

## Comparison Between Only Child and Child with Siblings on Adjustment and Personality

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### ABSTRACT

A sibling relationship is likely to be the most lasting in our lives. It has an important role not only in the family life but also influences our adjustment and wellbeing in social circumstances. However, in the face of failing fertility and increases in divorce, the number of children growing up without other children in the household has increased as families have become smaller. The term adjustment refers to the degree to which an individual's personality functions effectively in the world of people. Personality refers to the unique and relatively stable qualities that characterize a person's responses to life situations over a period of time. The aim of the research was to compare the level of adjustment and personality in only child and child with siblings. For this purpose, a sample of 100 adolescents (50 only child and 50 sibling child) was taken. NEO-FFI and Adjustment Inventory for College students were used as tools. The results indicate that sibling child are more adjusted than only child and also there are significant differences on the dimensions of neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experiences. Since the results show that adjustment is comparatively low in only child, it indicates that being an only child is a disadvantage in itself as they are always over pampered, and given undivided love which in turn leads to some form of maladjustment in important areas of functioning. Also, since sibling child are high on neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experiences, it indicates that how having a sibling affects the overall development of an individual which have a crucial role to play in how an individual perceive and interact with others, and how open he/she is to new ideas and experiences.

**Keywords:** *Sibling Child, Only Child, Personality, Adjustment, Sibling Relationship*

Siblings play an important role in the social lives of most individuals. Most adolescents consider a sibling a best friend and report positive feelings about their sibling, and they also frequently interact with them. (White and Riedman, 1992, Spitze and Trent, 2006). Recent results in America indicate that only 3 percent of adults think the ideal number of children for a family to have is one (Carol, 2007). According to National Survey of Families and Households (1990), many couples think about having another child, so that their son or daughter will have a sibling which is a concern for childbearing. Hence, Sibling

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relationship is thought to be one of the most enduring of human relationships, but there is also an apparent concern that a lack of siblings will be harmful during childhood and throughout the life course. (Blake, 1981)

However, in the face of failing fertility and increases in divorce, the number of children growing up without other children in the household has increased as families have become smaller. According to U.S Central Bureau (2008), the expansion of families with only one child that is children who grow up without a sibling, has gradually increased over time. According to Census Bureau (2008), The percentage of women aged between 40–44 with one child born increased from 9.6 percent in 1980 to 17 percent in the 1990s and still continuing into the 2000s.

Siblings play a major role in one another's lives that replicate the companionship of parents as well as the influence and support of friends. Since siblings often grow up in the same household, they have a enormous amount of exposure to one another, just like other members of the immediate family. However, a sibling relationship tends to be more uncensored, free and symmetrical than with family members. Hence, sibling relationships often reflect the overall condition of cohesiveness within a family.

Having siblings plays an important role in the social lives of adults. Siblings account for companionship and emotional support in childhood and throughout the life course (Goetting, 1986). Several studies suggest that siblings contribute to the social support needs of adults, providing "unique forms of social support" (Bedford, 1995). Because siblings tend to be more numerous and available than other kin and also tend to outlive parents, siblings account for a large proportion of adults' social networks at any one time and throughout life (Bedford, 1995). Thus, sibling interaction accounts for a substantial amount of family activity over the life course.

Adults without siblings may make up for kin deficit by spending more time with other relatives from their family of origin, such as parents. More recent research found that parents reported more visits with an only child than with a child who has siblings; similar patterns prevail when respondents report about visiting their own parents (Logan & Spitze, 1996).

An only child is a person having no siblings, either biological or adopted. It is generally used for those individuals who don't have siblings. An only child, however, may have half-siblings or stepsiblings who come along considerably late but still they are considered an only child. Children who have much older or younger siblings that is generally with a gap of ten or more years might have a similar family environment to only children. Families may have an only child for an array of reasons that include personal choice, family planning, financial problems, emotional issues or physical health issues, longing to travel, stress in the family, educational advantages, late marriage, stability, focus on work, time constraint, advanced age, infertility, divorce, and death of a sibling or parent. Whereas a sibling child is one of two or more individuals having one or both parents in common. In most societies throughout the world, siblings who often grow up together helps in facilitating the development of strong emotional bonds between the children. The emotional bond between siblings is often complicated and is influenced by factors such as parental treatment, birth order, personality, and personal experiences outside the family. There are cases where siblings grow up in separate homes, in different environments. Therefore, both nature and nurture have an effect on development.

