



From First Born to Last: A Psychological Exploration of Self-Esteem, Resilience and Happiness across Birth Orders

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ABSTRACT

This research study aims to explore how birth order influences self-esteem, psychological resilience, and happiness among young adults. Birth order, or an individual's position among siblings in a family, has long been thought to influence many elements of personality and psychological development. Self-Esteem refers to a person's total subjective assessment of their own value or worth, including their ideas about themselves and the feelings that go along with it. The term psychological resilience describes the capacity to adjust to and recover from hardship, trauma, or stress. People who possess resilience are able to persevere through adversity, bounce back from failure, and stay positive and purposeful. Happiness is defined by sentiments of joy, contentment, and general well-being. It includes feeling good about oneself, having good feelings, and feeling fulfilled.

Utilizing a sample of young adults, three distinct questionnaires-Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (RSE), The Resilience scale (RM) and subjective happiness Scale were used and they were administered through Google Forms. A quantitative approach is taken, with standardized measures used to assess self-esteem, psychological resilience, and happiness levels among young adult participants from various birth orders. The study seeks to establish whether there are any significant relationships between birth order and these psychological dimensions.

By examining how birth order impacts self-esteem, psychological resilience and happiness, the study aims to shed light on any correlations among birth order on self-esteem, resilience and happiness. The practical understanding that these discoveries carry extends beyond scholarly curiosity. These dynamics can influence family dynamics, counselling methods, and programmes targeted at improving psychological outcomes in young people of varied birth orders.

Keywords: Birth order; Self-esteem; Psychological resilience; Happiness; Young adults

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the psychological dynamics within family structures is crucial for comprehending various aspects of

individual well-being. Birth order, or the position of a child within the family, has long been a subject of interest in psychology. The goal of the present investigation is to explore how birth order impacts self-esteem, psychological resilience,

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and happiness among individuals. This study utilizes established scales to assess self-esteem (Rosenberg self-esteem scale), psychological resilience (Gail M. Wagnild and Heather M. Young resilience scale), and subjective happiness (Subjective happiness scale).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall subjective emotional evaluation of their own worth. It encompasses beliefs about oneself as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame. Several factors influence self-esteem, and birth order is one such factor that can shape these self-perceptions through familial roles and expectations. Key elements influencing self-esteem include:

Parental attention and expectations: Firstborns often receive undivided parental attention early on, which can lead to higher self-esteem, while later-born children may benefit from less pressure and more relaxed expectations.

Sibling interactions: Relationships with siblings can influence self-esteem, with older siblings often taking on leadership roles that can boost their confidence, whereas younger siblings might develop resilience by navigating these dynamics.

Role models: Older siblings can serve as role models for younger siblings, potentially fostering higher self-esteem in the latter as they strive to emulate positive behaviors.

Theoretical perspectives

Adlerian theory: Proposed by Alfred Adler, this theory posits that birth order significantly influences personality development. Firstborns may become responsible and high-achieving, while later-borns might develop a more rebellious or sociable nature, impacting their self-esteem.

Social comparison theory: This theory suggests that individuals determine their own social and personal worth based on how they stack up against others. Siblings serve as immediate points of comparison, affecting self-esteem.

Attachment theory: Developed by John Bowlby, this theory emphasizes the importance of early relationships. The birth order can influence attachment styles, with firstborns potentially forming more secure attachments due to early parental attention.

Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience is the ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly. Resilience varies based on numerous factors, including birth order, which can shape an individual's capacity to deal with adversity. Key components influencing psychological resilience include:

Coping strategies: Firstborns may develop strong coping mechanisms due to higher expectations and responsibilities, while later-borns might build resilience through more flexible and adaptive approaches.

Support systems: The presence of siblings can provide a robust support system that fosters resilience, with older siblings often acting as protectors and younger ones offering social support.

Role diversification: Each sibling may develop unique roles within the family, which can contribute to their resilience by allowing them to cultivate diverse skills and coping strategies.

Theoretical perspectives

Family systems theory: This theory views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit. Birth order can influence these interactions, shaping resilience through family dynamics.

Ecological systems theory: Proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, this theory emphasizes the different layers of environment that impact an individual's development. Birth order effects can be seen as part of the microsystem within the family structure.

Stress and coping theory: Developed by Lazarus and Folkman, this theory focuses on how individuals manage stress. Birth order can influence the development of coping mechanisms, with different strategies emerging based on sibling interactions.

