

GIAR International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

Volume 1; Issue 1; Jul 2026; Page No. 33-38

Peer Reviewed Journal

Hands-on Parental Empowerment: Sibling Rivalry

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Abstract

Sibling rivalry is a widespread childhood behaviour that it can be coupled with emotional and behavioural problems in case conflicts are personal and intense and not managing. Parents play a significant role in identifying sibling rivalry and addressing emotional and behavioural needs of their children accordingly. The current study is aimed at enhancing parental learning about sibling rivalry using a systematic Parental Empowerment Programme (PEP). Through the combination of education, discussion, teaching with videos, and practical advice, the programme achieves the creation of awareness by parents regarding the causes and manifestations of sibling rivalry and the development of the right approach to handle sibling conflict. A structured questionnaire and interview method were used to assess parental knowledge. The programme focuses on parental awareness, positive use of conflict, emotional support as well as positive parenting practices. Parental empowerment can help families to facilitate healthier relationships between siblings and minimise emotional and behavioural problems within children.

Keywords: Sibling rivalry, parental empowerment, parental knowledge, sibling conflict, emotional problems, behavioural problems, children.

Introduction

Difficulties in emotions and behaviour are critical areas in childhood. One kind of family conflict that could impact the emotional health and behaviour of children is sibling rivalry. It is usually competition among siblings regarding the attention of parents, their love, notice, or other resources and can be accompanied by jealousy, anger, quarrels, and other adverse emotions of a negative nature.

Despite the fact that level of sibling rivalry is a normal aspect in child growth, excessive or chronic sibling rivalry can have adverse effects on emotional and behavioural adaptation of children. Parent involvement is thus significant in problematic sibling relationships identification and responding to emotional needs of children accordingly.

Unequal attention, comparison between the children, inconsistent responses or

insufficient acknowledgment of each child as an individual may make some parents, unintentionally, contribute to rivalry. Moreover, resources which can be used to constructively address family conflict might be less in parents who undergo stress or feel socially isolated.

Parental education will thus be structured to enable parents with insights and viable tactics on how to comprehend and cope with sibling rivalry. PEP (in this article) is designed to raise awareness levels of parents, enhance proper correct parenting reactions and minimize chances of emotional and behavioural disorders linked to unabating sibling conflict.

Sibling Rivalry

Sibling rivalry is defined as competition, jealousy or conflict between siblings, more often based on competition to gain parental attention and affection. Competition can be especially visible after the younger sibling is born, as an older child can feel that their parents pay less attention to them.

Sibling rivalry can be manifested in the form of fights, jealousy, defiant behaviour, tantrums, returning to previous behaviour, anxiety, depression, isolation, or in bid to win parental attention. In more extreme situations, reader aggression can be prolonged hostility, psychological aggression or even physical aggression between sibling.

Although interpersonal conflicts within the family may be a normal aspect of a family life, parents are supposed to differentiate between normal and normal developmental

conflict and those that are persistently harmful and connected with some serious problems with emotional or behavioural issues. Positive parental responses are thus valuable to aid children on how to voice their feelings, solve conflicts and build more positive and healthy sibling bonds.

Parental Empowerment Programme (PEP)

Parental Empowerment Programme is an instructional and supportive intervention that aims at enhancing parents knowledge and capability to respond productively to the developmental, emotional, and behavioural requirements of their children. The programme offers information to parents concerning sibling rivalry, its potential causes and exhibitions, and effective strategies that can be employed in controlling the sibling conflict. It also helps parents to be able to identify any emotional and behavioural changes in their children and react in a constructive and supportive way.

A major goal of parental empowerment is to aid parents realise normal stages of child development and identify the social, emotional, physical and academic needs of their children. The programme also would influence parents to discover their strengths in parenting and apply them to foster positive child development. Empowerment of parents can also help alleviate loneliness through linking parents with fellow parents and community support systems. It may be through such support that parenting can be made more resilient and that parental coping

is enhanced to help them handle difficult family circumstances.

Parental Empowerment Programme Goals.