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The term Adjustment refers to the degree to which an individual's personality functions effectively in the world of people. The concept of adjustment was originally used in Darwin's (1859) "Theory of Evolution" and he termed it as adaption. Darwin was of the view that those species would survive who would become accustomed to the hazards (Survival of the Fittest). Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his/her characteristics, behavior and thought" (Allport, 1961). It can also be stated that it refers to "unique and relatively stable qualities that characterise an individual's behaviour across different situations over a period of time".

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Sample*

The aim of the present study was to compare the level of adjustment and personality in only child and child with siblings. The study was conducted in universities and homes of Delhi/NCR where 100 adolescents (50 sibling child and 50 only child) were assessed using AICS (Adjustment Inventory for College Students) and NEO-FFI (Neo- Five- Factor Inventory). The participants who were assessed were between the age group of 18-25years. Hypotheses were formulated according to the objectives of the study and the obtained findings were analysed and interpreted with the help of statistical tools including: Mean, Standard Deviation and T-test.

H1: There will be significant differences in the level of adjustment in only child and child with siblings.

H2: There will be significant differences in the personality characteristics in only child and child with siblings.

#### *Tools*

**Adjustment Inventory for College Students (AICS):** Adjustment Inventory for College Students (AICS) is produced by Dr. A.K.P. Sinha and Dr. R.P. Singh. It measures adjustment in five areas namely –

Home (16 items),

Health (15 items),

Social (19 items),

Emotional (31 items)

(v) Educational (21 items). It contains 102 items in total.

It has test-retest reliability of 0.93 and Item analysis validity coefficients were determined for each item by biserial correlation technique.

#### *Neo- Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI)*

NEO-Five Factor Inventory was produced by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae in 1992. The NEO-FFI is an abbreviated rendition of NEO-PI-R Inventory. It comprises of 60 items. It examines a person's Big five traits which include Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experiences, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. There are 12 items in each dimension scored from 4, 3,2,1,0 and in some items scored reversely. It has good test-retest reliability 0.81 and good convergent and divergent validity.

#### *Procedure*

For the purpose of this study, the sample was randomly selected from various arenas i.e. through the online medium, different colleges. At first, consent was taken from the sample and was informed about the rights as a participant. After which two standardized psychometric tools were selected for data collection; Adjustment Inventory for College

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Students and NEO- Five Factor Inventory. Analysis and Interpretation of the obtained result was done through the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS).

### RESULTS

**TABLE 1: Group Statistics of Adjustment among Only Child and Child with Sibling.**

Dimension	Type	N	Mean	SD
Adjustment	Only child	50	37.02	12.198
	Child with siblings	50	24.58	8.783

Table 1 indicates mean and standard deviation of only child and child with siblings on AICS. For only child, the mean lies at 37.02 and standard deviation of 12.198 and for child with siblings the mean lies at 24.58 and standard deviation of 8.783. (Also represented in figure 1)

**Table 2: Independent sample test for Adjustment inventory for College Students. (AICS)**

Dimensions	Type of child	DF	Mean difference	t-value	p-value (Significance 2 tailed)
Adjustment	Only child	98	12.440	5.852	.000**
	Child with siblings	98	12.440		

*\*\*p is significant at  $p < 0.001$  (2 tailed)*

Table 2 indicates the independent sample test for adjustment of only child and child with siblings. The t was found to be 5.852 with a df of 98. The sig (2 tailed) was calculated at .000 which was found out to be significant at 0.01 level highlighting significant differences on the dimension of AICS between only child and child with siblings.

**Table 3: Group statistics of Personality among Only child and Child with siblings**

Dimensions	Type of child	N	Mean	SD
Neuroticism	Only child	50	19.84	7.347
	Child with siblings	50	22.96	5.123
Extraversion	Only child	50	23.2	5.299
	Child with siblings	50	31.92	4.398
Openness to experiences	Only child	50	25.12	7.668
	Child with siblings	50	28.06	5.254
Agreeableness	Only child	50	28.38	6.128
	Child with siblings	50	27.28	5.831
Conscientiousness	Only child	50	32	5.477
	Child with siblings	50	30.66	5.457

Table 3 indicates the mean scores and standard deviation of only child and sibling child on NEO-FFI (five dimensions). For only child, the mean scores on five dimensions are 19.84,

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23.20, 25.12, 28.38 and 32 and standard deviation is 7.347, 5.299, 7.688, 6.128, 5.477. For child with siblings, the mean scores on five dimensions are 22.96, 31.92, 28.06, 27.28, 30.66 and standard deviation is 5.123, 4.398, 5.254, 5.831, 5.457. (Represented in figure 2)

