Birth Order Paradox: A Phenomenological Study on the Lived Experiences of Eldest Sibling in the Birth Sequence Hierarchy

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ABSTRACT

Background: Age gap plays a huge role in the relationship between siblings since the cognitive development of ten years old is indeed different from a one-year-old. *Method:* This paper made use of the qualitative research approach, individually the phenomenological research design to explore and further understand the experiences of the respondents which are older siblings in an extensive age gap sibling relationship, relative to the central question "In what way do siblings with large age gaps become advantageous and disadvantageous?" Twenty-five semi-structured interview questions were used to gather all the data used in this paper and were later analyzed using an inductive approach in the development of themes. *Findings:* Findings have shown the experiences of older siblings in this kind of family set up in terms of Sibling Relationship, Sibling Roles, Sibling Pressure, and Sibling Adjustments. *Conclusion:* An addition of new members to a family affects the lives of older siblings, especially if the new addition came after half a decade or more. *Recommendation:* To fill in the literature gap, the researchers highly suggest considering a more significant number of respondents as well as birth orders and the gender of older siblings to get a broader perspective on the research topic.

Keywords: Sibling Relationship, Sibling Roles, Pressure, Sibling Adjustments, Older Siblings, Age Gap
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INTRODUCTION

Research on the family structure has burgeoned over the past few decades, as scholars have carefully investigated living arrangement patterns and their implications for child well-being (Brown, 2010; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; as cited by Brown et al., 2015). Family composition and household dynamics among siblings are developed positively or negatively in early life right through adulthood. (Hashim & Ahmad, 2016). The majority of siblings often spend more time with each other than with anyone else. During childhood, siblings are a fundamental part of most children's social worlds. Siblings can genuinely mold the interests and personalities of a person, and the way he or she connects with his or her family and friends (Buist, Dekovic, & Prinzie, 2013 as cited by Fuller, 2019). Age gaps in siblings play a considerable role in the personality and the relationship of the siblings. More significant age gaps between siblings negatively affect the personality traits of the youngest child in a two-child household. Specifically, a more significant birth gap leads to more disorganized behavior, more neuroticism and more introversion (Golsteyn & Magnée, 2017). Furthermore, several authors found that birth order influences children's personality and treatment by parents (Healey & Ellis, 2007; Pinel-Jacquemin & Gaudron, 2013; Rhode et al., 2003; & Pillemer, 2007; as cited on the Undergraduate Scholars Research Conference of The Western States Communication Association, 2016) Older siblings are positioned to guide and build the development of younger siblings, rather than the reverse, given their older age, more developed cognitive skills, and experience in the teacher role (Howe, Della Porta, Recchia, & Ross, 2015; Prime, Perlman, Tackett & Jenkins, 2014; Recchia, Howe & Alexander, 2009 as cited by Prime, 2017). Similarly, children are most likely to imitate models that are warm and nurturing, high in status, and similar to themselves (Bandura, 1977 as cited by Prime, 2017); to this end, older siblings represent prime candidates from which children may learn, that tends younger siblings to imitate or copy their older brother or sister's behavior and action as they serve as their role models.

Also, studies in recent years indicated the stimulus of the birth order towards the youth's academic accomplishment. This portrays the significance of birth planning to a child's development and expected behavior in terms of education. A recent study found substantial and robust effects of birth order on education. Similarly, another researcher utilized data from the 2003 British Household Panel Survey to analyze the degree to which family size and birth order affect a child's educational

attainment. Their principal findings conclude that higher birth order children receive, on average, a lower share of family resources. (Black, Devereux and Salvanes, 2005; Booth and Kee, 2005; As cited by Chen, 2016). Taking all these points into consideration, the researchers have caught their interest in this topic because of the seemingly unexplored study on the lived experience of older siblings, by their birth sequence hierarchy. The purpose of this study was to examine the behavior of the eldest sibling, adjusting to the birth hierarchy sequence set-up in a household.

Unlike the younger siblings, there have been few studies that have focused on older siblings when it concerns age gaps. This study aims to explore the overlooked lived experiences of older siblings in an uncommon family set up like a comprehensive age gap sibling relationship and to learn its benefits and its effect on the cognitive development of the child. The researchers aimed to profoundly understand the life the sibling experienced and see its impact on his/her development. This research aims to understand the effect of having a new member of a family after a long period to the previous child.

The researchers observed how the birth of a new sibling changed the life of the older sibling in terms of resources, attention, and treatment. As the older siblings realized their familial circumstances, this encouraged them to be matured and responsible enough for their parents and younger siblings. Such turn of events leads the older sibling to develop skills such as leadership skills, independence, and vigilant intelligence.

