

First Ordinal Birth Position in the Family and Resilient Identity of Adolescents in Bamenda II Subdivision



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Abstract

Aim: This study investigated the influence of "First Ordinal Birth Position in the Family on the Resilient Identity of Adolescents" in the Bamenda II Sub-division of the Northwest Region of Cameroon. Specifically, it sets out to find out how the first ordinal birth position of adolescents in their families influences their resilient identity.

Methods: A concurrent nested mixed-method research design was adopted in this study. In this light, both the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms were adopted. A total of 200 adolescents within the age range of 12 to 19 years were selected as sample using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Krejcie and Morgan's table of calculation was used to calculate the sample size. A questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale, and structured and closed-ended questions was used to collect quantitative data from adolescents and a Focused Group Discussion guide was used to collect qualitative data from parents. Inferential statistics were calculated using the Omnibus test of Model coefficient and all statistics were presented at the 95% confidence level (CL). The regression test was used to test hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient which ranged from 0.684 to 0.774.

Results: The findings indicated that there is a significant influence on the first-birth position and the psychological resilience of adolescents as they enjoy first-born privileges and equally perform different responsibilities assigned to first-birth position children only. These findings highlight the significant role of birth order in shaping adolescent resilience and the need for targeted interventions by parents, educators, and policymakers.

Conclusion: The study conclude that the first ordinal birth position influences the resilient identity of adolescents.

Recommendations: Policy policymakers should come up with guidelines for parents and adolescents on how to manage their families for sustainable development and the psychological well-being of adolescents. Teachers, and counsellors should identify values which will build adolescents self-esteem, resilience and teach them in the classroom. Adolescents should also be sensitized on how to develop coping and resilient identity skills.

Keywords: *First ordinal birth position, resilient identity, and adolescents*

INTRODUCTION

This study investigated first ordinal birth position in the family and its influence on the resilient identity of adolescents in the Bamenda II Sub-division of the Northwest Region of Cameroon. In every family, children fall within one of four birth positions; first-born, middle-born, last-born, or only child, and not a single one of them escapes whatever advantages or disadvantages that a particular position holds. Children have deep-seated feelings about themselves and their relationships with other members of their families and society which may be feelings of acceptance or rejection of one's self. As individuals mature, they can define and control these feelings but young adolescents need help to know why they feel the way they do and how to cope with these feelings. A child's birth order - whether first-born, middle-born, last-born or an only child - significantly shapes their experiences. Birth order refers to the numerical position a child is born in their family; first-born and second-born being examples. Birth order is believed to have a profound and lasting effect on the resilient identity and psychological development of adolescents and this assertion has been repeatedly challenged by researchers (Shulman *et al.*, 1977; Stronge *et al.*, 2019). According to Fonagy *et al.* (1994:233) resilience refers to normal development under difficult circumstances. Krovetz (1999) identified four strands to resilient identity that is social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose.

For a long time, birth order has been discussed as a crucial factor for individual differences. In a family context, birth order determines not only one's age but also one's level of authority, decision-making power, and access to resources (Tripathy, 2018). The influence of birth order on personality was first highlighted in the works of Alfred Adler, the father of individual psychology. Consequently, even after 100 years, the words of Adler still reverberate in the research literature and demand continued exploration. It is reported that birth order studies have wide implications for coping abilities and psychological resilience in life. Though research in this area is widespread, its generalization and predictions remain limited. Many overlapping and inconsistent findings open doors for more investigation.

Background of the Study

Adler (1870-1937) pioneered the study of birth order. His research suggested that the position in which a child is born significantly affected the child's growth, personality and resilient identity. Research in the late 20th century and the early 21st century shows even greater influence, contributing to self-perception and success in adulthood. Being born first, last or somewhere in the middle is not significant (Ansbacher *et al.*, 1956). What matters is how a child is treated by parents and other siblings and how that child feels about it. Birth spacing, gender difference, age difference, parental attitudes, self-confidence and physical attributes also affect personality formation and the interpretation of birth order and behaviour. These factors influence how parents treat children and how each child is viewed by the other siblings. This affects the way adolescents view and describe themselves and the value they place on themselves. It has long been known that siblings play an important role in the family structure. Sibling relationships are unique because siblings can be friends, semi-parents, and rivals at a go (Shulman *et al.*, 1977; Damian *et al.*, 2015).

