



**Sibling rivalry: Are gender differences or age ranges of birth the cause of  
social jealousy**

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**ABSTRACT**

*A little competition created between siblings is normal throughout the life span. This shows that the closeness between the two is close enough to give rise to many problems, although in the end, sibling rivalry will disappear over time when each child reaches adulthood. Sibling rivalry starts in childhood. Every child who is not born as an only child will know about sibling rivalry. Sibling rivalry causes several changes in behaviour in a more negative direction. One of the negative attitudes produced by children is social jealousy between siblings, which results in sudden and unusual changes in behaviour. This research aims to find out and identify the factors that cause sibling rivalry in sibling relationships based on gender differences and birth age ranges. The type of research used in this research is qualitative research with a case study approach. The sample used in this study was eight children with classifications, namely, four children of the same gender and four children of the opposite gender. The data collection technique used was in-depth and unstructured interviews submitted to each parent. For data analysis techniques, Miles and Huberman analysis include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The results of this study show that birth age is a factor that causes sibling rivalry between sibling relationships, based on the sample that has been studied.*

**Keywords:** Sibling Rivalry; Gender Differences; Age Range of Birth; Social Jealousy.

## ABSTRAK

*Persaingan kecil yang tercipta di antara hubungan kakak-beradik adalah hal yang wajar sepanjang rentang kehidupan. Ini menunjukkan bahwa kedekatan antara keduanya terjalin cukup dekat sehingga menimbulkan banyak problematika di dalamnya, meskipun pada akhirnya sibling rivalry akan menghilang seiring berjalan waktu ketika masing-masing anak menginjak usia dewasa. Sibling rivalry sudah dimulai sejak usia kanak-kanak. Setiap anak yang terlahir tidak sebagai anak tunggal akan mengenal tentang sibling rivalry. Sibling rivalry menyebabkan beberapa perubahan perilaku menuju ke arah yang lebih negatif. Salah satu sikap negatif yang dihasilkan anak adalah kecemburuan sosial antara saudaranya yang mengakibatkan perubahan perilaku yang tiba-tiba dan tidak biasa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan mengidentifikasi faktor yang menjadi penyebab sibling rivalry pada hubungan bersaudara berdasarkan faktor perbedaan gender dan rentang usia kelahiran. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Sampel yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah 8 orang anak dengan klasifikasi yaitu 4 orang anak dengan jenis kelamin yang sama dan 4 orang anak dengan jenis kelamin yang berbeda. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan yaitu wawancara mendalam dan tidak terstruktur yang diajukan kepada masing-masing orang tua. Untuk teknik analisis data menggunakan teknik analisis Miles dan Huberman meliputi reduction data, data display, dan conclusion drawing/verification. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa usia rentang kelahiran menjadi faktor penyebab terjadinya sibling rivalry antara hubungan bersaudara berdasarkan sampel yang telah diteliti.*

**Kata Kunci:** Sibling Rivalry; Perbedaan Gender; Rentang Usia Kelahiran; Cemburu Sosial.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Family, as the smallest form of unit in a community setting that lives in a house, has a specific relationship, such as blood relations, that exists due to marriage, birth, adoption, and so on. A family is considered whole and perfect if it is blessed with the presence of a child. The presence of children in a family indicates that the family is complete, as it is made up of nuclear family members. Many husband-and-wife couples who will become prospective parents are attempting to make this happen because the child will be the successor to the family (Marhamah & Fidesrinur, 2019). As a result, every married couple is eagerly awaiting the birth of a child. Every child will go through each phase of development at their own age, which is known as the Golden Age. During this period, every process of growth and development in a child occurs rapidly. It not only influences the growth and development process but also the character formation process (Kamil & Asriyani, 2023). Moreover, it is hoped that the character formed will have positive energy and emotions. Therefore, every child needs love from every adult nearby, especially from both parents.

Siblings, whether elder brothers or sisters, are the closest persons in a child's life other than their parents. However, siblings may be one of the causes of social envy in sibling relationships. It is impossible to deny that when other family members or new members arrive, youngsters will feel competitive. There are many reasons why social jealousy arises

between sibling relationships. One of the most common causes is a small age difference between the births of the first and second children. Typically, the age gap that causes the trigger is between 3-5 and 8-10 years old (Ayu, Sri, & Rulita, 2013). This is seen as a critical age for parents considering adding children to their household. As a result, sibling rivalry is more likely to arise at that age, when children attend preschool.

