

The Emotional State of the Firstborn Batak Child in Handling Family Expectations

Dira Kaniya¹, Syawaluddin Nasution²

^{1,2} *Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia*

Corresponding Author:  dira0102222074@uinsu.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The emotional condition of the first-born son in Batak culture is influenced by the high expectations of the family, which are rooted in the patrilineal kinship system. This study aims to analyze the emotional condition of the first-born sons of the Batak Mandailing and Angkola in carrying their family's expectations while pursuing education at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, State Islamic University of North Sumatra, and to examine the relationship between emotional condition and physical aspects, cognitive aspects, and the influence of the patrilineal structure on their psychological experiences. The study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. The research informants were six undergraduate students of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Class of 2022, selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The research results show that the first-born boys experience emotional dynamics such as pride, responsibility, motivation, anxiety, fear of disappointing their parents, and inner conflict due to high family expectations. These pressures affect physical aspects, like fatigue, sleep disturbances, headaches, and heart palpitations, as well as cognitive aspects, including overthinking, difficulty concentrating, indecision, and fear of failure. In addition, the patrilineal structure and Batak cultural values, namely hamoraon, hagabeon, and hasangapon, shape their identity as family successors while also serving as sources of motivation and emotional pressure. The informants manage these conditions through religiosity, social support, and commitment to achievement. This study shows that the emotional state of the first-born Batak boy is the result of the interaction between family expectations, cultural values, and individual psychological experiences. These findings contribute to the development of cultural psychology studies and form the basis for strengthening culturally-based guidance and counseling services in universities.

Keywords: *Angkola Batak Tribe, Emotional Condition, Family Expectations, First Child, Mandailing Batak Tribe, Patrilineal System.*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received

July 23, 2026

Revised

August 04, 2026

Accepted

August 11, 2026

How to cite

Kaniya, D. & Nasution, S. (2026). The Emotional State of the Firstborn Batak Child in Handling Family Expectations. *Journal of Society Counseling*. 4(3). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59388/josc.v4i3.1010>

Journal Homepage

<https://journal.scidacplus.com/index.php/josc>

This is an open-access article under the CC BY-SA license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Published by

ScidacPlus

INTRODUCTION

Family is the first social environment that shapes the development of a child's personality, identity, and emotional state. Through the socialization process in the family, each individual learns the values, norms, responsibilities, and expectations that apply in the cultural environment they are raised in (Lumbantungkupa, Sianturi, & Situmorang, 2024). In Indonesian society, which still highly values collectivism, the family functions not only as a place to meet physical and emotional needs, but also as an institution that passes down cultural values and intergenerational expectations. One culture that has a strong family value system is the Batak community (Pakpahan, 2025). In Batak culture, the position of the first child holds a very important symbolic and social meaning because they are seen as the family's successor, a role model for their younger siblings, and the main person responsible for the family's honor and continuity. As a result, the first child often faces greater demands and expectations than their siblings, whether in education, work, behavior, or responsibilities towards their parents (Purba H. H., 2023).

In the patrilineal Batak kinship system, values like *hamoraon* (prosperity), *hagabeon* (offspring), and *hasangapon* (honor) are the main focus of family life. These values encourage parents to set high expectations for their children, especially the firstborn, so they can succeed academically, get a decent job, uphold the family's good name, and become responsible figures in both family and community life (Siregar, Adiwijaya, & Saragih, 2025). On one hand, these expectations can serve as a source of motivation for children to grow and achieve. On the other hand, however, expectations that are too high and persistent can lead to psychological pressure that affects a child's emotional state. Feelings of anxiety, fear of disappointing parents, feeling burdened by responsibilities, academic stress, and conflicts between personal desires and family expectations are emotional dynamics often experienced by first-born children in cultures that highly value family honor (Zahara, Efendi, & Yuniati, 2022).

Emotional well-being is an important part of personal development because it relates to a person's ability to recognize, express, and manage emotions when dealing with various life demands. In early adulthood, especially when someone is in college, being able to manage emotions becomes even more important since students face different role changes, academic pressures, social adjustments, and the process of figuring out their own identity (Siahaan & Tandyonomanu, 2022). Students who come from families with high expectations often face double pressure, having to meet academic demands at college while also fulfilling their family's hopes for their success. If this pressure isn't balanced with enough emotional support, it can lead to various psychological problems like anxiety, stress, emotional exhaustion, low psychological well-being, and even symptoms of depression (Siagian & Dora, 2025).

Students of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra are an interesting group to study because they come from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Batak students who still strongly uphold *adat* (customary) and family values. As students preparing to become professional human resources while also having religious and social competencies, they are expected to balance academic responsibilities, personal development, and family expectations. For students who are the firstborn in a Batak family, these demands often become more complex because they are expected to set an example for their siblings, finish their education on time, get a good job, and eventually help improve the family's welfare. This situation can affect their emotional state, both in terms of positive motivation and hidden psychological pressure.

Previous research (Sinulingga & Apri, 2024; Siantar & Asriwandari, 2025) regarding student mental health, parental expectations, and family dynamics, there has shown quite rapid development in recent years, but studies that link these three aspects with cultural background are still relatively limited. Research (Sinaga, Rohman, & Endayani, 2025; Purba, 2025) shows that family expectations affect students' stress levels, anxiety, psychological well-being, and emotional regulation abilities. The research (Yosephine & Wibawa, 2022) also explains that firstborn children tend to take on more responsibility compared to their siblings, which puts them at a higher risk of experiencing psychological stress than later-born children. However, most of these studies were done in Western cultures that emphasize individualism, so they haven't really shown how collectivist cultures shape the emotional experiences of firstborns when dealing with family expectations.

