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## Exploring the Impact of Eldest Daughter Syndrome on Generation Z's Educational Achievement

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### Abstract

The trending hashtag, #EldestDaughterSyndrome, made its debut on TikTok in 2023, connecting a worldwide community of eldest daughters who shared similar experiences growing up. The common hardships an oldest child bears are common to psychology but was first tested by psychoanalyst Alfred Adler in his Birth Order Theory. Later research relied on cross-sectional data across different birth orders to determine sibling differences in academic performance, familial relationships and childhood roles, but very few focused solely on eldest daughters. Here we report student responses on the relatability of a select group of #EldestDaughterSyndrome TikToks and statements from the Living Up To Parents Expectations Inventory (LPEI). Additionally, qualitative analysis on free response questions regarding academic performance, familial responsibilities, and self-esteem were evaluated, with responses heavily focused on parental expectations and pressures. We show that eldest daughters tend to feel more responsible and expected to succeed academically by striving for “higher status” careers and majors, yet also feel responsible for the success of their younger siblings as well. The unifying experiences and feelings amongst eldest daughters on the secondary level not only reflect themes presented in #EldestDaughterSyndrome TikToks, but also play a role in their identities. However, the quantitative data from the LPEI emphasized that Adlerian Birth Order may not play a factor in Eldest Daughter Syndrome as much as cultural and ethnicity does, therefore further research is required.

## Introduction

#EldestDaughterSyndrome is trending on TikTok, with 59.8 million views of adolescent girls around the world sharing their experiences of growing up. A combination of unfair responsibilities and high expectations from parents has caused eldest daughters to speak out about their underappreciated efforts to fulfill their parents' expectations (Hu, 2023). However, this idea is not revolutionary. Austrian psychiatrist Alfred Adler developed his birth order theory, which states that birth order and the number of siblings affect a child's potential, thus possibly correlating with both positive and negative life outcomes (Horner et al., 2012). Adler's Birth Order Theory is where modern-day stereotypes of the eldest, middle, and youngest children derive from. Adler's theory suggests that first-born children are over-achievers and take on the superior role, while later-born children often try their best to move from the path their elder siblings took, differentiating a reputation for themselves. Studies on the distinct traits between first- and last-born children have not only impacted personality but also their life choices. Specifically, parentification is the most common trait among firstborns, in which a child is given "adult responsibilities" at a young age, giving them the role of a third parent. Similar "responsibilities" and pressures are reflected in academic achievement, as eldest children are often labeled as the "achieving child," with higher academic expectations placed on them. Contrastingly, the youngest child, otherwise known as the "spoiled baby," doesn't have as many expectations placed on them (Nuttall et al., 1976; Mamoon and Mussarat, 2016).

Comparatively, gender may also play a role in academic achievement. Girls are more likely to finish college than boys and are more self-disciplined when it comes to their studies. More specifically, first-born girls are associated with higher grades and put more academic effort into their studies, but different results are observed among first-born boys (Barnard, 2020; Nuttall et al., 1976; Workman, 2020). However, the causes and motivations behind eldest children's academic success are not as well known, and even more so are the motivations behind eldest daughters' drive to achieve good grades in school. Various factors such as culture, region, family size, and economic status have been tested for correlation with academic achievement, with all factors pointing to the same observation: first-born girls strive for higher academic success (Mamoon and Mussarat, 2016; Nuttall et al., 1976; Raby and Pomerantz, 2016). Contrarily, first-born girls are more likely to hold onto traditional values compared to later-born girls, as a majority are raised to follow the everyday tasks performed by their mother, most likely because they are a girl and the oldest. Traditional household tasks and motherly duties, such as taking care of younger siblings or making dinner, add to the parentification of eldest daughters growing up. Between this "third parent" role that first-born daughters are born to play and the pressures to carry out a societally functional role, first-born girls lack creativity as the "conservators of traditional culture" (Glass, 1974). With its surge on social media, it's imperative that "a clear similarity in experiences between eldest daughters, or at the very least, the indication of a deeper connection, be analyzed" (Abdel-Gwad, 2023). Between balancing this "third parent" life at home between their responsibilities in school as a student as well as

accounting for birth order, this leads to the following question: To what extent does Eldest Daughter Syndrome impact academic performance? However, in the literature review to follow, a gap was found within the current body of knowledge as it provided limited professional resources and study on Eldest Daughter Syndrome due to its emergence from social media. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate if eldest daughters have shared experiences growing up and examine if those experiences are a driving force or detrimental to their academic performance.

