

## Impact of ordinal position on self concept among adolescents

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### ARTICLE INFO:

**Received** : 15.09.2012  
**Revised** : 30.03.2013  
**Accepted** : 03.05.2013

### KEY WORDS:

Adolescents, Ordinal position, Self concept

### HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE :

Mishra, Preeti and Kiran, U.V. (2013). Impact of ordinal position on self concept among adolescents, *Adv. Res. J. Soc. Sci.*, 4 (1) : 35 - 38.

### ABSTRACT

The present study is to examine the impact of ordinal position on self concept of adolescents across gender. The sample consisted of 66 adolescent boys and 54 adolescents girls studying in 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> standard in Lucknow city. The demographic data sheet including various parameters related to the general profile of the respondents was developed and used to gather the information *viz.*, age, sex, ordinal position, parents, and family profile. Self concept scale devised by Hadley *et al.* (2008) was used, to measure the self –concept among adolescents. The data was analyzed using test and ANOVA. Results revealed that highly significant differences were found among children who are single and elder in their families where in self concept of boys is comparatively higher than girls. In case of youngest child in the family, trend is entirely different with girls more self competent than boys. Highly significant differences across gender were found among all the children of any birth order.

### INTRODUCTION

Birth order personalities are formed early in life. Each child has to solve particular problems by using a set of coping skills which become birth order characteristics. The only child has to solve the problems of how to play alone without feeling lonely and how to deal with intrusion. The child develops imaginary playmates to overcome loneliness, deal with intrusion. The first born comes to feel unloved through the perceived loss of mother's love to the new baby. This child mentally trades love for attention in the form of respect, admiration and approval, seeking these in the place of unconditional love. The second child must cope with the oldest child taking away attention by out performing him or her. The child feels inadequate, tries to overcome the feeling by choosing perfectionism in some area of life. Also, the second born child feels that no one cares about how he or she feels because the oldest child clearly does not. Consequently, to avoid pain the second born child tries to suppress his or her own feelings. The third child must cope with the second born picking on him or her to pass on the feelings of inadequacy. The perception by the second born makes the third born feel vulnerable, as if anyone can get to him or her any time they want. The third born decides to cope by being strong. The

fourth born endures the third born saying “you're not big enough, strong enough, fast enough, old enough or smart enough to play with us.” The fourth born feels rejected, the fourth born attempts to achieve attention by trying hard. When the fifth child comes along, the fourth born ignores him or her trying to pass on the feelings of being unwanted. Consequently, the lack of interaction causes the birth order to start over with the fifth child as an only until there is a sixth child to cause him or her to become a first born. There are many exceptions to birth order, so the numerical place in the family may not correspond to the psychological birth order. When there is a discrepancy, we must use the psychological rather than chronological birth order. There are certain synohigms or clusters of traits that are characteristically found among children of different birth order.

The first born child shows uncertainty, mistrustfulness, insecurity, shrewdness, stinginess, dependency, responsibility, authoritarianism, jealousy, conservation, lack of dominance and aggressive, suggestibility, excitability, sensitiveness, timidity, introversion, strong achievement drive, need for affiliation, petulant, spoiled and prone to behavior disorders. The second child shows Independence, aggressiveness,

extroversion, fun loving, gregarious, adventurous, dependable and well adjusted. The middle child shows aggressiveness, easy distraction, craves demonstration of affection, jealousy, plagued by feelings of parental neglect inferiority and inadequacy and prone to behavior disorders. The last child feels secure, confident, spontaneous, good-natured, generous, spoiled, immature, extroverted, ability to empathize, feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, resentment against older siblings, envy and jealous irresponsible and happy. This indicates no ordinal position can be regarded as best. Firstborns have more guidance and help in their development than later born children. "The dice are loading in favor of the first because of the parental pressures on them to achieve; they usually achieve more than later born siblings. First born usually confirm more closely to social expectation and, as a result, they tend to be better accepted and more likely to play leadership roles.

