
ALTRUISM & SOCIAL INTIMACY AMONG FIRST-BORN AND SECOND-BORN EMERGING ADULTS

Selsha V Rajan¹, Deepa Mariam Ninan², Amala Thomas³, Pavithra Lekshmi⁴,
Ms. Krupa Dinah Mathews⁵

^{1,2,3,4}BSc. Psychology, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology

Abstract

High-quality interactions and relationships with others, such as intimacy with a spouse, friends, or family members, are referred to as social intimacy, and it can help predict mental health. Altruism is described as a motivational condition that a person holds with the intention of enhancing the wellbeing of another person. The purpose of the current study is to determine whether there is a substantial difference between first and second born emerging adults in terms of social intimacy and altruism. The sample included 126 college students who were emerging adults, of whom 63 were firstborn and another 63 were second-born. Convenient sampling techniques were used to gather the sample. Miller's Social Intimacy Scale and Altruism Scale were the instruments employed. Using SPSS, the data that were gathered were examined. The results demonstrated that there is a 0.01 level significant difference in altruism between first and second born emerging adults. When compared to first-born emerging adults, second-born emerging adults had more altruism. The analysis of the mean values revealed that first-born and second-born emerging adults differed in their levels of social intimacy. However, the variation is insignificant. Social intimacy was shown to be higher among second born than first born after analyzing the mean values.

Keywords: *Social Intimacy, Altruism, Altruism scale, Miller Social Intimacy Scale, Emerging adults, First born, Second born*

1. INTRODUCTION

“Emerging Adulthood” is a term used to describe a period of development traversing from about ages 18-19. It was designed by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett who received his PhD from Clark University in 2000. Arnett put forward the five basic features of emerging adulthood. The first feature is the age of identity exploration where young people explore who they really are and what they want out of work, school and love. The second feature is age instability, the emerging adulthood phase includes young people being inconsistent and unstable with their residents, job and even partners they choose. The third feature of emerging adulthood is the age of self focus where the young people take decisions for their self or future including career and marriage. The fourth feature of emerging adulthood is the age of feeling in between, here the young adults feel like they are taking responsibilities for themselves as well as for those around them but still do not completely feel like an adult. The fifth feature of emerging adulthood is the age of possibilities, emerging adulthood is a phase where young people seek and utilize all the opportunities provided to them. Emerging Adulthood is a phase where young people understand what they want and who they really want to be in their life. They make use of each and every resource provided to them in an appropriate manner.

Birth order refers to a child's position within the family hierarchy, such as firstborn, second born, youngest, etc. The relationship between birth order and family status has been the subject of extensive psychological research, although the idea that it consistently and strongly influences psychological consequences is unsupported. Francis Galton and Sigmund Freud both showed an early interest in birth order, but Alfred Adler was the first to suggest that birth order plays a significant determinant in personality development. Birth order is now less of a causal element in family structure research and more of an indirect variable that is more significant than more process-oriented variables (e.g., parental discipline, sibling interaction, genetic and hormonal makeup).

Family size refers to the number of persons present in a family. Birth order refers to the order a child is born to their family. Birth order and family size are strongly related, although family size differs between children from different families, while birth order differs between children within a family. It plays an important role in shaping an individual's development and personality. Being a first born or second born is not of significance, what matters is that birth order affects how a child is treated by their parents and other siblings and how they feel about it. It also affects the socializing skills of the child as well as the parents expectations. Gender also plays an important role in how a child is treated within the birth order management.

Early research suggests that altruism is found to increase positively during emerging adulthood. Altruism refers to benevolent and self denying acts of people incited by their generous dispositions rather than restraining themselves to selfish motives. The term altruism has been developed from the old French term “autre” meaning “other”. As the term suggests, altruistic behavior could be considered as an approach to be of service to others under challenging circumstances, whilst all people are believed to be altruistic to some extent, such deeds not only illustrate the good that we do for others but also pertains the prevention of harm and violence in their daily lives. Furthermore, altruistic actions need not arise from self denying intentions.

Behaviors performed by a group of motives, even those which are self interested can also be described as altruistic when it works in the best interest of others. However if someone performs an altruistic action that is not necessarily self sacrificing, then such behavior is termed as “purely altruistic” and operates for the welfare of others. Psychologists suggest many different causes of altruism . One such cause includes evolution which is explained with the help of kin selection theory which states that we are more likely to help those people who are related to us by blood. Another cause includes brain based rewards that is when a person involves in altruistic acts the pleasure centers of his brain gets activated. The third cause is the environment, it is explained based on the concept of relationship with others and socialization. Social norms are also considered as a cause of altruism. Sometimes people help other people to alter their own behavior. Studies suggest that altruism increases during the phase of emerging adulthood. Socializing is a key aspect for engaging in altruistic acts.

