

Birth Order Effects on Emotional Maturity and Psychological Hardiness among Adolescents

Nicole James^{1*}, Dr. Neelima Ranjith²

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a tough period in which the individual goes through a number of changes in all facets of development which ultimately force the individual to cope on multiple levels. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) adolescents are those who fall in the age range of 10-19 years. A healthy transition from childhood to adolescence will depend on how emotionally mature and hardy the individual is. Also, the birth order in which a child is born into the family destines him/her to certain life experiences which can ultimately influence their personality. **Objective:** The purpose of the present study was to compare the birth order effects on emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among adolescents. **Method: (a) Participants:** Data was collected from a total of 263 participants from various districts of Kerala. **(b) Materials:** The measures used are the Emotional Maturity Scale (Yashvir Singh and Mahesh Bhargava, 2012) and the Singh's Psychological Hardiness Scale (Arun Kumar Singh, 2008). **(c) Analysis:** Analysis was done using Kruskal-Wallis H test and Spearman rank order correlation coefficient. **(d) Results:** There was no significant difference in emotional maturity and psychological hardiness on the basis of birth order. Correlation was seen between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness based on birth order.

Keywords: *Emotional Maturity, Psychological Hardiness, Birth Order, Adolescents*

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) adolescents are those who fall in the age range of 10-19 years. During adolescence individuals experiences a number of drastic biological, cognitive and emotional changes. This requires the adolescent to cope on multiple levels at the same time. Effective adjustment requires emotional maturity and hardiness at optimum levels.

According to Smitson (1974), "Emotional maturity is a process in which a person continuously strives for a greater sense of emotional health, both intra-physically and intra-personally." An emotionally mature person can tolerate uncertainty and can maintain a balance in both play and responsible activities. An emotionally mature individual is one who is able to keep a lid on his feelings. They can maintain a moderation in the expression of emotion as well as behaviour. They are sensitive to the environment and the people they interact with. Emotionally mature individuals have the ability to bear tension and also have

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, LISSAH College, Kozhikode

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Union Christian College, Aluva

*Corresponding Author

Received: February 20, 2023; Revision Received: August 22, 2023; Accepted: August 24, 2023

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frustration tolerance. And once individuals achieve emotional maturity, they do not blow up emotionally when others are present, but wait for a convenient time and place to let off emotional steam in a socially acceptable manner (Hurlock E., 1981). The major components of emotional maturity are emotional stability, emotional progression, social adjustment, personality integration and independence.

Emotional maturity thus helps a person to manage one's own and others emotion in an effective manner. Emotional maturity can be considered as a state of having emotional control in social situations. It is a major determinant of one's personality, behaviour and attitudes. It helps with enhancing the relationship with others and also helps to enhance the self-worth. An emotionally mature individual seeks for a better sense of emotional well-being. According to Jerkily “emotional maturity refers to the degree to which the person has realized one's potential for richness of living and has developed his capacity to enjoy things, to relate himself to others, to love and to laugh, to feel sorrow at the time of grief, to be frightened, without wearing any mask”.

Hardiness is dealing with stressful conditions with commitment (vs. alienation), control (vs. powerlessness) and challenge (vs. threat). Psychological hardiness is a personality trait that indicates a person's ability to deal with and at the same time react to turbulent situations with coping techniques that can turn potentially ill-fated incidents into learning opportunities. Hardy attitudes also motivate hardy coping, hardy social support, and hardy health practices. If a person actively reflects upon each situation, hardy attitudes can deepen, leading to similar hardy reactions in new situations.

Birth order is the individuals rank in their sibling constellation. The order in which an individual born into a family has a great impact on his entire life. Birth order leaves a persisting impression on the individual's lifestyle. According to Adler a child's chronological order in which they are born plays a major role in the formation of their personality.

Adler (1964) classified birth orders into 4 categories, the first born, middle born, last born or only born or twins.

Adler found that first-borns are often oriented toward the past, locked in nostalgia, pessimistic about the future, mature intellectually to a higher degree than the younger children and are more orderly and authoritative. Pant et. al., (2016) concluded that first-borns are significantly more socially mature, socially adjusted and emotionally stable than later-borns. All of the components of emotional and social maturity showed significant positive correlation.

Second-borns attempt to get to the level of their older siblings which ultimately stimulate motor and language development. They are optimistic, competitive and ambitious.

