

Influence of child and familial factors on sibling relationship of adolescents

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Sibling relationship is one of long lasting relationship in most of the people's lives and one of the most important ones. Siblings may be particularly likely to influence each other's behaviour positively or negatively. While a variety of family characteristics are recognized as risk factors for adolescent behaviour problems, the role of siblings has received much less attention. Thus, a sibling specific risk factor may operate across the family and peer domains during adolescence, making sibling influences on behaviour problem a vital area for research and prevention efforts. So, an attempt was made to study the sibling relationship and the influencing factors on sibling relationship among adolescents. The population for the study comprised of 192 school children from 5th to 10th grade where 96 students from urban and rural areas were drawn equally from Dharwad and Bagalkot districts of Karnataka. For the present study, the permission was sought from Block Education Officer and the Heads of the schools were contacted and permission was taken for conducting the study. From each class, based on teacher's nomination, both high and low achievers were taken for the study. Sibling relationship questionnaire was used to assess the relationship status of siblings among adolescents. Socio-economic status was also assessed using Socio-economic status scale. Multivariate analysis and regression analysis indicated that there was significant interactional effect of age, gender and sibling constellation on the dimensions of relative status/power, sibling closeness, and sibling conflict and sibling rivalry. Sibling spacing also had a major impact where the siblings with less than one year spacing had lesser sibling relationship. Academic achievement influenced sibling relationship indicating better relationship among high academic achievers. With regard to familial factors, it was observed that mother's education was positively correlated with sibling relationship indicating better relationship among students with mothers having higher education. On the other hand, parents' occupation also had an impact where adolescents with parents working in public sector were said to have higher sibling relationship. However, family type was not associated with sibling relationship. Socio-economic status was also affecting sibling relationship among urban sample which was found that adolescents from lower income group had lower sibling relationship as opposed to high socio-economic group. This indicates that those influential factors which are found to lower the relationship status need to be corrected through educative programmes for adolescents and parents to enhance sibling relationship and reduce the problem behaviours among adolescents.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Sibling relationship, Child factors, Familial factors

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Sibling relationship is one of long lasting relationship in most of the people's lives and one of the most important ones: "Relationships between brother and sister have often been called life's most influential and longest lasting relationships – lasting longer than ties to parents, spouses or children" (Bank and Kahn, 1997). It plays a significant role in one's development as an individual and brings joy, rage, pain, pleasure and frustration in life. But everything is not nasty or unpleasant in the world of siblings. There is altruism, love, companionship and loyalty as well. As sibling hostility begun in childhood may last into adulthood, so can the solidarity among them remain forever.

During childhood years, children are faced with a number of developmental tasks, including the regulation of emotions and behaviour and the sibling relationship is one context in which children attempt to master these goals (Bedford and Volling, 2004). Relationships theorists argue that close intimate relationships with siblings are important contexts for children's development (Carpendale and Lewis, 2006). These dyadic relationships may provide a context for the disclosure of intimate, personal information which is a defining feature of close relationships. As children move into early adolescence, they develop greater abilities to engage in self-disclosure.

Siblings may be particularly likely to influence each other's behaviour, including acting as deviant peer role models, given the long-term and emotionally close relationships most share (Slomkowski *et al.*, 2001). Thus, a sibling specific risk factor may operate across the family and peer domains during adolescence, making sibling influences on behaviour problem a vital area for research and prevention efforts. Hence, the present study is an attempt to focus on "Influence of child and familial factors on sibling relationship of adolescents" with the following objectives:

- To know the sibling relationship among urban and rural school children.
- To study the influence of selected demographic variables on sibling relationship of urban and rural school children.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The study on "Influence of child and familial factors on sibling relationship of adolescents" was conducted during the year 2015-2016. The prior permission was taken from Block Education Officer before carrying out the study. The schools were randomly selected and the Heads of the institutions were contacted and permission was taken for conducting the study. The population of the study comprised of children studying in 5th to 10th grade from urban areas of Dharwad taluk and rural areas of Dharwad and Bagalkot taluk of Karnataka. In urban locality of Dharwad, four schools were randomly selected. In rural locality of Dharwad two schools and two schools from Bagalkot taluk were randomly selected for the study. For the present study, four children from each class of 5th to 10th grade were selected based on their performance in previous exam and teacher's opinion where both high achievers and low achievers were considered. On the whole, the sample comprised of 24 students from each school leading to 96 students from urban area and 96 students from rural area. Totally, the sample size consisted of 192 school children. The sibling relationship of children was assessed through the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire developed by Furman and Buhrmester (1990). The questionnaire has 48 statements which is a self-report questionnaire to assess the dimensions of sibling relationships which is categorized into four major dimensions/factors *viz.*, Relative power/status factor, Warmth/Closeness factor, Conflict factor and Rivalry factor that assesses the respondent's perceptions of the relationship and behaviours towards their sibling. It is a five point likert format (1=hardly at all to 5=extremely much) that was used for all sub-scales except the parental partiality scale in which possible choices range from "my sibling most always gets treated better, more attention, etc." To "I almost always get..." and scores were based on deviations from the midpoint of "about the same." Socio-economic status (SES) scale developed by Aggarwal *et al.* (2005) was used to assess the SES of adolescents. Frequency and percentage were calculated to interpret sibling relationship of school children. Multivariate ANOVA was used to know the interactional effects of age, gender and sibling

constellation on different dimensions of sibling relationship.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the present investigation as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under following heads :

Background characteristics of the sample :

Results related to distribution of children according to child characteristics such as age, gender, ordinal position, sibling constellation and academic achievement are presented in Table 1.

Sibling relationship of school children :

From Table 2, it was found that higher percentage of children from both urban (76%) and rural (71.9%) area fell in moderate level of sibling relationship followed by high (urban, 21.9% and rural, 25%) level. Accordingly, 2.1 per cent of the urban children and 3.1 per cent of

rural children fell under low level of sibling relationship.

Results related to dimension of sibling relationship (Table 3), it was noted that, on the dimension of relative status/power, it was found that, majority of children from both urban and rural areas fell under moderate level (80.2% and 74%, respectively). It was found that 13.5 per cent of the urban children and 24 per cent of the rural children fell under high level of sibling relationship. With respect to warmth/closeness, it was found that, in both the areas children fell under moderate level (urban, 53.1% and rural, 44.8%) followed by high level (urban, 39.6% and rural, 51%). On conflict dimension, it was found that majority of children fell in moderate level (urban, 67.7% and rural, 59.4%) followed by low level (urban, 22.9% and rural, 32.3%) level and 9.4 per cent of urban children and 8.3 per cent of rural children belonged to high level of sibling conflict. With regard to sibling rivalry, it was found that, in urban area 49 per cent were in moderate level of rivalry followed by low (45.8%) level and only 5.2 per cent were in low sibling

Table 1 : Percentage distribution of urban and rural school children by child and familial characteristics (n=192)

Sr. No.	Characteristics	Category	Urban	Rural	Total
1	Age (Years)	Younger (10-12)	47 (49.0)	48 (50.0)	95 (49.5)
		Older (13-16)	49 (51.0)	48 (50.0)	97 (50.5)
2.	Gender	Boys	50 (52.1)	44 (45.8)	94 (49.0)
		Girls	46 (47.9)	52 (54.2)	98 (51.0)
3.	Sibling constellation	EB x YB	25 (26.04)	23 (23.95)	48 (25.0)
		ES x YS	21 (21.87)	23 (23.95)	44 (22.91)
		EB x YS	28 (29.16)	27 (28.12)	55 (28.64)
		ES x YB	22 (22.91)	23 (23.95)	45 (23.43)
4.	Type of family	Nuclear	82 (85.4)	58 (60.4)	140 (72.9)
		Joint	14 (14.6)	38 (39.6)	52 (27.1)
5.	SES	Upper high	-	-	-
		High	11 (11.5)	-	11 (5.70)
		Upper middle	47 (49.0)	44 (45.8)	91 (47.4)
		Lower middle	38 (39.6)	52 (54.2)	90 (46.9)
		Poor	-	-	-
		Very poor	-	-	-

Figure in parentheses indicate percentage, EB=Elder brother, ES=Elder sister, YB=Younger brother, YS=Younger sister

Table 2 : Percentage distribution of adolescents' sibling relationship by locality