Intimacy generally refers to the sensation of having a close personal relationship and feeling a sense of belonging. It is a comfortable and intensely intimate emotional connection with someone as a result of delving deeply or intimately into relationship through familiarity and shared experience. Genuine human closeness needs reciprocity, discussion, openness, and vulnerability. A person we have an especially close relationship with is considered to be "intimate." This was made clear by Dalton (1959), who describes how anthropologists and ethnographic researchers acquire "inside information" from within a particular cultural setting by creating networks of close friends who are able (and willing) to provide knowledge that cannot be obtained through formal channels.

In the last few decades, a relatively new area of social psychology research has emerged: the systematic study of intimate relationships. Even though the systematic study of intimate relationships is relatively new, early Greek philosophers were the first to analyse intimate relationships from a societal perspective. Although early academic studies focused on dyads or small groups of individuals in the public and carefully analysed behaviours like competing and cooperating, negotiating and bargaining, compliance and resistance, they were nonetheless interested in intimate connections.

Social intimacy is defined as meaningful interactions and connections with others, such as being close to a spouse, friends, or family, and it is a predictor of mental health (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982). It entails the encounter with intimacy, warmth, and interpersonal communication (Hu et al., 2004; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Timmerman, 1991). Intimacy can also be defined as "the sharing of one's deepest self, or essence, with another person, such as strength and vulnerability, weakness and competence" (Hu et al., 2004).

The development of personal connections satisfies the inherent human yearning to belong. The individuals we are drawn to, like, and love, romantic and sexual interactions, and the people we marry and who support us emotionally and personally are all examples of intimate relationships. People who

are in intimate relationships have a social network of people who are emotionally close to them and who satisfy our innate wants for belonging and care.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Booyesen et.al. (2018) published "Putting a premium on altruism: A social discounting experiment with South African university students." This paper describes a social discounting experiment conducted with South African university students. In connection with other social discounting task experiments, participants identified target individuals in their social network with various extents of intimacy and then make 10 decisions involving monetary sums for themselves or their targets. According to the hypothesis, in addition to the altruism premium for kin that has been recorded in the publications, there may be other premier for family in general, as well as partners and friends. In addition to the "kinship" premium, there is a sizable "intimacy" premium, which corresponds into a substantial "family" premium. The findings also support the importance of extended family in terms of the "kinship" premium on altruism. The closeness of family and kin relationships, particularly close kin, has a significant and large effect on altruism. However, altruism within families and among close relatives may be enhanced by developing more cohesive and stronger families through formative social welfare programs.

Grauerholz (1988) conducted research on the Altruistic other-orientation in intimate relations. Data from married and unmarried college students were gathered as part of an investigation into whether men and women differ in the extent to which they are altruistically other-oriented in their intimate heterosexual relationships. The findings suggest that men are more altruistically other-oriented toward their partners than women are. Gender has no direct effect on altruistic other-orientation when the effects of dependency, gender role traditionalism, and relationship seriousness are considered. Greater dependency, gender role traditionalism, and relationship seriousness, on the other hand, encourage people to be more altruistic toward their intimate partners.

Feeney & Collins (2003) conducted a study on the motivations for caregiving in adult intimate relationships, as well as the influences on caregiving behaviour and relationship functioning. This study identified and investigated the correlates of specific caregiving motivations in 194 romantic couples. The analysis indicated that (a) there are a variety of distinct motivations for providing and not providing care to one's partner, (b) the motivations are associated with various personal characteristics of the caregiver and the receiver, (c) the caregiver's perceptions of the relationship influence his or her caregiving intentions, (d) different motivations for caregiving estimate different patterns of caregiving behaviour, and (e) responsive caregiving predicts the recipient's perceptions of a healthy relationship. The implications of identifying the motivations that promote or inhibit responsive support provision in intimate relationships were discussed.

