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EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ELDEST DAUGHTERS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Table of Contents	i
List of Table	v
List of Figures	vi
Abstract	vii
Abstrak	viii
Acknowledgement	ix

INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Research Objectives	3
1.4 Research Questions	3
1.5 Significance of the Study	4
1.6 Research Framework.....	4
1.6.1 Theoretical Framework	4
1.6.2 Conceptual Framework	5
1.7 Definition of Terms	6
1.7.1 Eldest Daughters	6
1.7.2 Challenges	6
1.7.3 Impact.....	7
1.8 Limitation of Study	7
1.9 Summary	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.0 Introduction	9
2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings	9
2.1.1 Bowen’s Family System Theory	9
2.1.2 Adler’s Birth Order Theory	11

2.2 Challenges of Eldest Daughters	11
2.3 Roles and Responsibilities of Eldest Daughters.....	12
2.4 Family Expectation on Eldest Daughters	13
2.5 Impact on Eldest Daughters	14
2.6 Gaps in Literature.....	14
2.7 Summary	15
METHODOLOGY.....	16
3.0 Introduction	16
3.1 Research Design.....	16
3.2 Participants	16
3.3 Data Collection.....	17
3.3.1 Pilot Study.....	17
3.3.2 Interview.....	17
3.3.3 Semi-Structured Questionnaire.....	18
3.4 Trustworthiness.....	19
3.5 Research Procedure.....	19
3.6 Data Analysis.....	20
3.7 Summary.....	21
FINDING AND DISCUSSION.....	22
4.0 Introduction.....	22
4.1 Demographic Information.....	22
4.2 Findings and Discussion.....	23
4.3 Responsibility Burden.....	25
4.3.1 Sibling Care.....	26
4.3.2 Household Burden.....	27
4.3.3 Financial Pressure.....	28
4.4 Family Reliance.....	28
4.4.1 Decision Support.....	28
4.4.2 Emotional Anchor.....	29
4.5 Time Constraints.....	29

4.5.1 Loss of Personal Time.....	29
4.6 Silent Expectation.....	30
4.6.1 Unspoken Standard.....	30
4.6.2 Fear of Disappointment.....	30
4.7 Emotional Supression.....	31
4.7.1 Bottling Emotions.....	31
4.8 Discussion on Challenges.....	32
4.9 Impacts.....	34
4.9.1 Positive Impacts.....	34
4.9.2 Negative Impacts.....	36
4.10 Discussion on Impacts.....	36
4.11 Discussion on Challenges, Impacts, and Literature.....	38
4.12 Summary.....	39
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	40
5.0 Introduction.....	40
5.1 Discussion of Findings.....	40
5.1.1 Challenges Faced by Eldest Daughters.....	40
5.1.2 Impact on Eldest Daughters.....	41
5.2 Significance of the Study.....	42
5.3 Implications of the Study.....	42
5.4 Limitation of the Study.....	42
5.5 Recommendations for Future Research.....	43
5.6 Summary.....	44
REFERENCE.....	45
Appendix A.....	49
Appendix B.....	51
Appendix C.....	53

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1

Phases of Thematic Analysis.....	20
----------------------------------	----

Table 2

Demographic Information.....	22
------------------------------	----

Table 3

Summary of Themes, Sub-Themes, and Sub-Sub-Themes.....	25
--	----

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1

Theoretical Framework of Birth Order Theory and Bowen's Family System Theory..... 4

Figure 1.2

Conceptual Framework of Challenges and Impact on Eldest Daughters 5

Figure 1.3

Structural Overview of Six Main Themes and Their Sub-Themes.....23

Figure 1.4

Impacts of Challenges on Eldest Daughters.....34

ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ELDEST DAUGHTERS

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This study investigates the challenges faced by eldest daughters, focusing on their roles, responsibilities, and the impact of the challenges on eldest daughters. Guided by Bowen's Family Systems Theory and Alfred Adler's Birth Order Theory, the research examines how these challenges impact the psychological and emotional well-being of eldest daughters. The study highlights caregiving, decision-making, and being role models as central roles, while responsibilities include household management and balancing familial obligations. Family expectations, shaped by cultural and societal pressures, are identified as a critical factor contributing to stress, anxiety, and perfectionism, alongside positive outcomes like resilience and leadership. Using a qualitative approach, the study aims to explore the interplay between their challenges and the resulting impacts. Findings offer valuable insights for parents, educators, and mental health professionals to better understand and support eldest daughters in navigating their family roles. By addressing the challenges and their impact, this research contributes to the literature on family dynamics and the experiences of eldest children, particularly daughters, in various cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

Keywords: Eldest Daughters, Family Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities, Bowen's Family Systems Theory, Birth Order Theory

ABSTRAK

MENEROKA CABARAN YANG DIHADAPI OLEH ANAK PEREMPUAN SULUNG

GRATY BETTELLENE ANAK PATRICK

Kajian ini menyelidiki cabaran yang dihadapi oleh anak sulung perempuan dengan memberi tumpuan kepada peranan, tanggungjawab, dan impak yang dihadapi. Berpandukan Bowen's Family System Theory dan Birth Order Theory oleh Alfred Adler, kajian ini meneliti bagaimana cabaran tersebut mempengaruhi kesejahteraan psikologi dan emosi anak sulung perempuan. Kajian ini mengenal pasti amanah seperti menjaga adik-beradik, membuat keputusan, dan menjadi contoh kepada adik-beradik sebagai peranan utama, manakala tanggungjawab pula melibatkan pengurusan rumah tangga dan memenuhi kewajipan keluarga. Harapan yang ditetapkan oleh ahli keluarga terhadap anak sulung perempuan, yang dipengaruhi oleh tekanan budaya dan masyarakat, dikenal pasti sebagai faktor utama yang menyumbang kepada tekanan, di samping kesan positif seperti daya ketahanan dan kepimpinan. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif, kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka pengalaman hidup anak sulung perempuan serta hubungan antara cabaran yang dihadapi dan impaknya. Hasil kajian ini menawarkan inisiatif berguna kepada ibu bapa, pendidik, dan profesional kesihatan mental untuk lebih memahami dan menyokong anak sulung perempuan dalam melaksanakan peranan mereka dalam sesebuah keluarga. Dengan menumpukan fokus kepada cabaran dan kesannya, kajian ini menyumbang kepada literatur tentang dinamik keluarga serta pengalaman anak sulung perempuan dalam pelbagai konteks budaya dan sosioekonomi.

Kata kunci: Anak Sulung Perempuan, Harapan Keluarga, Peranan dan Tanggungjawab, Bowen's Family System Theory, Birth Order Theory

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Chapter 1 consists of the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, research framework, and the definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background of Study

In many families, eldest daughters are often seen as role models and are tasked with significant responsibilities, such as care-giving, decision-making, and even providing financial support. These roles stem from family expectations, which can vary from high to moderate or low, depending on cultural, socioeconomic, and familial dynamics. While some eldest daughters thrive under these circumstances, others may experience stress, anxiety, or feelings of being burdened. Exploring the challenges they faced provides valuable insights into how they perceive and respond to these challenges and how these challenges impact them.

In many Asian cultures, being the firstborn daughter comes with the expectation of being accountable for the actions of younger siblings, while also embodying maturity, patience, and responsibility. First-born daughters often report feeling pressured to serve as role models, take on family duties, and not rely on their younger siblings (Wu et al., 2018). These expectations can lead to psychological stress, as the burden placed on eldest daughters may contribute to anxiety, stress, and emotional strain.

Environmental factors such as stressful events and personality traits, like sensitivity, can be influenced by birth order. Studies have shown that birth order can significantly affect psychological outcomes, with eldest daughters often experiencing heightened levels of anxiety, stress, and even psychiatric disorders such as depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (Risal & Tharoor, 2012). The role of eldest daughters is often influenced by family dynamics, where they are tasked with responsibilities that can lead to a mix of positive and negative experiences.

Research suggests that the psychological effect of birth order, particularly the role of the eldest daughter, plays a pivotal role in shaping personality and behaviour. Alfred Adler emphasized that birth order is one of the most important factors in a person's life, with the position they hold in the family being a strong predictor of their future psychological traits. The eldest daughter often assumes the role of a surrogate parent (Zaidi, 2010), which can contribute to increased pressure and responsibilities. As a result, eldest daughters may experience higher levels of stress or emotional strain compared to their younger siblings.

In the Malaysian context, traditional family values and cultural expectations further shape these roles and experiences. Research by Ha and Tam (2013), conducted among Malaysian undergraduates in Klang Valley, found that birth order influences parent-child relationships and personality traits, with first-borns often linked to stronger family relationship expectations and certain personality patterns such as conscientiousness and emotional stability. Similarly, Ooi, Putri, and Mazlin (2019) observed that first-born Malaysian students tend to experience subtle differences in personality characteristics, which can reflect internalized familial roles. A study by Chow and Amzat (2024) also suggests that cultural factors within Malaysian families may influence the way eldest children, particularly daughters, adapt and respond to familial pressures.

Moreover, Malaysian adolescents have reported experiencing differential parental treatment based on birth order, with first-borns subjected to greater parental control and higher expectations of responsibility compared to their younger siblings (Sakineh et al., 2011). These findings align with global research on parentification, where eldest daughters are often expected to assume adult-like caregiving roles prematurely, which can lead to significant emotional and psychological strain (Hooper et al., 2011).

Although much research has examined the impact of birth order on personality and responsibilities, few studies have specifically focused on how eldest daughters' experiences are shaped by family expectations, especially in diverse cultural contexts such as Malaysia and Sarawak. The experiences of eldest daughters in multi-ethnic Sarawakian families remain particularly underexplored, despite the region's rich cultural diversity and varying familial structures. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the subjective experiences of eldest daughters and identifying both the positive and negative outcomes of their roles.

1.2 Problem Statement

The role of eldest daughters in families comes with significant challenges, shaped by their responsibilities, family expectations, and cultural norms. These challenges often require them to take on leadership, care-giving, and decision-making roles, sometimes at the expense of their own well-being. While fulfilling these roles can lead to positive experiences such as resilience and a sense of accomplishment, they can also contribute to emotional strain, and burnout.

Despite the widespread experiences of eldest daughters, there is limited qualitative research that explores the challenges they face and the impact these challenges have on their psychological and emotional well-being. Existing studies primarily focus on eldest daughters' roles within family structures but often overlook how these responsibilities shape their lived experiences. This study aims to address this gap by examining the challenges eldest daughters encounter including their roles, responsibilities, and family expectations and how these challenges impact overall well-being. By exploring both the positive and negative effects, this research provides a deeper understanding of the experiences of eldest daughters, contributing valuable insights for families, educators, and mental health professionals.

1.3 Research Objective

The objectives of this study are:

- 1.3.1** To explore challenges faced by eldest daughters in their family roles.
- 1.3.2** To understand the impact of challenges on eldest daughters.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

- 1.4.1** What are the challenges faced by eldest daughters in family roles?
- 1.4.2** What is the impact of the challenges on eldest daughters?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. First, it contributes to the existing literature on family dynamics by providing an in-depth exploration of the challenges faced by eldest daughters and their impact. By examining their roles, responsibilities, and family expectations, the study enhances understanding of how these challenges shape their lived experiences, both positively and negatively.

Second, the findings may benefit parents and caregivers by shedding light on the pressures eldest daughters experience due to family expectations. Recognizing these challenges can help families foster a more supportive environment, reducing emotional strain and promoting well-being.

Finally, this study has implications for mental health professionals and educators who work with eldest daughters facing stress, anxiety, or burnout due to their family roles. The insights gained can help inform counselling approaches, mental health interventions, and educational strategies to better support eldest daughters in navigating their roles and responsibilities.

1.6 Research Framework

1.6.1 Theoretical Framework

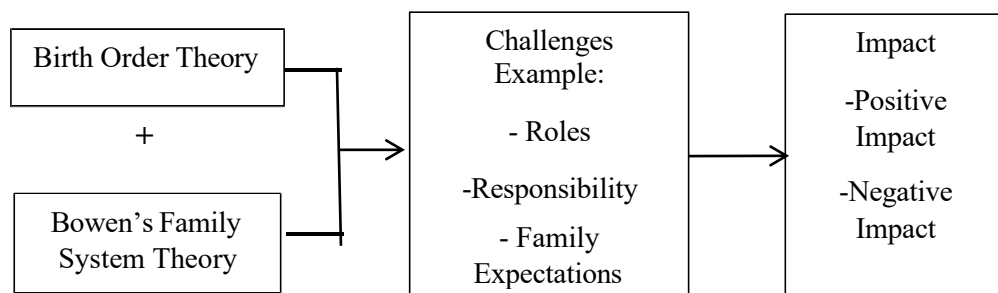


Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework of Birth Order Theory and Bowen's Family System Theory

This study will be guided by two theories: Bowen's Family Systems Theory and Birth Order Theory. Bowen's Family Systems Theory suggests that family members are interconnected, and their roles and behaviors influence one another within the family system (Bowen, 1978). The Birth Order Theory, developed by Alfred Adler, emphasizes the

psychological and social influences of birth order on an individual's personality and behaviour (Chow & Amzat, 2024).

The combination of these theories sheds light on the challenges faced by eldest daughters, which include their roles, responsibilities, and family expectations. These challenges, in turn, lead to positive impacts (e.g., leadership, maturity, responsibility) and negative impacts (e.g., stress, anxiety, burnout).

1.6.2 Conceptual Framework

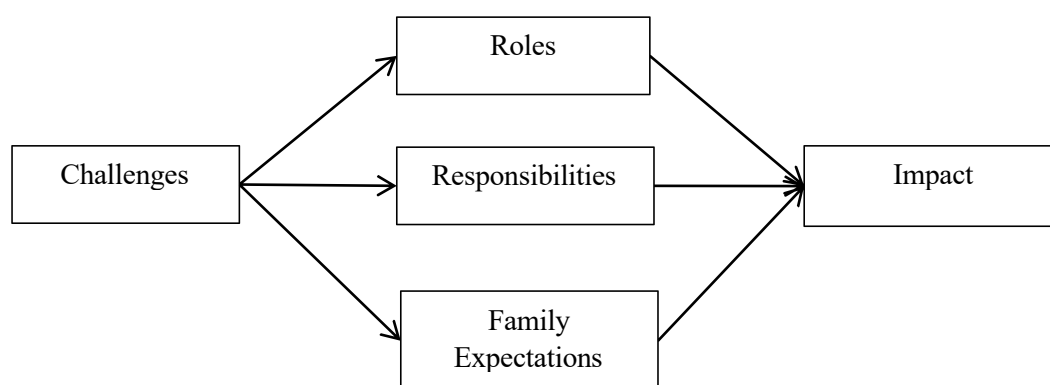


Figure 1.2 Conceptual Framework of Challenges and Impact on Eldest Daughters

The independent variable is the challenges faced by eldest daughters, which are shaped by their family roles and dynamics. These challenges are further broken down into three key factors: roles, responsibilities, and family expectations. Roles involve caregiving, decision-making, and acting as a role model for younger siblings. Responsibilities include managing household tasks and balancing familial obligations, while family expectations reflect the standards and pressures placed on the eldest daughters by parents and society.

The dependent variable is the impact on the eldest daughter, which is categorized into two types: positive impacts, such as leadership, resilience, and independence, and negative impacts, such as stress, anxiety, and burnout. The framework visually represents the flow of influence, showing how challenges translate into specific roles, responsibilities, and family expectations, which then shape the psychological and emotional impacts experienced by eldest daughters. By focusing on this relationship, the conceptual framework provides a clear structure for understanding how the challenges of being the eldest daughter led to distinct outcomes.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Eldest Daughter

Conceptual Definitions:

According to Davidoff and Hall (2018), Victorian novels often portrayed eldest daughters as primary caretakers and moral pillars. Eldest daughters are known for being reliable, conscientious, cautious, controlling, and achieving. They are typically more mature and qualified to assist with childcare and domestic chores, often becoming “alloparents” (Konner, 2011). From an early age, eldest daughters display high degrees of maturity and responsibilities, frequently assuming care-giving roles, managing domestic duties, and tending to younger siblings.