Developments occur more speedily in most of the youngest children as they have a drive to do better than their older siblings. They are at most times high achievers. But if they are pampered excessively, unfamiliar to all the day to day struggles and being used to excessive caring, they may have to face lot of adjustment issues when they reach adulthood.

Only children at most times mature earlier and exhibit adult behaviors and attitudes. Only children have learned neither to share nor to compete. They feel overly discouraged when

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they do not get the desired acknowledgement and consideration. Chandola et.al., (2016) found that only children are socially rigid and their confidence level tend to be low.

Adler's theory is not absolute. What Adler was suggesting was the likelihood that certain styles of life will develop as a function of order of birth combined with one's early social interactions. Thus, the personality of individual is believed to be differently shaped because of the birth order. Therefore, the emotional maturity as well as the hardiness of an individual may also differ based on the different birth orders.

The existing research findings indicate that adolescents do differ in emotional maturity and psychological hardiness depending on their gender. Adolescent studies have shown that birth order is significantly correlated to their adjustments and coping. Joy, et. al. (2018) concluded in their research that there is a significant difference in emotional maturity among adolescents based on birth order. Patron (2017) in a study to find the personality correlates of birth weight and family birth order concluded that birth order can influence hardiness factors. Thawani (2015) concluded that gender difference was seen in personality and emotional maturity factors among different birth orders.

There are very few studies that have been conducted to find birth order effects on emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among adolescents. The numbers are even smaller when India and more specifically Kerala is taken. Hence the study 'Birth Order Effects on Emotional Maturity and Psychological Hardiness Among Adolescents' is relevant.

Objectives

- 1) To assess the emotional maturity and psychological hardiness of adolescents based on birth order.
- 2) To assess the relationship between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness.

Hypotheses

- 1) There will be no significant difference among different birth order groups in emotional maturity.
- 2) There will be no significant difference among different birth order groups in psychological hardiness.
- 3) There will be no significant relationship between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness based on birth order, namely,
 - a) Singletons
 - b) First Born
 - c) Second Born
 - d) Third Born

METHOD

Participants

The present study consists of 263 participants. In this research participant age group ranges from 15-19 years. The samples were collected from different districts of Kerala. In this research non probability sampling method of convenience sampling method was used.

Inclusion Criteria

- Adolescents between the age group of 15-19 years.
- Adolescents pursuing higher secondary education and under graduation.

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- Adolescents from Kerala.

Exclusion Criteria

- Adolescents who have four or more siblings.
- Adolescents who are differently abled.
- Adolescents who are drop outs.

Measures

The following tools were used to get necessary data regarding the different variables in the study. Brief description of the tools used for the data collection is given below.

Emotional Maturity Scale (Yashvir Singh and Mahesh Bhargava, 2012)

Emotional Maturity Scale by Singh and Bhargava was used. It seeks information about the following five factors of emotional maturity: Emotional Stability, Emotional Progression, Social Adjustment, Personality Integration and Independence. It is a self-reporting five-point scale which consists of 48 items.

Items of the scale are in question form demanding information for each in either of the five options which are Very Much (5), Much (4), Undecided (3), Probably (2) and Never (1). The items are so stated that if the answers are very much a score of 5 is given, for much 4, for undecided 3, for probably 2, and for never a score of 1 is given. The total score of the scale is an indicative of emotional maturity. Greater score on the scale is expressed in terms of emotional immaturity. Score range of 52- 80 indicates extreme emotional maturity, 81-88 indicate moderate emotional maturity, 89-106 indicate emotional immaturity and 107-240 indicate extreme emotional immaturity.

Reliability: The reliability of the scale was determined by (i) Test-retest Method, and (ii) Internal Consistency.

(i). Test-retest Reliability- the scale was measured for its test-retest reliability by administering upon a group of collegiate students (N=150) including male and female students aged 20-24 years. The time interval between the two testing was that of six months. The product moment r between the two testing was .75.

(ii). Internal Consistency- the internal consistency of the scale was checked by calculating the coefficient of correlations between total scores and scores on each of the five areas.

Validity: The scale was validated against external criteria, i.e., the 'emotional' area of the adjustment inventory for college students by Sinha and Singh. The inventory has emotional area measuring 'emotional' adjustment of college students. The number of items of this area is twenty-one. Product moment correlation obtained between total scores on all twenty-one 'emotional' items and total scores on EMS was (N+46).