The introduction of new people into their lives may cause children to feel as if they have lost the love they have received. The children assumed that their parents' affection would extend to the presence of a second child or younger sibling. Sibling rivalry typically occurs not only when there is not a significant age gap but also a gender difference. Children of the same gender are more susceptible to sibling rivalry, while other possibilities exist for children of opposite genders (Indriyanti, Nurwati, & Santoso, 2022). According to the Psychology Dictionary, as stated by Chaplin and quoted by Herdian and Wulandari (2014), sibling rivalry is a situation in which siblings of the same sex compete or are in competition with one another. The competition is about recognising and treating something that can be received from nearby adults. Sibling rivalry is characterised by a variety of symptoms, including aggressive behaviour or resentment (annoyance, anger, and hatred) towards parents and siblings (Imelda Fitri, 2022). Not only that, but feelings of envy and jealousy towards parents and siblings can also be indicators of sibling rivalry. Recognising the distinguishing characteristics of sibling rivalry from an early age is a frequent responsibility for all parents in order to prevent social jealousy between older and younger siblings.

The challenge for parents nowadays, particularly given the relatively close birth spacing between their first and second children, is to handle the conflict and aggressive behaviour that arise between siblings. Some research proves that the parents' role can influence the quality of interactions between children's siblings (Bouchard, Plamondon, & Lachance-Grzela, 2018). Fathers and mothers in a family attempt to foster situations that value the comfort of both children. Thus, negative emotions, such as social jealousy, do not develop in children. The emergence of feelings of envy towards a new person, such as the birth of a second child referred to as a younger sibling, causes the first child to behave abnormally. Children will whine more than normal, cry, and hit those around them. Children engage in a variety of behaviours in trying to recover their parents' attention.

Based on the explanation, researchers are interested in conducting research to identify the causes of social jealousy developed in a child, whether it comes from gender differences or the relatively close age difference between the birth of a child. Interviews with each child's mother revealed that each respondent behaved differently if they were jealous of their younger sibling. Many children will immediately try to get their mother's attention when they are in a crowd. This is also in accordance with the field data obtained from the observations. One of the respondents would not hesitate or be embarrassed to cry and even have a tantrum when his mother did not pay attention to him and instead gave more attention to his younger sibling when he was in public places.

A similar study had been carried out previously by Elinda et al., and the findings of this study show that older siblings in all the families studied experienced sibling rivalry. This is demonstrated by a variety of aggressive behaviours, including hitting, pinching, and saying negative sentences, as well as regressive behaviours such as trying to breastfeed directly. When the younger sibling is breastfeeding, he wants to be carried when he observes another

sibling being carried and tends to bite his fingers (Elinda & Mulyani, 2022). The age of the research sample distinguishes the researcher's work from that of Elinda and Mulyani. The research sample was PAUD age, specifically 5–6 years old. Meanwhile, Elinda and Mulyani's research participants were between the ages of two and three. Aside from that, based on the child's preschool age, the researcher performed the study both at home during interviews with the child's mother and at school when the child interacted with his peers. If previous studies relied solely on direct observation and interviews at home, the researchers conducted research in two locations: home and school.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *2.1. The Nature of Gender*

When considering the impact of the socio-cultural context, women are often perceived as inferior to men in social settings. In fact, gender is broadly defined as a concept used to identify disparities between men and women that can be attributed to socio-cultural factors. These distinctions make it challenging for women to achieve the same opportunities and welfare as men in social terms. Understanding of women who are noted for their soft, lovely, emotional, or maternal attributes. Meanwhile, men are regarded as strong, rational, manly, and powerful. However, in reality, these characteristics are interchangeable. Many males exhibit empathy, kindness, and other attributes. Women can also be strong, rational, and powerful (Sulistyowati, 2020). Therefore, if we look more deeply at the concept of gender, it should not only be in the context of sex differences but also a characteristic of a man or woman that is constructed socially and culturally, which is not excessive but emphasises the aspect of a person's masculinity or femininity in a particular culture (Suhra, 2013).

When gender is researched in depth, it has a broad meaning. According to Santrok, as quoted by Asti Nur Hadianti (2019), gender identity refers to a person's sense of being male or female, which most children develop by the age of three. Furthermore, gender roles are defined as the acceptable behaviour, attention, attitudes, skills, and considerations of social personality qualities of a man and a woman. Gender inequalities between men and women can lead to injustice, especially for women. Gender injustice can take many different forms. Mansour (in Rosalita, 2020) defined injustices against men and women as marginalisation, subordination, stereotypes, double obligations, and violence.