This research gap is even more apparent in the context of Batak society. Most studies on the Batak people focus more on the patrilineal kinship system, clan inheritance, the Daliha Na Tolu values, and cultural philosophies like *hamoraon* (prosperity), *hagabeon* (descendants), and *hasangapon* (honor). These values position the firstborn as a central figure in the family, expected to continue the family line, uphold the clan's good name, serve as a role model for their siblings, and take responsibility for their parents in the future. However, research that specifically looks at how the internalization of these cultural values affects the emotional well-being of the firstborn is still very limited. In other words, the relationship between Batak culture, family expectations, and the emotional experiences of the firstborn hasn't received much attention in academic studies.

Based on this gap, this study offers a fresh perspective by deeply examining the emotional condition of firstborn Batak children in carrying family expectations among undergraduate students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Class of 2022, using a qualitative approach. This study not only identifies the types of emotions experienced by the students but also explains how Batak cultural values shape family expectations and influence how students understand and manage their emotional states. Thus, this study is expected to enrich research in cultural psychology and family psychology and serve as a basis for developing counseling services that are more sensitive to cultural backgrounds.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to deeply understand the subjective experiences of students as the firstborn in Batak families in carrying family expectations and its impact on their emotional well-being. Through this approach, the researcher can explore the meaning, perceptions, and experiences of informants based on the realities they directly experience (Creswell, 2018). A case study is used because the research focuses on phenomena that occur in a specific group within a particular social and cultural context, namely undergraduate students of the Faculty of Dakwah and Communication at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, class of 2022.

The research was conducted at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, State Islamic University of North Sumatra. The research informants consisted of six undergraduate students from the 2022 batch who are the first children in Batak families. The informants were selected using purposive sampling, which is choosing informants based on specific criteria that match the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2022). The criteria for informants include: (1) active students of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UINSU, Class of 2022, (2) of Batak ethnicity, (3) being the first child in the family, and (4) willing to be a research informant. The number of six

informants is considered sufficient because qualitative research prioritizes depth of information over the number of participants, and the data obtained has reached saturation (Arikunto, 2021).

Data collection was done through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The interviews were semi-structured to get information about family expectations, emotional experiences, challenges in meeting parents' expectations, and strategies the informants used to manage their emotions. Observations were carried out to understand the informants' behavior, interactions, and expressions during the research process, while documentation was used as supporting data in the form of field notes, interview guides, and other documents relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis used an interactive model (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2024), which includes three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation (data display), and drawing and verifying conclusions (conclusion drawing/verification). In the data reduction stage, the researcher selects, categorizes, and codes the data according to the research themes, such as forms of family expectations, emotional conditions, causal factors, and emotion regulation strategies. Next, the data is presented in the form of narratives and thematic matrices to make interpretation easier. The final stage is carried out by drawing conclusions based on the patterns found and verifying their alignment with the field data.

The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation and technique triangulation (Moleong, 2024). Source triangulation is done by comparing information between informants, while technique triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, this study applies research ethics principles by obtaining informants' consent (informed consent), keeping their identities confidential using initials, and ensuring that all data is only used for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Emotional Condition of Firstborn Batak Mandailing and Angkola Boys in Handling Family Expectations While Studying at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN North Sumatra

Based on observations of six undergraduate students from the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Class of 2022, who are firstborn sons from the Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola ethnic groups, it was found that the participants experienced diverse emotional responses in dealing with family expectations. As firstborn sons, they were perceived as having greater responsibilities than their younger siblings, including maintaining the family's reputation, serving as role models, and achieving academic success. These responsibilities fostered a sense of pride because they were entrusted with significant expectations by their parents. However, at the same time, they also generated emotional pressure due to the high standards they were expected to fulfill.

The observations revealed that most participants experienced anxiety and fear of disappointing their parents if they failed to meet family expectations. This was reflected in their serious commitment to their academic studies, their efforts to maintain strong academic performance, and their careful consideration when making decisions related to education and their future careers. Furthermore, several participants preferred to suppress their emotions when encountering difficulties because they believed that, as firstborn sons, they were expected to solve problems independently without adding to their family's concerns.

The observations also indicated the presence of internal conflicts when participants' personal aspirations did not align with their families' expectations. Some participants admitted that they had to set aside their own interests or plans to fulfill their parents' wishes. Nevertheless, they consistently demonstrated a strong determination to complete their education as a form of responsibility toward their families. This motivation was reflected in their disciplined attendance, dedication to completing academic assignments, and commitment to graduating on time so that they could contribute to improving their family's economic well-being.

To cope with these pressures, each participant adopted different emotional regulation strategies. Most sought spiritual comfort by strengthening their relationship with Allah through prayer and acts of worship, while others sought support from friends, participated actively in student organizations, or engaged in activities that helped reduce stress. Overall, the observations suggest that the emotional condition of firstborn Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola sons is characterized by a combination of pride, responsibility, motivation, anxiety, and internal conflict, all of which emerge as consequences of family expectations and the cultural values attached to their role as the eldest son. These observational findings are consistent with the interview results, which are presented below.