Levels of sibling relationship	Urban frequency (%)	Rural frequency (%)	Total frequency (%)	Modified (χ^2)
High	21 (21.87)	24 (25.00)	45 (23.43)	0.51 ^{NS}
Moderate	73 (76.04)	69 (71.87)	142 (73.95)	
Low	2 (2.08)	3 (3.12)	5 (2.60)	
Total	96 (100.0)	96 (100.0)	192 (100.0)	

Figure in parentheses indicate percentage

NS=Non-significant

rivalry. In case of rural area, more than half (52.1%) of them were with moderate sibling rivalry followed by high level (31.2%) of rivalry among siblings. Most of the children being in moderate level may be because of parental interaction and knowledge among parents regarding child care practices. Early adolescents perceived conflict as occurring most frequently with siblings, perhaps due to the nature of the relationship (Furman and Buhrmester, 1990).

Influence of child factors on sibling relationship of adolescents :

When the effects of age, gender and sibling

constellation was looked at, the results from Table 4 showed that there was significant effect of age on relative status/power where older (13-16 years) children reported higher power in sibling relationship quality among both urban and rural children. Gender had significant effect on relative status/power among rural children where males reported higher status/power on siblings. There was significant interactional effects of age and gender on relative status/power where older children who were males reported higher relative status/power. The significant interaction of age and sibling constellation was noticed where older children in elder brother, younger sister dyad reported higher relative status/power. There

Table 3: Percentage distribution of adolescents by level of dimensions of sibling relationship

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Levels	Urban frequency (%)	Rural frequency (%)	Total frequency (%)
1.	Relative status/ power	High	13 (13.5)	23 (24.0)	36 (18.75)
		Moderate	77 (80.2)	71 (74.0)	148 (77.08)
		Low	6 (6.2)	2 (2.1)	8 (4.16)
2.	Warmth/Closeness	High	38 (39.6)	49 (51.0)	87 (45.31)
		Moderate	51 (53.1)	43 (44.8)	94 (48.95)
		Low	7 (7.3)	4 (4.2)	11 (5.72)
3.	Conflict	High	9 (9.4)	8 (8.3)	17 (8.85)
		Moderate	65 (67.7)	57 (59.4)	122 (63.54)
		Low	22 (22.9)	31 (32.3)	53 (27.60)
4.	Rivalry	High	5 (5.2)	30 (31.2)	35 (18.22)
		Moderate	47 (49.0)	50 (52.1)	97 (50.52)
		Low	44 (45.8)	16 (16.7)	60 (31.25)

Table 4 : Comparison of variables on relative status/power using MANOVA (n=192)

Variables	Effects	Category	Urban		Rural	
			Mean ± SD		Mean ± SD	
Age (Years)		Younger (10-12)	33.14 ± 3.22		32.33 ± 4.56	
		Older (13-16)	37.23 ± 4.12		39.34 ± 3.22	
Gender		Boys	35.21 ± 2.28		38.44 ± 3.45	
		Girls	34.45 ± 5.21		34.98 ± 5.22	
Sibling constellation		EB x YB	32.14 ± 3.24		34.32 ± 3.67	
		ES x YS	33.33 ± 4.54		36.71 ± 4.53	
		EB x YS	37.33 ± 4.65		39.56 ± 4.55	
		ES x YB	34.96 ± 3.56		34.98 ± 3.23	

ANOVA

Interactional effects	F	Urban		Rural		
		S.E.±	C.D. (P=0.05)	S.E.±	C.D. (P=0.05)	
Age ^a * Gender ^a	5.34**	0.95	2.98	2.94*	0.99	3.43
Age ^a * Sibling constellation ^a	2.99*	1.23	4.13	5.31**	1.11	4.65
Gender ^a * Sibling constellation ^a	1.92 ^{NS}	1.12	-	2.52 ^{NS}	1.02	-
Age ^a * Gender ^a * Sibling constellation ^a	2.54 ^{NS}	1.24	-	4.27*	1.32	3.97

Age^a=Older (13-16 years), Gender^a= Males, Sibling constellation^a=Elder brother, Younger sister dyad

NS= Non-significant

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

was significant interaction of gender and sibling constellation where males in elder brother, younger sister dyad had higher relative status/power among both urban and rural children. Significant interaction effects of age and gender and sibling constellation was found to be non-significant in urban area but was significant in rural area where older children who are males belonging to elder brother, younger sister dyad had higher relative status/power.

