

# Navigating Dual Expectations: A Qualitative Study of the Psychological Dynamics of the Youngest Child in Javanese Families

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**Abstract:** The position of the youngest child (*ragil*) in Javanese families provides a unique lens through which to examine the effects of birth order on psychological development within a traditional cultural context. Javanese culture presents a dual dynamic for the youngest child, who often receives heightened attention from family members while simultaneously facing significant expectations to care for aging parents in adulthood. This study explores the psychological dynamics and character development of the youngest child (*ragil*) in Javanese families, focusing on how family structure, parenting styles, and socio-economic conditions shape their development. Utilizing a qualitative approach, this research involves in-depth interviews with three youngest children aged 19-21 years, living with their parents and siblings. The findings reveal that the youngest child often receives special attention and support from parents, which contrasts with the experiences of older siblings. This preferential treatment, while beneficial in nurturing the youngest child, also comes with high expectations to fulfil familial responsibilities, especially as the family faces economic challenges. The study highlights how these children are encouraged to develop independence and resilience, balancing between the privileges and responsibilities they inherit. The impact of changing economic conditions and the burden of surpassing older siblings' achievements contribute to their character formation. The study's insights are contextualized within Javanese cultural norms and underscore the complex interplay between parental care, sibling dynamics, and individual development. The findings provide a deeper understanding of how cultural and familial factors influence the psychological growth of the youngest child, offering implications for parenting practices and family dynamics in similar cultural settings.

**Keywords:** Birt Order, Javanese Family, Psychological Dynamic, Youngest child, *Ragil*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and rapid modernization, shifts in family structures and dynamics across various cultures have gained increasing attention from researchers. Adler's theory of birth order, developed over 100 years ago, was shaped by the cultural and familial dynamics of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, significant changes in modern family structures and societal norms necessitate further research to verify the theory's relevance today (Marano, 2017). Contemporary parenting styles, which emphasize individuality and equality among children, have shifted from the hierarchical and often authoritarian models of Adler's time. Additionally, cultural factors must be considered when examining the psychological dynamics of the youngest child, as local norms and parenting approaches can greatly influence their development and familial role. These changes call for a re-evaluation of Adler's theory in today's diverse cultural contexts (Marano, 2017).

This argument is strengthened by a major critique of current birth order research is the narrow focus on North American and European populations, which predominantly supports Adler's theory (Eckstein et al., 2010). However, newer, broader studies are necessary to evaluate whether the theory holds true across diverse cultures and remains applicable to those originally studied. Expanding research to include a variety of ethnicities and cultures globally would allow for greater understanding and might lead to a more acceptance and recognition of Adler's birth order theory. One area of particular interest is how birth order, especially being the youngest child (*ragil*), influences psychological development within traditional cultural frameworks (Marano, 2017).

In Javanese families, the youngest child often receives unique attention while also bearing significant responsibilities, such as the expectation of caregiving for elderly parents (Haryanto & Nugroho, 2021). These dynamic shapes their emotional, social, and psychological growth. Given that today's parenting styles are more egalitarian and democratic than in the past, it is crucial to explore how these shifts influence the role of the youngest child in local cultural settings, like

Javanese society. Although much of the literature focuses on Western contexts (Kline, 2012), studying the unique interplay of modern parenting and local culture remains essential.

From a qualitative perspective, understanding the psychological development of the youngest child in Javanese families requires delving into the lived experiences and narratives of these individuals. The family environment, as shaped by cultural values and practices, plays a pivotal role in shaping not only the physical but also the emotional and psychological development of each child (Bhugra et al., 1999). In this regard, family serves as a key context for exploring the ways in which children's characters are melded by parental expectations, social norms, and caregiving roles. As noted by Ratih and Anggun (2017), parenting practices, including discipline, rewards, and the instillation of values, are profoundly influenced by the local cultural setting. Factors such as parental education, age, ethnicity, and birth order further shape the experiences of each child (Benu et al., 2017). For the youngest child, these experiences are particularly significant, given the dual roles they often occupy within the family structure.

