

Abstract

**THE COPING RESPONSES OF THE ADOLESCENT SIBLINGS OF
CHILDREN WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES**

The objective of this study was to describe the coping responses of the adolescent siblings of children with severe disabilities in their adjustment to the family situation of having a sibling with a disability. Open-ended structured interviews were conducted with the children at their homes. These interviews were aimed at obtaining information regarding the subjects' perceptions of having a sibling with a severe disability, the available family resources, and their coping responses in adjusting to the situation.

by

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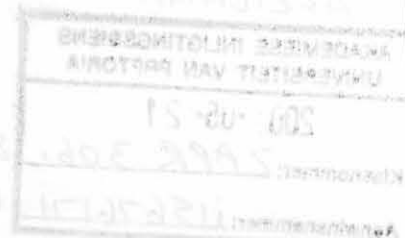
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Abstract

The objective of this study was to describe the coping responses of the adolescent siblings of children with severe disabilities in their adjustment to the family stressor of having a sibling with a disability. Open-ended, structured interviews were conducted with the subjects at their homes. These interviews were aimed at obtaining information regarding the subjects' appraisal of the stressor of having a sibling with a severe disability; their available coping resources; and their coping responses in adjusting to the situation.

The subjects reported limited family interaction and it was found that they were not freely expressing their feelings about their sibling with a disability. The subjects and their parents have received limited professional support regarding their siblings' disabilities and its consequences. The young adolescents experienced feelings of guilt regarding their feelings about their siblings with disabilities. The results of this study have shown that the parents and siblings of children with severe disabilities, need more professional support in terms of coping with the disability and its consequences. Siblings need guidance on active coping responses in coping with the stressor of having a sibling with a disability.

Further research is recommended to describe the sibling relationships of young adolescents with normal siblings, to provide comparative data for the present study.

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