The main aim of PEP is to enhance parental information and effective skills on how to handle sibling rivalry. The programme will aim to assist parents:

learn about sibling rivalry, and its typical forms;

- recognize the changes that occur in behaviour and emotions with respect to sibling conflict;
- understand developmental and emotional needs in children;
- react positively to jealousy and antagonism;
- enhance the use of nurturing and empathetic parenting;
- learn to deal with conflicts in a proper manner; and
- foster good relationship among siblings.

With training and effective mentoring, parents can gain a better understanding on how to identify problematic sibling interactions and intervene accordingly.

Delivery of the Programme

The parents were grouped into five groups with the number of participants in each group session being about ten. The

intervention involved three educational sessions in a 9-day time frame.

Session 1 Understanding Sibling Rivalry.

The introductory session prompted parents to share their own experiences and knowledge about sibling rivalry. This was succeeded by teaching material touching on the definition, incidence, pathophysiology and signs and symptoms of sibling rivalry, and information on how to identify emotional challenges in children. There were also chances to ask questions and clarify issues by parents.

Session 2: Sibling Conflict.

The second group session involved parents on how to cope with sibling rivalry. The various types of sibling conflict, how rivalry can be recognized amongst children, how it can be managed, and how conflict can be resolved using videotaping, were explained. At the end of the session there was a discussion of questions and concerns that were raised by the parents.

Session 3 Practical Management Strategies.

The third session focused on immediate skills of dealing with sibling rivalry. Parents were also lectured topics on the right practices and behaviours to embrace or avoid when dealing with conflict between their siblings through lectures and video-assisted instructions. Participants were also given educational material that they could refer to in the future so that they could be able to still implement the right strategies after the programme had ended.

Implication of Parental Involvement.

There is a primary role played by parents in influencing emotional climate within which the relationships of siblings are formed. Parenting here can be effectively achieved by understanding the unique needs of children, being sensitive to their feelings, setting the right boundaries and ensuring that siblings can work out their disputes in positive ways.

Parental education can make parents more conscious about the possible outcomes of continuous aggressive behavior in siblings and enhance their skills to identify, interpret and act on childhood feelings.

Other recent studies also confirm the significance of parental mediation of sibling conflict as it is argued that parenting may positively influence children to engage in effective conflict resolution strategies in place of merely trying to eliminate all sibling conflict.

It is therefore important that the parents are advised not to engage in irrelevant comparison between the siblings, they should be fair, they should listen to every child and enforce cooperative behaviour; they should intervene promptly in case of aggressive or unsafe conflict.

Wider Application of Parental Empowerment

The concepts of empowering parents can gain applicability beyond the area of sibling rivalry. Educational and supportive parental programmes may also be helpful when dealing with children who experience emotional, behavioural, developmental,

psychological, or chronic health-related problems in a family.

This can be potentially applications to children with autism, anxiety, attention-seeking behaviours, conduct-related difficulties, epilepsy, visual impairment, premature development, and children that may be receiving intensive treatment in hospitals. Yet, the particular content of what the parents intervene should be tailored to the child and the family situation instead of expecting that one and the same programme can apply to all issues.

Role of Nurses

Parents can be empowered by nurses, especially those that work in the paediatrics, community-health, school-health and mental-health settings, through education and support of the families. The nurses can assist parents to learn about normal child development, recognise emotional and behavioural red flags, identify stressors within the family, become better communicators with their children, and practice more helpful ways to resolve sibling conflict.

They can also notice those situations that need referral to paediatricians, psychologists, counsellors, social workers or any other suitable professionals. The continuous physical aggression, high levels of emotional distress, gross changes in behaviour, or fears about safety of the children should not be dealt with as normal sibling rivalry.

Conclusion

Sibling rivalry is a normal part of childhood, and family relationships, and chronic or extreme conflict may lead to emotional distress and behavioural problems. Parents thus need relevant knowledge and useful skills to identify sibling rivalry, decipher emotional needs of children and have conflict management skills.

An organized Parental Empowerment Programme has the potential to offer education, working instructions, consultations, and enabling learning experience that empowers the parents with deeper confidence and knowledge. The parental interventions do not need to interfere with all the conflicting factors of the brother and sister, but promote a healthy communication, emotional perception, fairness, cooperation, and constructive conflict resolution.

Parents empowerment can therefore also lead to healthier sibling interactions and assist parents cope with family pressure and social and emotional growth of children.

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