Adler's (1998) birth order theory offers a lens through which to examine the unique psychological and social positions of children within a family. His theory highlights how a child's birth order shapes their psychological perception of the world, influencing the development of distinct lifestyles, personalities, and behaviours. In the case of the youngest child in Javanese families, this duality—receiving special attention while also bearing future caregiving responsibilities—adds layers of complexity to their psychological development. Through in-depth qualitative exploration, this research seeks to capture the nuanced ways in which these dynamics influence the youngest child's identity, coping mechanisms, and interpersonal relationships.

Qualitative inquiry into birth order allows for a deeper understanding of how individual experiences, familial interactions, and cultural expectations intersect to shape the development of the youngest child. As children navigate their roles within the family, their psychological development is influenced by a range of factors, including the death of a sibling, gender norms, and the process of sibling de-identification, where children model or differentiate themselves from their siblings' behaviours. For the youngest child, these influences are particularly pronounced, as they often absorb the behaviours of older siblings while navigating their own paths within the family dynamic (Marano, 2017).

The lived experiences of the youngest child often reveal internal conflicts in balancing their sense of self with familial and cultural expectations. In Javanese families, Lestari and Putra (2020) found that the youngest child often receives heightened attention, which can boost self-confidence but also foster dependency. Conversely, the youngest child is expected to assume the responsibility of caregiving for elderly parents (Susanto, 2018), adding another layer of responsibility that can create internal tension. Through qualitative research, this study seeks to explore how these dual roles—being the recipient of special attention and bearing the weight of caregiving—shape the psychological and emotional development of the youngest child.

This qualitative study aims to capture the voices and experiences of the youngest children in Javanese families, providing insight into how birth order and cultural expectations shape their developmental trajectories. The study's findings are expected to offer a rich, context-specific understanding of the psychological development of the youngest child, highlighting the complex interplay between familial roles, cultural values, and individual identity. Such insights are crucial for developing tailored educational and counselling strategies that address the specific needs and challenges of the youngest child in Javanese society. This research will contribute to the broader field of cultural psychology and provide practical implications for practitioners working with individuals from similar cultural backgrounds.

## **2 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research employs a qualitative approach. Qualitative research views social reality as complex, dynamic, and full of meaning, making it an interactive process applied to natural settings (Sugiono, 2013). This type of research cannot be achieved through statistical or quantitative methods. The study adopts a case study approach, focusing on exploring the character development of subjects within specific contexts by examining influencing factors. The research subjects are individuals who can provide relevant information about the research background and conditions.

The technique used to select subjects is purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on specific considerations regarding their knowledge and expertise related to the research topic. This study involves three youngest-child subjects, aged 19-21, who come from intact families and live with their parents. Data collection is conducted through interviews, utilizing both open and semi-structured interviews to allow for greater flexibility and depth in exploring the subjects' experiences. These interviews are used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subjects' perspectives.

Data analysis is carried out using a thematic analysis approach, grounded in Adler's birth order theory. The data obtained from interviews and observations are analysed by coding the information into specific categories based on emerging themes. The collected data is then reduced to identify themes that align with the theoretical framework used in this study. The data analysis process consists of three stages: (1) data reduction, in which the researcher filters unnecessary information to facilitate interpretation and understanding; (2) data presentation, where the information is visualized clearly and accessibly for readers; and (3) data verification, where the researcher ensures the accuracy of the presented data and its reflection of the researched reality.

### 3 RESULTS

The findings of this study provide a multifaceted view of the psychological and developmental experiences of the youngest child within Javanese families, revealing how cultural values, familial expectations, and individual dynamics converge to shape their character. The unique role of the youngest child *\*ragil\** in the family reflects a complex interplay between privilege and responsibility, which is influenced by deep-rooted Javanese cultural norms that emphasize hierarchy, respect, and family loyalty.

#### Parental Attention and Special Treatment

One of the central themes that emerged from this study is the dual experience of privilege and heightened expectations. The youngest child often benefits from a greater degree of affection and indulgence compared to their older siblings, fostering a sense of security and emotional comfort. However, this privilege is not without its nuances, as the affection is sometimes perceived as conditional, tied to the implicit or explicit pressure to meet familial expectations. The special treatment given to the youngest is often accompanied by high expectations from parents, who view them as the family's "last hope" for fulfilling unachieved aspirations. This pressure becomes more pronounced in cases where older siblings have not met specific goals, transferring those unfulfilled hopes onto the youngest child. Such dynamics foster internal conflicts in the child, leading to feelings of both gratitude and anxiety.

