

## Study of Birth Order, Personality Traits and Psychological Well-Being in Adolescents: A Review

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigates the relationship between birth order, personality traits, and psychological well-being in adolescents. To categorize birth order, participants are grouped as first-born, middle-born and last-born enabling comparisons of personality characteristics and emotional intelligence. Personality traits are measured using various personality tests like, MBTI, TAT, Rorschach, MAP Series, NEO 5 Factors etc. whereas emotional intelligence, a key aspect of psychological health, is assessed using a validated Questionnaires. The objective of the present work was to analyze how birth order influences personality development and emotional intelligence, thereby affecting an individual's overall psychological well-being. By examining trends across different birth order positions, the research aims to highlight the role of familial dynamics in shaping personality and mental health outcomes. This study explores how birth order and personality traits influence the psychological well-being of adolescents. It examines the relationship between a child's position in the family (whether they are the firstborn, middle child, or youngest) and their development of personality traits like extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness. These traits play a significant role in determining emotional health, happiness, and life satisfaction during adolescence. The study also investigates how these family dynamics impact mental health outcomes, such as anxiety and stress. By understanding the interplay of birth order and personality, this research aims to offer insights into how family structures can shape emotional and psychological development, providing valuable information for creating support strategies that enhance adolescents' well-being.

**Keywords:** Birth Order, Personality Traits, Psychological Well-being, Adolescents

The relationship between birth order, personality traits, and psychological well-being in adolescents is a fascinating area of research that examines how a child's position in the family influences their emotional and mental development. Birth order theory, first introduced by Alfred Adler (1927), suggests that a child's role—whether they are the firstborn, middle, or youngest sibling—shapes their personality and psychological experiences. Adolescence, a key developmental stage where individuals form their identities and emotional regulation skills, is deeply affected by these family dynamics. Firstborn

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children often take on responsibilities and leadership roles, while middle children may develop independence and conflict resolution skills due to feeling less cantered in the family. The youngest children, often seen as the "babies" of the family, might show traits such as sociability, attention-seeking, or charm.

Personality traits, such as those defined by the Big Five model (McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. 1987) extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, play a significant role in an adolescent's psychological well-being, impacting factors like emotional health, happiness, and life satisfaction. Adolescents who display traits like high extraversion and agreeableness tend to have better mental health, while those with high neuroticism may experience increased levels of anxiety and stress. Investigating how birth order interacts with these personality traits could offer valuable insights into how different family dynamics influence an adolescent's emotional and psychological outcomes, providing a foundation for effective interventions and support systems.

### ***Birth order and personality traits***

The concept of birth order has been extensively studied in psychology to understand how an individual's position within the family hierarchy influences their personality, behavior, and life outcomes. This area of research posits that firstborns, middle children, and youngest siblings experience unique developmental environments shaped by variations in parental attention, sibling dynamics, and social expectations, ultimately affecting their traits and interactions.

Kaul & Srivastava (2018) explored how birth order affects personality traits in the Indian context. Their findings highlighted distinct patterns, such as firstborns displaying leadership and responsibility, middle children showing adaptability and social diplomacy, and youngest siblings being characterized by sociability and independence. Similarly, Volkom et al. (2017) examined the impact of birth order on sibling relationships and personality traits, emphasizing how sibling dynamics like rivalry and support contribute to personality development during adulthood.

Historically, early theorists like Adler and Sulloway (1996) suggested that birth order influences traits like conscientiousness and adaptability. Roher et al. (2015) reviewed this concept, noting that while firstborns often exhibit higher intelligence, the broader effects on personality traits remain inconclusive across cultures. Eckstein & Kaufman (2012) reviewed Adler's theories, focusing on traits such as leadership and self-esteem, highlighting their enduring significance despite criticism.

Cultural influences further underscore the variability in birth order effects. Khodarahimi & Ogletree (2011) studied Iranian adolescents, highlighting the role of family size and societal norms in shaping self-esteem and life satisfaction. Similarly, Al-Khayat & Al-Adwan (2005) examined the relationship between birth order and academic outcomes in Jordanian families, shedding light on how cultural and familial structures interact with birth order dynamics. Marini & Kurtz (2011) explored perspectives from within and outside families, finding unique differences in how traits like agreeableness and extraversion are perceived. This diverse body of research emphasizes how birth order, combined with cultural and familial factors, shapes personality development.

