



## **Birth Order and Delinquency Among Senior Secondary School Students in Calabar South, Cross River State-Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study was aimed at investigating the influence of birth order on delinquency among senior secondary school students in Calabar south. Cross river state, Nigeria. It was a survey research, as such the population used was 2640 senior secondary students using simple random sampling techniques, and 600 students were drawn for the study. For data analysis, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for testing the hypothesis. The result of the analysis showed that first born children are more delinquent than later born children. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.

**Key words:** Birth order, delinquency, firstborn, students, Secondary school.

### **INTRODUCTION**

For the last two decades, reports of birth order and delinquency have been rising at a rapid rate. Social scientists have long shown the effects of birth order and family size on outcomes Such as intelligence and educational achievement, but little attention has been paid to the effects of birth order on deviance and delinquency. It is important that birth order of children be studied to ascertain its effects on delinquency. Birth order or sibling configuration or sibling constellation refers to a child's ordinal position in the family. According to Steelman, Powell Wermo & Carter (2002), the presence of sibling dilutes resources necessary for social mobility.

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The incidences of juvenile delinquency and anti-social behavior have tremendously increased in intensity in cross river state in general and Calabar south in particular in recent years. There delinquents acts are exhibited mostly by senior secondary school students. They get involved in act such as truancy, rape, stealing, lying, house breaking, looting, gross disobedience, cheating, insubordination, malingering and harassment of innocent citizens. These unlawful acts have turned the area quiet, sleepy Calabar south to an area of horror and persistent fear.

This sudden upsurge of delinquent acts constitutes a lot of concern to parents, teachers, social workers, psychologist and all persons who believe in the healthy and harmonious development at human personality. A great number of our youth within secondary school age are found to be involved in these antisocial behavior/activities, which rampantly cause a lot of damage to lives and property considering the ages of these delinquent youths, it becomes pertinent to look closely if birth order are contributing factors to the level of delinquency experienced in recent times.

A study done by Zajonc and Markus (1975) shows that firstborn children tend to be more verbally articulate, less impulsive, more active, better performers in school, more likely to go to college and tend to have greater need to achieve. It was found that earlier born children tend to score higher on test of intelligence and aptitude than those born into the family later. In a similar study, salts et al (1995), found that twins and triplets had low scores on test on intelligence than non-twin siblings. Thus they agree with the findings of Zajonc and Markus in the claim that the most influential determinant of intellectual ability were family size and birth order. These are in addition to genetic heritage and parental care. Steelman et al. (2002) in stating sibling configuration asserted the superiority of the eldest, basing his designation on data that suggested that firstborn are more likely than their later born counterparts to become eminent scientist. Steelman and other scholars have therefore agreed on set of conclusion regarding how various structural features of the sibling group modify status outcomes. They observed that as the number of siblings increases, the intellectual development of subsequent siblings is impaired and even more important, academic achievement decreases and this shapes occupational opportunities and future home.

The firstborn or the oldest child enjoys the enviable position for a time of being an 'only child'. Usually the parents are thrilled about the arrival of their firstborn and totally devoted to doing all the "right things" for the new baby. The firstborn thus receives the parents' undivided love and care. In turn the child enjoys a secure and serene existence until another child is born to remove the favored status. This event dramatically changes the child's situation and view of the world. Adler (1956) often referred to the firstborn as the "king dethrone" and noted that this might be very traumatic experience. Seeing that a younger sibling is winning the contest for parent attention and affection, the oldest child's natural inclination is to fight back in order to regain his or her former supremacy in the family.

The second born or middle born according to Adler (1956) has a pacesetter in the form of an elder brother or sister and is thus stimulated or perhaps to outdo the older child's exploits. This spurs the second born often generating a faster rate of development than the firstborn exhibited. For example, the second child may begin talking and walking at an earlier age than the first child did. As a result of all of this the second born is characterized by being highly competitive and ambitious. His or her life style is one of constantly trying to prove that he/she is better than the older sibling. Thus the middle child is child is characterized by being achievement oriented, using both direct and devious means to surpass the older sibling.

