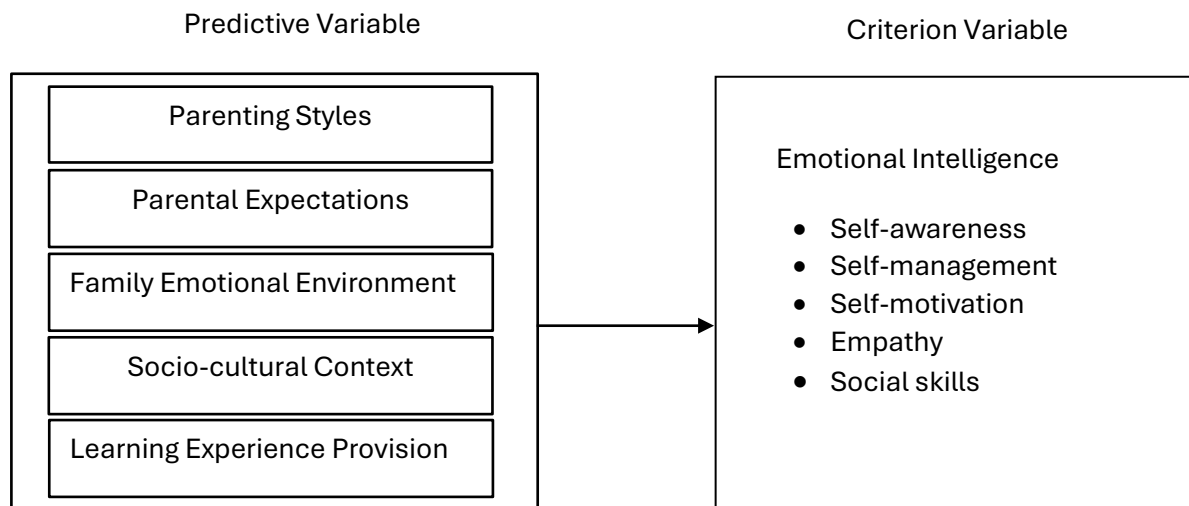
Emotional intelligence in early childhood is considered a crucial factor for the development of social, emotional, and behavioral competencies. Children with high emotional intelligence are better able to understand and manage their own emotions, as well as establish positive relationships with others. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence consists of five main components: self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. During early childhood, the development of these components helps children regulate their emotions, respond appropriately to their own and others' needs, and adapt effectively to various situations, forming a fundamental basis for learning and future success (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2004).

Factors Influencing Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood

Based on a synthesis of the relevant literature and previous empirical studies, five major factors were identified as influencing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood: (1) parenting styles, (2) parental expectations, (3) family emotional environment, (4) sociocultural context, and (5) learning experience provision. Collectively, these factors have been consistently recognized as important determinants of children's emotional development across different cultural and educational contexts. Accordingly, they were synthesized and integrated to establish the conceptual framework of the present study, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Alegre, 2011; Chen, 2023; Dang, 2023; Foerch & Adelman, 2024; Kim & Lim, 2014; Leerkes & Bailes, 2019; Lin et al., 2023; Liu & Li, 2025; Morris et al., 2007; Ranjith et al., 2025; Siregar & Sit, 2024; Vintimilla et al., 2025; Wang, 2022; Wang & Li, 2026; Weng, 2024).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study: Factors Affecting the Emotional Intelligence of Children in Early Childhood in Thailand



Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate factors influencing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood. The details are as follows:

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of early childhood teachers working in schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), Ministry of Education, Thailand. The population frame included public schools under the OBEC that offered early childhood education programs across six geographical regions of Thailand: Northern, Northeastern, Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern.

The sample consisted of 360 early childhood teachers from schools under the OBEC. The initial sample size was determined using G*Power 3.1 for multiple regression analysis, with a significance level (α) of .05, statistical power of .95, a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$) based on Cohen (1988), and five predictors. The analysis indicated that the minimum required sample size was 89 participants. However, the sample size was increased to 360 participants to enhance regional representativeness across the six geographical regions of Thailand. This larger sample size also allowed the study to better reflect the diversity of early childhood education contexts in each region. In addition, the increased sample size helped reduce the potential impact of incomplete data during the data collection process. A multi-stage random sampling technique was employed as follows:

Stage 1: Schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) were classified into six geographical regions of Thailand: Northern, Northeastern, Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern. The regions were used as strata, and stratified random sampling was employed. Subsequently, 30 schools from each region were randomly selected, resulting in a total of 180 schools. The equal allocation of schools across the six regions was intended to ensure balanced regional representation and enhance the ability to reflect diverse contexts of early childhood education in Thailand.

