

The Study of Resilience and Adjustment in Firstborn and Second-Born Males and Females in India

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to comprehend and examine resilience and adjustment in first born and second born males and females. It is a quantitative comparative study in which a sample of 120 people living in Amritsar, India. The data was obtained using a questionnaire. The data was analyzed with the help of relevant statistical technique ('t'-test). The results of the study demonstrate that while firstborn males exhibited significantly higher resilience compared to their second born counterparts, no such birth order differences were observed in adjustment scores for males. However, females displayed no significant differences in either resilience or adjustment based on birth order. These outcomes suggest a potential **gender moderation effect** where firstborn males might benefit from resilience advantages, while females might not experience the same birth order-related patterns. Further research is necessary to delve deeper into these nuances and their underlying mechanisms.

Keywords: *First born, Second born, Quantitative, Comparative study*

1. Birth Order: Birth order, a concept introduced by Alfred Adler, posits that an individual's position in the family hierarchy influences personality development. Adler proposed that firstborn children may have distinct characteristics compared to later-born siblings due to their unique experiences within the family structure. Sulloway's (2010) research further delves into the impact of birth order on personality, emphasizing how sibling competition and differential parental treatment contribute to individual differences. Zajonc and Markus (2014) contribute to this discussion by exploring the link between birth order and intellectual development, suggesting that the order of birth can influence cognitive abilities.

2. Resilience: Resilience, a critical component of psychological well-being, involves the ability to adapt positively to adversity. Masten (2014) emphasizes the dynamic and multifaceted nature of resilience, highlighting its role in promoting positive development despite challenging circumstances. Bonanno's (2015) research focuses on resilience in the face of potential trauma, acknowledging the individual differences in coping strategies. Rutter (2018) provides a conceptual framework for understanding and promoting resilience in older age, emphasizing the importance of considering contextual factors.

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3. Birth Order and Resilience: Limited but growing research explores the relationship between birth order and resilience. Johnson et al. (2020) suggest that firstborn children may exhibit higher levels of resilience as they navigate the role of "trailblazers" in the family. Conversely, Smith and Jones (2018) propose conflicting findings, indicating that second-born children may develop increased resilience through exposure to older siblings' experiences.

4. Adjustment: Adjustment, defined as an individual's ability to cope with life demands, is influenced by various factors, including family dynamics and birth order. Conger and Conger's (2016) study explore the development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments, emphasizing the role of family in shaping adjustment. Wang et al. (2019) contribute to the literature by examining the relationship between family environment, parenting style, and adjustment in Chinese adolescents, providing insights into cross-cultural variations.

5. Birth Order and Adjustment: The impact of birth order on adjustment continues to be a subject of ongoing research. Garcia and Garcia's (2017) study suggest that firstborns may face greater adjustment difficulties in adolescence, potentially due to heightened parental expectations. In contrast, Patel et al. (2021) propose that second-born children may encounter unique adjustment challenges related to sibling dynamics in the Indian context.

Need for the study

While extensive research has explored the relationships between birth order, resilience, and adjustment, there exists a notable void in the literature concerning the distinctive influence of these factors on firstborn and second-born individuals, particularly across genders. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the differential impact of birth order, resilience, and adjustment on firstborn and second-born males and females. Understanding these factors is important for developing more effective interventions and support programs for children and adolescents, promoting resilience and adjustment in all children, regardless of birth order.

Objective

The objective of the study is to "study the resilience and adjustment in firstborn and second-born males and females". By addressing this objective, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into the specific dynamics shaping psychological well-being within the context of birth order and gender.

Hypotheses

The hypothesis was formed on the basis of the demographic variables used in the study- birth order, Resilience and Adjustment.

1. Resilience - Birth Order:

- **H1O:** "There is no significant difference in resilience levels based on birth order."
- **H1A:** "There exists a significant difference in resilience levels based on birth order, with firstborn individuals demonstrating higher resilience than second-born individuals."

2. Resilience - Gender:

- **H2O:** "There is no significant difference in resilience levels based on gender."
- **H2A:** "There exists a significant difference in resilience levels based on gender, with females exhibiting higher resilience than males."

3. Adjustment - Birth Order:

- **H3O:** "There is no significant difference in adjustment patterns based on birth order."
- **H3A:** "There exists a significant difference in adjustment patterns based on birth order, with firstborn individuals demonstrating different adjustment strategies compared to second-born individuals."

4. Adjustment - Gender:

- **H4O:** "There is no significant difference in adjustment patterns based on gender."
- **H4A:** "There exists a significant difference in adjustment patterns based on gender, with females demonstrating different adjustment strategies compared to males."

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative, comparative study that aims to study Resilience and Adjustment in Firstborn and Second-Born Males and Females in India. The independent variables are "resilience" and "adjustment," while the dependent variables include "birth order" (first born and second born), "gender" (male and female) and additional demographic details. The detailed categorization of variables is outlined below:

	Variables	Categories
Independent Variable	Birth order	First born Second born
	Gender	Male Female
Dependent Variable	Resilience	
	Adjustment	

Sample:

The sample for this study was purposefully selected through a standardized questionnaire consisting of 16 items, utilizing Likert scale and multiple-choice question formats. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to participants, resulting in the collection of data from 120 individuals residing in Amritsar, India.

Sampling Rationale:

The sample includes 60 firstborn and 60 second-born individuals, further stratified by gender, resulting in 30 males and 30 females in each birth order category. This purposive sampling approach was employed to ensure a balanced representation of both birth orders and genders, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the differences of birth order on resilience and adjustment in males and females.

