



COPING MECHANISMS OF FILIPINO SIBLINGS OF EXCEPTIONAL PUPILS

Randolph G. Catungal, MA, MS

Master Teacher

Lagro High School, Philippines

Carmelita U. Cruz, PhD

Retired Dean

Roosevelt College Foundation, Philippines

Ma. Teresa R. Abadam, MA

School Directress

The Camilian Maria Domenica Dev't Center, Inc.

Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: February 11th 2021 Accepted: February 28th 2021 Published: March 26th 2021</p>	<p>This research aimed to determine the implication of the coping skills in terms of understanding, awareness, and acceptance of siblings of pupils in an inclusive classroom and be the basis for an intervention plan. The study was descriptive type. It was conducted in a public school in Quezon City in the school year 2014-2015. The thirty-three (33) siblings and thirty-three (33) pupils were the respondents and subjects respectively. The data used frequency, percent, mean, analysis of variance, and chi-square test. Analysis of the results led to the following conclusions: In general, the sibling-respondents have 3 siblings, in which predominantly male and 19.5 years old. The pupil-subjects consist of males who slightly outnumbered the females, or generally 14 years old, either the youngest or the middle child, with predominantly intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder, with moderate level of exceptionality, and mostly in the kindergarten level. Understanding, Awareness, and Acceptance are the coping skills used by the sibling-respondents when dealing with their disabled siblings. Coping mechanisms are perceived to be exhibited often. This shows that sibling-respondents often understand, are aware, and accept their exceptional siblings. This means that the level of the siblings' coping skills of the disabled pupils are nearly the same regardless of whether the disability is ADHD, ASD, Intellectual Disability, Physical Impairments, or Visual Impairments. They may have high or low coping mechanisms towards their sibling with special needs regardless of their gender, age, number of siblings, economic status, and religion. Results of this study imply that there must be cooperation among teachers, parents, and siblings of differently-able pupils to achieve the common goal of helping them to improve their behavior and cognitive aspect as well for which an intervention program was planned.</p>

Keywords: Coping mechanisms, Sibling rivalry, Filipino, Special Education, and Psychology.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship among siblings generally begins to grow from birth. They normally play with each other that develop great relationships. They usually fight, argue, and quarrel, but at the end of the day they develop strong relationship as siblings. They would have a big impact when they found out that their siblings have exceptionalities. They encounter difficulty interacting with their siblings with exceptionality and might misunderstand their siblings' reactions and feelings on certain situations. They may also feel embarrassed concerning their behaviors whenever they go to public places. This phase may affect regular children as to their associations toward their peers, not inviting their friends to play and keep away from inviting them to come in their homes. On the other hand, these siblings still show support and care to their siblings with exceptionalities like demonstrating to them how to do certain things, teach them how to behave in a specific situation and providing their families some strategies in managing their exceptional siblings. These siblings contribute to helping their siblings with disability and their parents as well. Having an exceptional sibling can be beneficial on the part of the siblings. Despite the challenges they experienced throughout their lives, brothers and sisters of

exceptional sibling increased awareness, and become more concern in terms of their siblings’ conditions, needs, and their responsibilities as their siblings’ guide (Wall, 2004).

Siblings play many roles to each other lives. In fact, siblings’ relationships make up a child’s first social network and these are the basis for child’s interaction with the other people outside the family. When the relationship is affected by a sibling’s disability, the benefits for both the disabled and non-disabled child are altered. Sibling of a child with exceptionality may find themselves adjusting to a brother or a sister who requires closer attention and more demands from parents and other household members or relatives. Reaction to this situation may range from jealousy and anger, to love, acceptance, and genuine caring for the sibling with exceptionality (Isaac, 2005).