Stage 2: Early childhood teachers were randomly chosen from the 180 schools selected in Stage 1 using simple random sampling. Two teachers were selected from each school to achieve the required sample size specified in the sampling design while ensuring equal representation across schools. This process resulted in a total sample of 360 early childhood teachers.

Research Instruments

This study employed a questionnaire as the research instrument to investigate the factors affecting the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood in Thailand. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher and consisted of a single instrument using a 5-point Likert scale. It was divided into three sections:

Section 1

Questions about the respondents' general information, including gender and work experience.

Section 2

Questions regarding factors influencing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood, covering five factors with a total of 25 items.

Section 3

Questions assessing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood, with a total of 20 items.

The structure of the research instrument and the reliability coefficients of each variable are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Structure of the Research Instrument

Variable	Number of items	Sample item
Factors influencing emotional intelligence (overall)	25 items	-
Parenting style	5 items	Parents encourage children to make age-appropriate decisions independently.
Parental expectations	5 items	Parents set expectations that are appropriate for children's developmental levels.
Family emotional environment	5 items	Family members provide children with opportunities to express their emotions appropriately.
Socio-cultural context	5 items	Families support children's participation in social activities.
Learning experience provision	5 items	Children have opportunities to learn and understand others' feelings.
Emotional intelligence of children in early childhood	20 items	Children are able to wait or delay the gratification of their own needs.

The Quality of the Instrument was Examined as Follows

Content Validity

The questionnaire was evaluated by five experts to assess content validity using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The panel of experts consisted of four experts in early childhood education and child development and one expert in educational measurement and evaluation. The analysis revealed IOC values ranging from 0.80 to 1.00, exceeding the acceptable criterion of 0.50 (Kanjanasri, 2013), indicating that all items demonstrated acceptable content validity.

Try-Out and Reliability Testing

The validated questionnaire was piloted with a sample of 30 participants to assess the quality of individual items using Item-Total Correlation (r_i). The analysis, performed with a social

science statistical software package, indicated r_i values ranging from 0.55 to 0.93, all above the minimum criterion of 0.30 (Azwar, 2017).

The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The questionnaire on factors affecting emotional intelligence showed an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.92, with individual factors ranging from 0.81 to 0.91, indicating high reliability above the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Kanjanasri, 2013). The questionnaire on children's emotional intelligence yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, with subscale reliability ranging from 0.78 to 0.88.

Data Collection

Data were collected online using a questionnaire created in Google Forms. The QR code and link to the questionnaire were then sent to the 360 early childhood teachers. Data collection took approximately 20 days, and responses were received from all 360 participants, representing a 100% response rate.

The basic analysis of the sample revealed that the majority of participants were female teachers, accounting for 94.44%, and most had 10–20 years of teaching experience, accounting for 61.38%.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data using a statistical software package. The data analysis procedures used to address the research objectives were as follows:

Analysis of the levels of factors influencing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood—both overall and by factor—using mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (S.D.), along with interpretation based on the following criteria (Kanjanasri, 2013):

- Mean score 1.00–1.49: Very low level of emotional intelligence
- Mean score 1.50–2.49: Low level of emotional intelligence
- Mean score 2.50–3.49: Moderate level of emotional intelligence
- Mean score 3.50–4.49: High level of emotional intelligence
- Mean score 4.50–5.00: Very high level of emotional intelligence

Analysis of the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood—both overall and by dimension—was analyzed using mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (S.D.), with interpretation based on the same criteria as those used for the factors influencing emotional intelligence.