### **Literature Review**

In the literature review to follow, birth order and parentification, and the relationship these factors have with academic achievement will be discussed. Examining the origins of Eldest Daughter Syndrome (EDS) and its relationship to motivation is important in identifying the personality traits and characteristics of eldest daughters that contribute to academic performance. The characteristics of Adlerian Birth Order Theory, such as family size, sibling separation, and gender, will be considered to identify similarities with EDS and identify the impact that being the eldest daughter has on academic performance. Furthermore, the effects of parentification and the “third parent” role and how this added stress impacts academic performance will be discussed. Finally, examining how these two factors contribute to EDS and its relationship to academic performance will identify the cognitive personality traits and motivations behind the eldest daughters’ academic drive.

### **Theoretical Framework and Theories of Birth Order**

In every family, sibling relationships play a major role in the development of one’s life. In Alfred Adler’s *Problems of Neurosis: A Book of Case Histories*, he describes the significance of birth order as “the psychic situation of each child is individual and differs from that of others because of the order of their succession” (Horner et al., 2012). Different from those of Sigmund Freud, who was known for his psychoanalytic theories, Adler developed a plethora of theories on personality, psychotherapy, and psychological disorders. Among these is Birth Order Theory, which explains the relationship between personality and one’s birth number among their siblings. In his case studies, Adler divided his subjects into four major categories: oldest, middle, youngest, and single. Between these 4 categories, Adler observed similar personality traits to distinguish one from another. For example, Adler proposed that unlike the youngest children, the eldest children suffered the trauma of experiencing undivided attention being taken away from them. He called this concept “dethronement,” which causes them to eventually imitate their parents and become “power-hungry conservatives” towards their younger siblings (Sulloway, 2002). Of course, while Adler’s observations may not be accurate for all sibling dynamics, it’s important to recognize them as foundations for the factors that may be due to birth order. A major comparison between the eldest and youngest children showed that younger siblings’ personality traits were associated with sibling-relationship agonism, whereas older siblings’ personality traits were not. Comparatively, due to issues of power imbalance between siblings

due to birth order, younger siblings played a more prominent role in the negativity in sibling relationships. Older siblings tend to have more authority in the relationship and set the tone, whereas younger siblings follow.

When comparing academic performance to birth order, it is noted that there are many flaws in the outcomes of such studies. This is due to the multiple factors contributing to academic performance and family dynamics (Horner et al., 2012). Additionally, many studies only focus on the positives in the relationship between academic performance and sibling succession, such as post-graduate success. For example, there is a higher likelihood for eldest children to procrastinate compared to younger siblings (Mamoona, I. L., & Mussarat, 2016). However, studies showing a relationship are sex specific. Compared to boys, girls are more likely to try harder in school, and unlike first-born boys, first-born girls are associated with higher grades (Nuttall et al., 1976). Such observations lead to questions about why girls are more motivated than boys in terms of their academic achievement. Boling answers this question by finding a relationship between birth order and creativity. In his study, it's confirmed that the results remain consistent with previous studies: first-born males and later-born females tested for the greatest creativity, while later-born males and first-born females scored low in creativity. Similarly, first-born males were observed to have more intellectual stimulation growing up, justifying the greatness of creativity. However, first-born females receive harsher socialization pressures compared to first-born males, hindering them from being creative. Another factor is simply being female, bearing the consequences of being the firstborn and the product of parental anxiety (Boling et al., 1993). These factors hindering creativity in first-born females can be linked to the responsibilities an eldest child has over its siblings. Similarly, such responsibilities go back to Adler's observation that eldest children often imitate their parents to become "power-hungry." This hinderance on creativity can be compared to academic achievement amongst first-born females in finding the effects first-born responsibilities have on academic performance. Similarly, such hinderance can also be a product of familial responsibilities due to the parentified role eldest daughters may take from a young age.