***Birth order and psychological well-being***

Psychological well-being is a multifaceted concept that includes mental health, emotional stability, self-esteem, resilience, and overall life satisfaction. Various factors, such as family dynamics, cultural identity, personality traits, and daily habits, influence this crucial aspect of human development, particularly during childhood and adolescence. Fukuya et al. (2021) explored the impact of birth order on children's psychological well-being, analyzing self-esteem, resilience, and happiness. They found that a child's position within the sibling hierarchy significantly shapes mental health outcomes, with nuanced differences in how firstborns, middle children, and youngest siblings adapt emotionally. Similarly, Salami (2011) examined the interplay between adolescents' personality traits and emotional intelligence, highlighting how higher emotional intelligence helps mitigate stress and fosters better coping mechanisms, ultimately improving overall well-being. Family circumstances and external pressures also play a critical role. Nidey et al. (2016) investigated the psychological challenges faced by parents of children with congenital conditions like oral clefts, emphasizing the need for robust support systems to reduce stress and anxiety. Biggs et al. (2020) studied the psychological impact of abortion stigma on women over time, revealing its profound effects on mental health, including elevated levels of anxiety and depression.

Cultural identity also significantly influences mental health. Kiang et al. (2006) focused on Mexican and Chinese adolescents, demonstrating how a strong ethnic identity fosters resilience and emotional stability. Adolescents with a solid connection to their heritage experience higher self-esteem and life satisfaction, illustrating the protective role of cultural identity in promoting mental health. Daily habits and routines further contribute to well-being. Fuligni & Hardway (2006) explored how sleep patterns and daily activities affect adolescents' psychological health. They found that consistent sleep schedules and balanced activities enhance mood, reduce stress, and improve overall life satisfaction.

***Personality traits and psychological well-being***

Psychological well-being is a critical aspect of human health that encompasses mental stability, emotional resilience, and overall life satisfaction. Multiple factors, such as social interactions, personality traits, and coping mechanisms, significantly influence this domain, especially during adolescence and in the workplace. Social media is one prominent factor shaping adolescent mental health. Keles et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review to explore the influence of social media on mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and psychological distress. They found that prolonged social media use and exposure to negative online interactions can exacerbate mental health challenges, but its impact varies depending on content and usage patterns. This underscores the importance of mindful social media engagement for adolescents' psychological well-being. Personality traits also play a pivotal role in shaping mental health. Dangi & Nagle (2015) examined the relationship between personality factors and adolescent well-being, highlighting how traits like extroversion and conscientiousness promote emotional stability, while neuroticism hinders it. Garcia (2011) compared two models of personality—the Big Five and Cloninger's psychobiological model—to assess their predictive power for adolescent well-being. Both models revealed unique insights, emphasizing the complementary role of broad personality traits and deeper biological and character dimensions in fostering mental health. Resilience is another critical factor in adolescent development. Olsson et al. (2003) analyzed the concept of resilience, identifying attributes such as self-esteem, social support, and adaptive coping as essential for adolescents to thrive amidst adversity. Their work highlights the significance of internal

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strengths and external resources in promoting resilience and positive developmental outcomes.

Workplace factors also significantly impact psychological well-being. Zapf (2002) reviewed the concept of emotion work, exploring how professions requiring emotional labor—such as healthcare and customer service—affect mental health. Emotional dissonance, burnout, and job satisfaction are key outcomes of managing emotions at work, suggesting that organizations should adopt strategies to mitigate these challenges and support employee well-being. Huppert (2009) further broadened the understanding of psychological well-being by examining its causes, consequences, and interventions. The study highlighted how factors like genetics, life circumstances, and behaviors influence mental health and linked high well-being levels to improved physical health, longevity, and social connections.

