

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Correlates of Sibling Relationship Quality and Caregiving Reception of Adults with Disabilities

Burke, M. M., Lee, C. E., Arnold, C. K., & Owen, A. (2016). Correlates of sibling relationship quality and caregiving reception of adults with disabilities. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities, 28*(5), 735-750.
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SUMMARY: With sibling relationships being the longest-lasting familial relationship, this study examined whether individuals with disabilities reported the same relationship quality and caregiving as siblings without disabilities. Participants from all over the U.S., who had a range of disabilities, were recruited to participate and complete a web-based survey. Overall relationship quality and caregiving from the non-disabled sibling varied depending upon several individual level factors.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Participants who contacted their siblings more frequently and did not have mental health diagnoses were more likely to report closer sibling relationships.
- Regarding caregiving, participants who were in greater contact with their siblings, had fathers in excellent or good health, were male, and had more siblings were more likely to receive caregiving from their siblings.
- Participants reported weaker sibling relationships when they had a mental health diagnosis.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with organizations connected with military parents with children with disabilities to emphasize the importance of using outside support resources
- Facilitate support groups for military families with family members with disabilities to increase the kinship among those families

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Educate military families with individuals with disabilities and a mental health diagnosis on the impacts to other siblings
- Provide workshops to help military families with family members with disabilities learn about available supportive services to handle caregiving responsibilities

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Support programs that provide services for members of military families who have disabilities
- Recommend professional development courses for community providers to educate them about supporting military families with family members with disabilities

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited through e-mails and flyers to local, state, and national parent support groups and organizations that support families and individuals living with disabilities.
- Participants were asked about the quality of their relationship with their sibling, mental and physical health as well as the health of their parents, and about caregiving they may receive.
- Analysis looked at individuals with disabilities perspectives on their sibling relationships and caregiving.

PARTICIPANTS

- One-hundred and six individuals with varying types of disabilities responded to a national web-based survey.
- Most participants were unmarried (72%) and primarily identified as White (82%).
- Participants represented 30 of the 50 states in addition to Puerto Rico. More than half (52%) of the participants reported having physical disabilities, 31% physical health conditions, and 27% mental health disabilities.

LIMITATIONS

- Individuals with limited access to the internet may not be proportionately represented in this study; therefore, results should be interpreted within these parameters.
- This study was based on a sample that was not representative of individuals living with a disability in the U.S.; thus, the generalizability of the results, especially with respect to individuals with intellectual disability, may be limited.
- Participants with more extensive support needs may have been unable to access or complete this survey, which could have biased the findings of this study.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the perspectives of individuals with disabilities about the types of supports needed from their siblings along with the barriers and facilitators to receiving such support
- Explore whether the same correlates exist across samples of individuals with different types of disabilities
- Investigate methodologies that facilitate individuals with disabilities to more fully participate in quantitative (e.g., survey) studies

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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