

Family Attachment, Career Distress and Self Esteem

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Abstract

The present study examined the influence of family attachment and birth order on the career distress and self-esteem among migrant students. It is a comparative study. This research includes quantitative research methods, and the sample for this study was 499 participants among the young adults (migrant students) who fall under the age of 18 to 25 years old in the Indian context through standardized instruments: the Family Attachment and Changeability Index, Career Distress Scale, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.. The research method was conducted with the ethical guidelines. Since normality assumptions were not met, non-parametric tests (Kruskal–Wallis and Mann–Whitney U) were applied. The findings revealed no significant difference in family attachment based on birth order. However, significant differences were observed in self-esteem and career distress. Non-first-born students reported higher self-esteem, whereas first-born students experienced greater career distress. The findings indicate that although family attachment does not vary across birth order groups, birth order plays a significant role in shaping self-esteem and career-related distress among migrant student.

Keywords: Family attachment, career distress, self-esteem, migrant students.

1. Introduction

1.1 OVERVIEW

This research investigates the psychological experiences of migrant college students, specifically examining the role of family attachment and birth order. Career distress and self-esteem instability can result from migrating for higher education due to exposure to new learning and social contexts. The introduction describes the role of attachment styles shaped by the family, which continue to affect emotional security and coping strategies despite migration. Birth order is also introduced as a factor influencing personality, role, and stress. Theoretical frameworks for this research include Attachment Theory, Family Systems Theory, Career Construction Theory, and Self-Esteem Theory. Overall, the study aims to examine these relationships through a comparative approach to better understand career distress and self-esteem among migrant students.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Migration for higher education is an important life transition that places students in unfamiliar academic and social environments. Although it promotes independence and growth, it can also create emotional challenges. Migrant students often experience career uncertainty and fluctuations in self-esteem during this adjustment period. Physical distance from family may reduce emotional support and affect coping abilities. The quality of family attachment plays a key role in shaping confidence, security, and decision-making. Students with secure attachment may experience lower career distress and higher self-esteem. In contrast, insecure attachment may increase anxiety and career-related confusion.

Birth order is another family factor that influences personality traits, responsibility, and achievement expectations. First-born and non-first-born students may differ in how they handle stress and career pressures. Therefore, this study examines the comparative influence of family attachment and birth order on career distress and self-esteem among migrant students.

Migrant student

Migrant students are learners who pursue education away from their native place, either across national borders or within the same country, in search of better academic and career opportunities. They often face challenges such as cultural adaptation, language barriers, financial stress, and separation from family support systems. According to the OECD (2023), migrant students are defined as those who were born in a country other than the one where they are studying, or whose parents were born abroad. Such conditions may increase their vulnerability to stress, lower self-esteem, and career-related difficulties. However, migrant students also display resilience and adaptability in adjusting to new academic and social environments. Their experiences highlight the importance of family attachment, peer support, and institutional guidance in shaping educational outcomes. Understanding their psychological and social needs is crucial to promoting academic success and overall well-being.

Family attachment

Family attachment significantly shapes emotional and psychological development. According to Bowlby (1988), secure early attachments build emotional regulation, resilience, and healthy relationships. Such individuals show higher self-esteem and confidence in facing life challenges. In contrast, insecure attachments (anxious or avoidant) are linked to lower self-esteem and fear of rejection (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). These patterns influence adult functioning, affecting stress management and relationships, both personally and professionally. Attachment patterns influence how individuals manage career stress. According to Feeney and Collins (2015), those with anxious attachment may have fear of failure and feel judged, while avoidant individuals often avoid support and career opportunities (Feeney, 1999; Bowlby, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). In contrast, securely attached individuals cope better with job stress.

Family attachment is fundamental to an individual's emotional and psychological growth, influencing one's self-perception and interactions with the outside world. Based on Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, it denotes the lasting emotional connection between children and their caregivers, which offers a secure foundation for exploration and resilience in adversity. For migrant students, who frequently find themselves separated from their families due to academic or professional ambitions, family

attachment plays an essential role in sustaining emotional stability, self-worth, and effective coping mechanisms.

A strong family attachment has been linked to enhanced self-esteem, increased career adaptability, and reduced feelings of distress, as the sense of belonging and unwavering support promotes confidence in making choices. In contrast, a weak or disrupted family attachment can render migrant students more susceptible to insecurity, intensified career-related distress, and diminished self-efficacy. Specifically, the attachment bond not only ensures emotional security but also conveys cultural values, expectations, and guidance that shape attitudes toward careers and reactions to stress.

This study focuses on family attachment as a significant factor impacting career distress and self-esteem among migrant students. That these students encounter unique academic, social, and emotional hurdles while adjusting to new surroundings, it is crucial to comprehend the influence of family attachment on their psychological adaptation. By examining how attachment bonds interact with variables such as birth order, the research aims to emphasize the protective function of family connections in fostering resilience and mitigating vulnerability among migrant student groups.

Career distress

Career distress, characterized by feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and dissatisfaction related to one's professional life, can significantly impact an individual's psychological well-being, including self-esteem and family attachment. Career distress may stem from various factors such as job dissatisfaction, lack of career advancement, job insecurity, or conflicts in the workplace. According to Super's (1990) theory of career development, individuals' self-concept is closely tied to their career choices and development. When a person experiences career distress, it can reduce the sense of self-worth, as their professional identity, it is often a central aspect of their self concept which feels threatened. This decline in self-esteem can manifest in various ways, such as feelings of inadequacy, diminished self-efficacy, and a lack of motivation to pursue career goals. The impact of career distress on self-esteem can be particularly pronounced when individuals perceive their work as a primary source of validation and success. Research by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) highlights the concept of work family conflict, in which career related stressors spill over into personal life, affecting both emotional well-being and relationships.

Career distress refers to the psychological pressure, uncertainty, and negative emotional experiences individuals encounter concerning their educational and career growth. It includes sensations of confusion, frustration, anxiety, and helplessness that arise when students face challenges in making career-related decisions, coping with academic demands, or fulfilling personal and societal expectations. Career distress often arises during transitional stages, such as starting higher education, getting ready for employment, or making career choices in new environments.

For migrant students, the experience of career distress can be especially intense. Moving often entails cultural adjustments, separation from family support systems, and heightened pressure to succeed academically to validate the sacrifices made by their families. These students may grapple with identity conflicts, language barriers, limited access to career resources, and increased expectations from their families, all of which contribute to greater susceptibility to career-related stress.

The existence or lack of family attachment plays a significant role in how students handle career distress. Strong family connections offer emotional support, direction, and motivation, allowing students to navigate uncertainties more successfully. Conversely, weak or insecure attachments can worsen stress, leading to diminished confidence, challenges in decision-making, and lowered self-esteem. Therefore, comprehending the nature of career distress in relation to family attachment and birth order is crucial for addressing the psychological difficulties faced by migrant students.

Self esteem

Self-esteem is refers to the individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal value, plays a fundamental role in psychological well-being and influences various aspects of life, including relationships and career outcomes. High self-esteem is associated with a positive self-concept, confidence in one's abilities, and emotional resilience. According to Rosenberg (1965), self esteem reflects how individuals evaluate themselves and their perceived value within social contexts. It acts as a protective factor, allowing individuals to navigate stress, setbacks, and interpersonal challenges more effectively. Conversely, low self-esteem can lead to feelings of inadequacy, vulnerability to criticism, and difficulties in forming secure relationships. As self esteem shapes one's worldview and self-perception, it can significantly affect interactions within family dynamics and career trajectories. In the context of family attachment, self-esteem serves as a vital component of emotional bonding and interpersonal relationships.

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their worth, competence, and value as a person. It is a central construct in psychology, influencing how people perceive themselves, interact with others, and cope with life's challenges. Rosenberg (1965), who developed the widely used Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), defined self-esteem as a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the self. High self-esteem is associated with greater confidence, resilience, and positive emotional adjustment, while low self-esteem is linked to insecurity, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and difficulties in managing stress.

