



RESEARCH PAPER

Siblings' Relationship and Identification Process in school going Children

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ABSTRACT

Siblings are a person's first interaction of their age and until a child starts going to school the only too in most of the cases. The relationship a child has with his or her sibling is an important factor in children's life even when they become adults. The current study is done in order to explore the depth of siblings' relationship. The warmth of relationship that siblings share is dependent on a lot of factors. For the present study it is hypothesized that warmth in siblings relationship will be influenced by the gender of the participant and the gender of the sibling. It is also hypothesized that warmth in siblings' relationship will be predicted by the sibling identification process i.e. modelling and de-identification. The data was collected from school level children (N=100), aged 12-17 years of age (M=14.65, SD =1.69). The data was collected as a group after seeking consent from the school authorities. It was a self-report inventory consisting of demographic form, Sibling Influence Scale (Whiteman et al, 2010) and Quality of Sibling Relationship, warmth subscale (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985); it was then entered SPSS version 21. A two way ANOVA showed a significant interaction between the gender of the participant and gender of the chosen sibling, $F(1, 96) = 4.32, p=.04$. Female reported greater warmth towards brothers while males reported more warmth towards sisters. Multiple regression analysis was carried out $F(2, 97) = 853.42, p<0.001, R^2=.945, adj R^2=0.944$ showing that sibling modeling and de-identification significantly predicted the warmth in the relationship. The findings of this study suggests that both gender composition and identification process effects the warmth in sibling relationship.

KEYWORDS Siblings, Relationship, Identification Process, Warmth, Modelling, De-Identification

Introduction

Family is the fundamental social institution in human life and of a society (Upali, 2015). It is built upon love, trust and growth of the members and a healthy bond they share expand in society. Furthermore, it is not only the source of nourishment or nurturing but also the very first environment where an individual learns about who they are and what their identity is. The family defines an individual and essentially how they represent himself. Within a family system there lies the values and core beliefs that respond in a certain pattern. The behaviors that influences the children and the adults of the family and helps them grow into a better future for the nation. The child develops their identity through the responses they receive from their parents (Upali, 2015).

Siblings possess a distinctive position in the family dynamics. They have a very different bonding unlike the parent-child relationship. Siblings' relations is an intricate mixture of love and hate and companionship and rivalry. Brothers and sisters share experiences that shape them into a new person with time. Sibling relationships have been described as love-hate relationships by virtue of their emotional intensity, but we know

little about how sibling positivity and negativity operate together to affect youth adjustment (Whiteman et al, 2016).

In some cases the siblings are the rivals while in healthy parenting styles the siblings are friends and a support to each other. When parents show consistent healthy behavior and avoid inattentive behavior the siblings grow into a healthier bond and a better individual while strict parenting leads to the sibling conflict and creates a barrier amongst them that complicates the identity formation. The study focuses on the formation of the identification process that refers to the identification of the psychological and physical personality of oneself after a certain age where an individual realizes their self-worth, their own attitudes and behavior and their characteristics and skills. The identity of individuals emerges, at least in part, from being members of a family (Scabini & Manzi, 2011). Identification occurs with parents and children where a child may look out to resemble an admired sibling which shows positive identification or they deliberately develops a sense of hatred in their hearts and maintains distance where their own identity is compromised. Both the directions are essential in identity formation. Identity theories generally agree that the identity a person comes to hold through their unique values and interpretations of the events in their life can help explain people's behavior (Meltzer et.al, 1975). The sense of belongingness is fostered by modelling while de-identification can encourage uniqueness and differentiation. It also depends on the sibling birth order, the gender of the child and the gender of the sibling.

Aurellyya Ciptari Dhienda & Muttaqin, Darmawan did a research in 2022 called "Quality of sibling relationships and identity formation: Identification processes as a mediator". Their article emphasizes the identity formation during the period of adolescence is a continued process. The study aims to examine the identification process (modeling and de-identification) as a mediator in the relationship between siblings. Data analysis was performed using regression analysis. The study shows that the identification process could be a mediator between the identity process and the quality of the sibling relationship (Aurelleya & Muttaqin, 2022).