Factors influencing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood were analyzed using stepwise multiple regression analysis among teachers under the OBEC. This statistical technique was employed to identify the significant predictors among multiple influencing factors and to determine the extent to which each factor contributed to explaining variations in children's emotional intelligence. Prior to performing regression analysis, the researcher examined the relationships among variables to verify the assumptions by calculating Pearson's correlation coefficients.

Findings

The findings of this study are presented according to the research objectives as follows.

Results of the Analysis of the Level of Factors Influencing Emotional Intelligence Among Children in Early Childhood

The analysis of the levels of factors influencing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood in Thailand revealed that, overall, the factors were rated at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68, $S.D.$ = 0.61). When considering each factor individually, all factors were found to have mean scores at a high level. The factor with the highest mean score was Learning Experience Provision ($\bar{x}$ = 3.72, $S.D.$ = 0.70), followed by Parental Expectations ($\bar{x}$ = 3.69, $S.D.$ = 0.64), and Family Emotional Environment ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68, $S.D.$ = 0.65), respectively. The factor with the lowest mean score was Parenting Styles ($\bar{x}$ = 3.63, $S.D.$ = 0.66). Details are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Interpretation of Factors Influencing the Emotional Intelligence of Children in Early Childhood

Factors Influencing Emotional Intelligence	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Parenting Styles	3.63	0.66	High level
2. Parental Expectations	3.69	0.64	High level
3. Family Emotional Environment	3.68	0.65	High level
4. Socio-cultural Context	3.67	0.61	High level
5. Learning Experience Provision	3.72	0.70	High level
Overall mean	3.68	0.61	High level

Results of the Analysis of Emotional Intelligence Levels among Children in Early Childhood in Thailand

Overall, the emotional intelligence level was found to be high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.69, $S.D.$ = 0.71). When examined by specific dimensions, all aspects were at a high level. The Social Skills dimension had the highest mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 3.73, $S.D.$ = 0.74), followed by Self-Motivation ($\bar{x}$ = 3.70, $S.D.$ = 0.79), and Self-Awareness ($\bar{x}$ = 3.69, $S.D.$ = 0.69), respectively. The dimension with the lowest mean score was Self-Management ($\bar{x}$ = 3.65, $S.D.$ = 0.75). Detailed information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Interpretation of the Levels of Emotional Intelligence of Children in Early Childhood

Emotional Intelligence of children in early childhood	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Self-Awareness	3.69	0.69	High level
2. Self-Management	3.65	0.75	High level
3. Self-Motivation	3.70	0.79	High level
4. Empathy	3.68	0.69	High level
5. Social Skills	3.73	0.74	High level
Overall mean	3.69	0.71	High level

Results of the Analysis of Factors Affecting the Emotional Intelligence of Children in Early Childhood in Thailand

Results of the Analysis of Correlation Coefficients among Variables

The correlation coefficients between the five predictor variables and the dependent variable, which is the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood, were analyzed. The results showed that all five factors—parenting styles, parental expectations, family emotional environment, socio-cultural context, and learning experience provision—had significant high correlations with emotional intelligence at the 0.01 level. The correlation coefficients ranged from .718 to .778 ($p < .01$). Among these, the family emotional environment exhibited the strongest correlation with emotional intelligence ($r = .778$, $p < .01$), followed by learning experience provision ($r = .768$, $p < .01$). These findings indicate that these factors significantly influence the emotional intelligence of early childhood children in Thailand.

Furthermore, the inter-correlations among the five predictor variables themselves ranged from .630 to .805 ($p < .01$), indicating high correlations across all pairs. The highest correlation was found between socio-cultural context and parenting styles ($r = .805$, $p < .01$), followed by learning experience provision and socio-cultural context ($r = .793$, $p < .01$). Detailed information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Multiple Correlation Coefficients between Five Factors and Emotional Intelligence of Children in Early Childhood

Variables	Correlation Coefficient					
	1	2	3	4	5	EI
1. Parenting Styles	1					
2. Parental Expectations	.726**	1				
3. Family Emotional Environment	.746**	.630**	1			
4. Socio-cultural Context	.805**	.742**	.756**	1		
5. Learning Experience Provision	.679**	.715**	.783**	.793**	1	
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	.726**	.718**	.778**	.735**	.768**	1

** $p < .01$

Results of Preliminary Assumption Testing before Multiple Regression Analysis

The Normal P-P plot of the standardized residuals indicated an approximately straight-line pattern, suggesting that the residuals were approximately normally distributed. Additionally, the scatterplot of the residual variance (e) showed that the residuals were randomly dispersed above and below the zero line, with no discernible pattern. This indicates that the variance of e was constant, demonstrating homoscedasticity.