METHOD

Research Design

This study is qualitative oriented research precisely a phenomenological approach, for it focuses more on a lived experience within a particular group or person. Relating to the researchers' title, it focuses on the lived experiences of siblings with a significant age gap. The qualitative research approach is used to understand the experiences and perceptions of humans further. (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & De Lacey, 2016.) The researchers chose this kind of approach because it is concerned with creating answers to the *whys* and *hows* of the phenomenon in question and uses methods like in-depth interviews that do not apply to quantitative research. In the researchers' topic, it is advisable to use this kind of approach in order to get a detailed answer from the respondents. Phenomenological research aims to explore and study the lived experiences of humans in a humanistic and interpretative approach (Mohajan, 2018.)

Research Locus and Sample

The researchers had conducted this study in Philippine School Doha (PSD), a well-known Filipino school in Qatar, which excels in optimum quality education that ensuring its students to be globally competitive graduates. With its outstanding performance, local and international achievements like the institutional accreditation of the Qatar National School Accreditation (QNSA); Philippine School Doha has always been making its name through recognitions, acknowledged by Philippine Schools Overseas (PSOs) in the Middle East.

The school was selected due to the accessibility of having the guidance of our research teacher, Dr. Fredelito Don John Vallesteros, and our research adviser, Dr. Evelyn S. Mariñas. Some interviews had also gone through outside the campus to accommodate the respondent's preferences adequately.

Figure 1 Map of Qatar Retrieved from www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/middle-east/qatar/

The chosen participants of this study were older siblings with a sibling that has a 5-year age gap or more. The selection of the participants for this study was made through qualitative purposive sampling strategy (Creswell and Plano, 2011; Bernard, 2017; Patton, 2005; Vallesteros 2018; as cited by Umali et al., 2018) which is based on the people who have phenomenological social status, a status that is neither earned nor chosen but assigned. Neubauer (2019) stated the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it, so we should find people with experiences relating to the topic.

Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

Data needed in this study were gathered through a semi-structured interview with the assistance of instruments such as the *robotfoto* and the twenty-five semi-structured interview guide. The *robotfoto* (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Garcia &

Acosta, 2016; as cited by Umali et al. 2018) sought the demographic sketch of the participants, namely educational attainment, work experience, and years of stay in the State of Qatar. The twenty-five item semi-structured interview guide was also used in following up on specific ideas or issues to explore specific experiences ensuring that the sensitivity of subject being researched will float in participants' consciousness (Fossey, 2002; Garcia & Acosta, 2016; as cited by Umali et al, 2018). Data gathered were transcribed verbatim with the help of the recording gadget, and the participants were assured that their responses were treated with utmost confidentiality (Kayed & Hassan, 2013 as cited by Umali et al., 2018). Before the data collection proper, a pilot interview was enacted. This is an integral aspect and useful in the process of conducting phenomenological qualitative research as it highlights the preparation for a significant study (Majid et al., 2017 as cited by Umali et al., 2018). Subsequently, the researchers sought approval from the participants through written consent.

Data Analysis

The researchers had followed the inductive approach in theme development (Ryan, 2003; Vallesteros, 2018 as cited by Umali et al., 2018) to analyze the gathered data in this study comprehensively: (1) reading and rereading of the transcribed data to obtain the general sense of the participants' idea or opinion; (2) changing thought units from the language of the participants (emic) to the language of the researchers (etic); (3) sorting formulated meanings into categories and cluster of themes via a *dendrogram*(Faulkner and Sparkes; costa,2010 as cited by Umali et al., 2018); (4) creating a simulacrum for the visual representation of the findings; (5) subjecting developing themes to triangulation and member checking procedures to explore credibility of the results (McWiliam et al., 2009 as cited by Umali et al., 2018).
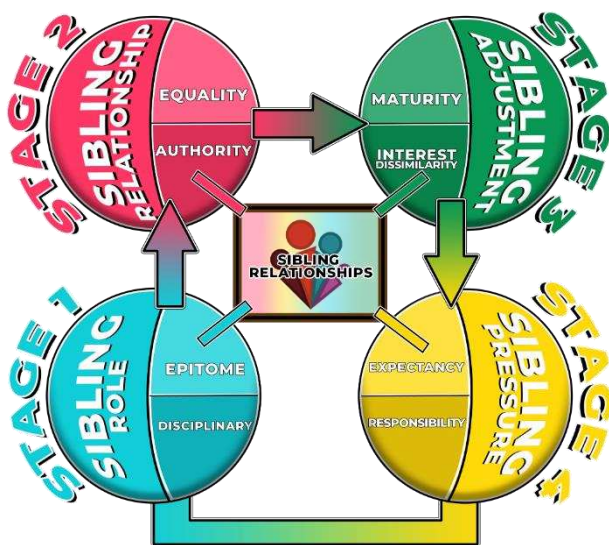
Findings

Figure 4 is the simulacrum that showcases the four significant themes found in the respondents' responses, namely Sibling Relationship, Sibling Roles, Sibling Pressure, and Sibling Adjustments.