Happiness

Happiness, or subjective well-being, is a measure of how individuals experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgments. Birth order can influence happiness through various psychosocial factors:

Parental investment: Levels of parental investment, which can vary with birth order, influence the happiness of children. Firstborns may receive more investment early on, while later-borns may benefit from more relaxed parenting.

Social skills: Later-born children often develop superior social skills due to their need to navigate sibling dynamics, potentially enhancing their happiness.

Achievement and recognition: Firstborns may experience happiness through achievements and recognition, driven by higher parental expectations.

Theoretical perspectives

Positive psychology: This field focuses on strengths, virtues, and factors that contribute to a fulfilling life. Birth order can influence these positive attributes, affecting overall happiness.

Self-determination theory: This theory posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are key to psychological growth and happiness. Birth order can impact the development of these aspects through family dynamics.

Social learning theory: Proposed by Albert Bandura, this theory suggests that individuals learn behaviors through

observation. Birth order impacts happiness as siblings model and learn behaviors from one another.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Damian R. Murray and Brent W. Roberts conducted a study that takes a thorough look at how birth order interacts with personality traits in the family context. The researchers provided light on how birth order affects psychological qualities such as self-esteem and resilience by investigating sibling interactions and the diversification of roles and duties within households. Using a within-family analysis approach, the study provides significant insights into people's unique experiences based on their ordinal place within the family hierarchy. The findings advance our understanding of how family dynamics influence the development of personality traits and psychological well-being.

Gitanjali Bhardwaj and Bageshri Gogate conducted this study delves deeply into how sibling dynamics impact people's self-perceptions, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between birth order and self-esteem. The authors highlight the subtle ways in which birth order affects self-esteem across diverse family configurations by conducting a thorough assessment of existing research and empirical data. By combining findings from earlier studies, the study sheds light on the complex relationship between birth order and psychological well-being. The findings emphasize the need of taking into account family context when assessing people's self-esteem development, as well as potential implications for interventions aiming at fostering positive self-esteem.

Sulloway's seminal research investigates the association between birth order and numerous psychological traits and achievements. Sulloway posits the Family Niche Theory, based on a thorough review of historical and contemporary evidence, which contends that birth order affects personality development through disparities in parental investment and sibling competition. By taking into account both within-family dynamics and broader societal issues, the study sheds light on how birth order influences people's self-esteem, psychological resilience, and happiness. The findings help us comprehend the complicated interplay between family dynamics and personality development, which has consequences for theories of human behaviour and socialization.

Emily B. Ansell and Douglas M. Teti on this study delves into the relationship between birth order and emotional intelligence, specifically the function of sibling dynamics in emotional development. By investigating how birth order affects emotional awareness, regulation, and expression, the researchers discover patterns of sibling contact that lead to the development of emotional competencies. The study sheds light on the mechanisms by which birth order affects people's ability to manage interpersonal relationships and adjust to shifting emotional circumstances by analyzing sibling relationships and emotional experiences in depth. The findings emphasize the importance of family dynamics in understanding emotional development and resilience.

Emily McMullin and Elizabeth A. Gershoff in this research dives into the complex dynamics of birth order and its impact on happiness, with a special emphasis on the quality of sibling relationships and the effect of social comparison processes. The researchers used a mixed-method approach that included qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis to get insight on how birth order influences people's subjective well-being and life satisfaction. By investigating the structure of sibling interactions and the impact of social comparisons within the family setting, the study sheds light on the mechanisms by which birth order influences happiness outcomes. The findings emphasise the significance of taking into account family dynamics and interpersonal interactions when attempting to explain the complicated relationship between birth order and happiness.

Yuko Fukuya et al. in this study explores how birth order influences various psychological aspects, including self-esteem. Fukuya et al. found that birth order had virtually no effect on self-esteem among Japanese children aged 9-10. The findings challenge the commonly held belief that firstborns or last-borns have distinct self-esteem advantages or disadvantages.

Instead, the study suggests that self-esteem is more closely related to individual and familial factors rather than birth order alone. This research underscores the complexity of self-esteem development and the need to consider a broader range of influences beyond birth order. In examining the impact of birth order on psychological resilience, Fukuya et al. found significant differences. Their research indicates that last-born children tend to be the most resilient compared to their older siblings. The study attributes this resilience to the youngest siblings having more role models and support systems in the form of older siblings, which helps them develop essential social and emotional skills. This finding highlights the role of sibling dynamics and family structure in fostering resilience, suggesting that interventions aimed at enhancing resilience should consider these familial factors. Fukuya et al.'s study also investigates the relationship between birth order and happiness. The results indicate that middle-born children tend to have the lowest happiness scores and feel closer to their friends than to their parents. This finding supports the "forgotten middle child" stereotype to some extent. Conversely, youngest siblings were found to be the happiest, possibly due to receiving more attention and less pressure compared to their older counterparts. These insights into how birth order affects happiness emphasize the importance of considering family dynamics when addressing well-being.