### *2.2. Theory of Emotional Development in Early Childhood*

An individual has experienced emotions since birth. Emotions continue to develop and grow during a person's life. Hurlock explains that the first emotional symptom experienced by a person is global arousal in response to a strong stimulus. At first glance, this feeling cannot be classified as a visible emotional reaction in general, yet it does convey a simple impression of pleasure or dissatisfaction towards anything. Unpleasant emotional reactions are typically expressed in a variety of ways, including crying, anger, and loud voices. Meanwhile, pleasurable reactions are expressed in certain responses, such as laughter, smiling, and chattering (Lubis, 2019). Basically, emotions are divided into two types: positive and negative emotions. Unpleasant sensations dominate emotions, while pleasant emotions can counteract them to some extent (Kamil & Sultan, 2022). Thus, in order to develop good and happy

emotions, teachers and parents must play an active role in guiding children's emotions in an appropriate direction.

It can be challenging for parents to play an active role in their children's character and identity development throughout their lives. Parents not only help their children live good lives, but they also assist them in managing and dealing with their own emotions. In this instance, parents have two options: use emotion-coaching approaches or disregard emotions. The two have quite noticeable differences. The contrast between the two can be apparent in how parents cope with any unpleasant emotions shown by their children. Parents who implement an emotional training strategy will observe their children's feelings as an opportunity to teach and educate them, help them recognise each emotion, and train them to deal with emotions properly. Meanwhile, emotional dismissing parents exhibit behaviour that rejects, ignores, or alters negative emotions (Sukatin, Qomariyyah, Yolanda Horin, & Aida Afrilianti, 2019). It is well known that children of emotionally trained parents do better in terms of self-management and relaxation. When angry, they are considerably more successful at coping with unpleasant emotions; they are also better at focusing attention on a problem and have fewer behavioural issues than children whose parents dismiss their feelings.

### *2.3. The Concept of Sibling Rivalry in Early Childhood*

The complex relationship that exists between siblings is quite unique. Some people even believe that this is the most lasting experience in an individual's life. Two brothers will share and participate in the same series of activities, resulting in a strong bond between them. A connection like this is regarded as a link that is entwined and bound together by love, genuine affection, and a type of caring. However, this can allow for a variety of undesired outcomes, including more conflict and rivalry (Donagh, Taylor, al Mushaikhi, & Bradbury-Jones, 2022). Sibling competition, often known as sibling rivalry, is common among children born close together in age. Sibling rivalry is typically characterised by an ambition to gain both parents' attention. Parents that have more than one child are going to provide treatment and education to their children, allowing children under the age of five to adapt to changes and new experiences in their lives (Anggraeni, Mardhiyah, & Nurhidayah, 2018).

This competitiveness is frequently seen in first-born children as a result of the birth of a younger sibling. The first child who plays the role of an older sibling may feel that his parents' attention is no longer totally focused on him, as it was when he was an only child. As a consequence of this, he feels compelled to exercise greater independence in all aspects of his life. A study shows that certain types of sibling rivalry might occur up to eight times every hour. Sibling rivalry has been known to develop to the point of physical violence, property damage, and even psychological issues. Violence like this is more common than other types of violence (Tucker & Finkelhor, 2015). According to Boyle (as cited in Muarifah & Fitriana, 2019), a child's aggressive behaviour can result in a variety of sibling rivalry reactions, including hitting, pinching, sobbing, and tantrums, with some even harming and kicking their younger siblings. Furthermore, parents may notice indicators of regression as a result of sibling rivalry, such as bed-wetting, peculiar (explosive) weeping, being more pampered and fussier than usual, and crying for no apparent reason. Furthermore, Murphy, McCurdy, Jehl, Rowan, and Larrimore (2019) found that children who feel safe are less likely to be envious than children who feel insecure. Children who have a strong and growing sense of security are

less likely to exhibit external jealousy. Based on one study, women experience more jealousy than men. (Pollet & Saxton, 2020).

### **3. METHOD**

This study employs qualitative research with a case study technique. Case study research is research that investigates a number of phenomena or a case over a specific period of time and activities and collects detailed information using various methods for collecting data over a specific length of time (Wahyuningsih, 2013). This study's samples consisted of 8 children aged 3-6 years, with four of the same gender and four of the opposite gender. There are several factors to consider when selecting a sample for this study, including the absence of gaps in determining the number of participants and gender, the presence of balanced precision as long as the sample is used as respondents, the analysis plan based on research needs, and limited energy, costs, and time. This research utilises a case study approach since it allows you to address students' problems in greater depth through multiple stages of observation, allowing you to not only identify each respondent's difficulties but also find solutions to the problems they encounter.