Results showed that there was non-significant effect of age on warmth/closeness among both urban and rural children. Gender had significant effect on warmth/closeness among both urban and rural children where females reported higher warmth/closeness in both urban and rural locality. Sibling constellation had significant effect on warmth/closeness among both urban and rural children. Elder sister, younger sister reported higher sibling warmth/closeness. There was significant interactional effects of age and gender on warmth/closeness where older children who were females reported higher warmth/closeness. The significant interaction of age and sibling constellation was noticed where older children in elder sister, younger sister dyad reported higher warmth/closeness. There was significant interaction of gender and sibling constellation where females with elder sister, younger sister dyad had higher warmth/closeness among both urban and rural children. Significant interaction effects of age and gender and sibling constellation was found to be significant for both

urban and rural children where older children who are females belonging to elder sister, younger sister dyad had higher warmth/closeness (Table 5)

Results from Table 6 showed that there was significant effect of age on sibling conflict among both urban and rural children where older (13-18 years) children had higher sibling conflict. Gender was found to have non-significant effect on sibling conflict among both urban and rural children. Sibling constellation had non-significant effect on sibling conflict among both urban and rural children. There were non-significant interactional effects of age and gender on sibling conflict among both urban and rural children. The significant interaction of age and sibling constellation was noticed where older children in elder brother, younger brother dyad reported higher sibling conflict. There was significant interaction of gender and sibling constellation where males with elder brother, younger brother dyad had higher sibling conflict among both urban and rural children. Significant interaction effects of age and gender and sibling constellation was found to be significant for both urban and rural children where older children who are males belonging to elder brother, younger brother dyad had higher sibling conflict.

Results from Table 7 showed that there was non-significant effect of age on sibling rivalry among both urban and rural children. Gender was found to have non-significant effect on sibling rivalry among both urban and rural children. Sibling constellation had significant effect

Table 5 : Comparison of variables on warmth/closeness using MANOVA			(n=192)					
Variables	Effects	Category	Urban		Rural			
			Mean ± SD		Mean ± SD			
Age (Years)		Younger (10-12)	59.52 ± 12.12		58.23 ± 11.49			
		Older (13-16)	62.45 ± 9.43		63.22 ± 8.56			
Gender		Boys	54.23 ± 10.10		56.23 ± 10.46			
		Girls	61.34 ± 11.13		65.92 ± 11.32			
Sibling Constellation		EB x YB	54.17 ± 14.23		55.13 ± 13.26			
Constellation		ES x YS	70.23 ± 11.43		72.13 ± 13.62			
		EB x YS	56.45 ± 7.89		57.73 ± 8.21			
		ES x YB	57.23 ± 14.45		53.32 ± 9.67			
ANOVA								
Interactional effects			F	S.E.±	C.D. (P=0.05)	F	S.E.±	C.D. (P=0.05)
Age ^a * Gender ^a			5.40**	0.95	2.57	6.72**	0.99	2.78
Age ^a * Sibling constellation ^a			2.92*	1.49	4.76	3.14*	1.68	5.11
Gender ^a * Sibling constellation ^a			4.65**	1.81	5.32	5.97**	1.88	5.79
Age ^a * Gender ^a * Sibling constellation ^a			3.12*	1.24	4.76	3.28*	1.32	4.91

Age^a=Older (13-16 years), Gender^a= Females, Sibling constellation^a=Elder sister, Younger sister dyad

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

on sibling rivalry among both urban and rural children. Children in elder brother, younger brother dyad had higher sibling rivalry when compared to other sibling constellation dyads. There were non-significant interactional effects of age and gender on sibling rivalry among both urban and rural children. The significant interaction of age and sibling constellation was noticed where older children in elder brother, younger brother dyad reported higher sibling rivalry. There was non-significant interaction of gender and sibling constellation on sibling rivalry among both urban and rural children.

Significant interaction effects of age and gender and sibling constellation was found to be significant for both urban and rural children where older children who are males belonging to elder brother, younger brother dyad had higher sibling conflict when compared to other counterparts.

