| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Children Socio-emotional Development and Qualities of Sibling Relationship During COVID-19: Parents' Perspective

Rahmadina S. Wibowo[1] ✉ Dhea Nadiva[2], Oktaffiana[3] and Angela D. A Pramastyasningtyas[4]

[123]*Undergraduate student, BINUS University, Psychology Department, Jakarta, Indonesia*
[4]*Faculty Member, BINUS University, Psychology Department, Jakarta, Indonesia*
Corresponding Author: Rahmadina S. Wibowo, **E-mail**: angela.pramastyasningtyas@binus.ac.id

| **ABSTRACT**

Mobility restriction affected mesosystem social unit, including children's relationship with parents and surroundings. Declining outdoor activities and attention shifting might expose children to envy and jealousy stimuli. The current study proposed to explore the understanding, experience, and support that parents need to reinforce children's socio-emotional development. A qualitative study was conducted to analyze theoretical assumptions systematically. The method of the study was an interview, along with purposive sampling and snowball sampling. MAXQDA was used to analyze the data, underpinned with several processes, including intercoder agreement, code-recode, and validation of related sides. Thematic analysis showed 3 primary clusters and 2 secondary clusters, which indicated children and parents' responses. Nurturing emotional intelligence, warmth relationship, and playing are being the crucial frequency codes. The qualities of relationships worked dynamically in two ways simultaneously. The study reached a conclusion that the learning between children and parents can be supported by parental treatment of children's reactions and disputes, parental involvement, early contact in sibling relationships, childhood habits, and emotional intelligence teaching strategy.

1. Introduction

The current outbreak elicited changes in daily routine and a major transition to various layers of society. Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems (Santrock, 2018; Whiteman et al., 2011), we found dramatic changes in the mesosystem layer, which consists of the closest interaction toddlers to form a social relationship, such as family, neighbours, preschool, and peers. The COVID-19 outbreak resulted in limited mobility, lack of a child's social network, and decreased learning opportunities to nurture child development (Al-Balushi & Essa, 2020). Indonesian parents reported were wary of enrolling their children in preschool during the outbreak (CNN Indonesia, 2020; Kompas, 2020). On the other hand, parents revealed emotional and social issues with their children escalated during this major transition (Schaffhauser, 2021; Suciati & Syafiq, 2021). 47% of the parents stated they were overwhelmed with the household responsibilities, and 37% got the work dwindled due to child care and education issues (Schaffhauser, 2021). Parents' feelings held an important key in parent involvement with children (Novianti et al., 2021). Recent evidence (Andriyani & Darmawan, 2018) pointed out 6 of 10 mothers didn't know the impact or intervention to child quarrel at home.

1.1 Sibling rivalry during the outbreak

Furman and Buhrmester (1985) coined 4 sibling relationship qualities, including (1) Warmth/Closeness, (2) Relative Status/Power, (3) Conflict, and (4) Rivalry. Warmth/Closeness shows affection, nurturance, acceptance, and emotional attachment. Relative Status/Power related to sibling dominance. Conflict evokes a disagreement, quarrel, and confrontation against one another. Rivalry

is indicated by competition among siblings to win over their desires and needs (Rinaldhy, 2008).

Research conducted a pilot study on two families who take care of siblings within 2-years- gaps. Parents stated their responsible are foisted when their children solely play around inside the house. They had their children more clingy, while parents were required to maintain housework and professional demands. Parents reported their children showed aggressive behaviors indicated by scratching, pinching, clutching, biting, punching, and kicking their siblings and other family members. Similarly, the child didn't want to relent her belonging to her sibling. The eldest child fell against the floor voluntarily to get the desired attention. Regression was found on the big sister was emulating their sibling, sucking thumb, wet's one bed, and asking to feed them despite their capability. Aggressive behavior and regression are common signs of sibling rivalry. Aggressive behavior was defined as the act of inflicting pain on others, either verbal or nonverbal (Feist & Feist, 2006). Regression was indicated by reverting backwards to early childhood development despite its current growth.