Conceptually, birth order is an important and complex variable in personality development. Adler (1964) defines birth order as the sequential position of a person among his or her siblings with respect to order of birth. Adler, often considered the father of birth order research, claimed that birth order can have lasting effects on an individual's personality. He stated that, birth order

differences in personality are mostly due to siblings trying to compete for the attention of their parents by claiming certain niches or roles within the family (Adler, 1964). This research provides an interesting view of how one's place in the family can continue to be a major factor in development throughout one's lifespan. Shulman and Mosak (1977) enunciated two definitions of birth order. The ordinal position is the first definition and is referred to as the actual birth order of siblings. The second definition by Shulman *et al.* (1977) states that the psychological position is the role adopted by the child in their interactions with others. The ordinal position and the psychological position bring different experiences to the child and have different effects on the personality development of adolescents.

Adler (1964), places particular importance on the psychological position of the child, he highlights that it is not the child's birth order number that influences their behaviour, but rather the situation into which they are born and how they subsequently interpret it (Eckstein *et al.*, 2010; Rohrer *et al.*, 2017). Also, self-perception is another concept seen to be influenced by the birth position of individuals. Individuals come to know their own attitudes, emotions and other internal states partially by inferring them from observations of their own overt behaviour and/or the circumstances in which this behaviour occurs. Self-perception constitutes self-concept which is a broad description of one's self and self-esteem which is the judgments of one's own self-worth.

Firstborns are presented with the first opportunity to create a personal niche within the family unit and tend to receive all of their parents' attention and a greater investment from their parents (Paulhus *et al.*, 1999). They tend to be responsible, ambitious, competitive, conservative, organized, hardworking and often serving as surrogate parents for their younger siblings (Jefferson *et al.*, 1998). In addition, they often attempt to please their parents by sharing their interests and show a strong willingness to fulfil parental expectations and wishes (Healey & Ellis, 2007), often through responsible behaviour (Paulhus *et al.*, 1999; Stronge, *et al.*, 2019). Despite firstborns being afforded the first opportunity to establish their niche within the family, attention shift is felt by the firstborn with the arrival of another sibling as they are no longer the primary focus of their parent's attention (Eckstein *et al.*, 2010). It is believed that attention shift arises more frequently in families viewed as being more competitive. Adler (1964) suggests that the first-born child never recovers from the trauma of losing his position and the exclusive attention of his parents when the second child arrives. These experiences shape the development of adolescents and the overall view they have of themselves.

It is considered as the science of understanding of an individual's place in a family. The order in which an individual is born into a family has a greater impact on his life (Leman, 2009). Adler argued that birth order leaves an indelible impression on the individual's style of life. He used that principle to explain an individual's uniqueness in life. He also believed that the child's chronological place in their family plays a major role in shaping their personality.

Some argue that birth order by itself does not determine sibling relationships but it impacts those relationships in some ways (Beer & Horn, 2000). Sulloway (1997) argued that the cause of sibling's differences in the home is based on birth order. He argued that individuals within the family system developed differing roles based on the resources available to each individual. There is competition among siblings in their attempts to secure physical, emotional, and intellectual resources from parents. He argued that the uniqueness of children is augmented by differences in birth order, gender, physical traits, and temperament. Children of different birth order develop

appropriate coping skills to deal with their situations. Birth order is critical because it is a proxy for differences in age, size, power, and privilege. Birth order, therefore, provides "a potential Rosetta Stone for deciphering some of the basic principles that govern family niches" (Sulloway, 1997). Middle-born children, even when parental investment is spread equally, still receive fewer resources, compared to their first-born and last-borns. They often feel inferior to older siblings because they do not possess their sibling's advanced abilities. The firstborn child takes on a parental role in his treatment of his younger siblings. In response to the older sibling's role, the middle-born child may rebel against authority and take a competitive stance throughout life.