Influence of familial factors on sibling relationship of adolescents :

The familial factors such as type of family and socio-economic status were taken into consideration to know

Table 6 : Comparison of variables on sibling conflict using MANOVA (n=192)

Variables	Effects Category	Urban		Rural	
		Mean ± SD		Mean ± SD	
Age (Years)	Younger (10-12)	23.14 ± 5.28		24.23 ± 5.66	
	Older (13-16)	25.54 ± 4.45		26.22 ± 4.21	
Gender	Boys	25.23 ± 5.91		27.33 ± 5.39	
	Girls	23.22 ± 4.16		24.87 ± 3.99	
Sibling constellation	EB x YB	27.23 ± 3.45		28.76 ± 5.89	
	ES x YS	24.23 ± 4.60		24.69 ± 5.23	
	EB x YS	23.22 ± 4.97		23.98 ± 5.23	
	ES x YB	24.51 ± 5.21		24.59 ± 4.98	

ANOVA						
Interactional effects	F	S.E.±	C.D. (P=0.05)	F	S.E.±	C.D. (P=0.05)
Age ^a * Gender ^a	0.88 ^{NS}	0.25	-	1.12 ^{NS}	0.61	-
Age ^a * Sibling constellation ^a	3.25*	0.86	2.52	3.97*	0.95	2.89
Gender ^a * Sibling constellation ^a	2.99*	0.67	2.12	3.12*	1.20	3.65
Age ^a * Gender ^a * Sibling constellation ^a	2.75 ^{NS}	0.58	-	3.48*	1.21	3.72

Age^a= Older (13-16 years), Gender^a= Males, Sibling constellation^a=Elder brother, Younger brother dyad NS= Non-significant
* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

Table 7: Comparison of variables on sibling rivalry using MANOVA (n=192)

Variables	Effects Category	Urban		Rural	
		Mean ± SD		Mean ± SD	
Age (Years)	Younger (10-12)	12.13 ± 7.56		13.12 ± 6.98	
	Older (13-16)	15.13 ± 6.78		16.54 ± 5.97	
Gender	Boys	14.35 ± 7.21		14.34 ± 6.57	
	Girls	12.37 ± 6.77		13.21 ± 5.82	
Sibling constellation	EB x YB	14.13 ± 5.64		15.86 ± 5.43	
	ES x YS	11.96 ± 4.67		13.43 ± 6.13	
	EB x YS	12.43 ± 6.49		12.22 ± 5.33	
	ES x YB	12.57 ± 5.89		13.33 ± 6.12	

ANOVA						
Interactional effects	F	S.E.±	C.D. (P=0.05)	F	S.E.±	C.D. (P=0.05)
Age ^a * Gender ^a	2.10 ^{NS}	0.65	-	2.54 ^{NS}	0.83	-
Age ^a * Sibling constellation ^a	3.97*	0.79	2.56	3.58*	0.85	2.83
Gender ^a * Sibling constellation ^a	1.88 ^{NS}	0.65	-	2.11 ^{NS}	0.63	-
Age ^a * Gender ^a * Sibling constellation ^a	2.85*	1.04	3.23	3.77*	1.32	3.96

Age^a= Older (13-18 years), Gender^a= Males, Sibling constellation^a=Elder brother, Younger brother dyad NS= Non-significant
* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

the effect on sibling relationship. When the differences between nuclear and joint family was tested, there was no significant differences being noted in both urban and rural locality indicating there is not much influence of type of family on sibling relationship of adolescents (Table 8).

Another variable socio-economic status was added and tested which showed that there was significant difference between the three groups of socio-economic status where children from high SES had higher sibling relationship (169.09) when compared to upper middle (160.39) and lower middle group (157.72). However, non-significant differences were found in case of rural area.

Among urban and rural school children, majority children fell under moderate level followed by high level and only few were in low level of sibling relationship. When dimensions of sibling relationship were observed, higher percentage of urban and rural children fell under moderate level of relative status/power, warmth/closeness, conflict and rivalry. Most of the children being in moderate level may be because of parental interaction and knowledge among parents regarding child care practices. Early adolescents perceived conflict as occurring most frequently with siblings, perhaps due to the nature of the relationship (Furman and Buhrmester, 1985).