Another research done is 2020 named as "Sibling Relationships in Adulthood: Research Findings and New Frontiers" focused on the most understudied topic from the family dynamics that is the sibling relationship. It navigates the context by elaborating on the psychological and social aspect in the sibling relationship. It promotes the detailed study of sibling relationships by evaluating individual and family characteristics as well as the broader sociocultural perspective. The study analyzes the sibling relationship from midlife to older adulthood highlighting the significance of siblings in family dynamics (Gilligan et. Al, 2020). On the other hand another study refers to the psychosocial stages of Erikson which says that the identity should be built in the early age to avoid role confusion. A strong sense of identity associated with better mental health of adolescents. The aim of the study was to analyze links between adolescent identity development and relationships with peers identified from a literature review discussing the theoretical factors that may predict these relationships (Rageliene, 2016). It was also found that maternal support was reduced due to commitment reconsideration and the quality of paternal relationship was worsened. Hence the results weren't moderated by adolescents' gender and sibling characteristics (Crocetti et.al, 2017).

Literature Review

The literature highlights mainly upon the sibling positive and negative bonding in African American dyads to test whether the changes in relationship qualities were

linked to changes in adolescents' internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The participants in the study were consecutively born siblings, 48% female and two parents from 189 African American families. Data was collected through home interviews for three years. Multilevel models revealed the positivity and negativity of the siblings that declined across adolescence with no difference by sibling dyads gender constellation. Thus sibling negativity remained a uniquely important relational experience for African American adolescents' adjustment (McHale et. Al, 2016). We have also found that parental socialization that influences that role of the family and empathy in children. The developmental course of empathy from age 7 to 14 is examined and the within-person associations between sibling warmth and conflict and youth's empathy are the key component. On three different occasions mothers, fathers and two eldest children were from 201 white, middle class families were provided questionnaire data that was to be filled. Multilevel models revealed that controlling for youth's pubertal status and parental education and girls' empathy increased during the transition from adolescence and then leveled off but boy's lower levels of empathy remained unchanged. Parental love and responsiveness during the initial birth giving period made siblings that were warmer and less conflicted. The study's findings highlight gender differences in empathy development and the role of siblings in shaping the socioemotional characteristics during adolescence period (Lam et. al, 2012). There are four theoretical psychologically oriented perspectives that are psychoanalytic evolutionary, social psychological, social learning and family ecological systems which combine together to form sibling relationships including perspectives on the nature and influences on developmental, individual and group differences in sibling relationships. Primarily, most researchers have researched about sibling's childhood and adolescence whereas this study highlights the developmental stages, suggesting the futuristic researchers to work on this fundamental family relationship (Whiteman et. al, 2012).

Key Concepts

The warmth in a sibling relationship is operationally defined as the degree of affection, closeness, support, intimacy and positive engagement within the relationship of siblings. Research suggests that the warmth in sibling relationship leads to two dynamics either modelling or de-identification. Modelling is defined as the extent to which individuals imitate or do the things as their sibling; contrary to this de-identification is defined as the extent to which individuals make intentionally make efforts to differentiate themselves from their sibling in terms of behavior and identity.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is done in order to understand the importance of a children's perception about the way they identify with their sibling i.e. modelling or de-identification and its impact on warmth they feel towards the sibling. We often see that the children don't have warmth for their sibling but in order to understand the quality of relationship one must understand the underlying process of identification. The aim of the study is to understand the relationship of siblings better in order to design strategy which help strengthen the bond and in return strengthen the personality of individuals and make them feel more grounded. As school going children are still in growing age, that's why identifying warmth with siblings in them can help us shape their relationship with their siblings in a better way.

Hypotheses

H1: Participants will score differently on warmth scale with siblings of same gender as compared to that of opposite gender.

Ho: Participants will not score differently on warmth scale with siblings of same gender as compared to that of opposite gender.

