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## Original Research

# The Parent and Sibling's Support of Pediatric Cancer

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## Abstract

A child's cancer diagnosis causes a family to experience a tremendous deal of uncertainty. Fearing what lies ahead, parents and siblings frequently worry about how therapy will impact their child's and their family's lives. Siblings and parents might feel a variety of emotions, including guilt, rage, despair, and melancholy. Siblings of ill children deal with their own psychological and emotional difficulties. The circumstances they find themselves in may cause them to feel scared, nervous, or even furious. This study aimed to describe the support provided by parents and siblings to children with cancer. This research utilized a cross-sectional design and was carried out from November 2023 to March 2024 at the Childhood Cancer Care West Sumatra. The study involved 55 children, chosen using an accidental sampling method. The TEIQUÉ-CF instrument was employed in this research, with descriptive analysis being conducted. Approximately, 61.8% of parents and siblings are emotional about pediatric cancer. By discussing these factors, families may better prepare mentally and emotionally for this protracted and difficult journey. Children with cancer have a greater chance of making a full recovery, both mentally and physically, if they get strong support from their parents and siblings.

**Keywords:** Cancer, Pediatric, Sibling, Support

## INTRODUCTION

The provision of physical, emotional, and social support over the course of treatment is crucial for children diagnosed with cancer, and this is especially true for their parents and siblings (Sels et al., 2021). Not only may childhood cancer alter the child's life, but it can also drastically alter the family's (Løkkeberg et al., 2020). Within this framework, parents and siblings play a critical role in making sure that children undergoing cancer receive the highest quality medical treatment as well as the essential psychological support (Adamczewska-Wawrzynowicz et al., 2023). Wawrzynski's research indicated mothers as a source of support for nearly all participants. The subsequent most commonly cited sources of support were close friends and fathers, followed by a sibling residing in the household (Wawrzynski et al., 2021).

Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2019, there are up to 401 million toddlers in Asia, and around 10 million of them face sibling rivalry. A study conducted in the United States by UNICEF on sibling rivalry in degree and dimensions across the lifespan

revealed that 55% of sibling rivalry transpires between the ages of 3 and 5 (Lazdia & Kusuma, 2019). According to the Central Statistics Agency, Indonesia's population was estimated at 237.6 million in 2017, with the number of children under five projected to be about 22% (or 47.2 million) in 2018, based on census data. This research indicates that over 75% of children in Indonesia aged 3 to 5 experience sibling rivalry (Merianti & Nuine, 2018). In the process of treating juvenile cancer, parents serve as the primary support system (Gannika et al., 2023). In addition to being in charge of medical matters like prescriptions and doctor's visits, they also play a crucial role in the support system by offering love, encouragement, and hope during this trying time (Davies & O'Connor, 2023).

Many studies have discussed the role of the family in childhood cancer (Ndlovu et al., 2022). They frequently deal with a range of issues, such as difficult medical choices and significant financial obligations, thus their job description goes beyond providing basic care to include handling stress and anxiety when it manifests itself (Neugebauer & Mastergeorge, 2021). Siblings of children with cancer, however, also play a vital part (Kashif et al., 2022). They may feel conflicting emotions like guilt, worry, or jealousy, and they need their parents to pay more attention to helping them understand and control these sentiments (Erker et al., 2018). Siblings' emotional support can provide cancer-affected youngsters extra courage and strengthen family ties while they navigate difficult times together (Paul et al., 2023). In general, it is impossible to overlook the impact that parents and siblings have on children who have cancer (Monios, 2015). Children look up to parents as a source of resilience and strength, giving them the hope and fortitude they need to battle this illness (Avoine-Blondin et al., 2022). Children with cancer can have a higher chance of recovering and maintaining a better quality of life both during and after treatment if their family provide the appropriate support (Racine et al., 2018). This study aimed to describe the parents and sibling's support among children with cancer at the Childhood Cancer Care West Sumatra.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional design, conducted between November 2023 and March 2024 at the Childhood Cancer Care West Sumatra. The target population consisted of 100 pediatric cancer patients, from which a sample of 55 children was selected through accidental sampling. Data were collected using the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Child Form (TEIQUE-CF), developed by Mavroveli et al., (2008), to assess children's emotional intelligence. The TEIQUE-CF comprises 75 self-report items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Example items include, 'I am concerned about my friends' issues' and 'I struggle to comprehend others' emotions.' The instrument covers nine dimensions: adaptability, emotional expression, emotional perception, self-motivation, self-esteem, low impulsivity, peer relationships, emotional regulation, and affective disposition. Responses are scored using a standardized table, with higher scores indicating greater levels of trait emotional intelligence. A descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the findings.