This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of older siblings in a broad age gap sibling relationship that is concerning the central question: "In what way do siblings with large age gaps become advantageous and disadvantageous?" This central question has been narrowed down to focus on one specific question that is: "What are the common advantages and disadvantages experienced by the older sibling in a wide age gap sibling relationship?"

Figure 4: The simulacrum shows the distinct relationship of the older siblings with their younger siblings in a family setting. The interaction revolves around the four major themes: *Sibling Role, Sibling Relationship, Sibling Adjustments, and Sibling Pressure.* Each of the themes is composed of two subthemes; these subthemes are *Epitome* and *Disciplinary*, *Equality* and *Authority*, **Maturity** and **Interest Dissimilarity**, and *Expectancy* and *Responsibility*, respectively.

The simulacrum consists of different stages that the older sibling experience in a wide age gap relationship. The 1st stage is role identification, wherein the older sibling recognizes his or her role in the family. The 2nd stage is determining the relationship between his or her younger sibling/s. The 3rd stage is distinguishing the adjustments that the older sibling has to do for his or her younger siblings, and the last stage is enumerating various pressures that the older sibling has to cope. The themes are designed to form a picture frame that represents the growth and unity of the family.

Sibling Roles

In society, we have roles wherein we fulfill our supposed and expected function. People have expected results when It comes to a specific role, and the same goes for the next central theme, "Sibling Roles." Each sibling is given a set of responsibilities and expectations that are set by their parents, which is usually based on their birth order or age. As for the eldest, there are lots of expectations from them, since they are seen to be the mature and responsible one.

To start, with the first sub-theme "role model." The eldest believe that they are primarily responsible for the positive or negative

influences that they give to their younger siblings since they are with the most of the time. It is their role to be the best example they can be growing up, as the respondents mentioned:

"Yes, I feel responsible for my younger sibling, in such a way that whenever I see them doing a bad action, it is an instinct of mine to punish them. Because I would not want them to grow up keeping it as a habit, because I want them to be better than me." (P4)

Additionally, the eldest also believe that it is a part of their responsibility set by their parents to be with him or her most of the time as the respondent has mentioned:

"Yes, in a way that I just do not think only for myself, but I also have to think about them because my parents wanted me to help them because they are still young and cannot think yet. That is why I put my best into it and I have to make sure that my task will be done." (P5)

As for the next sub-theme "Discipline," the eldest believe that they are also responsible when it comes to instilling discipline to them, whenever the parents are gone, they are next to take charge in the household, they have the authority among their siblings and as their role model, it is important to take actions to mold the sibling's behavior in the way they want to.

The eldest believe that they do have the authority over his or her siblings, it is their responsibility to tell them what is right and wrong what he or she should do in a particular situation and follow errand as well, as the respondents have mentioned:

"Yes, I do have authority over my younger siblings. I would always show them that we should respect older people and follow them as long as they are right. There are times that I tell them that they should have listened to what I said so that some situations could be avoided. As part of my authority, I could also tell them to do something for me." (P2)

Yes, in a way that I just don't think only for myself, but I also have to think about them because my parents wanted me to help them because they are still young and cannot think yet. That is why I put my best into it, and I have to make sure that my task will be done." (P5)

Furthermore, the eldest also believe that even though they have the authority over them, he or she is never perfect, so they should learn from the mistakes they have done, as the respondents have mentioned:

"Yes, I should be reliable and be a role model for my younger sibling, but I always remind him that even I have flaws, so he should also learn from my mistakes." (P6)

Additionally, the eldest are aware they shape their siblings to who they are in the future through words and actions, that is why they are cautious when he/she is around them because they are seen as the role model, someone that they should imitate in terms of behavior and it is expected that they are leading them to the right path.

"Being the older sibling, you have to watch out for your actions because it may create a ripple effect on her as she will imitate whatever you do and whatever she sees. Therefore, you have to be a good role model." (P3)

The respondents also added that they should also think before any action that they do because of how it can be a part of their habit as they grow up, the respondents also explain that they explain any wrong action they do so they will not imitate. According to the respondents:

"Being the eldest affects my actions. Because I need to think twice and thrice before doing something. Because if my younger siblings see it, they will think it is the right thing to do, they will start to imitate and adapt to it, until it is a part of their habit when they grow up, leading to a bad future. That is why I always take precautions before doing a certain action." (P4)

"I have to be a role model to my younger sibling; when I do something bad, and he saw sees it, I have to explain it to him." (P6)

With them taking charge of disciplining them, he/she is seen as the leader, someone that younger siblings should follow, they are seen in the same way they see their parents, someone you should ask permission to, and someone that scolds you when it needs be. This role in some way is advantageous and beneficial to them according to the respondents:

"I guess with money because I have access to that and I can buy whatever I want, with him, he needs my approval because I do not want him to be spoiled, so I am controlling him as well. He also needs my assistance in turning on some of the gadgets, so

sometimes I am telling him that my device is broken, but in reality, it is not." (P1)

The respondents think it is more beneficial when it comes to owning things such as clothes, which they cannot borrow for their age, as the respondent has mentioned:

"It becomes useful in terms of borrowing each other's clothes. As she is still young for my type of fashion, she cannot borrow my clothes." (P3)

The eldest has a lot on their plate; there are lots of expectations and standards that should be fulfilled and responsibilities that should be done at such a young age. It is a role that should be taken seriously, for they contribute to their sibling's future, attitude, and outlook on life.