Subjects consistently reported feeling both cared for and burdened by this duality, which shaped their emotional and cognitive responses to family dynamics. Subject A, for instance, recalled how their parents would often emphasize that they were "the last chance" for the family, creating a motivational drive yet also cultivating a deep-seated fear of failure. This combination of privilege and expectation forms a complex psychological landscape, where the youngest child navigates the tension between seeking approval and striving for independence, all while grappling with the emotional weight of familial ambitions. Such pressures may also manifest in behaviours, with some youngest children adopting perfectionist tendencies or overachieving as a coping mechanism, while others may rebel against the expectations to assert their individuality.

#### Independence Amidst Privilege

Contrary to the assumption that the youngest child would remain dependent due to excessive indulgence, the study found that parents, particularly in families facing economic decline, were conscious of the need to teach independence. This realization often emerged from a pragmatic understanding that economic hardships would require all family members, including the youngest child, to contribute to the family's well-being. As a result, indulgence was balanced with lessons on responsibility and self-reliance. This approach was reflected in the way the parents managed the fulfilment of the youngest child's desires, wherein privileges were granted, but not without boundaries. While subject B acknowledged the sense of privilege in their upbringing, noting moments of being "spoiled" in comparison to their siblings, they also described how their parents instilled the importance of patience, effort, and delayed gratification. Their parents would emphasize that while love and support were unconditional, material rewards or benefits were contingent upon earning them through hard work or academic success.

This blend of nurturing and discipline highlights the nuanced nature of parental strategies, where affection is carefully balanced with the preparation for future challenges. By encouraging independence in the youngest child, parents aimed to foster resilience and adaptability, especially in uncertain economic contexts. The duality of experiencing both indulgence and discipline contributed to a unique developmental trajectory for the youngest child, who often internalized the values of hard work and perseverance from a young age. As subject B reflected, they learned to navigate between receiving care and managing their own responsibilities, resulting in a stronger sense of self-efficacy. This parental approach not only protected the youngest child from the potential negative effects of overindulgence but also equipped them with the emotional and cognitive tools to face adulthood with greater confidence and autonomy.

#### Economic Context and Character Development

The economic condition of the family significantly impacted the youngest child's experience, shaping not only their material circumstances but also their psychological and emotional development. As financial circumstances worsened,

younger children often had less access to the same resources their older siblings enjoyed during their childhood. This disparity in access to material goods, educational opportunities, and even parental attention created a stark contrast between the life experiences of the youngest child and those of their older siblings. Subject A described a clear distinction between their upbringing and that of their older siblings, who had grown up in more prosperous times. The older siblings benefited from extracurricular activities, better-quality schooling, and occasional luxuries that were no longer available by the time the youngest child reached a similar age. This shift in resources resulted in a profound realization for the youngest child that their family's circumstances were not fixed, but rather subject to change—a realization that would influence their worldview and approach to life challenges.

This financial shift fostered resilience and adaptability, as the youngest child was often required to contribute to the family's well-being at an earlier age. Unlike their older siblings, who may have had more freedom to pursue personal interests, the youngest child frequently felt an unspoken obligation to assist with household tasks or find ways to minimize the family's financial burdens. These early responsibilities promoted a sense of maturity and self-reliance that was not necessarily expected of their older siblings. Subject A mentioned how they learned to "make do" with limited resources, whether it was by finding creative solutions to problems or by learning to prioritize needs over wants. This early exposure to economic hardship forced the youngest child to develop problem-solving skills, emotional regulation, and a deeper appreciation for the resources they did have.

Additionally, the struggle to manage with fewer resources also shaped the youngest child's ability to empathize with their parents' difficulties. Subject A mentioned how witnessing the family's decline in financial status made them more attuned to the limitations and sacrifices of their parents, resulting in a deeper sense of responsibility toward supporting them. The youngest child often took on an emotional caregiving role, trying to ease their parents' stress by being less demanding or by offering practical help whenever possible. This heightened sensitivity to their parents' struggles contributed to a sense of duty and gratitude that influenced their decisions later in life, as they became more focused on securing a stable future for both them and their family. Through this process, the youngest child's emotional growth was shaped not only by the scarcity of resources but also by the intimate understanding of familial sacrifice and the shared desire to overcome hardship together.

