

## Impact of Birth Order on Social Support, Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement

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### Abstract

The order in which a person is born can significantly influence various aspects of their development, especially for college students. This review explores how birth rank affects areas like emotional support, self-esteem, and academic success. Firstborns often exhibit strong leadership skills and academic prowess, while middle siblings may feel less supported but develop better bonds with peers. The youngest siblings are typically seen as more adaptable and socially skilled. While these patterns can vary across different cultures and family dynamics, they persist into adulthood. Understanding these effects can help educators and counselors provide more targeted support to college students, enriching both their academic and personal growth.

**Key Words** (Birth sequence, social assistance, self-worth, educational success, university students, sibling relationships, character traits.)

### Introduction

Birth order refers to the sequence in which children are born into a family, and it has been a point of interest in psychology for many years. Alfred Adler initially suggested that a child's position in the family shapes their environment and parental expectations, potentially influencing their personality, coping strategies, and social interactions. Recent studies have explored how birth order affects social support, self-esteem, and academic performance. For instance, later-born children may develop strong peer relationships and social skills due to a more stimulating environment, while firstborns might gain higher self-esteem from their leadership roles but face

pressure to achieve. Academic performance is often believed to favor firstborns due to greater parental investment, though research shows mixed results in this regard. To grasp the intricate ways birth order influences these factors, further literature review is needed, merging evidence and theoretical insights to clarify these relationships.

### Rational of the study

The impact of birth order on personality, behavior, and life outcomes is well-established, particularly during the transformative college years. Although previous research has focused mainly on childhood and adolescence, there is a lack of studies addressing college students, who navigate identity formation and academic challenges. College students often reevaluate their family roles and social identities, which may affect their self-esteem, perceived social support, and academic motivation. For instance, firstborns might carry leadership traits and high expectations, while later-born children may be more socially adaptable. In cultures where family dynamics are emphasized, these birth order influences can persist into adulthood. Understanding these effects among college students offers valuable insights for educators and counselors, highlighting the need for tailored support to enhance well-being and academic success. This research aims to explore how birth order continues to shape social support, self-esteem, and academic performance in higher education, ultimately aiding in the development of customized mental health and advising strategies.

### Review of Literature

**Social Support and Birth order:** Social support is essential for a person's ability to manage emotions, cope with stress, and maintain psychological health. The order in which a child is born can affect how they perceive the availability and quality of that support. Firstborn children typically experience greater parental involvement, while those born later may form closer connections with peers as a result of their upbringing.

Salmon and Daly (1998) observed that middle children often feel they lack emotional support from their parents. This sense of being overlooked may lead them to seek out stronger friendships and depend more on friends or other support systems outside the family.

**Self Esteem and Birth order:** Self-esteem reflects how individuals perceive their worth, and studies show mixed results regarding birth order's impact on it. Kidwell (1982) suggested that firstborns tend to receive more parental support, boosting their self-esteem, while middle children may experience "middle-child syndrome," potentially leading to lower self-esteem.

However, Fukuya et al. (2021) found no significant differences in self-esteem based on birth order in their Japanese sample, indicating that factors like culture, parenting styles, and individual traits can shape these outcomes differently.

**Academic Achievement and Birth order: Research** indicates a notable link between birth order and academic achievement, with firstborns often outperforming their younger siblings in education. A prominent study by Black, Devereux, and Salvanes (2005) found that firstborn children tend to have higher IQs and a better chance of educational success than their later-born peers. This trend may be attributed to the resource dilution model, which highlights how parental resources like time, money, and attention are primarily concentrated on the first child.

Research by Bjerkedal et al. (2007) found that firstborn children tend to score higher on intelligence tests than their younger siblings, and this advantage often translates into better educational outcomes.

Research by Paulhus et al. (1999) revealed that firstborn children often show higher levels of conscientiousness, which is linked to better academic performance. In contrast, later-born children tend to be more rebellious and open to new experiences.

## Conclusion

The reviewed literature indicates that birth order has a complex yet significant impact on the psychological and academic experiences of college students. Firstborn children frequently enjoy greater parental attention and are more likely to demonstrate traits like conscientiousness and academic diligence. Middle children might find it challenging to establish their identity within the family structure but often create strong support networks among their peers. Youngest siblings are inclined to exhibit creativity and sociability, which aids them in adapting to various settings.



Although there are some discrepancies in the results, particularly across different cultures, it is evident that birth order interacts with environmental and familial elements to affect self-esteem, social support, and academic success. Understanding these trends can be crucial for student support services, enabling educators and mental health practitioners to provide more customized interventions designed to enhance both educational and emotional outcomes for students based on their family backgrounds.

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