

Relationship between first-born adolescents and positive personality traits

¹A. A. Salsabeel Bano, ²Farzana Alim

¹Research Scholar, ²Professor

Department of Home Science,

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Abstract : A lot of research work has been carried out about the role of birth order on the personality development, but the research findings are inconclusive. Moreover, in the Indian context, there has been limited research on assessing and evaluating the relationship of first-born children with their personality development. This paper examines the relationship of first-borns in terms of personality development in the context of the pioneering research carried out by Alfred Adler. For this purpose a sample of 132 children was selected comprising of young adolescents i.e., between 12-15 years of age from the schools of the Civil Lines area of Aligarh city. Data from the sample was collected by using a self-structured questionnaire containing questions regarding general background and ordinal position and a standardized questionnaire viz., Dimensional Personality Inventory (DPI) by Bhargava (2012). A bivariate relationship between positive and negative personality traits among first-borns was tested for statistical significance using paired samples t-test. From the results, a clear relationship was revealed between the first-borns and positive personality traits. Also, it was observed that the positive personality traits among first-born adolescents were not gender specific. The results from this study are novel, which provide a new insight for the Indian context, which can be extended by also including other groups such as sibship size, number of family members, and type of family.

IndexTerms - personality development, adolescence, first-born adolescents.

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the second decade of an individual's period of life and is seen as a powerful formative period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is the age between 10-19 years when there is a rapid physical, social and psychological growth as well as sexual maturity (WHO). Adolescence is regarded as a critical period during which certain key social attitudes are formed (Leman, 2004). A central task of period of adolescence is to develop a sense of oneself as an autonomous individual.

Every individual is a combination of unique traits like physical appearance, gestures, speech, ideas, emotions, habits, and skills. These characteristics function together as an integrated whole and constitute what is generally termed personality. Personality is a characteristic of a person, which makes him/her a unique person so that each person is different from others. Personality development is formed by the ongoing interaction of temperament, character, and environment.

It is believed that birth order influences many aspects of one's personality. Birth order is a child's ordinal position among the children in a family like the chronological order of births in a multiple birth. Conley (2004) defined birth order as the position of a child among his/her siblings. A child's birth order in his/her family is important when it comes to caring from parents, where the first-born (or oldest) child receives the highest care and motivation. Alfred Adler (1870-1937) is regarded as the father of birth order studies. He was the first researcher to identify the significance of birth order, where the psychological and behavioural traits for each child differ according to his/her birth order (Liebenau, 2005).

Past research has shown that the birth order also has a significant role on how a child develops in a family. It has been shown in the past that the first-borns are mostly responsible, ambitious, academically oriented and perfectionists than their later-born siblings (Sampson & Hancock, 1998). According to Adler's proposed personality characteristics of different birth positions, first-born children possess characteristic traits like leadership, responsible, high achievers, perfectionists and ambitious (Faraon, 2009). Similarly, in a family, siblings differ in terms of intelligence, personality development and achievements. Many researchers believe that the birth order affects how a child develops and several researchers have tried to study relationships between birth order and psychological outcomes including mental health, intelligence, academic achievement, and personality. In a similar way, personality development has also been found to be directly linked to the birth order of a child as proved in previous researches. For example Paulhus et. al. (1999) investigated birth order effects on personality and found first-borns as most achieving and most conscientious.

From the above, interesting insights are observed between first-born children and personality development. However, none of the abovementioned studies were performed for the Indian context. This paper presents such a study to find a relationship between first-born children and personality development among adolescents in the Indian context. For this study the following research question was investigated:

Whether the first born adolescents always possess the positive traits of personality development?

The above question can have the following variations, which were also investigated in the present study:

1. Do first-born adolescents always possess positive traits of personality development?
2. Does male first-born adolescent possess positive traits of personality development?
3. Does female first-born adolescent possess positive traits of personality development?

1.1 Objectives and Hypotheses

The study has the following objectives:

1. To find out the relationship between first-born adolescents and positive personality traits.
2. To find out the relationship between male first-born adolescents and positive personality traits.
3. To find out the relationship between female first-born adolescents and positive personality traits.