### **Parenting Styles and Parentification**

Parentification is a type of role reversal in which a child either parents the parents or performs parental tasks in place of the parent (Mayseless et al., 2004). In some cases, the child takes on a "third parent" role that can be done instrumentally or emotionally (Felton, 2022). In instrumental cases, the child takes on a physical role in parenting, such as taking care of their younger siblings or being frequently tasked with household chores that are unsuitable for their age. In emotional cases, the child takes on an emotional role where they are held responsible for their parents' emotional burdens that may be inappropriate for their age. For instance, "the child is called upon to care for the parent as a way of balancing unresolved issues that were not settled in the parent's own family of origin," and the parent may fail to give the child enough support because they are in need of protection and reassurance themselves, which will lead the

child to adopt a caregiving stance toward the parent because of this closeness (Mayseless et al., 2004). In both cases, the child is forced to be held accountable for their actions or duties that are beyond their role as a child, ultimately causing them to fall into this “third parent” cycle. Diana Baumrind, a clinical and developmental psychologist, is best known for her research on parenting styles and their effect on childhood development. Baumrind found three main models of parenting: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. The authoritarian model was characterized as parents attempting to “shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of their child in accordance with an absolute set of standards” where obedience, respect for authority, work, tradition, and the preservation of order are emphasized. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the permissive model is where “parents are tolerant and accepting toward the child’s impulses, use as little punishment as possible, make few demands for mature behavior, and allow considerable self-regulation by the child” (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Another term for the permissive parent is “negligent,” as many children who are raised by permissive parenting often turn out immature and lack independence. In the middle of the two is the authoritative model, in which the parent “attempts to direct the child’s activities in a rational, issue-oriented manner” and has “an expectation of mature behavior from the child and a clear setting of standards by the parents; encouragement of the child’s independence and individuality; and open communication between parents and children” (Baumrind, 1966; Dornbusch et al., 1987). Children raised by authoritative parents often succeed more as they’ve developed a close but healthy relationship with their parents. They learned to become socially responsible and were high in social and cognitive competence (Baumrind, 1966; Baumrind, 2005).

Parent-child relationships can also play a role in a child’s emotional intelligence, the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions, as “children gain awareness of their own and also others’ emotions and succeed in expressing and managing their own emotions” (Esra and Ibrahim, 2021). This relationship between parent and child can fall under an authoritative parenting model, fostering positive emotional wellbeing in a child that may set them up for a successful future. These parenting models can also tie in with Bowen’s Family Theory, in which all families have their own system or order, which affects the social development of a child as it “considers communication and interaction patterns, separateness and connectedness, loyalty and independence, and adaption to stress in the context of the whole as opposed to the individual in isolation” (Christian, 2006). This explains why some families behave differently than others according to their dynamic or generational way of living. However, parentification is not subjective to one singular parenting style and can become at fault with any of the three. Role reversal within a family may be dependent upon the characteristics of a child. For instance, “girls may be more likely than boys to do so, as females are expected to nurture and maintain relationships” (Mayseless et al., 2004). Similarly, this expectation may contribute to the developing personality of girls as they enter adolescence. As girls approach adolescence past menarche, the stage in which a girl has her first menstrual cycle, “feelings of insecurity and of inferiority and anxiety are at their peak. All demands are received as burdensome and hinder their productiveness with resultant irritation, negativism, and frequent friction with people” (Frank

et al., 1951). Eldest daughters, specifically, have these feelings heightened as they are placed with responsibilities categorized under “third parent,” which can hinder their performance outside of the home. As eldest daughters are most likely to fall victim to parentification, the effects of this role reversal can be seen in the academic setting to see if such burdens affect academic achievement.

### **Eldest Daughter Syndrome and Academic Achievement**

Among the hundreds of thousands of TikToks captioned with #EldestDaughterSyndrome, academic achievement is a topic brought up in many videos. The effects of academic achievement can tie back to Alfred Adler’s Birth Order Theory, which suggests the superiority complex of first-born children as over-achievers. Going back to Nuttall’s study, first-born girls, who are more associated with higher grades, can most likely relate to such TikToks. An example of both ideas is reflected in various TikToks, a popular video with the title, “Seeing the academic validation 4.0 daughter go to college and get her first ever B in a class that she doesn’t even need and dissociate for a week (cannot intervene, cannon event)” (theanorcross, 2023). Similar anecdotal videos attempt to fight off eldest daughter stereotypes, as seen in a video by abbizzl, which says, “The perfect oldest daughter that goes to school as a first gen, works hard, and helps everyone with things she never got help with so others don't have to stress as much as she did. She's the family's biggest resource.” (abbizzl, 2023). Among many of the videos under #EldestDaughterSyndrome, academic validation and achievement are common themes. This differs from older studies, such as Kenneth Kammeyer's 1996 study, which was performed on college women. Kammeyer observed that the relationship between birth order and the feminine sex role or stereotypes impacted a woman’s college education. He found that more of the first-born girls had a traditional orientation toward the feminine role and traditional beliefs about female personality traits; they described themselves more often as religious and were more likely to agree that they might marry before graduating from college” (Kammeyer, 1996). However, he also found that first-born daughters were more likely to finish college than younger daughters. He observed that the first-born girls' drive towards a college education was not negatively impacted by the traditional roles they also seemed to value. If anything, a college education is known to liberalize one's view, thus showing no effect on academic performance.