For migrant students, self-esteem plays a crucial role in navigating academic, social, and cultural transitions. Being separated from family support systems, facing new academic pressures, and adjusting to unfamiliar environments can challenge their sense of identity and self-worth. Strong family attachment often acts as a protective factor, fostering higher self-esteem by providing a foundation of security, encouragement, and belonging. Conversely, insecure attachments or strained family bonds may increase vulnerability to low self-esteem, making students more prone to career distress and adjustment difficulties.

Birth order

According to Alfred Adler (1928), birth order significantly shapes personality, as each position (first-born, middle, last-born) comes with unique social roles and developmental experiences within the family structure. He proposed that first-borns tend to be more responsible and achievement-oriented, middle children may become competitive or feel overlooked, and last-borns are often more social and attention-seeking.

Birth order refers to the chronological position of a child within their family (e.g., first-born, middle-born, last-born), which is believed to influence their personality, behavior, and psychological development due to differences in parental attention, expectations, and sibling dynamics.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

Family attachment

- ***Bowlby's Attachment Theory***

John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) laid the groundwork for attachment theory, focusing on the lasting emotional connection between a child and their primary caregiver. He suggested that secure attachment offers a “secure base” from which individuals can venture into the world, while insecure attachment may result in challenges with emotional regulation, self-esteem, and relationships with others. Bowlby’s research underscores how early family dynamics shape internal working models mental representations of the self and others that persistently affect personality development, coping mechanisms, and adaptation throughout life. For migrant students, these attachment bonds are vital in mitigating career-related stress and enhancing self-esteem when navigating new surroundings and obstacles.

- ***Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978)***

Family systems theory, created by psychiatrist Dr. Murray Bowen, is a concept that perceives the family as an emotional entity and a complicated, interconnected network. In contrast to conventional psychological methods that concentrate on an individual's separate issues, this theory asserts that a person's actions and emotional health are significantly affected by the dynamics and interactions within their family. The fundamental notion is that a modification in one family member impacts the whole system, similar to a domino effect. The theory is constructed on eight essential ideas, including differentiation of self an individual’s capacity to uphold their own identity while remaining connected to others and triangles, which are three-person relationship dynamics that emerge to alleviate tension between two individuals. These ideas aid in elucidating the behavioral patterns, communication styles, and emotional challenges that can be transmitted across generations. Ultimately, the theory offers a perspective for comprehending how the family environment influences our identities and behaviors, thereby serving as a valuable resource in family therapy to address conflicts and promote healthier relationships.

Career distress

- ***Career Construction Theory – Savickas (2002, 2005)***

According to Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2002, 2005), career development is an ongoing process of meaning-making and adaptation in which people actively shape their careers by fusing social roles, personal values, and life themes. According to Savickas, people who face uncertainty, feel that their self-concept and career choices are not aligned, or struggle to adapt to changing job environments are said to be experiencing career distress. This theory emphasizes the value of proactive coping strategies, flexibility, and personal narratives in reducing anxiety related to one's career and enhancing job satisfaction. This theory demonstrates how difficulties balancing personal goals with strange academic or cultural environments can exacerbate career distress for migrant students.

- ***Person–Environment Fit Theory (Holland, 1997)***

According to the Person–Environment Fit (P–E Fit) Theory (Holland, 1997), a person's success and job satisfaction are based on how well their personality traits and work environment mesh. According to

Holland, occupations are likewise divided into six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC). When a person's personality type and the demands or nature of their workplace are not compatible, career distress arises, which can result in stress, low motivation, and diminished self-esteem. Understanding the personality-environment fit of students, including those who are migrants, can help them make career decisions and lessen the anxiety that comes with having uncertain career paths.

Self esteem

- ***Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory (1965)***

Self-esteem is a general evaluative attitude toward oneself that reflects sentiments of self-worth and self-respect, according to Rosenberg (1965). Rosenberg asserts that social interactions and feedback from significant others help people develop their sense of self-worth, which is essential for motivation, emotional health, and social adjustment. While high self-esteem promotes confidence, resilience, and adaptive functioning, low self-esteem can have detrimental effects like anxiety, depression, and diminished coping skills. His work laid the foundation for widely used measures of self-esteem, including the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which assesses individuals' positive and negative self-evaluations.

- ***Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)***

According to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, self-esteem is a basic psychological need that arises following the satisfaction of needs for safety, social belonging, and physiology. Maslow states that while people with unmet esteem needs may experience feelings of helplessness, inferiority, or distress related to their careers and lives, those with high self-esteem experience confidence, competence, and autonomy. Meeting these needs is crucial for motivation, personal development, and wise decision-making in educational and professional contexts, such as those involving migrant students.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Education-related migration has become a rising trend, with students moving away from their families to explore educational and career avenues. While this shift is a great way for students to develop independence and mature as individuals, it also makes them vulnerable to emotional, social, and career-related issues. Students who migrate for education often find themselves in a state of confusion about their career choices and may experience fluctuations in their self-esteem as they face new surroundings without the support of their immediate family members. Such psychological issues can impact their academic and career success.

Attachment to family is a very important determinant of emotional security, coping mechanisms, and self-concept. At the same time, birth order can impact personality characteristics, responsibility levels, and parental expectations, which can further impact how people react to stressful situations and career pressures. While there have been studies on the impact of attachment and birth order on career-related issues, there has been very little research done on the joint and comparative effects of these two factors on career distress and self-esteem among migrant students. This relationship is very important in the larger context of mental health and career development issues among students, especially in countries where education migration is increasing.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Aim

The aim of this study is to examine family attachment and birth order influence career distress and self-esteem among migrant students. The study seeks to understand how differences in birth order (first-born and non-first-born). Through a comparative approach, the research explores how birth order may shape family attachment experiences, career distress and self esteem within migrant students.

Objectives of the study

- 1.To assess whether birth order and family attachment has levels interact to affect self esteem and career distress
2. To compare the level of family attachment, career distress and self esteem among migrant college students
3. To examine the relationship between family attachment, career distress and self esteem among migrant college students.
4. To analyze the effect of family attachment and birth order on career distress and self esteem among migrant college students

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION / HYPOTHESIS

Research question

How do family attachment and birth order influence the career distress and self esteem among migrant college student?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in family attachment among migrant college students based on their birth order.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in career distress among migrant college students based on their birth order.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in self esteem among migrant college students based on their birth order.

H₁₁: There is a significant difference in family attachment among migrant college students based on their birth order.

H1₂: There is a significant difference in career distress among migrant college students based on their birth order.

H1₃: There is a significant difference in self-esteem among migrant college students based on their birth order.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is important as it tackles the increasing number of students who migrate to pursue higher education and are confronted with distinct psychological issues. It points out the significance of family-related variables, which still affect students even after they have relocated to a different place away from home. By exploring the relationship between family attachment and birth order simultaneously, this research offers a broader perspective on career distress and self-esteem. It fills a research gap as it specifically targets migrant college students.

The results of this research can help mental health practitioners recognize patterns of susceptibility associated with family-related variables. The study can also assist institutions of higher learning in improving student services and career guidance programs. The research can also inform the design of preventive programs to mitigate career-related anxiety. In addition, it can provide guidance for parents to comprehend the influence of their relationships on their children's confidence and career adjustment. In general, this research makes a contribution to improving the emotional and career-related well-being of migrant students.

1.8 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Family Attachment: Attachment is a specific aspect of parent-child relationships, its purpose being, to make a child feel safe, secure and protected. It is distinguished from other aspects of parenting such as discipline, entertaining and teaching. In the context of this study, it is the emotional bond and sense of security a first-born college student feels towards their immediate family (parents, siblings, etc.).