This competition with firstborns drives middle-borns to innovation, doing or being different from their older siblings to make them stand out in the family dynamic. Because middle children follow the examples set to them by their older siblings, they tend to become more competent at an earlier age than their older siblings. Other middle children capitalize on the injustice they feel as children and become trial lawyers or social activists because such roles allow them to fight against other social injustices. They also become very socially skilled because they have learned to negotiate and compromise daily with their siblings and their parents in turn become more socially adjusted. Sigmund Freud (1970) believed that sibling rivalry was solely due to children feeling that they are receiving unequal amounts of attention, discipline, and or responsiveness from their parents. Freud (1970), thought that being a favoured child leads to self-confidence and ultimately a successful life.

First borns and last-borns often experience some period of their childhood as only children. In contrast, middle children always share parental resources with another sibling (Sulloway, 2007). As a result, middle children are often described as being peer oriented and independent on the family. Middle birth children have also been found to be less closely attached to the family, less likely to report having been loved during childhood and less willing to turn to parents when they are in need compared to first born individuals (Salmon & Daly 1998; Griffiths *et al.*, 2021 & Kandler *et al.*, 2024). Wallace (1999) writes that middle children often experience an identity crisis since they are neither oldest nor youngest. Wallace indicates that middle-born children often feel that they are either too young or too old to be loved and so try hard to carve their own unique identity which will make them special.

The theoretical underpinnings of this study emanate from Alfred Adler's birth order theory of 1964, which posits that an individual's birth position shapes their development and personality. Siblings adopt roles in the family which will cause their parents to give them more attention. The theory underlies the need to establish a role is the social comparison theory which states that humans have a basic need to evaluate themselves and that the easiest way to do so is to compare themselves to others. Within the family, individuals compare themselves to their siblings in order to decide what role they are going to play. If the firstborn child has already been applauded by the parents for a particular role or behaviour shown by the firstborn child, the other sibling might find another role to play in order to earn their parents' attention.

Theoretically, Adlerian concept of social interest is the individual's feeling of being part of a whole, spanning the past, present, and the future. Adler (1964) believed that people were mainly motivated toward this feeling of belonging. He did not believe that social interest was innate but rather a result of social training. Adler (1928) expressed that people strove to become successful and overcome the areas that they perceived as inferior. He referred to this process of personal

growth as striving for perfection and being resilient. Those who did not overcome feelings of inferiority developed an inferiority complex. Those who overcompensated for feelings of inferiority developed a superiority complex.

Adler (1964) believed that a person's conscious behaviour, not their unconscious, was the mainstay of personality development. Because of this concept, Adlerian theory emphasizes personal responsibility for how the individual chooses to interpret and adjust to life's events or situations. Maladjustment is defined in Adlerian theory as choosing behaviour resulting in a lack of social interest or personal growth. Adler believed that misbehaviour would take place when the person had become discouraged or when positive attempts at good behaviour had failed to get the needed results. Adler's theory is relevant to the study in that, different positions in a family birth order may be correlated to both positive and negative life outcomes. For example, researchers have noted that first-born children have an increased susceptibility to both drug use as well as positive educational outcomes (Laird & Shelton, 2006).

According to Freud (1970), three important conceptualised parts of the human personality are the id, ego, and superego. Based on the pleasure principle, id operates at the unconscious level. Satisfy the demands of the id in a very safe and socially acceptable way. The ego operates both in conscious and unconscious mind; ego follows the reality principle in contrast to the id. During childhood, the superego develops in individuals. Every child follows the same-sex parent and tries to identify with them. The superego is responsible for ensuring moral standards in individuals. It operates on moral principles and motivates them to behave in socially acceptable ways. The fundamental dilemma of all human beings is that every part of the psychic apparatus makes demands, which are incompatible with the other two. Therefore, every person is under the inner conflict. Freud compares the relationship between the structure of personality and the levels of consciousness to an iceberg floating on water. The unconscious mind controls the conscious mind of the person. This theory is related to this study in that developing one's personality can come from a variety of sources and influences in a child's life, it can be fascinating and important to understand those influences. One great way to understand the influence of birth order on one's personality is to discuss it with a therapist, they may be able to help you identify parts of your identity and how they developed.