Sequentially, after a professional education, it is common for the eldest daughters to strive for an affluent career. A variety of videos mention career choices among the eldest daughters, many falling under healthcare, law, politics, or any “helping” profession such as teaching or counseling. In a Dutch study correlating birth order and political leadership, it was revealed that “female politicians also show the overrepresentation of singletons and the underrepresentation of middle-born children that is a characteristic of the parental impact perspective” (Andeweg and Van Den Berg, 2003). While there was no direct relationship between the overrepresentation of the oldest children in politics, the number was significant enough to question the parental impact on children that may lead them towards politics.

Andeweg and Van Den Berg found that parents were more likely to guide first-born children into a higher-level education, pushing them for academic success and an overall more prosperous career compared to later-born children. This idea can be applied to the underlying academic pressures of eldest daughters, as reflected by the prompts on various TikToks. For instance, a TikTok created by a dental student posted a video titled, “Every family needs that eldest daughter that’s trying to become a doctor, seeks academic validation, and has an overbearing sense of responsibility” (Sahami, 2023). While these tendencies are seen in the workforce, trends in eldest sibling competition date back to the 17th century, a time when social status and wealth were usually won by the eldest child (Nitsch et al., 2013). However, the underlying feeling of competition and academic pressures in eldest daughters has yet to show a relationship to birth order or to being impacted by familial responsibilities as seen because of parentification. With the growing popularity of #EldestDaughterSyndrome on social media, it is expected that, as the targeted audience for such content, the eldest daughters taking the survey explained in the methodology section will relate in a similar way. By understanding this relationship, the motivations towards academic achievement in eldest daughters can be identified and observed to determine if Eldest Daughter Syndrome affects performance.

### **Methodology**

To answer the research question presented in this study, a mixed-methods, non-experimental, cross-sectional study was implemented to observe the effects EDS may have on academic performance. An online questionnaire-based survey was used to determine academic aspirations, birth order, family relationships, awareness and relatability of EDS posts on social media, parental expectations, and satisfaction with academic performance (Appendix A).

### **Participants**

The survey was advertised to secondary school and college students through the online platform ‘Schoology’ and social media, including Instagram and Snapchat; all participants provided online informed consent prior to data collection, and all data was deidentified to protect respondent identities. In addition, five STEM, two English, and two World Language teachers volunteered to provide links to the survey on their course pages. This resulted in a sample size of  $N = 204$  individuals who took the survey, and through inspection of 134 female respondents who were relatively young ( $M = 16.44$ ,  $SD = 1.051$ ) and whose average grade level was 11th grade ( $SD = 0.925$ ), complete data was provided. For the purposes of this study, only data collected from female respondents was observed.

### **Procedure**

The Living Up to Parents Expectations Inventory (LPEI) (Wang and Heppner, 2002) was used to measure participants parental expectations regarding personal maturity and academic achievement. For the purposes of the study, the section regarding “Dating Concerns” on the

LPEI was omitted. The scale consists of 25 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree). To measure personal maturity, phrases regarding household responsibilities and familial expectations (e.g., “Parents expect me to respect my older siblings and cousins and to take care of my younger siblings and cousins”), while academic achievement-phrased items (e.g., “Parents expect me to pursue their ideal careers (doctors, teachers, etc.)”) are posed neutrally (Appendix B).

Pictorial stimuli relating to EDS were obtained from TikTok under related hashtags (i.e., #eldestdaughtersyndrome, #eldestdaughteracademics, #eldestdaughter). Relatability to the posts was also measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly relate to 5 = doesn’t relate to me at all) (example in Figure 1). These questions were analyzed quantitatively, as the numerical ratings correlated to individual opinions and feelings towards the phrases and posts.