The data collection technique employed in this study was in-depth, unstructured interviews with the child's parents. According to Creswell (Ubaid Ridlo, 2023), data can be collected in case research in a variety of ways, including interviews. Interviews can be conducted in an open manner, with notes used to collect information, or with recording equipment. Miles and Huberman's analysis (in Mustika Ratu, Senny Weyara Dienda Saputri, 2020) technique was utilized to analyze the data. This technique involves interactive and continuous qualitative data analysis to ensure clear and high-quality results. Data analysis activities include data reduction, data display, drawing conclusions, and verification.

### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The first example, involving a child with the initials ARF, is known to have negative emotional symptoms. ARF is a 5-year-old girl who has a younger brother who is about the same age as her, at 2 years old. According to discussions with her mother, ARF's behaviour and attitude have shifted since her younger brother was 15 months old. At first, ARF did not perceive her younger sibling as a rival for her mother's love. However, this did not persist long after the younger sibling began to walk well. According to the mother's explanation, while ARF does not always exhibit social jealousy, she is likely to do this on multiple occasions if she is unfamiliar with the situation and conditions. ARF exhibits numerous social jealousy attitudes, such as suddenly crying when her mother returns home from the market; ARF occasionally disturbs MAF when playing while her mother cooks; and, aside from that, ARF does not want to own items or toys that are identical to MAF's.

It is believed that the mother first accepted this as normal. Remember that envy is a natural emotion between siblings. However, the mother became concerned as ARF's refusal to give up and sharing toys with MAF progressed. When ARF is not in a good mood, she will stop her father from giving attention to her younger siblings. Therefore, this is where the responsibilities of father and mother are initially divided. ARF will be furious when she discovers that her father is quite close to MAF compared to her. If this happens, ARF will stop bothering her brother. On various occasions, his father advised and directed ARF, stating that her behaviours were wrong and would have an impact on MAF's future behaviour. ARF

sometimes listened to what her father said, but she rarely took it seriously. As a result, the nature of "self-centeredness" erupted from her once more.

In the second case, the boy with the initials AAY was five years old, whereas MNY was four. AAY and MNY have a relatively similar age range, namely one year. The mother's interview reveals that they both had the same treatment. The parents of AAY and MNY will treat them both equally. Even if AAY is registered to attend PAUD, MNY will participate despite the fact that he is not in the same class as his elder sister. This means that when AAY starts school in the morning, MNY will be ready to go to the playground the same day. In everyday life, the two of them are frequently engaged in cooperative activities. Unlike the first case, AAY and MNY did not exhibit excessive social jealousy when interacting. AAY and her brother frequently appear amicable and cheerful when they have to complete all of their activities together. Although the two of them occasionally get into small conflicts that prompt their mother and father to separate them, one example of social envy exhibited in this second scenario is when AAY obtained an award from school for her achievements. MNY believes that whatever AAY gets and earns, he must also receive. This happens because they have been treated as twins since childhood, and they have grown accustomed to it at home. If AAY receives an item, MNY will receive the same thing. However, when you attend school, this cannot remain the same. This is because, even though both of them are preschoolers, their levels are at different levels. In this case, MNY will complain and ask his parents for the same thing, and if his wishes are not fulfilled, he will sometimes throw a tantrum. Their parents may attempt to purchase them the same things that AAY got, but if the mother is unable to do so, AAY will share the object with MNY.

The third instance involves a child of a different gender. The first child is a five-year-old girl named NQ, and the second is a three-year-old boy named MK. Interviews with NQ's mother have revealed that NQ has more social envy towards her younger brother when he is close to her father. NQ believes that her father's love should solely be focused on her and not shared with anyone, including her own younger sibling. However, when MK is near her mother, NQ feels normal. NQ's mother was okay with this at first, given that girls are typically connected to their biological father. However, over time, NQ's mother became concerned about MK's proximity to their father. According to an interview with NQ's mother, if she witnessed her father cuddling MK, she would sulk and, in the worst-case scenario, go on hunger strike. She will end her "hunger strike" once MK is no longer in her father's arms. However, when it comes to sharing toys and food, NQ differs from the previous two situations. She is known to be ready to share food and other items with her younger sibling. NQ is only concerned with the parents' handling of MK, which is regarded as typical.

