

# ***Research on the Influence of Sibling Relationships on Personal Growth***

**Yichu He<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Pinghe high school, Shanghai, 201200, China*

*a. 13918460779@139.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Sibling's relationship plays an essential part throughout one's life. Nowadays, the unit of family descend into nuclear family. The relation between siblings became crucial to the family combination. The primary aim of this study is to provide a clear picture of what a sibling relationship is like and the affect on one's character building as well as the question of how does it affect the further development of one's relationships with other people close to them. This study explores the features of sibling relationships and the impact of sibling relationships on personal growth by reviewing relevant concepts and researches. Overall, it is concluded that this relationship experienced by many is a great factor that of one's being of a person, including agreeableness, motivation, attitude towards achievements, relation with closed ones and so on. Sibling relationships have a significant impact on personal growth, especially in the following three aspects: one is friendship, one is personality, and the last is sibling interactions.

**Keywords:** Birth order, Age gap, Parents, Sibling relationship.

## **1. Introduction**

As the traditional bond from the customs fade away due to urbanize, the main social unit of family shift to nuclear family composed of mostly parents are child. As a result, the importance of maintaining a positive relationship between siblings increase. Beforehand, family are kept together by all kinds of traditions that are strictly followed by the older generations as how they were been taught at youth, which originated from myths due to the fear of nature and the feeling of helplessness. Nowadays, with the improvement of technology, less people believe in ghost or god. The advancement of portable electronic devices and short, eye-catching video clips, family relationships are put to second place. This condition continues until an unexpected pandemic roam over Earth, locking families into one small house. Escape was impossible. In a way, COVID push a stop button on the world, allowing people to look back and pick up the pieces lost on this fast pace of life—reunite family. Up to this point, people start getting confused about the question “why”. It seems to be a topic no one really cared much about before. Relationships between family members have existed in Chinese history, but mostly in respect for elders and rarely in respect for siblings.

In the dictionary, siblings is “one of two or more individuals having the same parents or sometimes only one parent in common”. As a big portion throughout ones life, they are often the first friend, rival and somehow even role model. Medically, siblings share around 25% to 50% of genes. Physically, they share the same parents, compete for the same resources and meet a great number of the same

people. Emotionally, they share the same childhood and mental-shaping events. It is a special relationship only lower than identical twins. Something that will resurface after quarrels, outlast marriage, survive death of parents. Therefore, this study will provide a clear picture of what a sibling relationship is like and its effect on personal growth. Learning how to harmoniously get along with siblings is an important skill in life, it not only can influence the atmosphere of one growing up, which can be pivotal to the the way one internalization and react to the world, but also the attitude when facing the people the love or love them.

## 2. Features of Sibling Relationship

Having someone older at home all the time can mean having a role model to follow, positive or negative. Since positive effect are often too minuscule to decide, some researches solve the quantify problem by observing the “negative” effects siblings can have on each other—injuries. As the state in the experiment which included 242 children from age 0 to 15, three hundred and five per one thousand child injured has a sibling who got wounded in the previous ninety days, while only a hundred and seventy four per one thousand single child had wounded. Almost two times the number [1]. However, out of everyone’s expectation, the seriousness of the wounds are another story. The injury-related hospitalization for children with siblings hurt in the past ninety days was one point seven per one thousand child. For those who are the only child in the family, the hospitalization rate goes up to three per one thousand child. This time, only half the number. Looking from the other side, this can mean that siblings does have a undeniably impact on each other, particularly physically.

To fully understand the universal unique things happening between siblings, one must begin when time starts to condense into honey—the adulthood. Sibling is someone who has the second closest relation and one that will link up the other sibling’s whole life. As siblings grew up to adults, they can be the only support of each other in a unfamiliar city without parents being around. Taking this as a start, having a well relation with siblings can ensure a baseline of life quality by taking care of each other economically. This can really help during the unstable period right after graduation from university. Being the only someone who share fifty percent of DNA on this world and the one who share the childhood with, there are many circumstances that he or she can understand what is going on in the mind of their sibling’s to comfort and care for each other emotionally [2].

In essence, to further investigate in the relation between two siblings is critical. As people’s perceptions change, many choose to have two children for companion and safety. According to 18 sibling pairs, a few conclusion were abstract between the questions and answers. Fundamentally, the siblings reported a feeling of “shared loyalty” towards each other, connecting them, and allowing them to stand up and face whatever difficulties that comes ahead. Additionally, the siblings described new kinds of bond formed as the challenges were solved, this pull them closer, appreciating each other and not taking that as granted. Eventually, the siblings, as time goes, feel more like sharing the sweet and sorrow of life together with empathy; Recalling the shared memories together and laugh at the silly things in the past. In conclusion, the participants said that having a daily, face-to-face contact is favorable to increase the sibling’s openness and trust with one another, increasing the shared loyalty, then becoming more willing to share, and a cycle is formed.