Having a sibling with exceptionality can affect a non-exceptional sibling’s social life. This sibling might feel embarrassed by the sibling’s behaviors especially in public places. Some children may refuse to have friends with other children of their age. For the last twenty years, this issue on siblings with exceptionalities has become less true as they became enlightened and aware concerning exceptionalities. When these two individuals reached their adulthood, they may experience resentment or hatred. One example would be when an exceptional child uses the sibling’s properties and crosses or blocks the sibling’s way. In this case parents rather tend to punish the exceptional child’s sibling than to punish the exceptional child. Parents allotted more of their resources to their exceptional children’s expenses. They get the higher amount of money while their siblings receive less. Time and attention are also the issue of these siblings since exceptional children get more time and extra attention to their parents as they are being accompanied to attend to their regular activities like attending to different therapy sessions. One of the positive effects of having exceptional children is that their siblings are able to build up their sense of responsibilities to helping their siblings with exceptionalities, and a desire to help their parents in raising their exceptional children (Fein, 2007).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The descriptive method of research is used throughout the data gathered from the respondents. Picciano (2004) stated that a descriptive research attempts to describe, explain and interpret conditions of the present i.e. “what is”. The purpose of it is to examine a phenomenon that is occurring at a specific place and time. The study is conducted in a public elementary school in Quezon City, Philippines. The subjects of the study were pupils with exceptionality and their siblings were the respondents. Purposive sampling is used since the respondents of the study were chosen based on their knowledge of the information required by the researcher. Intellectual Disabilities comprised of 6 pupil-respondents with Down syndrome, and 10 with Mental Retardation. On the other hand, Visual impairments included 2 pupil-respondents with low visions. Every respondent accomplish the multiple statements of direct and indirect probe respondents: coping mechanisms used by non-exceptional siblings towards their exceptional siblings. This implies that one sibling with for each pupil with exceptionality served as the respondent. The eldest sibling of the exceptional sibling was chosen as respondents of the study. In cases where an exceptional pupil is the eldest, the younger non-exceptional sibling was the one to answer the questionnaire. An exceptional pupil whose immediate sibling is younger than 14 years old was not included in the study.

Questions that the researcher used were adopted from the study, “Attitudes of Children toward Siblings with Special Needs” (Gavan, 1998). The questions were suitable and exact to what the researcher wanted to measure. There were four data gathering tools that the researcher used in this study, namely: (1) the demographic profile which targets personal information about the respondents’ name, gender, age, economic status, number of siblings, and religion, (2) Sibling Understanding questionnaire that gauged how non-exceptional siblings’ extent of understanding regarding their brother’s or sister’s exceptionality; their responsibilities and roles as siblings, (3) Sibling Awareness questionnaire that measured non-exceptional siblings’ awareness of their exceptional sibling; their responsibility, and the situations in their family, and (4) Sibling Acceptance questionnaire that determined non-exceptional siblings’ extent of acceptance towards exceptional sibling and situation. Siblings were also asked to rank the mechanism they used in addressing specific needs of their exceptional siblings using the scales below.

4.5-5.0	Always (A)
4.5-5.0	Often (O)
2.5 -3.4	Sometimes (S)
1.5 – 2.4	Rarely (R)
0 – 1.4	Never (N)

The socio-demographic profile of the exceptional siblings pertaining to the gender, age, birth order, grade level, exceptionality and level of exceptionality are included in the questionnaire. To try out, the questionnaire was first administered to 10 parents of the 10 exceptional siblings in the school, which served as the respondents. The researcher also conducted informal interviews, with the siblings to confirm the data and other given information in the questionnaire. Suggestions and comments of the try-out respondents were considered in making the final draft of the questionnaire. In getting the needed information, the researcher sought consent from the parents and permission from the Division Office where the school is located. After the approval of the letter, the researcher then distributed the questionnaire to the actual sibling-respondents which was retrieved after 1 week. Then the data were assessed, tabulated and made ready for statistical treatment. Furthermore, the researcher also conducted informal and formal

