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Socially Important Personal Qualities of Students with Different Sibling Positions

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Abstract

Introduction. This paper brings new insights into the study of the sibling position of students to examine their socially important personal qualities in connection with this factor and to understand what short- and long-term individual and social consequences this may entail. This paper presents the results of a study of socially important personal qualities of students with different sibling positions, including empathy, personality orientation, altruism, life position, and the degree of adequacy of the view of life. According to these parameters, we carried out a comparative analysis of the data gathered from students – the only, the eldest, and the youngest children in the family. **Methods.** A sample of 150 students was randomly drawn and divided into three groups – the only children in the family, the eldest siblings, and the youngest siblings. The study used the following psychological assessment tools: (a) the questionnaire for Diagnosis of the Level of Polycommunicative Empathy Level by I. M. Yusupov, (b) the Bass Orientation Inventory, (c) Altruistic Orientation test, and (d) the Hardiness graphic technique, which assesses life positions and the degree of adequacy of views of life. **Results.** The findings of the study indicated that socially important personal qualities are more characteristic of students who are the only children in the family. There are more similarities than differences between first-born students who are the eldest and the only children in their families. However, students who are the only children in their families have more differences than similarities with those who are the youngest ones. In the group of students who are the youngest children in their families, the scores are lower compared to those in the other two student groups (except for altruism). **Discussion.** The data obtained in three student groups are interpreted and addressed to specialists in family counseling, psychotherapists, social service psychologists, curators of student groups, and inquisitive parents. The information about advantages and vulnerabilities of students' sibling position can form a scientific basis for creating programs for the development of their socially important qualities in the educational process of the university.

Keywords

sibling problem, students, sibling position, personal characteristics, empathy, type of orientation, altruism, life position, view of life, comparative analysis

Highlights

- ▶ Students who are the only children in their families are characterized by empathy, orientation toward 'business', activity, and adequacy in their views of life; altruism is characteristic of them to a greater extent than of those who are the eldest siblings, but to a lesser extent than of those who are the youngest siblings.
- ▶ Students who are the eldest siblings are more focused on themselves, less altruistic and less adequate in their views of life; they are more empathic toward the elderly and fictional characters.
- ▶ Students who are the youngest siblings are aimed at relationships to the detriment of themselves; they are characterized by a high level of altruism but a low overall level of polycommunicative empathy and less activity.

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Introduction

The issues considered in this article enter the subject area of the *sibling problem* posed by scientists at the end of the 19th century (Baskaeva, 2021; Zyryanova, 2008; Lapteva, Valueva, & Shepeleva, 2019). From the very beginning, its essence was the assumption of the importance of relationships between siblings for their individual personal development, socialization, and social adaptation. Gradually, researchers moved from studying the factors that determine the quality of relationships between children born and raised in the same family (considering birth order, number of children, gender, age difference) and the influence that siblings have on each other's development, to the study of personal characteristics of children depending on their sibling position, and then on the contributions that they make to society as socialization expands.

In the gradual process of developing a sibling problem, we can note the following most noticeable points: 1) an emphasis on finding a connection between the birth order of children and their achievements (at the beginning of the 20th century, E. Hawilock showed a connection between the order of birth of children and their success in life) (Matveeva, 2001); 2) the analysis of sibling relationships as a central phenomenon of family life and a key social condition for personality development, presented in the studies of A. Adler (Adler, 1997); 3) the study of the influence of the individual environment and the formation of the scientific direction of 'behavior genetics'. The idea of the individual environment became the theoretical basis for rethinking the mechanism of socialization: not the family but the child himself/herself with his/her own unique developmental environment became the unit of socialization (until the second half of the 20th century); 4) the search for approaches to the detection of specific factors of the individual environment (from the second half of the 20th century to its end). By the end of the 20th century, the need to develop a more adequate theory to explain the differences between siblings and the correct methodology

for their study was identified (Baskaeva, 2021). At the beginning of the 21st century, in the abstract to the review entitled *Early Sibling Studies* N. M. Zyryanova noted: "The birth order effect turned out to be more complex than most researchers thought in 1920–1965. Elucidation of the role of the birth order effect in personal development is a topic for future research" (Zyryanova, 2008, p. 1); 5) modern studies of sibling relationships (21st century).