Psychological Hardiness Scale (Arun Kumar Singh, 2008)

The Psychological Hardiness Scale developed by Singh was used. Scale It measures three components, namely commitment, control and challenge. It consists of 30 items.

Every item of SPHS has been provided five response categories namely "strongly agree", "agree", "neutral", "disagree", and "strongly disagree". All items except item no 17, 21, 25, 28 would be given a score of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for the above five categories of responses respectively. Since these items (17, 21, 25, and 28) are negative, they would be given a score

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of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for the above five categories of responses respectively. Subsequently the scores earned by the test on each item are added to yield a total score. Higher the score higher is the magnitude of psychological hardiness.

Reliability: Psychological Hardiness Scale has both sufficient degree of test retest reliability and internal consistency reliability. For calculating the test retest reliability, the scale was administered twice, with a gap of 14 days on a sample of 200 subjects. The test retest reliability was found to be 0.862 which was significant at 0.01 level, likewise, the internal consistency reliability as indicated by the coefficient of alpha was found to be 0.792 which was significant. Thus, Psychological Hardiness Scale possessed a sufficient degree of reliability.

Validity: Psychological Hardiness Scale has also a sufficient degree of content validity. A group of experts (N = 12) provides a high level of consensus regarding suitability of items in terms of being important indices of three components of psychological hardiness, i.e. commitment, control and challenge. The overall coefficient of concordance of the rankings of 12 experts was 0.74, which was significant and it provided evidence for the content validity of the whole scale.

Procedure

Data was collected using Google Forms.

Statistical Analysis

The following were the statistical techniques used for the analysis of data. SPSS version 21 was used for data analysis.

1. Mean

Mean is the arithmetic average of a group of numbers. It is computed by the dividing the sum of all scores by the numbers of scores in the group.

2. Kruskal-Wallis H test

The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a rank-based nonparametric test that can be used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two or more groups of an independent variable on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable.

3. Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient

The Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient (Spearman's correlation, for short) is a nonparametric measure of the strength and direction of association that exists between two variables measured on at least an ordinal scale. It is denoted by the symbol r_s (or the Greek letter ρ , pronounced rho). The test is used for either ordinal variables or for continuous data that has failed the assumptions necessary for conducting the Pearson's product-moment correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Comparison among groups based on birth order in emotional maturity

Variable	Birth Order	N	Mean	Kruskal Wallis H Test	Significance
Emotional	Singletons	64	125.01		
Maturity	First Born	65	146.47	4.379	.223
	Second Born	71	135.02		
	Third Born	63	120.77		

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Table 1 shows the mean value of emotional maturity in singleton adolescent which is 125.01, first born adolescents which is 146.47, second born adolescents which is 135.02 and third born adolescents which is 120.77. The score in Kruskal-Wallis H test is 4.379 and the p value is .223 (>0.05). The obtained score is not found to be significant. Hence the null hypothesis there will be no significant difference among different birth order groups in emotional maturity is accepted. The findings are contradictory to the results of the study Impact of Birth Order conducted by Joy and Mathew (2019) which reported that there is a significant difference in emotional maturity among single born, first-born and last-born adolescents. Similarly, contradictory results were obtained in the study Understanding Social and Emotional Maturity of Adolescents: Analysing Impact of Birth Order by Pant and Singh (2016). The study concluded that the emotional maturity of adolescents is influenced by their ordinal position in the family. The study also reported that first born were significantly better on emotional stability and social adjustment.

One of the reasons for not seeing significant difference in emotional maturity on the basis of birth order can be the smaller size of the families and the reduced number of children. All children in the family are given equal attention and importance. These days responsibilities are also equally shared among all the siblings without any discrimination. Hence there is no extra burden on a particular sibling usually the eldest to take care of all others. Since the upbringing and the facilities made available to all children are the same, the levels of emotional maturity do not vary between the different birth order groups.

As per the norms, adolescents belonging to all the birth order groups, that is, the singletons, first born, second born and third born fall in the category of extreme emotional immaturity. The extreme emotional immaturity can be the result of their immature brain which is still developing. Covid and the associated lifestyle changes have lead to extreme stress and anxiety in the adolescents. Their emotional state is in chaos which might have ultimately resulted in the extreme emotional immaturity.