H1: Sibling modelling and sibling de-identification would significantly predict the warmth in siblings' relationship.

Ho: Sibling modelling and sibling de-identification would significantly predict the warmth in siblings' relationship.

Material and Methods

The data was collected as group. Firstly the consent was taken from parents/teachers and then the form was given to students. The exclusion and inclusion criteria was discussed with the teachers and only the students who fit the criteria were in the room so we were sure all the questions are answerable by them. After explaining the purpose of research a bit the participants were instructed to fill out the form. They were explained the right to withdraw and their voluntary participation in the research. After that the participants were asked to keep one of their siblings in mind and fill out the form given to them.

Participants

The data was collected from 100 secondary school children age ranged from (12-17), it consisted of both male and females. The participants were school going students.

The inclusion criteria was the participants with more than one siblings, the age of the participants was between 12 to 16 years, only the children living in the same house as their sibling were included.

The exclusion criteria was the participants who had siblings with special needs. The individuals who were the only child were also not included in the study. The siblings who were not living in the same house for any reason were also not taken as participants of current study.

Measures

Demographic forms

The demographic form consisted of 2 parts. The first part was about the information about self which included age, gender, birth order, qualification, marital status, family system of the participant. After filling that part the participants were asked to choose one of their siblings and do the rest of the questionnaire keeping in mind the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The part 2 of demographic form had the same details about the chosen sibling.

- 1) Quality of Sibling Relationships (Furman and Buhrmester, 1985)

The warmth/closeness subscale of the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (SRQ; Furman &

Buhrmester, 1985) consists of 27 items used to assess the quality of sibling relationships.

Furthermore, it uses seven behavioral indicators of sibling closeness: prosocial behavior, intimacy, companionship, similarity, attention, admiration of the sibling, and affection. Sample of items, for example, "How much do you and this sibling tell each other things you don't want other people to know?" and "How much is there a strong feeling of affection (love) between you and this sibling?". Responses to the warmth/closeness subscale of SRQ use five response options ranging from 1 (hardly at all) to 5 (extremely much). The internal reliability of the scale is calculated by computing underlying cronbach's α , which is found to be .94. Whereas, that for intimacy is .87, prosocial behavior is .77, companionship is .73, affection is .87, similarity is .76, admiration of sibling is .74 and admiration by siblings is .78. Construct validity was calculated correlating the scale with internalizing ($r=.16^*$) and externalizing behaviors ($r=.23^*$) and the quality of relationship with parents ($r=.38^*$). Sibling Influence Scale (Whiteman et. al, 2010)

The Sibling Influence Scale consists of 18 items used to assess their identification process. Furthermore, it consists of two sub-scales such as modeling (8 items, for example, "From watching my sister/brother, I have learned how to do things") and de-identification (10 items, for example, "I try to be different from my sister/brother"). The SIS response uses five options ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The subscales showed an internal consistency of scores of 0.90 and 0.85 for modeling and differentiation, respectively (Whiteman et al., 2010). These constructs have also been found to be orthogonal ($r = -.05$) and valid in past research (Whiteman et al., 2007, 2010; Whiteman et. al, 2014).

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Estimates for Study Variable

	μ	SD	No of unit	A	Skewness	Kurtosis	Range (A)	Range (P)
Modelling	3.63	1.47	8	0.98	-0.76	-1.16	1-5	1-5
De-identification	3.75	1.79	10	0.76	0.73	2.60	1.10-4.90	1-5
SRQ(warmth)	3.44	1.09	27	0.96	-0.85	-1.13	1.52-4.59	1-5

N=100, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

Descriptive statistics were found for the data including minimum and maximum values, Mean and Standard deviation.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics for all the demographic variables.

