

Violence in sibling relationships: abuse or par for the course?

*A qualitative interview study on the perspective of
school counsellors on sibling violence*

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the perspective of school counsellors on sibling violence, focusing on their understanding of the phenomenon through their professional experiences and their perceptions of their own abilities in addressing it. The study was conducted through a qualitative approach, where six school counsellors working with teenagers aged thirteen years and up were interviewed using a semi-structured interview method. The findings of this study suggest that school counsellors play an important role in identifying, responding, and promoting change in cases of sibling violence within the school system. Furthermore, their observations indicate that the family environment can be significant to the occurrence of sibling violence through the normalisation and perpetuation of the violence, be it directly or through a general culture of violence in the family. Additionally, the occurrence of sibling violence has also been observed to have some potential consequences for persons experiencing it, such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and mistrust of others.

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1 Introduction

Sibling violence is an understudied area of domestic violence both in Sweden and internationally (Foody et al., 2020; Meyers, 2017), despite the long-lasting and impactful nature of sibling relationships (Button & Gealt, 2005; Meyers, 2017). Kiselica and Morrill-Richards (2007) have dubbed sibling violence a forgotten abuse form due to it being largely neglected in both research and public discussion. Still, some studies suggest it is the most common form of family violence, sometimes occurring more frequently than parent-child abuse (Pickering & Sanders, 2017). Nevertheless, this expression of violence is sometimes deemed to be harmless to the childhood experience by parents and society overall (Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Meyers, 2017; Pickering & Sanders, 2017; Plamondon et al., 2021).

Compared to other forms of violence between children and their peers, such as peer bullying, sibling violence is less likely to be reported outside the family (Foody et al., 2020; Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007). In some cases, sibling violence is misconstrued as a normative part of an individual's socialisation (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 2005; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Meyers, 2017). Therefore, parents are more likely to dismiss the behaviour as standard, albeit sometimes a more intense, form of sibling rivalry (Pickering & Sanders, 2017).

1.1 Potential consequences

A growing body of research has highlighted the consequences of sibling violence in both childhood and adulthood. Such consequences include mental health issues, lower self-esteem, and lower perceived social competence (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 2005; Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Meyers, 2017; Perkins & Meyers, 2020; Plamondon et al., 2021). Studies suggest that persons affected by sibling violence could be more vulnerable to other forms of victimisation, such as peer bullying and intimate partner abuse (Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Perkins & Meyers, 2020; Plamondon et al., 2021; Spira et al., 2020; Toseeb, 2022).

Although research indicates that sibling violence can be more common than peer bullying (DeLara, 2022; Foody et al., 2020), it remains highly underreported outside of the immediate family (Plamondon et al., 2021). The experience of sibling violence is correlated to a higher risk of being exposed to peer bullying (DeLara, 2022; Foody et al., 2020), whether as a

victim or victimiser. Therefore, one can posit that teachers and school counsellors might be some of the first key adults outside of the immediate family to encounter children experiencing sibling violence (Stutey & Clemens, 2015). This gives way to the question of whether these professionals possess the tools and skills necessary to ensure the well-being of these children.

1.2 In a Swedish context

Sibling violence is relatively understudied in a Swedish context. There is a scarcity of national statistics on sibling violence in Sweden because it is often included under umbrella terms such as family violence and domestic violence. In The National Board of health and welfare's (Socialstyrelsen) guide to the documentation of the child's best interest in social services, siblings were mentioned twice; neither time mentions violence in sibling relationships (Socialstyrelsen, 2012).

The BBIC (barns behov i centrum), or Children's needs in focus inquiry system by The National Board of health and welfare (NBHW), does include questions regarding the health and behaviour of siblings in families (Socialstyrelsen, 2018). Said questions have inquiries regarding a sibling's potential delinquent behaviours or tendency towards violence in general. Siblings are also included in inquiries about family and close relations, but not those regarding exposure to violence by peers. Furthermore, the quality of sibling relationships is not explicitly included in the protective factors against a child's exposure to physical and psychological violence. Siblings are also included under the umbrella term 'close relations' (närstående) in the NBHW guide to the social workers' and health care professionals' work with domestic violence (Socialstyrelsen, 2016). Still, the focus of the document is primarily intimate partner abuse pertaining to adults.

It could be said that the focus of prevention and intervention work per the NBHW guidelines seems to revolve around violence perpetrated by adults against children. One can argue that the different forms of violence between children, including sibling violence are overlooked. In practice, this could pose issues such as de-prioritising efforts focusing on sibling violence in favour of interventions for more widely recognised forms of violence. This could contribute to relevant professionals such as school counsellors and healthcare professionals not having access to the relevant skills and education to help children experiencing sibling

violence. Therefore, the question remains whether relevant professionals such as school counsellors have an adequate understanding of the phenomenon, and possess the tools and skills necessary to ensure the well-being of children who experience violence in their sibling relationships

1.3 Aim

This study aims to explore the perspective of school counsellors on sibling violence, focusing on their understanding of the phenomenon through their professional experiences and their perceptions of their own abilities in addressing it.

1.4 Research questions

1. According to school counsellors, how can a child's family environment contribute to the occurrence of violence in sibling relationships?
2. According to school counsellors, what are the perceived consequences of violence in sibling relationships on children?
3. How do school counsellors recognise and respond to cases of sibling violence?

1.5 Term Definitions

Due to the dynamic nature of sibling violence, this section will introduce key terms used to describe the phenomenon, along with how they will be used in this study.

1.5.1 *Abuse by any other name*

The terminology around sibling violence, much like the terminology surrounding domestic violence overall, is not clearly defined. Words such as 'violence', 'abuse', 'maltreatment', 'aggression', and 'bullying' – whose definition has been debated in multiple research fields – have all been used synonymously to explain physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse in sibling relationships (Button & Gealt, 2005; Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Meyers, 2017; Perkins & Meyers, 2020). Burcar Alm (2021) states that victims and survivors tend to minimise their experiences by using words such as 'arguing' and 'picking-on' to describe them. While terms such as 'abuse' and 'aggression' are reserved for the hypothetical experiences of others. Perkins and Meyers (2020) argue that the multitude of labels could dilute the severity of the experience and further minimise it on a societal level.

The abused sibling may experience a sense of isolation when these other terms are used as they invalidate the abusive sibling experience...and contribute to victims' doubt about the legitimacy of their experience as, in fact, abusive (p.339)

The terms 'abuse' and 'violence' are used interchangeably to describe the phenomenon of violence in sibling relationships in this study to allow space for nuance in experiences and definitions without minimising the abusive nature of said experiences.

1.5.2 *Rivalry or abuse*

Much like most interpersonal relationships, healthy sibling relationships are not void of conflict. Meyers (2017) states that sibling rivalry is a natural part of sibling relationships that can foster necessary skills such as cooperation, negotiation, and competition. The interactions in these situations have a mutual element that can be classified as sibling rivalry instead of sibling abuse (ibid). In other words, in interactions classified as sibling rivalry, one sibling does not hold a significant amount of power over the other. In sibling relationships where violence is present, there becomes a clear power imbalance. There is a consistent presence of intimidation, degradation, and control exerted through physical and emotional force (Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Meyers, 2017). The abusive behaviour can result in feelings of inadequacy, shame, and fear (Button & Gealt, 2005; Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Meyers, 2017).

Kiselica and Morrill-Richards (2007) have argued that an act's emotional and psychological impact must be considered when determining whether an action should be categorised as abusive; intention and context become integral to the definition. Similarly, Burcar Alm (2021) notes a delicate balance between rivalry and abuse in sibling relationships. She posits that issues can arise if discussions on the matter do not include nuances in the interpretation of sibling interactions. She states that:

Det blir problematiskt om allt våld mellan syskon förstås inom ramen för en normaliserande våldsdiskurs...som gör att deras erfarenheter inte tas på allvar. (På samma sätt skulle det vara problematiskt att tolka all rivalitet mellan syskon som våld.) (Burcar Alm, 2021 p.77)

2 Literature Overview

The primary focus of the studies presented in this section has been the lived experience of survivors and the effect of the immediate environment on said experience, as well as the role of the social worker regarding sibling violence. Therefore, studies that examine said aspects will be used as the foundation for the research area explored in this study.

2.1 Search process

The search process began with an open-ended search on sibling violence, using Google scholar, books, and Swedish news articles on sibling violence. Bildtgård and Tielman-Lindberg (2008) state that gaining a broader understanding of the research area can aid in the identification of the tools necessary to facilitate a more directed search. Searches were performed through ProQuest platforms and the EBSCO Discovery Service to find relevant scientific texts. Initially, the searches yielded an extensive amount of search results, most of which were irrelevant to the purpose of this study. Therefore, a filter was used, requiring the majority of search words be present in either the abstract or in the keywords to narrow down the number of search results. A chain search was later done using the reference lists of several studies the author has chosen to include in this paper. This last step generated the majority of relevant studies used here.