Table 1. Interview Findings on the Emotional Condition of Firstborn Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola Sons in Fulfilling Family Expectations

Participant	Interview Findings
Student 1	<i>"As the firstborn son, I feel that I have a great responsibility toward my family. My parents expect me to graduate on time, secure a good job, and become a role model for my younger siblings. I am proud that they trust me, but sometimes I feel pressured because I am afraid of failing to meet their expectations."</i>
Student 2	<i>"My parents always tell me that I am the family's greatest hope. Therefore, I work very hard in my studies. Whenever my academic performance declines, I become anxious and fear disappointing them. I rarely share my problems because I do not want to make my parents worry."</i>
Student 3	<i>"Being the firstborn means I have to be more mature than my younger siblings. Sometimes I want to pursue my own dreams, but I choose to follow my family's expectations instead. This often creates inner conflict, yet I continue to persevere because I want to make my parents proud."</i>
Student 4	<i>"I am proud to be the firstborn because my family trusts me. However, there is considerable pressure to succeed all the time. Whenever I face assignments or examinations, I often worry about failing. Usually, I calm myself by praying and discussing my concerns with friends."</i>
Student 5	<i>"I realize that after graduation I am expected to help improve my family's financial situation. This expectation motivates me to keep studying, but it also leaves me emotionally exhausted at times. I cope with the pressure by strengthening my relationship with Allah and participating in student organizations so that I can maintain peace of mind."</i>
Student 6	<i>"As the firstborn son, I feel responsible for preserving my family's honor and clan reputation. I never want to disappoint my parents. Therefore, I always strive to demonstrate good character, remain active in campus activities, and maintain strong academic performance. Although I sometimes feel burdened, I view my family's expectations as motivation to continue growing and improving myself."</i>

Based on the observations and interviews with the six participants, it can be concluded that firstborn sons from the Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola ethnic groups experience complex emotional conditions in fulfilling family expectations. They experience pride and motivation because they are entrusted as the family's primary hope, while simultaneously facing emotional pressure, anxiety, fear of disappointing their parents, and internal conflict arising from the significant responsibilities they bear. To cope with these challenges, the participants regulate their emotions through religious practices, social support, and a strong commitment to academic achievement. Consequently, family expectations function not only as a source of psychological pressure but also as a powerful source of motivation for completing their education and preparing for their future lives.

The Relationship Between Emotional Condition and Physical and Cognitive Aspects Due to Family Expectations on the Firstborn Batak Son

Based on observations of six firstborn male students from the Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola ethnic groups, it was found that the emotional distress arising from family expectations was closely associated with the physical responses experienced by the participants. The pressure to fulfill their parents' expectations and serve as role models within the family caused several participants to experience fatigue, difficulty resting, and visible signs of tension when facing academic demands. Some participants also reported sleep disturbances, headaches, heart palpitations, and decreased appetite, particularly during examination periods or when thinking about their responsibilities after graduating from university.

In addition to affecting their physical condition, the observations indicated that family expectations also influenced the participants' cognitive functioning. Most participants frequently worried about the possible consequences of failing to meet their family's expectations. As a result, they tended to experience overthinking, difficulty concentrating during lectures, and uncertainty when making decisions related to their academic pursuits and future career plans.

The observations further revealed that the emotional pressure experienced by the participants contributed to a fear of failure and a strong desire to consistently achieve the best possible outcomes. They worked hard to maintain high academic performance because they viewed educational success as a responsibility toward their parents. Consequently, several participants became more cautious in their actions and imposed exceptionally high standards of success on themselves, which further intensified their psychological distress.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that emotional condition, physical well-being, and cognitive functioning are closely interconnected. The greater the family expectations perceived by the participants, the stronger the tendency for physical responses such as fatigue and minor health problems, as well as cognitive responses including overthinking, difficulty concentrating, and fear of failure. These findings suggest that family expectations influence not only the emotional well-being of firstborn Batak sons but also their physical functioning and cognitive processes throughout their university education.

Table 2. Interview Findings on the Relationship Between Emotional Condition, Physical Responses, and Cognitive Functioning Resulting from Family Expectations Among Firstborn Batak Sons

Participant	Interview Findings
Student 1	<i>"When my academic assignments pile up and my parents keep reminding me to graduate on time, I often have difficulty sleeping and my head feels heavy. I also</i>

Participant	Interview Findings
	<i>constantly think about whether I will be able to meet their expectations, which sometimes makes it difficult for me to concentrate during lectures."</i>
Student 2	<i>"I often become anxious whenever my grades decline. When I am overwhelmed with worries, my heart races and I lose my appetite. I keep thinking about what would happen if I failed and disappointed my parents."</i>
Student 3	<i>"As the firstborn son, I feel that I must succeed. Sometimes I overthink before making decisions because I am afraid of making mistakes. When the pressure becomes intense, I get tired easily and find it difficult to stay focused during classes."</i>
Student 4	<i>"Whenever I have examinations or major assignments, I often become so tense that I cannot sleep. I also overthink about my future because I feel that I need to succeed as soon as possible to fulfill my family's expectations."</i>
Student 5	<i>"I often force myself to keep studying even when I am physically exhausted because I want to achieve good results. The pressure sometimes gives me headaches and makes it difficult to concentrate. I am afraid that I will not become a source of pride for my family."</i>
Student 6	<i>"My family's expectations always motivate me to give my best. However, I often feel anxious when making decisions because I worry that the outcomes will not meet their expectations. When I am under a lot of pressure, I become fatigued easily, have difficulty sleeping, and constantly think about my future after graduation."</i>

Based on the observations and interviews, it can be concluded that family expectations are closely related to the emotional condition, physical well-being, and cognitive functioning of firstborn male students from the Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola ethnic groups. The pressure to fulfill family expectations gives rise to physical responses such as fatigue, sleep disturbances, and headaches, as well as cognitive responses including overthinking, difficulty concentrating, indecisiveness, and fear of failure. Nevertheless, the participants consistently strive to transform these expectations into a source of motivation, encouraging them to excel academically and complete their higher education to the best of their abilities.