Operational Definition:

The role of the eldest daughter will be measured based on self-reported experiences that reflect the responsibilities they take on within the family. This includes tasks related to leadership, such as guiding younger siblings, making decisions, and assuming care-giving roles, like assisting with family matters or taking on parental duties in the absence of parents. These experiences will provide insight into the level of responsibility and pressure felt by the eldest daughter.

1.7.2 Challenges

Conceptual Definition:

Challenges refer to the difficulties or obstacles encountered by eldest daughters in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. These challenges often arise from societal, familial, and cultural expectations that require them to balance care-giving, household leadership, and personal aspirations.

Operational Definition:

Challenges will be identified through participants’ descriptions of situations that have caused emotional, mental, or physical strain. These may include managing conflicting expectations, feelings overburdened by responsibilities, or navigating the pressure to meet family standards.

1.7.3 Impact

Conceptual Definition:

Impact refers to the psychological, emotional, and social outcomes that result from the roles and responsibilities of eldest daughters. It encompasses both positive impacts, such as resilience and leadership skills, and negative impacts, such as stress and burnout.

Operational Definition:

The impact will be measured through participants' self-reported experiences of how their roles and responsibilities as eldest daughters have influenced their mental well-being and personal development. This includes identifying both positive impacts (e.g., increased independence) and negative impacts (e.g., stress).

1.8 Limitation of Study

This study is centered exclusively on eldest daughters, which limits the applicability of findings to eldest sons or individuals of other birth orders. Future research could expand the scope to include eldest sons or compare experiences across different birth orders to provide a more comprehensive understanding of sibling dynamics and family expectations. As a qualitative study, the findings rely heavily on self-reported experiences, which are subject to personal interpretation, memory recall, and potential biases. To mitigate this limitation in future studies, researchers could incorporate mixed-method approaches, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative measures such as validated psychological scales to enhance objectivity and reliability.

The small sample size further restricts the ability to generalize results to a broader population, potentially missing the diversity of experiences among eldest daughters, particularly across different cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Future studies could involve larger and more diverse samples from various regions, including rural and urban areas, to capture a wider range of perspectives and experiences. Additionally, the focus on family expectations may overlook other external factors, such as societal, cultural, or peer influences, that could also shape their experiences. Future research should consider incorporating these additional factors to provide a more holistic view of the pressures and challenges faced by eldest daughters.

Despite these limitations, this study aims to provide an in-depth exploration of the unique challenges and impacts faced by eldest daughters, contributing valuable insights to the existing body of research. Addressing these limitations in future studies will help to further enrich the understanding of the complex interplay between family dynamics and individual well-being.

1.9 Summary

Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the study, including the background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework, as well as definitions of key terms. This chapter sets the foundation for understanding the focus and scope of the research. The subsequent chapter, Chapter 2, will delve deeper into the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, along with an extensive review of relevant literature to support and enrich the study's focus.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the existing literature related to the challenges faced by the eldest daughters, focusing on the subsequent outcomes of their responsibilities. It highlights theoretical perspectives, previous studies on eldest daughter's roles, family expectations, and their influence on psychological well-being. Additionally, it identifies gaps in the literature and positions the current study within this context.

2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

The study is guided by Bowen's Family Systems Theory and Adler's Birth Order Theory

2.1.1 Bowen's Family System Theory

Bowen's Family System Theory provides a framework to understand how family and expectations influence the roles and responsibilities of family members. According to Bowen, family members are interconnected within an emotional system where patterns of interaction and relational dynamics significantly shape individual roles. These dynamics are particularly relevant when examining the role of the eldest daughter, as family expectations and responsibilities often disproportionately fall upon them due to their position within the family hierarchy.

Bowen (1978) proposed that family expectations and patterns of closeness or distance create a ripple effect that impacts individual roles. In the context of the eldest daughters, family dynamics often assign them roles such as caregiver, problem-solver, or leader, shaped by both explicit and implicit expectations. These roles, deeply embedded in the family system, often reflect the family's collective functioning and are influenced by inter-generational patterns of behavior and responsibility. Previous studies have demonstrated how eldest children, particularly daughters, are often drawn into caretaking roles within the family due to these systemic dynamics, which can lead to both resilience and emotional strain (McGoldrick & Carter, 2001; Titelman, 2012).

Family systems with high emotional dependence or imbalances in differentiation of self, where members struggle to balance emotional and intellectual responses may place additional pressure on the eldest daughter to meet relational and functional demands. In my study findings, several participants demonstrated low differentiation of self, for example, when they prioritized family needs and obligations over their personal goals or well-being, feeling guilty if they pursued individual interests. This aligns with Titelman (2012), who observed that poorly differentiated individuals are more likely to experience internal conflict when navigating familial expectations.

Furthermore, family projection process, where parental anxieties and unfulfilled aspirations were projected onto the eldest daughter. For instance, participants reported being held responsible for upholding family reputation or compensating for siblings perceived shortcomings, a pattern consistent with Bowen's assertion that parents may unconsciously pass unresolved issues onto their children (Bowen, 1999). The multigenerational transmission process was also reflected. Many eldest daughters described patterns of responsibility and sacrifice passed down from previous generations, especially when their mothers or grandmothers had also assumed caregiving roles. This intergenerational pattern reinforces certain expectations for the eldest daughter to replicate these behaviors, a phenomenon observed by McGoldrick and Carter (2001) in multigenerational family studies. Finally, triangles are another key concept of Bowen's theory. In families where parental conflicts existed or where one parent was emotionally unavailable, the eldest daughter often became the intermediary, absorbing tension between other family members. This dynamic, while stabilizing the family in the short term, frequently led to emotional exhaustion and role overload for the eldest daughter, mirroring patterns described in previous research (Titelman, 2012).

This dynamic can lead to the eldest daughter internalizing a sense of responsibility for maintaining family stability (Bowen, 1999). Consequently, these expectations influence how the eldest daughter perceives their role, navigates family challenges, and develops coping mechanisms to manage their responsibilities. Bowen's emphasis on the interconnected nature of family roles and relationships underscores the importance of exploring how the eldest daughter's experiences are shaped by family dynamics and expectations. Understanding these patterns helps to reveal the common challenges faced by eldest daughters across different family contexts and highlights the coping mechanisms they employ to manage their roles and responsibilities within the family system (Titelman, 2012).

2.1.2 Adler's Birth Order Theory

Adler's Birth Order Theory emphasizes the impact of birth order on personality development. Eldest children, including eldest daughters, are often characterized as responsible, achievement-oriented, and nurturing due to the expectations placed upon them (Adler, 1928). According to Adler, the firstborn child initially receives the undivided attention of the parents, during which time the child adopts the parents' views, rules, and traditions. However, with the arrival of younger siblings, the eldest child is often expected to take on leadership and caregiving roles, learning to imitate parental behaviors and maintain family structure (Hotz & Pantano, 2015).

In response to these expectations, eldest daughters typically develop a serious attitude, become self-reliant, and adopt a conventional approach to preserve their unique status within the family. They strive for continued parental approval through responsibility and achievement. This often leads to the development of perfectionistic tendencies, as they aim to meet high standards and avoid mistakes to remain valued and trusted within the family (Kamran, 2016).

A qualitative study by Kamran (2016) revealed that parents frequently view their firstborn child as a role model for younger siblings. The second child often imitates the eldest, who is typically assigned more responsibilities and expected to mature earlier than their peers. In line with Adler's theory, eldest daughters are often required to adopt quasi-parental roles to uphold family traditions and values, further reinforcing traits such as perfectionism and conscientiousness. These daughters learn to model their parents' behaviors when performing tasks, which fosters a strong internal drive toward achieving excellence and maintaining family harmony.

By integrating Adler's Birth Order Theory with prior research findings, this study provides a holistic perspective on the dynamics influencing eldest daughters' roles and experiences. Specifically, the theory helps explain the emergence of perfectionism among eldest daughters, which can be seen as a response to the layered expectations and responsibilities imposed upon them within the family system.

2.2 Challenges of Eldest Daughters

Eldest daughters often experience a range of challenges due to the dual expectations they face from their family and society. These challenges begin early, as they are frequently given significant care-giving responsibilities, which may include managing household chores or supervising younger siblings. This sense of duty, shaped by their birth order, forces eldest daughters to juggle multiple roles, including being a caregiver, a mentor, and a role model. As a result, they often experience high levels of stress, as they feel the constant pressure to meet these familial expectations while also excelling in their personal endeavors, such as academics.

or work. The weight of these responsibilities can sometimes lead to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety, as they struggle to balance their own personal needs with the demands placed on them. The cumulative burden of these roles often leaves eldest daughters feeling overwhelmed and exhausted, contributing to emotional and psychological strain (Chinoy, 2017).

Additionally, societal and cultural expectations can intensify the challenges faced by eldest daughters. In many collectivist cultures, such as those in Asia, eldest daughters are expected to maintain family honor and contribute to the well-being of their parents and siblings, which can be especially taxing if their personal goals conflict with family demands. The stress associated with these expectations can lead to the development of perfectionist tendencies and self-criticism, as eldest daughters strive to meet the ever-growing demands placed upon them. Research by Bigelow (2016) suggests that the heightened stress experienced by first born daughters often results in higher levels of anxiety, particularly as they attempt to fulfill multiple roles at once. This constant pressure to be successful in all areas of life can lead to chronic stress, burnout, and eventually, a diminished sense of self-worth.

2.3 Roles and Responsibilities of Eldest Daughters

Eldest daughters assume a variety of roles within their families, with each role carrying their own set of responsibilities. As the first born, they often act as caregivers for younger siblings, a role that starts early in their lives. These care-giving duties can range from managing household chores to providing emotional support to younger siblings. This responsibility fosters a strong sense of maturity and leadership in eldest daughters, as they are expected to take on adult-like tasks from a young age. However, these responsibilities also place an emotional burden on them, as they may feel the weight of their family's expectations and the pressure to meet them. In addition to caregiving, eldest daughters are frequently expected to serve as mentors to their younger siblings, guiding them in areas such as academic and personal development. This role can be rewarding but also exhausting, as they are continually required to provide advice and support to those around them, sometimes at the expense of their own needs (Chatterjee, 2024).

Furthermore, eldest daughters often find themselves in the role of mediators, managing family dynamics and resolving conflicts between parents and siblings. This mediation role further increases their sense of responsibility, as they must bridge the gap between different family members and ensure that harmony is maintained. The emotional and physical toll of these roles can lead to anxiety and burnout, as eldest daughters often struggle to balance the

needs of their family with their own personal goals and desires. The pressure to excel in all these roles can result in feelings of inadequacy when expectations are not met. Research by Borgstede et al., (2023) emphasizes how these roles often lead to perfectionism and self-criticism in eldest daughters, who may constantly feel they are falling short of their family's expectations. Despite the valuable life skills they develop, these roles often restrict their personal freedom, as family obligations take precedence over personal aspirations.

2.4 Family Expectations on Eldest Daughters

Family expectations for eldest daughters are often shaped by cultural and societal norms, placing them in a position of responsibility from a young age. In many collectivist societies, particularly in Asian cultures, eldest daughters are expected to uphold family honor and take on leadership and care-giving roles. These expectations can include looking after younger siblings, assisting with household chores, and providing for elderly parents. The pressure to meet these expectations is immense, as falling short is often seen as a failure that reflects poorly on both the eldest daughter and the entire family. In contrast to individualistic cultures, where personal achievements and independence are emphasized, collectivist cultures demand a greater focus on familial duties, which can result in heightened stress and anxiety for eldest daughters. The constant pressure to meet these high expectations can lead to feelings of inadequacy, as eldest daughters may struggle to balance their own desires with the responsibilities thrust upon them.

Research by Qian et al., (2023) highlights how parental expectations can significantly affect the emotional well-being of first-born children, especially eldest daughters, in their study, they found that higher parental expectations were correlated with the increased feelings of sibling jealousy and emotional stress, indicating that the pressure to fulfill these roles can have negative emotional consequences. Similarly, McGoldrick (2018) discusses how the pressure to live up to these expectations can lead to chronic stress, anxiety, and burnout. In some cases, these cultural and familial pressures can result in a permanent state of tension for eldest daughters, as they are constantly aware of their family's expectations and the potential consequences of failing to meet them. The emotional burden of these responsibilities can impact their overall mental health, leading to issues such as depression and exhaustion, especially when the demands placed upon them are unrealistic or excessive.

2.5 Impact on Eldest Daughters

The impact of the roles and responsibilities thrust upon eldest daughters can be profound, often leading to significant emotional and psychological consequences. The constant pressure to meet family expectations can result in chronic stress and anxiety, as eldest daughters struggle to balance their family roles with their personal goals and desires. Research by Borgstede et al., (2023) suggests that the intense pressure to excel in multiple areas, including caregiving, academics, and family responsibilities, often leads to perfectionism and self-criticism. These traits, while initially fostering resilience and responsibility, can ultimately contribute to burnout and a diminished sense of self-worth. The emotional toll of trying to meet these high expectations can lead to feelings of inadequacy and a sense of failure, particularly when the eldest daughter feels unable to fulfill her role in the way her family desires.

Prolonged exposure to this pressure can also have long-term consequences for mental health. Many eldest daughters experience depression, emotional exhaustion, and burnout, as the cumulative stress of fulfilling their familial duties takes a toll on their emotional well-being. The persistent fear of not meeting expectations can lead to chronic feelings of sadness, low self-esteem, and a lack of personal fulfillment. These emotional struggles are further exacerbated by cultural expectations, particularly in collectivist societies where failing to live up to familial expectations is often seen as a personal failure. Fung (2018) highlights how these pressures are particularly intense for eldest daughters in high-achieving families, where the expectation to excel academically and professionally, while also fulfilling care-giving duties, leads to increased emotional exhaustion and depletion. This emotional strain can have lasting effects on their mental health and may impact their future relationships and parenting styles.

2.6 Gaps in Literature

While substantial research has explored the roles and responsibilities of eldest daughters, there remains a significant gap in understanding both the positive and negative impacts of these challenges, particularly within the context of family expectations. Existing studies often focus on the functional roles of eldest daughters, such as caregivers, leaders, and role models for younger siblings (Chinoy, 2017; Feinberg et al., 2019). However, limited attention has been given to how these roles influence their psychological and emotional well-being, including both adverse outcomes like anxiety, burnout, and perfectionism, as well as positive impacts such as resilience, leadership, and independence.

While familial and societal expectations are frequently emphasized, there is insufficient research on how these pressures result in a dual impact on eldest daughters' mental health and personal development (Borgstede et al., 2023; Fung et al., 2018).

Furthermore, although responsibilities such as managing household tasks and balancing familial obligations have been well-documented, there is a lack of comprehensive research on how these roles lead to long-term emotional exhaustion or foster personal growth. Previous research acknowledges the heightened stress, anxiety, and perfectionism eldest daughters often experience as they strive to meet family expectations (Leiter & Maslach, 2018; Yue et al., 2018). However, few studies have thoroughly examined the ways in which these challenges might also cultivate valuable traits such as problem-solving abilities and a strong sense of accountability.

2.7 Summary

This chapter reviewed existing literature on family expectations, the roles of eldest daughters, their lived experiences, and coping mechanisms. It also discussed the theoretical frameworks guiding the study and identified critical gaps in literature. These insights form the foundation for the subsequent methodology chapter, which outlines the research design and approach for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter encompasses a few sections which describe the research methodology for current study. These are details on research design, participants, data collection, research procedure, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to capture the depth and richness of participants' challenges. The qualitative approach is particularly suited for exploring nuanced and subjective phenomena, such as the impacts of being the eldest daughter. By using this approach, the researcher can gather detailed and context-specific data, providing a broader understanding of the research problem.

The study specifically uses a case study design to examine the unique experiences of eldest children, enabling an in-depth exploration of their challenges within their familial contexts and the impact of these challenges on eldest daughters. This approach allows research to focus on individual cases while identifying recurring themes and patterns.

3.2 Participants

The participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling to ensure alignment with the research objectives. The target demographic includes young adults aged 18–25 years who are the eldest daughter in their families. This age group was chosen as they are at a developmental stage where they can reflect on childhood and adolescent experiences while also navigating adult responsibilities.