Sibling Relationships

Being a brother or a sister is a big challenge because it holds many responsibilities. Some kind of authority must play in the role of being an older sibling. Authority is the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience, as stated by the Oxford Dictionary.

Based on the respondents' responses, they express their authorization or their older sibling figure, through their way of showing discipline, teaching their younger siblings fundamental morals and values in life. Values are fundamental beliefs that serve as a guide to motivate attitudes or actions. It describes the personal qualities we choose to embody, as it reflects on our actions. Thus, older siblings ensure to show their authority power towards their younger sibling on disciplining them and teaching them ethical values. Moreover, some respondents have also mentioned expressing their authority through assigning tasks and errands to do to teach their younger siblings how to handle responsibilities at times and teach simple chores. As a respondent has stated:

"In chores, I can tell them to do this kind of chore-like my brother in grade 7, and I tell him to wash the dishes at least the glasses. I can also tell them to help in preparing the table in the morning, folding the clothes and putting it in the cabinet" (P5)

"I can give him commands, even little things, for example, whenever I want to tell my mom something, but I have to leave, I will ask my brother to tell it to my mom for me. I have authority over my brother, for example, when he is noisy in our house, and our board mates are disturbed, they will tell me to talk to my brother, and so I will talk to him and reprimand him." (P6)

Due to the considered wide age gap that siblings have, parenting plays a significant role as it affects sibling relationships. Some tend to have different kinds of sibling relationships.

"We are very close currently because my brother is homeschooling, so at home, I am his best friend. Currently, I am having this dilemma because I am going to college so we will be separated and with our age gap we are very close to each other, I know him, he knows me, he needs me, and he's always looking for me as well. Our relationship is very quipped or very close, and with that closeness, I am getting afraid to leave him with my parents since I will be away for college." (P1)

"Maybe one would think that our age gap will hinder us from being close, but my younger sister and I are close, and we would spend a lot of time together. Even if I have a lot of school-related works, we would always have time to bond and interact with each other." (P2)

As some respondent has said, they have a strong relationship with their younger sibling despite having a wide age gap. Although, some respondents suggest that they have a love and hate relationship with their younger siblings. As they have said:

"Our relationship is good even though we fight sometimes." (P3)

"I wrote there in the description' love and hate relationship' because I believe that we have this mutual relationship that we both benefit from everything, not just only him or me." (P5)

However, one respondent had a different answer from the other respondents. This respondent suggests that he/she has a distant relationship with his/her younger sibling. As the respondent had mentioned:

"We do not have a typical relationship between most siblings. Like I said it is like have two worlds in a room, though we do not usually talk, we still inform each through actions that we are siblings by heart and mind." (P4)

Sibling Adjustments

Having another sibling five years or more apart from someone can be a significant adjustment on their lifestyle, their treatment, and their development. The process of adjusting plays a considerable role in the social relationships of the older sibling, especially in adapting to a new environment where there is a new priority.

The first sub-theme "Sibling adjustments," indicates how the child is affected by having a sibling who is 5- years younger. The older sibling faced dilemmas such as having divided attention and at the same time pressure for carrying a lot of responsibilities from the birth of their younger sibling to their maturing stage, as mentioned:

"I had mixed feelings when my younger sister was born. I was very excited to have a younger sister finally, but I was worried that my parents would not have any time for me anymore and just focus on the baby. We even hired someone to look after my sister when my parents were away. (P2)"

"When the baby was born, my parents' expectations from me got higher, and more responsibilities came. Financial wise, our budget was divided more because raising a child would require a lot of money. (P2)"

For the second sub-theme "Interest Dissimilarity," the older sibling emphasizes how their age gap made a massive gap in their relationship as well due to their interests, such as when the lack of experience, having their preferences, and responsibilities.

"The age gap affects our relationship in a way that sometimes we do not understand each other's sides when problems arise. Such as she does not understand me and what I am going through because there are some things I cannot explain to her yet as she is not yet mature enough to understand. (P3)"

"Since we started forming our world, we started having our interests as well. This resulted in having little to no talks in our house. (P4)"

"The generation gap affects our relationship. I am an old-fashioned person who likes old songs, and he cannot relate to it, and there are times we could not understand each other. (P6)"

As for the third sub-theme "Maturity Development," similarly to the previous sub-theme "interest Dissimilarity," the older sibling emphasizes the difference in experiences. Most responses show how their age gap positively mold their maturity in terms of leadership, communication, and being a good role model.

