

Effect of Birth Order on Educational Attainment and Professional Success

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Abstract: *This research paper investigates the controversial idea that birth order of an individual can influence their personal growth and success. It specifically looks into how birth order might affect personality characteristics and achievement levels. In the context of India, birth order is particularly significant, as firstborn and youngest children often receive more affection, care, and attention. The study analysed 311 data points from participants employed in corporate settings, aged between 30 and 50. It primarily concentrates on self-assessed indicators of success, educational qualifications, and demographic traits, gathered through surveys and interviews. The relationship between birth order and factors such as the family support, family type, number of siblings, current economic status, and financial status at the time of childhood was explored utilizing descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Findings in literature suggest that, birth order does play a role in shaping personality and success, with firstborns typically demonstrating greater confidence and self-esteem, likely as a result of receiving increased parental attention. Meanwhile, the youngest and middle-born children develop various coping strategies depending on their order within the family. The research concludes that although birth order affects personality and success, these outcomes are also influenced by other social and familial elements.*

Keywords: Birth order, Qualification, Success, Family type, Family size

1. Introduction

Birth order indicates the order in which children arrive in a family, such as firstborn or secondborn. It is widely recognized that birth order can significantly influence psychological development, though this assertion has faced considerable skepticism. Recent research shows that children born earlier tend to have marginally higher intelligence scores on average, yet there is little substantial evidence linking birth order to personality changes. Still, the notion that birth order significantly shapes personality remains prevalent in popular psychology and culture. Extensive scientific investigation has been devoted to the potential effects of birth order on personality, with the most comprehensive and rigorously conducted studies indicating either no effect or a minimal one. Accurately controlling for all statistically significant variables associated with birth order is challenging in this research field. Factors such as family size and various social and demographic elements can complicate findings. For example, compared to smaller families, larger families frequently have worse socioeconomic standing. As a result, while ranking third, thirdborn children are statistically more likely than their firstborn siblings to come from larger, less affluent families. It's important to take this context into account if thirdborns display particular features. Alfred Adler developed the idea of birth order theory in the 20th century, arguing that a person's character and development are influenced by the order in which they were born. Adler also emphasized the importance of family, community, and social factors in personality formation. Many contemporary psychologists maintain that one's position within the family's birth order plays a critical role in shaping personality.

Firstborn children often enjoy undivided attention from their parents for a period, as these new parents are typically more focused on their first child. They tend to be very cautious regarding all elements of parenting, from minor injuries to

early educational endeavours. This concentrated observation benefits older children significantly. Although it is a common stereotype that middle children act as mediators, there is some truth to this belief. Without the status of being the eldest or youngest, middle children often seek to establish their unique role within the family. They generally appreciate negotiating and finding compromises, allowing them to relate easily to individuals of various ages, even those outside their own. Additionally, middle children may feel competitive towards their older siblings, whether through achieving better academic results, surpassing their sporting achievements, or mastering new skills. Alternatively, if they choose a more rebellious route, they might still find success. According to Adler, the youngest child in a family usually takes one of two paths in their personality development. One path leads toward success, where they strive to excel and often become the family's reference point. The other possibility is for the youngest to become avoidant, which can stem from a lack of confidence or ambition. Youngest children might also enjoy freedoms that their older siblings do not, as parents tend to relax their rules over time, allowing for a more hands-off approach. In an engaging, creative, and adventurous family environment, the youngest is frequently secure in their role within the family.

Previous studies have produced varied results, with some indicating minimal effects while others highlight significant correlations.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To find the statistical significance of the relationship between birth order and professional success.
- To assess the influence of birth order on educational attainment.
- To explore the connection between birth order and socioeconomic achievement.

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- To identify the shortcomings in earlier research studies.

1.1 Hypotheses:

The researchers have embarked on this study with the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant relationship between the order of birth and career success, specifically regarding current financial status.

Hypothesis 2: Birth order is not expected to have a meaningful influence on academic success, particularly concerning the highest educational attainment.

Hypothesis 3: The order of birth is not predicted to significantly affect traits such as confidence, personal ambition, or interpersonal skills.

Hypothesis 4: Birth order is not likely to have a notable impact on academic achievement, as personal motivation and external support are considered more influential than family birth order. These hypotheses enable the investigation of various possible outcomes and can be examined through both qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

2. Literature Survey

This section outlines literature reviews related to prior investigations on birth order and its implications for human development. Adams B (1972) offered a thorough summary of the studies regarding birth order and its influence on different facets of human behavior and development. He stated, "Birth order serves as an indicator of differences in age, physical size, and social standing, all of which shape personality. Moreover, birth order pertains to the roles and positions available to children within the family structure. Generally, firstborns, who often take on the role of surrogate parents, display higher levels of conscientiousness than their younger siblings. In contrast, later - born children tend to be more agreeable, extroverted, and less traditional." Sulloway, F. (2001), and Forbes G (1971) investigated the connection between candidates' birth order and their success in the 1970 Illinois General Elections, discovering that both firstborn and lastborn candidates were more successful in their elections than those born in the middle.