observations in the classes even outside the school of the sibling-respondents of pupils to validate and improve the data. Frequency and percent were used to treat research questions 1 and 2, weighted mean was used to treat research question no. 3, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to treat research question no. 4 and chi-square test was used to treat research question no. 5. Interpretation of the weighted mean was based on the given scales above.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher believed that the main responsibility of every sibling is to fully accept the exceptional pupil's unique characteristics and love them unconditionally as well as with parents and teachers. In relation to this, the researcher was inspired to contribute a research study on strategies for siblings using coping mechanism. Out of thirty-three 33 sibling-respondents, 19 or 57.6% are males and 14 or 42.4% are females. The distribution reveals that the male sibling-respondents outnumbered the female in nearly 3:2 ratios. 23 or 69.7% of 33 sibling-respondents comprises the ages 14-20, 8 or 24.2% sibling-respondents are in the ages 21-27, 2 or 6.1% sibling-respondents are in the ages 28-34, and no sibling-respondent was older than 34 years old. It also shows that majority of the sibling-respondents are considered "young ones" because of their ages ranging from 14 to 20. An obtained mean of 19.5 suggest that, generally, the sibling-respondents are in nineteen to twenty years of age. At this age, the siblings can have the capability to understand or adapt to the needs of their special sibling. 19 or 57.6% of the 33 sibling-respondents have 2-3 siblings, 10 or 30.3% have 4-5 siblings, and 4 or 12.1% have 0-1 sibling. An obtained mean of 3.0 shows that the most number of siblings in the family is three inclusive of the respondents. It is implied that there were, on the average, 4 children in the family at the time of the study. 27 or 81.8% of the 33 sibling-respondents are in the middle class, 4 or 12.1% are in the lower class, and 2 or 6.1% are in the upper class. It also shows that majority of sibling-respondents are in the middle class, which are capable of providing for the needs of children with exceptionalities. 29 or 87.9% of the 33 sibling-respondents are Catholic, 2 or 6.1% are Born Again Christian, 1 or 3.0% belongs to Iglesia ni Cristo, and 1 or 3.0% belongs to Jehovah's Witness. It also shows that most of the sibling-respondents are Catholic, in fact, nearly 9 out of 10. It may be expected that the families adhere to the tenets of the Catholic religion. 18 or 54.5% out of 33 pupil-respondents with exceptionality are males, and 15 or 45.5% are females. It also shows that male pupil-respondents slightly outnumbered the female. Previous studies found that Blumberg (2013) stated that in 2011-2012, school-aged boys were more than 4 times as likely as school-aged girls to have ASD (3.23% compared with 0.70%). Comparisons of the prevalence of ASD between the narrower age groups (ages 6-9, 10-13, and 14-17) that compose the school-age group (ages 6-17) did not reveal any significant differences in 2011-2012. In contrast, age-related differences were observed in 2007. At that time, children aged 14-17 were less likely to have ASD than children aged 10-13 (0.73% compared with 1.45%). Treadgold (2011) said that the latest SEN (Special Educational needs) figures for January 2010 show that in both primary and secondary schools, the incidence of pupils with SEN (both with and without statements) is much greater for boys than it is for girls - in state-funded secondary schools, the proportion of boys with statements (2.9%) is nearly three times higher than for girls (1.0%); and Park (2009) investigated a genetic clue to why autism affects boys four times more often than girls. 15 or 45.5% of the 33 pupil-respondents with exceptionality are in the ages 11-15, 8 or 24.2% have ages 6-10, 6 or 18.2% have ages 16-20, 3 or 9.1% have ages 21-25, and 1 or 3.0% is in the ages 26-30. It also shows that most of the pupil-respondents with exceptionality have ages 11-15. In a previous report, McKellar (2004) found that most children in foster care (as of 2001) are school-aged (ages 6-18) with a mean age of about 10, or the typical age of fourth graders. The most common ages at which children entered care were 11-15 years, followed by 1-5 years. The most common disabilities among foster children are learning disabilities, mental retardation, and emotional disturbance. The pupils with exceptionality in the study were as young as 6 years old and as old as 30, but predominance was in the ages 11-15. This is why the mean not turned out to be 14. 15 or 45.5% of the 33 pupil-respondents are youngest, 14 or 42.4% are middle child, and 4 or 12.1% are first child. It also shows that some pupil-respondents with exceptionalities are prevalently youngest. However, some studies found the prevalence of exceptionality among the middle child. 11 or 33.3% have Autism Spectrum Disorder, 16 or 48.5% have Intellectual Disorder, 1 or 3.0% had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, 2 or 6.1% have Low vision, and 3 or 9.1% have Physical Impairments. It also shows that almost half of the pupil-respondents have Intellectual Disabilities which include mental retardation, and Down syndrome. One-third had autism spectrum disorder. These two exceptionalities are prevalent among the respondents. In other study, Braun (2010) found out that ASD prevalence, both with and without ID, increased significantly for both time periods with average annual increases from 2000 to 2010 of 6.6% for ASD with ID and 9.6% for ASD without ID. ID prevalence without co-occurring ASD decreased significantly from 13.0 per 1,000 in 1996 to 8.6 per 1,000 in 2010, yet was stable when restricted to 2000 through 2010 (9.5 per 1,000 to 8.6 per 1,000). The stability in prevalence of ID without ASD from 2000-2010 is consistent with the stable prevalence of intellectual disability overall from 1991-2010. 21 or 63.6% of 33 pupil-respondents are in Kinder level, 4 or 12.1% are in Grade 1 level, 3 or 9.1% are in Grade 2 level, 2 or 6.1% are in Grade 2 level, 2 or 6.1% are in Grade 5 level, and 1 or 3.0% are in Grade 3 level, are included in the regular classroom. It will be noted that most of the pupil-respondents were 6 to 15 years old comprising 69.7%. It would seem that these are the pupils who were in the Kindergarten level, on account of intellectual disabilities. When talking about coping mechanisms, these refer to the ways undertaken by siblings when dealing with their exceptional siblings.