The Influence of Patrilineal Structure and Batak Socio-Cultural Identity on the Emotional Condition of the Firstborn Son in Bearing Family Expectations

Based on observations of six firstborn male students from the Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola ethnic groups, it was found that the Batak patrilineal system and sociocultural identity exert a strong influence on the participants' emotional development. As firstborn sons, the participants were regarded as the successors of their families and the guardians of their clan's honor (marga). From an early age, they were instilled with a greater sense of responsibility than their younger siblings. This position shaped their self-identity as individuals who were expected to serve as role models, complete their education successfully, and prepare themselves to contribute to their families in the future.

The observations further revealed that Batak cultural values, particularly *hamoraon* (prosperity), *hagabeon* (descendants and family continuity), and *hasangapon* (honor and dignity), formed the foundation of the family expectations placed upon the participants. These cultural values motivated them to pursue academic excellence and maintain appropriate behavior to

uphold the reputation of both their family and clan. However, these high expectations also generated considerable emotional pressure, as the participants felt obligated to succeed and avoid disappointing their parents.

The observations also demonstrated that the identity of being a firstborn son within Batak culture creates distinctive psychological experiences. Most participants displayed greater independence, maturity, and caution in making decisions because they recognized that every action they took would be closely observed by their families. They tended to suppress their personal problems and attempted to resolve them independently as an expression of responsibility toward the role they had inherited. These findings indicate that the Batak cultural structure influences not only social behavior but also the ways in which the participants regulate their emotions and cope with pressure throughout their university lives.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Batak patrilineal system and sociocultural identity play a significant role in shaping the psychological experiences and emotional conditions of firstborn sons. Cultural values emphasizing responsibility, family honor, and success as the successor of the family lineage serve as both powerful sources of motivation and significant sources of emotional pressure. Therefore, the participants' emotional experiences are influenced not only by academic demands but also by the strong internalization of cultural values associated with their role as firstborn sons within Batak families.

Table 3. Interview Findings on the Influence of the Batak Patrilineal System and Sociocultural Identity on the Emotional Condition of Firstborn Sons in Fulfilling Family Expectations

Participant	Interview Findings
Student 1	<i>"Since I was a child, my parents have always told me that because I am the firstborn son, I must become the successor of the family and preserve the honor of our clan. This makes me feel proud, but it also gives me a great sense of responsibility to succeed so that I do not disappoint my family."</i>
Student 2	<i>"In our family, the firstborn child is expected to be a role model for the younger siblings. I feel that I must behave more maturely and act carefully because everything I do will be judged by my extended family. Sometimes, that pressure makes me feel overwhelmed."</i>
Student 3	<i>"My parents have always taught me that my success is the family's pride. Values such as preserving the family's honor motivate me to work hard to complete my education successfully, even though I sometimes have to sacrifice my personal aspirations."</i>
Student 4	<i>"As the firstborn son, I feel responsible for improving my family's economic situation after graduation. That expectation motivates me, but it also often makes me anxious because I am afraid that I may not be able to fulfill my parents' expectations."</i>
Student 5	<i>"I was taught to uphold the honor of my family and clan wherever I go. Therefore, I always strive to behave well and maintain good academic performance. Although there is pressure, I consider this responsibility to be an essential part of my identity as the firstborn son."</i>
Student 6	<i>"In Batak culture, the firstborn son carries significant responsibilities toward the family. I feel that I must become a source of pride for my parents and be ready to support my family after graduation. This responsibility has made me</i>

Participant	Interview Findings
	<i>more independent, but it also creates emotional pressure whenever I think about the future."</i>

Based on the observations and interviews, it can be concluded that the Batak patrilineal system and sociocultural identity strongly influence the emotional condition of firstborn sons from the Batak Mandailing and Batak Angkola ethnic groups. Cultural values such as *hamoraon* (prosperity), *hagabeon* (family continuity through descendants), and *hasangapon* (honor and dignity) cultivate a strong sense of responsibility as successors to the family and guardians of the clan's reputation. Although these cultural roles serve as powerful sources of motivation for academic achievement and personal success, the high expectations associated with them also generate considerable emotional pressure. Consequently, the participants strive to become more independent, mature, and responsible as they navigate the challenges of university life while fulfilling their family obligations.

Discussion

The Emotional Condition of the Firstborn Sons of the Batak Mandailing and Angkola Tribes in Bearing Family Expectations During Their Education

The research results show that first-born boys from the Batak Mandailing and Angkola ethnic groups have complex emotional conditions in carrying family expectations while studying at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. The informants not only feel proud of being trusted as family successors and role models for their younger siblings, but they also experience emotional pressure in the form of anxiety, fear of disappointing their parents, and inner conflict due to the high expectations placed on them. These findings show that family expectations have two sides: as a source of motivation to achieve while also being a factor that can cause psychological pressure. These research results are in line with previous studies (Fathurohman, Romadhona, Ahsin, Darmuki, & Hidayati, 2023), which state that high parental expectations can boost academic motivation, but if not balanced with emotional support, it can increase the risk of stress, anxiety, and psychological pressure in students. Similarly, (Saragi, Febryany, Dewa, Putra, & Marpaung 2025) explain that high family expectations often cause emotional conflicts because individuals feel they have to meet the success standards set by their family.