Nissenbaum, J. (2012) explored how birth order relates to the academic and social experiences of college students, finding that only children and middle - borns with same - gender siblings scored lowest in academic and social achievement and were less likely to have a positive view of their birth order. According to Rohrer, J. et al. (2015), birth order has no discernible effects on traits like extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, or imagination. They came to the conclusion that, aside from the intellectual realm, birth order has no discernible effects on long - term personality traits. Pinquart, M et al. (2020) carried out a random - effects meta - analysis involving 169 studies, asserting that parents should instill positive academic expectations in their children. They found that parents' involvement in checking homework and communicating with teachers was not as beneficial in meeting academic expectations as fostering positive aspirations and encouraging engagement in school activities. Claxton, R. P. (1994) examined how perceived parental

feedback correlates with birth order, hypothesizing that firstborns or only children would report receiving more process - related input from parents, while lastborns would receive more feedback regarding outcomes. The results indicated that lastborns reported significantly less of both types of feedback compared to firstborns or middle children. In their study, Premnath, P. et al. (2021) collected information on the background, birth order, gender, age, number of siblings, parents' income, and level of education of 88 participants. While acknowledging that the effect of birth order on academic performance may vary by nation, family size, and cultural setting, their findings indicated a connection between birth order and academic success.

Prior research on this subject had limitations, often focusing solely on school - aged children or having a narrow scope of inquiry. To overcome these limitations, our study includes a wider array of factors, such as current annual income, workplace position, family type, and the level of support received from family during upbringing. These additional factors have been incorporated to analyze their correlation with birth order, enabling a more comprehensive exploration of the relationship between birth order and overall life success.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

This research utilizes a descriptive design to investigate the link between birth order and various indicators of life success, such as career accomplishments, personality characteristics, and social behaviors. The research involved a sample of 311 individuals aged between 30 and 50 years, with 74.92% (233) identifying as male and 25.08% (78) as female. Participants were categorized according to age group, job role, and academic qualifications.

3.2 Procedure

Data was gathered through surveys and interviews. Participants filled out a Google form that included both open and closed questions to furnish demographic details and achievement ratings.

3.3 Measures

The independent variable examined was birth order, which was classified as firstborn, middleborn, and lastborn. Additionally, various categorical demographic factors were included, such as family size, gender, educational attainment, and life achievements.

3.4 Data Analysis

A chi - square test was employed to assess the potential relationship between the two variables in the dataset. In this analysis, factors like birth order, financial status, childhood support and attention, as well as workplace position, were organized in a contingency table. By comparing the null hypothesis with the alternative hypothesis, insights regarding the connections between these variables were obtained.

3.5 Research Questions

Sr. No	Parameters	Classification	No. of Respondents
1	Gender	Male	233
		Female	78
2	Age	30 - 35	190
		35 - 40	51
		40 - 45	31
		45 - 50	39
3	Financial condition	Lower	42
		Middle	208
		High	61
4	Position in the workplace	Employee	186
		Head	59
		Owner	66
5	Education	Graduate	169
		Post - graduate	116
		Doctorate	26
6	Birth order	1st	133
		2nd	123
		3rd	30
		4th and above	25
7	Annual income range	Below 5 lakhs	102
		5 - 10 Lakhs	116
		10 - 15 Lakhs	64
		15 - 20 Lakhs	29
8	Support and attention of your family in childhood	Not at all	32
		Moderate	159
		Full support and attention	120
9	Family type	Nuclear	207
		Joint	104
10	Family size	3	53
		4	128
		5	68
		6 and above	62

4. Results and Discussion

Birth order	Highest Educational Degree	Level of Confidence	Communication skill	Annual Income Range	Current Financial Condition	Position at Workplace
Chi - square statistics	9.58	17	5.42	11.6	10.1	10.3
P - value	0.144	0.03	0.712	0.071	0.04	0.036
Significance	Not Associated	Associated	Not Associated	Not Associated	Associated	Associated

5. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that variables such as education level ($p = 0.144$) and communication skills ($p = 0.712$) are not affected by a person's birth order. Conversely, a moderate relationship is identified between current annual income and birth order ($p = 0.07$), with this income significantly linked to confidence levels ($p = 0.030$) and current job position ($p = 0.036$). This suggests that birth order may have an influence on an individual's confidence. Furthermore, it affects their financial situation and workplace role. Additionally, the statistically significant connection of current financial status and job position with the highest level of education is influenced by childhood financial status, the number of siblings, and the type of family (nuclear or joint). In the Indian cultural context, children born first, especially in larger or financially struggling families, often receive more resources and responsibilities, potentially leading to better educational and career achievements. However, changing family dynamics and socioeconomic developments are gradually lessening these disparities, suggesting a movement

towards more equal opportunities across different birth orders.

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