Three coping mechanisms namely understanding, awareness, and acceptance were presented in the questionnaire provided to the 33 sibling-respondents of this study. Each of these problems may serve as an instrument that will guide family members especially siblings in coping with their exceptional siblings' behavior. The scale used to interpret the weighted means is as follows and following the tables present the coping mechanisms of siblings in terms of understanding, awareness, and acceptance. Understanding is the person's interpretation, comprehension on the analysis on the things around him. In this study, it refers to the evidences of the extent of the siblings' understanding of their exceptional siblings. Siblings knowing their sibling has disability, different needs; needs specialist doctors, and special education program revealed by obtained means of 4.8, 4.5, 4.5 and 4.6, manifested as Always. This could be the fact that siblings of these pupils with exceptionality are well-informed by their parents, SPED teachers, counselor, social worker, or specialist doctor that their sibling has special needs. Siblings know that their siblings with exceptionality cannot perform some activities due to their disability, their brother or sister is different from other children of his/her age, their sibling's disability sibling's disability will last them a lifetime, siblings might also show negative emotions towards their sibling's behavior, and their brother or sister with exceptionality cannot understand, which are revealed by obtained means of 4.3, 4.4, 3.6, 3.5, and 3.6 in the data and with a verbal interpretation of Often. This could happen when siblings forgot that their siblings' have exceptionality and when they are becoming impatient. Knowing others may say bad things over their sibling's exceptionality got a very low mean of 3.3 with verbal interpretation of Sometimes. This could be attributed to the fact that they are not aware that people around them might bully and give negative feedbacks to their exceptional siblings. The over-all mean of 4.1 suggest that siblings of these exceptional children often understand the things around them and to their siblings' situations and needs.

Understanding the siblings with exceptionality is one good indication of the possibility that these children will be still guided accordingly. Since the siblings are still young, they will come to understand more the children with exceptionality. Awareness is the person's undifferentiated consciousness or reaction certain situation. In this study, it refers to the regular children consciousness that they have sibling with exceptionality and knowing their responsibilities. Siblings were always aware that his/her sibling with disability needs the help of their family as revealed by an obtained mean of 4.7. Siblings were aware Often-that their sibling needs some assistance from them, there are changes in some house rules and family routines due to their sibling's exceptionality and needs, that their sibling receives more attention and time from their parents, that their parents spend more of their finances on their sibling with exceptionality for their needs and wants, that other people may not feel comfortable with their sibling, and that they might be the one to take care of their sibling with disability in the future. These are revealed by obtained means ranging from 3.8 to 4.4. This could happen when siblings are jealous of their exceptional siblings because of the much attention that parents give to them. An over-all mean of 4.2 suggests that sibling-respondents are often reactive towards their exceptional siblings' behavior and needs such that jealousy may not occur, and often conscious of the disability of their siblings and of their responsibilities as well. Being aware of the attention and care for the children with exceptionality, the siblings would be of great help to the family in the management of the children.

Acceptance is the person's disposition to tolerate people and other situations. It is also a positive welcome toward situations on his life. In this study, it refers to the acceptance of siblings toward their sibling's exceptionality and to its corresponding undesirable scenarios that might arise. Non-exceptional siblings always accept that their- sibling has exceptionality, the parents give more attention to their sibling with exceptionality, they have full responsibility to these children with unique attitudes and behaviors. These were revealed by weighted means ranging from 4.5 to 4.6. This could be attributed to the fact that siblings always understand and always aware that their siblings have special needs. Siblings often accept that- they may not get their wants due to their financial adjustments for exceptional sibling's expenses that there will be changes in their daily routine, they will be personally affected, such as using their personal belongings (such as comb, bag, etc.) and more importantly, they can be relied upon. These are revealed by the obtained weighted means ranging from 4.2 to 4.4. This could happen when siblings are not aware of the situation and needs of their exceptional siblings and when jealousy arises. An over-all mean of 4.4 suggest that sibling-respondents often tolerate their exceptional siblings' behaviors, wants, and needs. They often accept challenges that may arise from situations around them. Siblings can have the full acceptance of their special siblings if they would always understand and be aware of the needs and wants of these children. The following tables present the analysis of variance used to find if there exist significant differences among the coping mechanisms of siblings of pupils with different exceptionalities. Since the computed value of F is much less than the critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the coping mechanisms of siblings of pupils with exceptionality in terms of understanding. It means that the level of the siblings' understanding of the pupils with exceptionalities is nearly the same regardless of whether the exceptionality is ADHD, ASD, Intellectual Disability, or Physical Impairments. Since the computed value of F is much less than the critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the siblings' level of awareness of pupils with different exceptionalities. It means that the siblings were similarly aware of the pupils' exceptionalities whether it is ADHD, ASD, Intellectual Disability, or Physical Impairments. The pupils may have different exceptionalities, but