Self- concept has a physical and psychological aspect. The physical aspect is composed of concepts individual have of their appearance, their sex appropriateness, the importance of their bodies in relation to their behavior and the prestige their bodies give them in eyes of others. The psychological aspect is composed of concepts individuals have of their abilities and disabilities, their worth, and their relationship with others. For the development of self-concept of adolescents the factors responsible may be heredity endowment, early home experience ordinal position and events in later life, which will help to determine the pattern of development of self-concept (Hurlock, 1997). Hence the present study was taken up to study the impact of ordinal position on the self concept of adolescents.

## METHODS

The study was conducted on a representative sample of 120 adolescents of 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> class selected on the basis of multistage random technique from different private schools of Lucknow city. For the fulfillment of the objective of the study following tools were selected and used-

- Self – concept scale by Hadly *et al.* (2008).
- The demographic data sheet including various parameters related to the general profile of the respondents was developed and used to gather the information *viz.*, age, sex, ordinal position, parents and family profile.

### Data collection :

120 adolescents (66 boys and 54 girls) studying in 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> standard in the age range of 13 to 18 years were randomly selected from 4 schools of the Lucknow city. Zone 1 was selected randomly, from which two wards were selected, from each ward; two areas were selected using area sampling technique. 15 boys and 15 girls were selected based on

probability proportion to size as 120 adolescents. The research tools namely self concept scale, and the demographic data sheet including various parameters related to the general profile of the respondents was developed and used to gather the information *viz.*, age, sex, ordinal position, parents and family profile. The data was collected and analyzed in terms of mean and Standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA using SPSS Software.

## OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Birth order is the position in which a child is born in to family. Based on a child's birth order, the manner in which they are treated and socialized by their family can shape the person they grow in to adult. The person in whom a person is born in to their family plays a substantial role in the individual's development of personality, character, intelligence, and career choices (Stewart *et al.*, 2001). Self- concept refers to self evaluation or self – perception and it represents the sum of an individual's beliefs about his or her own attributes. Self concept reflects how an adolescent evaluates himself or herself in domains (or areas) in which he or she considers success important. An adolescent can have a positive self concept in some domains and a negative self concept in other. Research also suggests that each individual has a global (or overall) self-concept that reflects how the individual evaluates his or her self-worth as a whole. In the present research, the self concept of adolescents was assessed based on their birth order.

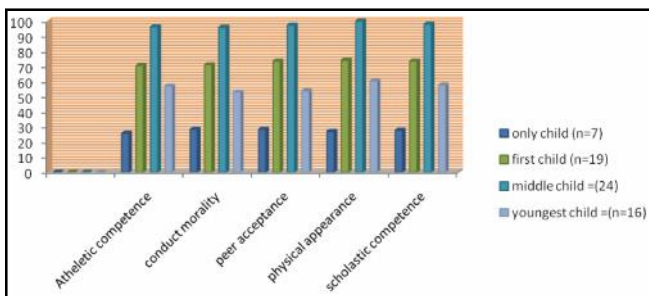
The various parameters governing the self concept of adolescents are presented in Table 1. It can be portrayed from Table 1 that, highly significant differences were found among children who are single and elder in their families, with mean values of boys comparatively higher in boys than girls It may be due to the reason that the girls who are single may not get company at home and our social system do not allow then to single much outside, where as boys who are single try and make friends outside and may develop more self competence than girls. In case of youngest child in the family the trend is entirely different with girls more self competent than boys. Athletic competence (boys 57.16 and girls 77.83) conduct/morality (boys.53 and girls 78.5): Peer acceptance (boys 53.83 and girls 81), Physical appearance (boys 60.5 and girls 79) and Scholastic competence (boys 57.66 and girls78.5). It is clearly evident that highly significant differences across gender are found among all the children at any birth order. The order in which is born in to their family plays a substantial role in the individual's development of personality, character intelligence, career choices and self- concept. (Stewart *et al.*, 2001).The birth order causes an effect on the human capital of an individual. Models from psychology, Zajonc (1976), predict a decline in intellectual environment with order, which