To achieve the abovementioned set of objectives, the following hypotheses were framed:

1. There is a significant relationship between first-born adolescents and positive personality traits.
2. There is a significant relationship between male first-born adolescents and positive personality traits.
3. There is a significant relationship between female first-born adolescents and positive personality traits.

The methodology presented in the following section, and the results obtained by using this methodology, demonstrate how the abovementioned objectives were met and whether the proposed hypotheses were accepted or rejected.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in schools of the Aligarh Muslim University, Civil Lines area of Aligarh city (Uttar Pradesh, India). For the present study, both the descriptive and inferential statistics were used by the investigators. Positive or negative personality traits and gender of adolescents were identified as the dependent variables, while the first-born children were considered to be the independent variable.

2.1 Sample

A sample of 132 adolescent students was collected by the purposive sampling method. All the sampled students were in the age group of early adolescents (12-15 years old), with the mean age being 13.5 years. While collecting samples for the study, care was taken that both boys and girls comprise the sample so that the effect of gender on the results could be studied, however, as can be seen from Table 1, which shows the detailed breakdown of the samples, there were more girls in the group than boys. As the sample was collected purposely, only first-born adolescents were selected for data collection. The collected sample was categorized according to gender where first-born boys were 46.2% and first-born girls were 53.8%.

Table 1. Gender-wise distribution of first-born adolescents

Ordinal position	Number of		Total
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	
First-born	61 (46.2%)	71 (53.8%)	132(100%)

2.2 Procedure

Data from the abovementioned sample was collected by using two types of questionnaires - a self-structured general background questionnaire and a standardized Dimensional Personality Inventory (DPI) developed by Bhargava (2012). Both of these questionnaires were distributed to the abovementioned respondents and were asked to respond to the questions given on them. Their responses were gathered and analysed by using statistical techniques. It is to be highlighted that the questionnaires had questions in simple language so that the targeted group of young adolescents does not face any difficulties answering them. In the self-structured questionnaire the participants were asked about their birth order among their siblings and a brief background of theirs like age, gender, religion and type of family; while the DPI questionnaire had questions related to 6 important personality dimensions: (i) Activity-Passivity; (ii) Enthusiastic-Non-Enthusiastic; (iii) Assertive-Submissive; (iv) Suspicious-Trusting, (v) Depressive-Non-Depressive and (vi) Emotional Instability - Emotional Stability. These dimensions were further merged into 2 categories viz. Personality Dimension I which included activity, enthusiastic, assertive, trusting, non-depressive and emotional stability traits like energetic, persistent, warm hearted, social, witty, straight forward, leader, adaptable, cheerful, relaxed, composed, satisfied and emotionally mature etc., whereas and Personality Dimension II which included passivity, non-enthusiastic, submissive, suspicious, depressive and emotional instability traits like dull, inactive, slow, shy, inhibited, cold, hesitant, non-achiever, hopeless, depressed, unloved, unwanted, upset, anxious, fearful, sensitive and touchy as shown in Table 2. Thus, an individual having dimensional personality I has positive personality traits while one having dimensional personality II has negative personality traits. Detailed results along with their analysis and interpretation are presented in the next section.

Table 2. Classification of personality dimension groups

Ordinal position	Dimensions of Personality	Personality Traits
Personality dimension I	Activity, Enthusiastic, Assertive, Trusting, Non-Depressive and Emotional Stability	Energetic, Persistent, Warm Hearted, Social, Witty, Straight Forward, Leader, Adaptable, Cheerful, Relaxed, Composed, Satisfied, Emotionally Mature etc.
Personality dimension II	Passivity, Non-Enthusiastic, Submissive, Suspicious, Depressive and Emotional Instability	Dull, Inactive, Slow, Shy, Inhibited, Cold, Hesitant, Non-Achiever, Hopeless, Depressed, Unloved, Unwanted, Upset, Anxious, Fearful, Sensitive, Touchy etc.

III. RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

From the above sample's data obtained via the 2 questionnaires, a bivariate relationship between birth order and personality traits was tested for statistical significance using paired samples t-test. To apply this test the following null hypotheses were framed:

- For the whole group, there exists no significant relationship between first-born adolescents and their personality traits.
- For the boys group, there exists no significant relationship between first-born adolescents and their personality traits.
- For the girls group, there exists no significant relationship between first-born adolescents and their personality traits.