The following keywords were used in varying combinations throughout the search process: "sibling violence", "sibling abuse", "sibling maltreatment", "sibling bullying", "violence in sibling relationships/ våld i syskon relationer", "family violence", "sibling relationships", "domestic violence", "peer bullying", "school counsellor", "social worker", "school social worker", "incest", "sexual sibling abuse". The different combinations were created using words such as "or/eller", "and/och ", and "Not/inte".

2.2 Previous research

This section will present an overview of previous research relevant to this study. The research included is presented in five significant themes focusing primarily on victim experiences and the impact of the environment on said experiences. The role of the social worker is also briefly discussed here. The research presented here is of international origins due to a lack of relevant Swedish research. This requires that some local and cultural variation be considered when applying the presented research findings to the context of the study at hand.

As previously mentioned, the term sibling violence is broad and multifaceted, which has resulted in different labels being used to describe the phenomenon throughout the various presented studies. Therefore, it is crucial to keep in mind the findings of previous studies may have been affected by their chosen terminology. As such, the terminology used in the studies mentioned below will be left unaltered in this section to promote an accurate representation of their results.

2.2.1 *The normalisation of sibling violence*

As previously mentioned, sibling violence is considered by many researchers to be one of the most prevalent forms of familial violence; and yet it remains one of the least studied in the field (Duncan, 1999; Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Meyers, 2017). In an interview study aiming to illustrate the different expressions of physical and emotional sibling abuse, Meyers (2017) interviewed 19 participants on the topic. Most participants attributed their reluctance and uncertainty about labelling their experience as abusive to societal and parental minimisation of the acts. In Pickering and Sander's (2017) Australian survey study, 520 parents were recruited to gain an understanding of the challenges in the parenting of siblings. The results showed that two-thirds of participants reported conflict within their children's relationships yet stated that they got along well. This could be due to conflicts within sibling relationships being considered an inevitable reality whilst still being undesirable in theory (ibid).

Hardy et al. (2010) conducted a survey study to gauge the perceived acceptability of sibling aggression in American undergraduate students. Participants rated the acceptability of four scenarios of sibling aggression, followed by a survey of their personal experiences. Findings showed that most participants (both male and female) had experienced verbal and sometimes physical sibling aggression, both as victims and sometimes as perpetrators. The study also found that personal experiences of sibling aggression were positively correlated with the acceptability of the behaviour in others. Hardy et al. (2010) posit that this could be a form of justification of the act on the perpetrators' part, done through the normalisation of sibling aggression to minimise the perceived gravity of the act. The study's methodological approach could pose a limitation, considering that participants might be less likely to admit to perpetrating certain acts of sibling aggression if they had earlier rated them as "unacceptable" in the hypothetical scenarios.

2.2.2 *The impact of the social environment*

A survey study was conducted by Plamondon et al. (2021) with a sample of 214 French-Canadian university students to determine the effect of past victimisation in the form of sibling bullying on the relationship between family dynamics and the well-being of young adults. The study found a positive correlation between negative family dynamics and sibling bullying in childhood and adolescence. Negative family dynamics refer to perceived issues of sibling rivalry, aggression by parental figures and interparental conflict. The study also found a positive correlation between sibling bullying and internalised issues such as lower self-esteem, a lack of sense of confidence, and higher life dissatisfaction. This is further supported by Hardy et al. (2010) and Meyers (2017).

2.2.3 *The reciprocal element of sibling violence*

All of the abovementioned studies note the reciprocal nature of violence in sibling relationships (Hardy et al., 2010; Meyers, 2017; Pickering & Sanders, 2017; Plamondon et al., 2021). Meyers (2017) does classify the reciprocal element of the conflict partially as a characteristic of typical sibling rivalry, with the condition that neither sibling consistently holds power over the other. The remaining studies suggest that reciprocity does not negate the nature of the violence. Plamondon et al. (2021) argue that, unlike peer bullying, the underlying causes and relationship dynamics between siblings lend themselves to a reciprocal

element in the expression of violence, which makes the imbalance of power far less central to sibling bullying.

2.2.4 *Multiple Victimisation*

Multiple studies have suggested that experiences of sibling violence could contribute to the multiple victimisations. An Irish survey study conducted by Foody et al. (2020) explored the effects of multiple victimisations on the victims by examining peer and sibling bullying. The study found that victims of sibling bullying were at a higher risk of becoming victims of peer bullying. Hendy et al. (2012) found in an American survey study, with 1199 participating college students, that experiences of sibling violence were significant predictors of partner violence later in life in women.

Spira et al. (2020) have suggested a potential link between elder abuse and sibling violence in a conceptual article aiming to describe the possible effect of sibling violence on the vulnerability of victims of elder abuse. They posit that, while there has been no empirical research conducted on the connection between sibling violence and elder abuse, studies on the relationship between sibling violence and other forms of abuse show a link between the experiences of sibling violence and risks of multiple victimisations. This could allow for the hypothesis that experiences of sibling violence could potentially be linked to instances of elder abuse. That being said, the article does not examine this link with a specific form of elder abuse.

2.2.5 *Social work interventions*

Perkins and Meyers (2020) state that social work interventions are warranted in response to sibling violence in an overview study on emotional and physical sibling violence manifestation. The article highlights the importance of social worker interventions that focus on creating an accepting space where discussions of aggression within the family can productively take place. It also notes that interventions that focus on parental guidance are necessary due to poor parenting strategies being an indicator of sibling violence. Therefore, educating and supporting parents by equipping them with the necessary tools to intervene in instances of sibling aggression is deemed an essential part of a social worker's role in interventions against sibling violence (ibid). While this article addresses some relevant

themes concerning sibling violence, one could say that the points made in it are somewhat peripheral and could stand to be further developed. That being said, it does serve as an adequate foundation for further explorations of the topics at hand.

In a conceptual article Stutey and Clemens (2015) focus on the role of school counsellors in interventions regarding sibling violence and echo the findings of previously presented studies, which posit that sibling violence is an understudied field where conflicting terminology and unclear definitions undermine the development of interventive development. The article presented a five-step model in lieu of an official protocol for recognising sibling abuse. The authors posit that school counsellors could use the model to recognise and respond to instances of sibling abuse. The authors concluded that it is highly likely that school counsellors are some of the first adults to identify the presence of sibling violence. It is important to note that the article is a joint venture with the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) and is derived from a focus on the American school counsellor, and regional and national variations should be included in the interpretation of the model presented and the article as a whole.

Stutey and Clemens' (2015) article also echoes Perkins and Meyers' (2020) statement on the importance of social workers raising awareness of sibling violence in a child's network as a form of intervention, specifically concerning school counsellors. Another point in which both articles agree pertains to sibling violence being an indicator of parental negligence (Perkins & Meyers, 2020; Stutey & Clemens, 2015). Perkins and Meyers (2020) argue that parents should carry more responsibility for the occurrence and prevention of sibling violence, whilst Stutey and Clemens (2015) state that school counsellors should report parental refusal to cooperate in interventions regarding sibling violence as 'parental neglect'.

2.2.6 General limitations of presented studies

The findings of most of the abovementioned studies should be interpreted with certain shared limitations in mind. The most prominent of which are the relatively homogenous participation pools from which data was derived. Whilst the studies each focused on different relevant groups to the topic – be it parents, professionals, or individuals with first-hand experiences – the participants still shared several similarities within said groups. In most cases, participants were predominantly female and Caucasian. In the case of Pickering &

Sanders (2017), participants were also mostly highly educated Caucasian mothers with a higher income status. The majority of the authors of these studies note the lack of exploration of different cultural norms and socioeconomic variations on the phenomenon of sibling violence and the need to focus on said variables in future research. Therefore, including variables such as father participation, cultural norms, income variances, ethnicity, and education could influence the findings of the abovementioned studies. Another significant limitation is the retrospective and self-reporting nature of these studies, resulting in possible inaccuracies due to the subjectivity of participant answers and the amount of time passing between the conducting of the studies and the experiences they intended to explore. In the case of Spira et al. (2020), whilst the article is not an empirical study, it is based heavily on previous research on sibling violence. It presents potential deductions about the connection between sibling violence and elder abuse. The author has chosen to include it in this section to highlight a relevant and largely unexplored area in research.