"You become mature with the things that you do, and you would be knowledgeable about handling someone. In academics, it would improve your leadership since you would know how to delegate the task with your members but then at home, you would know what task you would ask for your brother. You would improve in communication as well. (P1)"

We are different because of the generation gap between us. I have experienced more hardships and struggles in my life compared to my siblings. (P4)"

"Being the older sibling, you have to watch out for your actions because it may create a ripple effect on her as she will imitate whatever you do and whatever you see. Therefore, you have to be a good role model. (P3)"

Sibling Pressure

One of the main four themes that the researchers found is pressure. Other respondents often feel pressure due to the expectations of their parents and the responsibilities imposed upon them.

When the family of the respondents increased in terms of numbers due to the new addition of the family. The parents' expectations towards the child heightened due to the significant age gaps between the new siblings. The older siblings are now expected to act as the second parents of the newborn child. As the respondents expressed their hardships in reaching their parents' expectations:

"As an older sibling, you are tasked to reach the expectations of your parents. I was expected to finish my studies so that I would be able to let my younger siblings' study, as well. It is also the role of the eldest to look after my younger siblings because if my siblings do something wrong, their actions would be pointed at me, which I think is unfair sometimes. "(P4)

"Pressure and expectation. More expectations will bring you more pressure on your part so everything boils down to pressure and there are lots of factors that are affecting you and you need to be cautious of your actions and you need to know how to handle your brother as a young teenager as well as you need to be more responsible with your time. "(P1)

Furthermore, the responses also expressed the difficulties that come with being the older sibling in this type of sibling relationship. As the respondents discussed:

"The disadvantages for me are the high expectations of my parents, and if I fail on something, I would always get scolded. I would also get compared to other older siblings or even to my younger sister. "(P2)

Yes, it is tough. I would always complain about being the older sibling. I have so many responsibilities and I always need to think about my younger siblings. My parents are also expecting me to be the next parent of my sisters and to support them financially and support their education in the future."

The respondent also further expressed that the choices and decisions they make are affected by their birth order in the family.

"I even asked myself if I am still going to marry, or I will just look after my two younger sisters. The pressure of being the older sibling would always be there, and you'll also get compared to other older siblings. (P2)

Furthermore, a set of more substantial and additional responsibilities came along with the new sibling in the lives of the respondents. These responsibilities became too much to handle for the respondents, which resulted in a heavier load of pressure. As the respondents mentioned:

"Being the older sibling means having all the responsibilities, if my parents caught my siblings doing an adverse action, I take all the blame and share of the punishments as well, because this means I was not leading them to the right path. That is why I try to solve all the problems because my siblings cannot do it without my guidance. "(P4)

"Yes, my parents would always remind me that I am also responsible for my younger siblings. I need to be the person who is going to be there for them when my parents are no longer with us. It is like their future depends on me, and I fear that if I didn't do my job, they would end up in a bad situation, but I love my sisters, and I would not want them to end up in that way. "(P2)

"Yes, in a way that I just do not think only for myself, but I also have to think about them because my parents wanted me to help them because they are still young and cannot think yet. That is why I put my best into it, and I have to make sure that my task will be done." (P5)

Furthermore, the older sibling faced dilemmas in handling these responsibilities, as the respondents mentioned:

"The disadvantages of being the older sibling have many responsibilities, and if you made a simple mistake at home or if your sibling has been scolded, my parents would always put it back to you in the sense of failure as a good sister. "(P3)

"There are many disadvantages, first is a responsibility, because I am responsible to my three younger siblings, so if they get lost, it is my job to find them, or I will be the one to blame. Second is priorities, I need to prioritize my younger sibling because they are important to me. It is also shown how Filipino parents prioritize their younger siblings more than the older ones; that is why it is kind of unfair." (P5)

Based on the responses of the respondents, responsibilities could be overwhelming if it gets too much. The respondents would also often think about their younger siblings first before they think about themselves.

DISCUSSION

Siblings have a significant influence on one another as they grow older based on many factors that affect their growth and relationship with one another. (Noller 2005; As cited by Whiteman, Solmeyer, and Mchale, 2016.) Though being an older sibling is a difficult task, sibling relationships have specific unique characteristics.

Moreover, Sibling relationship qualities have been linked to both family dynamics and structural characteristics, such as gender, age spacing, and birth order (Overlock, 2017). Each child is born into a predetermined class of birth order and is attributed to different characteristics due to their position and the family environment. It was suggested that these characteristics were learned and may be responsible for many behaviors throughout the child's lifetime (Adler, 1979; as cited by Shah, & Jadav, 2016). Also, age spacing and gender can be a significant element in the cause of sibling rivalry as well. Age or age gap gives older siblings a

more excellent capability to control interactions. (Solmeyer et al., 2014; Tucker et al., 2013 as cited by Overlock, 2017).