Economic issues are something that surround people throughout their lives, especially for the time when one has to care for both their new born child below and the elderly parent above. This period is, in many cases, reduced with siblings around. Siblings, linked at little, both have the feeling of responsibility towards parents. At the difficult time for one, another back up. Data were collected in the year 2013 to 2014 from 84 sibling pairs [3]. From the conversations, adult siblings experienced pressure from family light to heavy, the amount of pressure per person distributed on the siblings are negatively correlated with the adult siblings’ relationship. Although many said that they were more

than willing to return the care their parents have throughout their childhood, challenges emerge when dealing with it, and although the stress from the family affect the way siblings interact in life from both up and down sides, the majority bonds of the siblings and family are strengthened through difficulties like this.

The effect of some abstract concept such as bonds can be enlarge and explained by sensitive peoples. In a way, the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are a group of them. They are socially behind average, lack in communication skills. Therefore, sibling's effect on them can be weighty for them to entail the majorities. According to a research which included a population of 150 participants, researchers the children with a mean age of four into three equal groups: no sibling, older siblings, and younger siblings [4]. The results were unforeseen. Children with ASD who has an older sibling has a forty eight point nine percent higher cognitive ability than those with no or younger siblings. The latter two groups has no significant differences. This finding emphasize that the older sibling play a big role in positively affecting the social development of younger siblings with ASD, indicating the influential position sibling relations have, especially for the younger one.

### **3. The Impact of Sibling Relationship on Personal Growth**

#### **3.1. The Impact on Friendship**

One might wonder how important a sibling relation is. If it matters when siblings are separated at adulthood. It turns out that siblings are likely to be the first "friend" to each other, so the way one treat his or her sibling has a great impact on how he or she deal with their future relationships between people, friends or partners. Childhood is a time for children to explore things around and gather new information. The way and type of information absorbed by the child is critical, when internalized, for building up his or her way of selecting, processing and reacting to the world. Long story short, as someone who are together from the every early memories, the quality of sibling relationships has a positive association to the later prosocial behaviors. The prosocial behaviors are essential to "best friends" relationship quality, which in turn is a great factor of one's living standard. Worth mentioning, the condition that the siblings are in surprisingly does not affect either friend relation nor life satisfaction [5].

One can say that sibling is the first friend of one's life, and the way one treats him or her, as well as the way one is being treated in return, plays a great role in the future friend link together with the link to the society. From the data collected in the preschool-aged children, which is quantitated by the sharing task, friend relationships are engaged in more complex social interaction behaviors, whereas sibling relationships are more asymmetry [6]. Base on this model of the two types of relationships, the significant qualities of interplay with one partner can lead to the up rise quality of the other relationship. At the same time, when one of the relationship (sibling or friend) is in a low quality, the higher quality the other relationship is to one, the better the chances are for the former relationship to be able to initiate into a better relationship.

#### **3.2. The Impact on Personal Character**

Oldest child syndrome, sometimes called firstborn syndrome, refers to how being the firstborn child in a family can shape a person's identity. Birth order has long been thought of as one of the primary factors that influence our personality and development. In particular, firstborn children are usually characterized as responsible, Type A personalities who are often drawn to leadership-type roles in the family and in their lives. Being the oldest sibling may have its perks, but it also can feel like a burden at times. Theories about oldest children's development are based on the idea that these children are usually given their parents' undivided attention early on, which may make it more likely for them to reach developmental milestones early, especially ones centered around

intelligence and academic achievements. Overall, they can be more agreeable and outgoing than the younger child.

Many kinds of inter-human relationships can influence the sibling relationship at youth, one of them is the parent-child relation, which also occur in the nuclear family. The condition of the sibling warmth and conflict effect the acceptance and different treatments of parents and child in all dimensions. On the one hand, for the older siblings in the family, who father has spend a relatively longer time with, the father-child relation has a significant impact on both one's perception of bond in the sibling relationship and psychological modification. On the other hand, for the younger siblings in the family, acceptance and support from the mother really contributes to the warmth perception and interpretation of the sibling bond [7]. This might be mainly due to the reliance and being the "group pet" of the younger child from the mother and the independence of being the older child and the responsibility of an elder sibling idolizing the father.

When chosen to have a second child, the parents will often decide on whether to have a boy or a girl. Therefore, the relationship between the younger and older sibling is crucial. Backed up by a longitudinal data from Britain, which included children from 10 to 16, most boys are more agreeable if their younger sibling is a girl[8]. This is due to the desire from oxytocin of the older child to protect the younger and weaker one. Since a girl is more fragile, having a younger sister can stimulate the protection desire in boys. On the other hand, if the boys have a younger brother, there is a higher likelihood of viewing them as a competitor for resources with his parents rather than a part of the family. Concluding from above, it is more likely to have siblings with different sex as a factor of strengthening family bond and bond between peer group siblings.