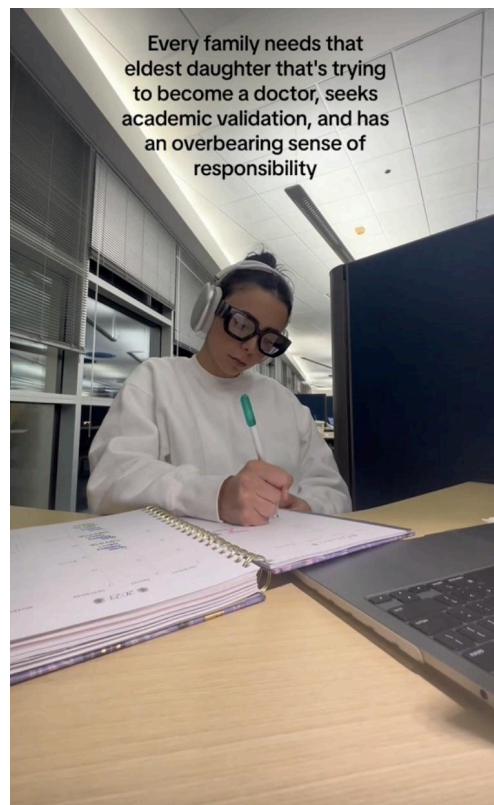


Figure 1. *TikTok #4 on survey*

Additionally, similar interview questions used on school “smart girls” (Raby and Pomerantz, 2016) were used to collect participants’ satisfaction with their academic achievement thus far. The first question regarded whether participants felt under-appreciated for their efforts or accomplishments and the second was related to sibling success and if participants felt responsible for it. The third question asked if participants felt their academic performance was impacted by their home life, while the fourth question directly regarded their



satisfaction with their academic achievement. These questions were posed last, were optional for participants, and were measured qualitatively.

A cross-sectional study of secondary and college students may explain or compare the factors of EDS among different age groups and determine if such factors change or remain similar with age. Thus, by collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the survey, the prior research question, if Eldest Daughter Syndrome affects academic achievement, may be answered.

## Results

The collected data was converted into numerical values, then ran through the statistical analysis program JASP, Jeffery’s Amazing Statistical Program, and produced each variable’s Spearman’s Rho  $\rho$  value with the variable it was compared to. Spearman’s rank-order correlations were conducted to determine if there were significant relationships between variables. The Spearman’s rank-order correlation is the nonparametric version of the Pearson product-moment correlation. Spearman’s correlation coefficient,  $\rho$ , measures the strength and direction of association between two ranked variables. Once the data was separated between male and female respondents, the frequencies among the eldest daughters and ethnicities can be seen in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1. *Frequencies of responses to the survey measuring birth order and ethnicity (n = 134)*

Variable	N	%
<b>Birth Order</b>		
1” Eldest	52	39
Other	82	61
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian or Alaskan	2	1
Asian	12	9
Black or African American	9	7
Hispanic or Latino	50	37
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0

White

61

46

The role of ethnicities in this study and their significance will be further discussed in the paper's discussion section.

After careful analysis, data points with significant values related to birth order were extracted and placed into the graph shown below (Table 2). The LPEI statements correlated to birth order can be seen under the table listed as Statement 1 and Statement 2; the full list of LPEI statements used in the survey can be viewed in Appendix B.

Table 2. Spearman's rank order correlations between birth order, personal maturity, and academic achievement (n = 134).

Variables	Spearman's rho	p-value
Statement 1. "Parents expect me to talk and to behave cautiously when away from home"	0.20*	0.05
Statement 2. "Parents expect my academic performance to make them proud"	0.22*	0.03

\* = p < .05

In general, the negative correlations for both statements suggest that females with a lower birth order (ex., "1" being the eldest) are more likely to have such expectations. Out of the 26 statements in the LPEI, these were the only statements with significant differences. However, when correlated with ethnicity, the number of significantly different LPEI statements drastically increased. The Spearman's rank-order correlations between ethnicity and LPEI statements can be seen in the table below (Table 3).

