

Abstract (250-350 words):

Background: Siblings of children with disabilities are at an increased risk for mental health and behavioural difficulties. Existing sibling-focused interventions are beneficial in providing social and emotional support, learning through psychoeducational activities, and offering siblings strategies to highlight their strengths and familial relationships. Although interventions to support siblings of children with disabilities show promising results, guidelines on intervention structure and design are limited.

Objective: This scoping review aims to (1) summarize the characteristics of sibling-focused interventions, (2) identify critical elements of interventions and relevant outcomes, and (3) highlight gaps in the literature to guide future research directions.

Methods: Scoping review guidelines were aligned with Arksey and O'Malley, with considerations from Levac et al., while adhering to the PRISMA-ScR checklist. Four databases: (1) Ovid MEDLINE; (2) EMBASE; (3) CINAHL; and (4) PsycInfo were searched without publication year restrictions due to the sparse research area. After screening 4664 studies for title and abstract, 89 articles were eligible for full-text review, from which 34 studies were included for data extraction. Studies were coded descriptively for study and intervention characteristics, design elements, and intervention outcomes.

Results: Common sibling-focused intervention elements included: (1) Theoretical Framework; (2) Psychoeducation; (3) Age-appropriate Activities; and (4) Social Engagement. Most interventions were delivered using a group-based and in-person format (n=28; 82.4%). Results also demonstrated the scarcity of remote delivery options for interventions, including the use of virtual delivery and telephone support (n=2; 5.8%). Intervention outcomes were focused on enhancing sibling connectedness, knowledge, attitudes, and mental health. Future directions should strive for (1) diversity in participating families, (2) rigorous methodological approach to study design, (3) qualitative exploration of sibling experiences, and (4) increased intervention accessibility.

Conclusions: This scoping review provides a comprehensive synthesis of sibling-focused interventions, common design elements, and relevant outcomes. Results may guide researchers and clinicians in the development of meaningful and accessible interventions for families. Findings also highlight key recommendations on future research directions, including study design and intervention development.