



THE EFFECT OF BIRTH ORDER AND FAMILY TYPE ON PERSONALITY AMONG INDIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to investigate effect of birth order and family type on personality. A survey was conducted on a sample of 100 Indian college students, 50 males and 50 females with a mean age of 20.02 years. Among the sample, 47 were the eldest in their house-hold, 28 were the youngest, 2 were middle children, and 13 were the sole children in their family. From the sample, 19 were reared in a joint family, 76 in a nuclear family, while 5 in a single parent house-hold. For this study, Myers-Briggs type indicator form M was used. SPSS version 16.0 was used for data analysis and Chi Square test of Independence was used to analyse the results. The results showed that there was no significant difference in the personality traits of the individuals with different birth order or family type.

KEYWORDS : Personality, Adolescence, Birth order, Family type

INTRODUCTION

Psychologists while defining personality, (Morgan, King, Weisz, and Schopler, 1986), tend to focus on the traits within a person, or traits visible through the behaviour, or both. Gordon Allport, 1937, in a very famous definition, mentioned both the inner and the outer traits, but focussing on the inner qualities said, "Personality is the dynamic organisation within the individuals of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to the environment." Walter Mischel (1976) mentioned both the inner and the outer traits of an individual, but focussed more on the outer behavioural characteristics. As personality is quite difficult to be measured scientifically, no single explanation of personality has been approved by all the psychologists. This led to the formation of many broad theories of personality. (Morgan, King, Weisz, and Schopler, 1986) These theories have been grouped into four main categories-

- (1) Type and trait theories- focussing on people's characteristics and how they can be organized into systems
- (2) Dynamic Approaches- laid emphasis on the interaction between motives, impulses, and psychological processes.
- (3) Learning and behaviour approaches- emphasize the conditioning and other learning processes, and habit formation.
- (4) Humanistic Processes- focus on the importance of self, and the subjective view of the environment.

The dynamic approach is based on the psycho-dynamic perspective originated by Sigmund Freud. His beliefs in the influence of the unconscious on the conscious part of mind were published in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, (1901) which was received with much criticism.

Alfred Alder was also one of the many psychologists who were in disagreement with the Freud's theory of personality development. He developed a theory focussing on the feelings of inferiority and seeking feelings of superiority.

Alder also developed a theory that **the birth order of a child affects the personality of an individual**. He said that the **firstborn** children feel inferior to the younger siblings because they are suddenly thrown back by the shift of this focus when a younger sibling enters the family. So they might become a little difficult and over-achieving. On the positive side, the first-borns might become responsible and grow up to be responsible, and disciplined adults. **Middle children**, according to Adler, have a much easier rearing. They have a feeling of superiority over the elder sibling who got dethroned by his arrival, and they also get to dominate the younger sibling. These children tend to be very competitive. They have a habit of being preferred and a compulsive need to "win" in every situation. The **younger** siblings are supposed to be the pampered and the protected ones, but they feel the most inferior. They grow up in the shadow of the other siblings and have a tendency to please everyone.

For the behaviourists, personality is a set of learned responses or habits (DeGrandpre, 2000; Dollard & Miller, 1950). They share one common belief- the behaviours that contribute to the personality development are conditioned or learned. (Morgan, King, Weisz, and Schopler, 1986).

Carl Rogers, as a humanist, believed that parents and others react to children's behaviours either in a positive manner or with disagreement, and disapproval. The way these opinions are expressed might lead a child to label their actions, or thoughts as unworthy, and they might abandon those aspects of their "self". (Ciccharelli and White, 2015).

Diana Baumrind (1967) talks about three basic styles of parenting, each of which may lead to the development of certain personality characteristics in the children. These styles of parenting are dependent upon two dimensions: responsiveness (warmth), and demanding (control).

- (1) Authoritarian parenting (high on demanding, low on responsiveness)- overly concerned with rules. These parents are stern, rigid, controlling and uncompromising. Children raised under this parenting style are often resentful, insecure and withdrawn. As teenagers they are rebellious, and view authority as a negative figure in their life.
- (2) Permissive parenting – very few demands on the behaviour of the children.
 - a) Permissive neglectful parenting (low on responsiveness, low on demanding)- no involvement in children's life
 - b) Permissive indulgent parenting (high on responsiveness, low on demanding) - too involved in their children's life. Children from both kinds of permissive parenting tend to be immature, selfish, dependent, lacking social skills and disliked by peers.
- (3) Authoritative parenting (high on responsiveness, high on demanding)- combination of firm limits with love, warmth, respect, and affection. They are more democratic, the punishments are non-physical, and allow the child to put in their views. Children here are self-reliant and independent.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Personality has been studied through majorly four different perspectives as studied earlier-

Psychodynamic perspective- Modern researches, mainly in the area of hypnosis and subliminal perception, have shown that there are influencers that exist outside the boundaries of normal conscious awareness. (Borgeat & Goulet, 1983; Bryant & McConkey, 1989; Kihlstrom, 1987, 1999, 2001).