Table 3. Spearman's rank order correlations between ethnicity, personal maturity, and academic achievement (n = 134)

Ethnicity and LPEI Statements	Spearman's rho	p-value
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1. Parents expect me to control/change my behavior	0.20*	0.02
2. Parents expect me not to make trouble for the family	0.20*	0.02
3. Parents expect me to respect my older siblings/cousins and to take care of my younger siblings/cousins	0.23**	0.007
4. Parents expect me to spend money wisely	0.21*	0.01
5. Parents expect me to take care of my physical health	0.20*	0.03
6. Parents expect me not to waste money on unnecessary things	0.21*	0.02
7. Parents expect me to study hard to get a high-paying job in the future	0.33***	< 0.001
8. Parents expect me to honor my parents and family's ancestors	0.27**	0.002
9. Parents expect me to study at their ideal college/university	0.21*	0.02
10. Parents expect me to pursue their ideal careers (doctors, teachers...)	0.25**	0.004
11. Parents expect me to share the financial burden of the family	0.18*	0.04
12. Parents expect me to study their ideal program/major	0.28***	< 0.001

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\* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

As seen in the table above, each of the LPEI statements was negatively correlated with ethnicity (American Indian Alaska Native = 1, Asian = 2, Black or African American = 3, Hispanic or Latino = 4, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander = 5, White = 6). The negative correlations suggest that differences in parental expectations may be due to culture within families. Additionally, since there were no significant differences between birth order and EDS-related TikToks, ethnicity was correlated to determine if there were similar findings as when correlated with the LPEI (Table 4). The TikToks associated with the Spearman’s Rho numbers are shown below the chart (Figures 2, 3, and 4).

Table 4. *Spearman’s rank order correlations between ethnicity and EDS-related TikToks (n = 134).*

Variables	Spearman’s Rho	p-value
1. Ethnicity and TikTok #1	0.25**	0.004
2. Ethnicity and TikTok #2	0.30***	< 0.01
3. Ethnicity and TikTok #3	0.16	0.07
4. Ethnicity and TikTok #4	0.26**	0.003

\* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

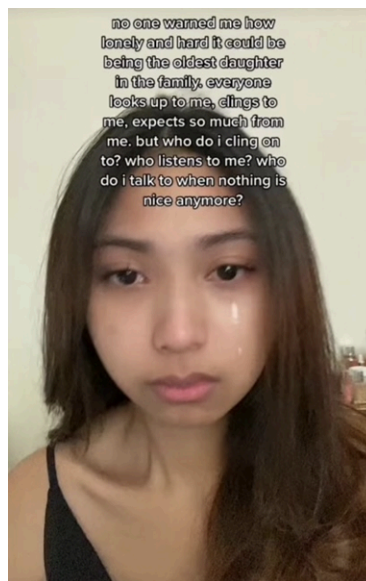


Figure 2. *TikTok #1 on survey (khansaneira, 2023)*



Figure 3. *TikTok #2 on survey (abbizzl, 2023)*

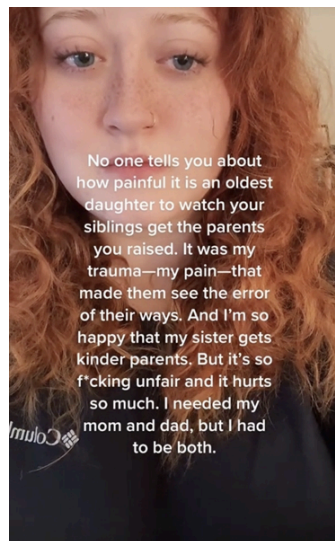


Figure 4. *TikTok #3 on survey (brittneetalley6, 2023)*

Like Spearman's rank-order correlation between the various LPEI statements, there is a negative correlation between ethnicity and the four TikToks. Thus, it may be suggested that lower-ranked ethnicities (such as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American) may relate more to the posts.

The open-ended questions point towards similar themes seen in the surveyed EDS-related TikToks. For example, in Figure 1, TikTok #4 emphasizes the stereotype of eldest daughters pursuing a career in medicine with similar high-paying jobs implied, such as lawyers,

scientists, etc. Out of the 134 respondents, over half reported (55%) they are pursuing or planning to pursue a career in STEM with majors including, but not limited to, biology (11%), pre-medical/pre-health studies (18%), psychology (7%) and engineering (7%).