2.3 Conclusion and reflections

A clear focus area within the field and the studies above is the perspective of victims of sibling violence. Generally, there seems to be a consensus within the field regarding most potential consequences of sibling violence and most risk factors and ameliorating conditions for the phenomenon. Furthermore, there is a consensus that further studies on sibling violence are still required for an adequate understanding of the phenomenon. This includes studies from varying perspectives, including the perspectives of perpetrators, parental figures, and professionals encountering said phenomenon. Furthermore, there remains a fragmentation concerning the labelling of violence in sibling relationships. Many labels are used to define sibling violence, which, as previously mentioned, can influence the findings to some degree. Research focusing on socioeconomic and cultural nuances is also somewhat missing, as seen in the abovementioned studies.

Previous studies also highlight the heightened risk of experiencing multiple victimisations correlated with experiencing sibling violence, such as peer bullying. They also note that the school environment can play a significant role in either ameliorating or aggravating instances of sibling violence. This lays the foundation for this study, which aims to explore a professional perspective on sibling violence that is also uniquely placed to address multiple

forms of victimisation beyond sibling violence, such as peer bullying (and potentially violence within the home).

The studies presented in this section are primarily contemporary, but there still is a lack of Swedish research on the topic. The studies are predominantly conducted in western countries, mainly in the USA; this could result in some cultural nuance regarding views on family dynamics, especially in sibling relationships, to be overlooked in the field. Furthermore, this overview has not explored studies regarding the relationship between mental illness and sibling violence. The focus in this section has been the currently available body of research on the impact of different factors in the environment which may promote the occurrence of and hinder interventions on sibling violence.

3 Theory

To analyse school counsellors' perspectives on sibling violence and their perception of their professional role in recognising and responding to it, a theoretical framework consisting of a family system approach accompanied by Stutey and Clemens' (2015) modified five-step model for recognising and responding to sibling violence was employed. The participants' reasonings and conceptualisations around the phenomenon of sibling violence will be analysed through a family system lens. Their process of recognition and response will be compared to Stutey and Clemens' (2015) modified five-step model.

The initial coding and thematisation of the participants' reasonings and conceptualisations around the phenomenon of sibling violence, along with their reflection upon the boundaries of their professional roles – which will be further explored in the results & analysis section (see section.5) – has been deemed compatible with the aforementioned approaches. Based on the research questions and the previous research sibling violence was approached in this study as a part of a larger dysfunctionality. Drawing on the empirical data, one can further explore this relationship between sibling violence and said dysfunctionality within the family through the application of a family system theory.

This approach does run the risk of diluting the material analysis and causing it to be somewhat lacking in structure due to the combination of approaches present. To counteract this, the author selected a theory and model that build a common foundation. That foundation is the assumption that the family system is vital in the behaviour and well-being of the individuals within it (Hyde-Nolan & Juliao, 2012; Stutey & Clemens, 2015; Yerby, 1995). This shared understanding could counteract the risk of dilution in the analysis by providing a cohesive starting point for the theoretical framework.

Additionally, the role of the school counsellor, which is highly individualised and focused on social work within a school setting (Stutey & Clemens, 2015), has also been explored in this study. For the purpose of understanding the conflict regarding the role and responsibilities of a school counsellor in association with their reflections and understanding of sibling violence, the application of Goffman's role theory was deemed appropriate. In order to minimise the risk of diluting the analysis of the material, the theory will be presented in a rudimentary manner, with the aim to restrict its application only to the most relevant parts pertaining to the material of the study.

3.1 The family system theory

The family system theory is an approach used to understand an individual in the context of their interaction within a family system and the interactions of the system with its environment (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022). It operates under the idea that individuals cannot be viewed in an isolated manner outside of their interactions and relationships with their families (Hyde-Nolan & Juliao, 2012). There is a likelihood that any changes affecting one member of the family may have effects on the entire family system (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022; Plamondon et al., 2021). According to the family system theory, the family is significantly influential regarding an individual's well-being in the long term, both emotionally and physically (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022). Furthermore, the values, beliefs, and rules within a family can shape an individual over the course of their life (ibid).

This theory can be used to understand the experience of sibling violence in the context of the family system, seeing as “...patterns of interaction between family members create, maintain, and perpetuate both problem and nonproblematic behaviors” (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022, p.188). Furthermore, the normalisation of sibling violence by the family and the impact of other factors in the family environment which may affect the experience of sibling violence may be further understood by applying the family system theory to the empirical data of this study.

The family system theory encompasses eight interlinked concepts (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022). This study will be restricted to using the general definition of the theory along with the concepts nuclear family’s emotional process and the family projections process as they examine the most relevant points of the data.

3.1.1 *The nuclear family’s emotional process*

This concept focuses on four problem categories within the family system; said problem areas may overlap and at times instigate one another (ibid). The problem areas are marital conflict, emotional distance, the impairment of one or more children, and dysfunction in one spouse (ibid). An example of such overlap is instances where emotional distance may be caused by dysfunction in a spousal relationship, through excessive criticism or disengagement.

3.1.2 *The family projection process*

This concept revolves around the parent’s ability to project their problems onto the children in the family system. A child’s beliefs and values are to some degree shaped by their parents, who may impart certain strengths to the child. However, children can also inherit the problems and shortcomings of their parents, which may include an excessive need for approval or an inflated sense of responsibility for the happiness of others (ibid).

3.2 Stutey and Clemens' five-step model

This model will focus on the school counsellors' processes in recognising and responding to instances of sibling violence. As there is no standard process available, it becomes difficult to examine each school counsellor's individualised approach. The proposed model used here has been modified by Stutey and Clemens (2015) – from the original model intended for medical professionals – to align with a school counsellor's role. It will be used in this study to provide a tool for describing the individualised approaches and processes curated by school counsellors in their work with the phenomenon in a more structured manner.

The model was created in cooperation with *The American School Counsellor Association* for American school counsellors, which is evident in the way it is mapped out. Local, cultural, and organisational differences between the Swedish and American school counsellors are not explored. This could affect the depth with which the model can be applied to the analysis of this study. Furthermore, the model is a proposed manner of approach to sibling violence, not an officially implemented one, which could put in question its credibility. The study at hand does not intend to replicate the application or evaluate the viability of the model. Instead, it intends to use a simplified version, created for this study (see subsection 3.2.1) to describe the respondents' retellings of their individualised processes to present a skeletal frame within which the processes implemented by school counsellors can be understood. The simplified model excludes specific interventions, approaches, and criteria that do not apply to the Swedish school counsellor's role.

3.2.1 *The simplified version*

The following is a simplified description of Stutey and Clemens' (2015) model, created by the author for this study to restrict the use of the model to only its most relevant parts based on the Swedish school counsellor's role and the material of this study.

1. *Assess*: focuses on garnering an accurate understanding of sibling dynamics and assessing whether a student may be experiencing – or exhibiting – behaviours consistent with sibling violence. Said experience is evaluated through a series of questions intended to ascertain the nature of the sibling relationship.

2. Conceptualise: This step is intended to gauge behavioural patterns within sibling dynamics on a spectrum of sibling aggression. This process is informed by the school counsellor's understanding and definition of sibling violence, along with their knowledge of child development and behaviour.

Determining the parents'/guardians' willingness to cooperate is a key part of this step. The model highlights the importance of parental involvement in the prevention and response to sibling violence. This is due to the underlying understanding that the overall family dynamic directly impacts the sibling dynamic. This step is also deemed necessary for the school counsellor to determine if the situation warrants reporting to social services.

The process of conceptualising sibling violence in comparison to normal sibling dynamics within this model is based on the following four criteria coined by Wiehe (Stutey & Clemens, 2015):

- Age appropriateness of the behaviour
- Presence of victimisation
- The duration and frequency of the behaviour
- The purpose of the behaviour

Behaviours falling outside of the developmental and social norms for children of that age may indicate the presence of sibling violence in the dynamic. Furthermore, "...behaviors may constitute sibling abuse when they are unidirectional and represent a clear power differential with intent or perceived intent to harm" (Stutey & Clemens, 2014 p.211).

3. Plan: The third step is for the school counsellor to determine what viable next steps can be taken in the response process, along with the parents/guardians and students. This relies on the assumption that the family systems inform both sibling dynamics and the choice of intervention methods to sibling violence. Exploring the parents'/guardians' willingness to learn and implement tools to prevent and address instances of sibling violence should

be prioritised. This is done concurrently with an evaluation of the student's safety. The outcomes of the fourth step are based on whether the situation is deemed entirely unsafe for the student.

4. *Intervention*: This step is a dynamic one, considering that intervention in the form of a report to social services can be done at any point in the process depending on the student's safety in their current situation. Other forms of intervention can range from family therapy to case monitoring. The conceptualisation and assessment of the individual case done in the previous steps informs the outcomes of step 4. The types of intervention needed may vary depending on whether said intervention addresses the underlying reason for the emergence of sibling violence or the relational dynamics and effects on individuals resulting from the it.
5. *Evaluate*: Finally, the school counsellor evaluates the interventions that have been provided by themselves or by external parties. The model emphasises the importance of an interdisciplinary team (including school counsellors) and parents/guardians evaluating applied interventions cooperatively. This is done to garner a more detailed understanding of the efficiency of the intervention. Although, the most efficient step in the evaluation, according to the model, would be based on the child's own experiences of said intervention.