Learning and Behaviourist perspective- Many researchers have verified the social learning theory, and its concepts (Backenstrass et al., 2008; Bandura, 1965; Catanzaro et al., 2000; DeGrandpre, 2000;

Domjan et al., 2000; Skinner 1989).

Humanistic perspective- The term positive psychology was first used by Maslow in 1954, and this field has emerged more recently as a new branch of psychology. Both share the fundamental ideologies of their focus on human potential, identification of strengths, and positive aspects of humanity (Mahoney, 2005; Seligman, 2005; Snyder & Lopez, 2005; Waterman, 2013).

Type and trait perspective- Walter Mischel, a social cognitive theorist, has said that there is a trait-situation interaction (Mischel&Shoda, 1995). The five-factor model (OCEAN) has been tested and approved by many researchers. Although regional variations exist in the personality development, a cross cultural study done across 56 countries found evidence of these 5 factors in all primary cultural regions of the world (Scmitt et al, 2007).

Personality development has been known to be effected by many factors. Many studies over the years have highlighted a few factors. Among them are birth order and family type:

1) **Birth Order:** Some researchers have found evidence to support the link between birth and personality and described in Adler's theory (Gupta, 2017; Stein, 2001; Sulloway, 1996; Dixon et al., 2008).

Beer and Horn (2000) researched the influence of rearing order on personality development among two adoption cohorts. Clear difference was only found in the levels of conscientiousness. Armitage (2007) conducted a study on "Birth Order: College students' perceptions of their ordinal position compared to Alfred Adler's categories" confirming Adler's theory. Healey (2008) conducted a study on 'Effects of Birth Order on personality: a within- Family examination of sibling niche differentiation'. Results revealed that conscientiousness was higher in first born children, while openness to experience was higher for second born children.

2) **Family Type:** Bilquis and Mayuri (1999) studied the effect of family type and size on personality development and found that both the factors indirectly influence the personality development of the children. Dayal and Mishra (2012) studied the effects of family size, age and gender on the pattern of personality formation and found that the children of the small family were more reserved, detached and critical when in comparison to those reared in a large family and also showed signs of being more demanding, impatient, excitable and over-active.

Rationale:

Personality has yet to receive an explanation or definition that justice to its concept. Personality is a dynamic concept, and is constantly affected by many genetic and environmental conditions. Birth order and family type are two variables that have been taken into account for affecting personality in many researches quoted above. This study was done to verify these findings so as to facilitate career, parenting, and proper child rearing. It is necessary to recheck old ideas, and change or modify them with the changing times.

METHODS

Problem:

Is there a significant relation between birth order and personality, and family type and personality?

AIM:

To analyse the relation between the personality of an individual and their birth order, and the personality of an individual and the structure of the family they grew up in.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To find out if there is any relation between the personality of an individual and their birth order.
2. To find out if there is any relation between the personality of an individual and the structure of the family they grew up in.

Hypotheses:

H01-There is no significant relation between the personality of an individual and their birth order in the family.

H0 2- There is no significant relation between the personality of an individual and the type of family they grew up in.

Research design:

The research is a quantitative study which aims at studying the effect of birth order and family type on personality. And for this, Pearson Chi Square test of independence is run. The sampling method employed is purposive sampling and the instrument used for measurement of personality is MBTI form M. The Method of data collection used was survey method.

Research sample

The sample consisted of 100 students of age group 17-25 years, (50 males and 50 females). This age denotes the transition of adolescence into adulthood. The mean age of the sample is 20.02 years. The standard deviation is 1.205. Among the sample, 47 were the eldest in their house-hold, 28 were the youngest, 2 were middle children, and 13 were the sole children in their family. When family type is seen, 19 of them were reared in a joint family, 76 in a nuclear family, while 5 in a single parent house-hold.

Sampling Criteria:

The students pursuing higher education and belonging to an age group of 17-25 years from all cultures and religions who were willing to participate were included. Working class and uneducated population was not included. Any other age group was not included.

