

Growing up with disabled siblings - opportunity or a threat to development? The role of family and individual factors in going through adolescence - perspective of a healthy child.

Having a disabled sibling can be a source of extremely important and enriching experiences that foster both, the development of socio-emotional competences, as well as broaden the child's perspective and knowledge (Burke, 2004). However, the presence of the disabled child in the family, also poses many challenges for their siblings, especially in adolescence (Knecht et al., 2015). Thus, having a disabled sibling is analysed in the literature from two main perspectives: threat and opportunity for development:

- 1) Children with disabled siblings often receive less attention from their parents and friends. They often experience a sense of injustice and anger, which may then result in hyperactivity, irritation and aggression manifested in school and peer functioning (Knecht et al., 2015). Research also indicates that adolescents in this group exhibit higher levels of depression, separation anxiety, and internalizing behaviors (Lovell & Wetherell, 2016).
- 2) The resource perspective, in turn, indicates a higher sense of responsibility, self-efficacy and pride in caring for sick siblings (Roper et al., 2014). There is less quarrel and competition among siblings, increased level of empathy (Cuskelly & Gunn, 2003), as well as an increase in self-control, tolerance and understanding (Mulroy et al., 2008) are observed in siblings of children with disabilities.

Current scientific research on the functioning of families with a disabled child has focused mainly on relations with parents, parental roles, teachers, and medical staff surrounding the disabled child. The role of siblings has been limited (Takataya et al., 2019). Therefore, the aim of the project is to investigate the specificity of the growing up process in young people with disabled siblings. The functioning of adolescents with disabled siblings as a person growing up in three environments: family, peers and school will be examined. The proposed research model focuses both, on the difficulties associated with having a disabled sibling (e.g. possible occurrence of disorders), as well as resources (e.g. the higher quality of relationships in the family, especially in the sibling subsystem). Furthermore, little is known about the functioning of adolescents with disabled children – most of the studies concern earlier or later developmental stages, especially preschool and adulthood (Malviya, 2018; Ünal & Baran, 2011). Additionally, most of the research focus on study of siblings of children with autism spectrum disorder or Down syndrome (Ferraioli & Harris, 2009; Hodapp & Urbano, 2007). Therefore, it seems important to address the issue of the functioning of siblings of disabled children in the broader context of disabilities, thus the proposed project assumes taking into account: groups of siblings of children with intellectual disability, motor disability and chronic somatic disease, and comparing the functioning of these groups with each other and in relation to siblings of healthy children.

The 160 participants' dyads will take part in the study: healthy adolescent having disabled sibling and one of his/her parents. Participants will be divided in four groups (40 dyads in each group): three groups of adolescents having disabled sibling 1) intellectual disability, 2) motor disability, 3) chronic somatic disease, and 4) control group - healthy adolescent having sibling without any disability, as previously mentioned one of the parents will take part in the study together with every teenager. The parents' participation is necessary to assess the presence of possible internalizing and externalizing disorders among adolescents taking part in the study. The healthy adolescent will be filling out questionnaires regarding the remaining studied variables: *functioning in the family* - siblings relations, parental attitudes; *at school* - school achievement, extracurricular activities; *relations with peers* - time spending with peers, number of friends, as well as the *growing up process trajectory* - parentification and the way of going through an adolescent crisis.

The proposed project may contribute a theoretical framework of the role of sibling disability as potential opportunity or threat to development of adolescent. The project combines research problems specific for several subdisciplines of psychology - family, clinical, and developmental psychology, concentrating them around issues of growing up with disabled sibling. Furthermore, the functioning of adolescents in three environments: family, peers and school, will be investigated, which makes it possible to comprehensively analyse the situation of siblings of children with disabilities. The indicated innovativeness of the project and a comprehensive approach to the issue of disability in the family from the perspective of a healthy child will allow for a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying the process of growing up with disabled siblings.