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Must be the eldest daughters in their family.
2. Aged between 18–25 years.
3. Must identify with having experienced challenges or pressures as the eldest daughter.

3.3 Data Collection

Announcements to look for the participants for current study were made via social media such as WhatsApp and Instagram. Before conducting the study, the researcher identified the participants that fulfil the requirements of this study. Finally, the participants were explained about the purpose of this research. Then, the researcher asked permission from participants to use the information as research data. The participants were informed that their identity will be kept confidential; the information is used for academic purposes only. Once agreed, they signed an agreement with informed consent which stated the right for both parties, the participant and the researcher.

3.3.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with one participant to evaluate the suitability of the interview protocol for eldest daughters. The primary aim was to ensure that the interview questions were clear, understandable, and capable of eliciting in-depth responses aligned with the research objectives. This preliminary step helped confirm that the research design was appropriate and effective.

Prior to the interview, the participant was fully briefed on the purpose and procedures of the study, and informed consent was obtained. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Following the pilot study, it was concluded that the interview questions were clear and relevant. The overall flow of the interview was smooth, and the participant was able to engage well with the questions. No modifications were necessary, and the interview protocol was deemed suitable for use in the main study.

3.3.2 Interview

The research data was gained by having an interview session with the participants. This technique helped the researchers to ask questions to the participants face-to-face. The interview sessions were conducted individually with the researcher. This one-to-one contact interview session is more convenient for the researcher to enable wider exploration of the participants. These techniques enabled the researcher to explore the information of participants in more detail.

On the other hand, the participants were able to express the information in a more

convenient way by using their own words. By using this approach, the participants could share more information related to the research area. The interview technique enabled the participants to ask questions about the research. Hence, any improvement can be made by the researcher to study. Other than that, the interview enabled the participants to give explanation or elaboration of information given to avoid any ambiguity to the researcher.

The interview was aided with audio recording. This helped the researcher to transcribe the conversation into research data. Moreover, the recording was used as a solid proof of the data source. An agreement for permission to use the aid from the participants was requested before the interview session started.

In terms of language usage, the medium of conversation depends on the participants' fluency. The questions asked can either be in English language or Malay language.

This technique enabled the researcher to observe body language of the participants which reflected the feelings and action of the participants. By doing this, the researcher observed the body language parallel to the verbal information.

The average duration of each interview was around 30 to 40 minutes. A total of seven participants were interviewed, and the resulting transcripts amounted to approximately 30 pages of qualitative data for analysis.

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Questionnaire

Semi-structured questionnaire was chosen by the researcher as guideline to achieve the objectives of the study. Lists of questions were constructed by the researcher before collecting the data.

A set of questions were asked equally to each of the participants (See Appendix A). The list of questions was used as guidelines for the researcher so that the interview sessions are within the scope of study. However, the set of questions is flexible. The researcher can paraphrase the questions to the extent the participants could answer if objectives of questions are achieved.

Other than that, the questions' arrangement is not fixed and depends on how the participants respond to the questions. Furthermore, the questions were not limited according to the interview protocols only. If there were any inquiries by the researcher to explore the issues of participants, the researcher can ask any necessary questions. The researcher asked for additional questions which were relevant and suit the context of study to explore the issues deeper.

The interview session was conducted for approximately one hour. It consists of six phases which are building rapport phase; demographics identification phase; issues and challenges exploration phase; coping strategies identification phase; support system identification phase, and finally termination phase to determine the satisfaction level of being eldest children.

3.4 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness ensures the rigor and reliability of the study, encompassing four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Quantilope, 2022). Credibility refers to the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings, ensuring that participants' perspectives are accurately represented. In this study, credibility was established through an audit trail which was maintained, documenting the research process, decision-making, and data analysis steps taken by the researcher. Transferability addresses the extent to which the study's findings can be applied to similar contexts, allowing other researchers to relate the results to their own settings. Dependability emphasizes the consistency of the research process, ensuring that the study can be replicated under similar conditions. Lastly, confirmability highlights the objectivity of the research, ensuring that findings are shaped by participants' experiences rather than researcher bias. By maintaining these criteria, qualitative research upholds its validity and reliability.

3.5 Research Procedure

The current study follows these research procedures which are:

3.5.1 The researcher identified the research area of study and chose the research topic.

3.5.2 Research proposals were constructed and submitted to the supervisor. The proposal included the background of study, research gaps, literature review, time frames, and methodology on how to conduct this study.

3.5.3 The researcher identified the participants that are suitable and allies with the research objectives.

3.5.4 Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant individually to explore the challenges of being eldest daughters.

3.5.5 The findings of the interview were transcribed and analyzed.

3.6 Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed five steps in categorizing the data information which are text transcription, encoding the transcript text, identification of theme, answering research questions, and describing the data.

The information was analyzed by using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.

In current study, the researcher chose to use theoretical thematic analysis as compared to inductive thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) mentioned that theoretical thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area and are thus more explicitly driven by analysts. This form of analysis tends to provide a less rich description of the data overall, and more a detailed analysis of some aspects of the data. Other than that, the researcher chose thematic analysis at the latent or interpretive level despite the semantic level at which themes were to be identified. The researcher identified or examined the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualization of the data rather than identifying the surface meanings of the data as what semantic analysts do. By using the thematic analysis approach, Braun and Clarke (2006) provide 6 phases of analyzing the data. (See Table 1).

Table 1 *Phases of Thematic Analysis*

	Phase	Description of process
1	Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading, and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collecting relevant data to each code.
3	Searching for themes	Collecting codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4	Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

5	Defining and naming themes	On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
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(Adopted from: Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology.

Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3, p77-101)

The researcher tabulated the data which consists of transcribed data, pre-textual analysis and the emerging themes. As the interviews were conducted in Bahasa Malaysia, the data were translated into English language and placed in pre-textual analysis columns. After that, the researcher generated the initial codes from the entire transcribed data.

3.7 Summary

This chapter presents the research methodology, detailing the qualitative case study design used to explore the lived experiences of eldest daughters. Purposive sampling was employed to select young adult participants, with data collected through semi-structured interviews following a pilot study to refine the protocol. Thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke's framework, was applied to identify key themes and patterns. These methods ensure a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research topic while maintaining confidentiality and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of a few sections which encompass the demographic information about participants and the findings from the semi-structured interview as well as the discussion on the research findings. The participants were interviewed starting from April 2025 until May 2025. The displayed participants' names are nicknames and do not reflect their actual identity.

4.1 Demographic Information

Table 2 *Demographic Information*

Participants	Abeni	Sara	Brenda	Jash	Genia	Elsie	Rosanne
Current Age	22	22	23	23	23	25	22
Place of Origin	Sabah	Bau, Sarawak	Serian, Sarawak	Johor	Kuching, Sarawak	Kuching, Sarawak	Kuching, Sarawak
Current numbers of siblings	2 brothers, 1 sister	2 brothers	2 sisters	2 sisters	1 sister, 1 brother	3 sisters	3 sisters
Family structure	Non-nuclear	nuclear	nuclear	nuclear	nuclear	nuclear	Non-nuclear
Employment Status	Non-working	working	working	Non-working	Non-working	working	Non-working

Table 2 shows the demographic information for each participant to help the researcher analyze the data. By referring to Table 2, the participants in this study consist of seven eldest daughters ranging in age from 22 to 25 years old. The majority are 22 or 23 years old, with only one participant aged 25. These participants come from various regions in Malaysia, representing both Peninsular and East Malaysia. Specifically, they originate from Sabah and Johor, as well as Kuching, Bau, and Serian in Sarawak. In terms of family structure, five participants come from nuclear families, while two participants, for example Abeni and Rosanne, reported living in non-nuclear family settings, which include extended family members such as grandparents or cousins. Most participants have two to three siblings, and the sibling composition varies. For example, Elsie and Rosanne have only sisters, while

others have a mix of brothers and sisters like Abeni and Genia. Regarding employment status, three participants are currently working, while the remaining four are non-working, and are likely to still pursue their studies.

4.2 Findings and Discussion

There are six main themes that emerged from interview data. The emerging themes are the challenges include responsibility burden, family reliance, time constraints, silent expectation, and emotional strain and the impact of these challenges towards eldest daughters.

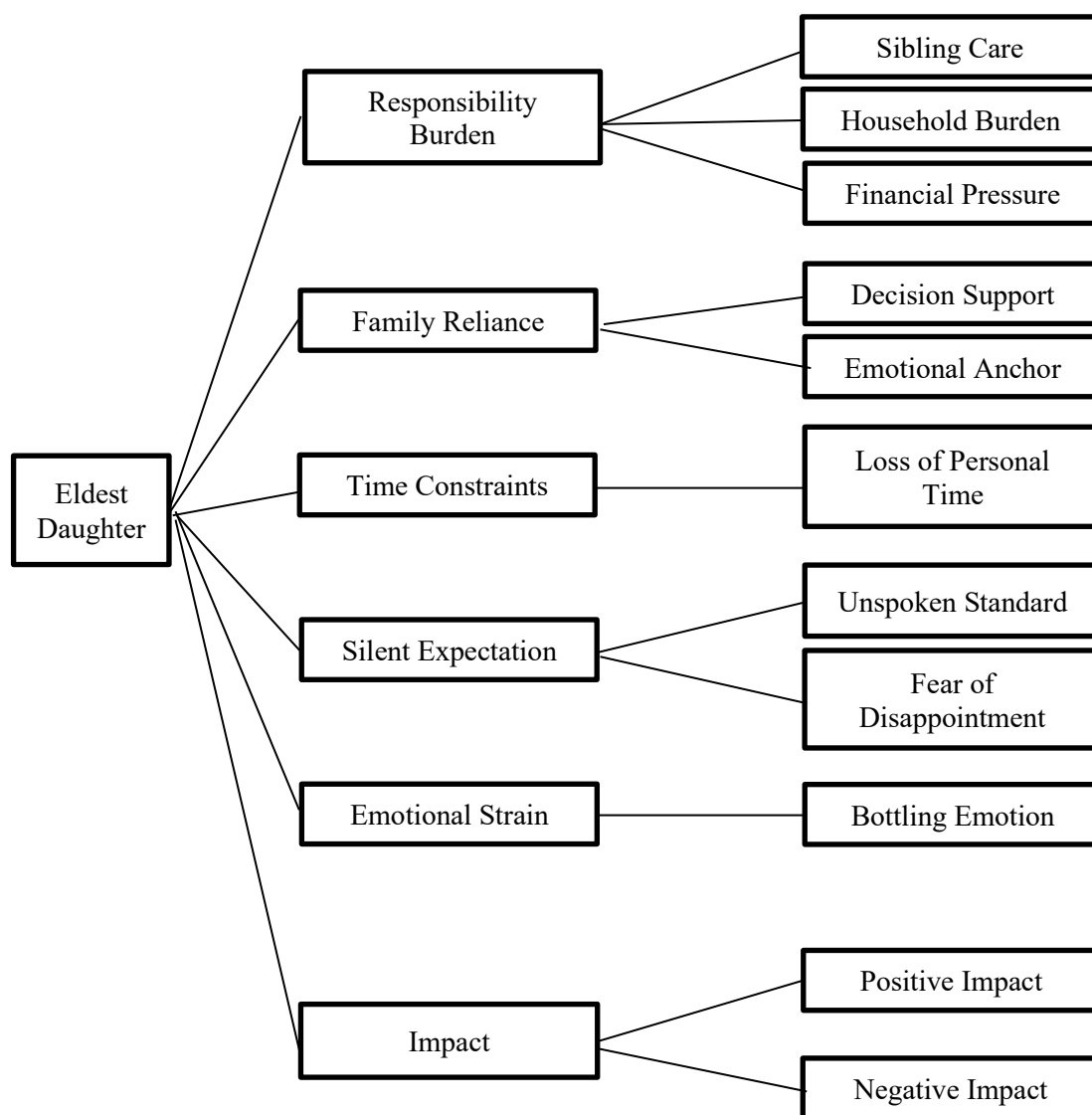


Figure 1.3 Structural Overview of Six Main Themes and their Sub-Themes

From the findings, five main themes were identified under the challenges faced by eldest daughters, alongside one theme capturing the impacts of these challenges. Figure 1.3 illustrates the structural overview of these six main themes and their associated sub-themes for the current study.

The study found that the challenges experienced by eldest daughters can be categorized into five main themes: Responsibility Burden, Family Reliance, Time Constraints, Silent Pressures, and Emotional Strain. Under responsibility burden, participants described experiences of sibling care, household burden, and financial pressure. Family reliance encompassed decision support and serving as an emotional anchor for family members. Time constraints reflected the struggle of balancing personal needs with family duties, while silent pressures involved unspoken standards and fear of disappointing family expectations. Emotional strain included bottling emotions to maintain family harmony.

Meanwhile, the impacts of these challenges were divided into two sub-themes under the sixth theme, Impacts, which include positive impacts and negative impacts.

These findings reflect the layered and often demanding roles of eldest daughters and are supported by theoretical foundations. Adler's Birth Order Theory emphasizes how firstborns, especially eldest daughters, tend to take on leadership roles and strive to fulfill family expectations. Similarly, Bowen's Family Systems Theory highlights how birth position within the family contributes to emotional roles and responsibilities, especially under pressures of harmony and interdependence.

Based on insights from participants, the study revealed notable differences in how challenges are shaped depending on whether the daughter comes from a nuclear or non-nuclear family structure (Kulkarni et al., 2024). In non-nuclear families, eldest daughters are often required to care not only for their siblings but also for cousins or other younger relatives living in the same household. This expanded caregiving role contributes to an intensified household burden and deeper emotional suppression, as they manage responsibilities typically expected of adults. In contrast, participants from nuclear families reported challenges that were more concentrated but equally heavy, particularly in managing household chores, academic responsibilities, and emotional support for family members, especially in households where both parents are working (Kulkarni et al., 2024). These daughters often experience a strong sense of silent expectation and family dependence, as they are seen as the primary support system at home. Despite the differences in family structure, participants across both settings reported overlapping experiences of time conflict, showing how cultural norms and birth order expectations continue to shape their roles. These comparisons demonstrate how family structure plays a significant role in shaping the intensity, scope, and nature of the challenges faced by eldest daughters, ultimately influencing how each sub-theme manifests in their daily lives.

Table 3 below provides an overview of the themes, sub-themes, and sub-sub-themes identified through thematic analysis:

Table 3 *Summary of Themes, Sub-Themes, and Sub-Sub-Themes*

Theme	Sub-Themes	Sub-Sub-Themes
1. Responsibility Burden	Sibling Care	• Childcare responsibility • Emotional support • Substitute parent
	Household Burden	-
	Financial Pressure	• Domestic Financial Support
2. Family Reliance	Decision Support	-
	Emotional Anchor	-
3. Time Constraints	Loss of Personal Time	-
4. Silent Expectation	Unspoken Standards	-
	Fear of Disappointment	-
5. Emotional Strain	Bottling Emotion	-
6. Impact	Positive Impact	• Maturity gain • Resilience building • Independence growth
	Negative Impact	• Mental exhaustion • Guilt pressure

4.3 Responsibility Burden

The analysis revealed that eldest daughter's shoulder significant practical responsibilities within their families. This theme encompasses three key subthemes: Sibling Care, Household Burden, and Financial Pressure.

4.3.1 Sibling Care

Eldest daughters often found themselves responsible for caring for younger siblings, either physically or emotionally. This role included daily caregiving tasks and acting as an emotional guide or stand-in parent.

a. Childcare Responsibilities

Participants described being tasked with watching over their younger siblings, especially in the absence of their parents.

When we were kids, I used to take care of my brother a lot, like feeding him, bathing him, and bringing him to play with me. (Abeni)

Sometimes I had to look after my younger siblings, especially when my mom was working. (Rosanne)

I think, mainly taking care of my sisters. Especially when my parents are like, not at home, busy working or something. (Elsie)

b. Emotional Support

Several respondents felt responsible for their siblings' emotional well-being, offering guidance in both academic and personal matters.