Nsamenang's (1992) theory of social ontogenesis highlights the dynamic and interactive nature of social development. It emphasises the importance of social interactions and cultural practices in shaping an individual's development and highlights the role of culture in influencing socialization processes. The theory advocates that children are co-participants in social and cultural life, and that human development is partly determined by the social ecology in which the human being learns and develops; thus, development is perceived as more of a function of social and not biological factors (Nsamenang, 2006). Africa's youth are immersed in an inheritance (Mazrui, 1986) of Arabic-Islamic cultural fragments and Western-Christian legacies, that have been superimposed on a highly resilient but ruthlessly haggled indigenous Africanity (Nsamenang, 2005). The African worldview conceives of the adolescent as growing out of childhood and poised for adulthood that lies in the future (Araria, 2007; Nsamenang, 2002). The majority of African children and youth are not overly defeated by their difficult circumstances but instead navigate their challenges successfully into productive pathways, surprisingly often outside official agendas. More so, within their peer groups and peer cultures, there is evidence of agency through their

different works of art and different activities that they engage in thus permitting them to be able to overcome their harsh realities (Nsamenang, 2008; 2012).

Contextually, Ordinal position refers to the actual order in which the child was born; i.e., first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and so on. Birth order refers to five basic positions that Adler described which tend to have recognizable characteristics later on in life. These are; the firstborn, second, middle, youngest and only child. In discussing these positions, it is important to remember that psychological position is the important determinant. One child may be an only child for several years and may then find himself in the position of being a firstborn. He may be overrun by the younger sibling, who then becomes, in some respects, like a firstborn (Jefferson *et al.*, 1998). The oldest may then function like a second-born. Because of physical illness or frailty, an older child may actually function like the youngest.

The middle child has the reputation of being the neglected child. This supposedly was due to the novelty of parenthood having worn off, and the idea that the most cherished child is the last. But, in many ways, the middle child has advantages. Having used a trial-and-error method in rearing the first, the parents are more confident, more positive and surer about themselves. The middle boy or girl is often spared the demands made upon the first and the restrictions placed upon the last. When parents tend to be anxious concerning their children, the middle child often escapes a large part of their nervous attention (Paulhus *et al.*, 1999).

In Cameroon and Africa in general and in Bamenda II in particular, many feel that the favoured position in the family is to be the youngest which greatly affect adolescents of the school going age. Parents are more relaxed and there are fewer restrictions. The child in this position is probably more spontaneous and creative than older ones. But, many children in this category have to struggle for recognition of their achievements. Everything has been done by older children, so his parents are less appreciative. Such a child has less incentive and is less eager to progress when his achievements are not acknowledged (Sulloway, 2001). If given the chance, the "only" child learns to be more independent and self-reliant because he has to compensate for the companionship that he lacks. His parents concentrate more of their time and interests on his growing up. With this smaller group, they are able to share experiences with him that would be impossible with larger families (Beer & Horn, 2000). They may teach him more and help educate him with the result that the vast majority of "only" children are more intelligent, as a group, than children of larger families.

METHODS

The concurrent nested mixed method research design was adopted in carrying out this study. In this light, both the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms were adopted. A sample of 200 was selected using the non-probability sampling technique. The purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used in deciding the category of adolescents that constituted the sample population which in this case was made up of adolescents within the age range of 12 to 19 years of age. Krejcie and Morgan table of calculation was used to calculate the sample size. Two instruments were used to collect data; a four-point Likert scale structured and closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from adolescents and a Focused Group Discussion guide to collect qualitative data from parents. Data were analysed following a triangulation approach in methodology, descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative analysis. Inferential statistics were calculated using the Omnibus test of Model coefficient and all statistics presented at the 95% confidence level (CL).

The regression test was used to test hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient which ranged from 0.684 to 0.774. The findings revealed that the first ordinal birth position influences the resilient identity of adolescents. The concurrent nested mixed method research design was used because the researcher had to gather information that explains how individuals experience a phenomenon and how they feel about it and testing the independent variable; siblings' birth order and the dependent variable; resilient identity.