The fourth case is a child of the same gender, a three-year-old boy with the initials BA and MR, who is 2.5 years old. The two's relatively tight birth age range, combined with the fact that they are the same gender, contributes to social jealousy. BA appears to have problems giving in and getting along with MR. Whatever it is, it always makes BA jealous of MR. According to interviews done by researchers with BA's mother, BA struggled to accept MR's birth in the early days. BA believes that he is no longer loved by his parents, so he frequently makes MR cry. Furthermore, BA enjoys disturbing his younger brother, who is busy playing alone, until MR screams and complains to his mother. BA is also known to have difficulty sharing toys and food with MR. He believes that everything MR possesses is

likewise his, but not everything BA owns is MR's. In situations like this, BA's attitude often overwhelms his parents because, at this age, BA should have begun to accept MR's presence as his younger sibling, as BA is the second child, not the first. This was also said by BA's mother; it was also the cause and one of the reasons why BA found it difficult to accept MR as his younger sibling because he had been a younger sibling for a long time before suddenly changing his position to become an older sibling. BA struggled to accept his apparent quick change in status.

**Table 1**

Grouping of social jealousy attitudes obtained based on interview results.

No	Child's Initials	Attitude Acquisition
1	ARF dan MAF	a. Behavior that suddenly changes when playing together, such as suddenly hitting or crying. b. Grabbing toys when interacting together. c. Not happy if he has the same objects or toys as his younger sibling.
2	AAY dan MNY	a. Wants to be treated the same as his siblings, especially at school. Even though they are at different levels of education. b. MNY wants to be given something exactly the same as AAY.
3	NQ dan MK	a. He doesn't like it when MK is close to his father.
4	BA dan MR BA dan MR	a. Not happy when they have to play together. b. He likes to disturb his little brother when he is busy playing alone. c. Sometimes they like to take whatever their younger sibling is holding. d. Does not like sharing toys and food.

Based on the table above, there are numerous forms of social jealousy that result from interactions between siblings. Conflicts between siblings result in tiny fights, which lead to small conflicts. According to the four cases studied, practically all forms of social jealousy are characterised by discomfort and difficulties sharing the same objects, goods, and belongings with siblings. Some children exhibit unpleasant emotions during social interactions with siblings, such as unusual weeping, grabbing, and even punching. Another type of social envy is directed towards emotional treatment as a result of loving treatment from one of the parents, such as the father or mother.

**Table 2**

Identification analysis of the causes of sibling rivalry in children by classification of gender differences or birth age range.

No	Classification of Children in Each Case	Gender Differences	Birth Age Range
1	Case 1: ARF and MAF	√	
2	Case 2: AAY dan MNY		√
3	Case 3: NQ dan MK		√
4	Case 4: BA dan MR		√



The table above indicates that three out of every four children studied by researchers show that close birth ages are the cause of frequent sibling rivalry. Table 1 shows various forms of social jealousy. Only the first scenario above is a factor contributing to sibling rivalry due to gender differences. Meanwhile, for three of them, data revealed that social envy in cases of sibling rivalry was associated with a somewhat narrow birth age range. The first child was between the ages of 1.2 and 3 years old.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Sibling rivalry is a well-known phenomenon. The situation in question is caused by a variety of circumstances. Sibling rivalry may cause major problems if not addressed properly. Identifying one sort of sibling rivalry symptom is a shared responsibility, especially for parents with multiple children. Having more than one child makes it difficult for parents to retain the same things, giving the child the impression that all he had as a child is divided and is no longer focused on him. Love and attention are common experiences for children. As a result, many children exhibit uncommon symptoms and personality characteristics when this happens.

Sibling rivalry can lead to social jealousy. Children with siblings are more likely to exhibit symptoms of social jealousy when they perceive that their parents' affection and attention are no longer focused on them. Thus, the unpleasant behaviour that emerges can take the form of actions that do not generally happen and are carried out by the child, such as punching, sobbing unexpectedly, and so on. According to the research, three out of four youngsters in the study indicate that a relatively close birth age range is the most significant factor in the occurrence of social jealousy and sibling rivalry in sibling relationships. It is believed that in the future, this research will provide solutions to various questions about sibling rivalry. In the future, the author aims to do a more in-depth study by expanding the number of samples or research items.

The novelty of this study derives from previous studies, which identified in detail based on information gathered from informants that, on average, elements of social envy arise when the birth span is relatively close. Although there are various other reasons that can cause children to have sibling rivalry with their siblings, the most common is a relatively close birth span. The researcher's focus throughout the results and discussion chapter is limited to two variables: birth span and gender disparities. In the future, it is hoped that other researchers who want to conduct research on sibling rivalry will focus on other variables such as the number of siblings in a family or the level of attachment between parents and children as a result of sibling rivalry or social jealousy among siblings.

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