I guided my sister a lot, whether it was about school, personal stuff, or emotional issues. (Jash)

I gave emotional support to my sister, especially when she was going through something. (Genia)

c. Substitute Parent

In certain situations, the eldest daughter stepped into a parent-like role, taking charge of responsibilities typically handled by adults.

I kind of played the role of a second adult at home. When my parents were busy, I filled in. (Jash)

I served as an example for my younger sister and sometimes even for my cousins or extended family members. (Genia)

Bowen's Family Systems Theory explains that within a family, individuals may take on roles that help maintain the family's emotional stability. The concept of parentification where a child takes on parental duties is clearly seen here. These eldest daughters absorb emotional and physical caregiving roles, showing low differentiation of self, as their sense of identity is entangled with family responsibilities. Adler's Birth Order Theory also supports this, stating that firstborns are likely to be given leadership roles and more responsibility, often acting as the "second parent".

4.3.2 Household Burden

Most participants reported that they were assigned a disproportionate share of household chores, often impacting their daily routines and causing fatigue.

Besides working, I must manage chores in the house...like cooking, sweeping...I already get used to these. Sometimes I feel like everything must be done by me, if it is not me, who else can it be? (Sara)

Balancing studies and housework were a common struggle among participants. Some described the exhaustion of managing both academic tasks and domestic responsibilities, especially after long days at university. According to Genia:

Sometimes I feel tired. After coming back from class, there is a lot of assignments, but I still have to cook...clean the house. If my mom is tired, I will definitely help. But at the same time, I also feel exhausted. So, there are times I feel stressed, but I tell myself...it is just part of my role. (Genia)

This burden reflects Adler's theory, where eldest children are often viewed as dependable and capable, resulting in them being expected to do more at home. From Bowen's perspective, this behaviour also stems from emotional fusion; these daughters feel compelled

to maintain harmony at home by taking over tasks even at their own expense. It reflects their role in reducing family anxiety through service and compliance.

4.3.3 Financial Pressure

In families with limited income, eldest daughters often assumed the responsibility of contributing financially.

a. Domestic Financial Support

Beyond earning money, some eldest daughters took on the added burden of using their income to support the family's basic daily needs.

Even now that I'm working, I cover my own expenses because I don't want to burden my parents. I still help with groceries and other things when I can. (Elsie)

I have to make sure the household needs are complete... like groceries, soap, all of that. Sometimes my mom does not have time to go and buy them, so I am the one who helps. (Sara)

Adler's theory notes that eldest children often adopt the role of "protector" or "provider" to maintain order. Financial support becomes an extension of this role. According to Bowen (1978), these daughters may feel emotionally obligated to reduce the family's anxiety, even by taking on adult responsibilities like contributing money to the household.

4.4 Family Reliance

Participants often became central figures whom their families relied on for both practical decisions and emotional stability. This theme includes decision support and being an emotional anchor.

4.4.1 Decision support

Some participants reported that they were frequently consulted for important family decisions, showing their involvement in adult-like responsibilities.

Sometimes I am involved in family decisions, especially when my mom is busy. (Genia)

My parents kind of treat me like their right hand...they trust me a lot. (Jash)

4.4.2 Emotional Anchor

Eldest Daughters also acted as emotional stabilizers in the family, especially during stressful or uncertain times.

I was the one who helped calm everyone down. I told them, "It is okay, we will get through this." (Jash)

Jash also added:

I always try to be the strong one. I feel like if I break down, no one else will hold things together. (Jash)

Bowen's concept of the emotional triangle can be applied here. Eldest daughters often serve as mediators or stabilizers during family stress. They become the bridge between parents and siblings. Adler's Birth Order Theory supports this as well, noting that eldest children usually internalize the belief that they must be strong and responsible, making them natural decision-makers in times of crisis.

4.5 Time Constraints

Participants shared experiences of struggling to balance personal needs with family obligations.

4.5.1 Loss of Personal Time

The dual demands of family and personal life led many participants to feel like they had no time for themselves.

Sometimes I have to set aside time for myself just to prioritise family needs. (Genia)

When I was working, sometimes I felt like I had double the responsibilities like work outside, and work at home too. (Brenda)

Both Adler and Bowen highlight the internal struggle of the eldest child. Adler suggests that eldest children are often perfectionists trying to meet family expectations, resulting in time stress. Bowen's theory adds that low differentiation of self can lead these individuals to put family over self-care, causing time conflict and identity stress.

4.6 Silent Expectations

Although not always verbally expressed, participants internalized the belief that they had to act as role models or uphold a certain image for the sake of the family.

4.6.1 Unspoken Standards

This pressure existed even when parents did not directly demand it, showing up as quiet expectations from within the family or society.

My mom always tells me I have to do better because my siblings are watching me. She'll say things like "Abe has to be good," can't do this, can't do that. She doesn't say it directly (setting expectation), but I can feel it. (Abeni)

4.6.2 Fear of Disappointment

Some participants shared a deep-rooted fear of letting their family down, even when no one explicitly said so.

my parents never really pushed me. They didn't expect specific grades or anything like that. But I guess I built this mindset like "I must succeed." Maybe to make them proud. Even when I did okay, I still felt like I wasn't doing enough. (Elsie).

As a student from IPG (*Institut Pengajian Guru*), Genia shared how her parents' high hopes for her success sometimes led to internal pressure and fear of failing their expectations.

That expectation sometimes makes me feel like I cannot make mistakes. I have to always be right, always succeed. Sometimes I feel scared if I cannot meet what they are hoping for. But I know they believe in me. (Genia)

Another participant expressed how the opinions of extended family and the pressure to not disappoint her parents made her feel anxious and afraid of being seen as a failure. According

to Brenda:

Especially when relatives ask whether I am working or continuing my studies. If it is not what they expect, they will criticise me like I have no future. I end up feeling stressed and scared that I will not make my parents proud. (Brenda)

This reflects that birth order personality trait of the eldest being driven by approval. Adler's theory says eldest children often become people-pleasers due to early praise and high expectations. From Bowen's view, the multigenerational transmission process may also be at work, parents pass on implicit standards that eldest daughters internalize without direct communication.

4.7 Emotional Suppression

Eldest daughters often felt the need to hide their emotions to maintain harmony or avoid burdening others.

4.7.1 Bottling Emotions

Suppressing stress, sadness, or fear became a pattern for many participants, even when they needed support.

Even when I am tired or sad or just...not okay inside. I do not show it...I hide my feelings just to keep everyone else calm. (Jash)

Sometimes I feel really guilty if I make mistakes. I will think about it for days. (Brenda)

Bowen's concept of emotional cutoff applies here. Eldest daughters learn to regulate or suppress their emotions to avoid adding stress to the family system. Adler's view on eldest children striving for perfection also leads them to hide emotional vulnerability, fearing it would be seen as weakness or failure.

4.8 Discussion on Challenges

A complex web of responsibilities that eldest daughters frequently manage is revealed by the emergence of five primary themes identified in this study: Responsibility burden, Family reliance, Time constraints, Silent Expectation, and Emotional Strain. In addition to family structure, theoretical frameworks and empirical data emphasize the psychological positive and negative impacts of such familial expectations, shaping the lived experiences of these eldest daughters.

A primary burden voiced by participants was the transition into quasi-parental roles, is what Bowen termed “parentification.” This entails children stepping into adult-like caregiving positions to fill emotional or functional gaps when parents are absent or overstressed. Participants, like Jash and Genia, described managing younger siblings’ physical and emotional needs, echoing the findings of Loraina Ciarico (2024), whose dissertation on eldest daughters confirmed that younger siblings or kin frequently depend on elder daughters for daily care. Adler’s Birth Order Theory reinforces this, proposing that firstborns internalize a sense of duty and order which an expectation the eldest daughters in this study vividly internalize.

Nevertheless, this caregiving responsibility frequently results in psychological strain. Banks and Shigemoto (2025) noted that parentified children may suffer from blurred identity boundaries, leading to difficulties in self-definition and personal autonomy. Similarly, Borchet et al. (2020) reported that while elder caregivers develop maturity and self-esteem, they are at risk of emotional exhaustion and relational stress if these roles become entrenched.

Beyond physical caregiving, participants emphasized the emotional labor they performed which providing stability during family stress or decision-making. Bowen’s construct of emotional triangle suggests that the firstborns often become intermediaries to manage household anxiety. Macfie et al. (2015) found that such dynamics often result in long-term emotional burdens, limiting individuation and reinforcing role rigidity. Similarly, Adler classified eldest children as “junior parents,” expected to offer leadership and mature judgement from a young age.

Participants like Elsie and Sara assumed financial roles within constrained familial economic conditions, whether by contributing earnings or purchasing household necessities. Adler’s framework characterizes eldest daughters as “providers,” a role adopted to fulfill family expectations. Bowen would consider this behavior as an adaptive role realignment under stress, where eldest daughters absorb and alleviate financial anxiety. Cristadoro (2025) warns, however, that such engagements may breed conditional self-worth were esteem contingent upon continued performance.

The “double shift” described by participants managing external commitments along with household responsibilities is indicative of a systemic conflict between personal and familial roles. Adler observed firstborn perfectionism and overcommitment, often fueled by the desire for approval.

Bowen's theory further explains that individuals with weak self-differentiation struggle to establish healthy boundaries, leading them to privilege family duty over self-care. This results in stress, fatigue, and fragmented identity.

Participants frequently described an insidious form of pressure which is unspoken yet powerful. Adler's notion of striving for superiority explains these internalized standards, even in the absence of explicit demands. Bowen's multigenerational transmission process endorses this, suggesting subtle values and role norms are subconsciously passed down and normalized within families. Their quoted anxieties, which are fear of making mistakes or not living up to familial standards, highlight this internalized burden.

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Participants consistently described concealing their emotions to protect family equilibrium. Bowen called this emotional cutoff, a defense that isolates personal feelings to reduce household volatility. Adler would interpret emotional censorship as a symptom of perfectionism where vulnerability could be mistaken for frailty. Over time, such repression may result in anxiety, relational detachment, and burnout, as supported by longitudinal findings on parentified children.

Notably, participants' roles also fostered positive traits such as maturity, leadership, emotional intelligence, mirroring Hooper et al.'s (2011) conclusion that caregiving engenders resilience and relational depth when balanced. However, when responsibilities are extreme or chronic, risks mount for emotional depletion, identity confusion, and psychological distress risks underscored in Bowen's and Adler's theories.

Eldest daughters in this study embody a paradox where they are often recognized as leaders and nurturers yet burdened by invisible weight. Bowen and Adler provide frameworks that illuminate the familial, emotional, and social factors underlying these roles: birth order dynamics, emotional enmeshment, and gendered expectations. The findings reinforce the need for interventions that encourage shared responsibilities, emotional differentiation, and clear boundaries. School counsellors and mental health practitioners might reallocate roles away from chronic caregiving. Future research should also investigate culturally sensitive strategies to distribute household labor more equitably and support eldest daughters' personal development.

4.9 Impacts

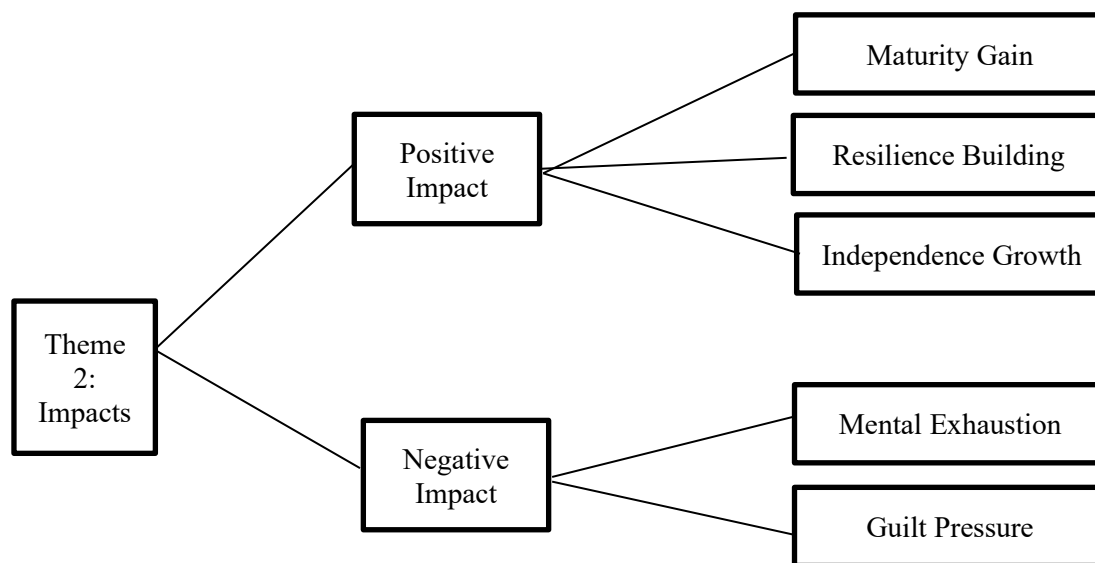


Figure 1.4 Impacts of Challenges Faced by Eldest Daughters

Based on analysis, the challenges faced by eldest daughters resulted in two main impacts which are positive and negative. These are summarized in Figure 1.4. positive impacts include the development of maturity, resilience, and independence. These qualities that often emerged as a response to ongoing responsibilities and expectations within the family. On the other hand, negative impacts such as mental exhaustion and guilt pressure were also evident, particularly among participants who experienced a lack of emotional support or unequal role distribution. These impacts were not formed in isolation but rather developed over time through repeated exposure to caregiving roles, unspoken expectations, and family dependence. The dual nature of these outcomes reflects the complex emotional and psychological experiences of eldest daughters, as shaped by both internal family dynamics and cultural norms.

4.9.1 Positive Impacts

a. Maturity Gain

Most participants shared that carrying multiple responsibilities helped them grow up faster than their peers, developing stronger emotional and practical maturity.

I would say it makes me more mature because I feel like I had to grow up faster than everyone else...I was taught to be more independent compared to my siblings. (Abeni)

I feel like I have become more mature and understand life better. I do not complain easily, and I try harder. (Sara)

This shows how eldest daughters often experience an accelerated sense of adulthood because of their family roles. This is consistent with Adler's Birth Order Theory, which states that firstborns typically adopt mature and responsible roles early in life (Coan et al., 2018).

b. Resilience Building

Despite the pressures, some participants described becoming emotionally stronger and more capable of handling life's difficulties.

I am way more independent now...I always think twice before I react. I guess all this shaped me into someone more grounded and emotionally mature. (Jash)

I have become more independent...more mature than my actual age. I can manage my time well and I am more sensitive to other people's emotions. (Genia)

c. Independence Growth

The eldest daughters also reported that their roles helped them develop strong self-reliance and confidence in managing responsibilities without depending on other.

Now that I am working, I cover my own expenses because I do not want to burden my parents, I still help with groceries and other things when I can. (Elsie)

I feel more independent now. I know my responsibilities...I know what I need to do. (Sara)

This sense of independence is often shaped by necessity, as these daughters are "first" in many expect including education, work, managing responsibilities, which encourage self-growth.

4.9.2 Negative Impacts

a. Mental Exhaustion

Some participants described the emotional and physical toll of their roles, especially when responsibilities became overwhelming.

Sometimes I get so tired that I lose my patience. But I just stay quiet...because I think, they are my family. I cannot just get angry at them...so I keep everything to myself. (Sara).

There were times I just...felt like no matter how much I did; it was not enough. I got super anxious. I even had trouble sleeping some nights. (Elsie)

This aligns with Bowen's theory on emotional cutoff, where individuals suppress their stress to maintain peace, leading to emotional fatigue and eventual burnout (Titelman, 2014).

b. Guilt Pressure

Participants also revealed a pattern of self-imposed guilt whenever they choose to prioritize themselves or fail to meet perceived expectations.

Even when I am enjoying myself, I feel guilty. I am used to putting others first. Sometimes I even forget what I want. (Elsie).

I feel really guilty if I make a mistake or go against my parents. Because as the eldest sister, I feel like I must set a good example. (Brenda)

This form of guilt often stems from internalized expectations rooted in family culture and gender norms, which reinforces perfectionism and self-blame, as noted by Adler (1928).

4.10 Discussion on Impacts

This study found that the challenges faced by eldest daughters resulted in both positive and negative impacts, shaped by their ongoing responsibilities, family expectations, and emotional roles. These impacts are categorized into two sub-themes: positive impacts which include maturity gain, resilience building, and independence growth, negative impacts which include mental exhaustion and guilt pressure.

One of the most common positive impacts was maturity gain. Eldest daughters often had to

take on responsibilities earlier than their peers, such as caring for siblings or managing household tasks. Through these experiences, they developed a more mature mindset and were able to make decisions independently. For example, the eldest daughter who frequently managed her siblings' schedules or handled family tasks would learn to act more like an adult, even during her teenage years. This reflects Adler's Birth Order Theory, which states that firstborns tend to become more serious, responsible, and reliable due to the expectations placed on them (Jain, 2024).

The second positive impact observed was resilience building. Many eldest daughters became emotionally stronger over time as they learned to deal with family stress, time pressure, or emotional struggles. For instance, a daughter who consistently supports her family during difficult times learns to adapt, regulate her emotions, and remain calm under pressure. This reflects the ability to cope with hardship and demonstrates emotional growth. Bowen's Family Systems Theory supports this by suggesting that individuals who are placed in central family roles often learn to manage tension and support others, which can foster resilience if well-balanced (Yusof & Binti, 2011).

Another major positive outcome was independence growth. Due to the need to manage responsibilities without much guidance, eldest daughters often became more self-reliant and confident in handling personal tasks, finances, or decision-making. For example, some eldest daughters may start budgeting their own expenses or planning family activities. This growth of independence shows how taking on early responsibilities can lead to strong problem-solving and life-management skills.

Despite the strengths gained, the study also revealed clear negative impacts, starting with mental exhaustion. Many eldest daughters experienced fatigue from balancing school or work, house chores, caregiving roles, and emotional responsibilities. A typical example would be a participant who returns from university classes and immediately takes over housework and sibling care without any rest. Over time, this can lead to burnout, stress, and emotional tiredness. Titelman (2014) stated that Bowen's concept of emotional fusion explains that when a person becomes overly involved in family responsibilities, it may affect their personal well-being and limit their space for emotional recovery.

The second negative impact was guilt pressure. Some eldest daughters developed a strong sense of guilt when they focused on themselves, made mistakes, or did not meet expectations. For instance, if an eldest daughter spends time on her own interests or says no to a family request, she might feel as if she is neglecting her role. This constant self-monitoring and internal guilt is explained in Adler's theory, which highlights how firstborns often aim to please and avoid disappointing those who depend on them (Sperry, 2021).

These findings show that while eldest daughters may grow into capable and strong individuals, their journey often involves emotional strain and hidden struggles. The impacts are shaped by how

their roles are managed and whether support is present. When responsibilities are balanced and shared, the positive impacts may be more dominant. However, when expectations are too high or unspoken, negative outcomes such as guilt and emotional fatigue may become more intense.

4.11 Discussion on Challenges, Impacts and literature

The findings of this study illuminate significant insights into the challenges and impacts experienced by eldest daughters, aligning closely with the objectives set forth in this research. In addressing Objective 1.3.1, this study identified five principal themes of challenges which include responsibility burden, family reliance, time constraints, silent expectation, and emotional strain. These findings reinforce and expand upon existing literature, confirming that eldest daughters frequently adopt quasi-parental roles, consistent with Bowen's concept of parentification and Adler's depiction of eldest children as "junior parents." Similar patterns were reported by Loraina Ciarico (2024) and Borchet et al. (2020), who observed that eldest daughters often assume caregiving and emotional support roles. However, this study contributes new depth by emphasizing the subtle but pervasive nature of silent expectation, which were less explicitly highlighted in prior works.

The strength of this study lies in its nuanced depiction of the emotional labor carried by eldest daughters, not merely in functional caregiving but in maintaining family emotional stability. The findings align with Bowen's notion of emotional triangles, where eldest daughters serve as mediators during familial tensions, a theme corroborated by Macfie et al. (2015). However, while earlier studies often framed these dynamic broadly, this research provides more localized insights specific to Malaysian family contexts, highlighting cultural expectations and gendered roles, thus extending the literature beyond Western-centric perspectives.

Nonetheless, a critical limitation emerges regarding the generalizability of findings. Although themes such as emotional suppression and financial contributions are widely reported in previous research (Cristadoro, 2025; Banks & Shigemoto, 2025), this study's small sample size limits broader applicability. Moreover, while previous studies, like Hooper et al. (2011), have discussed resilience as an outcome of caregiving roles, this research uniquely captures how resilience coexists with deep-seated guilt and emotional fatigue. Yet, the lack of a comparative group, for example, eldest sons or middle children, restricts the ability to determine whether these experiences are unique to eldest daughters or part of broader family dynamics.

Regarding Objective 1.3.2, the findings confirm a dual impact on eldest daughters: positive impacts such as maturity, resilience building, and independence, and negative impacts like mental exhaustion and guilt pressure. These results strongly echo the assertions of prior research by Leiter and Maslach (2018) and Yue et al., (2018), who documented stress and perfectionism among eldest

daughters. However, this study critiques and extends those findings by revealing how even positive traits, such as independence, may stem from necessity rather than genuine choice, potentially masking emotional distress.

Another contribution of this research is its illumination of financial pressure undertaken by eldest daughters, a dimension that has been underrepresented in previous literature. Participants shared experiences of managing both external employment and domestic obligations, underscoring the intersection between socioeconomic pressures and birth order roles. This finding critiques prior works, which have largely focused on emotional caregiving without sufficiently acknowledging the financial implications of eldest daughters' roles.

Despite its strengths, this study is limited by its reliance on self-reported narratives, which may be affected by selective memory or personal bias. Additionally, while the study confirms findings from Western contexts, it would benefit from deeper comparative analysis within diverse Malaysian ethnic groups to assess cultural variability more robustly.

In conclusion, the study successfully fulfills its objectives by providing an in-depth exploration of the challenges and impacts faced by eldest daughters. It offers critical comparisons with prior literature, confirms established theories, and highlights new facets of eldest daughters' experiences, particularly in the Malaysian context. Future research should aim to quantify these findings and explore interventions tailored to the unique pressures borne by eldest daughters to promote their mental health and well-being,

4.12 Summary

This chapter reported the findings of the challenges and impact of the challenges faced by eldest daughters. The findings of this study reflected the research objective of this study. This chapter also indicated the demographic characteristics of participants. The discussion of findings will be discussed in the next chapter of this report.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical discussion of the research findings in relation to research objectives, theoretical frameworks, and past literature. This structure follows the sequence of research objectives and research questions. This chapter further discusses the significance and implications of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

5.1.1 Challenges Faced by Eldest Daughters

The first objective of this study was to explore the challenges faced by eldest daughters in their family roles. The study revealed five main themes under this objective which include Responsibility burden, Family reliance, Time constraints, Silent Expectation, and Emotional Strain.

These findings are consistent with Adler's Birth Order Theory, which emphasizes that firstborns tend to be responsible, achievement-oriented, and mature (Sahal & Sharma, 2025). Adler proposed that eldest children often adopt the role of the "junior parent," assuming leadership and caregiving responsibilities (Vachon & Vachon, 2010). Similarly, Bowen's Family Systems Theory supports the finding that eldest daughters often assume functional and emotional roles to maintain harmony within the family system (Titelman, 2012). The emergence of the parentification role in many participants is in line with Bowen's concept of differentiation of self, where poorly differentiated individuals struggle to separate their own needs from the emotional needs of the family.

The study also adds depth to existing literature by comparing experiences in nuclear and non-nuclear family structures. Participants from non-nuclear families tended to have more extended caregiving roles, often looking after cousins or other extended relatives. This expanded responsibility increased emotional suppression and household burden (Chen & Mulligan, 2024). In contrast, participants from nuclear families experienced more focused, but still intense, expectations related to academic performance and household support (Kulkarni et al., 2024). Regardless of family structure, the eldest daughters shared similar struggles with time conflict and silent expectations, highlighting the universality of these experiences.

The findings illustrate how eldest daughters navigate multiple layers of responsibility,

encompassing practical tasks such as sibling caregiving, household management, and financial contributions under the theme of responsibility burden. Additionally, under family reliance, they are often key decision-makers and emotional anchors within the family. The theme of time constraints reveals their struggle to balance personal needs with family obligations, while silent expectation highlights the internalized pressure and fear of disappointing family members. Finally, the theme of emotional strain underscores the tendency of eldest daughters to suppress their own emotions to protect family harmony.

Collectively, these experiences demonstrate that the challenges faced by eldest daughters are multidimensional and shaped by familial roles, cultural expectations, and birth order dynamics. Adler's and Bowen's theoretical frameworks provide valuable insights into these patterns, emphasizing how eldest daughters internalize leadership, responsibility, and the need for emotional regulation. The study's findings reinforce the importance of developing interventions that encourage shared responsibilities within families, support emotional differentiation, and create healthy boundaries to alleviate the pressure placed upon eldest daughters.

5.1.2 Impact on Eldest Daughters

The second research objective was to understand the impact of the challenges on eldest daughters. Two major impacts were identified: positive and negative. Positive impacts included maturity, resilience, and independence. These traits developed through the process of consistently fulfilling expectations and roles within the family. Such experiences encourage emotional growth and leadership capabilities. Participants described themselves as more emotionally grounded, responsible, and self-reliant than their peers. These findings are consistent with Hooper et al., (2011), who suggested that caregiving roles can foster personal development if balanced.

However, negative impacts were equally significant. Many participants reported emotional exhaustion, guilt pressure, and stress. These effects are aligned with findings from Borgstede et al., (2023) and Fung (2018), which revealed that eldest daughters, especially in collectivist societies, often internalize expectations, leading to perfectionism, anxiety, and burnout. Bowen's concept of emotional cutoff and multigenerational transmission process can explain how such patterns develop over time. The daughters internalized not only their own roles but also the roles and expectations passed down through generations.

Participants' narratives also reflect the double-edged sword of early maturity. While

their roles contributed to emotional growth, they also led to suppressed emotions and restricted freedom. This duality highlights the complex nature of birth order roles in family dynamics.

5.2 Significance of the Study

This study provides important contributions to family psychology and counselling practices, particularly in the Malaysian context. It highlights how eldest daughters silently bear the emotional and practical burdens of their families. While the literature has acknowledged birth order and responsibility, this study uniquely emphasizes the cultural and emotional expectations tied to gender and position in the family hierarchy.

The research enriches Bowen's and Adler's theoretical application by contextualizing them within Malaysian family structures, especially in multicultural and multigenerational households. The findings are especially useful for parents, educators, and counsellors in recognizing the unseen burdens carried by eldest daughters and in providing support systems that validate their roles without overburdening them.

5.3 Implications of the Study

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study are valuable for multiple stakeholders. Parents can promote healthier emotional development by distributing responsibilities more equally among siblings and being more mindful of silent expectations. Mental health practitioners, such as counsellors and psychologists, should recognize the burden of these silent expectations in eldest daughters and integrate this understanding into their therapeutic approaches. Educators may benefit from identifying signs of burnout or perfectionism in students who bear heavy family responsibilities and offering supportive academic environments that acknowledge these pressures.

From a theoretical viewpoint, this study validates and extends Bowen's and Adler's theories within a Malaysian cultural context. The integration of these theories provides a more holistic understanding of eldest daughter experiences and suggests the potential for developing a culturally relevant model by combining birth order and family systems perspectives.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. Firstly, the sample size was small, consisting of only seven participants, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the age range of participants was restricted to young adults between 18 and 25 years old, excluding perspectives from younger adolescents or older women who may have different reflections

on their experiences. Thirdly, as a qualitative study relying heavily on self-reporting, the data are subject to memory bias, selective disclosure, and personal interpretation.

In addition, the study did not deeply investigate the influence of cultural and socioeconomic differences among participants, which may significantly affect the nature of challenges experienced. Another limitation is the limited exploration of coping mechanisms. Understanding how eldest daughters manage these challenges could provide a more complete picture and inform intervention strategies.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

5.5.1 Based on the limitations of the study, future research should consider involving a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of findings. Including participants from different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as various age groups, would provide a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of eldest daughters. Comparative studies involving eldest sons or middle and youngest siblings could also yield valuable insights into the role of birth order across the family hierarchy.

5.5.2 Additionally, future research could incorporate quantitative methods to complement qualitative insights. Using standardized psychological instruments to measure levels of stress, anxiety, self-esteem, or family role burden could validate and expand upon the findings of this study. Investigating coping mechanisms and support systems in greater depth would also be beneficial in designing effective mental health interventions and family support programs.

5.5.3 Practical interventions should be considered. For example, developing structured psychological support workshops specifically for eldest daughters could help them navigate their responsibilities and emotional burdens. Educational modules for parents could also be introduced to raise awareness about the unequal pressures often placed on first-born daughters and how to distribute family roles more fairly.

Throughout the process of conducting this research, as a researcher, I gained a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of eldest daughters. Listening to the participants' perspectives helped me broaden my awareness of family dynamics and the emotional and psychological responsibilities placed on first-born daughters. This experience strengthened my ability to analyze and interpret qualitative data objectively and enhanced my perspective as a future counsellor.

5.6 Summary

This study sets out to understand the challenges and experiences of eldest daughters and how these experiences shape their emotional and psychological well-being. The findings revealed that eldest daughters face a variety of complex responsibilities, including caring for siblings, managing household duties, handling financial contributions, and dealing with silent expectations and emotional suppression. While these experiences often nurture positive impacts, they also create significant emotional strain and stress, showing the dual nature of this unique family role.

By connecting the findings to Bowen's Family System Theory and Adler's Birth Order Theory, this research has contributed new insights into how family dynamics and cultural contexts influence the lives of eldest daughters. The study highlights the importance of greater understanding and support from families, educators, and mental health professionals to help eldest daughters thrive without being overwhelmed by invisible burdens. Ultimately, this research serves as a reminder that the silent sacrifices and strengths of eldest daughters deserve recognition, empathy, and meaningful support, paving the way for more equitable family relationships and deeper scholarly inquiry in the future.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ELDEST DAUGHTERS

Section A: Do rapport and stating the objectives of the interview

1. Hi, how are you?
2. How is your day today?

*Researcher explains the purpose of the interviews

Section B: Studying the background of the participant (demographics)

1. What is your name? What should I call you during this session?
2. How old are you?
3. Can you tell me a little about your family? (e.g., number of siblings, family dynamics)
4. How would you describe your role in the family as the eldest daughter?

Section C: Exploring challenges faced by the participant

1. What specific roles and responsibilities do you take on as the eldest daughter in your family?
2. How do these roles and responsibilities impact your daily life and routines?
3. Have you experienced challenges balancing your responsibilities as an eldest daughter with other aspects of your life (e.g., work, studies, personal time)?
4. How do family expectations influence or add to the challenges you face as an eldest daughter?
5. In what ways do cultural or traditional values within your family shape your role and responsibilities?

Section D: Exploring the impacts of the challenges on the participant

1. How has fulfilling your roles as the eldest daughter impacted you emotionally or mentally?
2. Can you describe a situation where being the eldest daughter brought you a sense of accomplishment or pride?
3. Have there been moments when the pressures of being an eldest daughter negatively affected your well-being? If so, how?
4. In your experience, how do the challenges of being an eldest daughter contribute to your personal growth?
5. How do you perceive the overall impact of your role as an eldest daughter - both positively and negatively - on your mental health and personal development?

Section F: Terminating the interview session with participant

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as the eldest daughter?
2. Do you have any advice for other eldest daughters facing similar responsibilities?

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



No. _____

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Greetings, my name is Graty Bettellene Anak Patrick. I am currently undertaking research for my undergraduate final year project at UNIMAS.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

I am interested in exploring the lived experiences of eldest daughters, focusing on how family expectations shape their roles, challenges, and coping mechanisms.

YOUR ROLE

If you would like to participate in my research, then this will require a meeting that probably be between one and two hours, but the duration is essentially up to you. We can arrange to meet at a time that suits you, and the location can be negotiated as well.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can change your mind about participating at any stage. I will make an audio recording of your conversations, which I will destroy after I make a written transcript. The information you provide will not have your name or any other identifying information on it and in adherence to university policy, the study's collected data will be kept in a secure location for five years, before it is destroyed.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Anything that you share with me will remain confidential, with only my research supervisors and myself knowing that you have contributed to the project. I will eventually write a final year project paper based upon my research, and it may be that I wish to include quotes from our conversations. If this is the case, I will do this in a way that ensures you cannot be identified from the quotes. In instances where there is even a small possibility you could identify; I will contact you to ask permission to include the quote. The same would apply to the quote that I might include in any articles, book chapters or presentations based on my final year project.

FURTHER INFORMATION

This research has been reviewed and given approval by Madam Nor Hasniah binti Ibrahim. If you would like further information about the study, please feel free to contact me:

Email: gratysasya@gmail.com

Phone: 011-21880399

Supervisor's contact

Email: inhasniah@unimas.my

Phone: 013-8233123

Thank you for your interest in this research project. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

No. _____



EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ELDEST DAUGHTERS

Please make sure you agree with these points clearly before starting the interview:

- I have understood the purpose and procedures of the study.
- I have been provided with the Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand that my involvement is voluntary.
- I understand that no personal identifying information like my name and address will be used, and that all information will be securely stored for 5 years before being destroyed.
- I understand that all my responses are anonymous and will be kept in strict confidentiality by the researcher.
- I agree to participate in the study outlined to me.
- I agree for the interviews to be taped/recorded.

Signature: _____

Date : _____

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS:

Participant 1: Abeni

Age: 22

Origin: Sabah

Interview Type: Semi-structured, qualitative interview

Date: 1/4/2025

Duration:

Interviewer: Hi, how are you?

Abeni: Okay.

Interviewer: Okay, before we begin, my name is Graty, a counselling student from UNIMAS and I just want to let you know that I'm doing my FYP about exploring the challenges faced by eldest daughters. So, this interview is part of my data collection for that. Just to explain a bit, I'll be asking you questions about your experiences, roles, and responsibilities as the eldest daughter. Your sharing will be kept confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous in the report. And yaa, this interview will be recorded, is it okay?

Abeni: Yea, sure

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Now, can you introduce yourself? Please tell me your name, age and where you come from?

Abeni: Okay, I'm Abeni, 22 years old. I grew up in Sabah.

Interviewer: 22 years old, Abeni. Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about your family background and also the number of your siblings?

Abeni: My family background...my mom is Malaysian, and my father is African, from Nigeria, but I grew up in Sabah. I grew up in a nuclear family eh no, non-nuclear family, meaning my grandparents were around, and my aunty. So while I was growing up, I had my grandma, my grandpa, my aunty, my mom, and then my cousin, my brother. That's when I was a kid, but now...it's my mom, my two brothers and my sister.

Interviewer: Two brothers and one sister?

Abeni: Yeah yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you describe your role in the family as the eldest daughter?

Abeni: Um, I'm not sure because even though I'm the oldest sister, we have a cousin...my cousin is basically like the older brother in the dynamic, so they mostly look up to him. But academically...I guess my brother looks up to me because I have better grades than my cousin. But if I had to say my role...I would say I was a caretaker. My siblings and I have a big age gap. The closest to me is 6 years apart, now he is 16. When we were kids, I used to take care of him a lot lah like I gave him food, kasi mandi him, bawa him to play. But now we don't live together anymore, so he yang jaga my younger siblings. But during our childhood, I yang took care of him. So yes, my role was like caretaker of my younger siblings.

Interviewer: Oh okay, I see. What specific roles and responsibilities do you take as the eldest daughter in your family?

Abeni: Um, I did take care of my siblings. I guess I'm more like the...I don't know if this is a role but I'm like the one who makes everyone laugh, like the cheerful one. So if anything happens, I'm the one who hypes everyone up, makes everyone happy. I would say I'm the jokester.

Interviewer: Oh, is it like a mood maker in the family?

Abeni: Yeah yeah, mood maker hehe.

Interviewer: Okay. So how do these roles and responsibilities impact your daily life?

Abeni: Well, as I said, I did act like a caretaker. Some people um my friends lah, say I have a nurturing personality. Like when I talk to them, they say I sound like their mom, hahaha. And with my family, I'm always playing and laughing. Like I said, the jokester.

Interviewer: Oh I see, ada pressure tak?

Abeni: Pressure...um, even though I'm the eldest daughter, I would say my brother is more like the role model for my younger siblings because they grew up with him. But I do get compared lah. My mom always tells me I have to do better because my siblings are watching me. She'll say things like "Abe has to be good," can't do this, can't do that.

Interviewer: Oh, macam ada high expectation lah?

Abeni: Yeah, expectation. But not constantly lah. She doesn't say it, but I can feel it.

Interviewer: Oh faham. Have you experienced challenges balancing your responsibilities as eldest daughter with other aspects of your life?

Abeni: Well, in university...not really lah. But when I was a kid, I had to take care of my younger brother. Sometimes I wanted to go outside and play with friends, and even though he was really small like 3 or 4 years old like that, I still bawa him with me to play. So it was okay. Even with the big age gap, I had my cousin helping too. Um, responsibilities at home...like cleaning the house...everyone did that. It was fair. So I would say no, I didn't really have trouble balancing.

Interviewer: Okay Abeni, I see. Okay, next, in what ways do cultural or traditional values in your family shape your roles and responsibilities?

Abeni: Oh, I would say- because I'm a girl, right? So growing up, I noticed things like cuci kasut for example, I had to wash mine and even my cousin punya. At that time, my grandma helped him wash his, but I had to do myself. Also, ironing our baju, I had to learn since darjah 3 but my brother already Form 1 still my mom yang tolong him iron. Even now, my mom still washes my younger brother's shoes, but I had to do mine when I was like really young. So yeah, as a girl and also the eldest lah, I was told to learn all the cleaning stuff and tolong others too.

Interviewer: Oh I see. Do you feel like this is unfair?

Abeni: Yeah, I would say it's unfair. Like with my cousin, it's understandable lah since we have different parents. But with my brother...I felt it was really unfair. My mom still helps him wash everything even though he is older now. I had to do all those things early. So yeah, tak puas hati la, but what to say...have to do lah.

Interviewer: Abeni has younger sister, right?

Abeni: Yeah, but she's 7 years old, my brother is 16, the other one is 8, and then my sister is 7. So yeah, still small.

Interviewer: Oh I see. How has fulfilling your roles as the eldest daughter impacted you emotionally or mentally?

Abeni: Hm...I would say it makes me more mature because I feel like I had to grow up faster than everyone else. Even like that...I like it though. I'm glad I'm the eldest daughter because if not, I think my personality wouldn't be the same. I had challenge like when my mom told

me to go register for school, we- I had to do it myself. So I was taught to be more independent compared to my siblings. My mom still helps them with things now. So yeah, it helped me mature.

Interviewer: Okay okay I see. Can you describe a situation where being the eldest daughter brought you a sense of accomplishment?

Abeni: Hm...what I can think of now is...when I was really young like 8 years old, I had to take care of my brother that like just 2. I changed his diapers and all. I was proud of that lah because even though I was like young, I knew how to take care of someone younger than me. Until now...I know how to handle kids. I don't baby them hahaha, I talk to them normally like adult. I think that's why kids like to talk and play with me.

Interviewer: Okay Abeni. Have there been moments when the pressure of being an eldest daughter negatively affected your well-being?

Abeni: Um...to be honest, I wouldn't say so. My family doesn't pressure me too much. There are expectations to be a role model, but mostly...no, I wouldn't say it negatively affected me.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the overall impact of your role as an eldest daughter, both positively and negatively on your mental health and personal development?

Abeni: Hm, I would say both good and bad lah. My mom raised us differently and I was raised the strictest. Everything had to be perfect like can't do this, can't do that...but with my brother, my mom was more chill, not so strict. The youngest one lagi chill. So growing up...was a bit struggle lah because seeing that difference made me feel jealous. But now, I'm already an adult, so my mom treats me like an adult too, so now it's okay.

Interviewer: Alright Abeni. Do you have any advice for other eldest daughters that facing similar responsibilities?

Abeni: Aa...I would say just make it chill. It may be difficult, but it will all be worth it because it's all a journey. When you are an adult already, you might not have to face it anymore. So... stay strong.

Interviewer: Okay, that's all. Thank you, Abeni!

Abeni: Alright, welcome.

Participant 2: Sara

Age: 22

Origin: Bau, Sarawak

Interviewer Type: Semi-structured, qualitative interview

Date: 3/4/2025

Duration:

Interviewer: Hi, sebelum kita mula, saya nak inform dulu yang saya sedang buat FYP saya, topik saya ialah “Exploring the Challenges Faced by Eldest Daughters”. So dalam kajian ni, saya nak lebih memahami pengalaman sebenar anak perempuan sulung like apa cabaran mereka, dan juga kesan emosi atau mental dari tanggungjawab itu. Saya nak maklumkan juga, perbualan kit ani akan dirakam untuk tujuan kajian je, dan identity kamu akan dirahsiakan. Semua jawapan kamu akan digunakan untuk tujuan akademik saja dan tiada sesiapa akan tahu siapa kamu. Boleh?

Sara: Boleh, saya okay je.

Interviewer: Alright. Okay kita start. Saya Graty, pelajar kaunseling di UNIMAS. Boleh tak kamu memperkenalkan diri? Nama, umur, asal dari mana...

Sara: Okay...nama just panggil Sara, umur 22, asal dari Bau. Lepas saya graduate dari IPS dulu, saya terus kerja...sekarang saya kerja sebagai pembantu akauntan di Emart.

Interviewer: Okay Sara, boleh tak kamu ceritakan sikit tentang latar belakang keluarga kamu, macam bilangan adik-beradik, atau suasana dalam keluarga?

Sara: Um, saya 2 orang adik lelaki je. Ayah saya...dia kerja sebagai petani, mak saya jurujual. Saya sekarang ni kerja lah...sebab lepas habis belajar saya tak sambung, terus kerja je. Adik saya, dia dah graduate Form 6, so tengah nak apply masuk U lah and sorang lagi Form 3. Dalam rumah tu...hm, okay la.

Interviewer: Oh, okay okay. So, macam mana kamu gambarkan peranan kamu dalam keluarga sebagai anak perempuan sulung?

Sara: Hm...bagi saya lah kan, sebagai anak sulung ni...saya macam tulang belakang keluarga jugalah. Selain kerja, saya buat kerja rumah juga...macam masak, menyapu...semua tu biasa

lah, sebab dah terbiasa. Kadang-kadang macam semua benda kena saya urus. Tapi...yalah, siapa lagi kalau bukan saya yang pergi buat.

Interviewer: Apa peranan atau tanggungjawab khas yang kamu rasa betul-betul kamu kena pikul sebagai anak perempuan sulung?

Sara: Err...saya kena pastikan keperluan rumah tu cukup lah...macam barang dapur, sabun, semua lah. Kadang-kadang mak tak sempat nak pegi beli so saya lah yang akan tolong.

Interviewer: Oh faham. Macam mana peranan dan tanggungjawab tu semua bagi kesan pada rutin harian atau hidup kamu?

Sara: Haa...kadang susah lah nak focus masa kerja. Fikiran saya asyik fikir pasal rumah, ada barang cukup ke, adik dah makan ke belum...benda-benda kecil pun boleh buat stress tau. Bila dah stress, kerja pun jadi tak smooth sangat lah.

Interviewer: Pernah tak rasa susah nak seimbangkan antara tanggungjawab anak sulung dengan kerja atau masa untuk diri sendiri?

Sara: Eh pernah! Saya kena fikir macam mana nak bahagi duit, contoh lah, untuk diri sendiri, untuk rumah...kadang-kadang tu saya tak beli barang yang saya nak sebab fikir keluarga dulu. Macam...priority saya tu bukan diri sendiri, tapi family saya.

Interviewer: Harapan atau ekspektasi dari keluarga...ada tak yang awak rasa makin menambah tekanan tu?

Sara: Hm ya...sebab saya rasa saya kena letak keperluan family dulu dari apa yang saya nak. Kadang saya nak berehat pun rasa bersalah, sebab macam...eh, patut tolong mak, patut buat kerja rumah. Sebab mostly diorang expect saya yang akan buat semua tu sebab yalah, anak sulung kan, mestilah kena buat semua tu tanpa disuruh. Sebab saya tau, kalau saya tak buat, memang takda orang yang akan buat, tak pun saya akan kena marah.

Interviewer: Oh faham. Macam mana dengan nilai budaya atau traditional dalam keluarga? Ada tak yang mempengaruhi peranan dan tanggungjawab kamu sebagai perempuan?

Sara: Oh ya, memang dari rumah lagi dah biasa perempuan kena buat kerja rumah. Dari kecil dah dilatih...so benda tu jadi macam habit lah. Tapi saya rasa benda tu ajar saya jadi bertanggungjawab juga lah. Bila saya tinggal sendiri nanti pun, saya tahu nak urus diri.

Interviewer: Okay Sara, sekarang saya nak tanya, sepanjang kamu jadi anak sulung ni, ada tak kesan emosi atau mental yang kamu rasa?

Sara: Hm...saya biasa buat semua benda tanpa mengeluh. Tapi jujur lah...kadang penat juga. Emosi, emosi terganggu juga. Tapi...bila tengok family happy, macam hilang sikit beban tu. Bila mereka happy, saya pun happy. Tapi tu lah, tak boleh lah nak cakap saya penat or stress kalau disuruh, sebab saya tau mak bapa saya akan tegur saya.

Interviewer: Oh faham sangat Sara. Pernah tak jadi satu situasi yang buat kamu rasa bangga jadi anak sulung?

Sara: Pernah, masa saya bawa family makan luar, belanja mereka semua makan sedap...atau belikan barang yang mereka nak. Saya rasa puas hati sangat lah masa tu. Rasa macam, "yes...I can do something for them."

Interviewer: Tapi dalam masa yang sama, ada tak masa-masa yang tekanan tu beri kesan buruk pada diri sendiri?

Sara: Hm...ada la juga. Kadang-kadang saya penat sampai boleh hilang sabar. Tapi saya diam je...sebab saya fikir, mereka tu family saya. Takkan la saya nak marah-marah kan...so, saya banyak pendam. Kena sabar je.

Interviewer: Dari pengalaman kamu, cabaran-cabaran ni ada tak bantu kamu berkembang secara peribadi?

Sara: Ada la juga. Saya rasa saya lebih berdikari sekarang. Saya tahu tanggungjawab saya...saya tahu apa yang saya kena buat...rasa lebih kuat...

Interviewer: Okay, kalau tengok secara keseluruhan, apa kesan jadi anak perempuan sulung ni, dari segi baik dan buruk terhadap kesihatan mental dan perkembangan diri kamu?

Sara: Okay, kesan baiknya...saya jadi lebih matang, lebih faham hidup. Tak cepat mengeluh, lebih banyak berusaha. Kalau kesan buruk...maybe saya cepat penat? Cepat overwhelmed. Banyak benda kena fikir. Kadang tu hilang sabar...sebab semua benda saya kena fikir sendiri.

Interviewer: Alright Sara, so sebelum kita tamatkan sesi ni, ada apa-apa tak yang kamu nak tambah tentang pengalaman kamu sebagai anak perempuan sulung?

Sara: Hm...rasanya takda kot. Saya rasa saya dah Kongsi semua tadi.

Interviewer: Last question ya, kamu ada tak nasihat untuk anak sulung yang lain yang mungkin sedang lalui benda yang sama?

Sara: Okay, jangan selalu mengeluh. Cari cara nak bahagiakan keluarga...belajar rajin-rajin, dapat kerja bagus...supaya kita boleh tolong mak bapa kita. Haa...itu jak lah hahaha.

Interviewer: Okay thank you Sara sebab sudi menjawab soalan saya!

Sara: Sama-sama. Good luck FYP!

Participant 3: Brenda

Age: 23

Origin: Serian, Sarawak

Interviewer Type: Semi-structured, qualitative interview

Date: 13/4/2025

Duration:

Interviewer: Okay Hi, saya Graty, pelajar kaunseling di UNIMAS, sebelum kita mula, saya nak bagitau dulu yang saya sedang buat FYP saya, iaitu “Exploring the Challenges Faced by Eldest Daughters”. So perlu explore pengalaman sebenar anak perempuan sulung like apa cabaran mereka, dan juga kesan emosi atau mental dari tanggungjawab yang ada. Untuk pengetahuan, perbualan kita ni akan dirakam untuk tujuan kajian ya, dan identity kamu akan dirahsiakan. Semua jawapan kamu akan digunakan untuk tujuan akademik saja dan tiada sesiapa akan tahu siapa kamu, jangan risau. Okay tak?

Brenda: Okay, boleh.

Interviewer: Okay, boleh kamu memperkenalkan diri?

Brenda: Nama saya Brenda, umur 23 tahun, asal Serian.

Interviewer: Okay Brenda, boleh kamu cerita sikit pasal latar belakang keluarga? Macam berapa orang adik-beradik, kerja mak ayah, and macam mana hubungan dalam family...

Brenda: Umm... saya ada dua orang adik perempuan. Mak saya suri rumah, and ayah saya kerja sebagai security kat sekolah. Saya dengan adik yang nombor dua tu sama-sama kerja sekarang, yang bongsu masih sekolah. Keluarga saya... boleh dikatakan agak strict jugalah, and jenis traditional.

Interviewer: Oh, okay okay. So, macam mana Brenda gambarkan peranan you dalam keluarga sebagai anak perempuan sulung?

Brenda: As anak sulung, I rasa saya ni macam tulang belakang family. Keluarga saya memang depend on saya, especially kalau nak pergi mana-mana. Contohnya, saya la yang selalu hantar dan ambil adik dari sekolah or kerja. Nak balik kampung pun saya yang drive. Tapi kalau nak cakap saya ni role model tu... saya rasa taklah sangat, sebab saya pun banyak kekurangan. Tapi saya boleh kata yang saya ni seorang kakak yang cuba bantu dari segi kewangan, hal-hal dalam

rumah... selagi mampu, saya akan tolong. Kadang-kadang kalau ada masa lapang, saya jaga anak sepupu saya, and tolong mak kat rumah jugak.

Interviewer: Okay, so boleh tak cerita sikit apa peranan dan tanggungjawab khusus you sebagai anak perempuan sulung?

Brenda: Selalunya saya la yang akan beli barang dapur, hantar and jemput adik balik sekolah or kerja. Dekat rumah, saya memang akan tolong mak masak, kemas rumah... kiranya tu memang dah jadi tanggungjawab saya lah kat rumah.

Interviewer: So peranan ni semua ada tak beri kesan kepada rutin harian Brenda?

Brenda: Hmm... kalau kesan tu, maybe tak banyak sangat la. Tapi saya pernah rasa macam kurang masa untuk diri sendiri. Tapi dari satu sisi, saya rasa saya dah jadi lebih berdikari sebab keluarga saya memang bergantung kat saya. Kadang-kadang saya teringin juga nak pergi jauh-jauh tenangkan diri, tapi saya tetap akan fikirkan keluarga saya dulu sebelum diri sendiri. Lepas saya dapat kerja ni pun, rutin saya memang berubah. Sebelum ni stay rumah lepas STPM je, tapi sekarang dah kerja, tanggungjawab tu rasa macam berganda sikit.

Interviewer: Pernah tak rasa susah nak balance antara tanggungjawab sebagai anak sulung dengan kerja or personal time?

Brenda: Hmm... jujurnya tak sangat sebab mak saya jenis supportive. Kalau saya stress pun, mostly sebab kerja, sebab saya fikir nak bantu ringankan beban family. Tapi memang la ada masa saya rasa tak cukup untuk diri sendiri. Sebagai anak sulung perempuan, keluar rumah pun saya kena update mak selalu, itu biasa. Kadang-kadang saya nak juga enjoy macam kawan-kawan lain, tapi saya ada tanggungjawab and saya taknak kecewakan mak ayah saya.

Interviewer: Macam mana dengan harapan keluarga? Ada tak tambah cabaran kepada Brenda?

Brenda: Yes, ada juga. Walaupun mak ayah saya supportive, kadang-kadang saya rasa rendah diri bila tengok kawan sambung degree. Saya risau kalau saya sambung belajar, siapa nak gantikan saya hantar family pergi mana-mana? Saya pernah dapat tawaran masuk universiti, tapi saya dilema sangat masa tu. Kalau saya sambung, saya rasa bersalah guna duit mak ayah, and menyusahkan ayah nak ambik alih tugas saya. Last sekali, saya tanya pendapat mereka, and diorang cakap ikut apa yang saya rasa selesa. So saya putuskan untuk kerja je, walaupun dalam hati ada keinginan nak sambung belajar juga.

Interviewer: Hmm... faham. So macam mana nilai budaya atau tradisi keluarga membentuk tanggungjawab Brenda?

Brenda: Sebab dalam family semua perempuan, dari kecil dah diajar buat kerja rumah. Anak sulung pula macam dijadikan contoh untuk adik-adik. So saya kena jadi orang yang bertanggungjawab la.

Interviewer: Okay Brenda, macam mana semua tanggungjawab ni bagi kesan kat emosi atau mental you?

Brenda: Kadang-kadang, saya rasa bersalah sangat kalau terbuat salah atau lawan cakap mak ayah. Sebab saya rasa as kakak sulung, saya kena bagi contoh yang baik. Kalau buat silap, saya akan fikir lama benda tu. Kerja pun kadang-kadang stress sebab fikir pasal duit.

Interviewer: Pernah tak ada situasi yang buat Brenda rasa bangga jadi anak sulung?

Brenda: Ha'ah, masa saya dapat lesen kereta, saya bawa family pergi jalan-jalan makan angin. Lepas tu, bila saya belanja mereka benda yang mereka suka, saya rasa puas hati dan bangga sangat.

Interviewer: Tapi ada tak waktu bila tekanan sebagai anak sulung tu bagi kesan negatif?

Brenda: Ada juga. Terutama bila saudara mara tanya saya dah kerja ke, sambung belajar ke. Kalau tak macam mereka harap, mereka akan kritik saya macam saya takde masa depan. Saya jadi stress and takut tak dapat buat mak ayah bangga.

Interviewer: Tapi dari pengalaman Brenda, semua cabaran ni ada bantu perkembangan peribadi tak?

Brenda: Ya, definitely. Saya jadi lebih berdikari, tahu rasa tanggungjawab, lebih matang dalam buat keputusan.

Interviewer: Overall, macam mana Brenda nampak kesan baik dan buruk peranan sebagai anak sulung ni?

Brenda: Kesan baik, saya jadi lebih bertanggungjawab, berdikari, and tak bergantung kat orang lain. Tapi yang buruk tu, saya rasa terbeban dengan ekspektasi orang terhadap saya. Rasa macam kena sentiasa buat yang terbaik supaya mak ayah saya bangga.

Interviewer: Okay Brenda, ada apa-apa lagi yang you nak kongsi tentang pengalaman jadi anak sulung?

Brenda: Hmm... takde dah kot. Hahahaha

Interviewer: Kalau macam tu, ada tak nasihat untuk anak sulung perempuan lain yang hadapi tanggungjawab macam you?

Brenda: Bagi saya, tak salah kalau nak meluah. Jangan pendam, nanti memakan diri sendiri. Kalau rasa berat, cakap je dengan orang yang kita percaya. Mental and emosi kita pun penting, haa..itu lah.

Interviewer: Okay thank you Brenda sebab sudi menjawab soalan saya!

Brenda: Okay, welcome.

Participant 4: Jash

Age: 23

Origin: Johor

Interviewer Type: Semi-structured, qualitative interview

Date: 20/4/2025

Duration:

Interviewer: Hi, so, um, just to let you know, this interview is for my FYP and I'm currently doing research on "Exploring the Challenges Faced by Eldest Daughters", and I'm focusing on, you know, like, how family roles and expectations can affect eldest daughters emotionally, mentally, and... generally in life. Everything you share will be confidential and used only for academic purposes. And this interview session will be voice recording. Is this fine for you?

Jash: Yeah yeah, no worries. I'm okay with that.

Interviewer: Alright then, uh, let me just start by introducing myself properly. I'm Graty, a counselling student from UNIMAS. Can you introduce yourself? Like your name, age, and your origin.

Jash: Okay hi Graty, I'm Jash, 23 years old and I'm from Johor.

Interviewer: Okay, Jash. So first question... Can you tell me a little about your family? Like, how many siblings you have, what's the family vibe like?

Jash: Umm, okay... so I just have 2 younger sisters. We're pretty close la. My family... hmm, I'd say we have like, a strong bond. We're not super traditional or strict, but we do respect each other a lot. Like, if there's a problem, we talk about it, no shouting or cold war kinda thing. My parents are the ones who make decisions, of course, but they still listen to our opinions lah. It's quite balanced, I'd say.

Interviewer: So how would you describe your role in the family, as the eldest daughter?

Jash: I'd say I'm like... the protector ah. Like, if anything happens, I'll be the first to step in. Especially for my sisters, I always feel like I need to jaga them, you know? Make sure they are safe, not stressed, all that. My parents also kinda see me as their right hand? Like they'll ask me stuff when making decisions, or like, they just trust me more la, I guess. I always try to be strong for everyone. It's like... if I break down, then who's gonna keep things together kan?

Interviewer: Yeah, I get that. So like, what are the specific roles and responsibilities you handle as the eldest?

Jash: Hmm... I think I kinda play the second adult role, haha. Like, if my parents are stressed, I'll step in. I guide my sister a lot... whether it's school, personal stuff, or even emotional things. I try to be the example, like, okay I need to behave, do well in studies, control my attitude. Then help around the house also, help my parents make decisions lah... macam, they trust my opinion, you know? Sometimes even if I don't feel like deciding, I have to.

Interviewer: And how does all this impact your daily life or your routines?

Jash: Actually, I think it makes me more... matured lah. Like, I plan my time better, I don't suka-suka waste time. I don't open up to many people outside 'cause I feel like my family already understands me best. So emotionally pun, I kinda filter what I wanna say. But because of that, I also become more chill, like I know when to react, when not to. Patience pun meningkat, haha.

Interviewer: Okay Jash. Have you ever had a hard time juggling these responsibilities with, like, your own personal time or studies?

Jash: Hmm... honestly, not really. I think because my family supports me a lot, so it never feels like too much. I know my limits lah. Kalau penat, I'll rest.

Interviewer: Oh, that's really good to hear. What about family expectations? Do you feel they add pressure or challenges?

Jash: Oh yes, definitely. It's not like they force me or what, but it's like this silent pressure, you know? Like, I must always be okay. Be strong. Be positive. Even when I'm tired or sad or just... not okay inside. But I don't show it la, 'cause I don't wanna make them worry. I'd rather keep things happy around them. So sometimes I hide my feelings... just to jaga the mood. But yeah, it gets tiring, emotionally.

Interviewer: I can totally relate. How about like, culture or traditions, do they play a role in shaping your responsibilities?

Jash: Hmm... yeah, like we're taught to always respect people. Doesn't matter if they're older or younger, just respect. And like, don't simply say things. Be careful with your words, la. My parents always tell me, if you wanna be listened to, you gotta listen first. So I apply that la in my role. It makes me more understanding, I guess.

Interviewer: I see. Emotionally or mentally, do you feel like being the eldest daughter has affected you?

Jash: I think it's made me stronger, honestly. Like, I don't break down easily. I know how to calm myself, take a step back. I don't depend on others for emotional support so much. I can handle my own stuff, la. I've become like... my own therapist, in a way, haha.

Interviewer: Can you remember any moment where you felt proud being the eldest?

Jash: Hmm... oh! There was one time my parents were going through financial problems, and I helped calm them down. I was like, "It's okay, we'll get through this." I also helped my sister with school stuff at the same time. I bought groceries, belanja them dinner even. It felt really good lah, like I'm capable of helping.

Interviewer: But on the flip side, have there been moments where being the eldest really got to you, like, negatively?

Jash: Actually... nope. Like, yeah it's hard sometimes, but not to the point I break down or anything. I think I've built myself to be stable emotionally. Kalau ada pun, I take a break, chill.

Interviewer: So overall, how do you think these challenges have contributed to your personal growth?

Jash: I'm way more independent now. I know how to manage emotions, set boundaries when needed, and I always think twice before I react. I listen better too. I guess all this shaped me into someone more grounded and emotionally mature.

Interviewer: how do you see the overall impact of being the eldest daughter? Both the good and the not so good?

Jash: Hmm... the good part is, I became stronger, more responsible, and I care more about people's feelings. The bad part... maybe just the pressure lah. Sometimes it's too much, especially when I have my own things going on. But overall, it's made me who I am. So I'm grateful, even if it's not always easy.

Interviewer: Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to share?

Jash: Nah, I think no...hahaha.

Interviewer: Or Jash has any advice for other eldest daughters going through similar things?

Jash: Yeahh... don't forget to take care of yourself. Like seriously. Being strong doesn't mean you have to do everything alone. It's okay to rest. Set boundaries. Be firm but also be kind. And always, always try to stay grounded. Don't act out of anger, but from understanding. That helps a lot.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you Jash for your cooperation!

Jash: Okay, my pleasure.

Participant 5: Genia

Age: 23

Origin: Kuching, Sarawak

Interviewer Type: Semi-structured, qualitative interview

Date: 22/4/2025

Duration:

Interviewer: Hi, Terima kasih sebab sudi luangkan masa untuk sesi interview ni. Um, saya Graty, pelajar dalam bidang Kaunseling. Seperti yang diterangkan sebelum ini, sesi ini adalah sebahagian daripada penyelidikan saya yang bertajuk *"Exploring the Challenges Faced by Eldest Daughters."* Temubual ini dirakam dan dijamin sulit. So, segala maklumat yang dikongsi hanya untuk tujuan akademik dan tidak akan didedahkan kepada pihak luar. Sebelum kita mula, adakah kamu bersetuju untuk meneruskan sesi interview ni?

Genia: Ya, saya setuju.

Interviewer: Sebelum kita masuk ke soalan, boleh awak perkenalkan diri sikit?

Genia: okay. Hai, nama saya Genia, umur 23 tahun dan berasal dari Kuching, Sarawak. Sekarang saya belajar di IPG... dalam bidang pendidikan. Err... sekarang saya dalam tahun akhir pengajian dan... ya, saya anak sulung dalam keluarga saya.

Interviewer: Bolehkah kamu ceritakan sedikit tentang keluarga kamu? Contohnya, bilangan adik-beradik atau dinamika dalam keluarga?

Genia: Saya berasal daripada sebuah keluarga kecil... yang sangat rapat sebenarnya. Saya anak sulung daripada 3 beradik. Saya ada dua orang adik... no 2 perempuan, bongsu lelaki. Mak saya kerja dekat shopping mall, dan bapa saya sekarang... um... dah tak bekerja. Walaupun keluarga kami sederhana, tapi kami sangat pentingkan kasih sayang dan sokongan antara satu sama lain.

Interviewer: Okay. Bagaimana pula Genia gambarkan peranan awak dalam keluarga sebagai anak perempuan sulung?

Genia: Saya rasa, um... sebagai anak sulung, saya jadi contoh untuk adik saya... dan kadang-kadang juga kepada sepupu atau saudara mara lain. Saya selalu dilibatkan dalam buat

keputusan keluarga. Kadang-kadang jadi orang tengah juga, eh... penghubung antara ahli keluarga. Kalau ada apa-apa isu, mak saya selalu bincang dengan saya dulu.

Interviewer: Apakah tanggungjawab khusus yang Genia pikul sebagai anak sulung?

Genia: Hmm... saya banyak tolong mak buat kerja rumah. Kalau mak kerja shift petang, saya akan masak dan kemas rumah. Kadang-kadang kena jaga hal-hal kecil macam beli barang dapur. Um... sejak dah besar ni, saya pun kena tolong buat keputusan... hal kewangan kecil pun kadang-kadang saya urus. Selain tu, saya bagi sokongan emosi jugalah kepada adik.