### *Rationale*

The study of birth order, personality traits, and psychological well-being in adolescents is vital for understanding developmental influences and enhancing mental health. Birth order can shape family dynamics, impacting adolescents' behaviors and personality formation. By investigating these relationships, researchers can tailor educational and psychological interventions to meet adolescents' unique needs. This research validates psychological theories and expands our understanding of familial and environmental factors influencing development. Practical applications include improved parenting strategies and personalized educational approaches. Insights from this research help parents and educators support adolescents more effectively, fostering better family relationships and promoting mental well-being. Ultimately, studying these interconnections provides valuable knowledge for enhancing individual development and contributing to societal well-being.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This review of related literature has been divided into three parts: a) birth order and personality traits, b) birth order and psychological well-being, and c) personality traits and psychological well-being.

### *Birth order and personality traits*

The exploration of the relationship between birth order and personality has been a subject of significant interest across psychological and cultural contexts. Various researchers have contributed to understanding how an individual's birth position within the family influences personality traits and related outcomes. Kaul & Srivastava (2018) explored this topic within the Indian cultural context, finding that firstborns often exhibit leadership qualities, responsibility, and a higher need for achievement. Middle children were noted to be adaptable, diplomatic, and socially skilled, while youngest children displayed traits like sociability, charm, and independence. Their work highlighted the cultural nuances influencing the birth order-personality relationship. Supporting this, Eckstein & Kaufman (2012), building on Adler's theories, also associated firstborns with leadership and conscientiousness, middle children with social skills and cooperation, and youngest children with creativity and charm. Examining sibling dynamics.

Volkom et al. (2017) analyzed how sibling relationships, influenced by birth order, impact personality traits during the transition to adulthood. They identified variations in agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness to experience shaped by sibling closeness, rivalry, and support. Similarly, Marini & Kurtz (2011) focused on the perception of personality traits from family and external perspectives, showing how traits such as

extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness differ depending on family roles and external views. A broader review by Roher et al. (2015) critically examined whether birth order affects lifelong outcomes, particularly intelligence and personality traits. While early theorists like Galton and Adler suggested advantages for firstborns due to parental attention, recent large-scale studies showed limited influence of birth order on personality traits beyond marginally higher intelligence for firstborns. This nuanced perspective challenges traditional assumptions about the strong link between birth order and personality. In specific cultural settings, Khodarahimi & Ogletree (2011) investigated birth order and family size among Iranian youth, highlighting their impact on self-esteem, optimism, and life satisfaction.

Similarly, Al-Khayat & Al-Adwan (2005) examined Jordanian families, revealing that birth order influences traits like conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience, alongside academic performance, shaped by parental expectations and sibling dynamics. These findings collectively suggest that while firstborns may benefit from greater parental attention and responsibility, middle children adapt by developing social and negotiation skills, and youngest children leverage their position to exhibit independence and charm. However, Roher et al. (2015) argue that the effects of birth order may be overstated, as recent empirical studies demonstrate minimal overall impact on broad personality traits. This debate reflects the complexity of personality formation, emphasizing the interplay between individual, familial, and cultural influences. For instance, Volkom et al. (2017) and Marini & Kurtz (2011) emphasize sibling dynamics and external perspectives, demonstrating how relationships within and outside the family shape personality traits. Cultural contexts, as explored by Khodarahimi & Ogletree (2011) and Al-Khayat & Al-Adwan (2005), further underscore that family structures and societal norms significantly influence the manifestation of these traits. By combining theoretical insights, cultural analyses, and empirical data, these studies contribute to a nuanced understanding of how birth order and related familial factors influence personality development across diverse settings.

### ***Birth order and psychological well being***

The exploration of the interplay between birth order, personality traits, and psychological well-being has been the focus of extensive research. Scholars have contributed significantly to understanding how these variables influence human behavior and emotional health. Fukuya et al. (2021), Biggs et al. (2020), Nidey et al. (2016), Salami (2011), Kiang et al. (2006), and Fuligni and Hardway (2006) provide distinct yet complementary perspectives on these relationships, offering a holistic view of psychological development across diverse contexts. Fukuya et al. (2021) examine the relationship between birth order and mental health outcomes in children, such as self-esteem, resilience, happiness, and mental health problems. The study focuses on the roles of firstborns, middle-borns, and last-borns, investigating whether specific sibling positions contribute to distinct psychological profiles. Their findings suggest that birth order influences psychological well-being, with variations in self-esteem and resilience levels among different sibling positions. This research sheds light on the role of familial dynamics in shaping mental and emotional development.