Second born (middle born) children may not be knowledgeable in all these because parental supervision is not shown effectively; parents may not have the time to restrict the childrens' access to media violence or monitor their peer groups, explain and inform them of the negative effects of substance abuse and access fire arms. This may lead to not being able to provide such children with stable family life tree of violence discipline them with love consistently and teach them the basic values of life, which include among others; respect for others; respect for authority and respect of themselves. Such children the paper concluded may not perform well in their academic work because of the various problems they may encounter in life (Criminal justice and crime prevention 1998).

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The situation of the youngest or the last born child is unique in several ways. First he never experiences the shock of dethronement by another child and remains as a baby of the family, be pampered not only by the parent or in large families, but by the older siblings as well. Secondly, if parents are economically strapped, he may be relegated to the position of "tag-along-kid" who has nothing of his own and must get by "hands-me-down" from other family members. Third, with several older models that set the pace, all of

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whom are bigger, stronger and more privilege than he is, he is likely to experience strong feelings of inferiority coupled with lack of independence. The last born possesses a high motivation to surpass older siblings. Adler (1985) spoke of the fighting youngest child as the most likely to become the most revolutionary. Ude (1999) showed that social environment affect siblings later born than the first born. Those later born children spend more time with peer group than the first born. Enusike (1985) maintains that with the number of children increasing above one, peers will have the opportunity of entering and introducing one another to media game which have been the major cause of delinquency today. Thus later born children are likely to be more delinquent than first born children.

Ude (1999) stated that the changes of in family structure help reduce the number of adults who provide interaction, structure and supervision in child's life. Fraser (1986) believes that only first born children can be supervised, have alternative program to help them grow and perform well in academic work. The later born he noted are prone to suffering parental separation and are not given enough care. This he believes that late born children manifest more anti-social behavior than their first born counterpart.

Nonetheless, Tower (1999) has contrary view to Markus. "Parents tend to spoil the first born children by petting and providing more than necessary things needed by the child, thereby creating room for social misbehavior". According to him, later born children perform well both at home and in school than the first born children who are spoiled either by their parent or care givers.

In recognizing the family's early and primary role in influencing delinquency in their children, Onyehalu (1986) concluded that parental supervision and socialization are major influence on children's subsequent delinquency. In his study, he revealed that later born children are less able to control their impulses, have lower tolerance for frustration, more likely to be hyper-active, have more deficiency adapting to school and are at a greater risk for delinquency than first born children. In addition, Cundiff (2010) in his study examined the relationship between birth order and a variety of delinquent outcome among adolescents. Using 16,500 students from the national longitudinal study of adolescent health; the relationship existing between birth order and delinquency was spurious. Birth order effects on delinquency that were observed between individuals become negligible and statistically non-significant when the effects are examined within families.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

### **Subjects**

A total sample of six hundred senior secondary school students were drawn from the population of 2640 students in the study area. Ten secondary

schools were again randomly selected with sixty students also randomly selected. Thus a total of six hundred (600) students comprising three hundred and twenty eight (328) girls and two hundred and seventy (270) boys were drawn.

### **Data collection**

A survey questionnaire was designed as instrument for data collection; it was divided into two parts. Part one was made up of sixteen items designed to get information on students' birth order. Items in this section were such that could elicit information on birth order. Part two of the instrument had twenty items structured in the form of state. Respondents were required to place a tick against each statement to show their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. It was on a modified four (4) point likert kind of scale.

## **RESULTS**

The hypothesis was tested using one way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The survey data collected and analysed as shown in table s1 and 2.