The research findings also show that being the first child makes the informants feel responsible, pushing them to try to maintain academic achievements and finish their education on time. They see academic success as a way to repay their parents' sacrifices and as a form of responsibility towards their family. This condition aligns with the birth order theory proposed by Adler and supported by research (Sarsito, Lesmana, & Wijayanti, 2025), which explains that the firstborn child generally has higher levels of responsibility, discipline, and achievement orientation compared to their siblings. However, this study shows that in the Batak cultural context, this sense of responsibility is not only influenced by birth order but is also reinforced by cultural values that see the firstborn as a symbol of success and a family successor.

The interview results showed that most informants chose to keep the problems they faced to themselves because they felt they had to appear strong and didn't want to add to their parents' worries. This condition indicates a tendency to control emotional expression as a form of responsibility toward the family. These findings are in line with research (Setyaningrum, 2025) which explains that individuals often use emotion regulation strategies like emotional

suppression, which means holding back or hiding emotions to still be able to fulfill the social roles expected of them. While this strategy can help people maintain their self-image in front of family, in the long run, it can increase psychological stress if it's not balanced with social support and the ability to manage emotions in an adaptive way.

This study also found that inner conflict arises when family expectations don't always align with the informants' personal desires. Some students admitted that they had to put aside their personal interests or plans to meet their parents' expectations. These findings show that firstborn children face a dilemma between self-actualization and the obligation to fulfill family demands. The results support previous research (Kalauserang, 2023), which explains that the conflict between personal aspirations and family expectations is one of the main causes of emotional stress in students from collectivist cultures. In cultures that prioritize family interests, individual decisions are often influenced more by considerations of maintaining family harmony than by personal interests.

The findings of this study have different characteristics compared to previous research because the emotional state of the informants is influenced not just by the parent-child relationship, but also by the value system of the Batak Mandailing and Angkola cultures. Values like *hamoraon* (prosperity), *hagabeon* (descendants), and *hasangapon* (honor) shape the belief that the success of the first child represents the family's and clan's honor. Therefore, the pressure felt by the informants doesn't just come from academic demands, but also from the moral responsibility to maintain the family's good name. These findings complement previous studies (Khoirina, Azizah, Yu'laa, Herianto, & Adelina, 2024), which explain the strength of the patrilineal system in Batak society, showing that this system not only affects the social structure of the family but also shapes the emotional and psychological experiences of the first-born child while going through higher education.

On the other hand, this study found that the informants were able to develop various adaptive strategies in managing their emotional conditions. Religious approaches through prayer, worship, and increasing closeness to Allah SWT, social support from friends, as well as involvement in student organizations became coping mechanisms that helped them reduce emotional stress. These findings are in line with research (Siahaan, Brahamana, Simarmata, & Aqueena, 2023), which states that religious coping is one of the effective strategies in helping individuals face life pressures, while also strengthening meaning and psychological resilience. Therefore, family expectations in this study are not only understood as a source of pressure, but also as a factor that shapes students' motivation, responsibility, and emotional resilience in completing their education.

Overall, the results of this study show that the emotional condition of firstborn Batak Mandailing and Angkola boys is the result of the interaction between family expectations, their position as the eldest child, and the internalization of Batak cultural values. Unlike previous studies that focused more on the relationship between parental expectations and mental health in general, this study shows that cultural context plays an important role in shaping students' emotional experiences. Therefore, psychological support as well as guidance and counseling services at universities need to take students' cultural backgrounds into account in order to provide more contextual support for the emotional dynamics they experience.

The Relationship Between Emotional Condition and Physical and Cognitive Aspects Due to Family Expectations on the First Male Child of the Batak Tribe

Research results show that family expectations are closely related to the emotional, physical, and cognitive conditions of first-born Batak Mandailing and Angkola boys. Based on observations and interviews, the pressure to meet parental expectations not only causes anxiety and fear of failure but also affects physical conditions, such as fatigue, sleep disturbances, headaches, palpitations, and loss of appetite. Additionally, the informants experienced changes in cognitive aspects, including overthinking, difficulty concentrating, indecisiveness, and a tendency to set high standards of success for themselves. These findings indicate that emotional conditions triggered by family expectations have a comprehensive impact on both the psychological and physical functions of students.

The finding aligns with the research (Pramuniati, Mahriyuni, Hardini, & Hidayati, 2025), which explains that psychological stress that continues over time can affect the body's physiological functions through increased stress hormone activity, leading to symptoms like sleep disturbances, fatigue, headaches, and a decrease in immune resistance. Likewise, (Manurung, Sentosa, Asfriyati, & Achmad, 2024) state that prolonged emotional stress is often expressed through physical complaints (somatic symptoms), especially in individuals who are dealing with both academic and family demands at the same time. In the context of this study, the pressure to meet family expectations makes the informants more vulnerable to physical fatigue, especially when facing exams, finishing assignments, or thinking about responsibilities after completing their education.

In the cognitive aspect, the research results show that most of the informants experience overthinking, difficulty concentrating, and fear of failure. This condition indicates that family expectations affect students' thinking process and decision-making abilities. These findings support cognitive theory (Beck, 2020), which explains that psychological pressure can trigger negative thinking patterns, excessive worrying, and a tendency to anticipate failure, thus interfering with concentration and problem-solving abilities. Research (Simarmata, Ika, Aritionang, Lumbantoruan, & Hutagalung, 2024) through Attentional Control Theory, it is also explains that anxiety reduces an individual's ability to focus because most of their cognitive resources are used to think about threats or potential failures. This is seen in informants who keep thinking about the consequences if they fail to meet their family's expectations, making them more hesitant in making decisions and having difficulty concentrating during the lecture process.