Currently, there is a greater search for answers to the following questions: how do parents establish and/or maintain relationships with their children depending on the order of their birth? How do children with a particular sibling position form relationships with peers under different social conditions? How do relationships develop between siblings throughout life? How is sibling position related to a person's social status outside the family? Researchers agree that sibling relationships that have developed within the family, continuing into adulthood, determine the quality of relationships in the society where children are included as they grow older and expand socialization (Russ & Vladimirova, 2012; Yakimova, 2013; Alibegashvili, 2019; Lapteva et al., 2019; Baskaeva, 2021).

In the 21st century, Russian psychologists touched upon such aspects of sibling issues as: a) the influence of birth order on cognitive development, intelligence and other personal characteristics of children (Alekseeva, 2008; Varaksina, 2015; Lapteva et al., 2019). Analysis of statistical data on 224 Nobel laureates of the 20th century showed that 46.9 % of them were first-borns, 18.8 % – second-borns, 17.9 % – third-borns; b) the ability for leadership, management behavior, and creative self-realization of young people with different sibling positions in the family (Sai, 2009; Gurova & Surkova, 2012), etc. The findings of scientists indicate a certain superiority of first-borns – the only and oldest children in the family. Perhaps, for this reason, first-borns attracted more attention from Russian researchers. At the end of the last century, T. K. Karatsuba completed her dissertation work on the characteristics of the life and professional development of the only children in the family (Karatsuba, 1998), and a decade later, M. V. Sai published the results of a gender analysis of the personal leadership potential of children with and without siblings (Sai, 2009). There is an evidence indicating the features of the psychology and social adaptation of the only children in the family and their family parenting (Balandina & Silina, 2010; Varaksina, 2015; Kovalenko, Sarkisyan, & Gundar', 2015; Gitman & Podol'naya, 2016), substantiating the connection between birth order and behavior of the individual in conflict (Groshev & Utenysheva, 2015).

Foreign scientists also continue research in this area and sometimes refute earlier conclusions, for example, about the relationship between birth order and intelligence (Kristensen & Bjerkedal, 2007). The American Reference Module for Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Psychology has an article on Birth Order by psychologist F. J. Sulloway (Sulloway, 2017). American psychologists A. Bleske-Rechek and J. A. Kelley studied the influence of birth order on the personality of first-born, older, middle, and younger children in a family (Bleske-Rechek & Kelley, 2014). English psychologists have studied the association of birth order with the ability to cooperate in preschool children (Prime, Plamondon, & Jenkins, 2017). Swedish researchers analyzed the relationship between the sibling position and the field of specialization that children chose in college (Barclay, Hällsten, & Myrskylä, 2017). Other Swedish scientists found that male older children in the parental family are "more emotionally stable, persistent, sociable, ready to take responsibility, and able to take initiative" than those born younger and asked the question whether older children born to lead? (Black, Grönqvist, & Öckert, 2018). An article by R. Kuba, J. Flegr, and J. Havlíček, published in the Dutch journal entitled *Intelligence*, shows the influence of birth order on the probability of

entering university (Kuba, Flegr, & Havlíček, 2018). In the publication of the German researcher J. Grabmeier, the influence of the sibling position on divorce was noted. Thus, as the number of siblings increases, the probability of divorce in adulthood decreases (Grabmeier, 2013). In 2021, a Russian-language translation of the book by the Australian teacher M. Grose (*Why First-borns Rule the World and Later-borns Want to Change It*) was published. In it, the author summarized numerous studies and existing theories and also put forward assumptions awaiting verification by scientific methods and life. In particular, he argues that about 50 % of people around us – active first-borns – are the only or eldest children in the family, and an exponential increase in the number of first-borns among the total number of children entails great consequences for any society (Grose, 2021).