Measures

Items were measured with the aid of a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire whereby respondents were required to state how they feel about each item, that is by stating whether they strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD), pertaining to the variables of the study as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Opinions of First Ordinal Position Children in the Family

Items	Agreed		Disagreed	
	N	%	n	%
I act as the natural leader of my siblings in the family constellation	50	100	00	00.0
I behave maturely because of my association with parents/adults	50	100	00	00.0
I serve as a model for younger siblings and assume some of their care	50	100	00	00.0
I lack dominance and assertiveness as a result of parental overprotectiveness	11	22.0	39	78.0
I conform to group wishes and pressures as a carryover of conformity to parental wishes	42	84.0	08	16.0
I have feelings of insecurity and resentment as a result of having been displaced as the centre of attention by a second-born sibling.	35	70.0	15	30.0
Multiple responses set (MRS)	238	79.3	62	20.7

From table 1, all the respondents agreed that they act as the natural leaders of their siblings in the family constellation. Again, all the respondents indicated that they behave maturely because of their association with parents/adults. Also, all the respondents agreed that they serve as a model for younger siblings and assume some of their care. Equally some (22%) respondents agreed that they lack dominance and assertiveness due to parental overprotectiveness while majority (78%) disagreed. Additionally, majority (84%) respondents agreed that they conform to group wishes and pressures as a carryover of conformity to parental wishes while a few (16%) disagreed. Similarly, the majority (70%) of respondents agreed that they have feelings of insecurity and resentment after being displaced as the centre of attention by a second-born sibling while some (30%) disagreed. Correspondingly, the findings on the multiple responses set revealed that the majority (79.3%) of adolescents of first ordinal position agreed that they act behave, and express positive feelings while some (20.7%) disagreed.

FINDINGS

The influence of the first ordinal position in the family on the resilient identity of adolescents was assessed using the Omnibus test of model coefficient and the Nagelkerke R square value as indicated below.

Table 2: Model Fitting Information and Predictive Power for the Predictive Component of First Ordinal Position on the Resilient Identity of Adolescents'

Omnibus test of Model coefficient	Explanatory/predictive power of the model (Pseudo R-Square) based on Nagelkerke R Square
$\chi^2=71.912$	0.763
df=50	
P=0.023	

Dependent variable: Resilient Identity of Adolescents

The variability explained by this model was significant (Omnibus Test of Model Coefficient: $\chi^2=71.912$; df=50; P=0.023). This therefore implies that this predictive component (first ordinal position) significantly influences the resilient identity of adolescents with an Explanatory Power (EP) and Predictive Power of 76.3% (Nagelkerke R Square=0.763). Generally, first ordinal position adolescents with positive behaviours and attitudes have a positive influence on their resilient identity. Thus, first ordinal position has a significant influence on the resilient identity of adolescents in Bamenda II Municipality. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was retained.

Table 3: Relationship between firstborn children with parents, siblings, and relationships with peers

Themes	Character	Groundings	Sampled Quotations
Relationship between parents and firstborn	Friendly	4	"... Firstborn has a friendly relationship with parents, peers, and extended family."
Relationship with siblings	Bossy	3	"...firstborn take charge of sibling care in a bossy but supportive relationship."
	Caring	1	"...they are lovely, caring, supportive but sometimes very jealous in terms of wanting whatever parents buy for younger siblings." "...Want to offer what they have to younger siblings ... very considerate in resource management or limited resources."

The findings of the qualitative data as shown in Table 3 reveal that first birth position children have a friendly relationship with parents. Equally, they have a bossy relationship with siblings as

parents stated. Other parents stated that firstborn children show care towards siblings as they emphasized that they are lovely, caring, supportive but sometimes very jealous in terms of wanting to whatever parents buy for younger siblings. Also, they offer what they have to siblings as parents reiterated that they want to offer what they have to younger siblings, they cope with their challenges and help their younger sibling to equally overcome their challenges. Some parent commented that are very considerate when it comes to resource management or limited resources. Furthermore, relationships with peers were friendly as parents pointed out that they are friendly with peers at school and in the neighborhood and understands the value of friendship. Similarly, they indicated that the children respect peers.