3.1 Relationship between first-born adolescents and their personality development

Table 3 shows the mean and the standard deviation (SD) of the Personality Dimension I for the whole sample size (i.e., considering first-born boys and girls together). The mean of Personality Dimension I for the first-born was 40.40 with a standard deviation of 6.877, while the same for the Personality Dimension II was 30.11 with a standard deviation of 11.200. When the mean of Personality Dimension I and II was compared by paired t-test, a statistically significant difference between the mean scores was observed as shown in Table 3 (df = 131, t = 9.690, P<0.05).

Table 3. Significance of the difference between the first born adolescents and personality dimensions I and II.

Variable	Number of students	Mean score	SD	SEM	df	t-value calculated	Significance	Null hypothesis R/A
Pers. Dim. I	132	40.40	6.877	0.598	131	9.690	0.000	R
Pers. Dim. II	132	30.11	11.200	0.974				

From the above table, it is clear that there was a relationship in Personality Dimensions I and II among the first-born adolescents. Thus, the analysis of results confirmed the prediction hypothesized in this study for the present sample.

3.2 Relationship between first-born adolescent boys and their personality development

Table 4 shows the mean and the standard deviation (SD) of the Personality Dimension I and II of the boys group. The mean of Personality Dimension I for the first-born boys was 39.56 with a standard deviation of 6.769, while the same for the Personality Dimension II was 30.31 with a standard deviation of 10.993. When the mean of Personality Dimension I and II was compared by paired t-test, a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of Personality Dimension I and II among first-born adolescent boys was observed as shown in Table 4 (df = 60, t = -5.935, P < 0.05).

Table 4. Significance of the difference between the first-born adolescent boys and personality dimensions I and II.

Variable	Number of students	Mean score	SD	SEM	df	t-value calculated	Significance	Null hypothesis R/A
Pers. Dim. I	61	39.56	6.769	0.867	60	5.935	0.000	R
Pers. Dim. II	61	30.31	10.993	1.408				

A significant relationship in Personality Dimensions I and II was observed among the first-born adolescent boys. Thus analysis confirmed the prediction hypothesized in this study for the present sample.

3.3 Relationship between first-born adolescent girls and their personality development

Table 5 shows the mean and the standard deviation (SD) of the Personality Dimension I and II of the girls group. The mean of Personality Dimension I for the first-born girls was 42.42 with SD of 7.513, while the same for the Personality Dimension II were 29.94 with a SD of 11.45. When the means of two groups was compared, the paired t-test yielded a significant difference between the mean scores of Personality Dimension I and II among first-born adolescent girls as shown in Table 5 (df = 70, t = 7.973, P<0.05).

Table 5. Significance of the difference between the first-born adolescent girls and personality dimensions I and II.

Variable	Number of students	Mean score	SD	SEM	df	t-value calculated	Significance	Null hypothesis R/A
Pers. Dim. I	71	42.42	7.513	0.892	70	7.973	0.000	R
Pers. Dim. II	71	29.94	11.450	1.359				

A significant relationship in Personality Dimensions I and II was observed among the first-born adolescent girls. Thus, analysis confirmed the prediction hypothesized in this study for the present sample.

From the abovementioned results, which were based on the application of paired samples t- tests, it was concluded that the null hypotheses set out for the study were rejected. Thus following can be said:

- the personality development of first-born adolescents was dependent of the birth order.
- statistically, the results showed that there was a significant relationship between birth order and personality development among first-born adolescent boys and girls – or in other words, the birth order effects on personality development were existent among gender;
- the same was previously proved by the study of Adams (1972) that the first-borns were always described as being responsible, high achievers, ambitious, conforming and perfectionists i.e. having positive personality traits.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

A successful study was conducted to examine and evaluate a relationship between first-born adolescents on personality development by collating results of a questionnaire-based survey. The novelty of the study was that, it was conducted in an Indian city. By conducting paired samples t-test, it was concluded that birth order had a significant effect on personality development

among adolescents. From the results, a clear relationship was revealed between the first-borns and positive personality traits. Also, it was observed that the positive personality traits among first-born adolescents were not gender specific. Thus, we can say that first-born adolescents do possess positive personality traits as was proposed for the study.

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