### 3.3. The Impact on Sibling Interactions

Parents' attitudes toward the child can be influential toward the way the siblings interact with each other. Children with younger siblings might not be as acceptable as the younger to the older one for the reason that the old child had a memory of being the only child, which can effect how they welcome the new family member. In the families with a toddler and infant, the toddlers are often more willing to share and more tolerant toward the younger child when the father show more sensitivity towards the siblings, but only when the father shows preference to the toddler[9]. There are two explanation for this phenomenon. One is that for toddlers, they wish to maintain the position of being "more important" than another child, therefore motivates them to show more positive behaviors for insurance of the place in the family. Another reason might be their willingness to compensate their younger siblings for their lack of the father's love and companion.

There was a saying that the less siblings' age gap are, the more they will likely they will grow harmonious. In fact, siblings with an age gap less than three are often more likely to share resources with close ones such as friends compared to ones with the age gap lager than three [10]. To further explain, for those whose sibling's age gap are larger than three, when choosing friends or siblings to give the resource to, the probability of choosing sibling is larger for the larger child than the younger one. However, when the same circumstance was faced by siblings was an gap age under three, younger child, compare to the other one, would be more likely to be willing to share with their siblings rather than friends. This is mostly caused by the relationship between siblings, when the gap age is less than three, the siblings have similar developed brain and Theory of Mind, allowing them to play together as one. Siblings with gap age greater than three have different development level of the Theory of Mind.

## 4. Conclusion

This paper concludes the research by showing the role and impacts of siblings through a literature review. The study shows that there are three main themes that characterize siblinghood. First, siblings have a distinctive bond; it's the understanding through genetic similarity, sense of belonging, same portion of memory consciousness of being the descendants of the same family. Followed by is the consanguineous, and therefore, an unavoidable mutual commitments. This unique relationship within the nuclear family is the start of almost all peer group relationships, such as friendship, college relationships, schoolmate relationships. Ending with each other's emotional support and help at necessity like limit resources. All in all, sibling relationships have a significant impact on personal growth, especially in the following three aspects: one is friendship, one is personality, and the last is sibling interactions. Since bond is a something very different from person to person, scientists are still looking for ways to quantify it in order to determine the general law. As the society's unit inclines toward relationships of the nuclear family, further studies of siblings relationships should be done in the future to unlock it's remaining mysteries.

## References

- [1] Johnston B D, Grossman D C, Connell F A & Koepsell T D. (2000). High-risk periods for childhood injury among siblings. *Pediatrics* (3 Pt 1), 562-8.
- [2] Dana Šýkorová. (2024). Siblinghood Amongst Older Adults: What Being a Sibling or Having Siblings Means. *Journal of Family Issues* (2), 419-446.
- [3] Ngangana Pamela C, Davis Bertha L, Burns Dorothy P, McGee Zina T & Montgomery Arlene J. (2016). Intra-family stressors among adult siblings sharing caregiving for parents. *Journal of advanced nursing* (12), 3169-3181.
- [4] Ben-Itzhak, E., Nachshon, N., & Zachor, D. A. (2019). Having siblings is associated with better social functioning in autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 47, 921-931.
- [5] Martina Smorti & Lucia Ponti. (2018). How Does Sibling Relationship Affect Children's Prosocial Behaviors and Best Friend Relationship Quality?. *Journal of Family Issues* (8), 2413-2436.
- [6] McElwain Nancy L & Volling Brenda L. (2005). Preschool children's interactions with friends and older siblings: relationship specificity and joint contributions to problem behavior. *Journal of family psychology : JFP : journal of the Division of Family Psychology of the American Psychological Association (Division 43)* (4), 486-96.
- [7] Sheila R. van Berkel, Marleen G. Groeneveld, Judi Mesman, Joyce J. Endendijk, Elizabeth T. Hallers-Haalboom, Lotte D. van der Pol & Marian J. Bakermans-Kranenburg. (2015). Parental Sensitivity Towards Toddlers and Infant Siblings Predicting Toddler Sharing and Compliance. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* (8), 2270-2279.
- [8] Felisha L. Younkin, Michael W. Firmin, Ashley Belles, Moriah L. Hardman, Michaela E. Holloway & David R. Patrick. (2021). Sharing life together: Sibling's relationships while attending the same college. *Personal Relationships* (4), 927-939.
- [9] Golsteyn, B. H., & Magnée, C. A. (2020). Does sibling gender affect personality traits?. *Economics of Education Review*, 77, 102016.
- [10] Xiao Erping, Qin Hao, Zhu Xinyi & Jin Jing. (2023). The influence of birth order and sibling age gap on children's sharing decision. *Early Child Development and Care* (7), 939-951.