3.3 Goffman's role theory

Goffman (2021) builds his theory on the analogy that social reality is much akin to a theatre stage. The role theory states that an individual takes on a certain role on stage, with the expectation of being associated with the attributes attached to the role by the audience. Furthermore, the individual expects the audience to afford them the authority and legitimacy attached to their inhabitancy of the role (ibid). Goffman (2021) states that an individual's actions are directly influenced by the context in which they exist. The shared attributes and characteristics of a role are also subject to the context in which they exist. The audience expects individuals taking on a role to possess enough of the characteristic associated with their role to perform it in the expected manner (ibid). Certain conflicts can arise when two different, sometimes opposing, actions are expected to be performed within the same role or

when an individual is performing multiple roles, which include opposing expectations of the individual (Angelöw & Jonsson, 2015; Goffman, 2021). An example regarding school counsellors can include opposing expectations for the role coming from the principal of the school and the individual school counsellor. In the case of this study, the school counsellor's role is, as previously mentioned, quite individualised with some uncertainties in its characterisation, especially in regard to sibling violence.

3.4 The application of the theoretical approach

As mentioned previously, the theoretical approach of this study, implemented in the results and analysis section (section 5) will use Bowen's family system theory, Stutey and Clemens' modified five-step model, and Goffman's role theory. The family system theory will focus on the further understanding of the phenomenon of sibling violence from the school counsellors' perspective. Specifically, their definitions of and observations of the phenomenon. This is intended to explore the impact of the family system on sibling relationships, focusing on the connection between conflicts in the family system and the occurrence of sibling violence. Secondly, the five-step model will be used to describe the practices and processes of school counsellors in their work with sibling violence. Participants' answers will be analysed and later described using a simplified version of the five-step model. This description will later be used to garner insight into how school counsellors work with the phenomenon. Lastly, Goffman's role theory will be used to describe the school counsellors' reflection on their professional roles, including their practices and reasoning on their work with sibling violence. Furthermore, the theoretical perspectives will be applied in a manner which complements the presentation and analysis of the results in section 5. This is for the purpose of garnering an added layer to the analysis and thereby a better understanding of how certain aspects of the results relate to the theoretical approach of this. Additionally, the theoretical perspectives will be applied in a more holistic manner through the discussion of the findings in section 6.

4 Methodology

This section will discuss the methodological plan of the study, which includes the methodological approach of data collection, analysis, and participant selection. Relevant ethical considerations will also be discussed here, along with the study's limitations.

4.1 Methodological approach

The aim of this study – which is to explore the perspective of school counsellors on sibling violence – lends itself to a qualitative methodological approach, specifically qualitative interviews. Considering that the experiences of school counsellors are at the centre of this study, semi-structured qualitative interviews would allow for a deeper and more detailed description of these accounts (Kallio et al., 2016; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). Therefore, the conducted interviews followed an interview guide (ibid) consisting of open-ended, mostly thematic questions derived from the research questions of this study. This was to ensure that all interview participants were asked the same central questions, allowing interviews to have a shared starting point and frame whilst still exploring the participants' nuanced experiences (ibid).

4.2 Participant selection

As mentioned previously, the experiences of school counsellors are at the centre of this study. Therefore, the inclusion criterion was current work experience as school counsellors working with teenagers aged thirteen and up. School counsellors without any work experience with the age group were excluded, along with those who had not encountered some form of sibling violence in their professional role according to their own interpretations. The age bracket implemented was to ensure that participant accounts were derived from cases of individuals in similar life stages where they could reflect on their situation more independently. Seeing as this study does not aim to explore the local differences in school counsellor practices as a factor, there was no restriction on location in the selection of participants. Furthermore, no distinction was made between school counsellors working in public (*kommunala skolor*) or private (*friskolor*) schools. The selection process could be said to constitute a purposeful selection process, meaning participants were chosen for the study at the author's discretion and judgment of their suitability (Palinkas et al., 2015).

4.3 Interview guide

Data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews based on questions from an interview guide (see [appendix 2](#)). Said interview guide was written in Swedish since the interviews were conducted in Swedish to ensure that no vital information was misinterpreted on either side and that the school counsellors could participate in the interviews without the encumbrance of an added language barrier. Most of the questions in the interview guide are open-ended in nature. The questions are divided into four themes that reflect key components from the aim of the study and the research questions: *The concept of sibling violence*, *experiences with sibling violence*, *perceived ability for recognition and response*, and *observations of the affected children*. The semi-structured interview was chosen specifically for its flexibility in conducting interviews based on the individual participants. This means that follow-up questions based on the individual participant's answers were asked alongside the questions presented in the guide (Kallio et al., 2016). In some cases, a choice was made to forgo certain questions from the guide if deemed necessary.

4.4 Data collection

Data was collected through six interviews with school counsellors, who were contacted via E-mails containing an information letter ([appendix 1](#)) detailing the study's aim and practical information regarding the interview process. Due to the potential participant pool being made up of school counsellors from around the country, it was deemed best to conduct the interviews digitally or through the phone. The interviews were recorded using a voice memo application and through the recording function on Zoom. The duration of the interviews varied between 35 and 58 minutes.

The interviews began with a repeat of the information offered in the information letter. A choice was made early in the planning of this study to forgo offering a detailed background and definition for sibling violence to explore the school counsellors' own awareness, understanding and definitions of the phenomenon. While allowing for the exploration of sibling violence as a concept, this choice did present some challenges regarding the level of detail offered by participants in their answers to some questions. This challenge was noted after two interviews were conducted. In order to garner more in-depth insight into the school counsellor's professional perception of the phenomenon, a vignette in the form of a fictional example case ([appendix 3](#)) was created by the author was added to the interviews. This was

intended to promote an added level of focus to the exploration of how school counsellors approach instances of sibling violence (Wilks, 2004).

Conducting the interviews digitally has both its advantages and disadvantages. The main benefits of this choice are the opportunity for participation without the hindrances a physical interview might add to the study and the ability to conduct said interviews on relatively short notice (Gruber et al., 2021). Furthermore, participants can allocate more time when the interview is conducted remotely, and the distance created by digital interviews may facilitate the discussion of sensitive topics for the participants (ibid).

A disadvantage of digital/remote interviews could be a loss of fluidity in conversation caused by either technical complications or disturbances in the environment for the participants. Considering that physical face-to-face interviews generate more context for the verbal data (ibid) one could posit that these disadvantages, along with a compromised ability to observe the full extent of a participant's body language, can lead to a loss of some aspects of the participants' stories.

4.5 Transcription of interviews

The transcription of interviews is an essential step toward familiarisation with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Bryman (2011) notes the importance of transcription that is as close to verbatim as possible to preserve the context of the interviews, which risks being diluted in the transcription process. Being that focus of this study is the content of the interviews as opposed to the way it is conveyed, some alterations to the transcribed data were done to preserve the readability of the text; these alternations will include editing incomplete sentences and repeated words, and filler words. In order to maintain the participants' anonymity, the transcripts were entirely anonymised, and each participant was assigned a fictitious name, which will be used in section 5 to distinguish the quotes used in the presentation and analysis of results.

4.6 Processing and analysis of data

The analysis of this study was conducted in a thematic manner, which is described as "...a robust systematic framework for coding qualitative data and for then using the coding to identify patterns...in relation to the research questions" (Braun & Clarke, 2014, p.2). This means that the author identified and analysed the reoccurring patterns within the data. This analysis method aligns with the study's purpose and offers a level of flexibility that might prove necessary due to the dynamic nature of the topic at hand (Clarke & Braun, 2018).

The analysis in this study was done following Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis process. The first step of the analysis was to familiarise oneself with the material through transcribing and reading the data. Secondly, significant and interesting patterns in the material were coded. The initial codes ranged from a single word to a sentence, quote, or paragraph. Thirdly, the generated codes were later consolidated into themes. After that, the themes were re-examined and fine-tuned. Some themes were merged, and others were separated into other individual themes. The themes were further examined and analysed to determine the crux of each one in order to label them accurately. Lastly, a presentation of the results, which links back to the research questions and is backed by participant quotes from the interviews, was created. Examples of codes and themes that were consequently generated through the thematic analysis process are presented in table 1.