Career Distress : It is the level of stress, worry, or fear that a first-born migrant college student experiences regarding their career prospects and future professional decisions. This can be measured using tools like the Career Distress Scale which assesses concerns about career decisions, job market uncertainties, and academic performance related to career goals.

Self-esteem: Self esteem refers to the belief and confidence of an individual upon one's own values and abilities. The first-born migrant college student's overall sense of self-worth or personal value, as assessed through standardized scales such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), which evaluates feelings of competence, self-respect, and confidence in one's abilities.

Migrant Students : A migrant students is defined as an individual who has relocated from their hometown or region to another place for the purpose of pursuing higher education. For this study, only college students who have moved to a different city or state for educational purpose will be included.

Birth Order: It refers to the chronological order of a students birth among their sibling

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Overview

The existing body of literature, on a broad scale, has examined various aspects of the role of family attachment, family functioning, self-esteem, and psychological factors on career development and mental well-being among young people. The research has consistently shown that a supportive family environment, parental attachment, and positive family cohesion are related to higher levels of self-esteem, career decision-making self-efficacy, and positive psychological adjustment. Emotional factors, such as anxiety and pessimism, are shown to be important intervening variables in the relationship between low parental attachment and career indecisiveness.

In migrant and first-generation college students, various studies have identified some unique career development challenges, such as marginalization, acculturation, and family role expectations. However, parental intimacy has been shown to be a protective factor for mitigating such negative career development outcomes. The literature on birth order has identified differences in personality traits and resilience. However, its impact on self-esteem and career outcomes has been mixed and context-dependent. Overall, this body of literature has highlighted the interrelated nature of family attachment, self-esteem, emotional well-being, and career development, but has also underscored the need for further integrative and comparative research, especially on migrant college students.

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that family attachment and family functioning significantly influence career development and psychological well-being among adolescents and young adults. Quantitative research by Chen et al. (2023) and Jiang (2022) found that family cohesion, adaptability, and parental aspirations positively predict educational aspirations and career choice self-efficacy, with emotional factors such as state anxiety mediating these relationships. Similarly, Bercovitz et al. (2012) reported that anxious attachment indirectly contributes to career indecision through career-related anxiety and pessimism, highlighting the mediating role of negative emotions. However, Disha et al. (2023) revealed a negative association between excessive family influence and career decision-making self-efficacy, suggesting that overinvolvement may hinder autonomy. Abdullah and Roslan (2021) further showed that self-esteem and peer support were stronger predictors of career decision self-efficacy than family support.

Empirical evidence also underscores the strong relationship between family functioning and self-esteem. Shi et al. (2017) found that healthy family functioning significantly predicted higher self-esteem among college students. Amjad et al. (2022) reported that supportive family environments positively influenced self-esteem and reduced social anxiety. Zhao et al. (2022) demonstrated that stable parental attachment reduced depression indirectly through fulfillment of psychological needs, with career identity acting as a moderating factor. Additionally, Arjanggal et al. (2020) identified self-esteem as a significant predictor of career decision-making self-efficacy, whereas Harsha and Rema (2023) found no direct relationship between self-esteem and achievement anxiety, indicating contextual variability.

Studies focusing on migrant and first-generation populations highlight additional complexities. Jang et al. (2023) found that parent intimacy buffered the negative impact of marginalization on career maturity and mental health among foreign-born young adults. Ying et al. (2022) and Wang et al. (2022) identified self-esteem as a mediator between family functioning and social adaptation among migrant children. Lu et al. (2020) reported that separation from parents adversely affected immigrant children's

academic and psychosocial outcomes. Furthermore, birth order studies (Malik, 2024; Fukuya et al., 2021; Bleske-Rechek & Kelley) suggest variations in personality traits and resilience, though findings regarding self-esteem remain inconsistent.

Overall, empirical evidence supports the significant role of family attachment in shaping self-esteem, career decision-making, and psychological adjustment. However, inconsistencies regarding birth order effects, the limited focus on career distress as an outcome variable, and the scarcity of integrated studies within migrant college populations indicate the need for further empirical investigation.

2.3 Synthesis of Literature

Family attachment in relation to Career choice and distress

Bercovitz, H. et al., (2012) The purpose of this study was to examine a theoretically-based model in which insecure attachment is related to career indecision through the mediation of negative emotions. Two hundred college students completed questionnaires measuring anxious and avoidant dimensions of insecure attachment, negative emotions (trait and career-choice anxiety, trait and career-choice pessimism), and career indecision. Path analysis indicated that anxious attachment was indirectly related to career indecision through a full mediation of career-choice anxiety and career-choice pessimism (but not through the trait emotions). Avoidant attachment was neither related to the negative emotions nor to career indecision. These findings contribute to the understanding of the linkage between internalized relationships with significant others and career planning and development, and highlight the important role that career-choice-related emotions play in the process of career decision making. In light of the findings, implications and recommendations regarding career development, career counseling interventions, and preventive measures aimed at reducing career indecision are presented.

Chen, X. et al., (2023) investigated the associations between individual, peer, and family factors and educational aspirations among rural Chinese adolescents. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, they collected data from 606 adolescents (Mage = 14.85 years; 50% boys) in Central China. Self-report questionnaires assessed educational aspirations, individual factors (e.g., academic performance, self-perception, self-regulation, attitudes toward teachers, and goal valuation), and contextual factors (e.g., family socioeconomic status, parent and peer relationship quality, and parental and close friends' aspirations). The results showed that individual factors and the aspirations of parents and peers had significant direct effects on educational aspirations, while family socioeconomic status had no direct impact. The findings underscore the importance of individual factors as mechanisms linking contextual influences to educational aspirations and suggest that interventions targeting these domains could help enhance aspirations in rural adolescents.

Disha, T. et al., (2023) conducted a quantitative analysis to explore the relationship between family influences and career decision-making self-efficacy among first-year undergraduate and postgraduate college students in India. The study involved 300 participants who completed the Parent Career Behaviour Checklist and the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy questionnaire. Findings revealed that parental general psychosocial support was a statistically significant factor in predicting career decision-making self-efficacy. Interestingly, the results indicated a negative correlation between family influence and students' career decision-making self-efficacy, suggesting that increased family influence might reduce students' confidence in making career decisions. Additionally, the study

identified significant gender differences, with male students exhibiting higher career decision-making self-efficacy compared to female students. These findings highlight the complex role of family dynamics in shaping students' career decision-making processes and underscore the need for interventions that consider familial influences and gender disparities.

Jiang, C.(2022) investigated the effect of family cohesion and adaptability on career choice self-efficacy among graduates, examining the mediating role of state anxiety. The study employed a quantitative design using self-report questionnaires, with data collected from a sample of 584 graduates. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between family cohesion, adaptability, and career choice self-efficacy, while state anxiety showed a significant negative correlation with these variables. Additionally, state anxiety was found to fully mediate the relationship between family cohesion and career choice self-efficacy and partially mediate the relationship between family adaptability and career choice self-efficacy. The study highlights the critical role of family environment and psychological factors in shaping graduates' confidence in their career decisions.

Roy and Giraldo-García (2018) conducted a systematic literature review examining global perspectives on the role of parental involvement and social/emotional skills in school-age children's academic success. Their analysis revealed that parental involvement varies across cultures, with distinctive characteristics and contextual differences. The study emphasized the importance of parents supporting their children's development of social/emotional skills to facilitate educational success. Recommendations were provided to encourage parental practices that promote both academic achievement and social/emotional development.

