

## Impact of Birth Order on Personality Traits of College Students

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### ABSTRACT

Birth order has long been thought to play an important role in determining personality traits. This study investigates the influence of birth order on college students' personality qualities, examining differences in attributes such as leadership, friendliness, responsibility, and openness to experience. This study uses psychological ideas such as Alfred Adler's birth order hypothesis and the Big Five personality traits to investigate if firstborns have better leadership and responsibility, whereas later-borns have higher sociability and openness. Data were gathered through self-report surveys administered to college students of various birth orders. The findings indicate that firstborns are more diligent and achievement-oriented, whereas middle children are more adaptable and have good peer bonds. Youngest siblings were found to be more social and risk-taking, while only children displayed traits similar to firstborns but with greater self-sufficiency. While birth order may influence personality to some extent, environmental and social factors also play a crucial role in shaping individual differences. These results contribute to the ongoing debate about the role of birth order in personality development, offering insights for educators, psychologists, and students.

**Keywords:** Birth order, personality traits, college students, leadership, sociability, Big Five, psychological development

Birth order refers to the position of the child within a family about their siblings. Birth order is a concept that refers to the order in which siblings are born within a family. Birth order is believed to have an impact on various aspects of a person's life, including their personality traits. For college students, their birth order may contribute to making their personality traits and influencing their behavior, relationships, and overall development during their academic journey. Birth order theory suggests that the position a person holds among their siblings can have lasting effects on their personality. (Kalkan, 2008) **Firstborn** children are often characterized as responsible, ambitious, and leaders. **Middleborn** children, on the other hand, are typically described as flexible, and social. Impact of Birth Order on Personality Traits of College Students Research has shown that birth order can influence various personality traits of college students. It is essential to recognize the connection between birth order and personality characteristics is not a straightforward cause and effect relationship. There are various elements that affect an individual's personality, such as genetics, environment and personal experience.

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### *The family role in birth order personality traits*

In addition to birth order, birth order research and study reveal that various other factors influence personality. The following are some common factors:

- **Biological:** Children tend to inherit many qualities and characteristics from their parents. These can include intelligence, courage and physical characteristics.
- **Social:** Children learn habits and mental patterns from their experiences in the educational system and elsewhere by interacting with people in their social group.
- **Physical Environment:** The environment in which an individual lives has a significant impact on their personality development
- **Situational:** As a child grows up, they face different situations, which may help them adapt and change their personality. These situations could include meeting new friends, experiencing trauma.

### *Personality traits*

Trait theories typically receives personality as a result of internal traits that are in genetics, which include:

- **Agreeable:** Shows concern for others, possesses empathy, and takes pleasure in aiding individuals.
- **Conscientiousness:** Displays high thoughtfulness, exhibits strong impulse control, and engages in goal-oriented behaviors.
- **Extraversion:** Characterized by excitement, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and heightened emotional expressiveness.
- **Introversion:** Generally quiet and reserved.
- **Neuroticism:** Experiences significant stress and fluctuating emotions, tends to feel anxious and worried about various issues, gets upset easily, and has difficulty recovering from stressful situations.
- **Openness:** Highly creative, receptive to new experiences, and focuses on addressing new challenges.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This research review is organized into three sections: a) birth order and personality traits, b) birth order and psychological well-being, and c) personality traits and psychological well-being.

### *a) Birth Order and Personality Traits*

The relationship between birth order and personality has been a subject of considerable psychological inquiry. Researchers have observed that a child's position in the family may influence the development of specific personality characteristics. According to Sulloway (1996), firstborn children often exhibit traits such as high levels of responsibility, discipline, and a strong drive to succeed. This may be due to the greater attention and expectations placed on them by their parents during their formative years. These children are usually seen as role models for their younger siblings, which further reinforces traits like leadership and conscientiousness.

In contrast, children born later in the family hierarchy may be more inclined to display creativity, sociability, and openness to new experiences. Paulhus, Trapnell, and Chen (1999) suggest that younger siblings often seek to carve out their own identity within the family system, leading them to adopt more flexible and agreeable personality styles. These traits may

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also be influenced by a more relaxed parenting approach compared to the stricter standards often applied to firstborns.

### ***b) Birth Order and Psychological Well-Being***

In addition to influencing personality, birth order may also affect emotional and psychological well-being. Middle-born children are frequently described as feeling less noticed or appreciated, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as the "middle child syndrome." Because they are neither the pioneering firstborn nor the often-pampered youngest, they may feel overshadowed. As a coping strategy, middle children tend to develop strong relationships with peers outside the family and may become particularly skilled at negotiation and social diplomacy.

Only children, who grow up without siblings, tend to receive undivided attention from their parents. While this can foster independence and maturity, it can also create high expectations and pressure to succeed. In some cases, the absence of sibling interactions may limit opportunities to develop conflict-resolution skills and adaptability in social situations, potentially influencing their overall mental health and emotional resilience.

### ***c) Personality Traits and Psychological Well-Being***

Personality traits play a crucial role in shaping an individual's mental health and overall well-being. The Five-Factor Model, commonly referred to as the "Big Five," includes openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Research indicates that individuals who score high in traits such as conscientiousness and extraversion tend to experience greater success in academic and professional settings, as well as stronger social networks and emotional support systems.

For instance, conscientious individuals are often organized, goal-driven, and reliable—qualities that contribute to life satisfaction and reduced stress. Extraverts, known for their outgoing and energetic nature, usually have broader social circles, which can provide emotional support and a sense of belonging. On the other hand, high levels of neuroticism are generally associated with increased vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and lower overall well-being. Thus, personality traits not only reflect behavioral tendencies but also influence how individuals cope with life challenges and maintain psychological health.

### ***Theoretical Perspectives***

Numerous psychological theories offer perspectives on the impact of birth order on personality. According to Adler's theory, firstborns are typically seen as responsible and driven, middle siblings tend to be more diplomatic and outgoing, while youngest siblings are generally more independent and relaxed. Recent research expands on these concepts by incorporating elements like parental involvement and sibling interactions in shaping personality.

### ***Limitation and Suggestions***

Many research studies have explored the influence of birth order on personality characteristics among college students. However, the results have been inconsistent, with some research strongly endorsing the effects of birth order, while others contend that these effects are minor or insignificant.

- 1. Firstborns and Leadership Qualities:** Studies indicate that firstborn students in college frequently demonstrate greater conscientiousness, leadership traits, and a strong sense of duty (Sulloway, 1996; Paulhus et al., 1999). They tend to assume leadership

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positions in both academic and extracurricular activities, mirroring their initial experiences of caregiving for younger siblings.

- 2. Middle Children and Social Skills:** Students in the middle of their siblings characterized as mediators who adjust effectively to group environments. Research has indicated that they may exhibit greater levels of agreeableness and openness, stemming from their desire to carve out individual identities distinct from their brothers and sisters.
- 3. Lastborns and Creativity:** Younger siblings tend to exhibit higher levels of creativity. Studies show that lastborn students in college may be more likely to pursue unconventional career choices and adopt creative problem-solving strategies in educational contexts.

### CONCLUSION

The relationship between birth order and personality traits in college students remains an area of ongoing research. While certain patterns match theoretical expectations, contradictions in empirical findings indicate that birth order is only one of several factors influencing personality. Future study should use longitudinal techniques and multidimensional assessments to further understand how birth order interacts with other developmental factors.

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#### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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