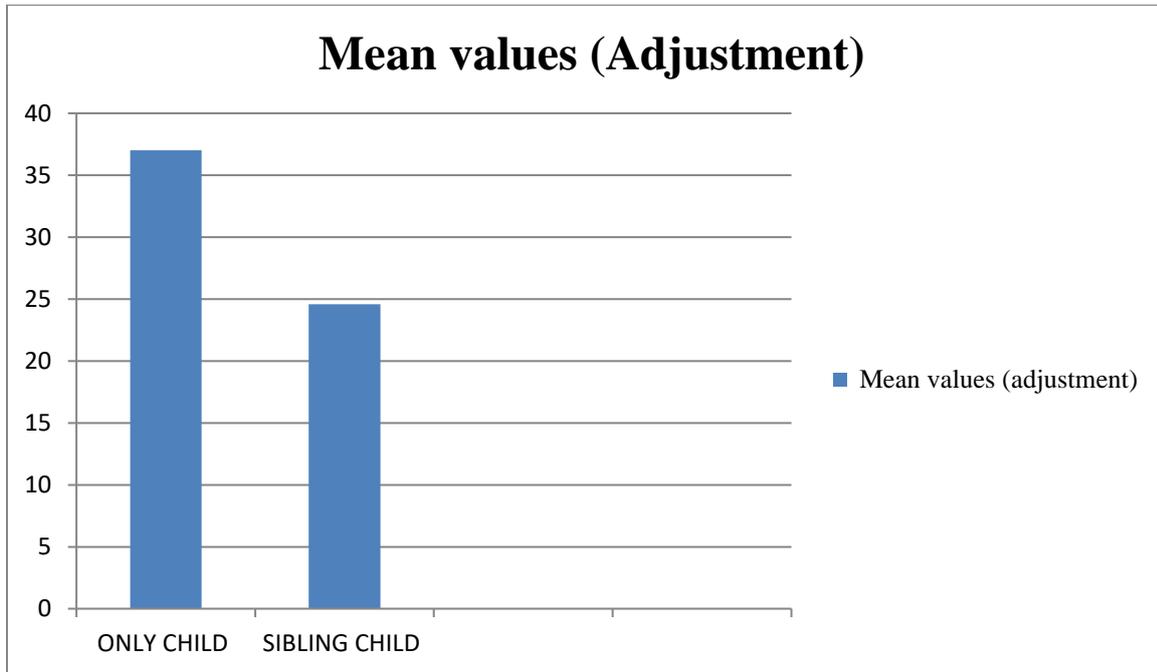
**Table 4: Independent sample test for NEO-FFI.**

Dimensions	Type	DF	Mean difference	t value	p value
Neuroticism	Only child	98	7.347	-2.463	.016*
	Child with siblings		5.123		
Extraversion	Only child	98	5.299	-8.954	.000**
	Child with Sibling		4.398		
Openness to experiences	Only child	98	7.688	-2.236	.028*
	Child with sibling		5.254		
Agreeableness	Only child	98	6.128	.920	.360
	Child with sibling		5.831		
Conscientiousness	Only child	98	5.477	1.225	.223
	Child with sibling		5.457		

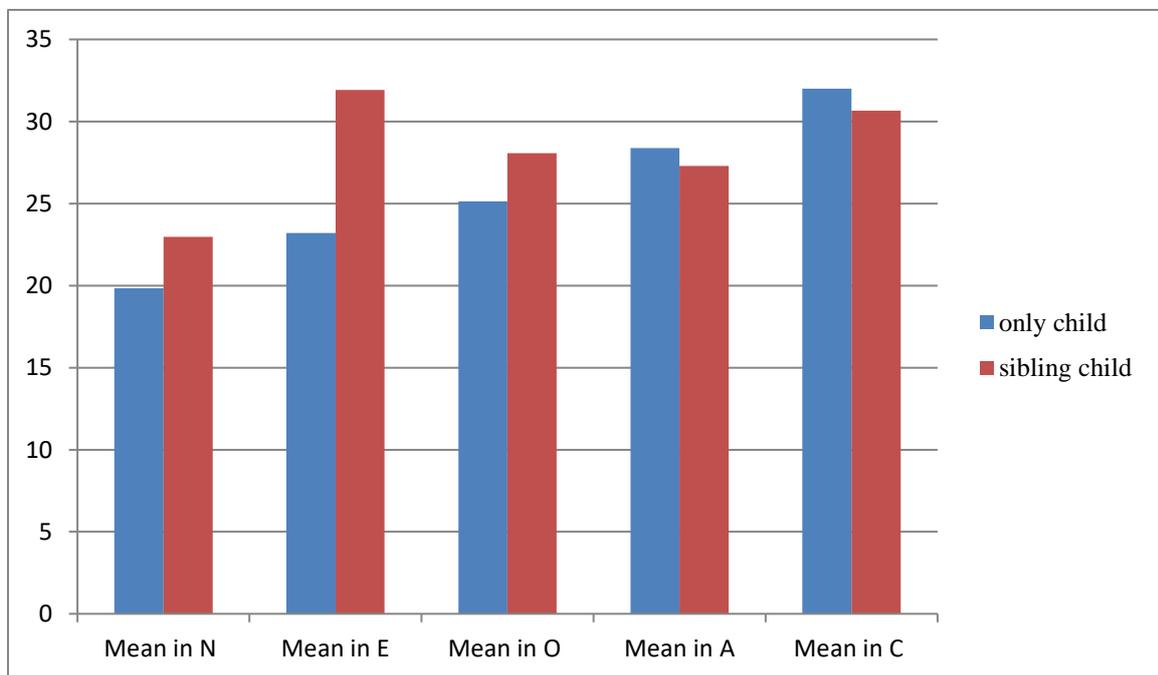
\*\*p is significant at  $p < 0.001$  (2 tailed) \*p is significant at  $p < 0.05$  (2 tailed)

