

Personality of ‘Only Children’ and ‘Children with a Sibling’

Jaya Eknath Badi^{1*}

ABSTRACT

Nowadays in India, a social and family structure is changing rapidly. Society is shifting from its traditional joint family structure to nuclear families. In last few years, it is observed that couples prefer to keep their family smaller and many of them even prefer to have only one child. The current study tries to explore the effect of being single or having a sibling on the personality of children. Following the OCEAN model of personality, NEO-FFI was administered on 200 college students. 50 girls and 50 boys without a sibling and 50 girls and 50 boys with one sibling were selected from senior colleges in Pune city. By using ‘t’ test the mean differences were statistically computed. Results showed that there are no significant differences between only children and children with a sibling on all five factors of personality (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism).

Keywords: ‘Only children’, ‘Children with a Sibling’, Personality

Family size is shrinking all over the world, particularly in the developmental countries. In India, the size of the family has become shrunk in last two decades. Indian Human Development survey found that percentage of only-child families has increased (Basu & Desai, 2012). India has tradition of joint family. In due course of time, it changed into a nuclear family pattern and now it has turned into a micro family pattern. As per family size our slogans about family are changing. Previously slogan was ‘Do ya teen Bas’ ‘दो या तीन बस’. This slogan turned into ‘Hum Do, Hamare Do’ ‘हम दो, हमारे दो’ now it’s ‘Hum do, hamara Ek’ ‘हम दो, हमारा एक’. This change has many reasons behind it. One-Child family culture is mainly seen in urban, upper class and upper caste nuclear families, as well as in educated and working women’s families. (Basu & Desai, 2012). Women are spreading their wings; they are not only looking after household duties but are also sharing financial responsibilities of the family. So, the couple prefers only child irrespective of the gender of the child.

While growing ‘only children’ and ‘children with a sibling’ all go through the same developmental stages, but the environment in the family is different. The only child in the

¹ Assistant Professor, Saraswati Mandir Night College of Commerce and Arts, Pune, Maharashtra, India

*Responding Author

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nuclear family grows up with two adults. Parents and siblings are main factors in personality development of children. Therefore, 'only children' never ever face situations like playing together with siblings, helping each other, giving emotional support, or fighting with siblings. Sibling is the first intimate friend, protector, guide, competitor, as well as an enemy. In personality, formative years, 'only children' are deprived of many pleasant and unpleasant experiences of being with siblings. Thus, it is commonly believed that 'only children' are spoiled, selfish, and lonely, socially estranged, less cooperative, less affiliated and more maladjusted than the child having a sibling (Jiao, Ji, & Jing, 1986).

Personality is one of the core aspects in the field of psychology. Allport (1961) defined personality as 'The dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behaviour and thoughts'. There are various models of personality given by legendary personality psychologists like Freud, Adler, Allport, and Cattell. The latest famous model of personality was given by Costa and McCrae. This model is based on the lexical approach where five core dimensions of personality were derived by rigorous factor analysis.

These big five personality factors are - neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to new experience. Neuroticism is a tendency to experience unpleasant emotions frequently. Individuals who are low on this factor are calm, even-tempered and imperturbable. Some personality researchers prefer to use the term emotional stability, which is the mirror image of neuroticism. Extraversion is a tendency to seek stimulation and to enjoy the company of other people. The opposite of extraversion is introversion. Extraversion is related to warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, impulsiveness, and a need for excitement. People high on extraversion are outgoing, sociable and assertive. Agreeableness is a tendency to be compassionate toward others. It implies concern for the welfare of other people and is closely related to Adler's concept of social interest. People high in agreeableness are generally kind, trusting, warm, altruistic, and modest. Conscientiousness is a tendency to show self-discipline, to be dutiful, and to strive for achievement and competence. People high in conscientiousness usually work hard and complete the tasks they say they will perform. Highly conscientious people tend to be organized, thorough, tidy and competent. Openness to experience is a tendency to enjoy new intellectual experience and new ideas. People high in this factor are imaginative, intelligent and creative. They enjoy modern art, unusual music, thought-provoking films, plays, and so forth. They enjoy meeting different kind of people and exploring new ideas and opinions.