## RESULTS

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
4-6	28	50,9
7-12	27	49,1
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	35	63,6
Female	20	36,4
<b>Family Situation</b>		
Traditional	36	65,5
Blended	19	34,5
<b>Parent Level Education</b>		
Low	27	27
High	28	28

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents' ages were in the 4-6 year range at 50.9%, of which the majority were male at 63.6%. 65.5% of family situations are raised in traditional families where parent level education is mostly found in higher education as much as 50.9%.

Table 2. Frequency of Parent and Sibling's Support

Parent and Sibling's Support	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Emotional	34	61.8
Companionship	21	38.2

According to Table 2, it is evident that among the 55 respondents, over half, specifically 61.8%, of parents and siblings exhibit emotional responses to pediatric cancer at the Children Centre Care West Sumatera.

## DISCUSSIONS

Pediatric cancer diagnosis frequently causes severe emotional distress for the family (George, 2011). It's not only about how to handle a grave medical diagnosis; it's also about how families manage significant adjustments to everyday routines and family structures. When parents get surprising news and are overcome with dread, they often experience a range of emotions (Boeriu et al., 2023). At first, astonishment and bewilderment might be experienced. The thought of their child having to deal with something so terrible breaks their hearts. It frequently comes with disorientation and a loss of control. Deep concern then set in. worry about the treatment's negative effects, their child's future, and their ability to handle unforeseen financial difficulties (Neugebauer & Mastergeorge, 2021).

Their ability to handle stress and emotions may be put to the test at this time. Parents may experience shame or question what they could have done or not done to contribute to this illness (Siebel & Anggraeni, 2022). Unspoken remorse and a sense of injustice that their child had to go through this misery consumed them. Nonetheless, there is also tenacity and resolve. In order to provide their children with a fortress, parents frequently muster all of their bravery and will (Boyd et al., 2024). Together, they build a resilient mindset and fighting spirit to meet this obstacle. Emotional effects also extend to siblings. They could experience fear, anxiety, or even jealousy over the extra care their ailing sibling is receiving (Saab et al., 2021). However, they may also cheer up ill kids and provide encouragement, which makes the

treatment room happier. The family eventually learns to adapt to this new way of life. They manage to deal with every emotion that comes up, enjoy every little accomplishment, and get beyond every challenge (Wechsler et al., 2022). There are happy times when the test results indicate progress, and there are sad times when the child's health deteriorates (Koutná & Blatný, 2020).

Families frequently find support in one another throughout this emotional upheaval. They become closer, more integrated, and more cognizant of the importance of life and well-being. While still accepting the painful reality of their diagnosis, they learn to treasure every minute spent together as a gift. They support one another with strength, and each little step toward healing offers an amazing sense of relief and happiness. It is crucial that family members, particularly parents and siblings, remain present and supportive during a child's cancer treatment (Koumariou et al., 2021). Children with cancer require the family's unwavering emotional support. Siblings and parents may provide youngsters the much-needed warmth, love, and hope they need to overcome their obstacles. For families, the cancer treatment process may be extremely taxing both physically and mentally. Other family members' support and presence helps fortify the family during this difficult time. When it comes to making medical decisions for their child's care, parents play a crucial role. They must be aware of the risks, advantages, and potential adverse effects of the various treatment alternatives (Alexander et al., 2023). Siblings who are older or closer in age can also help comprehend and support family decisions in this situation. In addition to offering emotional support, families may also offer practical assistance by attending to the kid's everyday needs, setting up appointments for medical visits and treatment, and giving other siblings extra attention if they feel left out while the child is receiving treatment. Major life adjustments are frequently required for families undergoing cancer treatment (Snaman et al., 2020). In order to help their children adjust to the new circumstances such as a strict medicine regimen or a change in lifestyle parents and siblings must also adjust to these changes. While undergoing therapy, children and their families may feel stressed, anxious, or depressed. Maintaining their emotional and psychological well-being can be aided by parental and sibling support. It's critical to have parental and sibling support both during and after therapy (Kuhn et al., 2022). Even after a cancer diagnosis, children still require assistance for long-term physical and mental healing.

## CONCLUSIONS

Families may better prepare mentally and emotionally for this protracted and difficult journey by talking about all of these factors. Children with cancer have a greater chance of making a full recovery, both mentally and physically, if they get strong support from their parents and siblings.

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