In the current situation of social development, the *relevance* of the sibling problem remains, on the one hand, due to the continuation of the scientific study of sibling relationships in order to methodically equip the family psychological and pedagogical aspects (correction of interpersonal relations between children in the family, helping parents in creating conditions for the formation of a sense of acceptance and expression support in the children's subsystem of the family, etc.), and on the other hand, the urgent need to study it outside the family context. The relevance of studying human psychology depending on the birth order (sibling position) in a wider society is argued by the fact that it is important from a practical point of view, for example, for the scientific explanation and levelling of some conflictogens in interpersonal communication and interaction in friendly and loving relationships, in professional and labour sphere, and to predict possible solutions that certain politicians will offer, leaders and managers at various levels of social management will take. In other words, it is important to know not only what children with different sibling positions become in life. It is also about knowing what socially important personal qualities they have at every stage of growing up and, consequently, what social and psychological consequences for society we can predict right now.

In our opinion, we should look for an answer to this question among students – students are already adults who have made their first serious choice (profession) but are still very susceptible to educational influence, especially in accordance with their ontological reality and if there is an opportunity to change something. So far, they rarely fall into the sample groups of empirical researches of psychologists, linking the personal qualities of adults with the order of their birth. In this regard, the publication by A. A. Moiseeva "The Relationship between Family Structure and Birth Order and the Altruistic Orientation of the Personality" is especially valuable for us (Moiseeva, 2016). And if empathy among students is quite studied (Nikishov & Osipova, 2015; Dmitrieva & Khamzina, 2020; etc.), then publications about the features of their personal orientation (Nikandrova, 2015; Pavlenko, 2019), as well as their life position (Gurova & Surkova, 2012; Filippova, 2015; Ivchenkov & Malinskii, 2018) are single. The degree of adequacy of views of life has not been studied among students. These aspects of the sibling problem still remain little studied in the radically changed conditions of Russian reality. However, the parameters of student youth as the only, older, and younger children in the family considered here (empathy, altruism, personality orientation, life position, degree of adequacy in the view of life) are important for understanding the society in which we live, predicting the nature of social interaction and the vector of its development.

The scientific novelty of this research lies in determining the personal characteristics of students with different sibling positions – the only, older, and younger children in the family and

establishing differences between them in such socially important personality characteristics as empathy, type of personal orientation, altruism, life positions, adequacy of perception life, which have a noticeable impact on the socio-psychological atmosphere in any society. The obtained data contribute to the development of sibling research in social psychology.

Determining the level of development of socially important personal characteristics of students with different sibling positions was *the aim* of the research. We solved the following objectives to achieve it: 1) identifying among students (the only, older, and younger children in the family) the general level of polycommunicative empathy and its particular indicators – indicators of empathy toward children, parents, elderly, strangers and unfamiliar persons, animals, and fictional characters; type of personality orientation and level of altruism; life positions and the degree of adequacy of their views of life; 2) performing a comparative analysis of indicators for of the same measured personality parameters and to check the reliability of intergroup differences; and 3) providing generalized socio-psychological characteristics of the three student groups.

The study tested *the hypothesis* that there were significant differences among the three surveyed student groups, identified, depending on the sibling position of the subjects, in such socially important personality traits as empathy, type of orientation, altruism, life position, and adequacy of view of life. We assumed that in the group of the eldest siblings, the studied personality parameters would have the highest rates and such students would be more socially oriented.

Methods

The sample comprised 150 senior students aged 19–23 years (median: 20.5 years) from several Moscow universities (mainly, MSUPE, RSSU, and MSRU). The empirical study was conducted in Moscow between March and June 2021 under the guidance of Professor N. A. Tsvetkova as a part of a practical course “Processing data from socio-psychological studies” at the Faculty of Extreme Psychology, Moscow State University of Psychology and Education. Women made up 62.67 % of the sample, and men – 37.33 %. The sample was formed randomly using a Google table. A distinctive feature of the sample (the predominance of female students) is explained by the predominance of girls in those study groups where the empirical material was collected. The total student sample was divided into three groups: I – the only children in the family (n = 58); II – the eldest children in the family (n = 36); and III – the youngest children in the family (n = 56). We should note that the first and second groups of students were first-borns (n = 94).