Family relation influencing individuals needs and self esteem

Amjad, M. et al., (2022) conducted a study examining the connection between family environment, self-esteem, and social anxiety among adolescents in Pakistan. Utilizing a sample of 270 students (110 boys and 160 girls) from 9th and 10th grades, they applied measures such as the Family Environment Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and Social Anxiety Scale for Children and Adolescents. Their analysis revealed that system maintenance within family environments negatively predicted social anxiety, while family relationships and system maintenance positively influenced self-esteem. However, personal growth did not significantly predict either self-esteem or social anxiety. The study concluded that self-esteem does not mediate the relationship between family environment dimensions and social anxiety. These findings highlight the importance of family dynamics in adolescents' mental health and emphasize the need for interventions targeting family support systems to enhance self-esteem and reduce social anxiety.

Shi, J. et., (2017) investigated the impact of family functioning and related factors on self-esteem among Chinese college freshmen. The study involved 2,001 participants aged 16 to 20, assessed using the Family Assessment Device (FAD), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and self-reported family information. Statistical analyses included ANOVA, correlation, and regression methods. Findings revealed that students from harmonious families, higher-income households, or those raised by their parents rather than grandparents had higher self-esteem. Additionally, only children displayed higher self-esteem compared to those with siblings. Family functioning,

particularly dimensions like roles, communication, behavioral control, and problem-solving, significantly predicted self-esteem, explaining 13.2% to 17.9% of variance. The study underscores the importance of family-based interventions to enhance self-esteem and promote mental health among college students.

Zhao, L. et al.,(2022) did a study that explored the complex interplay among parental attachment, basic psychological needs, career identity, and depression among Chinese overseas students in South Korea. A total of 335 Chinese overseas students were asked to fill out a questionnaire, and the data of these samples were utilized to test the moderated mediation hypotheses through SPSS and AMOS. According to the research, depression is inversely correlated with stable parental attachment, both directly and indirectly, through its impact on meeting fundamental psychological needs including relatedness, competence, and autonomy. It is found that career identity acts as a moderating factor, reducing the negative impact of unstable connection on psychological needs and, consequently, depression. These findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions aimed at strengthening career identity and addressing psychological needs to mitigate depression among this demographic.

Self esteem and self image in relation to achievement and career anxiety

Abdullah and Roslan (2021) conducted a study examining the relationships between perceived social support, self-esteem, and career decision self-efficacy among first-year undergraduate students in Malaysia. The sample included 190 students selected using cluster random sampling. Questionnaires measuring social support, self-esteem, and career decision self- efficacy were distributed, and regression analysis was used for data interpretation. The results revealed that support from friends and self-esteem were significant predictors of career decision self-efficacy, while support from family and significant others showed no significant effect. Notably, self-esteem had a stronger impact compared to friend support. These findings emphasize the importance of self-esteem in shaping career decision-making and suggest the need for interventions that focus on enhancing self-esteem and peer support to improve career decision self- efficacy among undergraduates.

Arjanggi, R. et al., (2020) conducted a study to explore the influence of academic behavioral confidence, self-esteem, and social anxiety on career decision-making self-efficacy among college students in Indonesia. The study included 935 students from two private universities, with 309 males (33%) and 626 females (67%), representing various academic programs and ethnicities. The findings revealed that academic behavioral confidence and self- esteem significantly predicted career decision-making self-efficacy, accounting for 31.5% of the variance. Academic behavioral confidence emerged as the strongest predictor, with the inclusion of self-esteem contributing an additional 3.8% to the explained variance. Social anxiety, however, did not significantly influence career decision-making self-efficacy and was excluded from the stepwise regression analysis. Gender differences were observed, with male students showing higher career decision-making self-efficacy, whereas female students reported higher levels of social anxiety. The study highlights the importance of fostering academic confidence and self- esteem to enhance career decision-making self-efficacy among students. It also suggests implementing career counseling, internships, and meaningful educational

processes to help students better understand their abilities and restructure their career decisions effectively.

Harsha and Rema (2023) conducted a study to examine the relationship between self-esteem and achievement anxiety among college students in Bangalore. Using a correlational research design and snowball sampling, data were collected from 103 undergraduate and postgraduate students aged 18–25 via online forms. Self-esteem was assessed using Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale, while achievement anxiety was measured using Alpert and Haber’s Achievement Anxiety Scale. The results indicated no significant relationship between self-esteem and achievement anxiety ($r = -0.018$, $p = 0.858$), nor any significant influence of self-esteem on achievement anxiety ($\beta = -0.040$, $p = 0.686$). These findings suggest that self-esteem does not directly impact achievement anxiety among this population, and the null hypotheses were accepted. The study highlights the need for further research, including larger and more geographically diverse samples, to explore additional variables that might influence these constructs.

Malik, A. (2024) investigated conscientiousness, narcissism, and self-esteem in first-born and last-born siblings. In a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, the study was designed to investigate personality differences across birth order. The research employed a sample of participants with different family backgrounds who undertook standardized psychological measures of conscientiousness, narcissism, and self-esteem. Statistical tests, such as t-tests and regression analyses, were used to compare first-born and last-born children. The findings showed that first-borns scored significantly higher on conscientiousness, indicating that they are more responsible, organized, and disciplined. Last-borns, on the other hand, scored higher on narcissism and self-esteem, possibly because they received more parental attention and social reinforcement. Additionally, the research concluded that birth order influences were stronger when they controlled for family size and socio-economic status, which shows that environmental factors are also important in the development of personality. The results imply that birth order is an important factor in determining personality traits and self-concept. This study adds to the debate surrounding birth order and personality differences by providing empirical evidence for the idea that first-borns and last-borns could develop different psychological profiles. This study emphasizes the importance of more research being done on family life and psychological development, specifically exploring how treatment by parents, sibling relationships, and socio-cultural influences create personality outcomes.

Wałęcka-Matyja, K. (2015) carried out a research on sibling relationships as coping with stress in early adulthood and its influence on self-esteem. The study investigated how sibling relationships act as a support system when experiencing stress and how they influence self-esteem. The study established that people who had positive and supportive relationships with their siblings showed higher levels of self-esteem and were able to cope with stress better. It underscored that emotional intimacy between siblings acts as a buffer against psychological distress, promoting resilience and mental well-being. Cicirelli also pointed out that siblings tend to be confidants and mentors, particularly in the absence of parental support, again affirming the notion that relationships between siblings are essential in emotional regulation and self-concept. In addition, the research illustrated that healthy interactions between siblings create feelings of security and belonging, mitigating social isolation and loneliness. The evidence highlighted that although birth order is linked with personality development, the quality

and strength of relationships between siblings have greater effects on their ability to cope with stress and self-esteem. These findings add to the general body of knowledge of family effects on psychological development in that they establish the importance of developing healthy relationships between siblings as a way to enhance emotional well-being during early adulthood.

Migrant and Immigrant students experiences

Andrade, A. et al., (2023) conducted a scoping review to examine the mental health of migrant children, focusing on their emotional and behavioral responses post-migration. The review analyzed 48 studies published between 2015 and 2022, encompassing research from various global contexts. Findings indicated that factors such as discrimination, loss of access to governmental and educational resources, pre migration trauma, loss of community, cultural distance, acculturation challenges, family burdens, and socioeconomic difficulties adversely affect children's mental health. Commonly observed symptoms among migrant children included depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSS), anxiety, and other mental health issues. The study emphasized the importance of targeted interventions, including supporting family transitions, fostering peer connections, and ensuring timely access to resources, to mitigate these negative outcomes and facilitate better integration into new environments.

Jang, S. et al., (2023) explored how career maturity, moderated by intimacy with parents and immigration background, mediates the relationship between perceived marginalization and mental health in young adults with migration backgrounds in South Korea. The study employed a quantitative research design using a moderated-moderated mediation analysis (Model 21 of PROCESS Macro in SPSS). The sample consisted of 300 adults aged 25-34 with migration backgrounds, including 204 born in Korea and 96 born abroad, with data collected through the Gallup Research Institute of Korea. The tools used included self-report questionnaires measuring perceived marginalization, career maturity, intimacy with parents, and mental health. The results indicated that career maturity, moderated by parent intimacy and immigration background, mediated the relationship between perceived marginalization and mental health, with significant effects only for foreign-born participants. The study suggests that perceived marginalization negatively impacts career maturity and mental health for foreign-born young adults, while high levels of parent intimacy can buffer these negative effects.