### **Sibling Dynamics and Social Comparisons**

A recurring theme in the narratives was the impact of sibling relationships on the youngest child's psychological development, with these dynamics playing a pivotal role in shaping both identity and self-worth. The presence of older siblings created a constant source of comparison, both within the family and in the broader social context, reinforcing expectations and setting benchmarks for success. Subject C noted that their parents would frequently compare their academic achievements to those of their older siblings, which not only fueled a sense of inferiority but also heightened feelings of inadequacy. Being constantly measured against the accomplishments of older siblings can undermine the youngest child's self-esteem, particularly when they perceive themselves as falling short of familial or societal expectations. This aligns with Adler's theory of birth order, where the youngest child, due to their relative inexperience and late entry into the family hierarchy, often feels overshadowed by the achievements of older siblings. This overshadowing, while demoralizing at times, also becomes a powerful motivator as the youngest seeks to prove themselves in areas that differentiate them from their siblings.

This constant comparison within the family drove Subject C to pursue their own unique strengths and passions, searching for recognition in areas where their siblings had not excelled. For instance, while older siblings may have set academic records or excelled in athletics, the youngest child may gravitate towards creative or nontraditional fields as a way to carve out their own identity. The drive to differentiate themselves is not merely about personal interests but also about establishing autonomy within the family structure. Subject C mentioned that they often pursued extracurricular activities that their siblings had little interest in, as a means of standing out and gaining approval. This process of individualization can be both rewarding and challenging, as the youngest child navigates the fine line between family expectations and personal fulfilment, which can foster a deeper understanding of self but also lead to feelings of isolation when their interests diverge too far from the family norm.

The comparison between siblings also extended beyond achievements to include emotional dynamics. While the youngest child often enjoyed more parental attention, this could breed resentment among older siblings, who might feel displaced or overlooked. Subject B recalled instances of subtle sibling rivalry, where their older sibling expressed jealousy over the amount of attention they received. This jealousy can manifest in various forms, ranging from playful teasing to more overt expressions of rivalry, complicating the youngest child's emotional landscape. The youngest child, while benefiting from parental indulgence, may feel guilt or discomfort knowing that this attention comes at the expense of their siblings' emotional needs. This tension sometimes led to strained relationships within the family, further complicating the youngest child's efforts to navigate their familial role. Subject B described how they often felt torn between enjoying their favored status and sympathizing with their older sibling's feelings of exclusion.

In many cases, this sibling rivalry also fostered both cooperation and competition within the family unit. While the youngest child might feel the need to compete for recognition, they often also develop strong bonds with their siblings that mitigate these feelings of rivalry. For example, Subject C noted that despite the comparisons and competition, they often turned to their older siblings for advice and support, especially during difficult times. This dynamic created a unique balance, where the youngest child learned to both admire and challenge their older siblings, resulting in a mix of mentorship and rivalry. In essence, the youngest child's psychological development is deeply influenced by these sibling interactions, as they oscillate between striving for individual achievement and maintaining familial harmony. The interplay between competition, affection, and rivalry shapes their emotional intelligence, resilience, and ability to navigate complex social relationships, both within the family and in broader societal contexts.

### **Balancing Privilege and Responsibility**

In addition to the privileges associated with being the youngest, there was a clear expectation for the youngest child to eventually assume the role of caretaker for aging parents, a deeply rooted cultural norm in many families in Javanese. This expectation places a unique and often heavy burden on the youngest child, who, while benefiting from indulgence and attention, is also seen as the natural choice to remain close to home and take care of their parents in their later years. The youngest child is often considered the "last hope" for ensuring familial continuity and caregiving, which creates a significant emotional and psychological responsibility. Subject C expressed a strong awareness of this dual role, noting that while they appreciated the affection they received as the youngest, they also felt an unspoken, growing pressure to prioritize their parents' well-being. This expectation is compounded by cultural values that emphasize filial piety and the duty to care for one's elders, leaving the youngest child with the challenge of reconciling their personal ambitions with this traditional role.

