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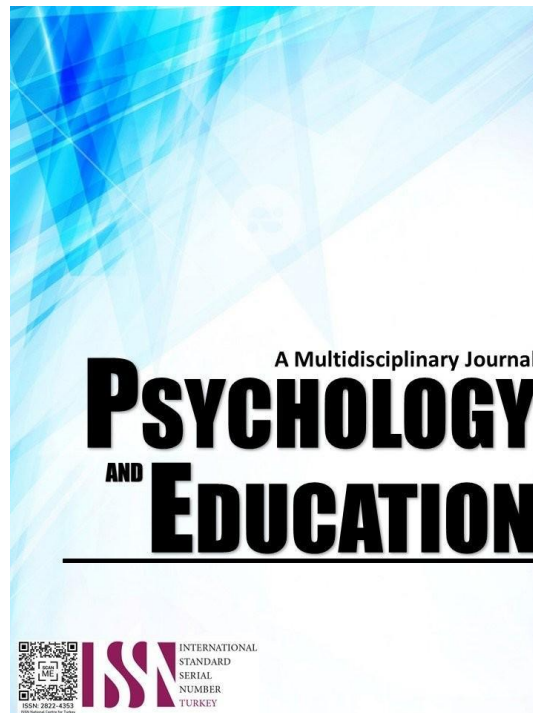
Pasan Ko Ang Daigdig: The Lived Experiences of Youngest Children as First-Degree Holders in their Households

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Abstract

Youngest children often face difficulties when it comes to education that exposes them to different kinds of situations. In the Philippines, education served as a desirable goal for every family. This includes getting a degree and providing for the needs of their household. Therefore, even with the lack of parental investment in education, the youngest children are still inclined to complete their studies. Thus, the primary goal of this research is to scrutinize the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the youngest children as first-degree holders in their households. Utilizing Phenomenological as the research design and employing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), several findings emerged: (1) youngest children's family expectations influenced their perspective on success, especially after being seen as the last hope. (2) The pressure that they got from their family and peers affected them to the point of disregarding their own needs. This caused them to have problems with socialization and understanding their needs. (3) However, the youngest children who are first-degree holders in their families also possess coping mechanisms like entertainment and self-care to ease their challenges.

Keywords: *youngest children, first-degree holder, education, birth order, psychology*

Introduction

In a household, education serves as a cultural goal, which is why Filipinos satisfy this kind of goal by employing a socially acceptable manner, for as by completing formal education and receiving a degree (Palma, 2021). Further, the eldest children are considered the backbone of the family in achieving outstanding academic accomplishments compared to the middle and youngest children (McNally & Yuen, 2015). Therefore, Toutkoushian et al. (2021) stated that the youngest child in a household often feels a great deal of pressure. Consequently, during their time in college, they most likely confront challenges such as financial instability and pressure even after receiving familial support and being ready for college (Falcon, 2015). Despite this readiness, Yilmaz and Kiran (2023) pronounced that the youngest child has no competence in career decisions compared to the eldest. It is for this reason that older children get more parental investment in education than younger children (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2023). Therefore, an investigation by Lwiza et al. (2023) stated that the eldest children generally attain higher educational outcomes than the youngest because of the intensive resource allocation. Nonetheless, the youngest children tend to drop their education less than the eldest, which highlights why the youngest children are the first to get a degree in their household (Mitra & Sengupta, 2023).

Moreover, students often select a path for practicality. This study was validated by Matkovic and Kogan (2014), who stated that diploma and degree holders often garner the most significant edges when finding and attempting to enter a job. In addition, they also stated that job mismatch can also be the cause of unemployment for unemployable degree holders. Therefore, within the first and second six months after graduation, the majority of graduates enter a specific job profession because it is easier to be admitted than others (Campbell, 2018).

However, the responsibility of these graduates is heightened and they often experience more difficulties and challenges than other graduates (Hutson et al., 2022). Furthermore, these students are expected to boost their assistance to their families because they are burdened with familial and financial obligations (Johnson, 2008). On the other hand, Medamarandawela and Weerakotuwa (2021) stated that others believe they are not burdened by family matters, as their parents encourage them to achieve their career goals.

A vast number of studies focus on firstborns or eldest rather than youngest children. Therefore, this study proffered a platform for the youngest and discerned their lives as first-degree holders in their households. Furthermore, this study aimed to investigate their lived experiences and the current status of their mental well-being such as the factors affecting their decisions in education, career, and socialization. With positive psychology as the foundation, it became easier for this study to identify everything that encompassed the experiences of people.