Lastly, qualitative data for the final four open-ended questions ultimately came down to “yes” or “no.” Only answers responded by those who also reported their birth order as “1,” therefore identifying as an eldest daughter, were recorded in the data below. The frequencies for each open-ended question can be seen in the table below (Table 5). Those who had “sometimes” or “not really” in their answer were categorized as “other.”

Table 5. *Frequencies of responses to the survey measuring birth order and initial responses to open-ended questions (n = 48)*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Have you ever felt under-appreciated for any of your accomplishments in your family?</b>		
Yes	28	58
No	11	22
Other	10	20
<b>Do you feel responsible for your sibling(s)'s success?</b>		
Yes	20	42
No	15	31
Other	13	27
<b>Do you believe your academic performance is impacted by your home life?</b>		
Yes	29	60
No	8	17
Other	11	23

**Are you satisfied with your current academic performance? Why or why not?**

Yes	24	50
No	18	37
Other	6	13

As seen on the table, for each of the open-ended responses, over half of the respondents answered with “yes.” For many of the responses, most expressed similar concerns found in various #EldestDaughterSyndrome TikToks. When asked if they’ve ever felt underappreciated for any of their accomplishments in their family, many responses used the phrase “expected of” or the word “expectation” in their answers. Overall, more than half (58%) of the respondents felt they were underappreciated; for instance, one student felt very strongly, answering “yes.”

*Yes, growing up, it was never my achievements that made me who I am. More so, it was my obligation to do my best.*

On the other hand, one student was hesitant about what to say, as she felt both ways, acknowledging her parents' good intentions but still feeling the hurt that comes with the lack of validation.

*Yes and no. My parents celebrate all my accomplishments but often tell me or ask if there is more that I could have done. I understand that this is to encourage me to continue achieving my goals, but it also makes me feel like my accomplishments are not enough.*

As a collective, the answers reported in the open-ended questions reflect similar ideas displayed in the EDS-related TikToks. The relevance and significance of these findings and their implications will be further discussed in the discussion section to follow.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The effect of EDS on adolescent academic achievement seems to be of great importance because it affects how eldest daughters perceive themselves academically and the frequencies of concerns expressed in the qualitative data. Collectively, the eldest daughters answering the survey felt they were underappreciated for their accomplishments, responsible for their sibling(s)’s success, believed their academic performance was impacted by their homelife, yet were satisfied with their current academic performance (Table 5). Since there is a high frequency of concerns among 3 of the 4 questions, the evidence supports the assertion made in many sources in the literature review that eldest daughters feel more pressure to strive more in academics and feel parental expectations as a result (Barnard, 2020; Nuttall et al., 1976;

Workman, 2020). While only two statements in the LPEI showed a significant negative correlation to birth order, various statements in the LPEI had strong negative correlations with ethnicity. Between these two variables, the evidence supports the notion that personalities associated with birth order may be under the branch pseudo-psychology, in which recently psychologists worldwide are rejecting Adler's Birth Order Theory (Vaghchipawala, 2023). Thus, while qualitatively the pressures and effects of EDS can be supported in influencing academic achievement, the cultural and familial role on academic performance may be further studied as a factor for EDS.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Since the survey is open to everyone, not just identifying females or eldest daughters, the collected data on eldest sons or youngest daughters can be used to compare to that of eldest daughters. Limitations to this study could include the number of respondents, as one relatively small sample of students is not representative of students nationwide or globally. A replication of this study could include a larger sample of respondents, which would result in more representative data. For a more specific study on the effects of EDS, a larger sample size consisting of solely eldest daughters can be conducted as well, and the third category of the LPEI, "Dating Concerns," may be implemented for a full comparison to the original study the LPEI was conducted in (Wang and Heppner, 2002). Future research on the holistic psychological, mental, social, and emotional effects of EDS, such as further analyzing parenting styles and sibling relationships, rather than the effect EDS has on academic achievement, is needed to determine the impact of the positive and negative consequences of the familial factors of Eldest Daughter Syndrome.





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## APPENDIX

### A. Online Survey

I would like to thank you for your participation in this survey. This survey investigates if eldest daughters have shared experiences of growing up and examines if those experiences are a driving force or detrimental towards their academic performance.

**Confidentiality:** Your interview responses, along with the responses of other interviewees, will be used to help me complete a research study that examines the social media trend, Eldest Daughter Syndrome, through a psychological lens. All responses are confidential and unidentified and no information directly associating your name with your responses will be reported to anyone. Typically, findings are reported in group form, so no individual is identifiable.