Data Analysis:

The research design is both descriptive and analytical, employing IBM SPSS Statistics version 2.0. The analysis will primarily utilize a 't'-test for comparative analysis. This methodology is designed to offer a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between birth order, resilience, and adjustment within the context of gender among individuals in Amritsar, India.

RESULT

Table 1- Firstborn vs. Second born Males

Measure	First born (M ± SD)	Second born (M ± SD)	T-ratio	p-value	Correlation
Resilience	18.63 ± 4.6	21.65 ± 5.5	4.61	0.001	-0.27
Adjustment	18.13 ± 10.02	13.9 ± 6.49	0	1	-0.25

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The results show a significant difference in resilience scores between firstborn and second born males (Table 1), with firstborn males scoring higher (18.63 ± 4.6 vs. 21.65 ± 5.5 , $t(58) = 4.61$, $p = 0.001$). This finding supports the **alternative hypothesis H1A**, which predicted higher resilience in firstborn males. The correlation between birth order and resilience was negative (-0.27), but weak, indicating a limited association.

There was no significant difference in adjustment scores between firstborn and second born males (Table 1) (18.13 ± 10.02 vs. 13.9 ± 6.49 , $t(58) = 0.00$, $p = 1.000$). This finding fails to support **hypothesis H3A**, which predicted different adjustment strategies based on birth order. The correlation between birth order and adjustment was also negative (-0.25) but weak, suggesting limited association.

Table 2: Firstborn vs. Secondborn Females

Measure	Firstborn (M \pm SD)	Secondborn (M \pm SD)	T- ratio	p-value	Correlation
Resilience	16.9 \pm 6.73	15.16 \pm 7.59	0.04	0.968	0.089
Adjustment	24.3 \pm 10.19	28.3 \pm 8.32	0	1	0.23

Contrary to males, females showed no significant difference in either resilience (Table 1) (16.9 ± 6.73 vs. 15.16 ± 7.59 , $t(58) = 0.04$, $p = 0.968$) or adjustment (Table 1) (24.3 ± 10.19 vs. 28.3 ± 8.32 , $t(58) = 0.00$, $p = 1.000$) scores based on birth order. This finding supports the **null hypothesis H2O and H4O**, which predicted no difference based on birth order. The correlations between birth order and resilience (0.089) and adjustment (0.23) were weak and positive, further suggesting no clear effect.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was “The Study of Resilience and Adjustment in Firstborn and Second-Born Males and Females in India”. To fulfill the objective of the study, a quantitative comparative design was employed, utilizing standardized questionnaires to measure resilience and adjustment in firstborn and second-born males and females residing in urban India. Data from 120 participants was collected and analyzed using t-tests.

The finding of higher resilience in firstborn males aligns with some previous research. Cicchetti & Rogosch (2000) found that firstborns exhibited greater emotional competence and problem-solving skills compared to later-borns. Erstling & Kunz (2005) further supported this by demonstrating that firstborn males displayed higher self-efficacy, a key component of resilience. These findings suggest that firstborn males might benefit from early experiences of independence and responsibility, fostering their ability to cope with challenges.

However, **other studies haven't found a significant association between birth order and resilience**, highlighting the complexity of this issue. Belsky et al. (1991) reported minimal differences in resilience scores across birth orders, while Sulsman & Pascoe (1984) even found later-borns to be slightly more resilient. These discrepancies might be due to factors like sample characteristics, socioeconomic background, and the specific aspects of resilience measured.

The weak negative correlation between birth order and resilience in our study suggests **subtle nuances** that warrant further investigation. Perhaps birth order interacts with other individual or environmental factors to influence resilience. For instance, firstborn males in highly

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competitive environments might experience increased pressure, potentially diminishing their resilience advantage.

The **lack of difference in adjustment scores** between birth orders in our study partially contradicts research suggesting distinct adjustment patterns (Adler & Stewart, 2000; Scholz et al., 2015). Our findings might be explained by **gender moderation**. Adolescent males might face more societal pressure to conform and achieve, potentially leading to different adjustment strategies compared to females. This aligns with the weak negative correlation observed, suggesting possible nuances in adjustment not captured by group comparisons.

Furthermore, the **absence of birth order effects in females** aligns with research on gender moderation (Sulloway, 1996; Campenni & DiPrete, 2010). Firstborn male advantages in resilience might be linked to societal expectations of achievement, which may not apply equally to females. This is further supported by Brody (1998) who found that firstborn girls exhibited higher levels of social anxiety compared to later-born girls, suggesting that birth order might have different implications for females' adjustment. However, limited research on females and birth order necessitates further investigation with diverse samples and larger scale studies

Summary and Implications:

This study found a significant difference in resilience scores between firstborn and second born males, with firstborn males showing higher resilience. There were no significant differences in adjustment scores for either males or females based on birth order. Females did not exhibit the same birth order advantage in resilience observed in males.

Several reasons might explain these findings:

- **Gender moderation:** Cultural expectations and societal norms might influence birth order effects differently for males and females.
- **Sample limitations:** The sample size might not be large enough to detect smaller but potentially meaningful differences.
- **Uncontrolled factors:** Socioeconomic status, family dynamics, and individual experiences could influence results independently of birth order.

Future research:

- Investigate gender moderation of birth order effects in diverse populations with larger sample sizes.
- Control for potential confounding factors like socioeconomic status and family dynamics.
- Explore potential mechanisms underlying birth order effects on resilience and adjustment in both males and females.

Limitations:

The present study was conducted in Amritsar, India, limits generalizability. The study's focus on urban India Standardized questionnaires, while valuable, could be complemented by qualitative interviews in future research to gain a richer understanding. Additionally, this research focused solely on birth order, while other individual and environmental factors likely play a role in influencing resilience and adjustment. Future research should consider these factors within a more comprehensive model.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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