It was found that there was significant interaction effect of age, gender and sibling constellation on relative status/power where older age children who are males in elder brother, younger brother dyad to be higher on relative status/power in sibling relationship. There was also significant interaction effect of age, gender and sibling

constellation on warmth/closeness dimension of sibling relationship where older age children who are females in sister-sister dyad expressed higher warmth/closeness with their siblings. Similarly, there was also significant interaction effect of age, gender and sibling constellation on sibling conflict and rivalry dimension where older age children who are males in elder brother, younger brother dyad expressed higher conflict and rivalry. Similar to the present findings, Gass *et al.* (2007) showed that females provide more comfort to siblings, particularly to sisters, than do males. Oliva and Arranz (2005) found that for girls, a good relationship with their siblings was linked to good relationships with their parents and peers, as well as increased self-esteem and life satisfaction. For boys, sibling relationships had no relation with other family or personal variables. Sibling conflicts were more frequent than intense by adolescent older siblings (Barr and Smetana, 2010). Sibling companionship and affection were also lower in the older age groups (Buhrmester and Furman, 1990). Even though age differences are noted across developmental periods with respect to positive and negative dimensions of sibling relationship quality, the emotional closeness and support in sibling relationships remains stable over time (Volling and Blandon, 2003). The results of Branje *et al.* (2004) revealed that sibling support increased strongly from age 11 to age 12 with a smaller increase from age 13 onwards. Barr and Smetana (2010) reported that same-sex sibling pairs had closer relationships than mixed-sex pairs where sister-sister dyad had better relation than brother-brother dyad. Stach (2007) observed that sisters share unique relationships that sisters use their

Table 8 : Comparison of mean scores of sibling relationship by type of family (n=192)

Locality	Type of family	Mean ± SD	t-test
Urban	Nuclear	158.91 ± 19.48	1.48 ^{NS}
	Joint	166.93 ± 12.68	
Rural	Nuclear	161.98 ± 21.18	0.45 ^{NS}
	Joint	163.97 ± 21.08	

NS=Non-significant

Table 9 : Comparison of mean scores of sibling relationship by socio-economic status (n=192)

Locality	SES	Mean ± SD	F-test
Urban	High	169.09 ± 15.48	3.92*
	Upper middle	160.39 ± 17.39	
	Lower middle	157.72 ± 20.26	
Rural	Upper middle	163.68 ± 22.66	0.15 ^{NS}
	Lower middle	162.00 ± 19.77	

NS=Non-significant

* indicates significance of value at P=0.05

relationships to develop as an individual and that being individual is important to the relationship and that the intimate nature is highly reliant on their upbringing and family life. Studies examining differences in sibling relationships quality as a function of sibling gender composition generally found higher quality relationships for same-sex sibling pairs (especially sister pairs) than for mixed-sex sibling pairs (Aguilar *et al.*, 2001).

There was non-significant association between type of family and sibling relationship. When means were compared, children from joint families in both urban and rural area scored higher scores on sibling relationship when compared to children from nuclear family although not significant. Children from joint families with large family size are at advantage as they have a greater opportunity to learn co-operation at an early age as they learn to get along with their siblings. However, the results showed that type of family have minimal influence on sibling relationship of adolescents.

Findings on the factor of socio-economic status revealed that in urban locality, the mean scores of children from high SES had significantly higher scores on sibling relationship when compared to upper middle and lower middle SES families. It may be due to parents from high SES category are usually educated well, positioned in better jobs and have better knowledge when compared to those from lower SES families which in turn leads to better emotional understanding and relationship between siblings. Emerson and Hatton's (2007) study indicated that low socio-economic status was related to development of emotional disorders and poor familial relationships. In rural locality, there was no difference noted between the groups because the present study samples had no children from high SES family in rural locality.

Conclusion :

The present study focussed on sibling relationship of adolescents where the significant interactional effect of age, gender and sibling constellation on various dimensions of sibling relationship. SES was also influencing sibling relation among urban adolescents. This calls for educational programme for children and parents to promote the healthy relationships between siblings since sibling relationship having a major impact on individuals for overall developing relationships.

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