Biggs et al. (2020) extend the discussion by exploring the psychological effects of perceived abortion stigma. Their study investigates how women who experience stigma, whether they received or were denied an abortion, report long-term mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and life satisfaction. The findings highlight the enduring impact of societal stigma on emotional health, emphasizing the need for policies and interventions to mitigate these negative effects. Nidey et al. (2016) shift the focus to parents of children with

oral clefts, analyzing the emotional challenges they face, including stress, anxiety, and depression. The study identifies factors that influence these parents' well-being, such as the severity of the child's condition, social support, and access to resources. This research highlights the importance of comprehensive support systems to improve the mental health and resilience of caregivers navigating such complex parenting roles. Salami (2011) investigates the interaction between personality traits and psychological well-being in adolescents, emphasizing the moderating role of emotional intelligence. The study explores how traits like extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism influence mental health outcomes such as life satisfaction and stress levels. Findings reveal that adolescents with higher emotional intelligence can better manage the challenges associated with certain personality traits, enhancing their psychological well-being and resilience. Kiang et al. (2006) contribute to the understanding of cultural identity and its effects on psychological well-being by studying adolescents from Mexican and Chinese backgrounds. Their research highlights the protective role of a strong ethnic identity, which fosters resilience, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. By exploring the daily emotional experiences of minority adolescents, the study underscores the importance of cultural heritage in supporting mental health and coping mechanisms.

Fuligni and Hardway (2006) delve into the influence of daily habits, particularly sleep patterns and activities, on adolescent mental health. Their research demonstrates how fluctuations in sleep duration and types of activities—academic, social, and leisure—affect mood, stress levels, and overall well-being. The findings emphasize the importance of balanced daily routines and consistent sleep schedules in maintaining psychological health during adolescence. Together, these studies offer a comprehensive view of the factors influencing psychological well-being. Fukuya et al. (2021) and Kiang et al. (2006) highlight the role of family dynamics and cultural identity, respectively, while Biggs et al. (2020) and Nidey et al. (2016) address the impact of external challenges and caregiving roles on mental health. Salami (2011) and Fuligni and Hardway (2006) focus on individual traits and daily habits, showing how these factors shape emotional resilience and life satisfaction. The interplay between these variables demonstrates the complexity of psychological well-being. Birth order, as explored by Fukuya et al. (2021), offers a lens to understand how familial roles impact resilience and self-esteem. Similarly, Kiang et al. (2006) highlight how cultural identity acts as a buffer against the challenges of adolescence, promoting emotional health in diverse populations. On the other hand, Biggs et al. (2020) underline the long-term consequences of societal stigma, while Nidey et al. (2016) call attention to the need for robust support systems for parents of children with special needs. The research by Salami (2011) and Fuligni and Hardway (2006) provides insights into how individual and lifestyle factors contribute to psychological well-being. Salami's findings underscore the role of emotional intelligence in mitigating the challenges of certain personality traits, while Fuligni and Hardway emphasize the significance of consistent routines and balanced activities for adolescents' mental health. Collectively, these studies highlight the multifaceted nature of psychological well-being, demonstrating the interplay of family, societal, cultural, individual, and lifestyle factors. They emphasize the need for holistic approaches in addressing mental health, offering valuable insights for psychologists, educators, and policymakers. By integrating findings from these diverse studies, interventions can be designed to support individuals across different life stages and contexts, ultimately promoting resilience and emotional health.

***Personality traits and psychological well being***

The impact of various factors on psychological well-being, especially in adolescents and workplace settings, has been explored in numerous studies, shedding light on the role of social media, personality traits, resilience, and emotional labor. Key contributions from Keles et al. (2020), Dangi & Nagle (2015), Garcia (2011), Huppert (2009), Olsson et al. (2003), and Zapf (2002) offer valuable perspectives on how these elements shape mental health. Keles et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review on the effects of social media on the mental health of adolescents. Their work explored the relationship between social media use and psychological issues such as depression and anxiety. By looking at factors like the amount of time spent on social media and the types of content consumed, they found a complex relationship between social media and mental health. While excessive use can lead to negative outcomes like anxiety, social media can also provide a space for connection and support, depending on how it is used. In a similar vein, Dangi & Nagle (2015) focused on the connection between personality traits and psychological well-being in adolescents. Their study showed that positive personality traits, such as extraversion and agreeableness, were linked to higher levels of happiness and emotional stability, while traits like neuroticism could have the opposite effect. The study emphasizes the importance of nurturing positive personality traits during adolescence to support mental health and well-being.