Jiao et al. (1986) found that 'only children' are more egocentric than children with siblings, whereas Falbo and Polit (1986) in their quantitative review indicate that 'only children' have more desirable personalities compared to children with siblings. Polit and Falbo (1987) mentioned that 'only children' are similar to children with siblings. Heidi (1999) examined the personality dimensions like Extraversion-Introversion, Neuroticism-Stability, and Psychoticism

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of children with and without siblings. These results show that there is only a marginal difference between individuals with and without siblings in Neuroticism. Chan-OB, Boonyanaruthee, Pinyopornpanic, Intaprsert, and Kuntawongse (2002) concluded that 'only children' are more ambitious, have broader interests, are more versatile, and self-confident, have clarity in thinking, intelligent and independent than first and middle-born children. Chenying, Tsunetsugu, and Francis (2005) examined the mental health of the Chain's urban and rural only-and non-only children. The results showed that 'only children' in urban areas had poor mental health. Only children in urban areas were higher in neuroticism, social depression tendencies, interpersonal dependency and factor anxiety. It means that the 'only children' were significantly more neurotic. Goel (2012) found that children with siblings were more confident than children having no sibling. There is a difference in personality of only children' and children with siblings. (Philip, 2015).

Various studies mentioned above show inconsistency in the results. They don't clearly indicate the effect of having a sibling or not having a sibling (being an only child) on the personality of the individual. Some studies show that being an only child supported personality development of a child while few studies indicate vice versa. Although this issue has related to child rearing practices all over the world enough attention has not been given to it in psychological research. The misconceptions and bias towards this issue is much more prevalent in our society than tested scientific information. Since this issue has a potential for substantial impact on the society as well as family structure within the country and also across the world this aspect needs to be studied in a proper scientific way.

The available literature is mostly from abroad (other than India). As the Indian society is culturally different from western society, there are major limitations in generalizing results of foreign researchers to Indian society. On the background of the population explosion in India, changes have occurred in the society where especially educated people are swiftly moving towards only child families; hence this issue has become important for the upcoming social changes in the country. It is essential that scientific, empirical attention be given to this issue. There is a dire need for further researches in the Indian context. To understand the effect of being raised with a sibling and without a sibling on an individuals' personality, the present study was conducted.

Objective

1. To study and compare the personality of 'only children' and 'children with a sibling'.

Hypothesis

1. There will be no significant difference in personality of 'only children' and 'children with a sibling'.

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2. There will be no significant difference in personality of 'only boys' and 'boys with a sibling'.
3. There will be no significant difference in personality of 'only girls' and 'girls with a sibling'.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The nature of the research is Ex post facto.

Sample

In the current study, the sample of total 200 students was taken. All of them were studying in various senior colleges in Pune city, Maharashtra state. The sample was selected by purposive sampling method. Age of the students ranged between 18 to 20 years. Total 100 males and 100 female participants were included. Out of them 50 boys and 50 girls had no sibling i.e. they were 'only children' and remaining sample of 100 (50 boys and 50 girls) had one sibling.

Tool

The NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), developed by Costa & McCrae (1992) was used for assessing the personality factors of both the groups. The NEO-FFI is a shortened version of NEO-PI-R inventory, it consists of 60 items. 12 items are assigned for each factor. It takes 10-15 minutes to administer. This test was revised in 2004. Total Five factors of personality are assessed - Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. Neuroticism is associated with emotional stability and the general tendency to experience negative effects such as fear, sadness embarrassment, anger, guilt. Individual who scores high on neuroticism is prone to have irrational ideas and unable to control their impulses. Extraversion is related to being assertive, active, and talkative. It includes positive emotions like excitement and optimism. High scores on Extraversion indicate that person is talkative, and social in nature.

Openness is related to aspects of intelligence, such as divergent thinking, that contribute to creativity. High scores on openness indicate that person is in active imagination, aesthetic, sensitive and intellectually curious. Person is curious about inner and outer world. Agreeableness indicates interpersonal tendencies, being sympathetic to others and eager to help them. High scores on Agreeableness indicate that individual has an active concern for others' welfare. Conscientiousness is associated with morality, punctuality, and reliability of an individual. Individuals high on Conscientiousness tend to be highly punctual, moral and reliable in behavior. The NEO-FFI can be administered individually or in groups. This is very reliable and valid tool known for its excellent psychometric properties. Numerous studies have been conducted throughout the world using this tool. The robustness of the FFM has been proven across different cultures including India.