Table 4 indicates the independent sample test for NEO-FFI of only child and child with siblings. On the dimension of neuroticism, the t was found to be -2.463 with a df of 98. The sig (2 tailed) was calculated at .016 which was found out to be significant at 0.05 level highlighting significant differences on the dimension of Neuroticism between only child and child with siblings. On the dimension of extraversion, the t was found to be -8.954 with a df of 98. The sig(2tailed) was calculated at .000 level which was found to be significant at 0.01 level highlighting significant differences on the dimension of extraversion. On the dimension of openness to experiences, the t was found to be -8.954 with a df of 98. The sig(2tailed) was calculated at .028 level which was found to be significant at 0.01 level highlighting significant differences on the dimension of openness to experiences. On the dimension of agreeableness, the t was found to be -8.954 with a df of 98. The sig(2tailed) was calculated at .360 which was found to be non-significant at 0.05 level highlighting no significant differences on the dimension of agreeableness. On the dimension of conscientiousness, the t was found to be -8.954 with a df of 98. The sig(2tailed) was calculated at .223 which was found to be non-significant at 0.05 level highlighting no significant differences on the dimension of conscientiousness.

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*Figure 1: Graph shows Mean values of Only Child and Child with Sibling on Adjustment.*



*Figure 2: Graph shows mean scores of Only child and Sibling child on five dimensions of personality respectively i.e. Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experiences, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness respectively*

## DISCUSSION

A sibling relationship is likely to be the most lasting in our lives. The impact they have on our young and adult lives is huge – they shape our personality and our adjustment. Sibling Relationships play an important role not only in the family life, but by influencing our adjustment and wellbeing in social circumstances.

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Adjustment is a continuous process during the life span. In young adults stress is a significant factor which adversely affects the physical health and mental health thus leading to maladjustment. However, Well adjustment in one's life leads to higher quality of well-being which is defined as a positive state of human being. The term adjustment is mostly used in relation to social or psychological adaptation. In this case, its positive aspect is mostly considered, namely good adjustment, when a person engages in a rich process and continues to realize and develop his potential abilities, responds to environment and in turn changes it and acts in an effective manner along with mental health (Saatchi, 2008). Personality refers to distinctive and relatively enduring ways of thinking, feeling, acting that characterize a person's response to life situations.

The aim of the present study was to compare the level of adjustment and personality in only child and Child with siblings. For this purpose, a sample of 100 was taken in which 50 were only child and 50 were sibling child. Tools used for the research were NEO-Five factor inventory by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae and AICS (Adjustment Inventory for College Students) by Sinha and Singh. The data analysis was done using t-test.

The findings of this research support the hypothesis of the current study. The first hypothesis of the study was that there will be significant differences in the level of adjustment among only child and child with siblings. The results support the hypothesis so therefore our hypothesis of the study is accepted. From table 2, it can be concluded that there is significant differences in adjustment of only child and child with siblings. Since the adjustment of only child is less it shows that the only child is not well-adjusted in the areas of home, health, emotional, social and educational dimensions. The probable reason might be that since birth the only child has no siblings with whom to connect. Since they are alone, the only child gets the whole emotional, social, material benefits from their parents, hence they do not know develop the sharing attitude. Therefore, they have problems in adjusting in various areas of life like school, workplace, or college. According to the first president of the American psychological association Stanley Hall, He referred only child as a 'Disease in itself' as he feels that an only child is socially maladjusted, narcissistic and over pampered. On the other hand, siblings know how to share their parents, their belongings, which is in turn a crucial life lesson in their life. The more you are closer to your sibling, the better is your relationship in older adulthood. It was also found that adjustment in siblings is greater as indicated in a study done by Widmer and Weiss (2010) where they found that positive image of the older sibling had correlation with positive developmental adjustment in younger sibling.

