Anxiety Levels and Sibling Relationship Quality of Adults with Siblings with Down Syndrome Compared to those of Adult Siblings of Typically Developing Individuals

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Abstract

This study examined anxiety levels and relationship quality of adult siblings of individuals with and without Down syndrome. Adult participants between the ages of 18 to 29 years of age with either a biologically related sibling with Down syndrome or a typically developing sibling were recruited via email through the University of Vermont, Down syndrome organizations and programs and Special Olympics organizations within the Northeast. Qualified individuals completed Riggio’s Lifespan Sibling Relationship Scale and Speilberger’s State-Trait Anxiety Inventory online. Data were calculated using SPSS. The results showed that siblings of individuals with Down syndrome have lower anxiety levels than siblings of typically developing individuals. These findings indicate that having a sibling with Down syndrome does not warrant elevated concern of increased anxiety of the typically developing sibling. Similarly, relationship quality was not significantly different between both groups, indicating that having a sibling with Down syndrome does not have an adverse effect on the sibling relationship. Future research should attend to a larger, nationally representative sample, as well as expand comparison variables between sibling groups, including sociability and peer relationships.