**Table 1 : The Effect of birth order on self concept of adolescents across gender**

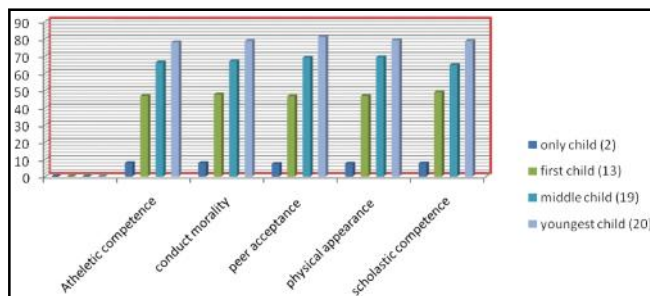
Parameters	Only child (n=29)			First child (n=32)			Middle child (n=43)			Youngest child (n=36)		
	Boys		Girls	Boys		Girls	Boys		Girls	Boys		Girls
	Mean/SD	Mean/SD	t-value	Mean/SD	Mean/SD	t-value	Mean/SD	Mean/SD	t-value	Mean/SD	Mean/SD	t-value
Athletic competence	25.83±1.94	7.83±1.16	16.30**	70.66±2.80	46.66±3.26	21.62**	96.33±2.33	66.16±3.42	49.13**	57.16±1.47	77.83±3.76	22.03**
Conduct morality	28.33±1.50	7.83±0.75	26.38**	71.16±4.35	47.5±3.44	17.11**	96±4.47	66.83±3.54	23.86**	53±4.89	78.5±3.50	17.41**
Peer acceptance	28.3±0.51	7.33±0.51	50.84**	73.5±2.88	46.5±2.88	26.06**	97.33±5.75	68.83±1.16	23.69**	53.83±3.81	81±1.41	22.01**

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at P<0.05 and 0.01, respectively

NS=Non-significant



**Fig. 1 : The effect of birth order on self concept of boys**



**Fig. 2 : The effect of birth order on self concept of girls**

can cause a negative effect of birth order on educational achievements. Economists emphasize the constraints on available parental time resources, which can cause a negative effect of birth order on educational outcomes (Becken, 1981, Behrman, 1997).

Fig. 1 clearly depicts a significant difference among various boys across ordinal positions, where in all the parameters of self concept were found high in middle born children low in only children. A study conducted by Gecas and Pasley (1993) hypothesized that middle born has lower self concept, but the hypothesis was proved to be incorrect supporting the findings of the current study.

Fig. 2 represent that among girls the result was completely different, it was seen that the self concept of the youngest child is higher compared to other positions and only children. The self concept of only child girls is low compared to other just like their counterparts.

**Conclusions :**

The results of the present study are to be seen in the light of some related research evidence. The result revealed that highly significant differences were found among children who are single and elder in their families, with mean values of boys comparatively higher in boys than girls which may be due to the reason that the girls who are single may not get company at home and our social system do not allow them to single much outside, where as boys who are single try and make friends outside and may develop more self competence

than girls. It is clearly evident that highly significant differences across gender are found among all the children at any birth order.

Birth order is the position in which a child is born in to their family. Based on a child’s birth order, the manner in which they are treated and socialized by their family can shapes the person they grow in to as an adult. This is plausible based on the assumption that the family is child’s first social circle. The members of a child’s family serve to develop the initial relationship that will impact the child tremendously because these relationships are seen as a model to interact with others outside the family. Based on this relationship with in the family system, a child will begin to develop a sense of self. Within a family, there are various niches, or roles, or roles that each family members plays. These roles all collaborate together in a functional family. The role or niche they identify with as a child, may lay precedent for their personality forever. A child’s birth order is the first predictor of how a child will behave, think and feel. The position a child is born have the potential to shape their personality, self –esteem, intelligence, and eventually their career choices. By examining the birth order of children and how this aspect of their lives has affected them today, this gives an opportunity to glimpse into complex and convoluted human psyche.

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