Lu, Y. et al., (2020) conducted a study examining how separation and reunification experiences affect the development of immigrant children in the United States. Utilizing data from the New Immigrant Survey (2003–2004), the researchers analyzed responses from 876 children aged 6–12 for academic achievement and 1,084 children aged 6–17 for psychosocial well-being. The findings revealed that children who had been separated from their parents exhibited poorer literacy skills and a higher risk of emotional and behavioral problems compared to those who migrated with their parents. Moreover, extended periods of separation and a history of parental undocumented status exacerbated these developmental challenges

Wang, Y. et al., (2022) explored the relationship between mindfulness and social adaptation among migrant children in China, focusing on the sequential mediating roles of self-esteem and

resilience. The study used a quantitative design with self-report questionnaires to assess mindfulness, self-esteem, resilience, and social adaptation in a sample of 526 migrant children. The results revealed that mindfulness was positively associated with social adaptation, and that self-esteem and resilience sequentially mediated this relationship. The findings suggest that mindfulness enhances the social adaptation of migrant children through its impact on self-esteem and resilience, highlighting the importance of mindfulness-based interventions to improve adaptability in this population.

Ying, L. et al., (2022) conducted a study examining the roles of peer attachment and self-esteem in mediating the relationship between family function and social anxiety among migrant children in China. The study involved a sample of migrant children who completed questionnaires assessing family function, peer attachment, self-esteem, and social anxiety. The findings revealed that both peer attachment and self-esteem serve as mediators in the relationship between family function and social anxiety. Specifically, higher levels of family dysfunction were associated with lower peer attachment and self-esteem, which in turn were linked to increased social anxiety. These results highlight the importance of fostering healthy family environments and strong peer relationships to mitigate social anxiety in migrant child..

Other factors such as Birth order and Generation

Bleske-Rechek, A. & Kelley, J. A. (Year) performed a study called "Birth order and personality: A within-family test using independent self-reports from both firstborn and later born siblings." In this study, a within-family approach was taken, and data were gathered in the form of self-reports from both firstborn and later born siblings to compare personality differences within the same family. Findings showed that firstborns were more likely to score higher on conscientiousness and leadership characteristics, while laterborns scored higher on openness to experience and social flexibility. The research discovered minimal support for substantial differences in neuroticism and agreeableness between brothers and sisters. The results highlighted the significance of intra-family dynamics, including sibling rivalry and parental investment, in personality development. The research also proposed that although there are birth order effects, these are moderated by environmental and family influences, not by ordinal family position alone.

Capannola and Johnson (2020) conducted a study exploring the family relationship experiences of first-generation college students (FGCS) as they transition to and persist through higher education. The research aimed to understand how family dynamics influence the academic journey of FGCS, considering both supportive and challenging aspects. The findings highlighted that while families often provide emotional support and motivation, they may also inadvertently impose pressures or lack understanding of the college experience, given their unfamiliarity with higher education systems. This duality underscores the importance of developing strategies to enhance family support mechanisms, ensuring they effectively contribute to the academic success and well-being of FGCS.

Covarrubias, R. et al., (2019) conducted a study exploring the interplay between family roles and independence among first-generation (FG) college students in the United States. Utilizing semi-structured interviews with 34 low-income Latinx and Asian American FG students, the research revealed that these students navigate both "soft independence" and "hard independence". The study

also highlighted six significant family roles, including emotional support, language brokering, financial assistance, and sibling caregiving. The findings underscored the challenges FG students face in balancing familial responsibilities with university norms that prioritize individual independence. These results emphasize the importance of universities recognizing and accommodating the interdependent strengths of FG students to support their academic and personal success.

Deenanath (2014) Although there is a large body of literature on first-generation college students and an emerging literature on immigrant college students, research focused on the combined experiences of college students who are both immigrant and first-generation is limited. College students who have the combined status of being first-generation and an immigrant are burdened with additional challenges navigating the college process, finding resources and balancing their dreams and goals with those of their family to name a few. These students pursue higher education as a means to improve their family's socioeconomic status, which makes choosing a college major and career path an important decision.

Fukuya, Y. et al., (2021) investigated the association of birth order with mental health problems, self-esteem, resilience, and happiness among children aged 9-10 years, using data from the A-CHILD study, a population-based study of children in Adachi City, Tokyo. The study, which included 3,744 children, used the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to assess mental health, along with self-reported measures of resilience, happiness, and self-esteem. Multiple regression analysis revealed that last-born children had the lowest total difficulties and the highest prosocial behavior scores, along with the highest resilience scores, while only children showed the highest total difficulties. Middle-born children reported the lowest happiness scores. Self-esteem did not differ significantly by birth order. The findings suggest that birth order influences both positive (resilience, prosocial behaviors) and negative (mental health problems) aspects of child development, warranting further research into the mechanisms behind these associations.

2.4 RESEARCH GAP

Although there have been many research studies on family attachment, career decision-making self-efficacy, self-esteem, and mental health, these factors have been studied individually rather than collectively. Even though there have been many research studies on the positive effects of family attachment and a positive family environment on self-esteem and career confidence, there have been few studies on career distress as an emotional outcome. Similarly, there have been many research studies on birth order, but there has been a lack of attention to its effects on career distress and self-esteem in relation to family attachment. There have been many research studies on migrant and first-generation students, but there have been few studies on the effects of family attachment on career distress and self-esteem. There is a lack of empirical evidence in the Indian context. Hence, a comprehensive comparative study on the role of family attachment in shaping career distress and self-esteem among migrant first-born and non-first-born college students is a major research gap.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This research used a quantitative comparative design to examine differences in family attachment, self-esteem, and career distress based on birth order among migrant college students. A total of 499 participants aged between 18–25 years were selected through purposive sampling, as the study specifically focused on migrant students. Data were collected using self-report questionnaires consisting of standardized instruments. It had standardized instruments like Career distress scale developed by Creed, P.A., et al (2017) used to assess the level of distress in individuals specifically in their career and professional life. Rosenberg's self esteem scale was developed by Morris Rosenberg (1965) used to assess the self esteem and measures the global self worth by focusing on both positive and negative feelings about oneself. Family attachment and changeability index was developed by Hamilton McCubbin, Anne Thompson and Kelly Elver (1995) is used to measures the family dynamics, focusing only on attachment. Besides, all participants signed informed consent, and the ethical approval was granted by the institutional review board.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the distribution and central tendencies of the variables. Since the assumptions of normality were not fully met, nonparametric statistical techniques were employed. The Kruskal–Wallis test was used to examine differences in family attachment, self-esteem, and career distress across birth order groups. Additionally, the Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to compare differences between the two independent birth order groups (first-born and non-first-born students). These statistical procedures were used to determine whether birth order significantly influences levels of family attachment, self-esteem, and career distress among migrant college students.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative research design was used. The study includes 499 college students aged 18–25 from various departments, selected through purposive sampling to ensure demographic diversity.

3.3 PARTICIPANT

The study sample included 499 college students of different academic departments whose ages ranged from 18 to 25 years. They were selected through purposive sampling were used because the study focus only on the migrant students. None of them were non-migrant students. The study includes undergraduates or postgraduate migrant students, were registered in regular academic programs. Among the inclusion criteria were good command of English and the readiness to sign an informed consent form. In order to get more accurate and reliable data, the researchers excluded those with psychiatric or neurological diagnoses, and those who take medication, and non- migrant students.