Table 4: Resilient Identity of First Birth Position Children

Themes	Character	Groundings	Sampled Quotations
The personality of firstborn Children	Strong identity	4	"...they have very strong identity... Always want to identify with parental behaviour" "...They are resourceful and possess a high degree of agency..."
	Strong sense of belongingness	4	"...have a strong sense of belongingness and influential personality" "...They are socially competent..."
	Sees name	4	"...Sees his name as that which he must defend and keep very high"
	Body image	4	"...very comfortable with body image, always appreciate the appearance, broad muscles, and energetic and Soft looks."
	Positive self-esteem	4	"...they have positive self-esteem, they strive to meet life expectations according to societal norms...always want to be perfect and want siblings to adhere to the same standards, set life standards very high and want to perform their role by all means without accepting defeat."
	Role performance	4	"...they respect family, cultural, and social norms and conform to parental wishes." "they possess problem-solving skills and are problem-solvers"

The findings in Table 4 indicate that firstborns have a strong resilient identity as parents stated that "...they have very strong identity... always want to identify with parental behaviour". Similarly,

the first-born children have a strong sense of belongingness. This is clear as parents pointed out that "...first born have a strong sense of belongingness and influential personality" Also parents revealed that the first-born children see their names as that which must be defended. This is clear as they stated that "... firstborn children see name as that which they must defend and keep very high." Similarly, parents stated that the firstborn has a comfortable body image. This is clear as parents stated that "...very comfortable with body image, always appreciate the appearance, broad muscles and energetic and soft looks." Equally, parents stated that the first-born children have positive self-esteem. This is clear as parents reiterated that "...they have positive self-esteem, they striving to meet life expectations according to societal norms...always want to be perfect and want others especially siblings to adhere to the same standards as self, set life standards very high and want to perform their role by all means without accepting defeat." Correspondingly parents stated that children show respect in role performance. This is clear as parents insisted that "...they respect family, cultural and social norms and conform to parental wishes."

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that there is a significant influence of the first ordinal position in the family on the resilient identity of adolescents as they enjoy first-born privileges and equally perform different responsibilities assigned to first-birth position children only. This finding supports Boer *et al.* (1992) who state that the firstborn child, the second-born child, the youngest child, and the only child. The differences in family dynamics, which are involved in birth order, should not surprise anyone that firstborn and later born have different characteristics.

Some argue that birth order by itself does not determine sibling relationships but it impacts those relationships in some ways arguing the case for differences in siblings in the home based on birth order. He argued that individuals within the family system developed differing roles based on the resources available to each individual. There is competition among siblings in their attempts to secure physical, emotional, and intellectual resources from parents. He argued that the uniqueness of children is augmented by differences in birth order, gender, physical traits, and temperament. Children of different birth order develop appropriate coping skills in an attempt to deal with their situations. Birth order is critical because it is a proxy for differences in age, size, power, and privilege. Birth order, therefore, provides "a potential Rosetta Stone for deciphering some of the basic principles that govern family niches" (Sulloway, 1996, p. 21).

Rodgers (2001) holds the view that birth order is not a very significant factor in shaping one's worldview. He contends that birth order is very visible and easily identifiable. It therefore receives credit for other less visible characteristics like genetics, quality of schooling, and quality of parental support. Ernst and Angst (1983) were critical of any scientific value of birth order calling the concept a "mirage." They concluded that birth order itself did not in any significant way impact one's personality, values, or beliefs, but that other variables made the difference. Birth-order influences on personality and IQ have been greatly overrated. They therefore sought to discredit the value of birth order as a viable variable.

According to Adler, the lastborn is empathetic, charming, and sociable. They are often the life of the party, doing better than other siblings in their social interactions (Blair, 2011; Leman, 2009). They can be manipulative and undisciplined if over-pampered and often struggle for power and competence (Leman, 2009). Lastborns are more disorganized and less motivated to achieve than other siblings (Booth & Kee, 2009; Blair, 2011). They tend to be very high on the need for

achievement and show better leadership skills and academic success (Leman, 2009). They are perfectionists, critical, and independent. Often seen mentoring the younger siblings, they also possess the qualities of a caregiver and parent (Leman, 2009). Mostly, middle-born children face ambiguity regarding their role within a family. Owing to this, they struggle to find their place, resulting in more peer than parental interaction (Blair, 2011; Leman, 2009). Finally, due to fewer socialization opportunities than in larger families, firstborn children are often cautious, secluded, and arrogant (Blair, 2011; Leman, 2009). Only children are also more self-sufficient and do not show the need for validation like the firstborn (Blair, 2011).