Sibling Roles

As stated by the Oxford Dictionary, role is the function or position that someone has or is expected to have in an organization, in society, or in a relationship, it can also be the degree to which someone is involved in a situation and the effect that they have on it, because the older sibling, like any member in a family, has a major role to fulfill, especially with the relationship of his or her siblings. Sibling relationships are a source of positive support and skills development and can improve self-regulation and emotional understanding. Siblings typically function as models of acceptable or unacceptable behavior within the home and can serve as guides to the social world outside the reaches of family influence. (Stormshak, Bullock, and Falkenstein, 2016).

Regarding the first sub-theme "Role Model," According to Society for Research in Child Development, older siblings play an essential role in the lives of their younger siblings. Like parents, older brothers and sisters act as role models and teachers, helping their younger siblings learn about the world. This positive influence is thought to extend to younger siblings' capacity to feel care and sympathy for those in need. It is because of this responsibility that older siblings over-immerse themselves in the parental role, creating a tricky balance between being a child and adult at the same time. Because it is their role to adjust to their role and responsibility, this can give additional pressure to the eldest because they feel that they are not allowed to make mistakes (Jambon et,al., 2018). In addition to that, older siblings acted as role models and socialization agents for younger siblings. In contrast, younger siblings engaged in learning and imitation Studies specific to Western emerging adults' development find similar results. Older siblings are perceived—by both their younger siblings and themselves—to assume a protective and caregiving role by giving more advice, being less influenced by younger siblings, and serving as a source of knowledge for emerging adulthood. (Wu et al., 2018). As for the second sub-theme which is " disciplining" the age difference between siblings often makes the issues of power and control as well as rivalry and jealousy sources of contention for children, but also provide a context for more positive types of complementary exchanges, such as teaching, helping, and caregiving interactions. (Howe & Recchia, 2014) Correspondingly, First-borns have parental expectations and additional pressure to succeed. This will instill a higher drive to achieve in the firstborn, and anxiety of inability to live up to parental expectations. This can cause the firstborn fear failure to such an extent that they set even higher standards. There are more pressure and higher expectations set from them. (Flanagan, & Morrison, 2007; as cited by Shah, & Jadav, 2016)

Sibling Relationship

Family and sibling relationships play a significant role in one's life as the home is where a child grows and develops. Sibling relationships are unlike any other relationship as it is involuntary and permanent and is the most enduring relational tie of most people's lives (Floyd & Morman, 2014 as cited by Worthington, 2019) Thus, sibling relationships play an important role in family life (Howe & Recchia, 2014), and the quality of sibling relationships has significant impact in their whole life journey.

Individuals rely on their family, siblings included, for support, both emotionally and material (Silva Júnior, Dunbar, & Brito, 2014). However, due to older siblings holding great responsibility in the family, in some circumstances, their attitude, emotionally to be specific, changes. Especially the treatment of older siblings to their younger siblings, they tend to become more authoritative.

Older siblings show their authority to their younger siblings may come in different forms, in particular, showing authority through acts of discipline and assigning some errands. Furthermore, a sibling relationship can be described as how siblings interact and engage with each other. The relationship of siblings may vary from having a distant and weak relationship to a very close and healthy relationship.

Closeness in siblings is one of the most studied topics in siblings' relationships (Floyd & Morman, 2014). The more emotional closeness there is in a sibling relationship, the higher the commitment and contact there is during their life. Myers (2015) defines these relationships as individuals who develop a sibling relationship based on mutual empathy, love, concern, and understanding, similar to a best friend relationship. Siblings having a healthy relationship are a positive thing leading the family into a better and stable relationship.

One of the significant effects of differences in sibling relationships is the large age gap. Older children often experience trauma when a younger child is born, and they feel replaced by a new sibling. A child may feel a loss of a previous sense of the self and the loss of the mother as a person before a new sibling arrival. If a child experiences a new sibling arrival as a threat of annihilation, he or she may feel envy towards him/her.

Jealousy and competition are a normal part of childhood but should not be encouraged by parents, or it will increase (Greif & Woolley, 2016). Favoritism is another factor that leads to jealousy among siblings. Hence these kinds of feeling recognized over time might lead to unhealthy sibling rivalry and sibling having distant and weak relationships. However, if they did not feel jealousy between their siblings, they are more likely to be close to their siblings (Greif & Woolley, 2016).

Nevertheless, developmental changes entail changes in relationships. Therefore, weak sibling relationships may be compromised and change through less social interaction of the children showing affection and being more open to one another.

Differences in the treatment of parents to their children may also affect sibling relationships. Parental behavior and family-related experiences may influence the quality of the relationship of siblings to one another (Portner & Riggs, 2016).

The relationship of parent to child is modeled through the relationship of a family. Warm and positive parental behavior encourages siblings to engage in similar behaviors with their siblings; thus, building a close and robust sibling relationship. Unlike, the presence of negative behaviors in the parent-child relationship, such as punitive treatment, may carry over as harsh and aggressive behavior in sibling relationships. Furthermore, parents treating siblings equally may have sound effects on the foundation of the relationship of the children.