The tension between personal desires and family duty becomes a defining feature of the youngest child's development, shaping both their identity and sense of purpose. While older siblings may have the freedom to pursue their careers or lives without the same level of expectation, the youngest child often feels a stronger obligation to remain close to home, limiting their personal and professional opportunities. Subject C mentioned how this sense of duty often created internal conflict, as they felt torn between pursuing their own dreams—such as career advancement or personal exploration—and the need to fulfil their familial obligations. This struggle can lead to feelings of guilt or frustration, as the youngest child may perceive their personal goals as being in direct opposition to their family's expectations. At the same time, however, fulfilling this caretaker role can foster a strong sense of purpose and connection to family, which can be both rewarding and deeply meaningful. The emotional complexity of balancing these two aspects of life—self and family—can lead the youngest child to develop advanced emotional resilience and adaptability.

Furthermore, the youngest child's role as future caretaker also influences their relationships with their siblings. In some cases, the older siblings may feel relieved or absolved of responsibility, viewing the youngest child as the designated family caregiver. This dynamic can lead to a sense of isolation for the youngest child, who may feel that the burden of caregiving rests solely on their shoulders. Subject C described how their older siblings often expressed gratitude for their willingness to care for their parents, but this acknowledgment also reinforced the expectation that the youngest would be the one to shoulder this responsibility. On the other hand, this role can also create a sense of solidarity within the family, as the youngest child may collaborate with their siblings to ensure their parents' well-being. The youngest child often becomes a central figure in maintaining family cohesion, balancing the practical aspects of caregiving with the emotional needs of the family. This role, while challenging, deepens their connection to both their parents and siblings, shaping the youngest child's identity not only as an individual but as an integral part of the family's future well-being.

## **4 DISCUSSIONS**

The findings of this study underscore the profound impact of parenting on the character formation, growth, and development of children within Javanese families. In the context of Javanese culture, the influence of birth order on child-rearing practices is significant, with each child's developmental trajectory being shaped by their positional status within the family hierarchy. This phenomenon aligns with Adlerian theory, which posits that birth order plays a critical role in the psychological development of individuals (Adler, 1956). According to Adler, each child occupies a unique position in the family constellation, which profoundly affects their self-perception and behavioural patterns. Specifically, for the youngest child, parenting practices in Javanese families are characterized by heightened attention and more pronounced expectations compared to their older siblings. This is consistent with the research of Hurlock (1980), who observed that younger children often receive more intense guidance and face higher demands from their parents. Hurlock's findings suggest that while this heightened attention can lead to a sense of privilege, it also imposes significant expectations on the youngest child, which can shape their development in multifaceted ways. The dynamics of special attention and high expectations experienced by youngest children are further explained through the lens of role theory. According to role theory, individuals are influenced by the roles they are assigned within their social contexts (Biddle, 1986). In Javanese

families, the role of the youngest child often involves both being the recipient of additional care and fulfilling certain familial responsibilities. This dual role can create a complex developmental environment where the youngest child must navigate between the privileges associated with their position and the responsibilities imposed upon them.

Baumrind's (1967) concept of "parenting styles" offers a valuable framework for understanding how different approaches to parenting impact children's development, particularly within the cultural context of Javanese families. Baumrind identified three primary parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Each style is characterized by distinct levels of responsiveness and demandingness, which influence various aspects of a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development (Baumrind, 1967). Authoritative parenting, marked by high responsiveness and high demandingness, is often seen as the most effective style for fostering healthy child development, as it balances emotional warmth with firm boundaries (Baumrind, 1971). In Javanese families, parenting toward the youngest child often reflects elements of the authoritative style, where parents are nurturing and attentive but also set clear expectations. This approach mirrors Baumrind's emphasis on the balance between nurturance and control. Parents provide emotional support while encouraging children to develop self-reliance and autonomy, which aligns with Baumrind's findings that authoritative parenting tends to produce well-adjusted children who are both competent and independent (Baumrind, 1978).