The following socio-psychological diagnostic tools were used: (a) the questionnaire for Diagnosis of the Level of Polycommunicative Empathy Level by I. M. Yusupov to assess empathy toward children, parents, elderly, strangers and unfamiliar persons, animals, and fictional characters; (b) the Bass Orientation Inventory (Self, Relationship, Business); (c) Altruistic Orientation test (Fetiskin, Kozlov, & Manuilov, 2002); and (d) the Hardiness graphic technique (Koroleva, 2005), which assessed life positions of students at the moment of our survey, including ‘victim’, ‘contemplator’, ‘activist’, as well as the degree of adequacy of their views of life. The students were offered to draw a spider and two flies: one of the flies should remain outside the net, and the other should get stuck in it. When analyzing the drawings, we determined the following: the character depicted first (the position of the author) and the distances among the three characters (the degree of adequacy of the view of life was determined based on the R. Likert scale in the range from 1 to 10 points, depending on how the location of the spider and flies resembled an equilateral triangle; a high and extra high degree of adequacy of view of life was counted from 6 points).

Mathematical and statistical data processing was carried out using the MS Office Excel package, IBM SPSS Statistics 23. The significance of differences in the indicators of three student sample groups was determined by the Kruskal–Wallace H-test and Mann–Whitney U-test in pairs. The choice of criteria is due to the distribution of the studied indicators and the types of scales of psychodiagnostics tools.

Results

Results of diagnostics of polycommunicative empathy

The results of the analysis of indicators of the general level of polycommunicative empathy in three student groups are presented in Table 1.

Groups of students	Min.	Max.	Arithmetic mean	Dispersion	Levels					
					High		Average		Low	
					n	%	n	%	n	%
Only children	33	66	48.37	92.54	6	10.3	49	84.5	3	5.2
Eldest siblings	35	76	49.92	103.28	2	5.6	31	86.1	3	8.3
Youngest siblings	26	61	44.63	113.37	0	0	46	82.1	10	17.9

Table 1 shows that in all three sample groups, the indicators of the general level of polycommunicative empathy are in the range of average values. At the same time, students who are the only children in the family, as well as the eldest ones surpass the youngest ones in this parameter. Compared to the other two student samples, most of the students who are the youngest children in the family have a low overall level of polycommunicative empathy (about 18 %); none of the respondents had high scores.

The results of a more detailed analysis of empirical data on students' empathy levels, depending on the order of birth, are presented in Table 2.

Structural components of polycommunicative empathy	Only children		Eldest children		Youngest children	
	Mean	Dis.	Mean	Dis.	Mean	Dis.
1 – children	8.92	9.4	8.75	7.56	7.79	12,06
2 – parents	9.53	5.04	9.33	4.34	8.34	7,39

Table 2

Results of data analysis for individual components of the general level of polycommunicative empathy in three student sample groups

Structural components of polycommunicative empathy	Only children		Eldest children		Youngest children	
	Mean	Dis.	Mean	Dis.	Mean	Dis.
3 – elderly	7.29	5.35	7.50	8.83	6.25	7,61
4 – strangers and unfamiliar persons	8.71	9.12	8.58	6.94	9.09	12,08
5 – animals	7.54	8.88	7.42	5.05	6.50	7,20
6 – fictional characters	6.80	5.96	8.33	5.89	6.66	4,23

Table 2 shows that the indicators of students who are the only children in the family, as well as those of the oldest children in the family, are higher in almost all structural components of the general level of polycommunicative empathy compared to the indicators of the group of youngest children in the family. The exception is the component “empathy toward strangers and unfamiliar persons”. In the sample group of the youngest children in the family, it is the highest. The rating of the structural components of polycommunicative empathy in the sample of students who are the only children in the family, as well as the eldest ones, is headed by empathy toward parents (9.53 and 9.33, respectively). In the sample group of the youngest children in the family, that was empathy toward strangers and unfamiliar persons (9.09), followed by empathy toward parents (8.34). The lowest level of empathy in the sample of students who are the only children in the family is observed in the component of “empathy toward fictional characters” (6.80), in the sample group of the eldest children in the family – “empathy toward animals” (7.42), in the sample group of youngest children – “empathy toward the elderly” (6.25).