The results of this study also show that the fear of failure pushes the informants to set high standards of success for themselves. They try to maintain their academic achievements because they see educational success as a way of being responsible to their parents. This condition is in line with previous research (Rustam & Narsa, 2024), which states that high expectations from the family environment can lead to socially prescribed perfectionism, which is the drive to always succeed because you feel that success is a requirement to be accepted and valued by others. In this study, high standards of success indeed boost learning motivation, but at the same time also increase the risk of emotional stress when the results don't match expectations.

The findings of this study have different characteristics compared to previous research because the emotional pressure experienced by the participants is not only influenced by academic demands but also by Batak cultural values that place the firstborn child as the family's hope. Thus, the physical and cognitive responses that arise are not solely due to the burden of college life, but are the result of the interaction between academic demands and the cultural responsibilities tied

to their position as the eldest child. This shows that cultural context plays an important role in strengthening the influence of family expectations on students' psychological well-being.

Even though they face various pressures, the research results show that the informants are still able to develop adaptive coping mechanisms. They try to reduce stress through religious approaches, increasing worship and prayer, seeking social support from friends, and remaining committed to completing their education properly. These findings are in line with research (Cristina & Brahmana, 2024), which states that religious coping and social support are effective protective factors in helping individuals manage stress and boost psychological resilience. Therefore, family expectations in this study not only create negative impacts in the form of emotional pressure but also become factors that drive motivation, perseverance, and the ability to adapt in facing various challenges during education.

The Influence of Patrilineal Structure and Batak Socio-Cultural Identity on the Emotional Condition of the Firstborn Son in Bearing Family Expectations

Research results show that the patrilineal structure and Batak socio-cultural identity have a significant influence on shaping the emotional condition of the first-born male children of the Mandailing and Angkola Batak tribes. Based on observations and interviews, the informants interpreted their position as the first child not just as a birth order, but as a responsibility to continue the family line, uphold the family name, and take care of their parents and younger siblings. This position fosters a sense of pride because of the trust received from the family, but at the same time also creates emotional pressure due to the high expectations that must be met. These findings show that the informants' emotional conditions are influenced not only by individual factors but are also shaped by the social and cultural systems embedded in Batak family life.

These research findings are in line with studies (Pardede & Mulder, 2022) that explain that the Batak people follow a patrilineal kinship system that places sons, especially the firstborn, as the heirs of the lineage and guardians of the clan's honor. In this system, the first child has greater responsibilities compared to the other siblings because they are prepared to carry on the family values. (Cameron, 2023) It also explains that Batak cultural values such as *hamoraon* (prosperity), *hagabeon* (descendants), and *hasangapon* (honor) serve as the main foundation in shaping family expectations for children. The results of this study reinforce these findings, as the informants admitted they are motivated to achieve, behave well, and complete their education as a form of responsibility to their family while also upholding the good name of their clan.

From the perspective of cultural psychology, this finding shows that the informants' self-identity is shaped through the internalization of cultural values passed down by their family. (Agatha, 2022) It explains that individuals who grow up in a collectivist culture tend to develop an interdependent sense of self, meaning they see themselves as an inseparable part of their family and social group. This is evident in the informants who prioritize family interests over personal interests, even willing to set aside their own desires to meet their parents' expectations. So, the emotional pressure experienced by the informants doesn't just come from academic demands, but also from the awareness that their success or failure will affect the family's and clan's honor.

This study also found that being the firstborn shapes a unique psychological experience, namely developing a sense of independence, maturity, and carefulness in making decisions. Most informants chose to keep their problems to themselves because they felt they had to solve issues independently as a form of responsibility to their family. These findings are in line with research (Rifqi, Zulfa, Alana, & Syakuri, 2025), which states that individuals in collectivist cultures tend

to control their emotional expressions to maintain social harmony and fulfill the roles expected by the group. On the other hand, (Zulfa, Mulyati, & Ana, 2022) explain that individuals often use emotional suppression strategies to hold back emotional expression when facing high social demands. In this study, this strategy was seen in informants who chose to keep emotional pressure to themselves so as not to add to their parents' mental burden.

Even so, this study shows differences compared to some previous research that mostly considered family expectations as a factor that only negatively affects mental health. In this study, the patrilineal structure and Batak cultural identity are not just sources of emotional pressure, but also sources of motivation for the informants to develop discipline, responsibility, and a drive to achieve. In other words, Batak cultural values have a dual function: they act as protective factors that encourage academic achievement while also being risk factors that can increase psychological stress if family expectations are felt to be too high. These findings expand on previous research results (Oktaviana, Prasetyo, Izzati, & Djuari, 2024), which state that the influence of parents' expectations on psychological well-being depends on how individuals interpret those demands and the support provided by the family.