Garcia (2011) compared two models of personality and well-being in adolescents: the Big Five personality traits and Cloninger's psychobiological model. The Big Five model examines traits like extraversion and neuroticism, while Cloninger's model includes temperament and character dimensions. Garcia's research found that both models were effective in predicting well-being outcomes, suggesting that a combination of biological, characterological, and personality traits plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' mental health. Huppert (2009) explored the causes and consequences of psychological well-being in a broader context, reviewing biological, psychological, and social factors. Huppert's work emphasized the positive outcomes associated with high psychological well-being, such as better physical health, longevity, and improved relationships. The study stresses the importance of promoting mental well-being as part of overall health, pointing to the benefits of interventions that enhance psychological well-being. Olsson et al. (2003) examined the concept of resilience in adolescents, identifying key factors that help young people cope with stress and adversity. Their work highlighted internal resources like self-esteem, as well as external factors such as social support and adaptive coping strategies, which contribute to resilience. The study underscores the importance of resilience in fostering positive developmental outcomes and suggests directions for future research to support adolescents in overcoming challenges.

Zapf (2002) reviewed the impact of emotional labor on well-being in occupations such as customer service and healthcare, where employees are required to manage their emotions as part of their job. The study found that emotional labor, including emotional dissonance and job stress, can lead to burnout and psychological distress. Zapf's work points to the importance of addressing emotional demands in the workplace to protect employees' mental health and suggests strategies to reduce the negative effects of emotional labor. Taken together, these studies highlight the diverse factors that influence psychological well-being. Social media use, personality traits, resilience, and emotional labor all play significant roles in shaping mental health outcomes. The research underscores the need for holistic approaches to support mental health, whether through promoting positive personality traits in adolescents, fostering resilience, or addressing emotional labor in workplace settings. By

focusing on these areas, interventions can be better tailored to enhance well-being and prevent mental health issues across different life stages.

### CONCLUSION

The present literature review reveals a strong association between personality traits and various aspects of psychological well-being, with a focus on the impact of birth order and family dynamics. Studies such as those by Kaul & Srivastava (2018) and Volkom et al. (2017) examine how birth order influences personality traits like leadership, social adaptability, and emotional stability. Research by Roher et al. (2015) and Eckstein & Kaufman (2012) further investigates the lifelong implications of birth order on personality and intelligence. These findings underscore the complexity of birth order's influence, suggesting that while it may affect traits like conscientiousness and emotional resilience, other factors such as familial support and cultural contexts play a crucial role in shaping psychological health.

Additionally, studies such as Dangi & Nagle (2015) and Garcia (2011) highlight the significance of personality traits like neuroticism, agreeableness, and emotional intelligence in adolescents' psychological well-being. These studies demonstrate that positive traits contribute to higher life satisfaction, while negative traits such as neuroticism can lead to mental health challenges. Research by Olsson et al. (2003) and Zapf (2002) on resilience and emotion work emphasizes how adaptive coping strategies and emotional labor can mitigate stress and enhance emotional regulation, further shaping personality development and mental health outcomes.

Moreover, this review emphasizes the need for a deeper exploration of the mechanisms through which birth order and family dynamics influence long-term psychological outcomes. While studies like those by Dangi & Nagle (2015) and Garcia (2011) suggest that personality traits such as emotional intelligence and openness play a role in shaping psychological well-being, it is essential to consider other external factors like socio-cultural influences and peer relationships. Birth order may provide foundational insights into personality development, but a comprehensive understanding requires a broader view of the individual's environment.

The integration of multiple perspectives, including family systems theory, personality psychology, and cultural considerations, holds promise for enhancing therapeutic practices aimed at improving emotional and psychological resilience. Future research, considering the intersections of birth order, personality traits, and environmental influences, can lead to more personalized and effective interventions. This holistic approach encourages deeper insights into mental health, aiming to create tailored strategies for fostering emotional well-being and resilience across diverse populations.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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