Though many different conceptualizations of resilience exist, the most common definitions denote resilience as a trait. The level of one's resilience marks his or her ability to strive and recover in stressful and traumatic situations (Carver *et al.*, 2010). Birth order has been investigated in line with coping capacities in the face of adversities. It stands out as one of the most crucial traits for well-being and recovering from trauma (Dyrbye *et al.*, 2005). To sum up, three core concepts underlying resilience can be listed as: adversity; adaptation; positive coping; and self-efficacy (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Luthar *et al.*, 2000). Studies in the UK and US have found the prevalence of many mental health problems in later-born people. They have a high risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies. Many studies provide evidence that both genetics and the environment are equally responsible for one's level of resilience (Feder *et al.*, 2009).

Essa and Burnham (2019) studied the effects of birth order on personality through parent child attachment. The foundation of positive traits like self-esteem and resilience are an outcome of the quality of early parent-child relationships. It is possible for individuals' perceived status in their families to have an impact on their capacity to be resilient. In a study to investigate the link between mental health problems, resilience, happiness and birth order, it was found that the last-born secured the highest resilience score, followed by first-borns, then middle-born, and finally only children (Fukuya *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, in a cross-sectional study of a sample of 400 individuals, it was found that the first born performed better than the middle and later-born for resilience (Malik, 2021). Another study from Turkey confirmed better psychological resilience scores for middle and last-born in a sample of 247 individuals (Erguner-Tekinalp & Terzi, 2014). Sharma and Srimathi (2014) also found higher levels of resilience for first-borns than for later-born.

Rutter (2006) defined resilience as an interactive concept that is concerned with the combination of serious risk experiences and a relatively positive psychological outcome despite those experiences (Rutter, 2006). He makes the point that resilience is more than social competence or positive mental health; competence must exist with risk to be resilience. His definition has remained stable over time, with his 2013 definition stating that resilience is when, some individuals have a relatively good outcome despite having experienced serious stresses or adversities – their outcome being better than that of other individuals who suffered the same experiences (Rutter, 2013). Much of Rutter's work is based on his early research into children of parents with schizophrenia. In this work, he was originally focused on psychopathology and then noticed that some children were experiencing the risk but emerging relatively unscathed. This encouraged Rutter to search for competence in children who had experienced adversity, rather than his original focus on pathways of psychopathology.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings from this study are outstanding because they provide greater insight into understanding siblings' birth order as an important factor in understanding individual experiences and behaviours of adolescents in the Bamenda II.

The findings also confirm the supposition that like adolescent children in different parts of the world, adolescents in the Bamenda II municipality fall within one of four birth positions whose theories bring them different experiences that shape their behavioural patterns and make them to evaluate and place positive or negative judgments on themselves.

In fact, the results of this study indicate that, first birth position can be used positively by parents, family members, the community, teachers, educators and psychologists to build up resilient identity, positive self-perception (self-identity and self-esteem) in adolescents especially those that are at risk of missing their identity. In this light, the findings of this study are relevant and can be considered as an addition to existing literature on siblings' birth order (first birth position) and adolescent phase of development.

To begin, the findings of this study would permit readers to know more and gain more useful insights about the positive as well as negative aspects of parental attitudes that create different experiences in the different birth positions as revealed by this study and how it contributes positively to resilient identity and the adolescent phase of development.

CONCLUSION

Children of different birth orders develop different attitudes and behaviours in their attempts to deal with their different situations. Differences in the behaviour and attitude of siblings are based on their birth into distinct and different environments. They must therefore develop different qualities to compete successfully for parental attention and acceptance. The purpose of this study was to investigate first birth position and resilient identity of adolescents (12 to 19years). The design used for this study was the mixed method concurrent nested research design. Data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. The findings indicated that; there is a significant influence on the first birth position and the psychological resilience of adolescents as they enjoy first-born privileges and equally perform different responsibilities assigned to first-birth position children only.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents and educators should promote resilience-building strategies for first-born adolescents. Policymakers should develop family management guidelines to support adolescent well-being. Social workers should implement awareness programs on parenting styles and resilience. Parents should be sensitized through social gatherings, churches and even through the media to be conscious on how they treat their children and the effects of the different parenting styles should be made known to parents. Adolescents should also be sensitized on how to develop coping skills and also how to be independent and show pro social behaviours at all times. Teachers should identify values which will build adolescent self-esteem and teach them.

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