Overall, the research results show that the patrilineal structure and Batak socio-cultural identity are factors that shape the emotional condition of the first-born sons in carrying family expectations. The values of *hamoraon*, *hagabeon*, and *hasangapon* not only shape their identity as family successors but also influence how students understand responsibility, manage emotions, and deal with various academic and social demands. Therefore, the emotional condition of first-born Batak sons needs to be understood as the result of the interaction between cultural systems, family roles, and individual experiences, so guidance and counseling services in universities need to consider cultural dimensions when supporting students who come from families with high expectations.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the emotional condition of first-born boys from the Batak Mandailing and Angkola tribes in handling family expectations is influenced by their responsibility as the eldest child and the strong Batak cultural values, such as *hamoraon*, *hagabeon*, and *hasangapon*. Family expectations become a source of motivation to achieve, but they also create emotional pressure that affects physical and cognitive aspects, such as fatigue, sleep disturbances, overthinking, and fear of failure. Nevertheless, the informants are able to manage this pressure through religiosity, social support, and commitment to completing their education. These findings imply the importance of culturally-based guidance and counseling services in colleges and the need for emotional support from families in fostering students' mental health. This study is still limited to six informants from the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication students at UIN Sumatera Utara, Class of 2022, so the results can't be widely generalized yet. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve more diverse informants, covering various Batak sub-ethnic groups as well as other ethnicities, and to use mixed methods or longitudinal approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of firstborn children's emotional dynamics in dealing with family expectations.

REFERENSI

- Agatha, O. (2022). The Other(s) Principle(s): A Screenplay Exploring Childfree Issue in Indonesia. *Kata Kita*, 10(3), 427-435. doi:<https://doi.org/10.9744/katakita.10.3.427-435>
- Arikunto, S. (2021). *Prosedur penelitian: Suatu pendekatan praktik*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.

- Beck, J. S. (2020). *Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond (3rd ed.)*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Cameron, L. (2023). Gender Equality and Development: Indonesia in a Global Context. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 59(2), 179-207. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2023.2229476>
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Cristina, P., & Brahmana, K. M. (2024). A Description Of Happiness In A Toba Batak Couple Who Doesn't Have Children. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains Sosial, dan Agama*, 10(1), 262-274. doi:<https://doi.org/10.53565/pssa.v10i1.1952>
- Fathurohman, I., Romadhona, D. A., Ahsin, M. N., Darmuki, A., & Hidayati, N. A. (2023). Inner Conflict of the Character in the Movie Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap by Bene Dion. *ICCCM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(3), 33-45. doi:<https://doi.org/10.53797/icccmjssh.v2i3.6.2023>
- Kalauserang, E. D. (2023). The The Representation of Mothers as Bearers of Culture in Three Short Stories from Indonesia. *NOTION: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Culture*, 5(1), 93-106. doi:<https://doi.org/10.12928/notion.v5i1.7644>
- Khoirina, N., Azizah, L. N., Yu'laa, Y. W., Herianto, S., & Adelina, F. (2024). Navigating Dual Expectations: A Qualitative Study of the Psychological Dynamics of the Youngest Child in Javanese Families. *Proceedings of The International Conference on Psychology and Education*, 3(1), 1-15. doi:<https://doi.org/10.26740/icpe.v3i1.3714>
- Lumbantungkupa, B., Sianturi, R. P., & Situmorang, M. (2024). Spiritualitas Resiliensi Kaum Janda Dalam Menopang Pendidikan Anak Di Kelurahan Sirumahombar, Kecamatan Nainggolan Tahun 2023. *ABARA: Jurnal Konseling Pastoral*, 2(2), 47-52. Retrieved from <https://abara.iakntarutung.ac.id/index.php/abara/article/view/28>
- Manurung, J., Sentosa, H., Asfriyati, & Achmad, N. (2024). Culture And Fertility And Its Impact On The Quality Of Children : Ethnographic Study In The Batak Toba Community. *Mitra Husada Health Internasional Conference (MIHHICo)*, 4(1), 87-95. Retrieved from <https://prosidingmhm.mitrahusada.ac.id/index.php/mihhico/article/view/225>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2024). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Moleong, L. J. (2024). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif (Edisi revisi)*. Jakarta: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Oktaviana, L., Prasetyo, B., Izzati, D., & Djuari, L. (2024). Ethnographic Study: The Choice of Place and Birth Attendants from the Socio-Cultural Perspective in the Tunjung Benuaq Dayak Tribe. *Midwiferia: Jurnal Kebidanan*, 10(2), 74-90. doi:<https://doi.org/10.21070/midwiferia.v10i2.1695>
- Pakpahan, M. (2025). Resiliensi Orang Tua Tunggal Dalam Memperjuangkan Hidup Keluarga Di Dusun Gonting, Kecamatan Parmonangan, Kabupaten Tapanuli Utara: Sebuah Kajian Sosio-Teologis. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 4(4), 6795-6804. Retrieved from <https://publisherqu.com/index.php/pediaqu/article/view/3046>
- Pardede, E. L., & Mulder, C. H. (2022). The roles of family resources and family structure in moving from the parental home and village among young Indonesians. *Population, Space and Place*, 28(1), e2535. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2535>
- Pramuniati, I., Mahriyuni, Hardini, T. I., & Hidayati, F. (2025). Language shift between generations: Regional-speaking parents raise Indonesian-speaking children in North Sumatra. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 15(1), 102-115. doi:<https://doi.org/10.17509/dn726d13>
- Purba, H. H. (2023). Mengejar Pemulihan: Sebuah Upaya Mencapai Penyembuhan Dalam Keluarga Batak Kristen. *Diegesis : Jurnal Teologi*, 8(2), 207-225. doi:<https://doi.org/10.46933/DGS.vol8i2207-225>