The nature of this approach can be said to be an abductive one. An abductive approach can be considered a middle ground between fully data-driven or hypothesis-driven approaches (Thompson, 2022). This choice was made in part due to the lack of research on sibling violence and due to the nature of the aim of the study (Svensson, 2015), which is based on the perspective of only a handful of school counsellors. The results and analysis derived from the empirical data are presented in section 5 through quotes extracted from the material with the aim to highlight and exemplify the presented results. Through first conducting a data-driven thematic analysis, as opposed to a theoretically-driven approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a shift has occurred in the research questions and theoretical approach of this study. This is in part because of the mostly explorative nature of the aim of the study.

Table 1. Some generated codes and themes

Themes	Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fluid line between sibling violence and sibling rivalry • A tendency towards normalisation • Dysfunction within the family system 	<p>“En naturlig del av syskonrelationer”/ a natural part of sibling relationships. Lenient boundaries. Denial. A family culture of violence. A grey-zone distinction. Minimising the violence. Loyalty to the aggressor.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school counsellor's role and approach to sibling violence 	<p>Pre-emptive work. Dare to inquire, dare to listen. The victim's spokesperson. Candour and curiosity. The inclusion of the child. Checking one's prejudice.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of trust 	<p>The cornerstone of effective response. A relationship based on candour. “Vi träffades I nästan ett år innan hon vågade prata”/ We met for almost a year before she dared to talk</p>

4.7 Ethical considerations

Proper research conduct requires the consideration of ethical challenges present in a study. This is especially true for studies conducted through qualitative interviews, especially regarding sensitive topics. Which is why this study followed the Swedish research council's (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017) guidelines of participant protection to ensure the preservation of the safety and rights of the participants.

Potential participants were informed of the terms and criteria for participation in this study, per the Swedish research council's information and consent codes (ibid). Information on the purpose and scope of the study was provided to potential participants in the recruitment stage. Furthermore, participants were informed that their participation is voluntary. This includes being informed of their right to terminate their participation before, during, or after the interview. Participants were also informed of measures taken to preserve the confidentiality of the interviews (ibid).

4.8 Credibility, dependability, and transferability

The aim of this study is to garner a detailed understanding of the accounts and perspectives of a handful of school counsellors on sibling violence through qualitative interviews. This means that the process of participant selection could have excluded some nuance in the collected data. Furthermore, the individualised nature of a school counsellor's role and educational background, along with the local variations in school social work on an international level, can be said to affect the transferability of this study (Bryman, 2011). The lost nuance can also be attributed to the fact that focusing on the school counsellor's perspective forgoes the perspectives of affected children/teenagers and parents/guardians. Due to the ethical reasoning presented in section 4.7, the choice was made to interview school counsellors due to their focus being social work in school.

A different methodological approach, such as a survey study, could have also been used in the exploration of sibling violence. A general and wider-encompassing understanding of school counsellors' understanding of the topic could have been had that way. Considering that the study aimed to garner a deeper understanding of the topic, a qualitative interview was deemed more appropriate.

Given that sibling violence is – much most terminology regarding close relationship violence – a concept that is difficult to define, the choice to forgo offering a definition and extensive background on the topic can be said to have influenced the study's outcomes. This is due to the likelihood that participants' answers might have originated from differing definitions. This can also be a contributing factor to the low transferability of the study. Participants were asked at the beginning of the interview to define the concept of sibling violence from their own understanding. Nevertheless, the choice does affect the credibility of the study and the readers' ability to evaluate said credibility (ibid).

5 Results and analysis

This section aims to answer the research questions of this study and contribute to the growing understanding of the concept of sibling violence, specifically the school counsellor's role and perspective on the matter, along with contributing factors and consequences of the phenomenon. In this section, the author will present the results of the study along with the analysis and interpretation of said results with the help of the theoretical perspectives presented in section 3. Some parts of the material presented in this section may fall outside the scope of the aforementioned theoretical perspectives. The choice was made to include them in the results section due to their interesting and relevant nature. Subsection 5.1 named *Sibling violence or sibling rivalry* is made up of such material and will primarily focus on laying the foundation for further analysis by presenting the conversation around defining the concept of sibling violence. Other sections consisting of relevant material outside the scope of the theoretical approach will be clearly presented as such in advance.

5.1 The fluid line between sibling violence and sibling rivalry

Much like any other form of domestic violence, sibling violence can be regarded as a complicated phenomenon, which can be indicative of more extensive issues and consequently lead to harmful consequences for the individuals and families involved.

Jean: [...] det är hela systemet som på något vis gör att det blir så här [...]
Det är ingenting man kan lösa bara enkelt mellan två syskon, utan det är
mer komplicerat än så.

The interviewed school counsellors describe sibling violence as a broad expression of violence occurring in a sibling relationship. Consequently, much like in the case of any other form of domestic violence, the act of defining the phenomenon becomes a challenging one.

Alex: Alltså jag tänker väl att alla former av våld som finns i samhället i stort kan ju vara det samma som kan hända mellan syskon, egentligen. Så egentligen alla former av våld fast om det sker mellan syskon, tänker jag är syskonvåld.

This challenge occurs in part due to the fluid nature of the concept of violence overall, as well as the grey area present specifically between sibling violence and sibling rivalry.

Jean: [...] det kan ju vara lite flytande gränser så där när det [...] går över i något annat än att man bråkat med sina syskon, för det gör ju alla.

Despite the challenge, participants made a distinction between sibling violence and sibling rivalry. This distinction was based on different criteria that can be considered when determining the nature of a sibling dynamic. Said criteria include the frequency, severity, and intention behind the act, as well as the presence of a power imbalance between the siblings. Another interesting observation made by the participants was the presence of more lenient boundaries in a sibling relationship.

Odell: [...] när man har det jobbigt i skolan [...] man kan ju lätt komma hem och ta ut det på sina syskon, för där blir man alltid förlåten [...] Det är svårt att dra gränsen mellan när det är normalt eller när det är sjukt.

This separation between a sibling relationship and other peer relationships could make permissible actions that would not be favourably viewed in any other context.

Rene: Det är svårt att beskriva gränsen, men det är när barnen inte kan lösa det och det är grova saker och det är kränkningar och inte lagligt. Liksom hade man gjort samma sak mot en klasskompis så hade det inte varit lagligt eller alls ok och jag tycker att samma regler ska gälla även i hemmet.

Furthermore, the school counsellors note the importance of consulting the victimised child on their feelings of being violated in the evaluation of whether a sibling dynamic can be constituted to include sibling violence.

Bellamy: Framför allt, för att komma fram till det så är det viktigt att se [...] att en kränkning utgår från den enskildes känsla, om den känner att den är kränkt. Det är det man försöker hitta hos eleven och sen får man utgå från det.

5.1.1 *The different expressions of sibling violence*

The concept of sibling violence encompasses more than just physical aggression towards a sibling. Instead, the school counsellors indicated that much like any other form of domestic violence, sibling violence can be expressed in a physical, psychological, material, and sexual manner.

Rene: Det kan vara mycket olika saker. Dels att man slåss och misshandlar. Dels tänker jag det här med kontroll och heder kommer in där[...] detsamma gäller sexuella övergrepp [...] och sen givetvis, alltså psykiskt, att man säger taskiga saker och är elak, jag tänker att det är också en form av våld. Så jag tänker att det är ett väldigt vitt begrepp av våld.

5.2 A tendency towards normalisation

A reoccurring sentiment expressed by all interviewed school counsellors is the prevalent normalisation of sibling violence within a family system. The concept of normalisation can have a great many definitions. For simplicity and to minimise the risk of misrepresenting the material, this study will define the term through the manner in which participants have chosen to describe it. That is to say, normalisation in this study will refer to the act of dismissing, denying, minimising, or otherwise misrepresenting the violence in a sibling relationship both within the family and through interactions with the family's environment.

Alex: Det är nog lätt att med alla typer av våld som blir normaliserat, för det blir ju våld på olika sätt. [...] det kan ju bli så där att ”a men det där, det är ju inte så farligt. Jag bråkade också alltid med mina syskon.

The school counsellors express an understanding of a certain level of normalisation within a family in conversations regarding sibling violence. Sometimes this normalisation occurs through other expressions of violence within the family (see section 5.3), which could be categorised as a contributing factor to sibling violence. While other times there seems to be a normalisation specifically of violent behaviour within sibling relationships.

Bellamy: Hon tänkte att [...] eftersom mamma inte har gjort någonting, bara sagt 'jo men slå tillbaka' så tycker flickan någonstans att hon har normaliserat det för att de pratar kring det så i sin familj [...] det blir som en norm rent sagt.

This characterisation of sibling violence can show how violence can become a norm for the children within the family system through a family system lens. Parents can project their values and beliefs onto their children through their response to and interaction with the conflict. In other words, considering that the family system holds a significant influence on the formation of an individual's values, beliefs, and emotional processes, the normalisation of a problematic behaviour can further perpetuate its expression within the family system as well as in the interaction of the system with its broader context (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022).