The analysis of Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) revealed that all five predictor variables of emotional intelligence—namely, 1) Parenting Styles, 2) Parental Expectations, 3) Family Emotional Environment, 4) Socio-cultural Context, and 5) Learning Experience Provision—had relatively high Tolerance values ranging from .228 to .698, and relatively low VIF values ranging from 1.43 to 7.82. According to Hair et al., (2010), Tolerance values should not fall below .10, and VIF values should not exceed 10. Based on these results, it

can be concluded that the five predictor variables did not exhibit high intercorrelations, and thus multicollinearity was not a concern.

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis

The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that the five predictor variables influencing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood in Thailand, ranked in order of importance based on their standardized beta coefficients (β), were as follows: (1) Family Emotional Environment (X_3), (2) Parental Expectations (X_2), (3) Socio-cultural Context (X_4), (4) Parenting Styles (X_1), and (5) Learning Experience Provision (X_5). The multiple correlation coefficient between the five predictor variables and emotional intelligence was .882, indicating a high level of positive correlation. The prediction error (residual error) was .366. Furthermore, the multiple regression coefficients of all predictor variables, including the constant term, were statistically significant at the .05 level. Collectively, the set of predictor variables accounted for 77.50% ($R^2_{adj} = .775$) of the variance in emotional intelligence among children in early childhood, as presented in Table 4. The prediction equations can be expressed as follows:

Unstandardized Prediction Equation

$$\hat{Y} = 0.411 + 0.120X_1 + 0.303X_2 + 0.603X_3 + 0.150X_4 + 0.057X_5$$

Standardized Prediction Equation

$$\hat{Z}_Y = 0.101Z_{X1} + 0.247Z_{X2} + 0.490Z_{X3} + 0.127Z_{X4} + 0.063Z_{X5}$$

Table 4

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (b), Standardized Coefficients (β), and Significance Test Results

Predictor	Estimate (b)	SE	t	p	Standard Estimate (β)
Intercept	.411	.123	3.35*	<.001	-
Parenting Styles (X_1)	.120	.054	2.23*	.026	.101
Parental Expectations (X_2)	.303	.075	4.02*	<.001	.247
Family Emotional Environment (X_3)	.603	.086	7.00*	<.001	.490
Socio-cultural Context (X_4)	.150	.051	2.93*	.004	.127
Learning Experience Provision (X_5)	.057	.027	2.09*	.037	.063
Constant (a) = .411 $R = .882$ $R^2 = .778$ $R^2_{adj} = .775$ $SE_{est.} = .366$ $F = 248$ * $p < .05$					

Discussions

The findings of this study are discussed below in relation to the research objectives.

The results revealed that early childhood teachers perceived all five factors to be at a high level. The factor with the highest mean score was learning experience provision, followed by parental expectations and the family emotional environment. These findings indicate that both home and school environments in Thailand play essential roles in fostering emotional intelligence among young children. The prominence of learning experience provision aligns with

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which underscores the role of social environments in shaping emotional and social competencies through interactions with adults and peers.

Additionally, the importance of the family's emotional climate is consistent with Gottman (1997), who emphasized that families with constructive emotional communication facilitate emotional coaching processes that enhance children's ability to understand and regulate their emotions. These high levels may reflect the increasing collaboration among homes, schools, and Thai society at large in supporting children's emotional development. However, although parenting styles had the lowest mean score among the five factors, it remained at a high level, which may reflect variations across families—such as parental availability, working hours, and lifestyle changes—suggesting the need for further investigation in future research.