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage	μ	SD
Age	12years	11	11%	14.65
	13years	20	20%	
	14years	19	19%	
	15years	13	13%	
	16years	17	17%	
	17years	20	20%	
Gender	Female	47	47%	-

	Male	53	53%		
Birth order	Eldest	13	13%		
	Middle	28	28%	-	-
	Youngest	59	59%		
Grades	Middle	57	57%		
	Secondary	43	43%	-	-
Marital status	Married	100	100%		
	Unmarried	0	0	-	-
Living together	Yes	95	95%		
	No	5	5%	-	-
Challenged sibling	Yes	0	0		
	No	100	100%	-	-
Age of chosen sibling	Early childhood (1-6 years)	2	2%		
	Middle childhood (7-11 years)	12	12%	17.30	5.14
	Adolescence (12-18 years)	35	35%		
	Young Adulthood (19-30)	51	51%		
Gender of chosen sibling	Female	55	55%		
	Male	45	45%	-	-
Qualification of chosen sibling	Primary	4	4%		
	Middle	22	22%		
	Secondary	37	37%	-	-
	Bachelors	37	37%		
Marital status of chosen sibling	Unmarried	87	87%		
	Married	10	10%		
	Divorced	2	2%	-	-
	Widowed	1	1%		

Table 3
Results for two way ANOVA results for warmth in sibling relationship

	F	P	Effect size
Gender	4.01	.048	.05
Sibling Gender	0.15	.7	.002
Gender X Sibling Gender	4.32	.04	0.4

$p < 0.05$. note: $df = 1,96$

A significant interaction was found between the gender of the participant and gender of the chosen sibling on the warmth subscale of sibling relationship questionnaire, $F(1,96) = 4.32, p = .04, \eta^2 = 0.04$. The results indicated female participants had more warmth towards brothers ($M = 3.41$) than sisters ($M = 3.05$). In contrast, male participants showed greater warmth towards sisters ($M = 3.39$) than brothers ($M = 3.92$). Conclusively, participants had more warmth towards opposite gender sibling.

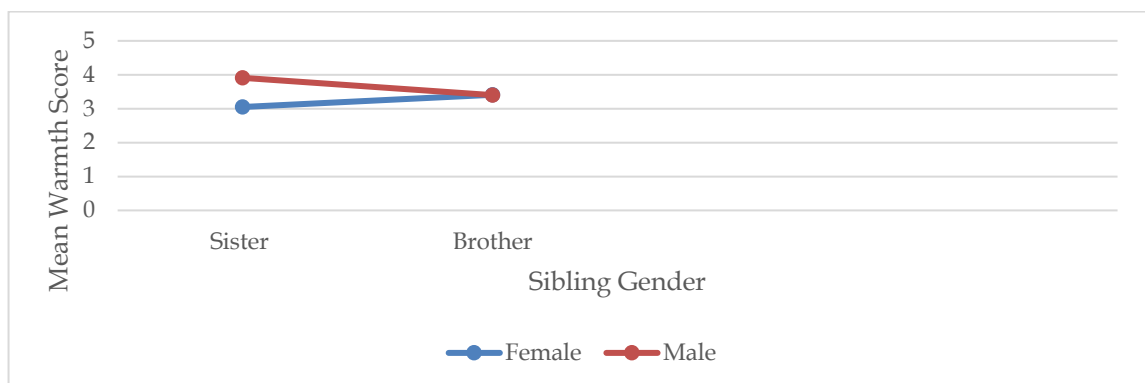


Figure 1 Cross gender pattern of sibling warmth

Table 4
Multiple regression analysis for predicting sibling relationship warmth

Predictor	B	SE b	β	R ²	F
Constant	22.79	1.87	-		
Modelling	2.06	.12	.82	0.945	835.42
De-identification	.282	0.08	.17		
R ²	0.945				
Adjusted R ²	0.944				

p<.001

A multiple regression analysis was carried out to know whether modelling and de-identification predicted the warmth of sibling relationship. The model was significant, $F(2, 97) = 853.42$, $p < 0.001$. $R^2 = .945$, $adj R^2 = 0.944$. Modeling and de-identification both were predictor of warmth in siblings' relationship.

