
NEWSLETTER

The Effect of Maternal Coping Strategies for Sibling Disputes on Sibling Relationships among Preschool Children in Two Child Families

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SIBLING relationships are long-lasting kinship which can tremendously influence a child across his or her life span. The sibling relationship research has drawn increased attention in China in the wake of the implementation of the Comprehensive Three Child Policy.

Child-, family-, school-, and society-related factors may all impact sibling relationships. Family-related factors include parents' marital relationship, parent-child relationship, parenting style, and parental coping strategies for sibling disputes. Preschool childhood is a pivotal stage in a child's development and a vulnerable phase in sibling interactions. The mother is the main caregiver of her children in the early childhood, and competition for maternal attention is one cause of sibling disputes. This study attempted to explore maternal coping strategies for sibling conflicts and their impact on sibling relationships among preschool children. It randomly selected 125 mothers with children in three public kindergartens in Beijing as the research subjects. The children were aged between three and six with inter-sibling age gaps of 1-12 years. All mothers sampled have given birth to two children. Preschool Children's Sibling Relationship Questionnaire and Maternal Coping Strategies for Sibling Conflicts Questionnaire were the measurement tools in the study.

According to the research findings, among maternal perceptions of children's sibling relationships, warmth scored the highest in mean value, followed by competition and confrontation. In terms of mothers' coping strategies for sibling conflicts, the child-centered approach scored the highest, followed by approaches of control and non-intervention. Regarding the association between the maternal coping strategy for sibling disputes and sibling relationship, it was found that the child-centered approach effectively predicted sibling warmth; and that there were significant and positive correlations between maternal control and non-intervention and sibling competition and confrontation. Therefore, the mother's attitudes towards sibling conflicts are closely related to sibling relationships between her children. The mother's positive approaches were conducive to the formation of warm relation-

ships between siblings, whilst her negative approaches were more likely to induce sibling competition and confrontation. Parents should increase their knowledge about how to deal with sibling disputes and help their children acquire the ability to get on well with their siblings and learn how to interact with peers through sibling conflicts.

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