3.4 SAMPLING

Inclusion criteria and Exclusion Criteria

The selection of participants involved a purposive sampling approach to the study, thus the study only focus on the migrant student (students who came out for the educational purpose from their hometown). Four hundred ninety nine college students, males and females, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, were selected from different academic departments. The sample was limited to students enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate programs and only those proficient in English since all instruments were administered in this language. Participants who suffered from any type of disorders, psychiatric or neurological conditions, and those who were on medications and non- migrants were not allowed. Besides, only those individuals who voluntarily offered informed consent were taken into consideration for participation, thus assuring the ethical aspect, as well as the protection of the participants' rights during the entire study.

3.5 PROCEDURE

Once the institution approves the permission based on ethical standards, the students from various academic departments will be chosen by a purposive sampling method. The collection of data will be done only after the consent of the participants. The participants will fill out an questionnaire consisting of Family attachment and changeability index, career distress and Rosenberg self-esteem scale along with basic demographic information. In addition to briefing the participants about the procedure, confidentiality will also be assured. Each participant will be allotted around 10-15 minutes for data collection. The obtained responses will be stored in a safe place and then processed with SPSS software.

Participants will be enlisted through institutional forums. Data will be gathered through an survey conducted anonymously. Informed consent will be secured. Participants will be promised that their data will be kept confidential and that they have the right to participate voluntarily. Ethical approval will be given by the college.

3.6 TOOLS OF THE STUDY

Career distress scale (Creed, P. A., et all) 2017

The career distress scale is a psychometric tool that is designed to assess the level of distress in individuals, specifically in their career and professional life. The Career Distress Scale was developed in Australia, which has an individual structure. It primarily evaluates factors like dissatisfaction in current job, uncertainty about career choices and feeling of being stuck or unfulfilled in professional context. The scale consists of 9 items with 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Rosenberg's self esteem scale

Rosenberg's self esteem scale is a widely used psychological tool to assess the self esteem of the individuals developed by Morris Rosenberg (1965). It measures global self worth by focusing on both

positive and negative feelings about oneself. It is a 10 item scale with 4 point Likert scale. It has an internal consistency of above 0.80 and a test-retest reliability of 0.85. It also has strong convergent validity across different genders, ethnicities and ages.

Family attachment and changeability index

Family attachment and changeability index was developed by Hamilton McCubbin, Anne Thompson, and Kelly Elver (1995). It is used to measure family dynamics, focusing on attachment and adaptability. This scale assesses how strong family bonds and flexibility influence youth. It consists of 16 items rated at a 6-point Likert scale. The test demonstrates a reliability of 0.73 on attachment scale and 0.80 for changeability. The validity is established through chi-square analysis, hence showing good reliability and validity.

3.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

The current study complied with the ethical norms specified for research with the involvement of human subjects aimed at their protection and respect. Every individual provided their consent to participate in the study prior to the data collection, and they were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any negative consequence. The participants' privacy and confidentiality were respected at all times, and the information obtained was solely for academic purposes. The research did not, in any way, cause psychological or emotional distress to the participants and their privacy was also respected throughout the research process.

3.8 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data collected for this study. Descriptive statistics such as mean, median, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were calculated to summarize the levels of family attachment, self-esteem, and career distress among migrant college students.

To examine whether birth order influences family attachment, self-esteem, and career distress, inferential statistical techniques were applied. Prior to hypothesis testing, the distribution of the data was assessed. As the assumptions of normality were not fully met, nonparametric tests were employed. The Kruskal–Wallis test was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in family attachment, self-esteem, and career distress across birth order groups. Additionally, the Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to compare first-born and non-first-born students to further examine the influence of birth order on the study variables.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1 OVERVIEW

The present study examined whether birth order influences family attachment, self-esteem, and career distress among migrant college students. Initially, normality tests (Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk) indicated that all three variables significantly deviated from normal distribution. Because the assumption of normality was violated, non-parametric tests were used for further analysis. The Kruskal–Wallis and Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted to compare first-born and non-first-born students. The results showed that birth order did not significantly influence family attachment, as no meaningful difference was found between the two groups. However, significant differences were observed in self-esteem and career distress. Non-first-born students demonstrated higher levels of self-esteem compared to first-born students, whereas first-born students reported higher levels of career distress. Overall, the findings suggest that while family attachment remains similar across birth order categories, birth order plays an important role in shaping psychological outcomes such as self-esteem and career-related stress among migrant students.

4.2 STATISTICAL FINDINGS

Table 1: Test of Normality

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	sig	Statistic	df	sig
Family Attachment	.305	499	.000	.244	499	.000
Self-Esteem	.071	499	.000	.990	499	.002
Career Distress	.072	499	.000	.980	499	.000

Before conducting inferential statistical analyses, the assumption of normality was examined for the study variables, namely Family Attachment, Self-Esteem, and Career Distress. Normality was assessed using both the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) test and the Shapiro–Wilk (S–W) test, as recommended for large sample sizes.

The results indicated that all three variables significantly deviated from normal distribution. For Family Attachment, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was significant ($D = .305, p < .001$) and the Shapiro–Wilk test was also significant ($W = .244, p < .001$). Similarly, Self-Esteem showed significant results in both the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test ($D = .071, p < .001$) and Shapiro–Wilk test ($W = .990, p = .002$).

Career Distress also demonstrated significant deviation from normality in the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test ($D = .072, p < .001$) and the Shapiro–Wilk test ($W = .980, p < .001$).

Since the p-values for all variables were less than the conventional threshold of .05, the null hypothesis of normal distribution was rejected. This indicates that the distributions of Family Attachment, Self-Esteem, and Career Distress were not normally distributed in the present sample.

However, it is important to note that the sample size of the study was relatively large ($N = 499$). In large samples, normality tests such as Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk are highly sensitive and may detect even minor deviations from normality as statistically significant. Therefore, the results were interpreted cautiously. Nevertheless, given the significant deviation from normality, non-parametric statistical techniques were considered appropriate for further analysis wherever required.

Table 2: Independent sample Kruskal-Wallis test

Variables	N	Test Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	Asymptotic Sig (2-Sided)
Family Attachment	499	.031a,b	1	.860
Self-Esteem	499	6.495a,b	1	.011
Career Distress	499	7.97a,b	1	.005

Since the assumption of normality was violated for the study variables, the Kruskal–Wallis test, a non-parametric alternative to one-way ANOVA, was employed to examine differences between groups (First-born and Non-First-born students) in terms of Family Attachment, Self-Esteem, and Career Distress.

The results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in Family Attachment between the two birth order groups, $H(1) = 0.031, p = .860$. This indicates that first-born and non-first-born migrant students do not significantly differ in their levels of family attachment.

However, significant differences were observed in Self-Esteem and Career Distress. For Self-Esteem, the Kruskal–Wallis test indicated a statistically significant difference between the groups, $H(1) = 6.495, p = .011$. Similarly, Career Distress also showed a statistically significant group difference, $H(1) = 7.970, p = .005$.

These findings suggest that while birth order does not appear to influence family attachment among migrant college students, it may play a meaningful role in shaping self-esteem and career distress. The

significant differences in self-esteem and career distress indicate that first-born and non-first-born students experience these psychological variables differently.

The results are particularly relevant in the context of migration, where family roles, expectations, and responsibilities may vary based on birth order. First-born students often assume greater responsibility and parental expectations, which may influence their self-concept and career-related stress. Conversely, non-first-born students may experience different patterns of emotional support and autonomy, contributing to variations in self-esteem and distress levels.

Overall, the findings partially support the assumption that birth order is associated with psychological adjustment outcomes among migrant students. Further analysis of mean ranks would help determine which group reported higher or lower levels of self-esteem and career distress.