Karen Erguner-Tekinalp and Neslihan Terzi (2016): This study examines how birth order affects psychological resilience among university students in Turkey. The results indicate that first-borns tend to exhibit higher resilience levels compared to their younger siblings. The authors suggest that the leadership roles often assumed by first-borns and the responsibility placed on them by parents may contribute to their enhanced resilience.

Kate Barnes (2022): Barnes' research, which included 211 participants from Ireland, explored the effects of birth order and family size on life satisfaction, self-esteem, and resilience. The study found no main effect of birth order on these variables but identified a significant interaction between family size and birth order for life satisfaction, particularly among middle children. As family size increased, middle children's life satisfaction scores also increased, suggesting a nuanced relationship between birth order, family dynamics, and happiness.

Methods

Significance of the Study

The study, "The impact of birth order on self-esteem, psychological resilience, and happiness among young adults," addresses a significant gap in understanding how birth order influences key psychological variables. Birth order has long been a topic of interest in psychological research, yet its specific effects on self-esteem, resilience, and happiness in young adults remain underexplored. This research is crucial as it examines how the order of one's birth within the family may shape their self-perceptions, coping abilities, and overall sense of well-being.

Understanding the relationship between birth order and these psychological factors can provide valuable insights into the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms. By identifying how birth order impacts self-esteem and psychological resilience, this study may inform strategies that enhance mental health outcomes and improve life satisfaction among young adults. As the dynamics of family structures evolve and individual psychological needs become more pronounced, this research is timely and essential for designing effective support systems tailored to the unique experiences of individuals based on their birth order.

Aim

To examine the relationship between perceived social support and self-stigma on mental health help-seeking among young adults.

Objective

- To investigate the association between birth order and levels of self-esteem, psychological resilience, and happiness among individuals.
- To analyze differences in self-esteem, psychological resilience, and happiness based on birth order positions (e.g., first-born, middle-born, last-born).
- To explore potential mechanisms or factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between birth order and self-esteem, psychological resilience, and happiness.
- To assess whether demographic variables (e.g., gender, family size) influence the observed relationships between birth order and psychological attributes.

- To provide insights into the practical implications of birth order on psychological well-being and potential interventions for promoting positive outcomes across different birth order positions.

Hypotheses

- There is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and subjective happiness.
- There is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and resilience.
- There is a significant positive relationship between resilience and subjective happiness.
- There are significant differences in the levels of self-esteem, resilience, and subjective happiness between first-born, middle-born and last-born.

Variables

Independent variable: Birth order

Dependent variable: Self-esteem, psychological resilience and happiness

Research design: Correlational research design

Sample and techniques

Population: Young adults residing in both urban and rural areas

Sample: The sample is young adults residing in both urban and rural areas.

Sampling method: Simple random sampling method

Inclusion criteria: Participants should be young adults aged between 18 and 35 years.

Tools Used

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE): The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) was constructed by Morris Rosenberg and was designed to measure self-esteem among individuals. The RSE consists of a series of statements related to self-esteem, and individuals will rate their agreement on a Likert scale (e.g., 1=strongly agree to 4=strongly disagree)

Resilience Scale (RS): The Resilience Scale (RS) was constructed by Gail M. Wagnild and Heather M. Young. It was designed to measure resilience among participants. The RS consists of a series of statements related to resilience, and participants will rate their agreement on a Likert scale (e.g., 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree).

Subjective happiness scale: The subjective happiness scale was constructed by Lyubomirsky S, and Lepper, HS and was designed to measure happiness among individuals. It is a 4-item scale designed to measure subjective happiness. The

scale consists of a series of statements related to happiness, and individuals will rate their agreement by selecting the option they think describes them best [1-4].

RESULTS

The study was directed to examine the impact of birth order on self-esteem, resilience and happiness among young adults. A total of 70 participants, both males and females participated in the study. Three scales were employed: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) was constructed by Morris Rosenberg and was designed to measure self-esteem among individuals. The Resilience Scale (RS) was constructed by Gail

M. Wagnild and Heather M. Young. It was designed to measure resilience among participants. The subjective happiness scale was constructed by Lyubomirsky S and Lepper HS and was designed to measure subjective happiness among individuals. The study examined comparisons and correlations. Kolmogorov Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk correlation tests were conducted to analyze the relationships between the variables, and the scores were recorded. Additionally, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted (Table 1).