Schwartz et.al (2013) investigated how altruistic social interest behaviors are related to better mental health. These researchers focused at whether altruistic social interest behaviors like helping others were linked to better physical and mental health in a stratified random sample of 2016 Presbyterian Church members from across the United States. Mailing questionnaires were used to assess sending and receiving help, and other methods used were prayer activities, positive and negative religious coping, and self-reported health and wellbeing. Although the sample was heavily tilted toward high physical functioning, the results of multivariate regression analysis revealed no relationship between giving or receiving help and physical functioning. After adjusting for age, gender, traumatic events, revenue, health status, positive and negative religious coping, and asking God for healing, both helping others and receiving help were significantly predictive of mental health. In the adjusted model, giving help was a powerful predictor of better observed mental health than receiving help, and feeling swamped by others' demands was a predictor of worse mental health. Finally, the analysis revealed that helping others is associated with higher levels of mental health, in addition to the benefits of receiving help and other known psychospiritual, stress, and demographic factors.

2.2 Research Gap

Families and social groups are held together by altruistic drives and behaviors, which promote cooperation and success in them. A close-knit group's members are more likely to get support when they need it because of altruistic impulses and the reciprocation of kind deeds. Humans are social creatures that thrive on intimate connections with others, therefore social intimacy is crucial. Although it is often associated with sexual relationships, intimacy can also exist in close friendships, parent-child connections, and sibling ties. Altruism and social intimacy have been the subject of numerous studies around the globe, but no study has specifically been done in Kerala to determine how altruism and social closeness alter depending on the birth order of emerging adults.

3. METHOD

3.1 Objective

The objective of the study is to assess significant difference in social intimacy and altruism between first-born and second-born emerging adults.

3.2 Hypotheses

2.2.1 There will be significant difference in Altruism between first-born and Second-born emerging adults.

2.2.3 There will be significant difference in Social intimacy between First-born and Second-born emerging adults

3.3 Variables and operational definition

3.2.1 Altruism

Altruism is a selfless concern for benefits of others, i.e., not because of obligation but the desire to help others.

3.2.2 Social intimacy

Social intimacy refers to the closeness, interactions and relationships with others which include family, friends, etc.

3.2.3 First-born

According to birth order, first-born are the first child born to a couple, also known as the eldest in the family.

3.2.4 Second-born

According to birth order, second-born are the second child born to a couple.

3.3 Sample

3.3.1 Sample size of the study

The sample consists of 125 emerging adults whose age ranges from 18 to 25. The participants were from different colleges from various parts of Kerala, India. In order to choose the sample, convenient sampling was used.

3.3.2 Inclusion criteria

Emerging adult college students whose age ranges from 18-25 who is either first-born or Second-born in a family. Both males and females are included.

3.3.2 Exclusion criteria

Emerging adult of age range between 18 to 25 who are working are excluded from the study. Single child and students with more than two siblings are not included in this study.

3.4 Assessment tools

3.4.1 Miller Social Intimacy Scale (MSIS)

A 17-items scale that measures closeness with others in the context of friendship or marriage. (Rickey S. Miller and Herbert M. Lefcourt).

3.4.2 Adapted self-report Altruism scale (SRA)

A 14 item scale to assess Altruism in Likert type format with anchors 0 (never) to 4(very often). It was developed by Peter Witt and Chris Boleman in 2009. The original version was developed by P.C. Rushton in 1981.

3.5 Research Design

Descriptive research design was employed to study the social intimacy and altruism among firstborn and second born young adults. Questionnaires were used to reach this goal.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Tools for collecting data were finalized and for the purpose of data collection, permission was taken from the respective participants. Each participant was contacted individually by the researcher. The questionnaires were circulated using google form. The participants were assured about the confidentiality of their responses. After explaining the purpose of study, the individual consent of each participant was taken and only those willing to participate were given the questionnaire. Instructions on how to mark the answers were also given via Google form. The data were collected and analyzed using SPSS.

3.7 Statistical Technique

The data was analyzed using SPSS. Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze the collected data to find out the difference in social intimacy and altruism between first-born and second-born emerging adults.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

Table 4.1

Mean Rank, U-value and p-value of Altruism among emerging adults in rural and urban area.

Variable	Group	N	Mean of Rank	Sum of Ranks	U-value	P-value
Altruism	First born	63	55.55	3499.50	1483.50	0.014**
	Second born	63	71.45	4501.50		

**Significant at 0.01 level

Table 4.1 indicates Mean Rank, U value and P value of Altruism among emerging adults in rural and urban area. For the subscale altruism mean of rank for first-born is 55.55 while for second-born is 71.45. For First-born the sum of rank is 3499.50 and for second-born is 4501.50. The U-value obtained is 1483.50 and the corresponding P-value is 0.014.

Table 4.2

Mean Rank, U-value and p-value of Social intimacy among emerging adults in rural and urban area.