Sibling Adjustments

Relationships with siblings differ from those with other partners. Given their proximity and availability during childhood and adolescence, siblings are frequent, though not necessarily sought out companions and social partners (McHale et al., 1996; Updegraff et al., 2005; as cited by Whiteman et al., 2016). Siblings have a significant influence on one another as they grow older. From their childhood to maturity, many factors affecting their developmental growth are present on how the older sibling adjusts due to the circumstances he/she is in.

Relationships with brothers and sisters are also distinctive in their emotional intensity--both positive and negative, leading to their characterization as love-hate or emotionally ambivalent relationships (Noller, 2005; as cited by Whiteman et al., 2016). Siblings either grow a feeling of responsibility and overprotectiveness towards the other or sometimes jealousy due to unlike treatment, which results in conflicting behaviors. Younger siblings received much more emotional support and intimacy from their elder siblings (Oliva et al., 2005; as cited by Soysal, 2015). It is reported that younger siblings admired their elder siblings, while elder siblings felt much more jealousy and hostile feelings toward the younger siblings (Buhrnmaster, 1992; Soysal, 2015).

Regarding the older siblings' communication adjustments, though children may not be as adept as adults at adapting their speech to younger children, siblings are able to adjust their teaching strategies to their younger siblings' ages Indeed, having older siblings positively affects: social-communicative skills the ability to join in conversations and some aspects of syntactic development, such as pronoun use (Dunn & Kendrick, 1982; Dunn & Shatz, 1989, Perez-Granados & Callanan, 1997;Mannle et al., 1992, Hoff, 2006; Takane et al., 1996; as cited by Havron, 2019). Besides, in research on bilingual families, older siblings are found to be effective second-language models, as their second-language skills can be better than the parents', and they tend to use the second language with their younger siblings (Bridges & Hoff, 2014; Duncan, 2017; Havron, 2019). Older siblings are capable of adjusting their way of speaking to be able to converse with their younger siblings in a flowy manner.

Also, siblings receive divided attention due to their younger siblings' influence, which affected their lifestyles. According to the resource dilution model (Blake, 1981; Havron, 2019), a family has limited resources to distribute between siblings, and the more children the family has, the fewer resources are allocated to each child. These resources can be material like books, games, and necessities or personal, like providing attention or teaching various stuff (Havron, 2019).

Older siblings undergo pressure due to responsibilities expected from their parents (Soysal, 2015). Specific roles are expected to be fulfilled based on the siblings' birth order. For instance, older siblings are expected to take care of the younger siblings and do the chores. The elder child of the family was more likely to substitute the parent as the age difference increased in siblings (Soysal, 2015). The elder sibling not only took care of them but also helped with their education and socialization (Cicirelli, 1994; Soysal, 2015)

On the subject of adapting, siblings develop their sense of identity, which creates a specific role for them. A theory that supports the idea is the deidentification theory. This theory postulates that, as siblings select their distinct niches in the family, sibling comparison and rivalry decline resulting in fewer sources of conflict. It may also be the case that as siblings become more different, they spend less time together and thus have fewer opportunities to argue and fight with one another, further reducing sibling conflict (Doughty, 2015).

For the second sub-theme "Interest Dissimilarity," one of its factors is their variation in experiences due to their age gap. The natural power differences that result from the age difference between siblings mean that two children are likely to have different experiences in the family (Howe et al., 2014).

Youths' activity interests may be a particularly appropriate topic for analyses of sibling differentiation because they reflect individual identity (Barber et al., 2001; Doughty, 2015), as well as youths' emerging priorities and orientation to time use. Adolescence has been described as a time of personal reflection and growth, with adolescents exploring many different possible identities—a process that may include testing out a wide variety of different activities and interests (Marcia, 1966; Doughty, 2015). Siblings who have different preferences from one another may lead to conflicts in terms of ideas and opinions on certain areas. Having such factors in a relationship can be detrimental to their bond.

Typically, older siblings acted as role models and socialization agents for younger siblings, while younger siblings engaged in learning and imitation (Whiteman et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2018). Studies specific to Western emerging adults' development find similar results (Wu et al., 2018). Older siblings are perceived by both their younger siblings and themselves to assume a protective and caregiving role by giving more advice, being less influenced by younger siblings, and serving as a source of knowledge for emerging adulthood (Paulsen, 2013; Voorpostel et al., 2007; Wu et al., 2018). It is evident that older siblings are expected to be role models towards their younger siblings; this caused them to carry a responsibility they must fulfill. Firstborn siblings engage in leadership, teaching, caregiving, and helping roles, whereas second-born siblings are more likely to imitate, follow, be a learner, and elicit care and help (Howe et al., 2014).