Table 3: Independent sample Man-Whitney U test using three variables across the birth order

Variables	N	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Test Statistic	Standard Error	Standard statistic	sig
Family Attachment	499	31381.0	64534.0	31381.0	1607.032	.177	.860
Self-Esteem	499	27007.0	60160.0	27007.0	1604.819	-2.549	.011
Career Distress	499	35635.5	68788.5	35635.5	1606.738	2.825	.005

Since the assumption of normality was violated (as indicated by the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests), non-parametric analysis was employed to examine differences between first-born (coded as 1) and non-first-born (coded as 0) students. The Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to compare the two independent groups on Family Attachment, Self-Esteem, and Career Distress.

The results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in Family Attachment scores between first-born and non-first-born students, $U = 31381.0$, $Z = 0.177$, $p = .860$. This indicates that birth order did not significantly influence perceived family attachment in the present sample.

However, significant differences were observed for both Self-Esteem and Career Distress. For Self-Esteem, the Mann–Whitney U test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two groups, $U = 27007.0$, $Z = -2.549$, $p = .011$. Examination of the mean ranks showed that non-first-born students ($M = 267.66$) had higher ranks than first-born students ($M = 231.25$), suggesting comparatively higher self-esteem among non-first-born students.

Similarly, Career Distress showed a statistically significant difference between birth order groups, $U = 35635.5$, $Z = 2.825$, $p = .005$. The mean rank values indicated that first-born students had higher rank

scores on Career Distress compared to non-first-born students, suggesting greater career-related distress among first-born students.

Overall, these findings suggest that while family attachment does not significantly vary across birth order, self-esteem and career distress are significantly influenced by birth order status. The results indicate that birth order may play a meaningful role in shaping psychological outcomes such as self-esteem and career-related distress among migrant college students.

4.3 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The present study aimed to examine how family attachment and birth order influence career distress and self-esteem among migrant college students. The findings provide partial support for the proposed hypotheses. With respect to family attachment, the results indicated no significant difference between first-born and non-first-born students. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was retained and the alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) was rejected. This suggests that migration experiences may create similar emotional bonding patterns across siblings, regardless of birth order. Family attachment appears to remain relatively stable despite variations in sibling position.

However, significant differences were found in both self-esteem and career distress across birth order categories. The null hypotheses H_{02} and H_{03} were rejected, and the alternative hypotheses H_{12} and H_{13} were accepted. Non-first-born students demonstrated higher self-esteem compared to first-born students, while first-born students reported significantly higher levels of career distress. These findings align with theoretical perspectives such as Adler's Birth Order Theory, which suggests that first-born children often experience greater parental expectations, responsibility, and achievement pressure. In the context of migration, these responsibilities may intensify, contributing to increased career-related stress. Conversely, non-first-born students may experience relatively greater flexibility and emotional autonomy, which could enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Overall, the findings suggest that while family attachment does not significantly vary by birth order among migrant college students, psychological outcomes such as self-esteem and career distress are meaningfully influenced. The results highlight the importance of considering birth order dynamics when understanding emotional adjustment and career-related stress in migrant populations.

5. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

5.1 OVERVIEW

The study examined the influence of family attachment and birth order on career distress and self-esteem among migrant college students. The findings revealed that birth order did not significantly influence family attachment. However, significant differences were found in self-esteem and career distress, with non-first-born students showing higher self-esteem and first-born students reporting greater career distress. The results partially supported the proposed hypotheses and aligned with Adler's Birth

Order Theory. The study highlights the importance of considering sibling position in understanding psychological adjustment among migrant students. Despite its contributions, limitations such as purposive sampling and cross-sectional design restrict generalizability and causal interpretation. Future research should adopt longitudinal, comparative, and mixed-method approaches to deepen understanding in diverse cultural contexts

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The present study examined the influence of family attachment and birth order on career distress and self-esteem among migrant college students. The results of the normality tests indicated that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, non-parametric statistical tests were employed. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in family attachment between first-born and non-first-born migrant students, indicating that birth order does not influence family attachment in this population. However, significant differences were observed in self-esteem and career distress. Non-first-born students demonstrated significantly higher levels of self-esteem compared to first-born students. In contrast, first-born students reported significantly higher levels of career distress. Overall, the findings suggest that while family attachment remains consistent across birth order categories, birth order plays a significant role in shaping psychological outcomes such as self-esteem and career-related stress among migrant college students.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine the influence of family attachment and birth order on career distress and self-esteem among migrant college students. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that birth order does not significantly influence family attachment, as no meaningful difference was observed between first-born and non-first-born students. Therefore, the null hypothesis related to family attachment (H_{01}) was retained. This suggests that emotional bonding and attachment to family remain relatively stable among migrant students, regardless of sibling position.

However, the study found significant differences in both self-esteem and career distress based on birth order. The null hypotheses H_{02} and H_{03} were rejected, and the alternative hypotheses H_{12} and H_{13} were accepted. Non-first-born students demonstrated higher levels of self-esteem, whereas first-born students reported higher levels of career distress. These findings indicate that birth order plays an important role in shaping psychological outcomes related to self-concept and career-related stress among migrant students.

Overall, the study concludes that while family attachment remains consistent across birth order groups, birth order significantly influences self-esteem and career distress. The findings highlight the importance of considering family dynamics and sibling position when understanding emotional adjustment and career-related challenges among migrant college students.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. The results partially support Adler's Birth Order Theory, as birth order significantly influenced self-esteem and career distress. First-born students reported higher career distress, which may be linked to greater responsibility and parental expectations. Non-first-born students demonstrated higher self-esteem, suggesting differences in autonomy and family roles. However, birth order did not significantly influence family attachment, indicating that attachment bonds remain stable despite sibling position. The findings also align with Career Construction Theory, highlighting how identity and role expectations influence career-related stress. From a practical perspective, educational institutions should provide targeted career counseling, especially for first-born migrant students. Mental health professionals should consider birth order dynamics while addressing student distress. Programs aimed at enhancing self-esteem can improve psychological adjustment among migrant students. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of family dynamics in understanding emotional well-being and career challenges in migrant populations.

5.5 LIMITATIONS

The present study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study used a purposive sampling method, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a wider population. Second, all data were collected using self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias and social desirability effects. Third, the study focused only on migrant college students and did not include a comparison group of non-migrant students. Additionally, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between birth order, family attachment, self-esteem, and career distress. Cultural and socio-economic factors specific to the sample may also have influenced the results.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should adopt a longitudinal design to examine how birth order, family attachment, self-esteem, and career distress change over time. Larger and more diverse samples from different regions and socio-economic backgrounds should be included to improve generalizability. Comparative studies between migrant and non-migrant students would help determine whether migration specifically intensifies career distress and self-esteem differences. Future studies may differentiate more clearly among first-born, middle-born, last-born, and only children to obtain more precise insights into sibling position effects. Additional variables such as parental expectations, coping strategies, resilience, peer support, and socio-economic status should be incorporated to understand mediating or moderating influences. Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups can provide deeper understanding of migrant students' lived experiences. Future research may also explore whether family attachment acts as a protective factor buffering career distress. Intervention-based studies can evaluate the effectiveness of counseling programs and self-esteem enhancement strategies. Cross-cultural studies would help determine whether birth order effects vary across different cultural contexts. Further empirical research in the Indian context is particularly necessary to strengthen evidence in this underexplored area.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT
RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION SHEET

This informed consent form is for the participants, who have been invited to participate in research on the title “Family attachment and Birth order effect on migrant student’s career distress and self-esteem. A comparative study.”

Name of principal investigator & department: Sivasankari K.N

Research Supervisor: Ms. Ann Mary Jacob

Name of Organisation: Kristu Jayanti (Deemed to be University), Bangalore

I am Sivasankari K.N, studying as a postgraduate student in the Department of Psychology (Clinical psychology) at Kristu Jayanti (Deemed to be University), Bangalore. I am conducting a research study to understand does the family attachment and birth order has the effect on career distress and self esteem among migrant students. I will give you adequate information and invite you to be a part of this research. You can decide whether or not you will participate in the research. Before you decide, Please feel comfortable talking to me about the research.

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them, I will be providing my contact details for the same.

Purpose of the research: The study investigates that the family attachment and birth order has an effect on career distress and self esteem among migrant students. It is a comparative study.

For Demographic Factors:

Only migrant students of 18–25 years of age who are either in undergraduate or postgraduate programs at recognized colleges or universities are eligible for the research.

You are invited to be part of this research as your answers will be instrumental in understanding the family attachment, self-esteem and career distress. Participation is entirely your decision, and you can discontinue your involvement at any time without any unfavorable consequences.

The information recorded is confidential, your name will not be included in the data collected, and no one else except me and my supervisor will have access to the questionnaire. Nothing that you share today or with me will be made public with anybody outside the research, and nothing will be attributed to you by name.

Participation in this study does not pose any risks. There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation will help us identify the factual details of the concerned research.

I am now available to answer any questions.

If you have any questions, you would like to ask later, you may contact me at

Email ID: 24mplc52@kristujayanti.com

Sivasankari K.N, Department of Psychology (Clinical psychology)

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Department of Psychology that includes the research scholar and the supervisor at Kristu Jayanti (Deemed to be University), Bangalore the rights of the research participants are protected.

APPENDIX B

NAME: _____ AGE: _____ GENDER: _____

COURSE & YEAR: _____ BIRTH ORDER: _____

1. Family Attachment Changeability Index

In my family...

1. In our family it is easy for everyone to express his/her opinion.
2. It is easier to discuss problems with people outside the family than with other family members.
3. Each family member has input in major family decisions.
4. Family members discuss problems and feel good about the solutions.
5. In our family everyone goes his/her own way.
6. Family members consult other family members on their decisions.
7. We have difficulty thinking of things to do as a family.
8. Discipline is fair in our family.
9. Family members feel closer to people outside the family than to other family members.
10. Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems.
11. In our family, everyone shares responsibilities.
12. It is difficult to get a rule changed in our family.
13. Family members avoid each other at home.

14. When problems arise, we compromise.
15. Family members are afraid to say what is on their minds.
16. Family members pair up rather than do things as a total family.

1 = Never

2 = Sometimes

3 = Half the time

4 = More than half

5 = Always

2.Rosenberg's self esteem scale

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

1 = Strongly agree

2 = Agree

3 = Disagree

4 = Strongly disagree

3.Career Distress Scale

- 1.I often feel down or depressed about selecting a career
2. I think that I should make a career decision as soon as possible, but I can't and this makes me anxious
- 3.I feel stress or pressure to select a satisfying career
- 4.I frequently blame myself for something I did or did not do in selecting a career

5.I tend to smooth over any career problem and pretend it does not exist

6.I often feel that my life lacks much purpose

7.I often hope that problems I have in selecting a career would just disappear

8.I don't have the special talents to follow my first career choice

9.An influential person doesn't approve of my career choice, which is hindering me from seeking that career.

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

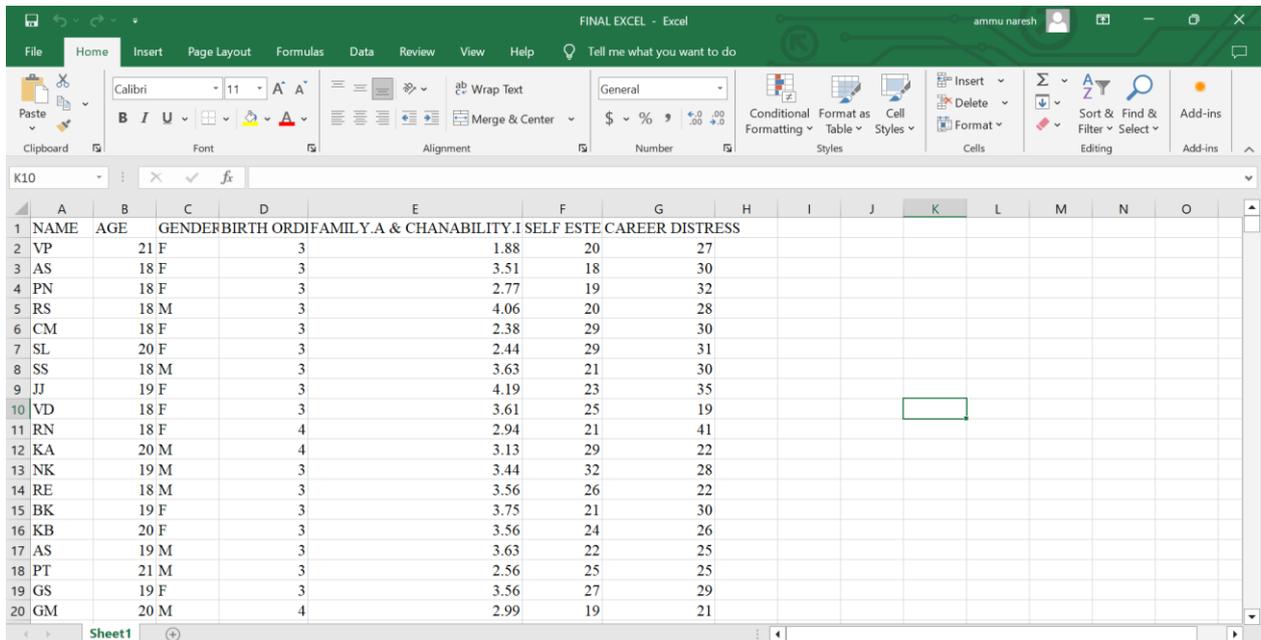
3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

APPENDIX C

DATA IN EXCEL SHEET



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	NAME	AGE	GENDER	BIRTH ORD	FAMILY.A & CHAN	ABILITY.I	SELF ESTE	CAREER	DISTRESS						
2	VP	21	F	3		1.88	20	27							
3	AS	18	F	3		3.51	18	30							
4	PN	18	F	3		2.77	19	32							
5	RS	18	M	3		4.06	20	28							
6	CM	18	F	3		2.38	29	30							
7	SL	20	F	3		2.44	29	31							
8	SS	18	M	3		3.63	21	30							
9	JJ	19	F	3		4.19	23	35							
10	VD	18	F	3		3.61	25	19							
11	RN	18	F	4		2.94	21	41							
12	KA	20	M	4		3.13	29	22							
13	NK	19	M	3		3.44	32	28							
14	RE	18	M	3		3.56	26	22							
15	BK	19	F	3		3.75	21	30							
16	KB	20	F	3		3.56	24	26							
17	AS	19	M	3		3.63	22	25							
18	PT	21	M	3		2.56	25	25							
19	GS	19	F	3		3.56	27	29							
20	GM	20	M	4		2.99	19	21							



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
480	JA	20 F		2		3.44	24				29				
481	KR	20 M		2		3.81	25				26				
482	SU	20 F		2		3.62	22				28				
483	NA	20 F		2		3.5	20				32				
484	SA	20 M		2		2.69	18				29				
485	BK	20 M		2		3.44	22				22				
486	RR	20 M		2		2.88	29				9				
487	SS	19 F		2		3.06	20				31				
488	GH	21 M		2		3.56	26				33				
489	VH	20 F		2		3.12	25				9				
490	JU	19 M		2		3.19	17				29				
491	FF	20 M		2		3.31	23				25				
492	UI	19 F		2		2.31	21				28				
493	MM	20 M		2		3.56	21				24				
494	MN	19 F		2		2.44	21				23				
495	HU	19 F		2		3.12	27				30				
496	KN	19 M		2		3.62	20				17				
497	MK	19 F		2		3.56	20				34				
498	SS	19 M		2		3.37	30				26				
499	NS	22 M		2		2.94	28				26				