The results of the study of personal orientation

Students’ personal orientation, depending on the order of birth, included an analysis of empirical data in the following four parameters: orientation toward ‘self’, ‘relationship’, ‘business’, and ‘altruism’. The obtained data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Distribution of students by the types of personality orientation, and the share of subjects with an altruistic orientation in three student sample groups

Samples of students	%	Types of personality orientation						Altruistic orientation				
		Self		Relationship			Business	Altruistic orientation				
		mean	disper-sion	%	mean	disper-sion	%	mean	disper-sion	%	mean	disper-sion
Only children	38.0	27.00	45.05	3.4	20.59	50.47	58.6	32.98	36.69	13.8	7.51	10.91

Table 3
Distribution of students by the types of personality orientation, and the share of subjects with an altruistic orientation in three student sample groups

<u>Samples of students</u>	%	<u>Types of personality orientation</u>									<u>Altruistic orientation</u>		
		Self			Relationship			Business			%	mean	disper- sion
		mean	disper- sion	%	mean	disper- sion	%	mean	disper- sion				
Eldest siblings	58.3	29.33	27.31	8.3	20.33	20.80	33.3	30.75	30.88	0	6.17	9.40	
Youngest siblings	30.4	25.02	18.93	25	24.95	24.74	44.6	29.89	40.24	19.6	8.48	5.82	

Table 3 shows that in the sample of students who are the only children in the family, as well as in the sample of those who are the youngest children, the orientation toward ‘business’ is more pronounced than the other two types of orientation. Moreover, it is most pronounced in the group of the only children (mean score of 32.98). In the samples of students who are the only and the eldest children in their families, the orientation toward ‘relationship’ has low scores. In the sample of students who are the youngest children in the family, its indicators (number of students, percentage in the group, and mean score) are obviously higher. In the group of students who are the eldest children there is a significant proportion of respondents who have a pronounced orientation toward ‘self’ (58.3 %).

The data analysis of three student samples on the parameter of the altruistic personal orientation showed that the highest percentage of altruists were noted in the sample of the youngest siblings (about 20 %); in the sample of students who were the only children, altruists made up about 14 %; the sample of students who were the eldest siblings consisted entirely of egoists.

The results of the study of life positions and the degree of adequacy of views of life in three student samples

The data obtained using the Hardiness graphic technique are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4
Students' life positions and the degree of adequacy of their views of life, depending on birth order

<u>Samples of students</u>	Average score	Dispersion	<u>Life positions</u>			<u>Degree of adequacy of the life view</u>		
			Activist	Contemplator	Victim	% with a high degree	Average score	Dispersion
Only children	2.56	0.56	55.2	29.3	15.5	63.8	5.80	5.67

Table 4

Students' life positions and the degree of adequacy of their views of life, depending on birth order

Samples of students	Average score	Dispersion	Life positions			Degree of adequacy of the life view		
			Activist	Contemplator	Victim	% with a high degree	Average score	Dispersion
Eldest sibling	2.25	0.71	50.0	25.0	25.0	41.7	4.08	5.91
Youngest siblings	2.23	0.69	25.0	26.8	48.2	67.9	5.45	6.87

Table 4 shows that an active life position is more characteristic of students who are the only (55.2 %) and the eldest children (50 %) in their families. In these samples 'activists' make up about half; in the sample of the youngest siblings this indicator is a quarter of the entire sample. Among the youngest siblings, there are at least half as much students in the 'victim' position as in other two samples. An unexpected result was obtained in the sample of the eldest children in terms of the degree of adequacy of their view of life. It was noticeably lower than in the samples of students who were the only and youngest children in their families. When calculating the index of life position, we found that all student samples gravitate toward an active 'spider'. The students who are the only children in their families do it best (the group-wide score was 2.56 out of three required by the 'activist'), then the eldest ones (2.25) and, finally, in the youngest ones (2.23).

According to the Kruskal–Wallace H-test, statistically significant differences between the three student groups at a significance level of $p \leq 0,01$ were found in the integrative parameter of 'polycommunicative empathy'; for personality orientation – in all three scales ('self': $H = 12.128$ at $p = 0.002$; 'relationship': $H = 18.537$ at $p = 0.000$; 'business': $H = 8.734$ at $p = 0.013$); for the degree of adequacy of the view of life ($H = 9.678$ at $p = 0.008$). Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5

Statistical significance of differences in the studied indicators among three student sample groups, Kruskal–Wallace H-test

Indicators	Polycommunicative empathy types								Orientation				
	Altruism	Parents	Animals	Elderly	Children	Fictional characters	Strangers and unfamiliar persons	General level of polycommunicative empathy	Self	Relationship	Business	Life position	Adequacy of the view of life
H	8.23	7.84	4.75	5.93	2.96	10.56	0.43	4.60	12.13	18.54	8.73	0.88	9.68

Table 5
Statistical significance of differences in the studied indicators among three student sample groups, Kruskal–Wallace H-test

Indicators	Polycommunicative empathy types								Orientation				
	Altruism	Parents	Animals	Elderly	Children	Fictional characters	Strangers and unfamiliar persons	General level of polycommunicative empathy	Self	Relationship	Business	Life position	Adequacy of the view of life
p	0.02	0.02	0.09	0.05	0.23	0.01	0.81	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.65	0.01

When conducting the comparative analysis of the indicators of students who are the eldest and youngest children according to the Mann–Whitney U-test, in addition to the indicated, significant differences were found in the ‘altruism’ parameter (U = 673.5 at p = 0.007).

These results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Statistical significance of differences between the samples of eldest and youngest children, Mann–Whitney U-test

Indicators	Polycommunicative empathy types								Orientation				
	Altruism	Parents	Animals	Elderly	Children	Fictional characters	Strangers and unfamiliar people	General level of polycommunicative empathy	Self	Relationship	Business	Life position	Adequacy of the view of life
U	673.5	768.0	789.0	774.0	840.0	618.0	951.0	793.5	579.0	504.0	982.5	994.5	684.0
p	0.01	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.18	0.00	0.65	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.84	0.91	0.01

Thus, a comparative study of the studied indicators of socially important personality characteristics among the samples of students who are the only, the eldest, and the youngest children in their families established a high level of confidence of the differences.

Discussion

The findings of this study enabled us to discuss the following generalized socio-psychological characteristics of three student groups, identified on the basis of birth order:

1) Compared to the students who are the eldest and youngest siblings, *students who are the only children in the family* have a higher level of polycommunicative empathy; they have a pronounced type of personality orientation toward 'business'; they take a more active life position and have a higher degree of adequacy in their views of life; the 'altruistic' orientation is characteristic of them to a greater extent than of students who are the eldest siblings, but to a lesser extent than of students who are the youngest siblings.

2) Compared to the students who are the only children and the youngest siblings, *students who are the eldest siblings* are characterized by a higher level of 'self' orientation, a significantly lower level of altruism, a lower degree of adequacy in their views of life, a somewhat higher overall level of polycommunicative empathy and, in particular, empathy toward the elderly and fictional characters.

3) Compared to the students who are the only children and the eldest siblings, *students who are the youngest children* have a significantly higher level of personality orientation toward 'relationship' and a lower level of orientation toward 'self', a higher level of altruistic orientation, a lower overall level of polycommunicative empathy, including its structural components such as empathy toward children, parents, elderly, and animals, but it is higher in the indicator of "empathy toward strangers and unfamiliar persons"; they have a less active life position.

The only children and the eldest siblings are first-borns. They are probably more similar than different. They are probably completely similar in terms of the following parameters: 1) orientation toward 'relationship' (for students of both compared groups, relations are third-rate, and this type of orientation is equally expressed in them); 2) they have very close values in the 'general level of polycommunicative empathy', including the following indicators: empathy toward children, parents, elderly, animals, strangers and unfamiliar persons.

The differences between them are established in terms of the level of empathy toward fictional characters (it is higher in the group of students who are the eldest children, which can be explained by the responsibility imposed on them by their parents for their younger siblings, which caused negative feelings and incited them to search the ideal relationships and explanations of their positions) and in terms of the degree of adequacy of their views of life (it is significantly higher among the students who are the only children in their families, which is explained by the ability of the parental family to provide the child with conditions for wider socialization and greater activity). The strongest difference was found in the indicator of personality orientation toward 'business' ($U = 1905.5$ at $p = 0.003$); students who are the only children significantly exceed their peers in this parameter.

The indicators of the group of students who are the youngest children are lower in almost all socially important characteristics, compared to the indicators of the other two student groups.

Conclusion

Summarizing the results of our empirical study and comparing them with the hypothesis put forward at the beginning of the study, we note that its first part was confirmed. Indeed, we found the statistically significant intergroup differences. However, it was also found that there are more similarities than differences between first-born students (the only children in the family and the eldest siblings). First-born students have more differences than similarities with the students who are the youngest siblings. The student group of the youngest siblings is somewhat 'inferior' to the groups of first-borns in terms of the level of development of the socially important personality characteristics that we studied, except for altruism (its general group indicator is higher and the proportion of altruists is larger).

The second part of our hypothesis – the assumption that in the sample of students who are the eldest siblings, the studied personality parameters may have the highest scores and that this group will be more socially oriented – was not confirmed. This sample turned out to be significantly more selfish and less adequate in the view of life, although more empathic toward the elderly and fictional characters. We should note that a high level of orientation toward 'self', combined with a low degree of adequacy in the view of life, lays the ground for the formation of illegal behavior. Presumably, this result is explained by the insufficient attention of parents to the needs of their older children. Thus, in some families, parents gave them to be raised by grandparents (that is why older children have a relatively high level of empathy toward the elderly and a low level of empathy toward parents); in others, they were charged with looking after younger siblings, were demanded to share toys, sweets, and other benefits that are valuable for an older child.

We found that students who are the youngest siblings lack the orientation toward 'self' and 'business', as well as empathy toward children, parents, elderly, and life activity.

In addition to the abovementioned, we distinguished a group of students – these were the only children in the family with high scores in all the studied socially important personality characteristics: the orientation toward 'business', active life position, realistic view of life, polycommunicative empathy. At the same time, altruism was not alien to them. The public need for young people with such qualities is high. However, society will not be able to ensure its reproduction if it takes a guideline to support one-child families. Besides that, not every one-child family creates conditions for raising a child with pronounced socially important qualities.

The scientific novelty of the obtained data lies in determining the level of development of a number of socially important personality traits in students (altruism, polycommunicative empathy, orientation toward 'business', active life position, and realistic view of life) in connection with their sibling position, as well as prospects for improving these qualities.

The practical significance of the study lies in the fact that the scientific basis has been obtained for developing programs of socio-psychological work with students, considering the advantages and vulnerabilities of their sibling position. The programs may contribute to the development of their socially important personal qualities. Such programs can be included in the educational process of the university. They can be implemented in the system of social services for the population. The results of this study will be of interest to specialists in family counseling, psychotherapists, social service psychologists, students and curators of student groups, as well as inquisitive parents. The development of this issue can be continued in other student samples (larger ones, including university students not only in the social and humanitarian field).

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Author Contribution

N. A. Tsvetkova worked with sources and wrote the overview part of the article, contributed to the experimental design of the study, developed tools for psychological testing and a summary table for research results, systematized early results, summarized the cumulative results of the study, and prepared the manuscript for publication.

K. E. Lagvilava performed the whole work on mathematical and statistical data processing and described the results.

E. A. Petrova performed the analysis of modern scientific publications on sibling studies in foreign psychology, ensured the participation of students in psychological testing, and collected early results.

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