Table 1: Tests of normality of variables self-esteem, resilience and subjective happiness.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
SE	0.095	70	0.189	0.968	70	0.069
RS	0.119	70	0.016	0.943	70	0.003
SH	0.092	70	.200*	0.972	70	0.12

Note: *This is a lower bound of the true significance.

For SE, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test produced a statistic of .095 with a corresponding p-value of .189. For SH, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test produced a statistic of .092 with a corresponding p-value of .200. The p-value for SE (0.189) and SH (0.200) are greater than the common alpha level of 0.05, indicating that the distributions of SE and SH are not significantly different from a normal distribution. For RS (0.016), the p-value is less than 0.05, suggesting that the distribution of RS is significantly different from a normal distribution [5].

Shapiro-Wilk test

The p-values for SE (0.069) and SH (0.120) are greater than 0.05, indicating that SE and SH do not significantly deviate from normality. For RS (0.003), the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a significant deviation from normality.

DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to understand the impact of birth order on self-esteem, psychological resilience and subjective happiness among young adults. The results of this study shed important light on the fact that among the young adults in this group, birth order has no discernible effect on resilience, self-esteem, or subjective happiness [6].

Self-esteem: Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) which was constructed by Morris Rosenberg and was designed to measure self-esteem among individuals. The findings of this study revealed that birth order does not significantly impact self-esteem among young adults. This is consistent with several contemporary studies that challenge the longstanding assumptions about birth order effects on personality and self-esteem. Self-esteem, a multifaceted construct, is influenced by numerous factors

including individual experiences, parental support, social interactions, and cultural background. The absence of a significant relationship in this study suggests that self-esteem is more heavily influenced by these external factors rather than the ordinal position within the family. This challenges the theories proposed by Adler and other proponents of birth order effects, who posited that first-borns, middle children, and last-borns would exhibit distinct personality traits. Instead, it aligns with the research of Jefferson, Herbst, and McCrae, who found that personality traits and self-perceptions are shaped by a complex interplay of factors beyond birth order alone. This finding highlights the necessity of considering a wider array of influences when examining the development of self-esteem in young adults.

Psychological resilience: Similarly, the study found no significant impact of birth order on psychological resilience. Resilience, defined as the ability to adapt positively in the face of adversity, is influenced by a combination of genetic, environmental, and social factors. The results suggest that resilience is not significantly determined by one's birth order but rather by other elements such as life experiences, personal relationships, and supportive environments. This finding aligns with the resilience theory posited by Wagnild and Young, which emphasizes the importance of individual factors and external support systems in fostering resilience. Additionally, this finding suggests that resilience-building interventions should focus more on enhancing individual strengths and external support systems rather than addressing perceived disadvantages or advantages related to birth order. Understanding the sources of resilience can better inform practices and policies aimed at bolstering mental health, especially in educational and therapeutic settings where fostering resilience is a key objective [7].

Subjective happiness: The analysis also indicated no significant relationship between birth order and subjective happiness. Subjective happiness, which includes an individual's overall life satisfaction and emotional well-being, appears to be influenced by a myriad of factors, including personal achievements, social relationships, and mental health. The lack of a significant association in this study suggests that happiness is not predominantly influenced by one's position in the family hierarchy. This finding is consistent with the research by Lyubomirsky and Lepper, who emphasize that happiness is a subjective experience shaped by personal and environmental factors rather than fixed familial roles. It underscores the importance of looking at broader social and personal factors when considering what contributes to an individual's happiness. These results suggest that interventions aimed at improving happiness should focus on enhancing individual and social factors rather than addressing birth order [8].

Correlational analysis: The correlational analysis aimed to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between birth order and the psychological variables of self-esteem, resilience, and subjective happiness. Using the Pearson correlation coefficient, the analysis revealed no significant correlations between birth order and these variables. Specifically, the correlation coefficient between birth order and self-esteem was $r=0.05$ ($p>0.05$), indicating a very weak and non-significant positive relationship. Similarly, the correlation between birth order and psychological resilience was $r=-0.03$ ($p>0.05$), suggesting a negligible and non-significant negative relationship. Finally, the correlation coefficient between birth order and subjective happiness was $r=0.02$ ($p>0.05$), indicating a very weak and non-significant positive relationship. These coefficients suggest that birth order does not have a statistically significant impact on self-esteem, resilience, or happiness among young adults. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests supported the normality of the data distributions, validating the use of the Pearson correlation coefficient. Furthermore, the Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to compare the mean ranks of the psychological variables across different birth order groups. The test results were non-significant ($p>0.05$), reinforcing the conclusion that birth order does not significantly influence these psychological constructs [9].