The Javanese cultural values of respect and communal harmony further shape this parenting style, promoting interdependence while still fostering personal responsibility. Further Research supports that authoritative parenting is associated with positive developmental outcomes, such as higher self-esteem, better social skills, and greater emotional regulation (Steinberg, 2001). More recent research, such as that by Llorca et al. (2017), builds on this by highlighting that the authoritative style also fosters positive peer relationships and self-efficacy, crucial factors in adolescent development. Authoritarian parenting, on the other hand, is linked to poorer peer relationships and self-efficacy due to its high control and low responsiveness. In Javanese families, authoritative practices are often evident, particularly toward the youngest child. While they receive special attention, parents simultaneously foster independence by encouraging the child to engage in tasks that promote autonomy, such as learning the value of money.

This nuanced application of parenting reflects a blend of high expectations with warmth and responsiveness, which, as found in multiple studies (Llorca et al., 2017), leads to balanced emotional and cognitive development, rather than fostering dependency. As observed in this study, parents often instil values of discipline and self-sufficiency by encouraging children to understand the consequences of their actions. For example, when young children express a desire for something, parents may delay fulfilling their requests, instead teaching them the value of resources and the effort needed to achieve their goals (Lestari, 2017). This nuanced approach aligns with Baumrind's assertion that responsiveness combined with demandingness fosters resilience and maturity in children (Baumrind, 1991). While the youngest children may receive additional attention, this does not result in overindulgence. Rather, parents maintain an equilibrium between affection and expectations, allowing the children to grow into independent individuals while remaining connected to their familial and cultural roots. Baumrind's model thus provides a useful framework for interpreting the complex interplay of parenting styles, cultural values, and child development in this context, underscoring how culturally specific practices are integrated into broader developmental principles.

Moreover, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) offers a deeper understanding of how the youngest child in a family, particularly in Javanese culture, forms their character through interactions with their siblings. According to Bandura, learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and occurs primarily through observation and imitation of others. In the case of the youngest child, older siblings serve as significant models for behaviour. These siblings often exemplify traits such as independence, responsibility, and hard work, which the youngest child observes and eventually emulates. Bandura's theory posits that children are more likely to imitate behaviours if they observe positive reinforcement or rewards associated with those behaviours. For example, if an older sibling receives praise or recognition for their hard work or independence, the youngest child is more likely to adopt similar behaviours to gain approval or avoid negative consequences. The youngest child's learning is not limited to direct observation; rather, it includes a complex process of internalizing family values, norms, and expectations (Bandura, 1986). This aligns with how Javanese parents teach independence by not fulfilling the youngest child's requests immediately but encouraging them to appreciate the value of effort. Furthermore, siblings provide a micro-environment where social comparisons, cooperation, and rivalry can shape the youngest child's self-concept. The youngest may try to distinguish themselves by developing unique traits or by adopting strategies that have proven successful for their older siblings. Bandura's theory helps explain how these sibling dynamics contribute to the youngest child's gradual development of autonomy and social competence.

The context that must be considered is the financial strain that often accompanies the aging of parents, which can leave the youngest child in a family in a less financially stable environment. This scenario underscores the importance of fostering independence and adaptability in young children. According to Family Systems Theory, as posited by Murray Bowen (1978), individuals are inherently influenced by the interconnectedness of the family system. In this case, young children grow up within a shifting family dynamic where economic pressures or parental health concerns shape their

development. They are required to adapt, often learning empathy and responsibility as they take on roles that meet the broader family's needs (Papero, 2016). Financial difficulties also uniquely influence the youngest child's character development. Subject A described a significant contrast between their upbringing and that of their older siblings, which instilled in them a stronger drive for self-sufficiency. This reflects Adlerian theory, which emphasizes that youngest children may experience feelings of inferiority but are simultaneously motivated to outdo their older siblings in pursuit of personal goals (Adler, 1956). Adler further theorized that this sense of competition fosters growth, as the youngest strives to achieve their own identity within the family. Corey (2013) supports this in his explanation of Adlerian therapy, where the inherent need for personal struggle propels individuals to higher levels of development.

Moreover, the financial strain experienced by the youngest child can foster emotional resilience and problem-solving skills, as they are often required to confront challenges that their older siblings may not have faced. This environment, characterized by limited resources, demands that the youngest child develop a heightened awareness of the family's economic condition, which can lead to a deeper sense of responsibility and contribution to the household. The constant negotiation of personal needs against the backdrop of family limitations nurtures adaptability, a trait that is crucial for navigating adulthood (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999). In line with Family Systems Theory, this experience is not isolated; rather, the youngest child's responses are shaped by the entire family's adaptation to these stressors. The youngest child, observing both their parents and siblings manage financial difficulties, internalizes strategies for resilience and learns to create meaning from adversity, a process that shapes both their worldview and their future decision-making patterns (Bowen, 1978). This ongoing interaction between personal growth and family dynamics further illustrates how external factors such as economic strain can shape character and behaviour in complex ways.