their siblings have the same level of awareness of their needs and conditions. Since the computed value of F in Table 4.3 below is much less than the critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in the siblings' level of acceptance of the pupils with different exceptionalities. It means that how the siblings accept the pupils do not differ whether their exceptionalities are ADHD, ASD, Intellectual Disability, or Physical Impairments. It can be inferred from that siblings may have the same coping mechanisms in terms of understanding, awareness, and acceptance toward their siblings with exceptionalities. It was ascertained on this study through the chi-square test whether the individual profile variables of the sibling-respondents had any influence in their coping mechanisms. The variables include gender, age, number of siblings, economic status, and religion. It can be inferred that the computed value of 4.445 is much less than the critical value of 9.488, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, no significant relationship exists between the gender of the siblings and their coping mechanisms. This means that male and female siblings may have high or low understanding, awareness, and acceptance towards their sibling with exceptionalities. Gender is not a factor on how the siblings consider the pupils with exceptionalities. Since the computed value is much less than the critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, no significant relationship exists between the age of the siblings and their coping mechanisms. This means siblings may have high or low understanding, awareness, and acceptance towards their siblings with exceptionalities regardless of their ages, whether young or relatively older. Young as 14 to 20, the siblings had similar ways of looking at the pupils with exceptionalities as those aged 21 to 34. The younger ones may have learned from the older members of the family. .3 is much less than the critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, no significant relationship exists between the number of siblings and coping mechanisms. This means that siblings may have high or low understanding, awareness, and acceptance towards their sibling with exceptionalities regardless of how many siblings they have. Since the computed value is much less than the critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there is no significant relationship. This means that siblings may have high or low understanding, awareness, and acceptance towards their sibling with exceptionalities regardless of how many siblings they have. This means that siblings may have high or low understanding, awareness, and acceptance towards their sibling with exceptionalities regardless of their economic status. Since the computed value is much less than the critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, no significant relationship exists between the religion of siblings and their coping mechanisms. This means that siblings may have high or low understanding, awareness, and acceptance towards their sibling with exceptionalities regardless of their religion. Both Catholics and Non-Catholics adhere to the teachings of their religion for the good of others. The implication of the coping mechanisms to the parents, siblings and teachers of pupils with different exceptionalities are: Parents are the ones responsible to explain to family members the situation of their children with exceptionalities. This could avoid occurrence of jealousies, feeling of partiality of parents to siblings, and giving attention to their children. Siblings could be also preparing to what should be done whenever their siblings with exceptionalities get bullied. They could no longer be jealous of their special sibling since they will also give full attention to the things needed by their siblings with exceptionalities. At home, parents and siblings may collaborate so that they could achieve the optimal learning for which they can fully understand the conditions and become aware of they want and what they need, and also to fully accept their children or siblings. Cooperation of the family members inside the home will be improved especially siblings will now give more respect and more love to their siblings with exceptionalities. They will also build a strong sibling-relationship in which becomes a strong foundation for future problems that may arise. This study also enhances the intervention programs in which a SPED teacher may create in the future. Regular education teachers will also get to know the things needed enable to cope with his or her child with disability-attention, love, and care. Most importantly, teachers, parents, and siblings of these pupils with different exceptionalities will be able to program seemingly expensive but it would better cope with the needs and behavior of these children with exceptionalities, improve their patience, widen their understanding of different things, and fully accept individual differences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommended the following to ascertain the usefulness of coping mechanisms to siblings when dealing with their exceptional siblings.

1. Siblings are encouraged to attend seminars or workshops intended for developing sibling relationship to better help them improve their coping skills.

2. Pupils with exceptionalities must be handled by teachers who have the appropriate training in special education. Another recommendation is to equip with the updates in the management and handling of children with special needs.

3. Siblings, teachers, and other family members of children with special needs are encouraged to always understand and be aware of their exceptional siblings behavior, attitude and needs; expected to manifest the same level of understanding, awareness and acceptance to avoid or prevent sibling rivalry; and must be provided with effective coping, techniques and strategies when dealing with exceptional siblings; and are encouraged to treat their exceptional siblings as normal individuals.

4. Similar study may be conducted for other learning disabilities in the different private and public schools providing inclusion or mainstreaming programs. A case study is suggested to evaluate effectiveness of certain specific programs.

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