The findings further showed that teachers rated children's overall emotional intelligence as high. Social skills had the highest mean score, followed by self-motivation and self-awareness, whereas self-management had the lowest score among all components, though still at a high level. These results are consistent with Goleman's (1995) framework, which notes that young children rapidly acquire emotional and social skills through interactions with others, particularly through play, collaboration, and social engagement in the classroom. The high rating of social skills reflects the current practices of early childhood teachers in Thailand, who emphasize group-based learning, play-oriented activities, creative media, and active learning approaches. This aligns with the Office of the Basic Education Commission's (OBEC) guidelines promoting holistic development across physical, emotional, social, and cognitive domains. Although self-management remained at a high level, its relatively lower score suggests that young children may still face challenges in managing emotions when encountering conflict or stress, as emotion regulation continues to develop during early childhood and is influenced by children's interactions with their social environments (Morris et al., 2007).

The study found that all five factors significantly predicted emotional intelligence at the .05 level. According to standardized regression weights (β), the factors were ranked in the following order of importance: family emotional environment, parental expectations, socio-cultural context, parenting styles, and learning experience provision. The model explained 77.80% of the variance in emotional intelligence, which is remarkably high. These findings confirm the initial hypothesis that at least one factor would influence emotional intelligence; however, this study demonstrates that all factors exert significant effects.

The family emotional environment emerged as the strongest predictor, reflecting the substantial influence of the family system on early development across physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains. Prior studies have consistently emphasized the critical role of parental involvement in shaping young children's developmental trajectories (Naknong & Pholpirul, 2025), consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. According to this framework, the microsystem, particularly the family, directly influences children's emotional development because it constitutes the primary context in which young children live and learn.

This finding also aligns with Denham (2007), who reported that warm and emotionally communicative families facilitate children's learning about emotional expression and emotion regulation. Similarly, Wang and Li (2026) demonstrated that family emotional closeness is positively associated with children's social-emotional competence both directly and indirectly through psychological resilience, and that family-school interactions strengthen this relationship.

Parental expectations, the second most influential factor, may reflect the idea that appropriate and supportive expectations foster children's motivation, self-management, and self-confidence—key components of emotional intelligence (Saarni, 1999). Meanwhile, sociocultural contexts and learning experiences also contributed significantly, underscoring the impact of diverse environments—schools, communities, media, and social interactions—on young children's emotional learning during their early years. Naknong and Pholphirul (2025) further emphasized that beyond parental roles, kin involvement in child-centered activities such as reading, playing, and outdoor engagement has significant positive associations with children's physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development, particularly in low- to middle-income families.

Evidence from Suwunnapate and Rattanakiat (2023) also supports this notion; their experimental study using guided physical activity interventions showed substantial improvements in children's emotional intelligence across self-awareness, awareness of others' emotions, and interpersonal skills. These results highlight the importance of home-school-community collaboration in creating an integrated support system that nurtures children's emotional development. They also reinforce the understanding that emotional intelligence emerges from interactions between internal contexts (family) and external contexts (school and society).

The final factor influencing emotional intelligence was parenting style, which can be explained by the fact that parenting represents the primary environment in which children learn to perceive, interpret, and manage emotions and develop interpersonal skills. Young children rely heavily on observation and imitation; thus, parental emotional expression, responses to challenges, and communication patterns serve as direct models shaping children's emotional abilities. Warm, responsive, and supportive parenting promotes emotional security, self-regulation, and empathy, whereas authoritarian, harsh, or neglectful parenting may limit children's opportunities to practice emotional and social skills, leading to weaker emotional intelligence (Ranjith et al., 2025). Therefore, parenting styles play a pivotal role as the foundation context through which children develop the emotional competencies necessary for healthy social functioning.

Conclusions

The analysis of the levels of factors influencing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood in Thailand revealed that, overall, the influencing factors were at a high level. When considering each factor individually, all factors were found to have high mean scores. The factor with the highest mean score was learning experience provision, followed by parental expectations and the family emotional environment. The factor with the lowest mean score was parenting styles.

Children in early childhood were found to have an overall high level of emotional intelligence. When examined by specific dimensions, all aspects were at a high level. The dimension with the highest mean score was social skills, followed by self-motivation and self-awareness. The dimension with the lowest mean score was self-management.