Newborn siblings were susceptible to evoke sibling rivalry (Andriyani & Darmawan, 2018). Putri (2013) identified that 40% of children struck their sibling with tools within a year, and 82% of children lashed out. Muarifah and Puspitasari (2018) stated 65% intermediate fighting and 6.9% intense fighting occurred among siblings. During the outbreak, tantrums and violent outbursts expressed children's discomfort and need deprivation (Al-Balushi & Essa, 2020; Syamsudin, 2013). Outdoor activities were necessary to promote energy and emotion channelling necessarily for children (Al-Balushi & Essa, 2020). Meanwhile, the COVID-19 outbreak was prone to tension between children exposed to stimuli that inflicted jealousy, envy, and anger (Al-Balushi & Essa, 2020). Likewise, lack of attention shifting from the stimuli might impede children adjustment, including their new roles and demands.

1.2 Socio-emotional development in children
Children's endearment towards their newborn sibling, in the beginning, could rapidly change as they develop self-conscious emotions. This was characterized by gaining self-awareness and feeling towards others such as embarrassment, empathy, pride, shame, guilt, disappointment, and envy (Santrock, 2011; Syamsudin, 2013). Meanwhile, the eldest child was still holding egocentric thinking yet had to deal with new responsibilities. Various studies attempted to explain jealousy and envy, which derived from insecurity, causing unpleasant experiences during childhood development (Halimatussadiyah, 2004; Putri, 2013; Santrock, 2011).

Halimatussadiyah (2014) found a distinct difference, as jealousy viewed as a negative attitude towards the newborn as a third party would be a hindrance and seized their belongings. On the other hand, envy showed a sibling coveting a possession that others have. In sibling rivalry context, they could fight over a material or parents' affection (Putri, 2013). They might experience the fear of being left out by parents as the main figure throughout their lifespan. Unfortunately, many Indonesian parents instilled that sibling rivalry is a common phase during childhood that will cease as they grow up (Putri, 2013). In the long run, neglecting sibling rivalry would fester the family system, causing several discomfort and disruption, such as competitive inheritance (Andriyani & Darmawan, 2018).

The limited mobility in the mesosystem was a growing concern that might impact childhood development. The aim of this study is to explore parents' understanding of children sibling relationships and socio-emotional development. A great understanding would drive parents to carry out their role and involvement in children's development (Novianti et al., 2021). Quantitative was currently the most popular approach for investigating sibling rivalry (Andriyani & Darmawan, 2018; Wulandari & Kumalasari, 2021). In contrast to an earlier study (Wulandari & Kumalasari, 2021), however, no significant impact of parenting style towards children socio-emotional development was found during the outbreak. Furthermore, the limitation of the relevant study exerted us to do this research. A qualitative approach was chosen to systematically gain a detailed and solid understanding to evaluate the theoretical assumption of past studies. Based on the review of existing research literature, this study formulated two research questions: (1) to examine understanding and experience parents have towards children socio-emotional development during the outbreak?, (2) What aids and supports are required for parents to sustain sibling relationships dynamic?.

2. Methods
2.1 Theoretical framework
The study was conducted in qualitative methodology through descriptive phenomenology. We believed the study carried out not only the frequency (The occurrence of quarrel, conflict, or dispute between siblings) but also included the process of socio-emotional development of children in everyday life. This is shown by harmony, need fulfilment, conflict. In order to dissect those grounds, parents' experience, perception, and understanding need to be investigated. Thus, a systematic qualitative approach is required.

2.2 Procedure

Preliminary observation and research proposal were commenced in December 2020. In January 2021, The pilot study was conducted in families of four children. Prior to further research, we evaluated the questionnaire. From June to August 2021, families of eight children were invited to participate in the study. Due to national health and prevention protocol during the outbreak, the study was commenced on a virtual platform, namely Zoom. Participants voluntarily filled out the informed consent, including a statement regarding the use of data for publication.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling and snowball sampling. According to Neuman (2013), purposive sampling is a data collection technique whose characteristics were determined by the researcher. While snowball sampling was a data collection technique using references from one case to another similar case.

2.3 Instrument

Data were gathered by conducting in-depth interviews. The first interview focused on parents' understanding in retrospect, including the past and present experiences regarding sibling rivalry and emotional intelligence teaching upon children. Some of the questions listed in the first phase of the interview guidelines were adapted from Binotiana (2008). Several aspects were chosen to examine sibling relationships, the introduction of relationships in children, parents' understanding in regards of the sibling relationship, initial contact with a sibling, an indication of sibling rivalry, and emotional intelligence teaching. To examine parents favouritism and parents views, the study provided hypothetical questions.

The second interview explored the phenomenon of sibling rivalry in the context of pre and during the pandemic. Several aspects were about the activities and reactions of the children, including pre-pandemic, early pandemic, and during mobility restriction (Perberlakukan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat). The children reaction related to increasing or decreasing boredom, mischievous, quarrel, sibling warmth, conflict, clingy attitude, et cetera. Inquiries include any leisure activities and playtime done by the children. In addition, we also asked about changes on the parent's side, including daily routines, parenting style, and parents role in shifting children attention. Participants were also asked to provide comments on the early childhood care program in the vicinity. Each interview was followed by researcher field notes and reflections.

2.4 Data analyze

The results were analyzed by using MAXQDA software word cloud, code frequency, and thematic analysis. The data were assigned according to the codebook written by the research team. The analysis process has passed through an intercoder agreement. Secondly, recheck the procedures and results of the coding (code-recode process). Lastly, I obtained validation from various parties, including peer reviews, external audits, supervisors, and interview participants.

3. Results

3.1 Respondents

The participants in this study were families situated in Jakarta and Bogor. The families were confirmed to have toddlers who have siblings with 0 to 5 years-birth intervals between siblings.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic data

Participants	Parenting activity	Gender	Observed Sibling age	
			Elder child	Younger Child
FP	Partial time	Female- Male	5 y.o	3 y.o
SA	full time	Female- Male	5,6 y.o	2,6 y.o
HA	full time	Male-male	4,5 y.o	2,5 y.o
NS	full time	Female-female	4 y.o	4 y.o

As mentioned previously, in alignment with the sampling methods, allowed the study was to take into account HA, which is situated in Lampung, Sumatra Island. Meanwhile, NS looks after two daughters who are identified as twins. This supported qualitative research, whose method and objectively considered exploration of various possibilities and opportunities. Thus, this study emphasized that there is no specific barrier or barrier as long as the participants are relevant to the study, that is, the parents' view towards sibling relationships in early childhood.

3.2 Data

This paper attempted to show that the result move in vertical (two-way directions),
where the changes in the quality of kinship relations can occur at the same time, hence they cannot be labelled to the child absolutely.

Figure 1. The code relation between the experience and knowledge of parents about sibling rivalry (1st phase interview).
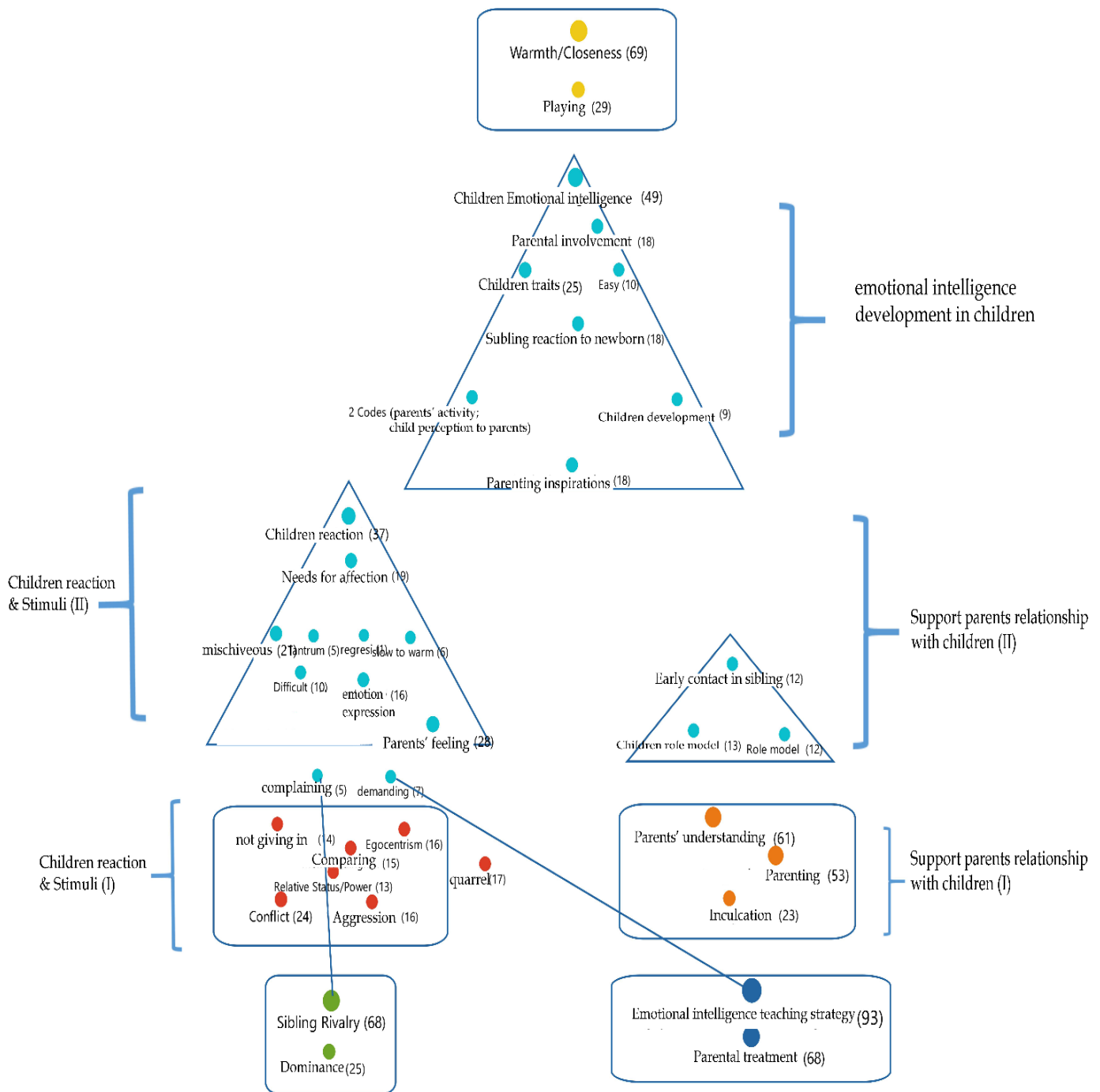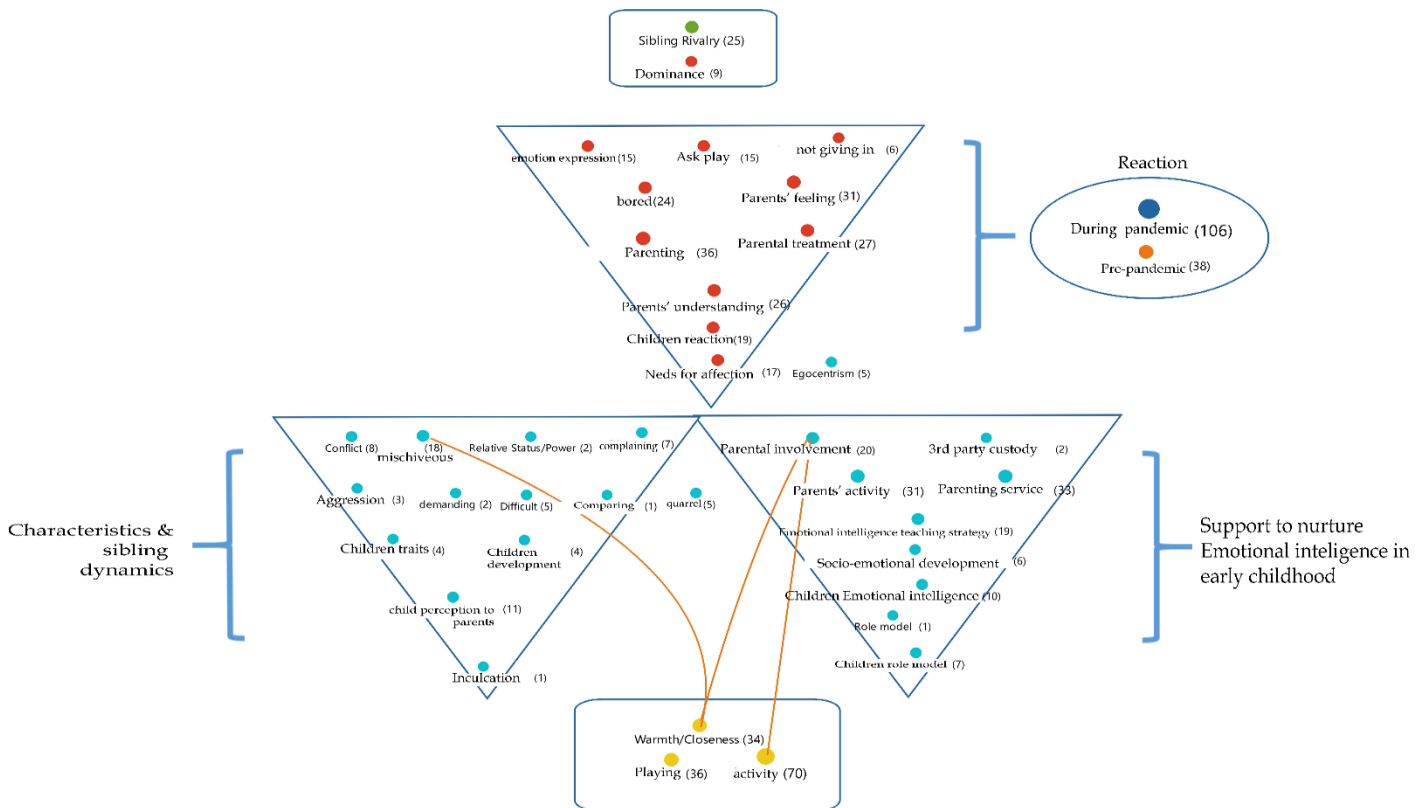
The analysis resulted in 3 primary clusters, namely sibling rivalry (green), emotional intelligence teaching strategy (blue), and sibling warmth (yellow). The secondary cluster mediates the primary cluster, which includes children's reactions and stimuli (red and blue), as well as support for the relationship between parents and children (orange and blue).

Figure 2. Code cloud of the first interview.

The code cloud showed teaching emotional intelligence is the biggest aspect for the four interviewees (93 codes). Followed by sibling warmth (69 codes), sibling rivalry (68 codes), and parental treatment (67 codes).

Figure 3. The connection between the coding of the second phase of the interview consisted sibling relationship dynamics in the pre-pandemic and during the pandemic.

The analysis resulted in 2 primary clusters, namely sibling rivalry (green) and warmth of sibling relations (yellow). The secondary cluster includes children's reactions (red and blue), characteristics and sibling dynamics (blue), and support for emotional intelligence development (blue).

Figure 4. The code cloud of the second interview.
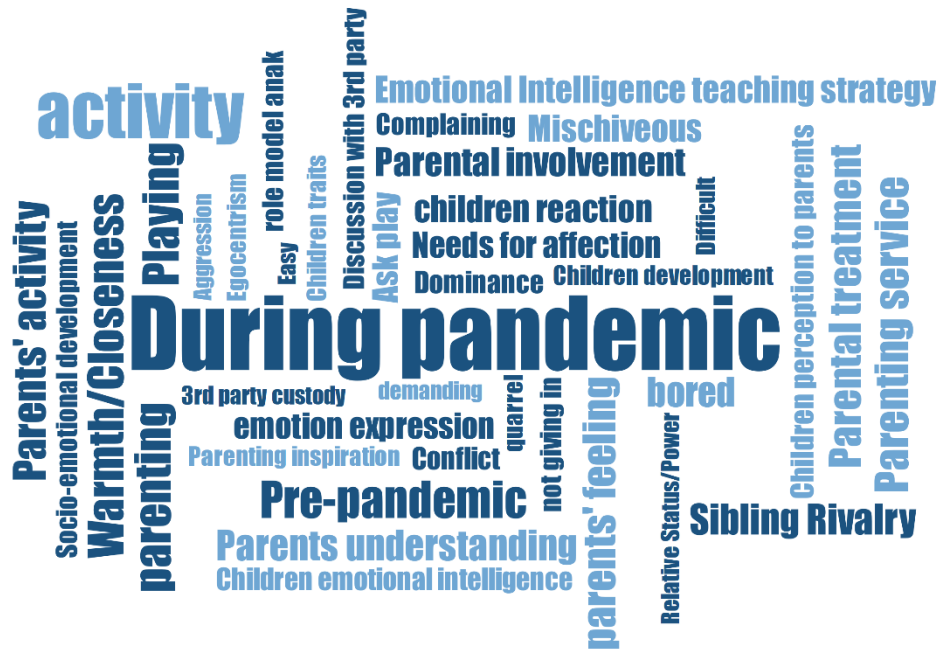
The code cloud showed children's activities (70 codes), playing (36 codes), and sibling warmth (34 codes). Followed by parental care (36 c codes), parenting services nearby (33 codes), and parents' feelings (31 codes).

The bond between coding is shown through code co-occurrence. Parents revealed more aspects during the pandemic, such as children's activities (44 codes) and playing (25 codes). In addition, there is also sibling warmth (27 codes), boredom (22 codes), asking to play outside (14 codes), and mischievous behaviors (14 codes). Sibling rivalry also often occurs during the pandemic (21 codes), followed by parental treatment (20 codes).

4. Discussion
4.1 The occurrence of sibling dynamics
Jealousy emerged as physical contact between one of the children and their parents. In FP, the apparent sibling rivalry behavior is fighting and exclaiming when one of the children claimed their mother. She also disclosed her feelings that it was FP who always hugged her younger sibling. Her children might perceive breastfeeding as FP giving a hug or plenty of attention to one of them. On SA, the elder child compared herself with her younger sibling, that their mother was more affectionate to him. When the elder child got uncomfortable, she hid behind the bedroom door and cried. The elder child also pinched her younger sibling because she felt exasperated.

On HA, the elder and younger children were fighting for their mother's lap. The elder child also claimed ownership of the new book. Meanwhile, NS noticed that her younger child was envious because she and the elder child had moles. The younger child slammed her bike when she heard her elder sibling would have a new bike bought by their parents. Based on Halimatussadiyah (2014), these behaviors are indicated as envy. Parents recognized jealousy and envy cues and shifted children's attention when experiencing them.

4.2 Emotional reactivity bridges sibling dynamics
The results of the four interviewees showed that after a conflict, sibling warmth emerged until the upcoming conflict reoccured. Sibling dynamics could also occur at times the eldest sibling loved their younger sibling on his newborn, as the resentment seethed by the times her younger brother misbehaved. This was in line with Hurlock's opinion (in (Sa'diyah, 2013) that children's emotions can take the form of; 1) strong emotions, 2) emotions that are often visible, 3). temporary emotions, 4). reactions reflect individuality, 5). emotions change in strength, 6). emotions can be identified through behavioral symptoms.

The relation between coding was shown through code co-occurrence. In general, sibling rivalry in the four families had a strong relationship with domineering behavior (17 sentences), comparing (12 sentences), and acts of aggression (11 sentences). Sibling rivalry was also related to the conflict based on the desire to dominate something in a sibling relationship. The younger child fiddled with his sister's toys before eventually getting bored of it. On the other hand, the elder child was reluctant to relent. Santrock (2011) revealed that early childhood has a fickle attraction to new objects and losing interest due to habituation. Children had a short attention span to new toys. Although children could learn to share, it was undeniable that children also showed emotional reactivity, such as elder sibling in HA, who claimed his father only paid attention to him because his younger sibling already had their mother's. Meanwhile, the elder sibling of SA cried when he let his younger sibling have his toys.

On SA, even though the younger one tended to hit, he refused to be told, but he depended on the presence of his elder sibling. On HA, the elder one tended to dominate and collide against his sibling. When the elder child got mad, he threw a tantrum and inflicted harm on his younger sibling. Still, they frequently played together. When the elder brother was teased, the younger one would defend. On NS, the elder child had a strong urge when dealing with an irritating experience. She would chase after the younger sibling to get back the unfair treatment (i.e. hitting the younger sibling) until the discomfort alleviated. Even though there was sibling rivalry, the elder sibling was still afraid that something bad would happen to her younger sister. The elder sibling would get a hug and reconcile with her younger sister. In the other case of NS, comparing can be seen as attention-seeking.

In figure 1 and figure 3, the quarrel code was located contiguous yet outside of the children's emotional reactivity. All of the interviewees thought that the quarrel was caused by these children's own reactions. Over time interpersonal awareness would nurture children's ability to express their thoughts and feelings, which emerges emotional intelligence. Thus, in the dynamics of the sibling relationships, children were able to resolve their own problems and conflicts, thus, maintaining the friendship. Therefore, the study outlined that dispute code is probable to hold a negative view. The four interviewees stated that the house felt empty if it was not accompanied by children's noise, exclamation, or overexcitement when playing. At the same time, it helped children to develop emotional intelligence (problem-solving, negotiation, togetherness, and needs expression). This is aligned to Leman and Oldham (2005) that interaction dynamics, such as collaboration and conflict, brought beneficial knowledge construction to their development.

This paper contested the claim (Muarifah & Puspitasari, 2018) that sibling rivalry forced parents to repeat the learning that had been given. Learning in life cannot be instilled only once, but it takes several times considering the variety of contexts children interact with. This is similar to the emotional intelligence teaching strategy from the four interviewees, which keeps being anchored continuously. Thus, children are able to observe and emulate it in social interaction. Supported by the results of FP, parents engaged in lifelong learning from their children and significant others. Parental involvement could be a mutual positive interaction between parents and children (Rowe, Ramani, & Pomerantz, 2016).

4.3 Challenge during the outbreak
During the pandemic, 2 out of 4 interviewees stated that there was a decrease or change in children's routines, such as private lessons or playtime with friends at certain times. Meanwhile, according to FP, her children preferred to spend most of their time at home (even before the outbreak) and had not yet entered preschool; hence none of their daily life changed significantly (such as playtime). FP also provided a special playroom. NS's children are also active in creating games.

Nevertheless, boredom perpetuated some of the children and parents of the four interviewees. Feelings of parents were also closely related to boredom. HA and SA felt that the beginning of the pandemic was a new challenge in dealing with the household, work, and children. It could be seen that household can be boredom relief for children, as playing and cluttering the house with toys or scribbling on the walls. Whenever the children begged to play outside, they constantly pestered their parents for attention instead. Children become increasingly attached to their mother (HA), while there are also children who are clinging to their father (NS and SA). Hence, it is susceptible to escalate sibling dynamics (conflict, sibling rivalry, and sibling warmth). However, all the interviewees admitted the bond between spouses and children strengthened. Fathers were also agile in taking care and accompanying their children while playing. Likewise, children have complete role models, and they feel more secure. Nevertheless, children felt restless when their parents were away on business. Children of FP would call when their parents work from the office, while children of SA bombarded them with questions.

Other boredom and tension reliefs were expressed through mischievous behaviors (Al-Balushi & Essa, 2020). Three out of four interviewees highlighted that children were tempted to mischievous behaviors when they saw their sibling relaxed. This fostered sibling warmth, as shown in Figure 2. On the other hand, there were several conflicts (such as imposing wills, incompatibility, negative feelings towards siblings, etc.). HA revealed that siblings would defend each other if they were teased and bullied by friends during the pre-pandemic. Meanwhile, the clashes happened during the pandemic because the disputes solely focused on the siblings.

The elder son of SA became sensitive and immediately pouted when he made mistakes. SA perceived this is as children troubled with boredom at home. This finding supported by Jiao et al. (2020) claimed the rise of children psychological difficulties experienced during the COVID-19 outbreak, including fear, perceived lack of affection, and easily offended. To overcome prolonged boredom, parents adopt a new habit: driving (without getting off). Recreational needs might be another factor influencing socio-emotional development studies, especially during a pandemic (Wulandari & Kumalasari, 2021). Bartlett, Griffin, and Thomson (2020) suggested establishing the change of children routines for the sense of safety and certainty (e.g. regular meals and bedtime, daily schedules for play and learning).

4.4 Parents' view towards sibling dynamics
When a conflict or sibling rivalry arose, two out of four interviewees reported sometimes they felt a lack of control of their emotions or abruptly scapegoated the elder sibling. In addition, the spouse of SA stated that the elder brother should give in more. However, SA emphasized the bad impact of parental favouritism. She believed that their elder child had their own rights. On HA, she asked her children to confess everything to hear and treated them fairly when there was a conflict or dispute.

The understanding of parents was the capability to discern children's behaviors and parents' treatments that imposed emotional intelligence teaching instilled since childhood. This greatly affected sibling relationships (strengthening the foundation of the warmth in the relationship, mediating the conflict and sibling rivalry). As Meriyati (2014) stated, emotional intelligence enables children to recognize the emotions of self and others, convey their emotions to others, express the emotions, adjust their desires based on the surrounding conditions, understand how to harness their emotions for daily life, and manage their emotions to determine future actions.

The study revealed the emotional teaching parents could be conducted by internalizing the role, expressing the importance of communication, understanding cause and effect, bringing memories attached to siblings, and projecting endearing conversations. This result was similar to the previous study by Leman and Oldham (2005), showing an internalization process by having collaborative recall between children. In addition, sibling warmth had a strong relationship with playtimes (16 sentences), children's emotional intelligence (10 sentences), and role models (5 sentences). Based on interviews, various toys that have material forms (block building, miniatures, dolls, etc.) are considered to encourage children's activity, including cooperation, acceptance, bonding, role-taking, and language development.

FP told the children that if they desired things, they had to convey them unequivocally (not by a vague sign such as frowning). Likewise, FP taught children to have open-ended questions that would engage children in problem-solving and observing retrospectively. SA, HA, and NS projected affectionate feedback (showering love by calling "dear", showing a smile, hugging) as a form of emotional validation to children as Syamsuddin (2013) defined tantrums as an expression of children's emotions. Endearment and positive affirmation enabled parents to regulate and lead children to positive emotions.

4.5 Fostering children self-conscious emotions
In Figure 1, the demanding aspect was close to the child's reaction and stimulus aspects (egocentrism, comparing, etc.). Nevertheless, the demanding aspect had a relationship with emotional intelligence teaching strategy. This was shown in FP's elder child, as she turned their mother's face so that she got the same attention as their younger sibling. In addition, it was seen in all the interviewees that the children were able to understand the needs of the siblings (either fall upon their mother or a toy); thus, they could demand attention from the father figure. Figure 3 showed parental involvement as support for promoting emotional intelligence in children, which is done throughout the daily activities (preferences for playing, learning, and other entertainments). Parental involvement provided a sense of security to children in their exploration (Rowe, Ramani, & Pomerantz, 2016). Words or reflections from the role model of parents enabled children to promote emotional intelligence. This also accorded to Bandura (2002), Meriyati (2014), and Wijayanto (2020) claimed parents serve as role models for children to learn over time by observing and emulating their behavior.

4.6 Supports to sustain parents understanding towards sibling dynamics on the outbreak
Parents confirmed that not many parenting resources were feasible in the neighborhood vicinity, even before the outbreak occurred. Whereas the purpose of Integrated Health Care (*Posyandu*) in the neighbourhood is to monitor children's health care and development, including childhood immunization, nutrition, birth control education (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2021). HA admitted it is not quite adequate to gather parenting resources or parenting consultation from the health care as they have experienced the downhill to take care of their first child as newlyweds. The rest of the interviewees deemed the necessity of having a platform known nearby. Chang et al. (2015) believed integrating parenting intervention to health services will bring great investment to parents' knowledge, practice activity, and child development.

5. Limitations and future directions

It should be noted that the first and second phases of interviews included experiences that participants are currently having; therefore, they cannot accurately measure the difference between before and during the pandemic. The intensity of the difference between pre and during the pandemic could be examined from the frequency and the stimulus for children at home, problem-solving between children and parents, attachment between children and parents, children's play activities, and parental involvement. Further research in this field would help empower parents and caregivers to support learning experiences. Matters such as (1) Propose Psychosocial Resources (seminars, counselling, guides, and support groups) which examines parenting and child development, (2) Foster emotional intelligence through children's games, such as modelling clay, block building, dolls, miniatures, etc., (3) Propose role-playing as a game to develop emotional intelligence.

6. Conclusion

Parents' understanding emerged by having keen observation on children's socio-emotional development, which includes the children's perceptions, feelings, and behavior. The overall result showed a good sign of parents understanding of socio-emotional and qualities of the sibling relationship. The learning between children and parents could be supported by parental treatment of children's reactions and disputes, parental involvement, early contact in sibling relationships, childhood habits, and emotional intelligence teaching strategy. Parents viewed the pandemic's challenges as an attempt to have a great understanding of their needs, open communication, problem-solving, and understanding others.

Notes on contributor: Ms. Rahmadina is a junior researcher and psychology undergraduate at BINUS University. Ms. Dhea is a psychology undergraduate at BINUS University. Ms. Oktaffiana is a psychology undergraduate at BINUS University Dr. Angela is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology, BINUS University. Her main topics are focused on child development, emotion, and resilience. She has published some papers in Indonesian and English in the field of psychology.

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