**Purpose:** Your responses will help provide information regarding Eldest Daughter Syndrome's impact on academic performance. Some of the questions may be repetitive to establish context for upcoming questions or ensure consistent responses.

#### Gender

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

#### Age

- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18+

#### Grade

- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th
- College

#### Race/Ethnicity

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White



What is the highest level of education your parent(s) have completed?

- 12th grade (or less)
- High school graduate
- Some college/AA degree/Technical school training
- College graduate (BA or BS)
- Graduate school degree: Master's or Doctorate degree (MD, PhD, JD)

Weighted Grade Point Average

- Below 65
- 65-69
- 70-79
- 80-89
- 90-95
- 96-100
- Above 100

Academic Program/Major (or intended program/major if still in high school)

*Open-ended question*

Do you (or used to) take any AP/IB courses?

- Yes
- No

If so, how many?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10+

What is your birth order? (Where do you stand out of the number of children in your family – ex. Oldest = 1; if you are an only child, put 0)

- 0
- 1
- 2



- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7+

How many siblings do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7+

Is your mother the eldest daughter?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure or N/A

Is your father the eldest son?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure or N/A

Have you heard of/seen the term “Eldest Daughter Syndrome” on social media before?

- Yes
- No

If so, on which social media platforms have you seen the term come up?

- TikTok
- Instagram
- X (Twitter)
- Snapchat
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Other

How much do you relate to the following TikTok?



*"no one warned me how lonely and hard it could be being the oldest daughter in the family. everyone looks up to me, clings to me, expects so much from me, but who do i cling on to? who listens to me? who do i talk to when nothing is nice anymore" (khansaneira, 2023)?*

- Strongly relate
- Partially relate
- Neutral
- Partially don't relate
- Doesn't relate to me at all

How much do you relate to the following TikTok?

*"the perfect oldest daughter that goes to school as a first gen, works hard, and helps everyone with things she never got help with so others don't have to stress as much as she did. She's the family's biggest resource" (abbizzi, 2023).*

- Strongly relate
- Partially relate
- Neutral
- Partially don't relate
- Doesn't relate to me at all

How much do you relate to the following TikTok?

*"No one tells you about how painful it is an oldest daughter to watch your siblings get the parents you raised. It was my trauma - my pain - that made them see the error of their ways. And I'm so happy that my sister gets kinder parents. But it's so f--- unfair and it hurts so much. I needed my mom and dad, but I had to be both" (brittneetalley6, 2023).*

- Strongly relate
- Partially relate
- Neutral
- Partially don't relate
- Doesn't relate to me at all

How much do you relate to the following TikTok?

*"Every family needs that eldest daughter that's trying to become a doctor, seeks academic validation, and has an overbearing sense of responsibility."*

- Strongly relate
- Partially relate
- Neutral
- Partially don't relate
- Doesn't relate to me at all



\*\*\*LPEI INSERTED HERE\*\*\*

### Open-Ended Questions

*Have you ever felt under-appreciated for any of your accomplishments in your family?*

*Do you feel responsible for your sibling(s)'s success?*

*Do you believe your academic performance is impacted by your home life?*

*Are you satisfied with your current academic performance? Why or why not?*

### **B. Living Up to Parent Expectations Inventory (LPEI)**





	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Parents expect me not to offend them verbally/vocally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me not to do the kind of things that may disappoint them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to speak carefully and not to offend people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to control/change my bad temper	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me not to make trouble for the family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to behave maturely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to be modest and polite	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me not to embarrass them ("lose face")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to talk and to behave cautiously when away from home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to respect my older siblings/cousins and to take care of my younger siblings/cousins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to be responsible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to avoid conflict with siblings/cousins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to maintain my academic performance when falling in love	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to spend money wisely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to take care of my physical health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me not to waste money on unnecessary things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 5. *Living Up to Parent Expectations Inventory (LPEI) Section on "Personal Maturity"*



	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Parents expect my academic performance to make them proud	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to have excellent academic performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to study hard to get a high-paying job in the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to perform better than others academically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to honor my parents and family's ancestors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to study at their ideal college/university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to pursue their ideal careers (doctors, teachers,...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to share the financial burden of the family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents expect me to study their ideal program/major	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 6. *Living Up to Parent Expectations Inventory (LPEI) Section on “Academic Achievement”*