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Procedure

In the beginning permission for data collection was procured from the principals and in charge class teachers. Then the test was administered to selected participants. A good testing environment was ensured during administration. Consent for participation in research was also procured from participating students. The researcher administered the NEO-Five Factor Inventory in the group consisting of five to ten students each in the classroom setting.

Statistical Analysis

Collected data was analyzed using SPSS (version 17). Mean, SD, *t*-values were computed. Scores are given as below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Mean, SD, t- value of personality factors of 'only children' (N=100) and 'children with a sibling' (N=100).

Personality factors	Only children	Children with a sibling	't'
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Neuroticism	23.24(8.88)	22.96(7.40)	.24
Extraversion	30.75(5.15)	30.93(4.89)	.25
Openness	27.11(5.04)	26.85(4.67)	.37
Agreeableness	28.25(6.14)	28.11(5.91)	.16
Conscientiousness	32.77(5.33)	33.42(6.57)	.76

In Table no. 1, the mean scores on personality factors of 'only children' and 'children with a sibling' are given. The results show that on neuroticism, openness and agreeableness only children scored slightly higher. On extraversion and conscientiousness, scores of children with a sibling are higher. But, the *t*-values indicating differences in personality factors of only children and children with a sibling are not statistically significant as shown in Table 1. All the differences were found to be statistically insignificant even at .05 level. Thus, the first null hypothesis i.e. there won't be significant differences in personality factors of 'only boys' and 'boys with a sibling' are supported by the data.

Table 2. Mean, SD, t-values of personality factors of only boys (N=50) and boys with a sibling (N=50).

Personality factors	Only boys	Boys with a sibling	't'
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Neuroticism	21.84 (9.20)	22.28 (6.92)	.27
Extraversion	31.18 (5.09)	31.60 (4.87)	.42
Openness	25.64 (4.38)	26.92 (4.91)	1.37
Agreeableness	27.10 (5.80)	27.30 (6.28)	.16
Conscientiousness	32.42 (5.57)	33.66 (6.46)	1.02

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In Table no. 2, the mean scores on personality factors of only boys and boys with a sibling are given. In all factors, boys with a sibling show slightly higher mean scores than only boys, but the results are not statistically significant. This analysis shows that there is no significant difference between the same gender i.e. only boys and boys with a sibling in terms of personality factors. Thus, the second null hypothesis regarding the differences in five personality factors of only boys and boys with a sibling is supported by the data.

Table 3. Mean, SD, t-values of personality factors of only girls (N=50) and girls with a sibling (N=50).

Personality factors	Only girls	Girls with a sibling	't'
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Neuroticism	26.64 (8.42)	23.64 (7.85)	.61
Extraversion	30.32 (5.23)	30.26 (4.87)	.05
Openness	28.58 (5.28)	26.78 (4.46)	1.84
Agreeableness	29.40 (6.32)	28.92 (5.46)	.40
Conscientiousness	33.12 (5.12)	33.18 (6.73)	.05

Table no 3, shows 't' values on personality factors were Neuroticism .61, Extraversion .05, Openness 1.84, Agreeableness .40, Conscientiousness .05 which are not significant even at .05 level. The 't' value obtained on Openness is 1.84 which isn't statistically significant at 0.05 level but is very close to statistically significant level ($p=0.06$). Hence, there seems to be some noticeable difference on personality factor of openness between only girl and girls with a sibling. The mean score of only girls is 28.57 as compared to 26.78 of their counterpart i.e. girls with a sibling, who shows that only girls are better in active imagination and aesthetics, are more sensitive and are more intellectually curious. But no statistically significant difference was found in any of these five factors, so it can be concluded that there is no significant in the personality of only girls and girls with a sibling. Hence, even the third hypothesis is supported by the analysis.

The present study revealed that 'only children' are more or less similar to 'children with a sibling' regarding their personality. Current results are in congruence with earlier results obtained by Polit and Falbo (1987), Poston and Falbo (1990), Chuanwen et al. (1994) along with Ha and Tam (2011) who found that 'only children' are fairly similar on personality characteristics to children with siblings.

CONCLUSION

Results of the present study show that there is no significant difference 'only children' and 'children with a sibling' in various personality factors stated by five-factor model. Results also show that there is no significant difference in personality (considering intra-gender comparison) between only boys and boys with a sibling only girls and girls with a sibling.

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