Concepts including positive experiences, strengths, human flourishing, and life satisfaction will be tackled (Lambert, 2015). With this investigation, a lot of topics concerning the household were comprehended. It also made way for several studies to be known that will provide greater assistance to Philippine and psychology literature. In conclusion, this study is deemed as a great tool to strengthen the support and knowledge of people in their families.

Research Questions

This study aimed to understand and explore the lived experiences of the youngest children as first-degree holders in their households. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of first-degree holders as the youngest in their household?

2. What are the challenges faced by first-degree holders as the youngest in their household?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of first-degree holders as the youngest in their household?

Literature Review

Experiences of Youngest Children as First-degree Holders

In the last two decades, the number of educational attainments obtained by people has heightened and increased (Arriagada, 2020). Therefore, according to Kristoffersen (2018), education holds a lot of expectations because of the higher living standards students commonly face. In addition to this challenge, youngest children often experience pressures, especially if they are the last chance of their family (Toutkoushian et al., 2021). Furthermore, a huge amount of influence is also given by families in a way that is seen as one of the most influential factors in a student's life (Yang et al., 2021). These preceding researchers also added that college students are more dependent on their families in this phase of life.

Influence of the Environment

While studying, students often struggle to find an appropriate space and support to get their work done (Van der Mark, 2015). For this reason, teachers are often supportive when they know about their students' living circumstances. This includes finding a suitable response for their students' needs and carefully allocating them. However, in the context of the household, parents are demonstrating conditional regard to minimizing the potential failure of their children (Tsang & Lam, 2023). This literature highlighted the fact that in order to motivate their children in their studies, parents are using conditional regard. By setting a condition and promising a reward, students are able to obtain motivation to get their work done.

To support this claim, this study was acknowledged by Makri-Botsari (2015) by illustrating that unconditional support and positive regard are the sole ways to truly support students in their studies. He also said that there is no other way of motivating students in this generation than giving them a vision of what they will possibly get after their success. To support and motivate children is to give them competence and confidence (Sahban, 2016). This preceding researcher also stated that motivation is a strong force for competence. In addition to this, Boonk et al. (2018) added that if the involvement of the family in the life of their child is positive, the result of it will also become positive.

Aside from these things, Ndukwu et al. (2020) also added that the socio-economic status of the students' families is highly influential when it comes to the achievements garnered by the students. The verbal encouragements and urges they are giving to their family members are both impactful and related to their possible attainment of any recognition.

Validation

The role of birth order in the personality of children emphasizes their actions and feelings. Tripathy (2018) explained that birth order can be used to explain the behaviors and attitudes of people. Therefore, birth order plays a crucial role in garnering and obtaining any achievement. For the reason that youngest children often seek parental validation to motivate them in various ways, primarily in academic performance, they also seek higher parental validation (Rohinsa et al., 2020). According to a theory developed by Adler (1964), birth order significantly impacts life outcomes that may be positive or negative (Horner et al., 2012). In addition to this, Adler and Bartlett (2008) stated that even though first-born children are getting more attention, youngest children are most likely to have feelings of superiority that require more validation. Therefore, validation is a huge determinant of the youngest child's academic success.

On the contrary, this imposes an immense risk for students. Fouad (2016) stated that most students consider the decisions of their families before formulating a plan, even if it is outside of their will. This highlights the fact that even in career and decision-making, the expectations and validation from the eyes of their families are highly influential when it comes to students' drive to success.

Success

By finishing a college degree, graduates are more likely to experience pride from their families which encourages them to strive harder (Azmitia et al., 2018). When an individual passes a specific program, the amount of praise and pride will affect them extensively to the point of being motivated. Therefore, it was added that dropping out of school is not an option because of this goal for students. They are more inclined to exert effort in their studies and work because of the motivation given by their families. Success plays a vital aspect in their drive.

Hébert (2018) also pronounced that on graduation, families are seen celebrating the achievements of their children. This provided motivation for students and graduates to continue their future responsibilities at home. Thus, even if full of pressure, the success experienced by students pushed them to make their goals more visible and clearer.

Challenges of Youngest Children as First-degree Holders

Personal and social challenges impact the lives of students starting from their education up until they graduate. Their responsibilities are heightened; therefore, their challenges are also increased. According to an investigation made by Wilkins-Yel et al. (2022), these challenges encompass difficulties starting from finances to family, relationships, and personal decisions. Furthermore, Shao et al.