Variables:

1. Independent Variables
 1. Birth Order
 2. Family Type
2. Dependent Variable:
 1. Personality Type

Tools

1. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator SCALE Form M
Time- 15-25 minutes

Authors: Katharine C. Briggs, Isabel Briggs Myers, Mary H. McCaulley (revised manual), Naomi L. Quenk (revised manual), Allen L. Hammer (revised manual).

Reliability and Validity: The authors report the usual estimates of reliability, including split-half, coefficient alpha, test and retest reliability, which indicate acceptable levels of the reliability for the scores. If one uses the four MBTI scales (scored continuously) as a unit of analysis, then responses show very high levels of internal consistency (>.90) and acceptable levels of test-retest reliability (.83-.97 for a 4-week interval). The construct validity of the four factor model of the MBTI was investigated using confirmatory factor analysis.

Procedure:

1. The subjects were approached and rapport was build.
2. After that, informed consent was taken and data was collected.
3. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.
4. Pearson chi square test was done to analyse the scores.

Analysis:

The analysis was done using the SPSS(Statistical package for Social Sciences) 16.0 software.

1. Mean and SD were found out to organise and summarise the data.
2. The Pearson Chi Square test of independence was used to see if there was any significant relation between the variables, i.e. birth order and personality, and family type and personality.

Ethical Issues:

1. The tools freely available in the psychology department of the university were used.
2. Informed consent was taken from the subject before collecting data.
3. Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained throughout the study.

RESULT

The sample was distributed in the dichotomies in the following frequency:

Table 1.1 showing the sample distribution in the dichotomies.

S. No.	Dichotomy	Frequency
1.	Extroversion	58
	Introversion	42
2.	Sensitive	54

	Intuitive	46
3.	Thinking	54
	Feeling	46
4.	Judging	54
	Perceiving	46

The result were found using Chi square test of independence for each variable. The value of Chi square for the variables is given below:

Table 1.2 showing the chi-square values of the sample for the variables

Independent Variable	Extraversion-Introversion	Sensing-Intuitive	Thinking-Feeling	Judging-Perceiving
Birth Order	.153	.072	.903	.660
Family Type	.580	.280	.278	.884

The degree of freedom of the sample is $(2-1)(5-1)=4$, and thus, for the results to be significant, the values should be above 9.488.

Now, if we see table 1.1, the value determining the relation of extraversion-introversion, sensing-intuitive, thinking-feeling and judging-perceiving, with Birth order is .153, .072, .903, and .660, and hence, not significant.

Thus, H01- there is no significant relation between the personality of an individual and their birth order, is accepted.

And, now in column 2, we see that the values for extraversion-introversion, sensing-intuitive, thinking-feeling and judging-perceiving, and their relation with Family Type are .580, .280, .278, and .884 respectively, and hence, not significant.

Thus, H02 -there is no significant relation between the personality of an individual and the type of family they grew up in, is accepted.

Thus, we conclude that: NO SIGNIFICANT RELATION WAS FOUND.

DISCUSSION

A quantitative research was conducted to find out the relationship between birth order and personality, and family type and personality. A survey was done on a sample of 100 college students from India, constituting of 50 males and 50 females belonging to an age group of 17-25. The mean age of the sample was 20.02 years. MBTI form M was used for this study. Chi Square test of independence was run to find the relation between the variables. The Pearson coefficient value, however, was found to be insignificant at 0.05 level for all the variables and their dichotomies. The research has concluded that both the independent variables i.e. birth order and family don't have any effect on the personality on the individuals.

Many researches show that birth order and family type infact do not affect personality of an individual. Other researchers point towards sloppy methodology, and the bias of the researchers towards the birth order idea (Beer & Horn, 2001; Freese et al., 1999; Ioannidis, 1998). Falbo and Poston (1993) conducted a study on 'The Academic, Personality and Physical outcomes of only children in China' and found very few effects. Ha and Tam (2011) studied the effect of birth order on personality and academic achievement, but results showed no significant difference. There could be many reasons for this.

- The families taken into account are mostly nuclear, so the children mostly get the similar environment.
- The parents now-a-days are more educated and aware about the various parenting styles and their effects.
- The sample consisted of all the hostellers living in the same environment and belonging to a more or less same socio-economic background.
- The education of the sample has been more or less the same too.

Limitations

1. The study was done on a small scale, a larger study could give a better insight on the topic.
2. The study was done only on one age group belonging to a similar educational background.

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