- Purba, R. (2025). Pergeseran Pola Asuh Keluarga Etnis Batak Toba Terhadap Prestasi Anak. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Sosial Humaniora*, 10(2), 153-160. doi:<https://doi.org/10.32696/jp2sh.v10i2.4238>
- Rifqi, M. J., Zulfa, A. A., Alana, M. A., & Syakuri, A. F. (2025). The Tension between Cultural Heritage and Individual Freedom: The JiLu Marriage Tradition among the Indigenous Javanese Community in Blembem, Ponorogo. *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 25(1), 91-110. doi:<https://doi.org/10.21154/altahrir.v25i1.10371>
- Rustam, A. R., & Narsa, I. M. (2024). Trying to Survive: A Phenomenography of Ethno-Religion-Cultural-Based Family Business Management Resilience During Pandemic Situation. *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen*, 22(4), 970-980. doi:<https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jam.2024.022.04.04>
- Saragi, O., Febryany, A., Dewa, E. G., Putra, A. I., & Marpaung, W. (2025). Gambaran Kecemasan Akan Pernikahan Pada Perempuan Dewasa Awal Yang Berlatar Belakang Keluarga Broken Home. *Sosioedukasi : Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Sosial*, 14(4), 3663-3673. doi:<https://doi.org/10.36526/sosioedukasi.v14i4.6596>
- Sarsito, T. S., Lesmana, F., & Wijayanti, C. (2025). Representation of Culture in the Batak Family in the film "Catatan Harian Menantu Sinting". *JURNAL HERITAGE*, 13(2), 212 - 229. doi:<https://doi.org/10.35891/ka7nqz42>
- Setyaningrum, A. H. (2025). Reproductive Control And Female Subordination In Batak Culture: A Muted Group Theory Analysis Of "Catatan Harian Menantu Sinting". *INJECT (Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication)*, 10(1), 343-360. doi:<https://doi.org/10.18326/inject.v10i1.4419>
- Siagian, D. M., & Dora, N. (2025). Analysis of Mandailing Tribe Students Who Experience Inner Child Dynamics Towards Social Life. *Entita: Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial dan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, 7(1), 149-166. doi:<https://doi.org/10.19105/ejpis.v7i1.19201>
- Siahaan, E. M., Brahamana, K. M., Simarmata, N. I., & Aqueena, G. (2023). The Effect of Social Support and Batak Values on Self-Acceptance of Fathers Who Have Children with Special Needs. *Journal of Educational, Health & Community Psychology (JEHCP)*, 12(4), 989. doi:<https://doi.org/10.12928/jehcp.v12i4.26932>
- Siahaan, E., & Tandyonomanu, D. (2022). Marsaor Paradotan Pada Pernikahan Pariban Suku Batak Toba di Kota Surabaya. *The Commecium*, 5(2), 138-156. doi:<https://doi.org/10.26740/tc.v5i2.47431>
- Siantar, S. L., & Asriwandari, H. (2025). Peran Keluarga Besar Suami Dalam Pelaksanaan Fungsi Keluarga Ibu Tunggal Pada Etnis Batak Toba Di Pekanbaru. *NUSANTARA : Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*, 12(7), 3000-3005. doi:<https://doi.org/10.31604/jips.v12i7.2025.%25p>
- Simarmata, P., Ika, N., Aritonang, N. N., Lumbantoruan, K. D., & Hutagalung, D. N. (2024). The Influence of Family Gratitude and Social Support on Psychological Well-being of Batak Toba Parents Who Do Not Have Son. *Journal of Educational, Health & Community Psychology (JEHCP)*, 13(2), 711. doi:<https://doi.org/10.12928/jehcp.v13i2.28969>
- Sinaga, U. H., Rohman, F., & Endayani, H. (2025). Pola Asuh Orang Tua Suku Batak Simalungun Terhadap Prestasi Akademik Anak Laki-Laki dan Perempuan. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan dan Konseling*, 1(2), 1-13. Retrieved from <https://glonus.org/index.php/kognisi/article/view/197>
- Sinulingga, A. W., & Apri, S. (2024). Analisis Tekanan Sosial Terhadap Keluarga Tanpa Anak Laki-Laki dalam Tradisi Keturunan Suku Karo. *Jurnal Pendidikan Luar Sekolah*, 18(2), 79-87. doi:<https://doi.org/10.32832/jpls.v18i2.17580>
- Siregar, S., Adiwijaya, S., & Saragih, O. K. (2025). Dinamika Pengasuhan Anak Dalam Perkawinan Lintas Budaya (Studi Tentang Potensi Konflik Budaya Antara Pasangan Suku Batak Toba Dan Dayak Di Kota Palangka Raya). *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosiologi*, 7(3), 273-281. doi:<https://doi.org/10.23887/jpsu.v7i3.105590>
- Sugiyono. (2022). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

- Yosephine, S. A., & Wibawa, D. S. (2022). Gambaran Subjective Well-Being pada Perempuan yang Mengalami Involuntary Childlessness dalam Keluarga Batak. *Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi MANASA*, 11(2), 86-104. doi:<https://doi.org/10.25170/manasa.v11i1.3376>
- Zahara, P., Efendi, I., & Yuniati, Y. (2022). Factors Affecting the Independence of the Primipara Mother in Care of the Infant at Pidie Jaya Hospital. *Journal La Medihealtico*, 3(5), 371-386. doi:<https://doi.org/10.37899/journallamedihealtico.v3i5.706>
- Zulfa, V., Mulyati, M., & Ana, N. (2022). The Effect of Adolescent Boys' Attachment to Fathers on Social and Emotional Development. *JITSS (Journal of Innovation and Trend in Social Sciences)*, 2(2), 56–68. doi:<https://doi.org/10.63203/jitss.v2i2.132>
-

Copyright Holder :

© Kaniya, D. & Nasution, S. (2026).

First Publication Right :

© Journal of Society Counseling

This article is under:

