



**BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF
SIBLINGS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

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Abstract:

This study aimed to explore the experiences of siblings of children with special needs. Using a phenomenological study, ten (10) participants from Davao City, Philippines, were selected through snowball sampling and interviewed face to face. In terms of the challenges and experiences, it involved the following: Hardships in communication, emotional struggles, sibling care constraints, societal pressure, support that stems from family, personal growth, adaptability, and advocacy. On the other hand, coping mechanisms used by siblings involve the following: Effective family communication, Family Unity through Acceptance, Family Bonding and Collaborative Caregiving. Lastly, in terms of the lessons and insights shared by the participants, it highlights the following: Preparedness for sibling support, Nurturing Inclusion through empathy, Supporting siblings of children with disabilities and Support services and policies. This research aims to shed light on the lived experiences of siblings of children with special needs. By understanding their challenges and opportunities, parents, caregivers, and educators can develop targeted interventions, support systems, and inclusive programs to address the unique needs of these siblings and create a more supportive and nurturing family environment.

SDG Thrust: #4 Quality Education & #10 Reduced Inequalities

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1. Introduction

In the complex world of families, the relationships between siblings are like a strong thread that holds everything together. However, when they discover that one of their siblings has unique needs or disabilities, it can significantly affect these bonds (Catungal, Cruz, & Abadam, 2021). These disabilities can include autism, down syndrome, hearing and visual impairments, etc. Having a child with disabilities can introduce challenges to a family's life, especially for siblings who often end up providing care for them over a long period of time (Chase and McGill, 2019). Often, these siblings feel invisible, their own support needs overlooked amid their sibling's challenges. This dynamic can lead to emotional neglect and further aggravate the complexities within the family structure (Hanvey, Malovic, & Ntontis, 2022). The study seeks to address these issues and contribute to a better understanding of the complicated dynamics surrounding siblings in such families.

The connections between siblings are marked by a sense of closeness and strong emotional depth (Hughes C., McHarg G., & White N., 2018) but not all the time this connection between them will last. Especially if one has a lifelong disability, their sibling relationship will face distinctive and intricate difficulties as they grow up. From an early age, non-disabled siblings begin to grasp their positions and responsibilities within the family dynamic. Some have already come to terms with the idea that if their parents are no longer able to take care of their disabled sibling, it falls upon them to shoulder this duty. They are completely at ease with this notion, asserting that their disabled sibling has played a pivotal role in fostering closeness within the family. They regard them as the emotional core of the family. However, it's worth noting that not all non-disabled siblings hold the same sentiment towards their disabled counterparts as they grow older. This occurs because some of them experience a sense of neglect and exclusion, observing that their parents' focus is predominantly on their disabled sibling, which results in them gradually detaching themselves from their own family (Avieli, Band-Winterstein, & Bergman, 2019). It is essential to gain awareness of the opinions and experiences of non-disabled siblings since doing so helps one better comprehend how their life course has shaped them as an individual and how their roles within the family affect them. To gain insights into how an individual perceives themselves in relation to their sibling with a disability, it is beneficial to explore theories from various fields that explain emotional and behavioral development within a family context. This research centers around these objectives: first, to explore the challenges and opportunities of siblings in families of children with disabilities; second, to investigate coping mechanisms used by these siblings to maintain family bonds; and lastly, to identify and share valuable lessons and insights from the experiences of these siblings.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory examines a child's growth within the framework of the relationships that constitute their environment. The theory identifies various layers in this environment, each influencing a child's development. The interplay between a child's evolving biology, immediate family and community surroundings, and the broader societal context propels and guides their development. Consequently, this theory offers deeper insights into an individual's life experiences, particularly those of individuals raised alongside disabled siblings. In the Life Course Theory, life experiences are interconnected and shaped by various factors, such as family dynamics which these factors collectively contribute to shaping an individual into the person they are today. That's why knowing the side point of the non-disabled siblings about their experiences in growing up with their disabled siblings is important as this helps us to understand them more. Furthermore, these two theories will guide us in explaining the behavioral and emotional issues of the non-disabled siblings within the family (Russell, 2024).

While much attention has been given to understanding the experiences of families with children who have disabilities, there's a noticeable research gap when it comes to the lived experiences of individuals growing up together with their brother or sister, particularly children with disabilities (Hanvey, I. *et al.*, 2022). We want to dig deep into the complex world of sibling relationships to uncover what's been failed to notice. According to UNICEF (2018), PhilHealth states that roughly one out of every seven Filipino kids, which amounts to about 5.1 million children, are living with disabilities. However, we currently lack the data about how many of them have brothers or sisters nor the insights they have living with them.

The significance of this study lies in the exploration of the bond between the non-disabled and disabled siblings within a family. This will examine how deep their relationship is as we are going to delve into their experiences. The direct beneficiaries of our study include siblings of children with special needs, parents/guardians, educators, healthcare professionals, and policymakers. By understanding their experiences and needs, we aim to enhance support systems, foster inclusivity, and inform policy and practice. This study directly supports SDG #4 by investigating the unique educational hurdles they encounter, with the aim of fostering inclusive educational environments. By understanding and addressing these challenges, we strive to contribute to the goal of providing quality education for all. Moreover, our study contributes to SDG #10 by shedding light on the inequalities experienced within families, emphasizing the importance of support structures, and fostering empathy towards siblings navigating diverse circumstances.

2. Method

The procedures used in this study include the research participants, research materials, data gathering, data analysis, and ethics.

2.1 Research Participants

In this phenomenological study, we've selected 5 individuals for in-depth interviews and 5 individuals for focus group discussions, which totals 10 participants, per Creswell's (2013) recommendation that a suitable sample size for phenomenological research can range from 3 to 25 participants. The participants recruited were ages 18 years old and above who have at least one sibling having a disability age 18 and below to be considered a child and residing in the vicinity of Davao City. The selection process followed these criteria, with participants affirming their eligibility by stating that they have a sibling with a disability. We decided to exclude those individuals under 17 years old due to the sensitive nature of the topic, making it potentially challenging for them to discuss. While it's true that including participants of all ages could provide a more comprehensive understanding of family quality of life and experiences, we chose not to do so.

According to Nikolopoulou (2022), snowball sampling gives the researcher an advantageous method for researching individuals with specific traits that might be challenging to identify using traditional means. Additionally, participants in this study were selected based on the predetermined criteria outlined by the researcher's questions. For the In-Depth Interview, this study employed snowball sampling to identify five (5) participants who have a sibling with a disability that ranges from ages eighteen (18) and below.

In addition, the participants involved in the in-depth interview (IDI) are as follows: IDI₁ is a 26-year-old housewife who has a 17-year-old sister who has Down syndrome. IDI₂ is a 22-year-old college graduate who has a 16-year-old deaf-mute brother. IDI₃ is a 23-year-old engineer who has an 18-year-old brother that has autism. IDI₄ is a 24-year-old office clerk who has a 16-year-old brother who has Cerebral Palsy. IDI₅ is a 21-year-old college student who has an 18-year-old sister who has a Learning Disability.

On the other hand, for the focus group discussion, this study also employed snowball sampling to identify five (5) participants who have a sibling with a disability age eighteen (18) and below.

In addition, the participants involved in the focus group discussion (FGD) are as follows: FGD₁ is a 23-year-old college student who has a 16-year-old sister who has Down Syndrome. FGD₂ is a 23-year-old college student who has a 16-year-old brother that has Autism. FGD₃ is a 22-year-old call center agent who has a 17-year-old brother that has Down Syndrome. FGD₄ is a 20-year-old college student who has a 18-year-old sister that has Deaf-Mute. FGD₅ is a 20-year-old college student who has a 15-year-old brother that has Cerebral Palsy.

This decision is based on the belief that obtaining consent for interviews from parents of minors might be more challenging, and also, adults usually find it easier to control the information they share with interviewers, whereas children tend to be more candid and spontaneous in their responses and reactions. Hence, by concentrating on adult participants, we anticipate acquiring valuable insights, potentially encompassing more sensitive details about their family dynamics. As researchers, our approach

involves direct communication with participants. We apprised them of the study's focus and requested their willingness to provide necessary information. To ensure clarity and consent, we furnish a personalized letter. Additionally, we prioritized conducting interviews in locations and settings preferred by participants, ensuring their comfort and convenience, while also considering their availability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.2 Research Instrument

In this study, the researchers interviewed the participants using a self-made questionnaire related to the study to collect the data. According to Osborne & Grant-Smith (2021), In-depth interviewing is a valuable research instrument in qualitative research because it is nuanced, participant-focused, and flexible. We decided to develop this instrument to explore the experiences of siblings in families with children with disabilities. The six interview questions were carefully crafted to be open-ended, clear, and aligned with these objectives, focusing on eliciting rich descriptions of challenges, opportunities, and personal insights. We deliberately sequenced the questions to start with broader topics and gradually move towards more specific aspects of their family experiences and personal growth. Rutledge & Hogg (2020) further highlight the expanding utilization of digital communication for in-depth interviews, facilitating outreach and maintaining effectiveness. To enrich the interviewee's perspective and delve deeper, researchers will employ techniques like probing questions. Audio recordings will also be used for accurate transcription.

2.3 Design and Procedure

In a phenomenological study, we delve into the personal experiences of individuals connected to a particular phenomenon. We aim to understand the significance of that experience in their lives and, from there, craft a comprehensive portrayal of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). A phenomenological approach is the perfect approach for our study on siblings of children with special needs because it gives us the chance to deeply explore and understand their experiences. The ideal direction of the study is to focus on the subjective perspectives of these individuals, by which we can uncover the complexities of their relationships. Phenomenology gives us the window to dive deeper into how siblings perceive and interpret their roles, providing rich insights into their challenges and opportunities. This approach allows us to go beyond surface-level observations and delve into the nuanced realities of their lives, offering a holistic understanding of their experiences.

In phenomenological research, the interview stands out as the most dominant approach for gathering data (Bevan, 2014). With the application of interviews, the researchers asked the participants to describe their lived experiences, coping mechanisms, emotions, and narratives of these families, ensuring that we are able to capture the complexity of these relationships. It focuses on the need for personal interaction and the collection of in-depth information from the participants. These interviews usually ask follow-up questions and take the form of a conversation to draw

out insights and responses. According to Oakley (1998), it emphasizes that interviews serve as a framework where practices and standards are not merely documented but also actively explored, questioned, and strengthened. This resonates with our goal of understanding the roles and challenges of siblings in families with children with disabilities.

Before proceeding with data collection, we obtained approval from the supervising professor and secured their signature as evidence of their consent to conducting interviews for this study. Also, the questionnaires being used in the interview are validated by our panellists in order to ensure their quality. Lastly, a letter towards the research participants is a must. After giving them the letter, we commenced the interview with the permission of these individuals for approximately 1 hour. The interview was divided into two categories wherein there is an in-depth interview, and the other one was a focus group discussion. For the in-depth interviews, it was a one-on-one which is between the researcher and the participant. On the other hand, FGD was conducted along with other participants. The whole interview was conducted face-to-face. The audio was copied to a personal laptop and personal computer the day following the interview to ensure the availability of the copies. After transcription, non-English responses were converted into Standard English for analysis.

Ethical considerations in research refer to a set of fundamental principles that shape your research methods and conduct. Researchers are obligated to consistently follow a defined code of behavior when acquiring data from individuals (Bhandari, 2018). These considerations safeguard the rights of research participants, bolster the credibility of the research and uphold the integrity of the scientific or academic process. Rest assured that all personal information concerning our research participants was treated with the utmost confidentiality to safeguard their rights. This commitment extends to the interview process, ensuring the privacy and protection of our participants throughout.

The data analysis method employed in this study is Thematic analysis. It involves recognizing recurring patterns or themes in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Considering the complexity of the topic, conducting a thematic analysis can assist in sorting and making sense of the diverse and detailed information that may come from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This approach enables researchers to recognize repeating patterns, shared experiences, and differences in the experiences of siblings. The thematic analysis offers a way to gain insights into the emotional, social, and practical dimensions of the sibling relationship in the context of special needs, thereby making the research more relatable and human-centered.

3. Results And Discussion

This section discusses the results of the thematic analysis of the responses from ten (10) participants regarding the challenges and opportunities of siblings in families of children with disabilities. The presentation of themes is based on research questions.

Table 1: The Challenges and Opportunities of Siblings in Families of Children with Disabilities

Emergent Themes	Clustered Themes	Formulated Meanings
Challenges		
Hardships in Communication	Interpersonal Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants highlighted the difficulty in understanding verbal and non-verbal communication. [RQ_{1.1}IDI₁] Participants encounter miscommunication often [RQ_{1.1}IDI₁ & RQ_{1.1}IDI₃]
	Adaptations of Communication Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant Learning sign language as a means of communication. [RQ_{1.2}FGD₄] Participants relied on body movement to communicate with their sibling's preferences. [RQ_{1.2}IDI₁]
Emotional Struggles	Impact of Sibling's Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants experienced stress taking care of them. [RQ_{1.1}IDI₂] Participants express feelings of uncertainty in the context of their siblings growing up. [RQ_{1.2}IDI₁]
	Unfair Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants feel like they don't get the same attention as compared to their siblings. [RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}FGD₂] Participants deal with the feeling of resentment towards their siblings. [RQ_{1.1}IDI₃]
Sibling Care Constraints	Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants have difficulty allocating time for their siblings. [RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₅] Participants struggle to make time for themselves. [RQ_{1.1}IDI₂]
	Financial Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants worry about the aspect of how they can sustain money to support their siblings. [RQ_{1.1}IDI₄] Participants stated that taking care of their siblings with disabilities involves a lot of money. [RQ_{1.1}FGD₅]
Societal Pressures	Misconceptions Surrounding People with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants are aware that people around them are uneasy when their siblings are around. [RQ_{1.1}FGD₃] Participants perceive society as often viewing their siblings with disabilities as mentally unstable. [RQ_{1.1}IDI₅]
	Social Discomfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants' siblings getting bullied or exploited by other people due to them being different. [RQ_{1.1}IDI₂] Participants felt embarrassed towards other people because of their siblings' uniqueness. [RQ_{1.1}IDI₅]
Opportunities		
Kinship Supports	Emotional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants feel rewarded by taking care of their sibling [RQ_{1.1}FGD₄] Participants describe how family support has helped them cope with emotional challenges. [RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.2}IDI₅]
	Family Collective Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants discuss the role of other family members in helping each other. [RQ_{1.2}FGD₂] Participants taking the responsibility of managing their siblings after one of their parents died. [RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₄]
Personal Growth	Relationship Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants reflect on how they develop maturity towards their siblings with disabilities. [RQ_{1.1}IDI₃] Participants emphasize how their relationship with their siblings made them compassionate which

		improves their relationship with their siblings. [RQ1.1.FGD1]
	Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants mentioned their ability to persevere despite difficulties towards their siblings. [RQ1.2PQ1.1.3FGD4] Participants highlight how their experience makes them tough in these challenges. [RQ1.1PQ1.1.1IDI5]
Adaptability	Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants adjust their communication style and approach to effectively interact with their siblings. [RQ1.1.IDI2] Participants are willing to spend time with their siblings to better understand their needs and preferences. [RQ1.1.IDI1]
	Development Through Adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants' acceptance towards their sibling who has a disability. [RQ1.2.FGD3] Participants mention how their patience grew to accommodate their siblings. [RQ1.1.IDI5]
Advocacy	Inclusivity Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants reflect on the changing societal attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. [RQ1.1PQ1.1.2IDI5] Participants educate others about the idea of disabilities. [RQ1.2PQ1.1.1IDI3]
	Knowledge About Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants would want others to receive more education about disabilities [RQ1.1.FGD3] Participants admit that their ideas about disabilities broadened over the course of time. [RQ1.1.IDI5]

3.1 Exploring The Challenges and Opportunities of Siblings in Families of Children with Disabilities

Through thematic analysis, several themes were generated, as shown in Table 1. This study created a total of 8 themes that exhibit the challenges and opportunities of siblings in families of children with disabilities. In which 4 themes are presented in the challenges, as well as the opportunities. The following themes generated in challenges are Hardships in Communication, Emotional Struggles, Sibling Care Constraints and Societal Pressures. On the other hand, 4 themes are also under opportunities. The following themes generated in opportunities are Support that stems from Family Unity, Personal Growth, Adaptability and Advocacy.

3.1.1 Hardships in Communication

This refers to the siblings of children with special needs, who often navigate a complex landscape marked by hardships and communication's vital role within the family dynamic. It takes time for siblings to understand and become accustomed to these unique communication methods, whether through speech, sign language, or other methods. This is observed in the following clusters below:

3.1.1.1 Interpersonal Barriers

This refers to the siblings' difficulty in communicating with their siblings with disabilities, which often arises from various interpersonal barriers. These barriers can stem from a need for more understanding or awareness about the unique needs of their sibling, leading to misinterpretations or misunderstandings in communication. This difficulty was observed in the responses below:

"The key challenges to our sister is miscommunication because we cannot understand what she is trying speak verbally or non-verbal, uhmm then misunderstood because kanang dili manamo siya masabtan or dili namo sya ma kuan iyang communication." [The key challenges to our sister is miscommunication because we cannot understand what she is trying to speak verbally or non-verbal, which results to misunderstanding because we don't understand her or the way she communicates...] - RQ_{1.1}IDI₁

"When it comes to communication, sometimes it's hard to make a casual conversation with him because I don't understand him, and that also applies to my brother as well, he also struggles to understand what I am trying to say." - RQ_{1.1}IDI₃

Verbal and nonverbal communication is crucial in any interpersonal interactions, a fact that is heavily agreed by RQ_{1.1}IDI₁, in which each of them is navigating unique challenges with their siblings. RQ_{1.1}IDI₁, who has a sister with Down syndrome, emphasizes the struggle with miscommunication stemming from difficulties in comprehending her speech and gestures. RQ_{1.1}IDI₃, whose sibling has autism, also faces hurdles in communication, as mutual understanding proves elusive in their exchanges. With that said, these will cause a lot of miscommunication, which IDI₁ and IDI₃ support. Misunderstandings naturally come into play when verbal and non-verbal cues are misinterpreted, which was brought up earlier when there is an inconsistency between what is said and what is meant. Miscommunications often lead to a breakdown in trust, further complicating communication and hindering meaningful connections.

The analysis above agreed with the study of Matthews (2023), which it was revealed that communication serves as a fundamental link to social engagement, whether it involves spoken dialogue, manual communication like sign language, or augmentative and alternative communication methods, it enables individuals to establish connections by expressing emotions, shared interests, experiences, and exchanging information. In addition to the mentioned study, the siblings of non-verbal individuals who have autism lack the ability to communicate with their sibling, which has impacted their relationship and bond. Moreover, the study by Chu, Kassim, Gan, Fierro, Chan and Hersh (2023) revealed significant interpersonal barriers experienced by participants in communicating with their siblings with Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD. A common challenge reported was the lack of understanding exhibited by their siblings, leading to

communication breakdowns. Siblings described difficulties in engaging in ongoing conversations due to their siblings' struggles with attending to discussions, understanding instructions, comprehending vocabulary, and maintaining topics. This hindered their ability to fully grasp their siblings' expressions and contributed to communication challenges within their relationships.

3.1.1.2 Adaptation of Communication Strategies

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who frequently encounter the need to adapt their communication strategies to interact with their disabled brothers or sisters effectively. In such circumstances, employing sign language, visual cues, and gestures becomes imperative for facilitating meaningful communication and fostering connections. However, utilizing these alternative communication techniques presents unique challenges for the siblings.

While these communication strategies are essential for promoting effective interaction and fostering connections between siblings, they also introduce complexities and challenges that siblings must navigate as they strive to communicate, connect, and support their disabled brothers and sisters. This is observed in the responses below:

“We basically learned the formal sign language together last year; thus, we’ve become closer.” - RQ_{1.2}FGD₄

“Pag mag communicate mi saiyaha magsalig pud mi gamit among mga actions like sa kamot or sa nawng ba” [*When we communicate with her, we also rely on using our actions like hand gestures or facial expressions...*] - RQ_{1.2}IDI₁

The responses agree that siblings of children with disabilities adapt their communication strategies to overcome challenges in interacting effectively with their siblings. In particular, RQ_{1.2}FGD₄ highlights the learning of formal sign language to bridge communication gaps with their deaf siblings. At first, they faced difficulty understanding their siblings' body language and sign language, but they chose to learn sign language proactively. This effort not only improved their ability to communicate but also brought them closer to their siblings. Likewise, RQ_{1.2}IDI₁ uses non-verbal cues like hand gestures and facial expressions to communicate effectively with their sibling who has Down syndrome. This adaptation demonstrates a recognition of the unique communication needs of their sibling and a willingness to adjust their communication style to facilitate understanding and connection. This adaptation demonstrates a recognition of the unique communication needs of their sibling and a willingness to adjust their communication style to facilitate understanding and connection.

To support the analysis above, Scruggs's (2017) study emphasizes the significance of adapting communication strategies within families with deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH) children. They highlight that approximately 95% of hearing families with one deaf or hard-of-hearing child do not learn sign language, resulting in significantly disjointed

communication. This statistic underscores the prevalence of communication barriers within such families. In contrast, the proactive efforts of siblings, as described in the analysis, to learn sign language demonstrate a recognition of the unique communication needs of their DHH siblings. By bridging these communication gaps, they enhance their communication ability and foster closer and more nurturing familial relationships. Moreover, in the study conducted by Eichengreen and Zaidman-Zait (2019) shows that siblings describe a strong emotional connection with their DHH sibling, often attributed to shared hearing loss (HL). This bond is reinforced by the necessity to communicate using adapted methods, such as lip-reading, which fosters exclusive focus on each other during conversations. While this enhances their connection, it also isolates them from others. Additionally, some siblings engage in explicit conversations about coping with hearing loss, actively listening, sharing experiences, and seeking advice from each other. This highlights the importance of adapting communication strategies within sibling relationships affected by hearing loss, fostering emotional closeness and mutual support.

To support the central theme, Riosa, Ensor, Jichici, and Davy's (2022) study showed that communication difficulties shed light on the dynamics within families with children with disabilities. Siblings often encounter hurdles in forming meaningful connections due to the unique communication challenges their disabled siblings face. Thus, while grappling with the challenges posed by communication barriers, siblings also harbour hopeful aspirations for enhanced communication pathways that foster deeper connections and mutual understanding among family members. This was similar to the study of Hinek and Milaković (2019), wherein communication challenges faced by siblings extend beyond verbal limitations, encompassing difficulties in understanding others and being understood, alongside deficits in social communication. These complexities hinder meaningful connections within the family dynamic, evoking frustration and highlighting the profound impact of their sibling's condition. Despite these hurdles, siblings express a collective desire for improved communication pathways, aiming to bridge the gap and foster deeper familial bonds.

3.1.2 Emotional Struggles

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who frequently experience profound emotional struggles, making it one of their biggest challenges in life. These emotional burdens manifest in many ways, often encompassing feelings of guilt, resentment, and isolation as they navigate the complex concept of their sibling's disability. This is observed in the clusters below.

3.1.2.1 Impact of Sibling's Disability

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities who navigate through the complicated set of challenges stemming from the profound impact of their sibling's disability. They endure the weight of constant stress, grappling with the uncertainties surrounding their futures with their siblings with disabilities growing up and the dynamics of their familial relationships. Furthermore, they bear the burden of societal

judgment, often feeling scrutinized and misunderstood for their close association with a sibling who has a disability. These siblings navigate a complex terrain of emotions, responsibilities, and perceptions, profoundly shaping their experiences. This was observed in the responses below:

“Having a sibling with disability means na kailangan dyud bigyan ng oras or bond with him that's why maka stress dyud siya.” [Having a sibling with a disability means that we really need to give him time and bond with him, which also results in stress] - RQ_{1.1}.IDI₂

“Especially pag mudako na siya, bantayanan kaayo tapos ang iyahang mga, kung magdako siya, dako pud ang among kuan sa iyang needs. Kanang dili baya siya maka stand up for her own.” [*Especially as she grows older, it requires careful attention, and our understanding of her needs becomes more profound. She cannot advocate for herself.*] - RQ_{1.2}.IDI₁

Having a sibling with disabilities is never an easy journey to overcome. The stress experienced by RQ_{1.1}.IDI₂ underscores the immense challenges that accompany this journey. IDI₂ expressed feeling stressed simply by dedicating time to their sibling, highlighting the constant strain of balancing caregiving responsibilities with other aspects of life. Moreover, IDI P1 articulated a deep-seated fear of not being able to assert themselves independently and feeling reliant on others for guidance and support due to their sibling's disability. These narratives collectively illustrate the profound impact of having a sibling with disabilities, marked by pervasive stress, emotional turmoil, and a constant struggle to navigate both internal and external challenges.

The results above were similar to the study of Chu *et al.* (2021), wherein the analysis provided aligns with the understanding that stressful experiences, such as those faced by siblings of children with disabilities, can significantly impact the dynamics of familial relationships, potentially affecting the sense of closeness and empathy within the family. This perspective resonates with Family Systems Theory, which suggests that all family members interact and influence each other. The study by Paul, Hussey, Woodman, Smith, and Shriver (2021) showed that siblings in Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region echoed similar sentiments of apprehension and uncertainty concerning the future care of their siblings with intellectual disabilities once their parents are no longer able to provide support. These concerns originate from various sources, encompassing uncertainties regarding the availability and accessibility of suitable care services, financial resources, and societal perceptions towards individuals with disabilities in their respective regions. The possibility of shouldering caregiving duties personally or delegating their sibling's care to others introduces additional complexity to their already burdened emotions.

3.1.2.2 Unfair Treatment

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who frequently grapple with the emotional weight of unfair treatment within their families. Despite their best efforts to navigate the complexities of their family dynamics, they often feel overlooked or, worse, maybe even forgotten. Their desires and necessities often go unnoticed amidst the continuous responsibilities of tending to their disabled sibling. Although they genuinely care for their sibling, the contrast between the attention they receive and the apparent preference shown towards their disabled sibling can evoke sentiments of bitterness and resentment. This was observed in the responses below:

"I struggled with feelings of jealousy and resentment as my sibling received specialized attention and treatment." - RQ_{1.1}IDI₃

"The attention of my mother is always for him, even if it's his fault, I'll be the one who suffers." - RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}FGD₂

Within families that experience the challenges of disability, narratives from individuals like RQ_{1.1}FGD₂ unveil the hidden struggles of siblings who often find themselves sidelined and neglected. It sheds light on the emotional complexities experienced when witnessing their sibling receiving specialized attention and care. RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}FGD₂ sincere revelation unveils the reality of feeling perpetually overlooked, with their mother's attention seemingly exclusively reserved for their sibling, regardless of fault.

The analysis of the participant's response aligns closely with Matthews's (2023) study, with the experiences shared by siblings of children with disabilities, particularly those highlighted earlier. The expressed feelings of resentment towards their autistic sibling or the circumstances surrounding their family dynamic is a common theme. This resentment often stemmed from the challenges posed by their sibling's violent outbursts or behaviors, which left them feeling helpless and unable to intervene. Additionally, siblings grappled with resentment towards the circumstances themselves, questioning why their siblings and family had to face such challenges in their lives. According to the findings of a study by Noonan, Donoghue, and Wilson (2018), Within the family dynamics, the sibling with ASD often occupies a central role, overshadowing the experiences and needs of other siblings. The siblings always feel like they are overlooked or "fading into the background" as their parents direct their attention and resources toward the sibling with ASD. Despite acknowledging their parents' love and dedication, they expressed a sense of disconnect, normalized by the focus on the sibling with greater needs. This narrative emphasizes the challenges faced by siblings in navigating familial dynamics and highlights the importance of addressing issues of fairness and equity within the family unit, having to take care of someone who has disabilities.

To support the central theme, the study by Avieli *et al.* (2019) showed that the birth of a child with a disability often results in unintentional emotional neglect of the sibling

without a disability by parents. This dynamic prioritizes continuous engagement with the needs of the sibling with a disability, fostering feelings of regret, neglect, and rivalry among the other siblings. Consequently, it creates a division between the parent-sibling with a disability coalition and the sibling without a disability, leading to two separate and opposing entities within the family structure. On the other hand, the study of Viswanathan, Kishore, and Seshadri (2021) stated that sibling caregivers often grapple with profound emotional struggles, particularly regarding future caregiving responsibilities in the absence of parents. While these concerns are not exclusive to autism spectrum disorder (ASD) but are also prevalent in any disability, they significantly impact the quality of sibling relationships. Therefore, it is crucial to support siblings in navigating these uncertainties and making informed decisions about future caregiving roles to preserve familial bonds and ensure holistic support for individuals with disabilities.

3.1.3 Sibling Care Constraints

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities who navigate through the considerable challenges of sibling care constraints, presenting one of their most formidable hurdles. These constraints encompass many factors, prominently including the substantial time and financial commitments demanded in supporting their disabled siblings.

3.1.3.1 Time Management

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities who confront the demanding reality of time management as a central aspect of their lives. Balancing the responsibility of caring for their disabled siblings alongside their commitments presents a formidable challenge. Siblings often find themselves in a tight spot, struggling to allocate adequate time and attention to meet the complex needs of their disabled brother or sister. This is observed in the response below:

“It was indeed a challenge to manage my time between him and for myself, kay ma divide man dyud ako attention towards him especially ako baya ang iyang kuya and it’s my responsibility look after him in a way.” [It was indeed a challenge to manage my time between him and myself because my attention is divided, especially since I am his older brother, and it’s my responsibility to look after him.] - RQ_{1.1}IDI₂

“Kay before mas atimanunun man gud siya so makaon akong time, imbis na maghimo ko og assignment, mga homeworks mas natuon akong pansin tudloan sya, i guide sya ana bantayan sya mga in.ana gud” [Perhaps it affects my time because, before, I used to prioritize taking care of my sibling with autism over completing my assignments or homework. Instead of focusing on my tasks, my attention would be directed towards teaching and guiding them.] - RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₅

The experience shared by RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₅ supports the challenges of time management faced by siblings of children with disabilities. IDI P5 reflects on the significant impact on their time allocation, revealing how their focus shifts from completing assignments or homework to prioritizing the care and guidance of their autistic sibling. This redirection of attention emphasizes the inherent difficulty in balancing academic responsibilities with caregiving duties, as their siblings need to take care of their personal obligations. Similarly, RQ_{1.1}IDI₂ articulates the struggle of dividing attention and managing time effectively between themselves and their disabled sibling, particularly as the older brother is tasked with the responsibility of caregiving. The sense of duty and responsibility weighs heavily on their shoulders, requiring them to navigate the complexities of time management while ensuring the well-being and care of their sibling.

The analysis is similar to Barath, Hlongwane, Madlala, Mzanywa and Paken (2023) and resonates with the experiences shared earlier, highlighting the crucial role of time management in shaping the relationships between siblings of children with disabilities. The study emphasized the significant impact of spending time together on the closeness and quality of their relationships. This sentiment is emphasized, reflecting on the positive transformation of their relationship with their sibling after they began spending more time together. The study by Matthews (2023) was further supported by the acknowledgement of negative emotions and resentment expressed by participants towards the time sacrifices required to care for their autistic siblings. This aspect emphasizes the balance that siblings of children with disabilities must navigate in managing their time commitments, recognizing the toll it can take on their emotional well-being and relationship dynamics. Despite the challenges of time constraints, the importance of spending quality time together is highlighted as pivotal in fostering stronger bonds and relationships between siblings.

3.1.3.2 Financial Challenges

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who often encounter significant financial hurdles as they navigate the responsibilities of supporting their disabled siblings. They are tasked with managing the financial aspect of assisting their sibling, recognizing the substantial financial resources needed to meet their sibling's unique needs. Additionally, the expenses linked to medical treatments, therapy sessions, specialized equipment, and other essential services can place a heavy financial strain on the family, affecting the economic stability and well-being of siblings as they endeavor to ensure optimal care for their disabled sibling. This is observed in the following responses below:

“First and foremost, the greatest challenge lies in your spiritual well-being, followed by your financial stability.” - RQ_{1.1}IDI₄

“But it's not that nagsisi mi tungod kay nakaspend mig money sa pagdala saiyaha bisag asa but we're happy enough knowing na gihimo namo among best to try na makalakaw sya.” [Still, we don't regret spending money to care for them wherever we can. We're content knowing that we did our best to help them walk.] - RQ_{1.1}FGD₅

The insights from RQ_{1.1}IDI₄ and RQ_{1.1}FGD₅ agree with the challenges linked to financial stability and caregiving expenses for siblings of children with disabilities. IDI₄ stresses the importance of spiritual and financial well-being, recognizing the profound impact of financial strains on siblings' overall welfare. Similarly, FGD₅ acknowledges the financial sacrifices made to support their sibling's well-being, finding comfort in their efforts to assist their sibling's journey with cerebral palsy. These responses depict the delicate balance between financial stability, caregiving duties, and the unwavering dedication to the welfare of siblings with disabilities.

The analysis of the participant's responses aligns closely with Khan, Berlas and Soherwardy's (2022) study. The experiences shared emphasize the significant impact of financial constraints on siblings of children with disabilities. The lack of financial resources spreads every aspect of family life, placing immense pressure on siblings who view financial support as their utmost responsibility. The study emphasized similar sentiments, highlighting the financial pressures, lack of social support, and anxieties surrounding family upbringing as indicators of despair among families with disabled children. Moreover, the study by Lima-Rodriguez, Baena-Ariza, Domínguez-Sánchez, and Lima-Serrano (2018) share the same sentiments, as they emphasize families with lower financial status may face heightened challenges in meeting the increased care requirements for people with disabilities. Financial limitations can significantly constrain the ability of siblings to provide adequate care and support to their brothers or sisters with ID or any disabilities, making it a constraint when it comes to sibling care.

To support the emergent theme, the findings of a study by Sangha, Anderson, & Burn (2023) state that the theme of sibling care constraints emphasizes the limitations of having individuals growing up with a sibling with a disability. These constraints consist of various aspects of life, including physical, social, and educational opportunities. Caregiving responsibilities consume a lot of time, reducing free time for leisure activities and hindering opportunities to pursue personal interests or hobbies. Additionally, the demands of caregiving may limit social interactions with friends, impacting the individual's ability to socialize and participate in extracurricular activities. Overall, the presence of a sibling with a disability imposes limits towards the lives of their normal siblings, restricting their opportunities for personal growth and social engagement. This is supported by the study of Simpson (2021), who expressed feelings of having missed out on various social experiences, including social events, holidays, and the opportunity to form typical relationships with their siblings. The sentiment that "life revolved around [the sibling with an intellectual disability]" was common among siblings. This theme highlights the sacrifices made and sheds light on the unique challenges they face in balancing caregiving duties with their own social and personal needs.

3.1.4 Societal Pressures

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who face considerable societal expectations that present a significant obstacle. Within these expectations lie prevalent misunderstandings about individuals with disabilities, fueled by societal norms and attitudes. The unease and stigma stemming from these misconceptions create a challenging atmosphere for siblings navigating societal interactions and relationships.

3.1.4.1 Misconceptions Surrounding People with Disabilities

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities who encounter societal misconceptions and stigmas surrounding their siblings' conditions in a frequent manner. Within society, there are prevalent misunderstandings and stereotypes regarding individuals with disabilities, leading to misconceptions about their capabilities and behaviors. These misconceptions can create challenges for siblings as they navigate social interactions and advocate for their siblings' inclusion. This is observed in the following responses below:

“Sometimes, when we are in a public place, people stare or make assumptions about us, which can be frustrating because not everyone understands.” - RQ_{1.1}FGD₃

“Because dili man gud tanan maka understand sa kana, na naay kanang na naay mga disability panan.aw nila buang diretso, naay sakit sa utok mga in.ana gud”
[*Because not everyone understands the situation. People often see individuals with disabilities as strange or mentally ill.*] - RQ_{1.1}IDI₅

The accounts provided by RQ_{1.1}IDI₅ and RQ_{1.1}FGD₃ support the significant societal pressures encountered by siblings of children with disabilities. IDI₅ highlights the prevalent misunderstandings surrounding individuals with disabilities, emphasizing how they are often perceived in a negative light by society. FGD₃ further elaborates on the frustration experienced by siblings in public settings, where they are subjected to stares and assumptions from others who may not understand their family's situation. Together, these narratives illustrate the societal pressures and discomfort experienced by siblings as they navigate the misconceptions surrounding disability in their everyday interactions.

The results above were similar to the study of Paul *et al.* (2021) study. It resonates strongly with the challenges highlighted earlier, particularly regarding societal stigma towards people with disabilities. Perceived stigma from community members is pervasive, as described by siblings who feel that their disabled siblings are often unfairly labeled as "mad," "crazy," "abnormal," or "cursed." There is a widespread sense among siblings that their disabled siblings are unwanted and that people in the community are afraid of them. Moreover, the study reveals various forms of segregation experienced by people with disabilities, particularly in African contexts. Siblings universally reject the

label of "abnormal" for their siblings and express a desire for the community to look beyond their disability to appreciate their positive qualities. These findings emphasize the societal stigma faced by individuals with disabilities and focus on the importance of promoting acceptance and inclusion within communities. Moreover, the study conducted by Mokoena and Kern (2022) emphasizes the profound impact of societal misconceptions surrounding individuals with disabilities, particularly within school environments and peer interactions. Siblings recounted instances of being ostracized, bullied, and mocked due to their siblings' disabilities, reflecting both their perceptions and lived experiences. These incidents not only highlight the prevalence of negative attitudes and misconceptions but also emphasize the emotional toll it takes on siblings. Such encounters underscore the urgent need to combat misconceptions and promote greater understanding and acceptance of individuals with disabilities within educational settings and society as a whole.

3.1.4.2 Social Discomfort

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who frequently grapple with significant social discomfort arising from the complexities of having a sibling with unique needs. One of the distressing aspects they encounter is witnessing their siblings subjected to bullying or social exclusion due to their disabilities. These instances of mistreatment deeply trouble the siblings, evoking feelings of helplessness and frustration as they yearn to protect their vulnerable siblings from harm.

"The challenges in that regard is that like gina bully ako manghud with and sometimes dyud it hurts when we didn't fight back for him since we want to avoid conflicts." [The challenges in that regard are that my younger sibling is being bullied, and sometimes it really hurts when we don't fight back for him since we want to avoid conflicts.] - RQ_{1.1}IDI₂

"Naulaw ko or limit lang kaayo ang akong friends before labi natong elementary because dili man gud tanan maka understand sa kana, na naay kanang na naay mga disability." [I felt embarrassed and my circle of friends was limited, especially during elementary school, because not everyone understands the situation.] - RQ_{1.1}IDI₅

The experiences shared by RQ_{1.1}IDI₂ and RQ_{1.1}IDI₅ emphasize the impacts of social discomfort experienced by siblings of children with disabilities. IDI₂ expresses the pain of witnessing their younger sibling being bullied and the internal conflict of wanting to defend them while avoiding further conflict. Furthermore, IDI₅ struggles to feel embarrassed and socially isolated, particularly during elementary school, due to others' lack of understanding of their sibling's situation. Together, these stories focus on the emotional strain of managing social interactions.

To support the analysis above, the study of Griffin, Fisher, Lane & Morin (2019) states that verbal bullying has a massive effect on its victims, especially those with

intellectual disabilities. Bullies use language to degrade and humiliate others, causing harm with insults, mockery, ridicule, and hurtful comments, which is similar to what our participants of siblings with disabilities experienced. The study of Aljabri, Bagadood and Sulaimani (2023) showed that when peers bully individuals with intellectual disabilities, it leads to various adverse emotional reactions, including tears, embarrassment, anger, nervousness, and feelings of oppression. These findings emphasize the damaging impact of verbal bullying on individuals with disabilities and emphasize the importance of raising awareness and intervening to address this widespread problem.

To support the global theme, the findings of a study by Viswanathan *et al.* (2021) show that siblings of children with disabilities often encounter societal pressures and stigma, particularly in social settings like school and play environments. This study's findings resonate with broader research highlighting the prevalence of social stigma surrounding disabilities, especially Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), across various socioeconomic contexts. In settings like India, where awareness about disabilities may be lacking, and discussions about ASD are not openly addressed, societal stigma is further exacerbated. This lack of awareness contributes to the perpetuation of stigma within the community, making it challenging for siblings to navigate social interactions and environments without facing judgment or discrimination. Dickinson (2020) conducted a study in which the siblings also expressed a strong sense of protectiveness towards their siblings with disabilities. One sibling who witnessed adverse treatment towards his sister expressed a desire to intervene and defend her if he were older. They wished to confront those who spoke unkindly and advocate for his sister's dignity. Similarly, other siblings, while not explicitly mentioning maltreatment, acknowledged the need to address questions and misconceptions from their peers regarding their siblings' disabilities. This protective instinct highlights the siblings' commitment to advocating for their siblings' well-being and challenging societal attitudes towards disabilities.

3.1.5 Kinship Support

This describes the experiences of siblings of children with disabilities, who often face significant obstacles but draw strength from the unity of their families. Emotional support from their families is essential in guiding them through the complexities of having a disabled sibling. Together, they share responsibilities and a strong bond, finding solace and courage in confronting the challenges posed by their sibling's disability. Despite their hardships, their family's committed support and unity provide them with resilience and empowerment as they navigate life's challenges together.

3.1.5.1 Emotional Support

This describes the experiences of siblings of children with disabilities who find happiness towards taking care of their siblings with special needs. Having to take care of these innocent and pure souls does give you that feeling of joy of how sweet they can be towards their normal siblings. On the other hand, families are also essential in assisting them with emotional difficulties by offering understanding, empathy, and motivation.

Through communication, shared experiences, and unwavering love, siblings find comfort in knowing they have support in their struggles. This familial support aids them in empowering them to face the complexities of their sibling's disability with fortitude and determination. This is observed in the following clusters below.

“It is extremely challenging to have a family member with disabilities, yet it is very rewarding in some sense.” - RQ_{1.1}FGD₄

“Akong mama is a single mother na nage help saakoa to deal sa mga challenges namo especially emotionally, so need niya og mga support so mag tinabangay jud mi para sa akoang manghud.” [*Especially since my mother is a single parent that helps me deal with the challenges especially emotionally and she really needs our support.*] - RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.2}IDI₅

The participants in our study supported the theme of emotional support and shared varied yet profound experiences regarding having a family member with disabilities. Despite the immense challenges they face, such as those highlighted by RQ_{1.1}FGD₄, they also express a sense of fulfillment and reward in their roles as siblings. Additionally, the support provided by parents, as mentioned by RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.2}IDI₅, plays a crucial role in helping siblings navigate the emotional challenges associated with caring for a disabled family member. These narratives highlight the complex yet meaningful dynamics within these families, characterized by love, resilience, and mutual support.

The analysis above agreed with Paul *et al.* (2021) study. The findings focus on the importance of providing emotional support to siblings who are taking care of their siblings with disabilities. Creating a supportive environment within the home allows them to share their feelings and responsibilities effectively. Utilizing a family-centered approach deals with the central role of the family unit, ensuring that all family members, including siblings, receive the support they need and resources to navigate their caregiving roles. This approach fosters a sense of unity, understanding, and collaboration within the family, ultimately improving the well-being of both the disabled sibling and their caregiving siblings. According to Chu *et al.* (2023) study, one of the significant themes emerging from the study revolves around the profound sense of gratitude expressed by siblings towards their disabled brothers and sisters. Despite the challenges they face, siblings find peace and fulfillment in the opportunity to take care of their disabled siblings, developing deeper connections and a sense of closeness. This theme emphasizes the transformative power of caregiving, illuminating the positive impact it has on sibling relationships and the broader family dynamics.

3.1.5.2 Family Collective Duties

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who shoulder these heavy responsibilities, especially when the time comes wherein their parents are unable to sustain their caregiving duties because of various reasons such as being incapable or,

worst, due to death. In such challenging circumstances, siblings usually step up to take on these responsibilities, ensuring the health and well-being of their disabled sibling. Additionally, other family members often provide support and assistance, creating a shared responsibility within the family. This collaborative effort ensures that the needs of the disabled sibling are met, fostering a sense of unity and resilience within the family unit. These are observed in the responses below:

“With the help of my other family members taking care of my sibling, it made my responsibilities a little bit easier.” - RQ_{1.2}FGD₂

“Kay ako naman gud ang naga atiman sa iyaha kay 7 years old pa lang siya namatay na man si mama.” [*The significant role I've assumed in his life with our mother passing away when he was just 7 years old.*] - RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₄

Continuing from the previous discussion on shared responsibilities among siblings of children with disabilities, the involvement of other family members plays a vital role in lightening the caregiving load, as expressed by RQ_{1.2}FGD₂. This collective support ensures that caregiving duties are more manageable for everyone involved. Additionally, as mentioned by RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₄, the passing of a parent can profoundly impact the family dynamic. In this kind of particular situation, siblings usually take these caregiving roles for their disabled sibling, filling in the responsibilities previously managed by the parents. This highlights the siblings' proactiveness and adaptability in navigating their caregiving duties, particularly in the absence of parental assistance.

The results above were similar to a study conducted by Matthews (2023), wherein the findings resonate regarding the future plans for their autistic siblings. These discussions brought forth crucial topics surrounding the future care of their siblings, particularly in scenarios where parents may no longer be able to provide care. This aligns with the study's findings, where the participants expressed taking on caregiving roles for their siblings throughout childhood and anticipating responsibility for their care in the future. In the study of Iannuzzi, Fell, Luberto, Goshe, Perez, Park, Crute, Kuhlthau and Traeger (2021), parents and siblings alike report that siblings experience stress due to the expectations placed on them to assume responsibility for their disabled sibling's care after their parents' passing. This underscores the significant impact of parental loss on siblings, highlighting the need for support and resources to help them navigate their caregiving roles effectively.

To support the global theme, according to the findings of the research that was carried out by Hinek *et al.* (2019), family unity plays a significant role in supporting siblings of children with disabilities. While parents are typically identified as the primary caregivers, siblings also play a crucial role in providing support and care for their brother with ASD. They step in when the parents are unavailable, assisting with caregiving tasks and ensuring their brother's needs are met. This collaborative approach within the family unit underscores the importance of familial support in navigating the challenges

associated with having a sibling with disabilities. According to the findings of Avieli *et al.* (2019) study, They highlighted how adult siblings of children with disabilities carry on the family tradition of caregiving, fulfilling the expectations set by their parents regarding the caregiver role. This shared responsibility creates a sense of unity among all family members, bound together by a common "mission of care." The birth of a sibling with a disability is viewed as a significant event that alters the trajectory of the family's interconnected lives, shaping their experiences and relationships in profound ways.

3.1.6 Personal Growth

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who usually experience opportunities for personal growth behind the scenes of challenges. Through their journey alongside their siblings with special needs, They undergo self-discovery, maturing emotionally and psychologically. They cherish the importance of patience and communication as they navigate the unique needs and behaviors of their disabled siblings. Furthermore, they develop resilience in adversity, learning to adapt and overcome obstacles. Ultimately, the experiences shared with their disabled siblings trigger personal growth, shaping them into compassionate, resilient, and empathetic individuals. This is observed in the following clusters below:

3.1.6.1 Relationship Building

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities who went through a process of relationship-building shaped by the challenges they encountered. Through their journey alongside their disabled siblings, they discover their strengths and capabilities. They learn the importance of empathy, patience, and understanding as they accommodate their sibling's unique needs and experiences. Ultimately, these self-discovery experiences shape them for who they are right now and deepen their bonds with their disabled siblings. This opportunity was observed in the responses below:

“With maturity, I learned how to navigate the complexities of my sibling's disability with the guidance of my parents.” - RQ_{1.1}IDI₃

“While there are difficulties, this journey has shaped me into a more caring and compassionate person, not just a sibling but also a strong supporter.” - RQ_{1.1}FGD₁

As siblings of children with disabilities navigate the complexities of their sibling's condition, they undergo significant personal growth and development. With maturity, as described by RQ_{1.1}IDI₃, they learn to navigate these challenges with guidance from their parents, gaining valuable insights into understanding and supporting their disabled sibling. Furthermore, as expressed by RQ_{1.1}FGD₁, the journey of caring for a disabled sibling shapes them into more caring and compassionate individuals, extending beyond the sibling relationship to become strong supporters and advocates. These experiences

not only foster personal growth but also strengthen the bonds within the family unit, creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all members.

The responses were similar to the study by Iannuzzi *et al.* (2021), wherein the study findings resonate strongly with the experiences that involve siblings of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). These siblings often express that their journey with a sibling with ASD offers numerous opportunities for learning and growth, particularly in developing values such as acceptance, respect, empathy, and compassion. This sentiment is echoed by parents, who also observe their neurotypical (NT) children's capacity for empathy aligning with the siblings' feelings. Overall, these experiences highlight the positive impact of having a sibling with ASD on the development of empathy and compassionate values among siblings and underscore the importance of familial support and understanding in nurturing these qualities. Similarly, the study of Chase *et al.* (2019) states these experiences further emphasizes the impact of having a sibling with a disability on their personal development and life trajectory. They attribute qualities like empathy, patience, acceptance, and independence to their sibling's influence, shaping not only their character but also influencing their career choices. This suggests that participants view their sibling's experience as a defining aspect of their lives, shaping their values, skills, and aspirations.

3.1.6.2 Resilience

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities who exhibit remarkable resilience in adversity. Despite their various challenges in life, they have shown the ability to persevere and endure. These experiences have molded them into tough individuals prepared to overcome obstacles and thrive despite the odds. Through their journey alongside their sibling with a disability, they have developed strength, resilience, and determination, more than enough to navigate life's challenges ahead.

“Showing our willingness to do whatever it takes to support my sister. Despite the challenges we face, we've remained resilient.” - RQ_{1.2}PQ_{1.1.3}FGD₄

“Dili nako maiwasan na ma burnout kay kato lagi dili ko ka balance sa akong priorities, sa academics og sa akong responsibility as ano as a sister pero padayon gihapon.” [*This constant juggling of priorities sometimes leads to burnout, as I struggle to maintain equilibrium in my life but still, we need to move forward.*] - RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₅

These responses support the diverse experiences of siblings of children with disabilities as they navigate the challenges and complexities of their roles. RQ_{1.2}PQ_{1.1.3}FGD₄ expresses a steadfast commitment to supporting their sister, highlighting their resilience in overcoming obstacles despite the challenges they face. On the other hand, RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₅ describes the toll of constantly juggling priorities, leading to feelings of burnout. Despite this struggle, they acknowledge the importance of moving

forward. Overall, the participants showcase their resilience and perseverance as they navigate the complexities of their roles and responsibilities.

The analysis above agreed with Chu *et al.* (2021). This study's findings reinforce the concept of resilience in siblings of children with autism, as highlighted by Family Systems Theory. Despite facing challenges, siblings actively try to create quality time with their autistic brothers and sisters. This aligns with the study's conclusions about the importance of sibling interaction for stronger family bonds. The experiences shared in the study also showcase the influence of external factors like the COVID-19 lockdowns. These lockdowns, while unexpected, offered siblings more opportunities to connect and spend time together, ultimately strengthening their bond. This reflects the siblings' resilience in adapting to changing circumstances and actively seeking ways to nurture their relationships with their autistic siblings, ultimately benefiting the entire family. Moreover, the study by Pallisco (2022) revealed the importance of supporting children with disabilities to mitigate negative outcomes and enhance resilience. By focusing on positive family resources such as cohesion and empathy, along with fostering functional coping mechanisms, siblings can navigate the challenges associated with disability more effectively. With adequate support, disability transitions from being viewed as a mere obstacle to becoming a transformative journey for all family members. This analysis, conducted among siblings aged 11 to 18 years old, emphasizes the resilience aspect as pivotal in promoting positive adaptation to familial circumstances.

To support the global theme, the findings of a study by Avieli *et al.* (2019), highlight the significant role of personal growth within sibling relationships, emphasizing the shared human experience of togetherness and closeness in age. Growing up together fosters a lifelong partnership that transcends the challenges posed by disability, creating a unique bond characterized by mutual support and affection. These siblings become each other's "significant other," enabling a shared and supportive future as they navigate life's journey together. Hinek *et al.* (2019) conducted a study in which most participants concurred that their upbringing alongside a brother with ASD profoundly influenced the development of their own personality traits. Some noted a heightened sense of responsibility at an earlier age compared to their peers, while others mentioned an increased capacity for understanding and empathy towards others as a direct result of their experiences.

3.1.7 Adaptability

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities who often demonstrate remarkable adaptability in navigating the complexities of their roles. They learn to speak different languages, like sign language, or use visual cues to connect with their brother or sister. This flexibility helps them understand each other better. These siblings also learn to manage their own feelings. They might sometimes feel jealous or left out, but they overcome those feelings and choose to be patient and supportive.

3.1.7.1 Flexibility

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who demonstrate remarkable flexibility in their interactions with their special needs siblings. They show a willingness to spend time with their siblings to better understand them, often going to great lengths to learn effective communication methods. Whether it's dedicating time to learn sign language, adjusting their communication style, or finding alternative ways to connect, these siblings exhibit flexibility and adaptability in their efforts to foster meaningful relationships with their special needs siblings. Their commitment to understanding and effective communication underscores the importance of flexibility in building strong bonds and supporting their siblings' unique needs. This was observed in the following responses below:

“Pero as time passes masabtan nako siya and mas na eager ko na mag learn ug unsa ang mga hindrances sa iyang hearing disability. For example, uhmm nag learn ko ug sign language para ma bypass nako ang communication problems namo.” [But I understand him more, and I am more eager to learn about the obstacles of his hearing disability. For example, hmm, I learned sign language to overcome our communication problems.] - RQ_{1.1}IDI₂

“So ang iyang communication kung everyday namo siya ginakuyog ma sabtan or ma adapt namo iyaha routine ba masabtan nanamo iya ginasulti o kay everyday man namo siya kauban.” [However, if we engage with her every day, despite having a busy schedule which makes it hard to manage our time, we can easily comprehend her preferences and needs.] - RQ_{1.1}IDI₁

These experiences highlight and support the dedication and understanding shown by siblings of children with disabilities. For instance, RQ_{1.1}IDI₂ expresses a deeper comprehension of their sibling's hearing disability and a proactive approach to learning sign language to bridge communication barriers. Additionally, RQ_{1.1}IDI₁ underscores the importance of consistent engagement despite busy schedules, illustrating a commitment to understanding their sibling's preferences and needs. These experiences showcase the siblings' proactive efforts to overcome challenges and foster meaningful connections with their disabled siblings.

The analysis above is similar to the study of Barath *et al.* (2023) study. The findings of the study, emphasizing the positive outcomes that can arise from challenges within the family, such as childhood hearing loss. Siblings of children with disabilities often identify the beneficial influence their sibling's condition has had on their own development. This includes aspects such as self-development, maturity, responsibility, and competency, reflecting the growth and resilience they have cultivated through their experiences. Like the findings of the study, many siblings also mention acquiring new language skills, such as sign language, as a direct result of having a sibling with hearing loss, which was mentioned in the responses earlier. This aligns with the study's findings

and further emphasizes the positive outcomes and opportunities that can emerge from navigating challenges within the family dynamic. Moreover, the study by Noonan *et al.* (2018) revealed that spending time with their siblings is embracing their unique way of experiencing the world, even if it is repetitive or distant. Their interactions were often guided by their siblings' interests and preferences, which sometimes demanded predictability and control. Despite the challenges of understanding their siblings' needs and behaviors, participants demonstrated empathy and patience, showing a willingness to accommodate their siblings' ways of being. This flexibility in adapting to their siblings' preferences reflects a deep sense of understanding and acceptance, ultimately fostering meaningful connections between siblings.

3.1.7.2 Development through Adjustment

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who went through a series of adjustments that resulted in significant developments in their lives. As they deal with the challenges of having a sibling with disabilities, they often experience feelings of denial in the initial stages of their lives. It is definitely hard to accept having siblings with special needs, especially at a very young age, but as time passes by, acceptance becomes a key component towards their journey of being exposed to their sibling over a long period of time. As siblings, they overcome these emotions and foster a more positive outlook in life. Overall, the journey of adjusting to life with a sibling with disabilities fosters invaluable development and maturity among siblings, shaping them into more empathetic, patient, and understanding individuals. This is observed in the following clusters below:

“We accepted and acknowledged that we have a family member who was born with a disability.” - RQ_{1.2}FGD₃

“maka develop og taas na patiences.” [I developed a greater level of patience..] - RQ_{1.1}IDI₅

The following responses of siblings of children with disabilities agree with this theme which emphasizes that they often find peace in acceptance. This sentiment is echoed in responses by RQ_{1.2}FGD₃ emphasizing the importance of embracing their sibling's condition as an integral part of their family dynamic. Furthermore, this journey towards acceptance fosters personal growth, as seen in responses from RQ_{1.1}IDI₅, who express how their experiences have cultivated greater levels of patience over time. Despite the daily challenges they encounter, siblings recognize the transformative power of acceptance, paving the way for resilience, understanding, and familial harmony.

These findings are supported by the research conducted by Matthews (2023), revealing that having a disabled sibling has provided them with a broader perspective on life. This includes the opportunity to enhance their patience, a sentiment echoed in the responses provided. As they navigate the complexities of caring for their sibling, they

develop a deeper understanding of patience, reflecting the transformative impact of their experiences on their outlook and approach to life. According to Chu *et al.* (2021) study, the study underscores a transformative journey undertaken by siblings of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as they navigate the complexities of acceptance. Moving beyond initial challenges, these siblings embrace their sibling's condition, fostering a sense of understanding and empathy. This acceptance marks a turning point, motivating them to become advocates for their sibling's well-being and inclusion within their family and community.

To support the global theme which is adaptability, the research conducted by Riosa *et al.* (2022) confirmed the theme of "Spending time together," highlighting the adaptability of siblings in nurturing their relationships with their autistic siblings. Siblings employ various strategies to connect, demonstrating flexibility and resilience in their interactions. For instance, some siblings in their study, engage in shared activities such as drawing pictures for their sibling to color, despite the infrequency of these moments. This adaptability underscores their commitment to fostering connections and underscores the importance of simple, unplanned interactions in strengthening their bond. On the other hand, Dickinson (2020) conducted a study in which the findings also emphasizes the importance of patience among siblings as they navigate their relationships with individuals with disabilities. Patience emerges as a recurring theme, reflecting the siblings' understanding of the unique needs of their brothers and sisters. Siblings acknowledge the importance of patience when confronting the hurdles posed by their siblings' disabilities. This flexibility is reflected in their readiness to modify their speed and strategies to meet their siblings' requirements, showcasing their ability to adapt and endure their caregiving duties. Patience serves as more than just a commendable trait; it's a crucial element of adaptability that empowers siblings to surmount challenges and cultivate meaningful relationships with their disabled siblings.

3.1.8 Advocacy

This pertains to siblings of children with disabilities, who find opportunities in advocacy. Drawing from their direct experiences and caregiving responsibilities, they emerge as advocates for disability awareness and acceptance in society. Their endeavors involve educating others about disabilities, promoting inclusivity, and fostering understanding. As they navigate the challenges of taking care of their siblings, their knowledge about disabilities expands, helping them to advocate more effectively. Their endeavors play a role in changing societal views and attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, promoting a more inclusive and accepting community. This is observed in the following clusters below:

3.1.8.1 Inclusivity Awareness

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who observe the evolving societal attitudes towards disabilities. They play a vital role in fostering awareness by sharing their knowledge and experiences with others. As they reflect on the changing

perceptions, they recognize the importance of education in promoting understanding and acceptance. Through their efforts, they contribute to a more inclusive society where individuals with disabilities are embraced and supported. These opportunities were observed in the responses below:

“Ano man gud sa karon man gud na generation dako na kaayo og knowledge or murag dahan na kaayo og mga knowledge or alam na sa kadaghan ang mga in ani na sitwasyon, kanang mga naay families na naay children with disability.” [In this current generation, people have greater knowledge or seem to be more aware of situations involving families with children with disabilities.] - RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.2}IDI₅

“Kaya it’s important na we spread awareness about disability para makabalo ang mga tao about ani na butang.” [That’s why it’s important that we spread awareness about disability for the people to know about these kinds of things.] - RQ_{1.2}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₃

The experiences shared by siblings of children with disabilities support the growing awareness within society regarding disabilities. As expressed by RQ_{1.1}PQ_{1.1.2}IDI₅, there's a noticeable increase in knowledge and awareness among people, particularly in contemporary times. Recognizing the significance of this shift, RQ_{1.2}PQ_{1.1.1}IDI₃ emphasizes the importance of spreading awareness about disabilities. Their sentiments highlight the crucial role of advocacy and education in shaping societal perceptions and fostering greater acceptance and inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

The findings of a study that was conducted by Pavlopoulou and Dimitriou (2020), shed light on the siblings' strong desire to convey their sense of pride and optimism to others. They are more than willing to advocate for their siblings and share their unique experiences and perspectives with the wider community. This focuses on the importance of providing support to facilitate their advocacy efforts effectively. By amplifying their voices and offering platforms for them to share their stories, society can gain deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by families living with disabilities. In addition to that, empowering siblings to advocate contributes to promoting greater awareness and understanding among society. It promotes an inclusive environment where disabled people and their families are embraced. Through collaborative efforts, it is possible to build a society that celebrates diversity and recognizes the strengths of every individual. In addition to the same study, siblings from the Asia-Pacific region bring up the importance of adopting a family-centered approach, emphasizing that societal change begins within the family unit. According to the findings of the research carried out by Smith, Hussey and Paul (2022) shedding light on siblings' perceptions of their communities' attitudes toward disabilities. While some participants reported mixed perceptions, with 50% expressing that people in their community felt embarrassed by intellectual disabilities and used hurtful language to describe individuals with intellectual disabilities, others revealed more positive attitudes. Specifically, 53% of siblings indicated that their community believed resources should be allocated to support

people with intellectual disabilities. Moreover, the majority of participants disagreed with the notion that intellectual disabilities can be spread from person to person or stem from bad parenting, highlighting a growing awareness and understanding within their communities. This theme underscores the importance of addressing misconceptions and fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with disabilities.

3.1.8.2 Knowledge about Disabilities

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who, through their caregiving experiences, have come to recognize the importance of promoting greater societal awareness and understanding of disabilities. Consequently, they advocate for creating inclusive environments that embrace individuals with disabilities. Moreover, as siblings engage in the daily struggles faced by their disabled brothers and sisters, they acquire an enriched comprehension of the spectrum of disabilities and the unique requirements of individuals within this community. These are observed below:

“That’s why I believe there is a need to spread information about disabilities whether an initiative to any organization or something because this led to me feeling isolated during my elementary days” - RQ_{1.1}FGD₃

“Kay nag dako ko na nag broad akong knowledge about mga disability mga taong naay disabilities so mas as daghan ko og knowledge or nadungagan ang knowledge sa about na in.ana” [*As I grew older, I was able to broaden my knowledge about disabilities, which in turn increased my understanding of various situations.*] - RQ_{1.1}IDI₅

The experiences shared by individuals like RQ_{1.1}FGD₃ highlight the importance of spreading awareness about disabilities. FGD₃ reflects on feeling isolated during their elementary days due to a lack of understanding about disabilities, emphasizing the need for initiatives to educate organizations and communities. Similarly, RQ_{1.1}IDI₅ discusses how their understanding of disabilities expanded as they grew older, indicating the significance of increasing knowledge to foster inclusivity and empathy. These experiences underscore the transformative impact of awareness initiatives in creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities and their families.

The results above were similar to the study of Matthews (2023). The study delves into a noteworthy observation concerning how people perceive their siblings' diagnoses. A considerable number expressed a desire for enhanced education about autism, recognizing its broader relevance beyond their immediate family circle. This sentiment underscores the importance of expanding awareness and understanding of learning disabilities, not only among siblings but also among society at large. Such education would not only benefit siblings but also contribute to fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with disabilities. Lastly, the study by Simpson

(2021) sheds light on the experiences of participants regarding the information they received about their sibling's disability during their upbringing. The findings reveal varied experiences among participants, with some receiving formal education about their sibling's disability while others acquired knowledge informally over time, similar to our participants' responses. Additionally, memories of hospital visits and health issues associated with their sibling's disability contributed to their understanding of the impact of the disability. The theme underscores the importance of understanding how siblings acquire knowledge about disabilities, whether through formal channels or through osmosis and observation in their familial environment.

To support the global theme which is about advocacy, the research conducted by Viswanathan *et al.* (2021) emphasizes the importance of familial support and awareness in enabling siblings to confront the stigma and emotional challenges linked to their siblings' disabilities. Parents act as a crucial piece towards guiding their children as they navigate the complexities of living with a disabled sibling. Through education and nurturing understanding, parents cultivate an atmosphere that fosters advocacy and inclusivity within the family unit. Through transparent conversations and parental guidance, siblings are equipped with the tools and self-assurance to advocate adeptly for their disabled siblings. This supportive atmosphere empowers siblings to challenge societal biases and champion inclusivity. Hence, the research underscores the significance of family support structures in emboldening siblings to advocate for their kin and counteract prejudices surrounding disabilities. According to the findings of the research carried out by Smith *et al.* (2022), siblings play a pivotal role in promoting inclusion and acceptance within their social circles. Findings reveal that a majority of participants actively seek friends who demonstrate acceptance toward individuals with intellectual disabilities, with 59% reporting that their friends are inclusive and understanding. Furthermore, a significant portion (69%) of participants involve their siblings with intellectual disabilities in social activities with their friends. However, challenges persist, as around a quarter of participants (27%) indicated that their friends struggle to comprehend their relationship with their siblings with intellectual disabilities. Despite these hurdles, siblings emerge as advocates for inclusion, fostering understanding and bridging social gaps within their peer groups. These findings underscore the importance of advocating for greater awareness and acceptance to dismantle persistent negative attitudes toward intellectual disabilities.

3.2 Coping Mechanisms Used by Siblings

Through applying thematic analysis, several themes were generated, as shown in Table 2. This study created (4) themes that exhibit the coping mechanisms used by siblings to maintain family bonds. The following themes are Communication for Understanding, Acceptance of Differences within the Family, Inclusive Family Bonding, and Collaborative Caregiving.

Table 2: Investigate Coping Mechanisms Used by These Siblings to Maintain Family Bonds

Emergent Themes	Clustered Themes	Formulated Meaning
Effective Family Communication	Daily Interaction for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participants always talk to their families to sustain the attention and interaction of their siblings. [RQ_{2.1}IDI₃] The participant always talks to their sibling with exceptionality. [RQ_{2.1}IDI₁]
	Solving Problems through Talking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participants talk with their families to solve problems regarding their siblings with disabilities. [RQ_{2.1}FGD₁] The participants talk to their families to address conflicts regarding their siblings with disability. [RQ_{2.2}PQ_{2.1.5}IDI₄]
Acceptance of Differences within the Family	Gradual Acceptance and Understanding the Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant discussed the importance of gradually accepting and embracing their sibling's circumstances over time. [RQ_{2.1}IDI₃] The participant emphasized how acceptance of differences led to a gradual understanding. [RQ_{2.1}IDI₂]
	Family Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant emphasized the importance of accepting their sibling for who they are. [RQ_{2.2}IDI₁] The participant highlighted the necessity of acceptance to prevent conflicts. [RQ_{2.1}IDI₄]
Inclusive Family Bonding	Spending Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant mentioned allocating specific time for family bonding to make their sibling feel loved and valued. [RQ_{2.1}IDI₂] The participant mentioned the importance of including their siblings in their family activities. [RQ_{2.1}IDI₁]
	Quality Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant prioritizes dedicating time to engage in activities with their disabled sibling as they recognize the fragility of life that they have. [RQ_{2.1}PQ_{2.1.1}IDI₄] The participants mentioned the significance of spending quality time to maintain strong connections with their siblings with special needs and family. [RQ_{2.2}FGD₁]
Collaborative Caregiving	Collective Agreement to Assist Sibling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant emphasized the significance of working together with the other members of the family for the good of their sibling. [RQ_{2.1}IDI₄] The participant highlighted the importance of collaboration and mutual understanding in caring for their sibling with special needs. [RQ_{2.1}PQ_{2.1.1}IDI₃]
	Shared Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant discussed how collaborative efforts impact their family. [RQ_{2.2}FGD₁] The participants stress the significance of collaborative efforts aimed at enhancing the well-being of their siblings with disabilities. [RQ_{2.1}FGD₅]

3.2.1 Effective Family Communication

This refers to the cornerstone of healthy relationships and a harmonious household dynamic. It begins with active listening, where family members attentively engage with one another's thoughts and feelings without interruption or judgment. This is particularly essential when one sibling has a disability, as it fosters understanding,

support, and a sense of unity within the family. To achieve effective family communication, individuals who have siblings with special needs use the following clustered theme:

3.2.1.1 Daily Interaction for Development

One of the most significant aspects of everyday communication is the immense influence that it has on the lives of children who have siblings with special needs. It provides a foremost pathway to nurturing these values, namely, understanding, empathy and support, among family members. Through frequent dialogue, the family members would be able to establish a healthy atmosphere that favourably influences the development of the persons with special needs as well as their siblings. This was observed in the response below:

"...tapos communication pud aron magkasinabtanay sa needs na kailangan sa akong manghud kaya para mahatag jud namo tanan na kailangan niya, kay kung wala mi communication ahm. Wala mi communication dili namo namo mahatag iyang mga kailangan." [...and communication is also necessary to understand the needs of my sibling so that we can truly provide everything he needs, because if we don't have communication, um, if we don't have communication, we won't be able to provide for his needs.] - RQ_{2.1}IDI₃

"Ang mga coping mechanisms na ako ginagamit kay constant communication dyud, everyday nimo siya i communicate, kamustahon nimo siya like "Ate, unsa man imong kuan karon?" communication, kanang kamustahon sa iyang mga ginabuhay ug unsa iyang gusto buhaton, unsa iyang kuan kay akong manghud man gud mo kuan siya na "ateee, kanang" lambing man gud siya so kailangan nimo siya everyday i communicate siya para iyaha pung, ang iyahang sinultihan ba ma improve pud siya." [The coping mechanisms I use involve constant communication, where I communicate with her every day. I always check her like, "Sister, what are you up to right now?" It's a form of communication where I ask about her activities and what she wants to do. Since she's my younger sister and she's affectionate, I need to communicate with her every day to improve her language skills.] - RQ_{2.1}IDI₁

Sibling communication is vital in shaping family dynamics, nurturing relationships, and facilitating mutual growth. As mentioned by RQ_{2.1}IDI₃, effective communication helps them to understand the needs of their sibling, allowing them to provide comprehensive support. Moreover, RQ_{2.1}IDI₁ emphasizes the importance of proactive communication to stay informed about the activities of her sibling, where consistent interaction also aids in enhancing the language proficiency of her sibling. These perspectives underscore the profound impact of sibling communication in fostering a supportive and enriching family environment.

The analysis above is similar to the study of Lea (2023), where open and honest communication is crucial in any relationship, including that of siblings. It is important to encourage them to express their feelings and concerns and actively listen to what they have to say. This creates an environment where they feel heard and understood, which can lead to stronger bonds between siblings. Furthermore, according to Izzulhaq and Simanjuntak (2022), the communication relationship in the family is our interaction to be able to understand each other better. With good communication in the family, there will be no misunderstandings, which are continuous and will not create a prolonged conflict. Additionally, having daily communication will help the families to understand the needs of the disabled family member. In the intricate composition of family dynamics, effective communication acts as the conductor, guiding siblings towards harmony and mutual understanding. Central to fostering strong relationships is the skill to communicate openly and empathetically.

3.2.1.2 Solving Problems through Talking

This should be interpreted as a communication tool relevant to solving family problems generally and within siblings in particular. One of the ways families can create a culture of healthy communication is by treating all issues as a collective problem; hence, engaging in a discussion, exchanging ideas, and listening to each other is very important. This process can help some family members to be able to come up with solutions to the conflict which can be solved. This is observed in the response below:

“In my experience, maintaining and strengthening family bonds in the context of having a sibling with disabilities involves several coping mechanisms. Una kay communication, communication is very important. Having open conversations about challenges and emotions has been crucial. Kami, we actively listen to our sibling needs, gina sabot namo iyang needs and concerns maong we also work together to find solutions to our problems para mahatag namo iyang kailangan.”
[In my experience, maintaining and strengthening family bonds in the context of having a sibling with disabilities involves several coping mechanisms. Firstly, communication is very important. Having open conversations about challenges and emotions has been crucial. We actively listen to our sibling’s needs, understand his needs and concerns, and work together to find solutions to our problems so that we can meet his needs.] - RQ2.1FGD1

“....sa among coping mechanisms kay as long as na ang buong pamilya kay gina istoryhan ang mga problema, labi na if concern sa iyaha, kay naga pangita jud mi og solusyon ana. Importante jud na istoryahan siya openly og tinudp-anay sa tanan kay kung imo lang man gud kim-kimun wala jud nay mahimu tapos mag away ra ang tanan, maong communication is the key lang jud. By addressing the problem with my family, na overcome na mo ang challenges then mas ning tatag pa jud mi.” [....as part of our coping mechanism, we make sure that the entire family discusses problems, especially if they concern someone, because we really seek solutions for

them. It's really important to talk about them openly and honestly with everyone because if you keep things to yourself, nothing will be resolved, and everyone will just end up arguing. That's why communication is really the key. By addressing the problem with my family, we overcome challenges together, and we become even stronger.] - RQ_{2.2}PQ_{2.1.5} IDI₄

Here we can see that communication is undoubtedly the solution to the problems arising in families, especially when it comes to their star children with special needs. When RQ_{2.1}FGD₁ illustrates the importance of open communication in this process, it also aims at encouraging active listening and collaboration, which are essential in finding ways of meeting the needs of their sibling. Along with this, RQ_{2.2}PQ_{2.1.5}IDI₄ emphasizes the part that the whole family plays in relation to discussing and solving issues that involve their disabled sibling, for instance. Through openly talking and being truthful, both parties try to prevent themselves from internalizing this problem, which may result in a huge misinterpretation and strain between the family members.

Hardy (2024) states that communicating about a given issue allows them to establish means of communication through which they can work as a team and collectively find out how problems can be solved. She claims that an excellent way of handling problems as a family is to develop a strategy addressing the communication about the arising conflicts. Moreover, she noted that the research revealed that it is effective for families to first decide on the problem, secondly, complete brainstorming without passing any judgment, and third, pick up the best solution which suits everyone. Choosing this process bit by bit would require some practice. Therefore, it's better to start with easier issues. Also, Arseneault (2023) states that by talking freely and frankly with your relatives, you would be able to create an atmosphere of trust and respect which is the very cornerstone of any strong relationship.

To reinforce the global theme, Ellingwood's study (2024) underscores the critical importance of effective family communication in cultivating trust, resolving conflicts, nurturing emotional connections, and promoting the well-being of both individuals and the family unit as a whole. Such communication establishes an environment where every member feels equally valued, heard, and respected, facilitating constructive conflict resolution and the pursuit of mutually beneficial solutions. This perspective is echoed by Godalle (2023), who emphasizes the necessity of transparent, firm, and consistent communication when supporting family members with special needs. By prioritizing honest, reliable, and consistent communication, families can enhance relationships among all members, particularly those with disabilities. Ultimately, fostering effective communication within families not only addresses issues directly but also strengthens familial bonds and contributes to successful outcomes for all involved.

3.2.2 Acceptance of Differences within the Family

This refers to a cornerstone of fostering a harmonious and supportive environment within a family unit. It entails embracing the unique identities, beliefs, and experiences of each family member, regardless of differences. Above all, unconditional love and

support are the foundation of family unity through acceptance. Showing acceptance, respect, and unwavering support for the sibling with a disability not only strengthens familial bonds but also contributes to their overall well-being and sense of belonging within the family unit. This is observed in the following clusters:

3.2.2.1 Gradual Acceptance and Understanding the Differences

This is the term of the process when people and families become acquainted with and like diversity. Unlike sudden or prompt awareness, it develops over a period of time and includes a learning, reflection, and understanding process. This is observed in the response below:

“Para sa ako.a try to understand and accept the situation na lang jud. Mao pud siguro bata pami kay gi prepared na mi sa among parents sa situation sa akong manghud for us na little by little maka adjust mi. And siguro pud tungod ato mas na accept namo ang iyang disability og maong nag strengthen pa ang bond sa among pamilya.” [For me, I think it’s best to try to understand and accept the situation. Perhaps, it’s because we were still children when our parents prepared us for my sibling’s situation, allowing us to adjust gradually. And maybe because of that, we were able to accept my sibling’s disability more easily, which strengthened the bond within our family even further.] - RQ_{2.1}IDI₃

“Siguro, sa acceptance kay naka tuon mi na ang tao daghan diay kalainan man tungod ana we learn to accept the uniqueness of each person. “[Perhaps, in acceptance, we have learned that people are diverse, and because of that, we learn to accept the uniqueness of each person.] - RQ_{2.1}IDI₂

Slowly opening your mind and heart to different perspectives is what represents a transformational one which is filled with learning, empathizing, and self-reflection. As described by RQ_{2.1}IDI₃, the gradual transition process helped a lot when it came to accepting the disability of their sibling, and as a result, family relationships became stronger. Moreover, RQ_{2.1}IDI₂ widens the scope, implying that accelerated acceptance also allows for the admiration of individuals as distinct essences within the concept of diversity. Ultimately, family acceptance stories highlight how essential the role of acceptance is within families. From comprehension to gradual adjustment, families can make bonds stronger and the environment of a household more accepting.

As per Shiju, Sabukuttan, & Aleena (2023), for families, the process of disability acceptance is not an easy one and is emotionally exhausting at the same time. In the course of time, nevertheless, the families may be gradually moving to the admission and adjustment. This phase incorporates a realization that disability is unalienable and accepting the need to make accommodations in numerous aspects of life. Mainly, families get a deeper understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and potential of their family members with disabilities. Moreover, they also understand their accomplishment and

strive to develop and increase their general contentment. This is also related to the study of Rositas, Fitriani, Muslihat, & Tabroni (2023), where having a child with special needs makes the parents' psychology at first, they have to struggle with the situation before finally being sincere and accepting it wholeheartedly. That is why each parent goes through stages of parental acceptance called DABDA, which stands for Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Going through these stages step by step, parents can gradually accept the situation of their child with a disability.

3.2.2.2 Family Acceptance

This refers to a bedrock of a nurturing and supportive familial environment, where each member feels valued, respected, and embraced for who they are. It involves recognizing and affirming the unique identities, irrespective of differences or challenges they may face. Family acceptance also entails providing unwavering encouragement through life's trials and triumphs. By nurturing an environment of acceptance, families cultivate deep bonds of love and trust, fostering resilience and unity that withstand the test of time. This is observed in the response below:

“With the coping mechanisms na ako or amo nagamit, na accept na dyud namo as a family iyahang condition. Kuan siya, so gi accept namo siya kay wala naman dyud mi mabuhat. I-accept nalang dyud siya kay wala man mi mabuhat kay naa naman siya. So acceptance ang impact sa among family. Na accept saamo family na ning-ana siya.” [With the coping mechanisms we have used, we have truly accepted her condition as a family. You see, we accepted her because there really isn't anything we can do about it. We just accepted her because he's already here. So acceptance has an impact on our family. Our family has accepted her like this.] - RQ_{2.2}IDI₁

“So sama sa akong giingon ganina ang coping mechanism is naan a didto ang support system, naa na didto ang acceptance, kay kung dili man gud nimo madawat naa jud possibility na dili mo makasinabtanay or basig mag-away na lang that's why you should accept the situation.” [So, like what I mentioned earlier, coping mechanisms include having a support system and finding acceptance. If we don't accept it, there's a possibility that we won't understand each other or might end up arguing, which is why you should accept the situation.] - RQ_{2.1}IDI₄

Acceptance is depicted as a vital component of coping and maintaining familial harmony, ultimately leading to a sense of unity and understanding within the family. As RQ_{2.2}IDI₁ indicates acceptance was necessary because there was no way to change the reality of the disability of their sibling. This shows that acceptance is portrayed as a pragmatic response to the situation, acknowledging the presence of the family member with a disability and embracing them as part of the family. Furthermore, RQ_{2.1}IDI₄ echoes the sentiment of the importance of acceptance, stating that acceptance is a coping mechanism in itself. They emphasize the necessity of accepting the situation to avoid

potential misunderstandings or conflicts within the family. By accepting the reality of the disability, they suggest that family members can better understand each other and maintain harmony within the family unit.

The analysis presented aligns with the research findings of Shiju *et al.* (2023), which highlight that accepting a disability is a profound and transformative journey undertaken by the entire family when confronted with the reality of their family member's condition. It entails a multifaceted process involving understanding and reconciling with the disability, adapting expectations, seeking support, and advocating for their needs. Through embracing a new perspective and fostering a nurturing environment, families lay the groundwork for acceptance, growth, and an inclusive future for their family members with disabilities. Moreover, the study by Haswar, Siahaan, & Safitri (2019) further supports this perspective. As the acceptance process begins, families start to take care of themselves and their children. They are now better at handling conflicts, and they are able to unconditionally accept the child without focusing too much on the fact that their child has a disability. With this, some parents can react suitably and become accustomed to their child during the process of acceptance, thus facilitating the child's rehabilitation and development by accepting the child and acknowledging the problems that the child faces. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of acceptance in fostering positive outcomes for families and individuals living with disabilities.

To support the global theme, the study of Gusrianti, Winarni, & Faradz (2018) indicates that a wide study showed that all individuals, including children, need acceptance as evidence of being loved by parents and other attachment figures. When the need is not met, a specific form of maladaptive behavior is reported, and they are more prone to develop behavior problems and mental health problems. That's why accepting the differences of people, especially those with disabilities, starts within the family according to Babik and Gardner (2021), a child's ideas and attitudes towards others are greatly influenced by their family: the parenting style and the child's attachment style might have an impact on the child's future attitudes towards people with disabilities. Crucially, there is a complex interaction between personality traits in children and parental influences. This also supports the study of Terry (2019), where he highlights the importance of understanding and appreciating diversity in a family. He emphasizes that family does not mean uniformity, and instead, family members should embrace their differences and find harmony. Terry supports his points by drawing examples from nature, music, and sports, where various elements work together to create a harmonious whole. By embracing differences and encouraging individuality, families can build a stronger, more unified bond.

3.2.3 Inclusive Family Bonding

This refers to the connections, interactions, and shared experiences that strengthen the relationships within a family unit. Investing in family bonding time can produce lifelong benefits for family members of all ages. For starters, bonding can strengthen your relationships with your loved ones. Family bonding with a member with a disability is

about fostering a sense of belonging and unconditional love. It is about celebrating each other's strengths, supporting each other through challenges, and embracing the unique qualities that make each family member special. This is observed in the following clusters:

3.2.3.1 Spending Time

This refers to allocating a period to engage in activities or interactions. It involves dedicating a portion of one's day or schedule to be present in a particular setting or to engage in specific actions. Spending time with a family member with a disability involves dedicating time and attention to engaging in activities or interactions with that individual. It may include various activities tailored to their abilities and interests, such as engaging in meaningful conversations, participating in adapted recreational activities, providing assistance with daily tasks, or simply being present to offer support and companionship. This time spent together aims to foster connection, understanding, and mutual enjoyment while promoting inclusion and support for the family member with a disability. This is observed in the response below:

"Tapos pud naga laan jud akong parents og time para mag-uban mi tanan, like family bonding namo ba para ma feel niya na included jud siya sa among family."
[Then my parents also make sure to allocate time for all of us to be together, like our family bonding, so that he really feels included in our family.] - RQ_{2.1}IDI₂

Ang ika duha is mag family bonding mi, mag famiy bonding dyud mi which is every sunday. Then dili pwede na dili siya uban kay kuyogon dyud namo sya, human kung asa mi, kung unsa iya gusto paliton dyud namo as we want to see her happy spending time with us.." [The second thing is we have family bonding, we really do have family bonding every Sunday. And it's not possible for her not to be with us because we really make sure she joins us. After all, wherever we go, whatever she wants to buy, we really buy it as we want to see her happy spending time with us.] - RQ_{2.1}IDI₁

Spending time with your loved ones creates great connections with them because it allows for meaningful interactions, and shared experiences and deepens the bonds of affection and understanding between family members. As RQ_{2.1}IDI₂ stated, allocating time for shared experiences and quality time together makes their siblings feel valued and integral to the family dynamic. Moreover, RQ_{2.1}IDI₁ also emphasizes the necessity of including their siblings in these activities to ensure her happiness and fulfillment. Overall, these statements underscore the importance of intentional efforts to include and support family members with disabilities. Through empathy, understanding, and active participation in family activities, they strive to create a nurturing environment where everyone feels valued, loved, and included.

Moreover, this investigation agrees with the research findings of Zabidi, Hastings, and Totsika (2023), where it is proposed that parents who provide more time to their

children commonly establish a close, nurturing relationship. The concept of shared time can be described as the time the parent spends with a child doing simultaneous chats and actions. Not only can common experience of the shared activities enhance mutual understanding, but these may also be accompanied by experiencing the same level of appreciation for similar activity, which was assessed as enjoyable by both parties. This can be the beginning of an autonomous development of a family member's retaining a better relationship with the one with disabilities among others. This is also supported by the study of Field (2022), which states that having positive attachments and feeling cared for by your loved ones leads to higher social functioning later on. A child with secure attachments also can more easily form healthy ties with others when they grow up and throughout their future. When individuals with disabilities are still young, families should begin establishing connections and a sense of belonging for them, starting within the family itself. Family connections offer emotional support and unconditional love for their children. Furthermore, as Li (2024) points out, research indicates that adults who received emotional support from their families during childhood experience fewer depressive symptoms.

3.2.3.2 Quality Time

This is a period of time when one can be greatly satisfied by the company of a person or by something that one feels is precious, valuable or something that one enjoys. This does not solely mean the length of time but the depth of the links, the engagement and the satisfaction felt during that time. Building strong family ties by spending quality time with a family member who has a disability is an important aspect of nurturing a high support level in the family. Studies have shown that spending time with family can bring about still less stress and anxiety, a healthier lifestyle and more over a longer life span. Family serves as the source of motivation for you to be the best version of yourself. With urgent attention to both inclusivity, communication, and mutual understanding, families with disabled members can exchange loving moments and valuable memories, which will lead to the robustness of connective bonds. This is observed in the response below:

"...then as much as possible pud we spend time with him, naa jud mi oras og adlaw na gilaan para lang sa iyaha, na kami isip pamilya kay mag uban jud mi tanan kay any time anihon lang gihapon nimo na labi na kuntahay if mawala sila sa kalibutan so kanang wala kay pagsisishan gud sa tanang butang basta imo lang gyud gibuhat tanan para sa iya." [..then as much as possible, we spend time with him, there's really a time or day dedicated just for him, that we as a family are always together because you never know when they'll be taken away from this world so you won't regret anything as long as you did everything for him.] - RQ_{2.1}PQ_{2.1.1}IDI₄

"Emphasizing the importance of spending time and supporting each other has fostered strong relationships among family members, providing a foundation for addressing difficulties." - RQ_{2.2}FGD₁

Through spending more time with the persons you care about, you will acquire a support system in place for whatever you might be going through. Likewise, nurturing a joyful and loving relationship with the disabled member of the family will be a source of comfort and acceptance. As RQ_{2.1}PQ_{2.1.1}IDI₄ underscores the fact that life is short, hence family reunions should be valued, and moments spent with one's loved ones should be cherished. To save time for each other and back each other, they are trying to limit those regrets and create the feeling of satisfaction in caring for those family members. Moreover, RQ_{2.2}FGD₁ stresses the importance of creating time for each other in the family and ensuring there is constant support. Provides evidence that as a result of this focus, families have amassed strong relationships which they build upon to deal with life's problems and issues. Besides, these statements give evidence that family members need to give each other time they can spend together, especially when a family member is a disabled person. Through efforts spent towards fostering relationships and trust within the family, they create a place where all can rely on each other as a whole.

This analysis is similar to the study of Thatcher (2020), where spending time with family is crucial for a person's development as it fosters adaptability and resilience. Within the family unit, key life lessons are imparted through coaching one another through life's challenges and successes. Family plays a fundamental role in shaping our identities and values. By investing time together, family members build confidence, knowing they are valued and supported by their loved ones. Furthermore, quality family time teaches essential interpersonal communication skills, such as engaging in healthy discussions and problem-solving, which are vital for navigating relationships and challenges in life. Furthermore, Taylor (2023) states that spending quality time together as a family is an essential part of creating lasting memories and fostering strong bonds.

To support the global theme, the study of Zabidi *et al.* (2023) shows that inclusive family bonding could be defined as the time a parent spends with their child engaged in joint conversations and/or joint activities. Spending time in shared activities may result in an increase in mutual understanding or in increased enjoyment derived from an activity that was experienced as mutually pleasant. These experiences could, in turn, lead to a closer, more positive relationship between the parent and their child. Indeed, Findings showed that spending more time in joint leisure activities or having family bonding was associated with higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict in the parent-child relationship in families of children with an intellectual disability, even after controlling for the effect of other factors known to be associated with parent-child relationship quality. This is also supported by the study of Carewco (2023), which said that if families don't spend quality time together or bond together, it's harder for them to function as a strong support system for one another. If a family member has a personal problem, they may not feel comfortable asking for help. Continued lack of support can lead to feelings of isolation, depression, and resentment.

3.2.4 Collaborative Caregiving

This refers to a model of caregiving where multiple individuals or entities work together to provide care and support for a person in need. Collaborative caregiving within families with a disabled member is a multifaceted endeavor that draws upon the combined efforts of various individuals and resources. At its core are the family members themselves, who provide the foundation of support, understanding, and love. They share the responsibilities of caregiving, each contributing their unique skills and strengths to meet the diverse needs of the disabled family member.

3.2.4.1 Collective Agreement to Assist Sibling

This refers to the shared mutual understanding and commitment to help and support a sibling who is in need. As part of this agreement, all family members must acknowledge the needs or obstacles faced by their siblings and take proactive steps to provide support, care, and direction. It highlights how the family works together to ensure the growth and well-being of the sibling, exemplifying the family dynamic's solidarity and support for one another. In families where one family member is disabled, collective assistance is a required method for the creation of a family that is caring and safe and where all the family members are valued, respected, and welcomed. Such troubles can be overcome by family members who can create and maintain strong bonds that add value to their lives because of this. This is observed in the response below:

“Isa pa kay pagtinabangay, kay kung wala man gud mi pagtinabangay dri sa sulod sa among panimalay, wala, gubot siguro ang among pamilya. kay dili man gud nako kaya kung ako lang ang molihok og si papa ang ang molihok tanan, maong gikan sa pag-atiman og pagbantay sa iyaha kay gibahin jud namo na.”
[Furthermore, cooperation is essential because without it within our family, things would probably be chaotic. I couldn't handle it all on my own, with me doing everything and Dad doing everything else. That's why we divided the responsibility of taking care and watching over our sibling.] - RQ_{2.1}IDI₄

“Siguro pagtinabangay lang sa tanan situation labaw na if about siya sa situation sa akong manghud. Og dili mawala diha ang pagsabot, maora man jud ang importante if naa ka ani na pamilya. Pagtinabangay og pagsinabtanay lang jud ang kailangan.” [Maybe mutual assistance in every situation, especially when it concerns my sibling's situation, is crucial. And understanding should not be absent, as it's really important when you have a family like this. Mutual help and understanding are all that's needed.] - RQ_{2.1}PQ_{2.1.1}IDI₃

In families where a member has a disability, a collective agreement to assist siblings is vital in order to ensure that total care is always provided and available. RQ_{2.1} PQ_{2.1.1} IDI₄ spells out the importance of cooperation in the family and implies that if the family is not united, they may end up in crisis. They stipulate the need for equity in the

responsibility of innovation and caring for the disabled sibling instead of just one among the family members. In addition, RQ_{2.1} PQ_{2.1.1} IDI₃ emphasizes these points as well, that is, mutual understanding and cooperation are indispensable factors for maintaining a peace-of-mind family and handling any situations that may occur. Overall, these participants' family members are valuable due to mutual support, shared responsibilities and teamwork when dealing with different family issues or the needs of a person with a disability. Collaboration and the comprehension of the issues are decisive factors for the well-being and oneness of the family as a whole.

The conclusion mirrors the study of Lara and De Los Pinos (2017) who assert that a collaborative relationship between families in assisting their sibling with a disability is understood to be the interaction of mutual support, which focuses on satisfying the needs of the person with a disability and their family and is characterized by a sense of competence, commitment, equality, communication and trust. Lo and Ma (2023) also state that when a group of people have jointly developed mutual support, they will undergo a dynamic process of such processes as information sharing, “all-in-the-same-boat”, and providing emotional support. Research has shown, through the study of family-based group intervention, the positive effects of mutual support. Where there were positive, mutually supportive practices that led to emotional stability, personal growth and reduced isolation among the parents of a disabled child, in other words, collective agreement to assist siblings or mutual support was effective in the application of multifamily therapy in modifying inter-family communications.

In the study of Kamaryati & Malathum (2020), it is stated that it is undeniable that individuals with disabilities require family assistance throughout their lives, especially if their condition develops early in childhood. Those who receive emotional support from family members may experience improvements in their physical and mental well-being. It is believed that some support resources can assist individuals in coping with their illness and handicap. In brief, collective family assistance is a helping hand provided by the family to a member in need. This help can be delivered by parents, and/or children, including informational, emotional, and instrumental support.

3.2.4.2 Shared Responsibility

This is carried out by a split of the responsibility or duty among all the members of a group. It implies that members of one group agree to contribute their fair share towards addressing a common goal or solving a collective problem. In such families, mutual responsibility is the foundation upon which care, support and inclusion of the disabled family member is built. This means that all the family members pledge to contribute to different aspects that include caregiving, advocacy, and daily life for the disabled family member's well-being and quality of life.

“The coping mechanisms we use to face challenges and our collaborative efforts significantly impact the overall dynamics of the family and our relationships. Prayer and spending time together, especially listening to my sibling, bring joy

and harmony to our family. By working together to meet their needs, we've created an environment where they are not a burden but an integral part of our family." - RQ_{2.2}FGD₁

"And as for my experience, aware ko sa iyahang situation and what I did is to do my part ra jud, like naa ra jud ko sa iya if kinahanglan ni mamang tig bantay, then ginahimo nako akong part because that's the only thing na pwede nako mashow akong concern and love sa akong family." [And as for my experience, I am aware of his situation, and what I did is to do my part only, like I am just there for him if he needs someone to watch over him, then I do my part because that's the only way I can show my concern and love for my family.] - RQ_{2.1}FGD₅

Joint responsibility for a disabled member among family members assumes a cooperative devotion of all family members to care, sharing and advocating for disabled family members. In RQ_{2.2}FGD₁, coping mechanisms, which are basically the methods and approaches the family uses as a group to deal with problems, help shape the family's broader atmosphere and interactions. It thus stands to reason that how family members deal with crises jointly contributes to the well-being and effectiveness of the entire family unit in addition to the nature and strength of their relationships. Another key element highlighted in RQ_{2.1}FGD₅ is being there for their siblings when needed. This shows their willingness to bring their family together and provide support to all members. When family members gather up and provide support to a loved one, they show their kind of love and commitment. This, in turn, helps to develop a feeling of security and belongingness for a person who needs it. Basically, out of these statements, we can get the overall idea that the whole family shares the responsibility, where each member plays their part in the support and the passion for the overall family, especially at the bad times.

This analysis agrees with the study of Vanegas and Abdelrahim (2016), which involved the joint action of the family members to ensure the health and quality of life of the disabled family members. As family members distribute responsibilities among them, they can develop a comfortable and diverse atmosphere where the individual's physical, emotional and social development may be facilitated. It includes providing for their necessities, which include health care, education and daily living activities. Moreover, the families have to deal with difficulties jointly and utilize coping mechanisms to help each other out. Also, in the study of Dev (2020) taking on the role of a family caregiver can lead to many sacrifices, especially if others don't help out. It would be less stressful for you and your siblings or other family members in the family if you found ways to share caregiving responsibilities. Asking other members to assist with planning, medical expenses, and other caregiving-related tasks could ease your load and give you more time to focus on your other personal stuff. That's why asking other family members to share responsibility with you does not only help you to make time for yourself but also for the own good of the disabled family member, as this will show them that their families are working really hard for their benefit.

To support the global theme, the study of Bahador, Farokhzadian, Nasab, & Abbasi (2023) says that a review of the literature suggests that collaborative family caregiving for people with intellectual disabilities can be a positive experience when coping strategies and flexibility are used. It also states that other studies have highlighted the positive impact that collaborative caregiving can have on family relationships, including strengthening family bonds and promoting a sense of social responsibility. Caregivers have reported feeling satisfied and experiencing a sense of vitality when caring for their loved ones and have identified positive achievements such as personal growth, learning new skills, and becoming more determined to face challenges. It also supported the study of Riches, O'Brien, Manokara, & Mueller (2022), who stated that some family caregivers assert that their caregiving role provides meaning to their lives and personal fulfillment. Examples include opportunities for development, increasing appreciation of diversity, and strengthening family relationships.

3.3 Insights Shared by the Participants

Through applying thematic analysis, several themes were generated, as shown in Table 3. This study created (4) themes that exhibit the coping mechanisms used by siblings to maintain family bonds. The following themes are Preparedness for siblings and support, Role of Siblings, Supporting Siblings of Children with disabilities, and Utilizing Policy-Affirmed Resources.

Table 3: Insights Shared by the Participants

Emergent Themes	Clustered Themes	Formulated Meaning
Preparedness and Future Planning	Understanding Siblings with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants advocate understanding children with disabilities and avoiding criticism or teasing them. [RQ3.1IDI2] Participants highlighted how understanding fosters stronger connections and bonds. [RQ3.1IDI5]
	Practical Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants highlighted preparation as part of understanding and empathizing with the situation. [RQ3.1IDI3] Participants should be prepared to handle the needs of a sibling with a disability. [RQ3.1FGD1]
Role of Siblings	Empowerment through Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants emphasized the importance of wholehearted acceptance in supporting siblings with special needs. [RQ3.1IDI1] Participants realized they should accept their sibling's condition and willingly provide care rather than feel obligated. [RQ3.1IDI4]
	Cultivating Empathy through Sibling Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants realized they should develop empathy by understanding their siblings' struggles more deeply. [RQ3.2IDI3] Participants highlighted how personal experiences have cultivated empathy, enabling them to support others facing similar challenges. [RQ3.2PQ1.5FGD4]

Supporting Siblings of Children with Disabilities	Guidance and Teaching for Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants highlighted the importance of guiding and teaching siblings with disabilities to be independent in their daily tasks. [RQ3.1IDI1] Participants highlighted supporting siblings with disabilities and avoiding criticism or teasing, fostering their independence and mental well-being. [RQ3.2PQ1.3 IDI5]
	Empowering Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants advocate for including children with autism in social gatherings to prevent later-onset conditions. [IDI1] Participants promote recognizing autism's spectrum so that individuals with autism can feel accepted and empowered in society. [IDI3]
Utilizing Policy Affirmed Resources	Accessing Government and Authorized Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants' responses highlighted the need for external support for families with disabled individuals. [RQ3.2PQ1.4IDI1] Participants mentioned the importance of recognizing available support and highlighted the role of government and NGOs. [RQ3.2PQ1.4IDI4]
	Awareness of Existing Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants highlight the importance of governmental policies in safeguarding the rights of individuals with disabilities. [RQ3.2PQ1.4IDI4] Participants acknowledge the existing policies for the welfare of persons with disabilities. [RQ3.2PQ1.4FGD9]

3.3.1 Preparedness and Future Planning

This pertains to siblings' readiness to offer assistance and understanding to their siblings with special needs. It involves understanding their sibling's situation and actively preparing to handle their unique needs. Participants highlight the significance of being emotionally and practically prepared to provide support, acknowledging that this preparation fosters stronger connections and bonds within the family. Unfortunately, according to some siblings, criticism or teasing from siblings can be hurtful and isolating for the sibling with a disability. They should prioritize creating a safe and accepting environment for their sibling with a disability.

3.3.1.1 Understanding Children with Disabilities

This pertains to how siblings understand their brothers or sisters with disabilities. It's not just about knowing the condition's name but also understanding what their sibling needs. When siblings truly understand their sibling's disability, it strengthens their relationship and helps them support each other better. This understanding is crucial for navigating any difficulties that may come up because of their sibling's disability. So, siblings without disabilities must grasp what their sibling is going through. The following responses led to the development of this organizing theme:

“Ang akoang advice for someone na nagaface ug similar situation like me is that dapat sabton ang mga bata na naay disabilities. Then dili dapat sila kanag suwayon or i tease kay biskan saway lang na sya is that little did we know na na dako na diay tog effect sa ilang mental aspect.” *[My advice for someone facing a*

similar situation like mine is to be understanding towards children with disabilities. They should not be criticized or teased because even seemingly harmless words can have a significant impact on their mental well-being.] - RQ_{3.1}IDI₂

“It's normal to question why things are the way they are. Maybe for me, it's normal to question, "Why do I have a sibling like this?" But slowly, you'll understand more and love them even more. It's about giving unconditional love, which strengthens the bond between siblings.” - [RQ_{3.1}IDI₅]

The participants of this study described the importance of understanding and supporting children with disabilities, particularly within the context of sibling relationships. RQ_{3.1}IDI₂ responses demonstrated a significant emphasis on the need to avoid behaviors such as criticism or teasing, as these actions can significantly negatively impact the mental well-being of siblings with a disability. RQ_{3.1}IDI₅ mentioned siblings can first raise questions and confusion about why they experience this situation but understanding and love grow over time. People who've grown up with siblings with disabilities emphasize the importance of unconditional love and support. These qualities are the foundation for a strong sibling bond and a lifelong support system.

These responses were also evident in the study by Blanchard *et al.* (2022), which emphasizes the importance of understanding and handling the needs of these siblings. Families can cultivate a more positive dynamic by acknowledging their unique experiences and challenges. Non-autistic siblings develop maturity and understanding from having a sibling on the autism spectrum, recognizing and adapting to the differences in their family dynamic (Riosa *et al.*, 2022). Understanding each other's perspectives and feelings among family members fosters a peaceful home environment. This enables everyone's needs to be heard and addressed, fostering a supportive and loving atmosphere where all can succeed (Deavin *et al.*, 2018).

3.3.2 Practical Planning

This is about sibling readiness to confront the uncertainties inherent in caregiving, acknowledging the challenges that may arise, and developing plans to address them effectively. Having a family member with special needs encompasses a multifaceted approach to equipping oneself with the necessary knowledge, emotional resilience, and practical strategies to navigate the challenges ahead. The term "Practical Planning" describes making plans and mentally preparing yourself to deal with the uncertainties of having a family member with special needs. This includes learning about their condition, understanding their challenges, and being emotionally intense to support them. It involves an active engagement with understanding and accepting the situation and a commitment to educate oneself about the specific diagnosis and its implications. The following responses led to the development of this organizing theme:

“Very important jud na we try to understand and accept ang sitwasyon sa inyong pamilya for you to be better prepared sa mga challenges in having a family member with special needs. Kay, we have seen kana bitaw naay autism man dili sila tarungon og alaga kay naa jud bad effect sa ilaha.” [*It’s crucial to try to understand and accept the situation as much as possible to help your family better prepare for the challenges of having a member with special needs. We’ve personally seen how detrimental it can be when individuals with autism aren’t treated properly.*] - RQ_{3.1}IDI₃

“Being prepared means having plans and the emotional strength to face the unknown, and educating myself about their diagnosis, learning about any unique challenges they may face, and understanding how their condition affects their daily life.” - RQ_{3.1}FGD₆

Being well-prepared involves not only practical planning but also emotional strength. RQ_{3.1}IDI₃ responds to the significant role of preparation in caring for a family member with special needs, particularly someone with autism. They stress the importance of understanding and accepting the situation to equip the family for the challenges ahead. Additionally, the participant highlights the negative consequences observed when individuals with autism are not appropriately treated, underscoring the urgency of thorough preparation and informed care. RQ_{3.1}FGD₆ mentions that preparation involves practical planning and emotional readiness when caring for a family member with special needs. They suggest that being prepared entails having concrete plans and the emotional strength to confront uncertainties.

These findings were also found in the research conducted by Sholikhah, Rukmini, Sumiatin, & Rosyadi (2023) on the importance of health promotion initiatives to enhance parental and community awareness regarding children with special needs. By increasing knowledge and understanding, individuals can better identify and comprehend the diverse types of special needs children may have and recognize their unique characteristics and requirements. Siblings may have in the future care of their sibling with Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs), but formalized plans are often lacking. Siblings themselves recognize the necessity of explicit plans to adequately prepare them for their future roles (Nguyen *et al.*, 2023). Thus, fostering open communication and implementing structured programs can aid in equipping siblings with the necessary knowledge, emotional resilience, and practical strategies to confront the uncertainties inherent in caregiving for a family member with special needs.

To support the global theme of Preparedness and Future Planning, the research conducted by Lee and Burke (2018) states that families often need to pay more attention to future planning despite its critical importance. Considering the challenges faced by sibling caregivers and the extended lifespan of individuals with IDD, future planning becomes imperative. According to Roberts (2021), the study underscores the critical significance of future planning for individuals with disabilities, particularly those with more severe impairments. As these individuals often require heightened levels of

caregiving and have lower independence, effective future planning becomes essential. It highlights the pressing need for comprehensive future planning initiatives to ensure the long-term welfare and stability of individuals with disabilities and their families.

3.3.2.1 Roles of Sibling

This pertains to the siblings of children with disabilities, who, through shared experiences and heartfelt discussions, gain profound insights into their roles as caregivers and allies. A significant realization they undergo is that their sibling's disability not only influences their perspectives but also enhances their capacity for empathy and understanding. Walking alongside their disabled siblings, they appreciate the importance of fostering inclusion through empathetic sibling relationships. They assume shared responsibilities in advocating for their siblings' needs, ensuring access to necessary support and resources, and promoting environments without prejudice. Through their collective experiences, they learn that embracing empathy and inclusivity can cultivate a more supportive and accepting environment where their disabled siblings can grow.

3.3.2.2 Empowerment through Acceptance

This pertains to acknowledging and embracing their siblings' conditions without reservation. The term refers to creating a supportive and welcoming environment within families, especially those with siblings with special needs. It involves fully accepting the sibling with special needs and willingly providing care out of love rather than feeling obligated. This concept also emphasizes the importance of developing acceptance by understanding the challenges and experiences of the sibling with special needs on a deeper level. Lastly, "acceptance" aims to promote understanding, kindness, and support within the family, ensuring that everyone feels valued and included.

"Accepting her condition or, in short, acceptance na dapat wholeheartedly. Dapat walay discrimination, walay kuan then i teach nimo siya kung unsay kailangan."
[Accepting her condition is vital acceptance should be wholehearted. There should be no discrimination, no judgment; instead, you should teach her what she needs.] - RQ_{3.1}IDI₁

"Secondly, you have to accept the situation as it is. Sometimes, you might think that you're just taking care of your sibling out of obligation, but in reality, you're doing it out of free will." - RQ_{3.1}IDI₄

The experiences shared by participants highlight the importance of wholehearted acceptance when it comes to acknowledging the condition of a sibling with disabilities. RQ_{3.1}IDI₁ mentions accepting the condition without hinting at discrimination or prejudice. They stress the importance of providing unwavering support and guidance, focusing on teaching siblings with disabilities what they require. Similarly, RQ_{3.1}IDI₄ highlights this sentiment by emphasizing that acceptance extends beyond mere

obligation; it entails fully embracing the situation. Both participants advocate for an environment free of judgment, focusing on understanding and meeting the needs of siblings with disabilities. Through wholehearted acceptance, families can create a nurturing space where all members feel valued, respected, and empowered to thrive despite challenges.

These findings were also found in the research conducted by (Deavin *et al.*, 2018) on the impact of adjustment over time on coping and acceptance among siblings of individuals with disabilities. Siblings describe a gradual easing of the burden of the illness as time elapses, contrasting the initial difficulty experienced upon diagnosis with a later sense of adaptability and acceptance. Most non-autistic siblings build positive relationships with their autistic siblings and peers, gaining personal understanding like patience and interpersonal insight into the qualities they value in others Schmeer, Harris, Forthun, Valcante, & Visconti (2021). This highlights the need for acceptance and understanding within families, fostering an environment where everyone feels valued regardless of differences. This promotes resilience and acceptance, creating a supportive space where siblings can thrive despite their sibling's disability.

3.3.3 Cultivating Empathy through Sibling Relationships

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities, who significantly experience empathy within their familial relationships. Through shared experiences and heartfelt interactions, participants explained how their familial environment has played a pivotal role in shaping their empathetic capacity. They mentioned that growing up with a sibling with special needs provided them with unique insights and challenges, ultimately fostering a profound understanding of empathy. Furthermore, participants highlighted how this empathetic environment contributed to the development of stronger bonds and increased resilience within the familial unit. These findings underscore the significant role of familial support in nurturing empathy and fostering enduring relationships among siblings of children with disabilities, highlighting the profound impact of family dynamics on emotional well-being and interpersonal connections.

“Learning how to handle and support my sibling with a disability has fostered a sense of empathy, emphasizing the interconnectedness of family members.” - [RQ_{3.2}IDI₃]

“I also have become empathetic towards other people with similar circumstances. These experiences shaped me in a big way, making me better at handling tough times and being there for others who need support.” - [RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.5}FGD₄]

Through their experiences, RQ_{3.2}IDI₃ express how learning to support their siblings with disabilities has deepened their empathy, highlighting their families' interconnectedness. They emphasize how these experiences have shaped their understanding of compassion and support toward their siblings and others facing similar

circumstances. RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.5}FGD₄ shares a similar opinion, acknowledging how their journey has increased empathy towards others in need. These shared experiences have profoundly influenced their ability to navigate challenging situations and provide support to those who require it. As they reflect on their growth, they recognize the transformative impact of empathy in fostering resilience and strengthening familial bonds, ultimately enriching their relationships and sense of interconnectedness within their family.

These findings were also found in the research conducted by (Deavin *et al.*, 2018) on the pivotal role of empathy in the familial relationships of siblings with children with disabilities. As adults, siblings anticipate assuming greater responsibilities in supporting their siblings with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) over their lifetimes. They expect to serve as advocates, guardians, and primary caregivers when parents cannot fulfill these roles. Despite the challenges of growing up with an autistic sibling, many siblings also articulate positive outcomes such as heightened empathy, kindness, and acceptance, emphasizing how their experiences have transformed their perspective and enriched their understanding of the world Matthews (2023). Enduring commitment and close bonds within families, emphasizing the significant role siblings play in supporting and caring for their siblings with special needs.

To support the global theme of the Roles of Siblings, the research conducted by Hall and Rossetti (2017) defines the multifaceted nature of siblings' responsibilities towards their brothers or sisters with disabilities. Each sibling's role is intricately shaped by their sibling's specific functional abilities and support needs, as well as by their family dynamics, the availability of external support systems, and their desires within varying degrees of closeness in relationships (Avieli *et al.*, 2019). While various factors determine when, how, and by whom sibling caregiving is provided, and guardianship is assumed, the full implications of these responsibilities for siblings are only starting to be acknowledged and explored (Lee, Burke, & Arnold, 2019). Sibling involvement's diverse and individualized nature highlights the significance of understanding siblings' unique roles in supporting their disabled siblings within their family dynamics and personal circumstances.

3.3.4 Supporting Siblings of Children with Disabilities

This pertains to the siblings of children with disabilities who navigate the complexities of having a disabled sibling. One adjustment they often make is their understanding of shared responsibilities as they learn to balance assistance with encouraging independence. They realize the importance of guiding and teaching their sibling essential skills for daily routines and caregiving tasks, empowering them to become more self-sufficient. This shared responsibility enhances their sibling's quality of life and fosters a sense of empowerment and self-confidence within the family dynamic. Thus, these siblings play a vital role in nurturing independence while strengthening familial relationships and overall well-being.

3.3.4.1 Guidance and Teaching for Independence

This refers to guidance and teaching provided by their siblings of children with disability to acquire essential skills to support independence. This guidance encompasses practical tasks such as daily routines and caregiving responsibilities, empowering siblings to navigate challenges independently. Moreover, our findings underscore the crucial role of familial support in nurturing independence as siblings learn to strike a balance between assistance and encouraging self-sufficiency. This emphasis on autonomy not only enhances the quality of life for their sibling with a disability but also cultivates a sense of empowerment and self-confidence among all family members. Thus, our research underscores the significance of fostering independence within the sibling dynamic of families with children with disabilities, highlighting its profound impact on familial relationships and overall well-being.

“kami ginatuduluan man namo ang ako igsuon ug mga daily routine sa balay para ma independent dyud siya mao dyud nay kuan. Kay kung in case wala na atong mama ug papa, at least kabalo siya kung unsay buhaton, mao dyud na ang among. Daily routine like manilhig, unsay mga kailangan sa balay, and etc. Teaching them how to be independent.” [We guide my sibling through our daily household routines to make her independent; that’s the key. In case our parents are no longer around, at least she knows what to do, that’s our goal. We teach her daily tasks like cleaning, understanding household needs, and more, promoting independence.] - RQ_{3.1}IDI₁

“she actually practiced independence on her own, kung kaya niya himuon na walay tabang namo kay mahimo jud niya. It’s just that sometimes she really needs guidance from us.” [she has learned to practice independence on her own. She can accomplish tasks without our help, although there are times when she may need guidance from us.] - RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.3}IDI₅

In their shared household, the siblings have taken on a proactive role in nurturing their sibling with disability independence. RQ_{3.1}IDI₁ shared that in their household, the siblings have taken on a proactive role in nurturing their younger sibling's independence. RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.3}IDI₅ mentioned their commitment to ensuring her self-sufficiency is evident as they guide her through daily household routines with care and patience. They understand the importance of equipping her with essential life skills, especially when their parents are not around. By teaching her tasks such as cleaning and understanding household needs, they empower her to navigate daily life confidently. P5 highlighted that a sibling with a disability has demonstrated her ability to tackle tasks independently; she still values and occasionally requires the guidance and support of her older siblings. This collaborative effort highlights the siblings' bond and dedication to fostering each other's growth and independence.

These findings were also found in the research conducted by Hall and Rossetti (2017), highlighting the proactive role siblings play in nurturing the independence of

their siblings with disabilities. Siblings describe guiding their siblings through daily household routines to foster self-sufficiency and equipping them with essential life skills. Additionally, they encourage and support their siblings to engage in various community activities, recognizing the importance of such participation in enhancing their sibling's quality of life. Siblings of individuals with disabilities continue to play a significant role in their lives well into adulthood, extending beyond typical sibling support to actively facilitating the development of independent living skills (Goodwin *et al.*, 2020). They become advocates for accessing necessary services and societal support, ensuring their sibling's independence and self-sufficiency. This intense involvement underscores the siblings' commitment to fostering independence and promoting their sibling's overall well-being throughout their lifespan.

3.3.4.2 Empowering Diversity

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities who engage in a diverse environment. Growing up in a diverse environment, they quickly learn the importance of accepting and including everyone. Their bond strengthens as they face the ups and downs of having a sibling with disabilities, learning to tackle challenges together. Through these experiences, they develop a profound sense of empathy, becoming unwavering sources of support for each other. Ultimately, Empowering Diversity fosters a deep connection and equips them with the tools to navigate life's obstacles with compassion and unity.

“It's important to expose her and socialize her with other people. Some have conditions that are apparent only after some time. The child should be included in social gatherings to make them feel that they are not left behind.” - RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.5}IDI₁

“With the right interventions and accommodations, autism can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society. Therefore, it's crucial to challenge misconceptions and promote acceptance and inclusion for individuals with autism.” - RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.3}IDI₃

Their experiences highlight the significant role of socialization and acceptance in supporting individuals with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives within their communities. RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.5}IDI₁ emphasizes the significance of exposing the sibling to social environments, recognizing that some conditions may only become apparent over time. They advocate for the inclusion of the child in social gatherings to foster a sense of belonging and prevent feelings of isolation. RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.3}IDI₃ mentioned emphasizing the importance of challenging autism misconceptions and promoting acceptance and inclusion. They highlight that with the right interventions and accommodations, individuals with autism can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.

These findings were also found in the research conducted by Debnam (2023b), stating that their exposure to various social settings and interactions fosters empathy and

understanding, transforming them into unwavering sources of supporting their siblings within a diverse and inclusive environment. Siblings of children with disabilities play diverse roles, such as assisting in self-care, school work, and participating in consultations while also protecting them from stigma and harm (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2021). By embracing diversity, siblings develop the resilience and compassion to overcome life's challenges, fostering deep connections and unity within their familial dynamic.

To support the global theme, Supporting Siblings of Children with Disabilities, the research conducted by Kirk & Prymachuk (2024b) through a focus on guidance and teaching for independence, children's hospices employ personalized, person-centered support strategies. They prioritize in-depth psycho-social assessments to address each individual's unique needs effectively. Having a sibling with autism strengthens the bond between siblings, encouraging mutual support and communication and positively influencing their relationships with friends and partners (Matthews, 2023). This underscores the importance of familial support in addressing the difficulties associated with having a disabled sibling. Children with special needs thus emerge as invaluable facilitators of growth and support, championing the well-being and independence of siblings of children with disabilities worldwide.

3.3.5 Utilizing Policy-affirmed Resources

Siblings of children with disabilities rely on a multifaceted support system comprising community and professional services as well as governmental policies. Within their community, they find emotional solace and tailored assistance from barangay programs designed to meet the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. Moreover, the guidance provided by professionals trained in supporting special needs individuals offers invaluable support to families navigating these challenges. Additionally, governmental and NGO initiatives play a pivotal role in ensuring comprehensive assistance for individuals with disabilities and their families. Simultaneously, siblings navigate the rights provided by the government, both within and outside their families, to address the challenges they encounter. Family support fosters understanding and validation, strengthening their bond with their siblings with special needs. External support, such as legal frameworks safeguarding the rights of persons with disabilities, fosters a sense of belonging within the broader community. While appreciative of existing policies supporting persons with disabilities, siblings advocate for further improvements, including increased financial aid and empowerment seminars to enhance family resilience. These experiences underscore the significance of familial and external support systems in their journey.

3.3.5.1 Accessing Government and Authorized Assistance

This refers to the siblings of children with disabilities who find solace in the extensive emotional support available within their community and through professional services. The barangay offers crucial assistance tailored to the unique needs of individuals with

disabilities, prompting calls for specialized programs to further aid in their care. Additionally, the availability of professionals trained in supporting individuals with special needs offers valuable guidance and assistance to families navigating these challenges. Recognizing the abundance of support resources, it becomes imperative to take proactive steps, leveraging government and NGO initiatives, to ensure comprehensive assistance for individuals with disabilities and their families.

“O naa nay silay mga support sa baranggay. Murag mag implemt sila or mag create ug program na related sa mga naay disabilities sailang needs.” [The barangay provides support during this time. It seems like they should implement or create a program that is related to the needs of individuals with disabilities and tailored to their specific requirements.] - RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.4}IDI₁

“kay naga himo naman og lakang ang mga government biskan kanang mga non-government agencies mga NGO daghan man mo tabang nila kay ang persons with disabilities kay dili jud na siya basta basta kaylangan jud na sila pun-an og atensyon.” [We should recognize that there is extensive support available for them, addressing their needs. Moreover, it’s imperative that we take action, as the government and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are already taking steps to assist them.] - RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.4}IDI₄

In the heart of every community lies support intricately woven to embrace individuals facing the unique challenges of disabilities and their families. RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.4}IDI₁ mentioned that professional expertise and the barangay add depth to this support network, guiding families through the complexities of caregiving with timely interventions and valuable insights and offering tailored assistance that acknowledges the unique needs of its members. RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.4}IDI₄ complementing these efforts are the proactive initiatives of government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to increase public awareness and accessibility to essential services. Together, these collaborative endeavors weave a nurturing environment where individuals with disabilities and their families find solace, empowerment, and the unwavering support of a compassionate community.

These findings were also found in the research conducted by (Sholikhah *et al.*, 2023), emphasizing the necessity of enhancing government promotional efforts to increase public awareness and access to services for children with special needs. This proactive approach broadens the scope of services within the community, ensuring more substantial support and assistance for children with special needs and their families. Enhancing sibling support systems, emphasizing collaboration with local sibling support groups, medical professionals, and community resources to meet the diverse needs of siblings of children with disabilities, ensuring continued support even beyond hospital discharge or transition into adult care (Niinomi *et al.*, 2022). Interventions should account for the changing needs of aging parents and siblings, utilizing identified patterns to

provide tailored support and enhance professionals' understanding of siblings' subjective experiences (Avieli *et al.*, 2019).

3.3.5.2 Awareness of Existing Policies

This refers to siblings of children with disabilities who often rely on rights provided by the government, both within and outside their families, to navigate the challenges they face. Within their families, they find understanding and validation, which helps strengthen their relationship with their siblings with special needs. External support, such as legal frameworks protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, also gives them a sense of belonging within the larger community. While they appreciate existing policies to support persons with disabilities, there's a recognized need for further improvements. This includes advocating for additional financial aid to alleviate the financial burden on families and promoting seminars to empower resilience among family members. Overall, the experiences of siblings of children with disabilities highlight the importance of both familial and external support systems in their journey.

“naa pud mo support outside, labi na katungod niya na ibelong siya sa persons with disabilities. Katungod man na nila naa man gud balaod para sa ilaha”. [we shouldn't forget that there is also support available externally, especially concerning his rights as a person with disabilities. It's their right, after all, and there are laws in place to protect them.] - RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.4}IDI₄

“I really appreciate the policies implemented for the welfare of PWDs, but they really need further improvements such as monthly or annual financial aid, and seminars on empowering resilience in the family members.” - RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.4}FGD₉

Siblings of children with disabilities often find solace and validation in external support systems, recognizing the importance of their sibling's rights as persons with disabilities. RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.4}IDI₄ mentions that they acknowledge the existence of laws designed to protect and uphold these rights, providing a sense of belonging within the larger community. Despite the appreciation for existing policies, there is a collective call for further enhancements. RQ_{3.2}PQ_{1.4}FGD₉ emphasizes the necessity for additional financial aid, advocating for regular assistance to alleviate the financial strain experienced by families. Furthermore, they highlight the importance of seminars aimed at empowering resilience in family members, recognizing the vital role of emotional support in navigating the challenges associated with having a sibling with a disability. These responses underscore the multifaceted experiences of siblings of children with disabilities and the ongoing efforts to strengthen support systems for their welfare.

These findings were also found in the research conducted by Malik *et al.* (2021) on policies to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, ensuring their independence and full participation in society. Constitutional rights provide a framework for persons with disabilities to live with dignity, free from violence and discrimination. These policies not

only empower individuals with disabilities but also contribute to their inclusion within society, aligning with the experiences of siblings of children with disabilities who rely on legal frameworks for support and validation. The Korean government is making efforts to include entire families in welfare policies but notes the lack of comprehensive services for siblings of individuals with disabilities (Park, Ryu, & Yang, 2021). They emphasize the need for greater awareness and tailored support for siblings, advocating for practical intervention plans based on research findings to address their specific needs effectively. To support the global theme, which is the Utilizing Policy-Affirmed Resources, the research conducted by (Niinomi *et al.*, 2022) the importance of leveraging community resources, such as NPO activities and local support groups, in providing psychosocial support for siblings of children with disabilities, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts between hospital-based care and community services. According to Ainslie (2024), numerous resources are available to assist typically developing children in better understanding their sibling's issues and addressing their feelings and concerns. One such resource is the availability of child or family therapists who can provide tailored guidance and support. Additionally, various agencies and programs offer sibling support groups as excellent resources, allowing children to connect with others facing similar challenges and normalize their experiences. However, the current study and previous research emphasize that siblings may need more formal support to prioritize their personal needs, demonstrating ambivalence (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2021).

4. Implications

This study aimed to gather insights into the challenges and opportunities encountered by individuals in caring for their siblings with disabilities. Through interviews, valuable information was obtained to inform recommendations for various stakeholders. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct further investigations into the experiences of non-disabled siblings, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of their challenges and opportunities and to gather sufficient data for comprehensive analysis. Moreover, researchers should explore the effectiveness of various coping mechanisms and support systems that are implemented within familial contexts to better address the needs of siblings. For siblings themselves, fostering cooperation within the family can enhance their comprehension of their siblings' conditions and equip them with effective coping strategies. Developing support tailored to siblings' specific needs can promote their well-being and strengthen sibling relationships. Collaboration with parents is crucial in comprehending the holistic needs of siblings and crafting strategies that foster their overall development. By conducting additional research, a more profound understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by siblings of children with special needs can be attained, thus laying the groundwork for more impactful support and intervention strategies.

5. Conclusions

Exploring the challenges and opportunities of siblings of children with special needs in this study, "Blood is Thicker than Water", has been an incredibly personal and eye-opening journey for us. As researchers who have never experienced firsthand the complexities of having a sibling with special needs, this research holds profound significance as it helps us to understand more the struggles that they experience in having siblings with disabilities. Through intimate interviews and reflective conversations, we've been able to connect deeply with the experiences of these participants, resonating with their stories of both struggle and resilience.

Throughout the study, we've experienced a range of emotions, from empathy and compassion to moments of introspection and reflection. It's been a profound learning experience, educating us on the challenges of accepting and embracing a family member with a disability. We've come to understand that familial love and support, though tested by numerous challenges, remain a constant source of strength and resilience.

Overall, this study has not only deepened our academic understanding but has also enriched our personal appreciation for the unique journey of siblingship within families touched by special needs. It serves as a poignant reminder that, despite the challenges they face, the love and connection shared among siblings truly make them stronger together.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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