Variable	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U-value	P-value
Social intimacy	First born	63	59.83	3769	1753	0.258
	Second born	63	67.17	4232		

Table 4.2 indicates Mean Rank, U value and P value of Social Intimacy among emerging adults in rural and urban area. Mean of rank for subscale Social Intimacy among first-born is 59.83 while for second-born is 67.17. Sum of rank for first-born and second-born are 3769 and 4232 respectively. The U-value obtained is 1753 and the corresponding P-value is 0.258.

4.2 Discussion

The aim of the study is to determine whether there is significant difference between first and second born emerging adults in social intimacy and altruism. Social Intimacy refers to the high quality interactions relationship between others, such as intimacy with spouse, friends, or family members and it can help predict mental health. Altruism is described as a motivational condition that a person hold with the intention of enhancing the well being of another person.

Table 4.1 indicates the Mean Rank, U-value and p-value of altruism among emerging adults in rural and urban areas. From the table 4.1 it is clear that there is significant difference in altruism between firstborn and second-born which is significant at 0.01 level. Hence the hypothesis is accepted. Emerging adults who are second-born were found to have significant levels of altruism. This could be attributed to the fact that emerging adults who were second- born were more likely to agree that they would take a chance and help someone in need and were less likely to agree that they should only worry about themselves (Deanna, 2016). People who are second-born may view their value in terms of other people's acceptance and judgment (kalkan,2008). Additionally, second-born receive more attention and love from their parents, and as a result, they may reciprocate more love and affection. We can infer from these results that second- born children are more likely than firstborn children to demonstrate a favorable attitude toward charity.

Table 4.2 indicates the Mean rank, U-value and p-value of Social Intimacy among emerging adults in rural and urban areas. From the table 4.2 the mean rank indicates that there is difference in social intimacy between first-born and second-born emerging adults but the difference is not significant (increase in sample size might have resulted in significant difference). Therefore the hypothesis is rejected. On the basis of the mean rank, it can be inferred that emerging people who are the second child have greater social intimacy than those who are the first child. This may be because second-born children receive greater parental attention and benefits than firstborn children. According to Alfred Adler's birth order theory, second-born people are more likeable, trustworthy, sociable, and empathic with others. Second-born are thought of as social lions, which implies that connections are very important to them and that they perform well in groups, according to previous studies. We can infer from these results that second born are more likely than firstborns to exhibit social intimacy.

5. CONCLUSION

The study was aimed to find out the difference between social intimacy and altruism among firstborn and second born young adults. From the findings, it can be concluded that there is significant difference in altruism between first born and second born which is significant at 0.01 level, altruism is high among second born. There is no significant difference in social intimacy between firstborn and second born but on analyzing the mean values it can be concluded that there is difference between first-born and second-born emerging adults.

REFERENCES

- Branscombe, N. R., & Baron, R. A. (2017). *Social Psychology* (14th ed.). Pearson.
- Buunk, B. P., & Schaufeli, W. B. (1999). Reciprocity in interpersonal relationships: An evolutionary perspective on its importance for health and well-being. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 10(1), 259-291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14792779943000080>
- Curry, O., Roberts, S. G., & Dunbar, R. I. (2012). Altruism in social networks: Evidence for a 'kinship premium'. *British Journal of Psychology*, 104(2), 283-295. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8295.2012.02119.x>



- Feeney, B. C., & Collins, N. L. (2003). Motivations for caregiving in adult intimate relationships: Influences on caregiving behavior and relationship functioning. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29(8), 950-968. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167203252807>
- Filkowski, M., Cochran, R. N., & Haas, B. (2016). Altruistic behavior: Mapping responses in the brain. *Neuroscience and Neuroeconomics*, 5, 65-75. <https://doi.org/10.2147/nan.s87718>
- Grauerholz, E. (1988). Altruistic other-orientation in intimate relationships. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 16(2), 127-131. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.1988.16.2.127>
- Schwär, G., & Mahony, A. (2012). Birth order position and prosocial tendencies. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 22(1), 56-60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2012.10874521>
- Schwartz, C., Meisenhelder, J. B., Ma, Y., & Reed, G. (2003). Altruistic social interest behaviors are associated with better mental health. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 65(5), 778-785. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.psy.0000079378.39062.d4>
- Smith, D. R. (2016). The Effect of Birth Order on Attitudes Toward Altruism. Departmental Honor Projects.
- Why we risk our own well-being to help others. (2012). Verywell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-altruism-2794828>
- Zhang, Y., & Ling, Q. (1970). SNS as Intimacy Zone: Social Intimacy, Loneliness, and Self-disclosure on SNS. *Global Media Journal*, 13(25).