The second hypothesis of the study states that there will be a significant difference in personality characteristics among only child and child with siblings. The results support the hypothesis of the current study on 3 dimensions that is neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experiences.

The first dimension is Neuroticism i.e., a person who is high on this dimension are likely to be moody, and encounter such feelings as anxiety, worry and anger. They have a tendency to experience negative emotions very easily. From table 4, the results show that there is a significant difference in the dimension of neuroticism among only child and child with siblings.

The second dimension relates to the aspect of being social, talkative, assertive and excitable. This is called Extraversion. People high on extraversion tend to look for social stimulation

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and opportunities to engage with others. They enjoy the company of other people and are full of positive emotions like excitement and optimism. From table 4, it is clearly visible that child with siblings are high on extraversion as they always have someone in their immediate environment to talk to or engage in some conversation. Also, only child lack siblings, so they lose the immediate accessibility of others near them with whom to interact socially. According to Koontz, (1989) only child are less on extraversion, as they feel that they do not need to be dependent on others, and they conditioned to be on their own. Study done by Trent and Spitze confirms the findings of the present research which suggests that there are differences in adult sociability behaviours between those who grew up with and without siblings.

The third dimension is Openness to experiences i.e., a person who seeks out new, unconventional, and unfamiliar experiences. They travel to new places, destination and embrace different cultures and practises. Such people try out new activities that they haven't experienced earlier. From table 4, it is clearly visible that there is a significant difference and sibling child are high on this dimension. One probable reason could be as they always have someone to share their views with and at the same time get their point of view. They become more liberal in their thoughts since they get their sibling perspective and also, they have more motivation to engage in different cultural practises.

The fourth dimension is Agreeableness i.e., a person who is warm, friendly, and kind to others. It involves behavioural characteristics like being more sympathetic, cooperative. It is similar to pro-social behaviour. From table 4, results conclude that there are no significant differences between the two groups. Badi (2017) support the results as she concluded in her study that there are no significant differences in only children and child with siblings on various personality traits stated by five- factor model.

The fifth dimension is Conscientiousness i.e., it reflects a person's degree to be dependable, hardworking, committed towards their goals and are responsible. People high on conscientiousness tend to do a task very carefully and they are usually efficient and organised. From table 4, it is clearly visible that there are no significant differences between the two groups. It might be because in today's competitive world, everyone is motivated to follow their goals and be organised and committed towards whatever goal they are pursuing. From table 4, it can be seen that there is marginal difference between the two groups and single child have high scores on conscientiousness, this is also in line with Study done by Pinyopornpanic, Intaprsert, and Kuntawongse (2002) demonstrated that only children tend to more goal-oriented, independent of their decisions, broad-minded are more ambitious, and are high on self-confidence, as compared to first and middle-born children

## CONCLUSION

It was hypothesized that there will be a significant difference in the level of adjustment of only child and child with siblings and there will be significant differences in personality characteristics of only child and child with siblings and the results were found to be in line with the hypothesis. After extensive review of existing body of work concerning on differences in adjustment and personality characteristics, the findings of the research indicates that there are differences in the level of adjustment and only child are having more adjustment problems than child with siblings. It can be concluded that adjustment in siblings with children is greater as having sibling provides an opportunity for children and teens to resolve conflict and take the viewpoint of another person, both of which promotes feelings of caring and concern for other people and overall promotes adjustment. Also, there are

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differences in the personality characteristics of only child and child with siblings on Neuroticism, Extraversion and Openness to experiences respectively.

Despite the accuracy and carefulness, there exist certain limitations in the present study. Firstly, the sample size was limited. The study would have given a more a valid and reliable result if the data was collected from larger sample. Gender differences were not seen in this research. Correlation as a statistical analysis tool hasn't been used. The study has not been able to modify or control any other extraneous variables.

### **Implications**

The results of the study indicate that adjustment is comparatively low in only child, it indicates that being an only child is a disadvantage in itself as they are always over pampered, and given undivided love which turn leads to some of maladjustment in important areas of functioning. Also, since sibling child are high on neuroticism, extraversion and openness to experiences, it indicates that how having a sibling affects the overall development of an individual which have a crucial role to play in how an individual perceive and interact with others, and how open he/she is to new ideas.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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