



Introduction

This study focuses on examining the relationship between birth order and personality traits in participants 18 and older. Australian Psychologist Alfred Adler (1830-1937) was one of first in the psychology field to propose the difference in birth order and personality Although some studies have shown significant results (e.g., Paulhus, Trapnell, & Chen, 2002), There are also some studies that differ (e.g., Lieberman, Shaffer, and Reynolds, 1985). We were intrigued by what role birth order plays in the development of specific personality traits and how it affects a person as they grow up.

The purpose of our study was to investigate if there is a relationship between birth order and developed personality traits in adults. We aimed to acquire data that demonstrated a relationship between birth order and accompanying personality traits

Hypothesis

We predicted that there would be similarities between birth order and personality traits. Oldest born would have the highest for conscientiousness, the middle born will score the highest for agreeableness, and the youngest born will have the highest for extraversion.

Method

Participants

Participants (N=148) consisted of 51 males, 95 females, and 2 that preferred not to say. Ages ranged from 14-45 (M=19). 32.4 % of participants were the oldest, 33.1% for the middle born, and 24.5% for the youngest born. Within these participants, 4.7% had 6 siblings,1.4% had 5 siblings, 5.4% had 4 siblings, 26.4% had 3 siblings and 62.2% had 2 siblings.

Measures

All participants completed a twenty-four questionnaire. Twenty of those questions were off of The Big Five Personality Test (Donnellan et al. 2006) also often referred to as the Five-Factor Model. The additional four questions were based on the participants demographics such as age, siblings and birth order that we had added. The test focuses on rating traits on a spectrum rather than yes or no questions. For the purpose of our study participants were asked to answer personality trait questions which involved using a rating scale to determine high or low levels of characteristic relating to the five personalities.

Procedure

Due to COVID-19, our research was done on google form. Before participating in the study, participants read and signed a consent form that went over risk factors and were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Once the consent form was signed all participants had the same format and questions. Once completed the participants were thanked for their time and participation in the study. The data from participants was then entered into Google Sheets, then transferred to SPSS to be analyzed.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of One-Way ANOVA for birth order and personality trait.

		N	M	SD	SD Error	Minimum	Maximum
Extraversion	1	48	3.32	.92	.13	1.00	4.75
	2	49	3.41	.90	.13	1.25	4.75
	3	51	3.23	.93	.13	1.50	5.00
	Total	148	3.32	.92	.07	1.00	5.00
Agreeableness	1	48	4.23	.69	.10	2.00	5.00
	2	49	4.05	.71	.10	2.00	5.00
	3	51	3.97	.71	.10	2.00	5.00
	Total	148	4.08	.71	.06	2.00	5.00
Conscientiousness	1	48	3.56	.91	.13	1.50	5.00
	2	49	3.40	.79	.11	2.25	5.00
	3	51	3.26	.72	.10	2.00	5.00
	Total	148	3.40	.81	.07	1.50	5.00
Neuroticism	1	48	3.31	.70	.10	1.00	4.50
	2	49	3.21	.79	.11	1.25	4.75
	3	51	3.21	.84	.12	1.25	5.00
	Total	148	3.24	.78	.06	1.00	5.00
Openness	1	48	3.85	.78	.11	1.50	5.00
	2	49	3.89	.66	.09	2.25	5.00
	3	51	3.94	.71	.10	1.75	5.00
	Total	148	3.89	.71	.06	1.50	5.00

Note: 1 = oldest born, 2 = middle born, and 3 = youngest born.

Discussion

The focus of our research study was to predict if there is a relationship between birth order and personality. This hypothesis will follow Alfred Adler's theory on birth order and personality correlation. Oldest will show higher conscientiousness, middle will show higher agreeableness and youngest will show higher extraversion. We hypothesized that there would be a relationship between birth order and different personality traits within multiple siblings. We used ANOVA to test that relationship. We found that our oldest child group (M=3.56, SD=.91) did show the highest level for conscientiousness. Furthermore, our middle child group (M=4.05, SD=.71) predicted that the middle child would report higher agreeableness. However, the oldest child group showed higher mean for agreeableness. Finally, was the youngest child group (M=3.23, SD=.93) which showed that the middle child group scored higher for extraversion. We found that within our participants answers that our results did not support our hypothesis. Although our hypothesis was false in our study, we also shared similarities of characteristics within the results of the oldest sibling in Eikstein's report (Eikstein, 2000).

Limitations

A possible design flaw in the study was not doing any research on participants who had no siblings and were an only child. In addition, this study mainly had young adults versus older adults who have lived longer, have a career and perhaps different personality characteristics than their younger self. Another limitation to take into consideration is that the participants were notified of the purpose of this study, being that they could have altered their answers to make themselves perceived differently as they really are, so that could have affected the results

Implications

Our study adds to psychological theory because it was testable and the data, we collected helped us understand the correlation between birth order and personality traits and how it is not set-in stone. For future studies like this one a bigger sample size would be strongly suggested to get a better data set. Also, perhaps adding in questions about family background such as raised by single or married parents and one- or two-family income to get a better understanding of outside factors that may contribute to participants' personality. Looking at the results we can see how your birth order doesn't necessarily determine your personality.

References

Available upon request