5.2.1 *Gender and age, and their roles in normalising sibling violence*

An interesting pattern within the material, which may not be within the scope of the theoretical perspectives, is the presence of a stereotypical approach in conversations surrounding sibling violence. This refers to the standard assumption of older siblings being violent towards younger siblings, specifically older brothers enacting violence upon younger sisters. This could be understood as a reflection of a broader phenomenon where men are generally perpetrators of violence against women.

Taylor: Generellt sätt så tror jag att man tänker att det är män som slår kvinnor. Vi vet ju att det finns kvinnor som slår män också, men det är ingenting som man pratar om.

5.2.1.1 Boys and violence

The normalisation of sibling violence observed by the school counsellors does not appear to be one-size-fits-all. As mentioned previously, some nuance reflected in the data suggests that there may be a difference in the normalisation of sibling violence depending on gender and age. One such variation indicates that the violence seems more easily dismissed and at times, encouraged by the family when the sibling subsystem consists only of boys.

Bellamy: Det finns vissa familjer där framförallt, fäder tänker [...] att vi är män och om vi inte lär oss [...] ta från en annan i våran familj hur ska vi kunna komma långt i livet och kunna få makt [...] [...] ”Man ska kunna ta för sig, det är ok att få en smäll” [...] När det är killar som utsätter tjejer är det något helt annat. Man märker ju att dem familjerna tycker att det är mycket mer skamfullt, att det är fel att det sker

This juxtaposition between the views on violence in sibling relationships depending on the genders of the involved parties is another example of the family projection process at work. By attempting to impart assertiveness to and strengthen the character of their male children, parents inadvertently impart certain values and beliefs that may be to the detriment of the children (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022; Yerby, 1995). This encouragement of aggressive behaviour can be explained as an example of how “...patterns of interaction between family members create, maintain, and perpetuate both problem and nonproblematic behaviors” (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022, p.188).

5.2.1.2 The minimised violence of younger siblings

Pertaining to age, one could understand the association between the stereotypes of older siblings as the perpetrators of violence as an expression of a power imbalance between the involved parties. Nevertheless, the school counsellors have indicated that this view on sibling violence can, in fact, be detrimental to the recognition of the violence occurring.

Bellamy: när man pratar om syskonvåld så låter det nästan som att det alltid är en äldre som utsätter den yngre genom åren har jag [...] märkt att det är ibland yngre som utsätter äldre. Och det är hur vi ställer frågor som är det intressanta att vi ibland fastnar i det här med ålder och kön och de här ja kategorierna mycket så.

Additionally, the school counsellors have observed that in instances where the younger child perpetrates the violence, age seems to become an argument for the parents' dismissal of the violence.

Jean: Jag tycker att föräldrar har ju svårare att se att det yngre syskonet utsätter den äldre för våld. Man hör de här orden "han är yngre än henne" [...] Eftersom mamman inte vill se att sonen har gjort fel på något sätt

Furthermore, the deviations from the stereotype of gender and age mentioned above can be affected by the family system. An example of this is the presence of honour-related violence within the family, which could perpetuate a younger brother's violent behaviour towards an older sister. Honour-related violence as an expression of sibling violence will be presented in subsection 5.3.

Rene: Det är ju oftast det äldre syskonet som utsätter det yngre, men det kan givetvis vara det yngre. Små syskon kan ibland styra hela familjen liksom [...] Jag tänker att det kan vara särskilt vanligt i de här hedersärendena [...] Alltså yngre bröder som är väldigt kontrollerande av äldre systrar.

5.3 Dysfunction within the family system: a contributor towards sibling violence.

A unanimous opinion expressed by all interviewed school counsellors is that sibling violence can be a symptom and indicator of a larger dysfunction in the family. From a family system standpoint, which suggests a reciprocal relationship between the influence of the family system on the individual and vice-versa (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022; Yerby, 1995), this can be seen as a logical assumption.

Odell: är det så i en familj så är den dysfunktionell, jag kan tänka att det då finns mycket där man inte vill prata om, det är inte bara isolerade våldet som är problemet. Då har man ju betydligt fler utmaningar i familjen.

This subsection will look at some expressions of dysfunction within the family system which have been observed to be underlying contributors to the occurrence of sibling violence. Furthermore, this section will delve into the position of the perpetrator of sibling violence as both a victim and victimiser within the family system.

5.3.1 *Violence begets violence*

The presence of other expressions of violence in the home could be labelled as a contributing factor to sibling violence from a family system standpoint. That is to say that due to the aforementioned influence that a family can have, the active exercise of violence within the family system coupled with the normalisation of the act can lead to children adopting violence as an acceptable aspect of their manner of interaction and communication. This can be both within their sibling relationships and potentially other relationships, as observed by the school counsellors.

Rene: i familjer där vuxna bråkar väldigt mycket, där det är våld antingen verbalt eller fysiskt [...] är det vanligt att även syskonen för ut mot varandra. Det är den kulturen av beteende i familjen [...]

5.3.1.1 Honour-related violence: a contributor and an expression of sibling violence

An example of a general culture of violence within a family which can become an expression of sibling violence is honour-related violence. This expression of sibling violence was highlighted by all interviewed school counsellors.

Rene: Dels är det här med heder, det är något helt eget där man har en kontext på något vis och en roll att tvingas in i både som den kontrollerande och den som blir kontrollerad och det är ju supersvårt att bryta från.

Through a family system lens, the honour-based context of a family can be said to inform the rules and beliefs of the individuals within the system and their interactions with one another, as well as the interaction of the family system with its environment. Furthermore, these roles and rules dictate the ways in which the members of the family interact with their general environment, including inquisitive school counsellors.

Alex: den typen av syskonvåld som man kanske hör mer om i den här rollen [...] skulle kunna relateras till hedersproblematik. Att det är liksom mera kontroll [...] av framför allt äldre syskon, [...] som då ska kolla vart man är och vad man gör och att man inte är med fel personer eller vad man har på sig.

Additionally, the rules within the family can contribute to assigning individuals in the system (boys and girls) certain hierarchical roles in their interactions with one another that can perpetuate violence by creating a power imbalance between them.

Bellamy: jag har sett framför allt äldre bröder som utövar någon slags ekonomiskt våld gentemot sina yngre syskon, i stil med att syskonen måste upprätthålla familjens heder [...] då har man ofta belönat sin syster på något sätt som gör att man kliver in i den här världen och inte riktigt förstår det som lite hemskt.

5.3.2 Underlying neuropsychiatric diagnosis

Another contributing factor to sibling violence observed by the school counsellors is the presence of underlying neuropsychiatric diagnoses, such as ADHD. Victims of sibling violence were observed to minimise their experience in cases where the violent sibling was seen to have a diagnosis.

Bellamy: ibland [...] försöker man rättfärdiga det genom att säga ”Jo men han har ADHD och det är nått som tillhör diagnosen” Även om personen är så pass kränkt och mår så dåligt av det som händer dagligen.

5.3.2.1 The parental responsibility

In order to understand how an underlying diagnosis can be a contributing factor to sibling violence, the concept of parental responsibility must be examined. Parental responsibility was a point brought forth by all interviewed school counsellors. They posited that it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to create and maintain boundaries for their children.

Alex: då var det föräldrar som inte hade gränssättning på olika sätt [...] barnen är ganska lämnade vind för våg [...] både i konflikt med syskon, men även i att reglera sina egna känslor eller att kunna få känslomässigt stöd från sina föräldrar [...] det kunde vara det som egentligen var bekymret och att det här syskonvåldet egentligen var ett symptom på nånting annat.

This could be understood from a family system perspective through the concept of the nuclear family's emotional process (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022). In the sense that an anxious focus on the child's diagnosis can instigate greater emotional distancing within the family, thereby contributing to a dysfunctional dynamic within their interactions with one another.

Taylor: föräldrar kanske har tappat greppet för att man orkar liksom inte riktigt med längre. Så att hela familjen är mer eller mindre i kris. Det finns ingen ork, ingen energi att förebygga, utan det smäller och då har det smällt och så orkar man inte ta hand om det riktigt

5.3.3 *The victim in the victimiser*

Whether within the scope of an honour-based context or partially due to an underlying diagnosis, the child perpetrating sibling violence remains a part of their family system. Their interactions and relationships with other members of the family are still influenced by their context (ibid). A point reiterated within the interviews is the unaddressed or inadequately addressed issues of the violent child, who may be a victim, in their own right.

