

THE ETHNOPSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO STUDYING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTS AND THE ELDEST CHILD

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Abstract:

The article examines the ethnocultural characteristics of parent-child relationships, focusing on the interactions between parents and their eldest child. It explores the influence of cultural traditions, values, and societal norms on parental expectations, upbringing practices, and the child's role within the family structure. The study highlights cross-cultural differences in family dynamics and emphasizes the impact of historical and social contexts on parenting styles. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how ethnocultural factors shape the psychological and emotional development of the eldest child.

Keywords. Ethnocultural characteristics, parent-child relationships, eldest child, upbringing practices, family dynamics, cultural traditions, parenting styles, social norms.

Introduction

Family relationships play a crucial role in shaping an individual's psychological and social development. Among these relationships, the interaction between parents and their eldest child holds a special place, as it is often influenced by deep-rooted ethnocultural traditions, social norms, and family expectations. The eldest child frequently assumes unique responsibilities within the family, serving as a role model for younger siblings and acting as a bridge between parents and the younger generation.

Different cultures assign distinct roles and expectations to the eldest child, which can affect their upbringing, emotional development, and social positioning. In

some societies, the firstborn is given greater authority and responsibility, while in others, they may experience stricter discipline or higher parental expectations [2]. These variations highlight the impact of ethnocultural factors on parenting styles and the emotional bonds between parents and their firstborn child.

This article aims to explore the ethnocultural characteristics of parent-eldest child relationships, analyzing the ways in which cultural values, historical backgrounds, and societal norms shape parenting practices. By examining these factors, the study seeks to provide insights into the role of tradition and social expectations in family dynamics, contributing to a broader understanding of parenting across different cultures.

In various societies, the eldest child holds a unique position within the family. This role is often shaped by cultural traditions, historical influences, and societal expectations. In collectivist cultures, such as those in Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa, the eldest child is frequently seen as a second authority figure after the parents, responsible for taking care of younger siblings and assisting with household duties. In contrast, in individualistic cultures, such as those in Western Europe and North America, the eldest child may have more personal freedom but still experience high parental expectations regarding academic success and leadership skills.

Different cultures also assign varying levels of responsibility to the eldest child. In some traditional societies, they may inherit leadership roles, decision-making authority, or even economic responsibilities. For example, in many Asian families, the eldest son is expected to carry on the family legacy, while in African and Latin American cultures, they often serve as intermediaries between parents and younger siblings.

Parental attitudes toward the eldest child are influenced by cultural values and norms [6]. In many cultures, parents expect the firstborn to be mature, responsible, and a role model for younger siblings. This expectation can result in stricter discipline, greater academic pressure, and higher emotional demands. Studies have shown that firstborns often receive more structured and authoritative parenting compared to their younger siblings.

In some societies, gender also plays a critical role in how the eldest child is treated. In patriarchal cultures, the eldest son may be given preferential treatment, more decision-making power, and financial advantages, while the eldest daughter may be expected to take on caregiving roles. However, in more egalitarian

societies, both boys and girls may experience similar levels of responsibility, although societal expectations for caregiving often still fall more heavily on girls. The unique position of the eldest child in the family can have significant psychological and social consequences. On one hand, they often develop strong leadership skills, a sense of responsibility, and high levels of self-discipline. Research suggests that firstborns tend to perform well academically, take on leadership roles, and exhibit greater independence compared to their younger siblings.

On the other hand, high parental expectations and social responsibilities can lead to stress, anxiety, and a fear of failure. Many eldest children feel pressured to succeed, fearing that any mistakes will disappoint their parents. In cultures where strict discipline is common, the eldest child may experience emotional distance from their parents, leading to feelings of isolation.

Comparing parent-eldest child relationships across different cultures reveals significant variations in family dynamics [4]. For instance, in East Asian families, the concept of **filial piety** (respect and obedience to parents) strongly influences parenting styles, often leading to high academic and career expectations for the eldest child. In contrast, Western cultures emphasize independence and self-expression, allowing the eldest child more autonomy in choosing their educational and career paths.

Religious and historical traditions also play a role in shaping these relationships. In many Muslim-majority countries, family honor and respect for elders are key values that dictate strict parental authority. Meanwhile, in Scandinavian countries, parenting tends to be more egalitarian, with fewer hierarchical expectations placed on the eldest child.

With globalization and social change, traditional parenting practices are evolving. In many urbanized societies, the strict roles assigned to the eldest child are becoming more flexible [3]. Parents are increasingly adopting more democratic parenting styles, allowing children, regardless of birth order, to have equal opportunities and responsibilities.

However, cultural heritage still plays a crucial role in shaping family dynamics. While modernization has led to more balanced parent-child relationships, deep-rooted traditions continue to influence how parents interact with their eldest child. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing parenting strategies that support both the well-being of the child and the preservation of cultural values.

Summary of Key Findings

1. The role of the eldest child varies significantly across cultures, from high levels of responsibility in collectivist societies to greater autonomy in individualistic cultures.
2. Parental expectations are influenced by cultural traditions, often resulting in stricter discipline and higher pressures on firstborns.
3. While eldest children tend to develop leadership and academic strengths, they may also experience stress and emotional challenges.
4. Modernization is gradually reshaping traditional parent-child relationships, but cultural heritage continues to play an essential role in shaping family dynamics.

This analysis highlights the importance of considering ethnocultural factors in parenting practices and suggests that a balanced approach—one that acknowledges traditions while adapting to contemporary social changes—may be the most beneficial for both parents and children[1].

The relationship between parents and their eldest child is deeply influenced by ethnocultural traditions, societal norms, and historical backgrounds. Across different cultures, the eldest child often bears unique responsibilities, ranging from caregiving and household duties to academic and professional expectations. These roles shape not only the child's development but also the overall family dynamic.

While collectivist cultures tend to assign the eldest child significant responsibilities, often positioning them as a secondary authority figure, individualistic cultures emphasize personal autonomy and self-expression. Parental expectations, shaped by cultural values, can lead to both positive and negative outcomes: while many eldest children develop leadership skills, discipline, and resilience, they may also experience heightened stress and emotional pressure[5].

Modernization and globalization have led to a gradual transformation in parenting styles, with many societies shifting towards more democratic and less hierarchical family structures. However, cultural heritage continues to play a key role in shaping parent-child relationships, highlighting the importance of finding a balance between tradition and contemporary parenting approaches.

Understanding these ethnocultural characteristics allows for a more nuanced perspective on parenting and family dynamics, offering valuable insights for

researchers, educators, and policymakers working to support child development in diverse cultural contexts.

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