Table 2. Comparison among groups based on birth order in psychological hardiness

Variable	Birth Order	N	Mean	Kruskal Wallis H Test	Significance
Psychological Hardiness	Singletons	64	142.80	2.782	.426
	First Born	65	131.37		
	Second Born	71	121.15		
	Third Born	63	133.90		

Table 2 shows the mean value of psychological hardiness in singleton adolescents which is 142.80, first born adolescents which is 131.37, second born adolescents is 121.15 and third born adolescents which is 133.90. The score in Kruskal-Wallis H test is 2.782 and the p value is .426 (>0.05). The obtained score is not found to be significant. Hence the null hypothesis there will be no significant difference among different birth order groups in psychological hardiness is accepted. The findings are contradictory to the results of the study Personality correlates of Birth Weight and Family birth Order by Patron (2016) which reported that hardiness factors can be influenced by birth order.

From the results it is evident that there is there is no significant relation among the different birth order groups in psychological hardiness. Differential treatment of the siblings and provision of other opportunities in an unequal manner results in the development of psychological hardiness at different levels. Hence the reduced discrimination and the

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equality ensured by the parents in all aspects of their upbringing could be the reason the insignificant relation among the different birth order groups in psychological hardiness.

As per the norms, all the birth order groups, that is, the singletons, first born, second born and third born fall in the category of high level of psychological hardiness. The reason for the high level of psychological hardiness can be a high level of commitment of the adolescents to their values, sense of identity, family life, etc. They might also possess high levels of challenge which is a passion for life and growth. The adolescents might also possess the quality of control which is their sense of autonomy and the belief that they can influence their own destiny.

Table 3 Relationship between Emotional Maturity and Psychological Hardiness based on birth order

	Emotional Maturity				
	Singletons	First born	Second born	Third born	
Psychological Hardiness	Correlation	.015	.287**	.486**	.022
	Significance	.904	.020	.000	.864

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 3 gives the relationship between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness based on birth order. The correlation coefficient for emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among adolescents (singletons) is .015 and the p value is .904 (>0.05). Hence the null hypothesis there will be no significant relationship between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among singletons is accepted. The correlation coefficient for emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among adolescents (first born) is .287 and the p value is .020 (< 0.05). Hence the null hypothesis there will be no significant relationship between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among first born is rejected. The correlation coefficient for emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among adolescents (second born) is .486 and the p value is .000 (< 0.01). Hence the null hypothesis there will be no significant relationship between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among second born is rejected. The correlation coefficient for emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among adolescents (third born) is .022 and the p value is .864 (> 0.05). Hence the null hypothesis there will be no significant relationship between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among third born is accepted.

From the results it is evident that there is a positive correlation between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among the first born and second born. It means that if there is an increase or decrease in emotional maturity a corresponding change will also occur in the other variable psychological hardiness and vice versa. An increase in characteristics such as willingness to take responsibility, owning mistakes, being unafraid, having an awareness of own limitations, etc. which corresponds to emotional maturity positively influences characteristics such as having an internal locus of control, being optimistic, having a sense of personal power, also having a sense of purpose and meaning in life, etc. which corresponds to psychological hardiness. A negative correlation was seen in emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among the singletons and third born. It means that the scores of emotional maturity do not influence the scores of psychological hardiness and vice versa in the case of singletons and third born adolescents.

Implications

The results obtained through this study can be used in understanding the emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among singletons, first born, second born and third born adolescents. A significant correlation was seen between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness among the different birth order groups. Thoughtfulness and acknowledgement about the various facets that affect the adolescents can help parents, teachers and other significant individuals who has the power to influence them to modify their behaviour and help the adolescents develop in appropriate manner. A child's behaviour and emotionality do not occur by virtue of their gender alone, rather family members are responsible to shape their development patterns. Also, an understanding of how gender influence a child's maturity and hardiness can help make parents and society more sensitive to the unique situation each child is born into.

CONCLUSION

Results indicated no significant difference in emotional maturity and psychological hardiness on the basis of birth order. Correlation was seen between emotional maturity and psychological hardiness based on birth order.

Scope for Future Research

- A larger sample size can be made available.
- Other variables could be studied with emotional maturity and psychological hardiness.
- Adolescents from different states of India can be included.
- Further studies on this topic could add interview schedules to augment data collection from questionnaires, that is, a qualitative aspect can be brought into the study and information such as what factors affect emotional maturity or psychological hardiness can be analysed.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: James, N. & Ranjith, N. (2023). Birth Order Effects on Emotional Maturity and Psychological Hardiness among Adolescents. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 2668-2676. DIP:18.01.253.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.253