Alex: De blir ju utsatta för någon annan typ av våld i sin tur, de har ju inte heller inte så mycket val [...] vissa tycker att det är bra att föräldrarna ska ha koll och tycker att de värderingarna och reglerna är bra och vissa tycker inte det, men ”jag måste göra det här för jag är storebror och jag är storasyster [...] det här är mitt ansvar och det är bara så det är” [...] Det är oftast inte så lätt för den heller.

5.4 Potential consequences of experiencing sibling violence

This subsection will present the part of the material regarding some potential consequences of sibling violence that have been observed by the school counsellors. Most parts of the material here do not fall within the scope of the theoretical perspectives. However, it is integral to answering the research questions of this study regarding potential consequences.

The consequences observed by the school counsellors ranged from internalised feelings of anxiety and mistrust to different levels of acting out and violent behaviours. While the school counsellors unanimously stated that the consequences of experiencing sibling violence are as varied as the individuals experiencing it, some interesting patterns were observed in the material. One such pattern is a reoccurring distinction between what could be labelled as *the camouflaged victim* and *the victim under the radar*.

The camouflaged victim refers to the teenager for whom violence becomes a tool of interaction and communication. They may act out, sometimes violently, to a noticeable degree, and they may involve themselves in dubious contexts outside the home, sometimes in an effort to escape it. These individuals have been described by the school counsellors as guarded.

Jean: De har lärt sig att det är en del av livet [...] man lär sig att man får så mycket vinning av våld [...] då börjar man utöva det även utanför familjen, mot andra för att få den här vinsten.

The victim under the radar refers to the high achieving, seemingly well-adjusted individual who seems to consider school a form of escape. They have been noted to be well-liked in their social context but may have difficulties in asserting themselves in said contexts. This individual may not be an immediately recognisable victim to the school counsellors who consider it challenging to identify them as someone experiencing sibling violence.

Alex: De är bra på att känna av andra människors humör och anpassar sig, de är ju oftast väldigt omtyckta. De är lätta att ha o göra med, det blir inga konflikter, men de kanske mår ganska dåligt själva.

An observed consequence of sibling violence for both these victims is a general mistrust of people around them. School counsellors observe that while they may have social relationships with other peers, certain boundaries remain difficult to cross.

Bellamy: det kan man se även i deras närvaro med andra elever att de är jättemisstänksamma, även de som är översociala att det bygger relationer men att de hela tiden har en tanke om [...] varför vill de umgås med mig

5.5 The school counsellor's role and approach to sibling violence

This subsection will look at three key aspects of the material: the school counsellor's sibling violence recognition and response processes through the simplified Stutey and Clemens model (2015). Secondly, the establishment of trust will be explored as a cornerstone of the school counsellor's role. Lastly, challenges within the role, such as the conflict between directive and practice, will be described with the aid of Goffman's role theory.

5.5.1 *Through the five-step model*

When asked about their recognition and response processes for sibling violence, the school counsellors stated that their processes were the result of multiple years of work experience. While there may not be a standard process of recognition and response to sibling violence, a pattern of conduct emerged within the data, suggesting that certain aspects of conduct are similar among school counsellors. Said aspects will be presented in this subsection and described through the lens of the Stutey and Clemens (2015) model steps: *assess, conceptualise, plan, intervention, and evaluate*. This will help establish a framework within which these similarities in conduct may be understood. Of note is the fluid nature of the school counsellors' work process; the application of the five steps, while presented chronologically here, happens more dynamically in practice and is curated to the individual student and the individual counsellor.

Rene: man jobbar med det som händer i rummet och samtalet

Contact with students is usually initiated for reasons other than suspicions of sibling violence, such as poor attendance. Furthermore, suspicions of sibling violence arise mostly through repeated contact with the students. Assessments of sibling dynamics usually do not start with questions about sibling relationships but more so through an assessment of the student's life in general, making the first step of the model a partially indirect one.

Bellamy: Men det kommer ofta av att man inte mår bra eller att man har mycket skolfrånvaro eller att man har mycket dåliga skolresultat, men det är inte bara så.

Once the nature of the sibling dynamic has been *assessed* through inquiries to students and sometimes parents/guardians and suspicion of sibling violence is established, the school counsellor begins the process of *conceptualising* the behaviour within this dynamic. This is done in order to determine where it can be placed on an aggression scale of ‘normal sibling rivalry’ to ‘sibling violence’. This step, not unlike the rest of the process, relies on the school counsellors’ understanding and definition of sibling violence, along with their knowledge of childhood development (ibid). This is done by asking questions about the sibling relationship and the individual student’s perception of the dynamic. Although reaching this point may take time, as previously mentioned, seeing as revealing what has been coined a ‘family secret’ is a challenging feat, most especially without an established relationship.

Taylor: Det är lite svårt att göra en bedömning på ett samtal om man inte har en relation [...] Jag tänker att generellt när man pratar hemförhållanden med elever att man ställer fler frågor om syskon. Jag frågar ofta om de har syskon, men jag tänker att man kan ju fråga hur är din relation till ditt syskon.

When making a comparison between healthy sibling dynamics and the dynamics in an individual case, school counsellors explore the purpose of the behaviour, the presence of victimisation, and whether the violence is unidirectional or reciprocal between the siblings. This approach can be described as a variation on the four criteria presented in the five-step model (Stutey & Clemens, 2015).

Additionally, determining the parents’/guardians’ stance on the matter early on helps gauge whether an *intervention* in the form of a report to social services is necessary. The family’s role and influence on the occurrence of sibling violence are understood through a family system lens and are integral to the five-step model (ibid). Therefore, it is important to gauge the parents’ involvement and willingness to cooperate during the conceptualisation step to garner a more accurate view of the sibling dynamic and the family system.

Alex: [...] när jag försöker ta reda på mer kring vilken typ av det är som förekommer i den här familjen, på vilket sätt blir det bråk mellan syskon, så är det. [...] ifall nån tar skada av det eller om det fortfarande känns som [...] en väl fungerade relation i botten [...] alltså finns det vuxna som hjälper och stöttar till eller är man helt lämnad

Once the presence of sibling violence has been established and parental cooperation has been gauged through the *assessment* and *conceptualisation* steps, school counsellors can in tandem with the involved parties (student and guardians) begin to *plan* the viable next steps in the response process. They can thereafter begin to implement any agreed upon *interventions*. Unanimously school counsellors have suggested, among other options, family therapy as a viable intervention if reporting to social services continues to be an unnecessary one.

Taylor: Alla parter försöker samarbeta för att hitta konkreta lösningar [...] Vi är liksom spindeln i nätet som ska slussa vidare till socialtjänsten eller familjebehandlare [...] man kan bjuda in till ett samtal [...] så att de blir motiverade att ta den hjälp som de behöver

The chronologically last step within the model, which is in fact, a continuous step in practice, is following up and *evaluating* the situation along with the implemented intervention to ensure a positive change in the student's environment and well-being. This is also done to ensure that interventions may be implemented in a timely manner if the situation is progressing negatively. The five-step model encourages that this be done as a joined effort between an interdisciplinary team, the parents/guardians, and the involved student to best evaluate the situation at hand. This is reflected in the data of this study.

Alex: Vi har ett jättenära samarbete med föräldrarådgivare i stadsdelen som är ganska tajt knutna till skolan, han som är vår kontaktperson där brukar dyka upp på föräldramöten [...] jag brukar försöka beskriva det utifrån det barnet jag träffar, hur den personen upplever att det funkar, vad blir den ledsen över, vad blir den arg över, vad tycker den är jobbigt och även lyfta att det är svårt att vara förälder.

5.5.2 *The importance of trust*

The unanimous stance of all interviewed school counsellors is that all treatment, recognition, and response processes are secondary to establishing trust with the student. They perceive the chances that a student would share significant issues in their lives with their school counsellor, to be higher once they feel safe enough within the dynamic to do so.

Rene: Vi träffades säkert ett år innan hon helt plötsligt en dag berättade vad det egentligen handlade om. Det behövdes det där året för att hon förmodligen skulle testa av och var trygg nog att kunna berätta det hon hade varit med om.

One could partly understand the student's need for relationships based on candour and trust by factoring in that mistrust of others may be a potential consequence of their experience of sibling violence. Furthermore, the school counsellors' ability to work motivationally with the parties involved relies on their ability to establish a trusting relationship.