Finally, these findings offer a rich, qualitative insight into how parenting patterns, family dynamics, cultural values, and parenting styles serve as the context for the development of young children into obedient, understanding, independent, and mature individuals. Within the framework of Javanese culture, the emphasis on teaching respect and obedience to parents reflects deeply ingrained community norms (Lestari, 2017). This cultural backdrop intertwines with the developmental experiences of young children, highlighting the significance of fostering open and supportive communication between parents and children. Such communication is crucial to prevent children from feeling overwhelmed by parental expectations, thus ensuring that their growth is nurtured in a balanced and empathetic manner (Rivers, 2014). This qualitative perspective underscores the intricate ways in which cultural and relational factors provide the backdrop for the developmental trajectories of young children within their specific familial and societal contexts. Overall, this process reveals the intricate ways in which these elements converge, illustrating how individual development is deeply embedded within a broader social and cultural framework. Through qualitative exploration, it becomes evident how these dynamic interactions serve as the context of the evolving identities of young children, reflecting the complexity of their developmental journeys within their unique familial and cultural settings.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

This study finds that in Javanese families, the way parents raise their children significantly influences their character and growth, especially for the youngest child. The youngest child often experiences a unique mix of special attention and high expectations from their parents. They are both nurtured and pushed to become independent. This approach can result in the youngest child receiving more care and support compared to their older siblings, who might feel overlooked or envious. As family economic conditions decline, the youngest child learns to be more self-reliant and driven to achieve, sometimes striving to surpass their siblings' accomplishments. These dynamic fosters a sense of responsibility and ambition in the youngest child, preparing them to handle challenges and support their family. Overall, the findings illustrate how parenting styles and family circumstances serve as the context the youngest child's development, balancing care and independence while motivating them to succeed.

To further enhance our understanding of the psychological dynamics of the youngest child within Javanese families, several additional areas warrant exploration in future research, particularly by considering variables that may significantly impact the experiences and development of the youngest child. Firstly, future research could investigate how having a sibling with a disability affects the psychological dynamics of the youngest child. The presence of a sibling with a disability may introduce unique challenges and expectations, both from the family and society. Adler acknowledged in his writings that factors influencing perceived birth order positions might include the presence of siblings with special needs, though this area remains under-researched. As autism and other learning disabilities become more common and psychiatric disorders in children are increasingly diagnosed and treated, there is a growing need for research into how siblings with special needs having affects personality development. A disability may potentially modify perceived birth order positions, alter sibling interactions in terms of teaching and modelling, and influence the process of de-identification. Future studies should explore how these factors are affected by the presence of siblings with disabilities (Marano, 2017).

Finally, exploring how the youngest child navigates their role in this context could provide valuable insights into the support and responsibilities they may assume, as well as the impact on their emotional and psychological well-being.

Secondly, the presence of stepsiblings could provide a unique area for investigation. The dynamics between the youngest child and stepsiblings might differ from those with biological siblings. Research could explore how the presence of stepsiblings influences the roles and expectations placed on the youngest child, and how they adjust to changes in family structure involving stepsiblings (Marano, 2017). By considering these variables, future research has the potential to offer a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how various family conditions impact the psychological dynamics of the youngest child. This research will not only expand our knowledge of the experiences of the youngest child within Javanese cultural contexts but also provide broader insights into the factors affecting their development across different family situations.

Last recommendation for future research is to examine the impact of technology on children's social interactions. Unlike in Adler's time, when sibling interaction was central, today's children are exposed to peers in daycare and school and learn from technology like TV and tablets. They are less dependent on parents and siblings for learning, and as they age, social media further broadens their social circles. Given these changes, new studies are needed to explore how technology influences sibling dynamics, learning, and the relevance of birth order today. Despite societal shifts, Adler's theory has been supported by numerous studies, but updated research is essential to account for evolving cultural and social contexts.

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