Discussion

It was hypothesized that there will be a significant difference in sibling relationship based on the gender of the participants and the gender of their chosen sibling. It was found that the girls had better relationship with their brothers as compared to their sisters. It was also found that the boys have better relationship with their sisters as compared to their brothers; conclusively siblings of opposite gender have better relationship as compared to that of same gender. This can be explained well by the gender socialization theory which states that each gender is expected to have their own gender role. The girls are expected to be more emotionally and verbally expressive while boys are taught to be emotionally restraint (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013, Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Now in opposite gender all these gender based roles are complementary to each other leading to more warmth towards opposite gender sibling (Endendijk et al., 2018) while when the gender of sibling is same leading to more comparison and competition and less emotional closeness. On the other hand when there is opposite gender sibling there is little or no pressure to compete (Mchale et. Al, 2012).

This result finding can also be explained by a theory given by Feinberg & Hetherington in 2000. The sibling de-identification theory according to which the process of de-identification in siblings leads removal of rivalry. Which directly does not create warmth but does create a safe space for the siblings to be able to experience warmth (Feinberg & Hetherington, 2000). In opposite gender siblings the process of de-identification happens naturally (Schachter & Stone, 2014) leading to little or no rivalry hence more warmth (Samek & Ruete, 2011).

Leon Fisteringer in 1954 gave the theory of social comparison which suggests that individuals compare themselves more with similar people i.e. same gender siblings (Whiteman et al., 2007). The social comparison with same gender sibling leads to increases rivalry (McHale et al., 2012 & Solmeyer et al., 2014), leaving less space to create warmth (Buist et al., 2013).

Next it was hypothesized that modelling and de-identification will predict warmth in siblings' relationship. It was found that modelling is a strong predictor of warmth while de-identification also predicts warmth but less than modelling. Bandura (1977) demonstrated that people learn behavior the most by modelling. If they see warmth in a relationship they model it back. Modelling is associated with greater similarity between siblings (Whiteman et al., 2007). It not only creates warmth but is also on going process of keeping up the warmth of the relationship between siblings

(Whiteman et al, 2011). In families with regular sibling interaction it is associated with creating emotional closeness, cooperation and warmth (McHale et al., 2012).

De-identification plays an important role in decreasing conflict and rivalry as suggested by sibling de-identification theory, 2000. It decrease rivalry but not increase the warmth (Feinberg & Hetherington, 2000). The process of de-identification works as a ground for maintains peace rather than bringing warmth in a relationship (Whiteman et al., 2007). When the process of de-identification is balanced with modelling it creates healthy (warmer) sibling relationship (Samek & Rueter, 2011). In a nut shell modelling does create warmth in sibling relationship actively whereas de-identification does not create warmth but it does regulates negative things in order to have a safe space for warmth to develop.

The small difference between the effect of de-identification and modelling on warmth can be explained by the fact that the participants were asked to choose a sibling. Research shows that even in the same family, siblings' relationship are different sibling to sibling and no two siblings have same relationship (Jensen et.al, 2022). Hence when they were given a chance to choose the sibling the naturally selected the one with whom they were closer. It is a natural phenomenon specially for the individuals in the age 12-16, that people try to talk relationships in clearer and positive terms rather than in mixed or conflicting way (Steriberg, 2014; Costello et al.,2014). They choose the sibling with whom they had most positive relationship. Additionally it is also seen that individuals go for things that support the image of good boy/good girl as familial harmony is something valued extremely by the cultural norms (Cameirini et al.,2018). Therefore, the mentioned factors added up to the fact that there was not much of a difference between warmth of the sibling's relationship when the participants modelled the behavior or when they choose to de-identify with their sibling.

Recommendations

In order to make this research more impactful, future studies can be done in longitudinal design in order see the effect of variables over time. The research can also be done choosing the sibling for the participants randomly in order to avoid the social acceptability bias. Qualitative data can also provide more insightful data about the variables in observation. As we know each child, despite having same parents experience different parenting hence that can be taken in consideration too in order to understand

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