(2020) stated that these difficulties also lead to the feeling of being a burden even though they need help. This leads to their mental, emotional, and social dilemmas.

Emotional and Financial Challenges

Although psychological problems do not interfere with schooling, children experience emotions like sadness and anger due to their living circumstances, which they do not share with family members (Van der Mark, 2015). This kind of attitude still transpires even after their graduation. Therefore, they are having a hard time opening up and seeking help.

On the other hand, Horner et al. (2012) added that youngest children often experience more difficulty in performing because first-born children receive more assistance and attention. These emotional challenges are extremely challenging to overcome which leads to stress that is tough to surpass, even after they finish studying (Kumar & Bhukar, 2013). This difference when it comes to treatment impacts students' ability to be independent and mature. House et al. (2020) asserted that academic stress, work hours, and financial distress significantly affect degree holders' and graduates' mental health.

Horner et al. (2012) also added that since the youngest children received less financial support than their older siblings, they had several challenges concerning their source of income and finances, especially if they were in a poor-income family. Therefore, financial status is also a great indicator of success. A study conducted by Ndukwu et al. (2021) exhibits the effect of having a financially balanced household in education. Furthermore, these students are also the ones who receive more pressure and demands from their respective families.

Pressure and Job Search

Students and fresh graduates struggle not only because of the expectations set by their families and peers but also the pressure they are placed and forced on themselves. With that being said, achievement is also highly discerned in students who pressure themselves more, while also being burned out because of the demands of their social group (Ndukwu et al., 2020). After they get their degree, the youngest children are also having a hard time dealing with pressure outside their education.

Supporting their family while also improving the quality of their lives is one of the most prominent problems faced by graduates, and even students, that proffer pressure on these people (Cisco, 2020). Moreover, this preceding researcher also pronounced that almost every family thinks that education would solve all of their problems which impacts the students negatively. However, amidst this pressure is the students' struggle to find a job.

Therefore, first-degree holders in their households often face tons of challenges concerning job search. As a result, they face mental distress and challenges, which is why according to Olson (2010), first-degree holders of the family need a lot of effort which includes, learning and being in the job, releasing an experience, and chasing a passion to fully function in the workplace. These things are needed for a person to be equipped to face the life of being a professional. Therefore, graduates from Nigeria often face difficulties in finding a job as a college or university graduate (Akanmu, 2011). In the Philippines, Velmonte (n.d.) also stated that the country's slow progress in the employment rate also contributes to the problems of job search. It is suggested that graduates should prepare themselves for these kinds of challenges in seeking a professional career. In addition to this, a study conducted by Mok et al. (2021) expressed that early signs of economic challenges and the downturn primarily also affect graduates' ability to find a suitable job. This claim was validated by Arthur-Holmes et al. (2022) by illustrating that in emerging economies and countries, job employment is a huge bother and challenge for graduates. Alongside this is the pressure on students to succeed in education, learn the system of jobs, and live independently (Chowdhury, 2020). On the other hand, Chen et al. (2021) highlighted that when an individual is dissatisfied with the quality of their education and experiences, the chance of being unemployed is increased.

Priority

Aside from emotional challenges, graduates are also having a hard time dealing with priorities and their personal wants. Jordan et al. (2022) explained that because of too many responsibilities inside the household, graduates are struggling to balance their own needs and the needs of their families. This kind of behavior leads to having nothing because of the excessive care they are giving to their families.

According to David et al. (2017), it is common in the Philippines to prioritize the needs of their family members over themselves. Therefore, it is also assumed that it can continue through adulthood, which explains why Filipinos often put others before themselves, even after getting a job. Even though everyone is acknowledged to have different priorities, especially concerning finances, the problem with budget allocation results in limitations inside and outside the family setting (Mendiola et al., 2017; Meler, 2020).

Coping Mechanisms of Youngest Children as First-degree Holders

Amidst challenges, having a balanced mindset and positive outlook in life results in a person's ability to have an identity (Bunchanan & Kern, 2017). Through self-care and self-acknowledgment, people will be able to minimize their stress and focus more on their identities.

Therefore, using different strategies and ways to overcome difficulties will provide a steady life mentally and physically (Ramos & Brown, 2020). Since students and fresh graduates face a lot of trials in school, households, and society, several coping mechanisms are

also present to balance and limit the entrance of these challenges.

Support

The role of families, friends, and the university or college programs are the major support systems that every student needs to function successfully in their respective fields (Irlbeck et al., 2014). This kind of support will primarily motivate them not only to pursue and strive for more but also to prioritize their needs and seek help when needed.

In addition, these researchers also stated that having this kind of support allows students to fulfill their roles without being pressured and burdened. Through this act of support, minimizing the results of challenges and pressures will not be impossible. Thus, gaining more drive and assistance. Therefore, by focusing on the damaged area of their mental health, people will be able to uplift other 's mental states (Harandi et al., 2017). Encouragement and proper support are highly needed and suggested to be given by families, friends, and even schools and organizations to better equip their students and post-graduates for various challenges in the future.

Self-Care

The balance between responsibility and self-care is vital in maintaining one's psychological well-being (Miller et al., 2023). Therefore, modern self-care is encouraged to diminish the increasing level of burnout among students and graduates (Daly & Gardner, 2020). This includes doing things they enjoy doing and giving importance to themselves rather than focusing more on what they can give to their families.

Furthermore, having a balanced self-care practice while doing other care is often deemed a struggle for professionals and even fresh graduates, which is why blocking access to stress factors will be helpful in the process of self-care (Brems, 2015). This researcher stated that if they do self-care in one sitting, they will find it hard to focus on one. Therefore, it is suggested that the root of stress be highlighted and acknowledged, and that the effects be minimized and lessened.

Utilizing a study conducted by Colman et al. (2016), self-care results in more advantageous results than harm. That is why it should be deemed a huge contributor to the solution of stress.

Prioritizing Needs

Financial challenges are seen rampant in the midst of finding a job. With that being said, one of the coping strategies available is giving the proper level of priority and successfully implementing them (Tilahun et al., 2016). Aside from this, they also added that the call of their mental health is also prioritized by seeking professional and peer help through family and friends. Additionally, identifying needs and studying the proper resources for those needs is also beneficial in the process of coping (Lutz et al., 2017). Therefore, Salloum et al. (2015) illustrated that this strategy permits people to surround themselves with solutions that will solve their challenges.

Synthesis of Related Literature and Studies

These articles synthesized that the support of the people around children is highly known for influencing their engagement in their studies (Makri-Botsari, 2015). It was also discussed that supporting children means increasing their competence and confidence (Sabban, 2016). However, the pressure that comes along with motivation challenges the emotional response of students which affects their ability to function (Kumar & Bhukar, 2013). With the study illustrated by Olson (2010), first-degree holders of the family face different challenges concerning job search. Even after graduation, they still hold tons of responsibilities in prioritizing their families financially and emotionally (Jordan et al., 2022). Therefore, they compensate by engaging in self-care and prioritizing themselves when needed (Brems, 2015; Lutz et al., 2017).

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a phenomenological research approach that allowed an in-depth focus on the personal lived experiences of the participants. In addition, a phenomenological research design assisted this study in describing the phenomenon that occurred in every participant's life. It also explains the meaning behind their stories and experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). Van Manen (2017) stated that phenomenology is essential because it yielded the study's most prominent feature, which permits a more distinctive interpretation, such as phenomenological understanding. Therefore, this approach benefited the entire study.

Participants

Through the utilization of purposive sampling, the researchers were able to locate the participants that would appropriately match the aim and objectives of the study (Campbell et al., 2020). By a defined set of criteria relevant to the study, purposive sampling provided huge assistance to the researchers in determining their participants (Andrade, 2021).

The study was conducted with fifteen fresh graduate students, with the criteria "first-degree holder in their household" as a priority. Moreover, there is no age range for the participants because there is no age limit in education. These participants came from specific areas in Bulacan, primarily District V. To elaborate on the criteria: (1) A Fresh Graduate; (2) From Bocaue, Balagtas, Guiguinto, and Pandi (District V); (3) Youngest Child; (4) Degree Holder of Any Profession (First in the Family)

Subsequently, these participants gave their consent and utmost willingness to participate in the study. Before proceeding to the interview, they were informed about the purpose and the things that the researchers would do.

Table 1. *Participant's Demographic Profile*

Participants	Age	Civil Status	No. of people in a household	Occupation of Parents	Wage
Degree Holder #1	29	Single	7	None	Above Minimum
Degree Holder #2	39	Single	3 (but living solo)	None	Above Minimum
Degree Holder #3	27	Single	7	None	Minimum
Degree Holder #4	25	Single	6	None	Minimum
Degree Holder #5	22	Single	3	Father: Tricycle Driver	Minimum
Degree Holder #6	29	Single	7	Seller, Driver	Minimum
Degree Holder #7	23	Single	5	Father: Driver	Minimum
Degree Holder #8	24	Single	6	Self-employed	Minimum
Degree Holder #9	22	Single	5	Vendor, Mechanic	Minimum
Degree Holder #10	23	Single	5	None	Minimum

Instrument

In order to guarantee the validity and reliability of the questions, the study employed a semi-structured interview with a thorough investigation of experts related to the subject matter. This included the questions formulated by the researchers to consolidate the three major themes of the study. These questions are focused on the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the youngest children as first-degree holders in their households. Alternatively, participants had the autonomy to expound their answers and provide an elaborate explanation.

Procedure

The study employed a semi-structured interview with the youngest children who are the first-degree holders in their household. The step-by-step process of collecting data is described below:

1. After fully validating the participants and instrument of the study, the researchers then proceeded to find the appropriate participants around the area.
2. Since the research locale is determined, the accumulation of experiences was done through one-on-one interviews.
3. To safeguard the privacy of the participants to answer questions, consent to be recorded for transcription was readily asked.
4. Aside from this, a consent form was handed out to the participants to ensure their willingness to participate in the study. Confidentiality was highly employed in the process of data collection. Through this, participants' rights were respected and protected.
5. After gathering all the data in the process, data analysis was conducted.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research is a design that can be performed in various ways. However, before conducting the research process, it is vital to have a thorough analysis to determine the context of the youngest children as first-degree holders. Furthermore, the recording and transcription were included to highlight the exact words stated by the participants. This also yielded more information and assistance in the study. As stated by MacLeod (2019), in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), these words and languages provided emphasis on the meanings of the participants' answers.

Moreover, the transcriptions also encompassed thematic analysis to filter unnecessary biases and determine common themes from the participants' experiences (Canary, 2019). The entire data analysis procedure became acquainted with developing themes and codes to connect every piece of information. Using the central themes of the study, experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms, the study was discussed thoroughly.

Additionally, more specific themes emerged from the participants' answers. In guiding the responses from the participants, Moustakas' phenomenological approach was utilized to provide descriptions that brought out meaningful presentations of perceptions (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the study concluded and underwent rigorous research to ensure its validity and reliability.

Ethical Consideration

To strictly follow the ethical considerations and permission to conduct the data collection process, the approval of the research adviser was acknowledged. With the help of this assistance, participants were highly respected in terms of their confidentiality and consent. Further, the set of criteria presented is vital to the development of the conclusion.

A discussed consent form was given to the participants to ensure their willingness to conduct the study. By doing this, it was easy for them to understand and perform their roles.

Moreover, the purpose and objectives of the study were also discussed and explained. In addition, the participants were also guided with the body of the study but had an in-depth explanation of the aim. Confidentiality is also one of the important things to consider and discuss; participants were ensured that all information would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. Further,

their voluntary participation will be guided by the Republic Act 10173 to protect the rights of their data.

Results and Discussion

Table 2. *The Analysis*

Themes	Subthemes
Inner Drive (Will)	Unconditional Support (Positive Regard)
	Validating Eyes (Affirmation)
	Extended Triumph (Social Contagion)
	Pressure After Pressure (External and Internal Demands)
Perpetual Distress (Fluctuation)	The Feeling of Being a Burden (Perception)
	The Shame of a Job-Seeker (Diffidence)
A Balanced Mindset and Positive Outlook (Self-Care)	Others Over Oneself (People-Pleasing)
	Knowing When to Give (Psychological Demarcation)
	Self-Redemption: Uplifting One's Mental State (Self-Positivity)
	Giving Back (Prosocial)

Inner Drive

Students are frequently driven by various things such as self-motivation, cognitive intelligence, and family and peer influence (Gregory & Kaufeldt, 2015). Furthermore, they also stated that inner drive contributed to their determination to strive for greatness. According to Ersanli (2015), this motivation is composed of factors internally and externally that help students to attain their desired goals.

Aside from these, the emotional support given by their family and friends is also responsible for their academic outcomes, as well as their psychological well-being (Roksa & Kinsley, 2019). Therefore, this theme highlights the participants' inner drive to push through their education.

Unconditional Support

The support given by loved ones has a significant impact on the academic success and motivation of a student. Moreover, Boonk et al. (2018) stated that parental involvement, primarily parental encouragement, expectations, and parental support, impact the journey of their children toward academic achievements. A study conducted by Makri-Botsari (2015) illustrates that the unconditional support and assistance of parents to their children equates to an unconditional positive regard within the scope of education. Boonk et al. (2018) added that positive effects will solely come if the parental involvement is also positive.

As the interviewer asked the participants about their experiences during their education, most answered that they received unending support from their families. Support is a way to show assistance and encouragement that results in a responsive and positive learning experience (Kiefer, 2015). According to Participant 2, she experienced full support from her parents, which contributed to her motivating factors:

My parents and siblings fully supported me to finish all my subjects or semesters smoothly.

Most of the participants shared the sentiment regarding unconditional support. This shows the evidence that the youngest children, as

first-degree holders, acknowledge their experiences as full of support.

Validating Eyes

The significant role portrayed by birth order indicates that there are connections to consider when explaining the behavior, social attitudes, and family sentiments of people (Tripathy, 2018). Furthermore, the researcher mentioned above indicated a theory proposed by Adler (1964) that talks about the motivation of youngest children to outdo different accomplishments made by other siblings. Therefore, parental validation provides satisfaction that plays an important role in academic pursuits (Rohinsa et al., 2020).

As the interviewer asked the participant about the reaction of their parents when they graduated, Participant 7 pronounced that the validation she got from her parents was a major part of her success:

Actually, umiyak nga si mama no'n kasi proud siya sa akin, e and feeling ko iyon din naman reason bakit ako nagstart magpursigi. Aside sa makatulong, madalas talaga akong magcrave ng attention at validation kasi... kasi bunso, e.

This statement is also supported by Participant 3 by stating that even in the absence of financial support, the emotional support of her family motivated her:

Ayon, super proud sila noong time na 'yon kasi noong gumraduate ako, 4 years wala na silang support sa 'kin. As in wala na silang ginastos kahit pambaon ko kasi 'yon nga, self-support ka dahil working student ka tapos swerte ka na lang din kasi scholar ka ni Jollibee.

All of the participants' responses revolve around their parents' happiness and pride. As the youngest children receive the attention and validation they seek, their motivation increases.

Extended Triumph

Using family as a source of strength contributes a lot to the development of motivation. According to a study conducted by Sagna and Vaccaro (2023), a large portion of students' success is dedicated to their loved ones, especially their families. Therefore, this highlights the answer of Participant 5 when asked about his proudest moment:

Feeling ko ang proudest moment ko is hindi lang siya basta nakagraduate ako o degree holder or nakapagmartsa, ang proudest moment ko kasi ay ang pamilya ko talaga ever since sobrang supportive nila parang wala akong nararamdaman na pressure gano'n. Sa mga kapatid ko, hindi sila nakagraduate pero parang pagkagraduate ko, graduate na rin nila.

Therefore, this data implies that one's success is the success of everyone who motivated him from the beginning of his journey.

Pressure After Pressure

The pressure arising after graduation is heightened by different responsibilities, especially concerning financial pressures (Woolston, 2019). In addition to this, Feldman and Newcomb (2020) illustrate the pressure brought by "life after graduation" where social and financial pressures are highly relevant. Therefore, participants shared the same response pertaining to their experiences after attaining a degree.

Participant 10 did not experience pressure during his education but received a tremendous amount of pressure when taking the Licensure Examination Exam in an attempt to find a stable job:

They do not have expectations with regard to me and my studies, but they have expectations of me like passing the licensure exam. So, it is kind of awkward, and sometimes it pressured me to review more to take up space. Sometimes it makes me anxious din since I am a first LET taker on the siblings so it is anxious.

This data showed evidence to validate the study of Beiter et al. (2015) indicating that pressure and post-graduate plans are key determinants of stress and challenges

Perpetual Distress

The challenges of being the youngest child while being the first-degree holder in a household do not end after graduation. An investigation made by Gordon and Steele (2015) highlighted the fact that there are new challenges as people approach graduation. Kavanagh and Szweda (2017) also stated that there are problems with the preparation-to-practice shift that make it hard for graduates to fully adapt to the change. This theme explains the challenges faced by the youngest children.

The Feeling of Being a Burden

Some people claim that education is a huge waste of money which resonates with the students, especially those who are experiencing financial difficulties (Caplan, 2018). Therefore, it creates the feeling of being a burden, primarily for students from low-income families. It also results in mental challenges, stress, and poor quality of sleep (Shao et al., 2020).

The interviewer questioned if participants felt that their education burdened their families. Participant 7 shared the sentiment of seeing education as a big burden for her family:

Oo syempre kasi noong una, kailangan tulungan muna nila ako financially, para sa requirements and mga gagamitin sa school kaya feeling ko that time, ang laking burden ng pag-aaral ko. Hindi naman kasi pagkakuha mo trabaho, may pera ka na, e. Matagal ka pa rin maghihintay kaya marami pa ring financial difficulties kasi marami pa rin kailangan bayaran, asikusuhin, o unahin sa bahay.

This data exhibits a huge representation of participants' feelings towards their education.

The Shame of a Job-Seeker

Job-seeking after graduation is a huge challenge for fresh graduates. Velmonte (n.d.) also explains that this phenomenon is also caused by the slow progress of the employment rate in the Philippines. Various studies also demonstrate that the standard of job employment is a stand-alone conflict (Vallesteros et al., n.d.). Further, emotional dilemmas like being torn between asking for help or not have become one of the main problems of fresh graduates (Zeng, 2022).

When the interviewer asked the participants about their challenges in finding a job, the majority of them found it tough to look for a job because of requirements, standards, and other factors affecting their progress. Participant 5 also demonstrated her shyness and shame in asking for financial assistance after graduation:

May financial difficulties noong mag-aapply na ako kasi noong mag-aapply na ako dahil kailangan ko ng pamasahe and marami ako pinuntahan, nagbabakasakali gano'n and nakakahiya na ring humingi ng pera o kaya baon 'pag hindi ka na estudyante.

Furthermore, Participant 2 also stated that there are so many struggles to face before finding the appropriate job:

Hindi ka agad-agad makahahanap ng trabaho, so nandiyan ang maraming resume na pinapasa, and then nandyan mga interview na nagf-fail ka rin, so hindi ka kaagad makahahanap ng trabaho.

It highlights that the youngest children find it hard to seek help after they obtain their degree because of the thought that they are supposed to be providing rather than asking.

Others Over Oneself

For most people, family is the top priority to be provided with resources. However, it excludes responsibility and desires to connect with other people and even themselves (Jordan et al., 2022).

An interviewer queried participants about their hardships in prioritizing personal needs, and almost all of the answers from them highlighted the same thing. To represent the group, participant 3 stated that there were times when she wanted to buy things for herself but proceeded to put her family first:

Ayon may mga instances na may gusto kang bilhin sa sarili mo pero dahil may hihingin sila at alam mong mas kailangan nila 'yon; 'yon ang ibibigay mo kahit alam mong kailangan mo rin ang gusto mo.

In addition, Participant 7 also pronounced the same response:

Ang dami kong gustong gawin, sobra. Hindi ko lang magawa kasi mas may kailangan akong gawin, mas kailangan kong paglaanan ng pera ang ganito kaysa sa luho ko.

Thus, prioritizing oneself is not one of the options when faced with responsibilities. As discussed, they are more inclined to put their families' needs first than themselves.

A Balanced Mindset and Positive Outlook

After a series of challenges, one of the main components of people's way to cope is a balanced mindset which pertains to the distinguishable values and attitudes that make a person's personality (Bunchanan & Kern, 2017). Additionally, aside from the information mentioned, a positive outlook is also known to assist people's mental and physical health (Ramos & Brown, 2020). This theme primarily explains the coping mechanisms amidst the stated challenges.

Knowing When to Give

One of the most highlighted responsibilities and challenges faced by the participants is the increasing demand for money. However, Geenen et al. (2014) talked about happiness and satisfaction brought by helping others rather than spending money for self-interest. Therefore, to compensate for this obstacle, participants acknowledge that household income cannot capture every need and start prioritizing important things (Main, 2016). When the interviewer questioned them about their ways to reduce their pressures at home, Participants 2 and 3 expressed the same answer:

Since kahit ako ang ano first-degree holder sa amin, hindi ko sila iniispoil, hindi sila kada may kailangan, ibibigay ko. Gusto ko kasi kada maiisip nila ang pera ko o kung ano man meron ako, hindi ko 'yon nakuha nang ganon kadali, gusto ko pinaghihirapan rin nila kung ano ang gusto nilang makuha Kailangan lang na kailangan mo talagang i-budget din, salamat naman 'di ba, dapat may bu- budgetin, so mahirap kapag alam mo na sa isang bagay lang ibubuhos mo lahat kasi roon masisira ang paghawak ng pera.

Kailangan nakaseparate ang pangbayad ng bahay, kasi renting lang naman kami dati. 'Yong pamasahe, iyon kailangan maging

mahusay sa paghawak ng pera.

They exhibited utmost responsibility and accountability for the money they were holding. This shows their ability to fight off challenges.

Self-Redemption: Uplifting One's Mental State

Self-redemption showcases the change or shift in one's personality to the better side (Bauber et al., 2019. Furthermore, this can be done by uplifting emotions that can turn into transcendence which is significant to reduce stress and anxiety (Van Cappellen, 2017). Therefore, participants are highly inclined to develop and improve themselves by redemptive behaviors.

Furthermore, according to Bressi and Caden (2017), the main vehicle to promote decent well-being is self-care. Everyone is capable of practicing this kind of activity to achieve peace and reduce stress (Martinez et al., 2021). As seen in the recent challenges, practicing self-care is also beneficial when it comes to nutrition, hygiene, or lifestyle (World Health Organization, 2014)

As the interviewer asked participants to describe their mental state, Participant 5 stated that to help herself heal, she must exhibit kindness in herself and allow herself to improve:

Tulad ng mga namention ko noong una, kailangan ko muna ipriority (ang) sarili ko para mas able na akong makatulong ng iba, like kailangan ko muna ayusin sarili ko, kailangan ko muna tulungan sarili ko, kailangan ko muna magheal para okay ka na. Kasi kung tulong ka lang nang tulong, mahihirapan ka talaga. Kasi 'yon 'di ba, kailangan mo muna tulungan sarili mo kasi paano ka tutulong ng iba kung kahit sarili mo hindi mo matulungan, e feeling ko kailangan mo rin mahalin sarili mo para mas kaya mo magmahal ng ibang tao.

In conclusion, the security of oneself became the key for the majority of the participants in coping with challenges regarding their mental state.

Giving Back

Most people after graduation seek money to give back and provide help for their families. This act promotes positivity in everyone's lives, therefore, giving back not only to one's parents but also to their loved ones (Bird et al., 2014).

An interviewer asked the participants about their coping mechanisms in handling difficulties faced by their families. Participant 6 implies her belief that after graduation, her parents will be proud of her for achieving it:

Ano inisip ko na lang na after ko makagraduate, ako naman makatutulong sa kanila parang ngayon lang naman 'to kumbaga temporary naman after naman nito mas malaking bagay naman na maiibalik ko sa kanila.

This statement indicates the hope of participants to give back to their parents as a way of acknowledging their sacrifices for the family.

Conclusion

Being the youngest child in a household while also being the first-degree holder is a huge responsibility and offers a tremendous amount of pressure. Starting from their education, these children often receive pressure to graduate even amidst some difficulties. However, as typical Filipino family exhibits, graduation and degrees are highly regarded and celebrated. This kind of practice motivates people to continue studying, especially if they are the only ones who are able to do it. Though the majority of career choices are inclined to practicality or are heavily influenced by the needs of their family, people are still choosing to comply because of Filipinos' family ties.

These experiences also affect their future decisions, mentality, and personality, including plans for marriage and family. Since they are exposed to hardships, the youngest children as first-degree holders prioritize financial situations first before this matter to avoid experiencing the same cycle.

Youngest children as first-degree holders encounter difficulties in terms of pressure, responsibility, socialization, and balancing academic commitments as they face the demands of both education and personal relationships. These challenges collectively shaped a distinct journey for the youngest as the first-degree holder in their household.

Finally, even though there are challenges and difficulties arising, the youngest children as first-degree holders are still choosing to continue and persist. They are still inclined to practice self-care and understanding without leaving their responsibilities behind.

It is highly recommended that family members, friends, and acquaintances exhibit support and understanding of the youngest children's academic milestones. This can be done by acknowledging and celebrating their first-degree achievements or not putting more pressure on their responsibilities. Actively listen and provide emotional support during this significant transition; recognizing potential stress. Encourage discussions on future plans and career goals to offer relevant guidance.

It is highly recommended that the government show its support and provide sufficient employment, not only to the youngest and first-degree holders but in a more general sense. Furthermore, by having a more inclusive country, people will be offered different opportunities which will help the majority to have the job and life they deserve. This can also be a call for action to implement a fair and healthy educational system for students.

It is highly recommended that the youngest children who become first-degree holders in their families have frequent time for themselves to reduce their stress and pressure. Find a healthy environment to balance household stress and responsibilities. Most of them prioritize other people, so it is highly recommended sometimes to choose mental well-being of oneself. In that way, mental challenges will be lessened.

It is highly recommended that psychology students provide more focus on the topic concerning the youngest children as first-degree holders of the family. For this reason, they will receive a platform that can assess their mental status and capabilities.

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