Sibling Pressure

Parents impose pressure on their children in which the parents want their children to follow their value system and norms. (Sangma, et al., 2018)

Based on the results of the interview, the pressure is present in most of the responses of the respondents. Different factors cause the pressure above, but it is mainly due to expectations and responsibilities that come with being the older sibling.

Expectancy is the first sub-theme under the central theme "Pressure." The respondents have mentioned their negative experiences of pressure due to the expectations of their parents. These expectations could be factors to their stress level, especially if it gets too much.

On a similar note, high parental pressure has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, high parental expectations lead to a positive academic performance of adolescents. On the other hand, high parental pressure to children may be a factor for stress and depression of adolescents. (Ma, et al., 2018)

One of the most common expectations that the respondent mentioned is school-related. The academic performance of the older siblings plays a vital role in the academic performance of their younger siblings. This could implicitly make the older sibling feel more pressure. It has also been proven that the academic pressure also increases during the adolescent years (Wang et al., 2019)

Furthermore, there are many factors why parents pressure their children to attain high grades in academics such as social respect, scholarship, parents' future and parents' investment on the children's education (Irfan, Nasreen 2014.) One of the biggest contributors to academic stress is parental pressure. Academic stress can lead to negative effects, specifically in the mental health of adolescents. (Quach, 2015; Deb, Strodl & Sun, 2015).
Moreover, parents do not only expect their eldest child to perform well in their academics, but parents also expect them to act as the second parents of their younger children. Firstborn children are usually the parent surrogate to their younger siblings. (Lynn Ng, Mofrad, & Uba, 2014).

Indeed, parental pressure plays a huge role in the stress level of youths. The struggles that the children are experiencing in trying to meet their parents' expectations can lead to an unhealthy mental state.

The second sub-theme under Pressure is Responsibility. The degree of responsibility increases with the age of people. Once a human gets older, the rate of their responsibilities gets harder and increases.

Furthermore, older siblings are seen as the more responsible and are more focused on pleasing their parents. (Black, Grönqvist, & Öckert, 2017). The respondents also stated that their priorities had changed when they had a new member of the family, like being the source of financial support of their siblings when they grow up. One respondent even mentioned their concerns about

their future as they will be the ones who will be in charge of their siblings' education and wellness once their parents retire. Older siblings do not only think about themselves but also about their younger siblings. There have been tons of reports by older siblings who are worrying about the future of their brothers and sisters. (Davys, Mitchell, & Haigh, 2015).

Similarly, it was stated that older siblings also play a part in the responsibilities that are concerning their younger siblings, but they should not expect to rely on their younger siblings. (Wu, Kim, Nagata, & Kim, 2018).

In conclusion, the sense of responsibility to the respondents grew with the feeling of pressure. Also, the respondents have a heavy responsibility to their younger siblings as their secondary parents. The respondent's priorities are also divided between their future and their siblings' future. The pressure made the respondents think not only about their future but also the future of their siblings.

CONCLUSION

Most children grew up with a sister or a brother. They spent most of their childhood with their siblings as they live under the same roof. Sibling relationship lasts longer than other regular personal relationships, and it plays a vital role in children's lives (Van, Guerguis, & Kramer, 2017)

The study explores the experiences of older siblings in a broad age gap sibling relationship and discovered four major themes which are shown in the simulacrum, namely, Sibling Relationships, Sibling Roles, Pressure, and Sibling Adjustments. The themes convey the experiences of older siblings in an extensive age gap sibling relationship.

Moreover, sibling relationships have been shown to impact how children behave and whom they become (Kluger et al., 2006; Lewis, 2006 as cited by Crow, Jennifer 2015). Based on this study, the researchers have discovered as parental treatment as creating a significant impact on the relationship of siblings. Fortunately, the respondents have responded positively to their parents, treating them equally.

In terms of the development of the younger siblings, older siblings played a crucial part. Children tend to copy what they see from older people and siblings uses this to their advantage for them to be a role model, and transmit societal values, standards, and customs to their younger siblings. (Palacios et al., 2016.) Furthermore, it is also important to note that as younger siblings emerge to adulthood and they have to choose what they want to be in life, they have the choice to conform and take on the identity of their older sibling. It is mainly because the eldest's personality heavily influences the rest of the siblings, and they tend to look at them as role models, teachers, as perfect examples for them and follow their footsteps. (Van, Guerguis, & Kramer, 2017)

Furthermore, when the new sibling arrived in the family, the respondents all felt jealousy, just like what has been stated in other studies. A newly joined baby causes some negative behavior patterns on the previous siblings. However, the attitude of parents to their children can affect the situation (Dağcıoğlu, 2018.)

For future studies, the researchers recommend having a broader set of respondents to have more precise and more subjective responses. The researchers also recommend considering different factors such as birth order and the gender of the older siblings to tackle a more specific topic. Different age groups are also highly recommended to be interviewed to have a more comprehensive set of perspectives.

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