Interviewer: Peranan ni beri kesan macam mana kepada rutin harian Genia?

Genia: Kadang-kadang rasa penatlah. Bila balik dari kuliah, banyak assignment, tapi still kena masak ke... um... kemas rumah ke. Kalau mak letih, saya memang akan tolong. Tapi dalam masa sama, saya pun rasa letih. Jadi ada masa saya rasa tertekan, tapi saya fikir... itu dah memang peranan saya.

Interviewer: Pernah tak rasa susah nak imbangkan tanggungjawab ni dengan benda lain macam pelajaran atau masa untuk diri?

Genia: Pernah... memang selalu juga. Bila ada banyak kerja kursus, tapi dalam masa sama, um... mak saya perlukan bantuan... saya rasa macam tersepit. Kadang-kadang terpaksa korbankan masa sendiri. Tapi... saya sayang keluarga saya, jadi saya tetap buat juga.

Interviewer: Bagaimana pula dengan harapan keluarga? Adakah ia menambah beban?

Genia: Ya... mereka memang banyak harap saya jadi contoh. Harapan tu kadang-kadang buat saya rasa... eh, macam saya tak boleh buat silap. Kena sentiasa betul, sentiasa berjaya. Kadang-kadang rasa takut kalau tak dapat capai apa yang mereka harapkan. Tapi saya tahu mereka percayakan saya.

Interviewer: Adakah nilai budaya atau tradisi mempengaruhi peranan Genia?

Genia: Memang ada. Dalam keluarga kami, perempuan biasanya yang lebih banyak buat kerja rumah. Jadi saya dari kecil memang dah biasa. Tapi kadang-kadang rasa juga macam unfair bila tanggungjawab tu tak dikongsi sama rata.

Interviewer: Genia rasa macam mana dari segi emosi atau mental bila mainkan peranan sebagai anak sulung?

Genia: Kadang-kadang rasa sangat penat. Um... saya kena kuat, walaupun saya sendiri pun perlukan sokongan. Saya cepat matang, belajar kawal emosi, tapi... ada juga hari yang saya rasa sangat down. Tapi saya bersyukur sebab adik saya selalu ada untuk saya.

Interviewer: Ada tak satu situasi yang buat Genia rasa bangga jadi anak sulung?

Genia: I think bila saya berjaya sambung belajar dalam bidang pendidikan... itu memang impian mak ayah saya. Saya rasa macam saya dah capai sesuatu yang besar bukan saja untuk diri sendiri, tapi juga sebagai hadiah untuk mak ayah saya. Itu satu kebanggaan terbesar saya.

Interviewer: Pernah tak tekanan tu beri kesan buruk?

Genia: Hmm...pernah la juga. Saya pernah menangis sorang-sorang sebab rasa terlalu tertekan. Rasa macam saya kena jadi sempurna sangat. Tapi lama-lama saya belajar juga untuk release tekanan. Kadang-kadang saya hiking, kadang saya keluar kejap, atau sekadar duduk dan tenangkan diri. Tapi, ya... memang ada masa susah.

Interviewer: Kalau ikut pengalaman Genia, macam mana cabaran ni bantu dalam perkembangan peribadi?

Genia: Boleh dikatakan saya jadi lebih berdikari... lebih matang dari umur sebenar. Saya pandai urus masa, dan lebih peka dengan emosi orang lain. Saya rasa semua ni bantu saya jadi versi diri saya yang lebih kuat dan sabar.

Interviewer: Secara keseluruhan, Genia rasa apa kesan peranan sebagai anak sulung pada kesihatan mental dan perkembangan peribadi?

Genia: Kesan baiknya, saya rasa saya jadi lebih bertanggungjawab, lebih disiplin. Saya kuat dari segi mental. Tapi kesan buruk... kadang-kadang saya overthinking. Susah nak berehat. Saya cepat letih dan rasa macam sentiasa kena buat sesuatu. Tapi saya cuba jaga keseimbangan.

Interviewer: Okay, ada apa-apa lagi yang Genia nak kongsikan tentang pengalaman jadi anak perempuan sulung?

Genia: Um... saya rasa walaupun jadi anak sulung tu susah, tapi ia banyak ajar saya. Saya banyak belajar tentang tanggungjawab, dan saya bersyukur ada keluarga yang menyokong walaupun saya jarang cerita masalah saya. Tapi bila saya cerita pun sikit, mereka faham dan tolong juga.

Interviewer: Kalau ada nasihat untuk anak sulung lain, apa yang Genia nak cakap?

Genia: Haa... saya nak cakap, jaga diri sendiri dulu. Kita selalu fikir pasal orang lain, tapi lupa kita pun perlukan rehat. Kalau penat, rehat. Kalau rasa tak mampu, minta tolong. Itu bukan lemah... itu manusiawi. Jangan rasa bersalah nak ambil masa untuk diri sendiri. Jadilah anak sulung yang bahagia, bukan yang terbeban je.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you so much Genia sebab sudi meluangkan masa!

Genia: Terima kasih juga. Good luck FYP!

Participant 6: Elsie

Age: 25

Origin: Kuching, Sarawak

Interviewer Type: Semi-structured, qualitative interview

Date: 29/4/2025

Duration:

Interviewer: Hi! Before we begin the interview, I just want to let you know that this session is part of my FYP, titled "*Exploring the Challenges Faced by Eldest Daughters.*" The purpose of this study is to understand the emotional and psychological impact of being the eldest daughter in a family, especially in terms of responsibilities and expectations. This interview will be voice-recorded, with your permission, and everything you share will be kept confidential. Is it okay for you?

Elsie: Yup, all good. I'm okay with being recorded.

Interviewer: Okay. Just to start off, I'm Graty, a counselling student from UNIMAS. So before we get into the questions, can you briefly introduce yourself?

Elsie: I'm Elsie, I'm 25 years old and currently working in logistics at Liansin Company. I'm from Kuching, Sarawak.

Interviewer: Okay Elsie, can you tell me a little about your family? Like, how many siblings you have or the family dynamics?

Elsie: So I live with my mom and dad, and I have three younger sisters. So yeah, it's like a house full of girls and me being the big sister.

Interviewer: How would you describe your role in the family as the eldest daughter?

Elsie: Umm... honestly, I'm not sure if I'd call myself a role model to them lah. But I guess... my role is like...someone has to do it. You know? Like, take charge when needed, be the dependable one... I don't always feel like I'm doing enough, but yeah.

Interviewer: Alright. What specific roles and responsibilities do you usually take on as the eldest daughter?

Elsie: Hmm... I think, mainly taking care of my sisters. Especially when my parents are like, not at home, busy working or something. I kinda feel like... like the admin assistant of the family. Always helping with house chores, keeping everything in order, reminding people of stuff...and then, there's the whole thing of like... being the first to go through everything, you know? Like first to go college, first to start working. So sometimes I don't really have anyone to guide me, I just... figure it out as I go or ask my friends.

Interviewer: How do these responsibilities affect your daily life and routines?

Elsie: Wah, a lot honestly. Like, when I was still in college and jobless, I had to wake up early just to do chores before my online class. Sometimes I didn't even focus on class properly. Brain somewhere else. Even now that I'm working, I cover my own expenses 'cause I don't wanna burden my parents. I still help with groceries and other things when I can. It's like... even when I'm not doing anything for them, I'm still thinking about it. Like what needs to be done next. It's tiring, but kind of get used to it. But sometimes I feel it's unfair lah... but I don't want to complain too much either.

Interviewer: I get it. So do you face any challenges balancing all that with your personal time or work?

Elsie: Yes. Back in college I really couldn't focus. Like, physically in class but mentally doing laundry. Now that I'm working, it's better. I still have time to watch shows, chill, read... because I'm naturally a homebody. But in terms of emotional balance...it's hard... I still worry about home a lot even when I'm not there.

Interviewer: How about family expectations? Do they add pressure?

Elsie: Hmm... honestly, my parents never really pushed me. They didn't expect specific grades or anything like that. But I guess I built this mindset like "I must succeed." Maybe to make them proud. Even when I did okay, I still felt like I wasn't doing enough. I feel guilty. You know? Like it's keep tambah tambah tambah.

Interviewer: I feel you. So do cultural or traditional values affect your role in the family?

Elsie: Not really. My parents never said like, "girls must do housework" or anything. It's more of an instinct, I guess? Like, because I'm the eldest, I automatically step into that role. No one asked me to do it, I just did it. Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you think this role has affected you emotionally or mentally?

Elsie: Uhh, I often feel like I can't mess up. Like, people expect me to always have it together, but I don't always do. I worry a lot... like if I made the right choice or if I'm letting them down. Even when I'm enjoying myself, I feel guilty. I'm used to putting others first. Sometimes I even forget what I want.

Interviewer: But have there been any proud moments?

Elsie: Yeah! Like... when I manage to treat them to makan outside. I remember once, I brought them for a nice dinner and paid for everything. They were so happy and surprised. It made all the stress feel kinda worth it lah.

Interviewer: On the other hand, has the pressure ever affected your well-being?

Elsie: Yup. There were times I just... felt like no matter how much I did, it wasn't enough. I got super anxious. I even had trouble sleeping some nights because my mind wouldn't stop. And the guilt...ugh, that one really sticks.

Interviewer: From your experience, do you think these challenges helped you grow?

Elsie: Definitely. I mean... I learned how to be responsible. Multitasking, empathy, being organized. I had to look out for others, and it's- that made me more understanding as a person, even in friendships and relationships. It's like... this role trained me like that lah.

Interviewer: So overall, how do you see the effects, both good and bad of being the eldest daughter on your mental health and development?

Elsie: Hmm... on the bad side, I did feel mentally drained sometimes. Especially handling work stress and some family stuff. Felt like no escape. But the good side is I became tougher la I guess. More mature. I know how to handle stress...so far I'm proud of myself lah.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you like to share about your experience as the eldest daughter?

Elsie: Umm... yeah. Being the eldest isn't easy. You do a lot behind the scenes and most people won't see that. Actually, every child has struggles, not just the eldest. But eldest daughters... we just... learn to carry things quietly, I guess. And if I'm being honest, sometimes I wish I had an older sibling too...

Interviewer: I feel you. Do you have any advice for other eldest daughters out there?

Elsie: To all the eldest daughters, your effort does matter, even when it feels like it doesn't. Please take care of yourself too. Yea, that's all.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you so much, Elsie.

Elsie: Okay, No problem.

Participant 7: Rosanne

Age: 22

Origin: Sabah, Dusun.

Interviewer Type: Semi-structured, qualitative interview

Date: 10/5/2025

Duration:

Interviewer: Hi Rossane, thank you for joining the session today. So sebelum kita start, I'll explain a bit lah about this research. This is actually for my final year project, tajuk dia "*Exploring the Challenges Faced by Eldest Daughters.*" So, I'll be asking you some questions about your experiences as the eldest daughter okay? And also, just nak inform awal-awal, I akan record this session, dengan permission kamu lah, boleh?

Rosanne: Oh okay, sure. No problem.

Interviewer: Alright, thank you! So maybe before kita mula, boleh perkenalkan diri sikit?

Rosanne: Um, okay. Nama saya Rossane, umur 22 tahun. Saya dari Sabah, tapi keluarga saya bukan exactly dari satu tempat lah sebab selalu pindah-pindah, sebab bapa saya tentera. Ayah saya Iban dari Sarawak, mak saya Dusun dari Sabah. Saya ada empat adik-beradik semuanya perempuan. Saya anak sulung, yang kedua sekarang sambung Sains Asasi, yang ketiga baru habis SPM tahun lepas eh tahun ni dan yang bongsu Form 3. Saya sambung degree lah ambik course Psychology.

Interviewer: Okay. So boleh cerita sikit macam mana suasana dalam family? Like family dynamics?

Rosanne: Um... family saya quite chill sebenarnya. Tak macam yang macam typical strict sangat tu. Even though I anak sulung, tapi diorang tak pernah bagi pressure pun. Semua okay je. Macam kalau ada benda nak bincang, memang open lah... kita boleh cakap terus terang. And... macam, walaupun semua perempuan, semua ada own role lah. Tapi tak adalah macam kena betul-betul jadi "kakak sulung kena buat semua" tu... tak sangat.

Interviewer: I see, I see. So selama ni macam mana your experience jadi anak sulung?

Rosanne: Honestly, macam... okay je. Tak rasa berat pun. Sebab kadang-kadang cousin saya pun tolong. So it's not like semua beban atas saya. I mean, ya lah, kadang-kadang kena jaga adik, especially kalau mak kerja. Tapi bukan selalu.

Interviewer: So, macam tanggungjawab tu? Ada tak yang you rasa macam memang tetap-tetap kena buat?

Rosanne: Hmmm... macam... basic je lah. Tolong masak, kemas rumah kalau perlu. Kadang kalau parents tak ada, jaga adik kejap. Tapi tak adalah macam wajib setiap hari. Semua orang contribute sama rata, I rasa.

Interviewer: Macam mana dengan benda-benda besar? Macam urus adik pergi sekolah or bantu buat keputusan?

Rosanne: Hahaha... oh yang tu tak sangat kot. Sebab adik saya semua quite independent juga. Maybe sebab semua perempuan. Diorang pun tak manja sangat. Kalau nak buat keputusan ke apa, mak ayah pun involve semua orang. Saya pun rasa macam equal je dengan adik-adik. Tak ada yang macam "you eldest, you kena buat semua."

Interviewer: Okay, interesting. So macam mana you balance between responsibility and personal time?

Rosanne: Umm... I think boleh la. Sebab saya memang jenis pandai susun masa. Kalau exam week tu maybe kena kurangkan tolong rumah sikit, tapi mak saya faham je. So tak ada pressure lah kat situ.

Interviewer: Ada tak expectation macam kena jadi contoh? Atau compare dengan adik?

Rosanne: Hmmm... macam... not really. Parents saya sangat supportive. Diorang tak compare pun. Kalau adik tak perform ke apa pun, diorang tak salahkan saya. So that's why I said earlier, tak rasa pressure sangat.

Interviewer: So dari segi emosi atau mental, ada apa-apa effect tak jadi anak sulung?

Rosanne: Maybe... jadi matang sikit awal. Sebab macam kena ambil tahu benda yang orang lain mungkin lambat belajar. Tapi I tak rasa macam tertekan sangat. Lebih kepada macam... slowly belajar tanggungjawab tu. Bila ada support system, cousin pun ada tolong, so tak rasa alone.

Interviewer: Okay. Ada tak satu situasi yang buat you rasa proud jadi anak sulung?

Rosanne: Oh... mungkin time parents or adik-adik datang minta nasihat. Bila they listen to me, I rasa macam dihargai lah. Macam, “ohh... diorang percaya I”, haa gitu.

Interviewer: Pernah tak sampai satu tahap rasa overwhelmed?

Rosanne: Ermm... tak sangat lah. Kalau penat tu normal la. Tapi tak sampai tahap burnout ke apa. I think sebab family saya very understanding. Even my dad... dia bukan jenis “you perempuan, you kena buat semua.” So, I think no? If academically I think yeah hahaha.

Interviewer: So, ada tak apa-apa lagi yang you nak share tentang jadi anak sulung ni?

Rosanne: Hmm... I think... just nak cakap not all eldest daughters go through hardship. Some of us okay je. Macam I. Family sangat supportive, so I tak rasa tertekan sangat. Tapi I tahu ada orang lain yang experience berat sikit lah so everyone punya story is different. Itu saja lah.

Interviewer: Yes, betul. Betul. Okay, last question. Any advice untuk anak sulung lain kat luar sana?

Rosanne: Okay, just... jaga diri. Kalau rasa penat, rest. Jangan paksa diri jadi perfect. And kalau ada support system like kawan ke cousin ke...don't be afraid to lean on them. Tak perlu buat semua sendiri sebab kita kan manusia...so, not everyone is perfect.

Interviewer: Alright, thank you so much, Rossane. Really appreciate your time and sharing.

Rosanne: No worries, thank you juga. Best juga dapat cerita-cerita macam ni.