**Table 1:** One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of birth order on students' delinquency.

Group	Birth order	N	X	SD
1	First Born	60	48.80	11.48
2	Middle Born	216	40.89	7.51
3	Last Born	324	40.86	10.74*
Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F
Between groups	3395.59	2	1697.80	17.48*
Within groups	57976.40	597	97.11	
Total	61371.99	599		

\* $p < 0.05$ ;  $N=600$ ,  $F_2 597 = 3.00^*$

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As presented in the table 1 above, the calculated F-value is 17.48 while the critical value is 3.0 since the calculated value is greater than the critical value at 0.05 alpha level with 2 and 597 degrees. The null hypothesis was rejected. This means that the influence of birth order on delinquency significantly differs among the group.

To know exactly the difference among the group lies a post hoc test using fisher's least significance difference (LSD) test was done. This revealed the data shown in table 2.

**Table 2:** Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) test of the influence of birth order on students' delinquency in Calabar South, Cross River state.

Group	Birth Order	1 (n <sub>1</sub> = 60)	2 (n <sub>2</sub> = 216)	3 (n <sub>3</sub> =324)
1	First Born	48.80 <sup>a</sup>	7.91 <sup>b</sup>	7.94
2	Middle Born	5.50* <sup>c</sup>	40.8 <sup>a</sup>	0.03
3	Last Born	5.73*	0.03	40.86

MS<sub>w</sub> = 97.11

a = Group means are on the diagonal

b= Difference between group means are above the diagonal

c= Fishers' LSD t-values are below the diagonal

\*p<0.05, df =597, critical t-value =1.96.

A shown in table 2, significant t-values are noted between (1) group 1 and 2 (first born and middle born). The calculated t-value between these group was 5.50 and against the critical t-values of 1.96. Also from the mean score of 4.80 and 4.89 respectively. It was revealed that firstborn are more delinquent than middle born children. (2) group 1 and 3 ( firstborn and last born ). The difference observed between these group was significant as reflected by a calculated t-value of 5.73, while the mean score on delinquency of first born was 48.80, that of the last born was 40.86. This means that the first born children are more delinquent than the lastborn.

## **DISCUSSION**

In the null form, this hypothesis stated that there is no significant influence of birth order on students' delinquency. One way analysis of variance statistical technique revealed that birth order has a significant influence on students'

delinquent behavior. From the findings, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings of this study imply that parents should be cautious in the way they relate with their firstborn children. The study revealed specifically that the first two children in the home have very high tendency to be delinquent. The mean score of the first two children on delinquency was 40.80 while those of the middle born children on delinquency were 40.89 and 40.86 respectively. The statistically significant value was noted only between the first born and others.. Many parents are known to pet, pamper or express excessive love to their first two children more than the successive ones. These latter children may later develop low self concept as well as suffer from other psychological disposition. Wright and Wright (1997) support this finding when they noted that social environment affect later born children more than first born children. The later born children spend more time with peer groups than the first. Thus the first born children are more withdrawn and introverted, leading to their being delinquent.

Patrick (1979) also agrees with the findings in his opinion that parents spoil their first born children by petting and providing more than necessary things needed by the child, thereby creating room for social misbehavior. Patrick maintained that later born children perform better both at home and at school than first born children who are spoiled by their parents or care givers. However, Cundiff (2010) research finding was contradicting this finding in that the relationship existing between birth order and delinquency was spurious. Birth order effects on delinquency that were observed between individuals become negligible and statistically non-significant when the effects are examined within families. This differences in his research could be as a result of cultural differences.

## **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of birth order on delinquency among senior secondary school student in Calabar south, Cross River state. As specific objectives to carry out this study effectively, the variable was hypothesized that there is no significant influence of birth order on students' delinquency. Using one way analysis of variance (ANOVA), the hypothesis was tested. Based on the findings of this study, delinquency among senior secondary school Students in Calabar south is simply as a result of being over petted loved and over pampered by their parents. On the basis of the findings above the following recommendations were made:

1. Seminars and workshop should be organized so that they will know the dangers involved in over-petting and over-pampering of children. If this is done, first born children will not be given preferential treatment from the later born children.

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2. Counseling psychologist should be deployed to schools for early identification of personal social issues among students. This will go a long way in reducing cases of delinquency among students.

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