The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that the five predictor variables influencing the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood in Thailand, ranked by the magnitude of their standardized beta coefficients (β), were as follows: (1) Family Emotional

Environment, (2) Parental Expectations, (3) Socio-cultural Context, (4) Parenting Styles, and (5) Learning Experience Provision. The multiple correlation coefficient between the five predictor variables and emotional intelligence was .882, indicating a high positive correlation. The prediction error (Residual Error) was .366. Additionally, the multiple regression coefficients of all predictor variables, including the constant term, were statistically significant at the .05 level. Overall, the set of predictor variables accounted for 77.80% of the variance in the emotional intelligence of children in early childhood.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Applying the Research Findings

From the findings indicating that the family emotional environment had the strongest effect on the emotional intelligence of young children, it is recommended that activities or programs be developed for parents, such as training on emotional communication skills, parent-child bonding activities, and guidance on strategies for responding to children's emotions. These initiatives would help parents support children's emotional learning appropriately, thereby fostering emotional stability and enhancing children's emotional regulation abilities.

Based on the finding that parental expectations were the second most influential factor, providing counseling and training for parents on establishing balanced expectations that promote children's self-development would be beneficial. Such support can help children develop greater motivation, learn self-management, and strengthen self-confidence without experiencing excessive pressure.

Given the significant influence of sociocultural context, learning activities should reflect children's everyday experiences. These may include using folktales, traditional games, cultural media, community-based activities, and outdoor learning experiences. Such activities allow children to acquire emotional skills from real-life contexts, helping them understand their own social environment and fostering sustainable emotional development.

As the findings revealed that young children demonstrated the highest levels of social skills, the implementation of group-based activities, pretend play, collaborative projects, and active learning approaches can effectively enhance their emotional intelligence. Structuring classroom environments that encourage interaction, emotional expression, and collaborative problem-solving will help children develop communication abilities, empathy, and cooperative skills.

Although parenting styles received the lowest mean score among the factors, they still significantly influenced children's emotional intelligence. Therefore, the development of activities or parenting manuals should take family contexts into consideration, such as single-parent households, families with working parents, or low-income families. Emphasis should be placed on warm, understanding, and emotionally supportive parenting practices that allow children to express their emotions, which in turn promotes emotional security and the development of social-emotional competencies.

The findings also indicate that emotional intelligence results from the interaction between internal contexts (family) and external contexts (school and society). Establishing structured collaborative networks—such as joint early childhood development programs between teachers, parents, and community organizations, school-family partnership activities, or the provision of media and environments that promote emotional intelligence—will ensure

that children receive continuous and comprehensive support across multiple developmental dimensions.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study relied primarily on evaluations provided by early childhood teachers, which may introduce bias or limit the perspectives captured. Future research should incorporate data collected directly from parents or caregivers, as well as observational assessments of children's actual behaviors, to enhance the accuracy and comprehensiveness of emotional intelligence measurement.

The findings suggest that parenting styles may vary across different family contexts. Future studies should compare outcomes across diverse family types—such as single-parent families, extended families, families in which parents work outside the home, and families with varying income levels—in order to more clearly understand how contextual differences influence children's emotional intelligence.

Although the present study demonstrated positive associations between the examined factors and emotional intelligence, causal relationships cannot be firmly established. Future research should consider employing experimental designs, such as implementing emotional intelligence enhancement programs for young children and conducting pre–post assessments, to verify causal effects.

Given the high intercorrelations among the five factors, future research could utilize Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the directional relationships and the direct and indirect effects among variables. SEM would offer greater precision in understanding the complex structural influences on emotional intelligence compared to multiple regression analysis.

Author Contributions

KP: Conceptualization, Investigation, Validation, Project Administration, Supervision, Resources, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, and Writing – Review and Editing. MN: Methodology, Formal Analysis, Validation, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review and Editing, and Visualization.

Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (GPT-5.5, OpenAI) to assist with language editing and manuscript polishing. The tool was used solely to improve the clarity, grammar, style, and overall readability of the manuscript. The authors carefully reviewed and revised all AI-generated content as necessary and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

Ethics

This study employed an anonymous online questionnaire, and responses could not be traced to identify individual participants. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained through implied consent when participants completed and submitted the questionnaire. Participants were informed of the study purpose, confidentiality of their information, and their right to withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable. No identifying information was collected, and all data were used solely for research purposes.

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