Key findings: The study, "Impact of birth order on self-esteem, psychological resilience and subjective well-being" sought to investigate if birth order has an influence on self-esteem, psychological resilience and subjective happiness among young adults.

The study used a correlational design with a sample of 70 young adults and three primary instruments: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). It was developed by Morris Rosenberg, the Resilience Scale (RS) by Gail M. Wagnild and

Heather M. Young and the subjective happiness scale by Lyubomirsky.

The primary findings of this study suggest that birth order does not significantly influence self-esteem, psychological resilience, or subjective happiness among young adults. These results contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the influence of birth order on personality and psychological outcomes, suggesting that birth order may not be as influential as previously thought. The study highlights the importance of considering a broader range of factors when examining psychological traits and well-being.

CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to investigate how young adults' subjective happiness, psychological resilience, and self-esteem are affected by their birth order. The results of this study showed no significant relationships between birth order and resilience, happiness, or self-esteem. The

Pearson correlation coefficients indicated very weak and non-significant relationships across these variables which runs counter to conventional views that imply a considerable influence of birth order on personality and psychological consequences. The idea that ordinal rank within a family has a significant impact on psychological well-being is called into question by the relatively weak and non-significant correlations across these variables that the Pearson correlation coefficients revealed. These findings highlight how intricate human development is and how numerous factors influence psychological characteristics. Understanding that resilience, happiness, and self-esteem are complex concepts impacted by a range of social, genetic, and environmental factors is crucial. This study emphasizes the value of examining factors other than birth order, such as parenting practices, socioeconomic circumstances, personal experiences, and cultural settings. Furthermore, this study contributes to the ongoing academic debate regarding the relevance of birth order in personality and psychological research. The findings suggest that while birth order may play a role in family dynamics, its impact on psychological outcomes is not as pronounced as previously believed. In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between birth order and psychological traits, challenging traditional assumptions and advocating for a broader perspective in understanding the factors that shape self-esteem, resilience, and happiness. By recognizing the complexity of psychological development, we can better support young adults in achieving optimal mental health and well-being.

Implications: The findings of this study have important implications for understanding the factors that contribute to self-esteem, resilience, and happiness. Mental health professionals, educators, and parents should consider a broader range of influences beyond birth order when supporting young adults in their psychological development. Interventions aimed at

enhancing self-esteem, resilience, and happiness should focus on individual strengths, life experiences, and social support systems rather than ordinal position in the family. These results also suggest that practitioners should adopt a holistic approach when assessing and addressing psychological well-being in young adults.

LIMITATIONS

- The use of self-report measures for self-esteem, psychological resilience and subjective happiness includes possible biases such as social desirability and recollection mistakes, which can affect the accuracy of the results.
- The study's sample was predominantly made up of young people from Bangalore, which may limit the findings' applicability to other age groups, cultural backgrounds, or geographic regions.
- The sample size and effect sizes may have altered the statistical power of the studies, affecting the capacity to identify tiny but relevant associations between variables.

Suggestions for future studies

To increase the generalisability of the results, larger and more varied sample sizes should be used in future studies. Incorporating individuals from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds may yield a more thorough comprehension of the possible impacts of birth order on resilience, happiness, and self-esteem.

Conducting longitudinal research would facilitate the comprehension of the enduring impacts of birth order on psychological consequences. Following people over time may show how self-esteem, resiliency, and contentment are influenced by one's birth order at various life stages and situations.

Examining the relationship between parenting practices and birth order may offer a more profound understanding of how resilience, happiness, and self-esteem grow. Future research could look at how various parenting styles might either lessen or increase the impact of birth order on these psychological characteristics.

Understanding the impact of sibling relationships and family dynamics in general should improve our comprehension of how psychological consequences are influenced by birth order. Research on the nature of sibling relationships and the emotional atmosphere in the family may provide insightful insights.

Subsequent investigations may broaden the focus by including other psychological variables, such as social competence, anxiety, and depression. This more comprehensive approach may facilitate the identification of more complex impacts of birth order on a greater variety of psychological outcomes.

It might be possible to investigate how cultural norms and values affect the correlation between psychological qualities and birth order by doing cross-cultural research. Comprehending these cultural variations may offer an international viewpoint on the consequences of birth order and aid in the creation of culturally appropriate solutions.

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