Bellamy: Generellt sett när de träffar mig så har de varit jättemisstänksamma och tror att jag är någon polis och jag är socialtjänsten och jag är bara där för att snoka och kommer bara ställa till det massor

5.5.3 *Challenges in the role of a school counsellor*

Consequently, one of the challenges a school counsellor faces in their role is establishing trusting relationships with students within the boundaries of their role when said boundaries may impede the process. It becomes a matter of weighing and interpreting the directives of the role in different manners in order to match them to the reality of the work. This conflict between what the role of the school counsellor entails on paper and what the school counsellors perceive as a sometimes dismissed and integral part of the role's reality could be understood through Goffman's (2021) role theory. It can be understood as a form of role conflict, where there is a disagreement on the expectations attached to a role (ibid); in this case, the disagreement on how a school counsellor can best fulfil their directive. On the one hand, working with complex issues such as sibling violence requires trust, which is

established through ongoing contact, according to the school counsellors. On the other hand, all the interviewed school counsellors expressed an expectation by leadership in their schools to minimise regular and ongoing contact.

Bellamy: Man säger ofta på ledningsnivå att man kanske inte ska ha regelbundna samtal som man kanske ändå ibland faktiskt har. Men det bygger ofta på relationer som man bygger för att komma fram till de här sakerna

Furthermore, whilst still maintaining that treatment work is not within a school counsellor's directive, different school counsellors may reason differently on different aspects of the matter. This can also be understood as another form of role conflict (Goffman, 2021). While some understand this to mean a hard distinction between their roles and the roles of say, family therapists, others might define the boundaries of their directives more fluidly.

Rene: Jag tänker att jag har ett hantverksyrke som man jobbar med det som händer i rummet och samtalet och behandling är ju förändringsarbete och förändringsarbete får jag jobba med i skolan. Jag får inte hålla på regelrätt behandling och det gör jag inte, men jag jobbar väldigt mycket med förändringsarbete och det kan jag.

When it comes to the distinction pertaining to sibling violence, the reasoning becomes a matter of responsibility. While all the school counsellors maintain that contact for the purpose of supporting the affected student is always on the table, the reasoning on where the responsibility for working with the phenomenon lies can differ based on their interpretation of their role. Some suggest that because the school counsellor's role revolves around ensuring the students' well-being during their schooling and sibling violence is a problem within the home, the responsibility for it falls outside the scope of their work.

Taylor: Vi är inte familjebehandlare [...] när det gäller syskonvåld så är det något som sker i hemmet, som familjen måste jobba med, vilket betyder att det inte är en skolkuratorns uppdrag att lösa den situationen

While others maintain for the same reason that some of the responsibility falls on them as school counsellors because the home environment has a significant effect on a student's well-being during their schooling.

Alex: det är lite svårt med just skolkurator, man är den som jobbar med socialt arbete fast man jobbar i skolan, men samtidigt så ska man jobba med skolfrågor egentligen, [...] men jag tror att de flesta skolkuratorer som jag vet tänker lite att hela livet påverkar hur det är att vara i skolan. Det är nog ganska liten del av sin tid som man jobbar strikt med skolfrågor.

5.5.4 *Suggestions on facilitating the work with sibling violence*

In a general sense, the school counsellors unanimously stated that further education for themselves and other professionals within the school environment on the concept of sibling violence would greatly facilitate their work, as it would allow them to further familiarise themselves with the concept and its application. Furthermore, school counsellors suggested that due to the importance of establishing relationships with the affected student, more time, leeway, and resources to cultivate these relationships would facilitate the work with complex issues such as sibling violence.

Rene: [...] att man får tid att bygga relationer. Man berättar inte om familjehemligheter, så som syskonvåld är om man inte har verkligt förtroende och relation till någon.

Additionally, some have suggested that questionnaires or evaluation metrics with certain standard questions could be a helpful tool to fall back on in the process of response and identification.

Rene: MADRS-S, det frågebatteriet har jag i huvudet [...] och så fort jag får ett nys på suicidtankar då checkar jag MADRAS, inte med poängen, men så att jag själv för min egenskull kan göra en liten bedömning av hur jag ska agera [...] det hade kanske varit bra med typ ett MADRS-S frågebatteri, typ det här kan jag checka av när det gäller just syskonvåld, det är inte fel.

6 Discussion of results and conclusions

This study has aimed to answer three research questions through qualitative interviews with school counsellors working with individuals ages thirteen years and up who have encountered the phenomenon of sibling violence. The conclusions drawn in this study are based on the findings of the results and analysis section as explained by applying a theoretical approach including the family system theory, Stutey and Clemens' five-step model, and Goffman's role theory.

The first research question of this study is, *according to school counsellors, how can a child's family environment contribute to the occurrence of violence in sibling relationships?*

The answer to which is best summarised as follows: The findings suggest that the family environment can be said to contribute to the occurrence of sibling violence through the normalisation of violent behaviour with sibling dynamics and through a broader sense of dysfunction within the family. This dysfunction can include a general culture of violence, such as honour-related violence, inadequate management of a child's underlying diagnosis, and inability to set and maintain adequate boundaries within the family. This sentiment is at the core of the family system theory, which has been used to explore further the material pertaining to this question.

The answer to the second research question, *"according to school counsellors, what are the perceived consequences of violence in sibling relationships on children?"* can be summarised as follows: the findings also show that school counsellors have observed that the experience of sibling violence can carry with it a number of potential consequences which can range from feelings of anxiety and mistrust to different levels of acting out and violent behaviours. Whilst the consequences of experiencing violence in any capacity are highly individualised, a pattern of two types of victims was identified in the material, the camouflaged victim and the victim under the radar. The consequences of experiencing sibling violence can be said to express themselves in two distinct manners through the aforementioned victim types.

How school counsellors recognise and respond to cases of sibling violence is the final research question. The findings of this study show that school counsellors do not have a standardised process for the recognition and response to sibling violence. Instead, through years of work experience, they have developed individualised manners of conduct in their

work with sibling violence. All the recounted work processes analysed in this study were built on a core understanding that trust is the cornerstone of any work the school counsellors may conduct with teenagers experiencing sibling violence or other experiences of a similar calibre. The findings also show that while each school counsellor had arrived at their response and recognition process individually, they still shared many similarities. Said similarities have been described using Stutey and Clemens' (2015) five-step model for response and recognition of sibling violence. Furthermore, the findings show that school counsellors may experience a conflict between the realities of their work with sibling violence and their directives

6.1 Conclusions and their practical implications

A noteworthy observation regarding the material is that whilst there may be uncertainty on the definition of the concept of sibling violence, which is addressed in subsection 1.5, the interviewed school counsellors all defined the phenomenon in a similar manner to one another and also to the definition provided in subsection 1.5. The most noteworthy observed difference was regarding which expression of sibling violence the school counsellor chose to draw on the most through the interviews. This seemed to coincide with which forms of violence they had more experience addressing.

Based on the findings in the previous sections, which are derived from the analysis of the material, one can conclude that the family environment can have any number of effects on the occurrence of sibling violence. This can occur both through the direct endorsement and normalisation of aggressive behaviour as a natural part of a sibling dynamic or through the presence of some indirectly contributing factors to the phenomenon's emergence. This normalisation of sibling violence, coupled with other underlying factors within the family, can be understood through the family system lens as contributing to dysfunction in the sibling dynamic (Pfeiffer & In-Albon, 2022; Yerby, 1995). The underlying factors may include a broader culture of violence, inadequate boundaries between siblings, or unmanaged diagnoses. Furthermore, the accounts of school counsellors coupled with a family system approach facilitate the conclusion that parental responsibility and parenting capacity are vital in determining the effects the family environment may have on the occurrence of sibling violence. This conclusion is supported by previous research, which suggests a strong link

between family dynamics and sibling violence (Kiselica & Morrill-Richards, 2007; Meyers, 2017; Pickering & Sanders, 2017; Plamondon et al., 2021).

Certain findings of note linked to the previous conclusion relate to the position of the violent sibling. These findings are in line with previous research (Foody et al., 2020; Hendy et al., 2012), which suggests that the experience of sibling violence – regardless of whether it may be as a victimised child or the one exhibiting violent behaviours – may have a negative effect on the involved parties. This, coupled with the variety of potential consequences of sibling violence observed by school counsellors, which range from anxiety, lowered self-esteem, being overly well-adjusted, aggressive behaviour, and mistrust of others, leads me to conclude that experiences of sibling violence may be determinantal to the individual in contexts beyond that of the family. This conclusion is in line with previous research, which suggests a link between sibling violence and challenges in other areas of life including difficulties in other interpersonal relationships (Hendy et al., 2012; Meyers, 2017; Spira et al., 2020). Moreover, an observed pattern in the findings suggests a reluctance in parents to perceive their child as a perpetrator of violence. On the one hand, one could posit this to a sense of loyalty within the family. On the other hand, it could suggest a general reluctance to see children as perpetrators of violence overall.

The role of school counsellors regarding sibling violence is partly at the heart of this study. The findings suggest that the role is a highly individualised one, which relies on the school counsellor's professional experience and understanding of childhood development and is affected by how they individually interpret sibling violence. Previous research notes that the role of the school counsellor as potentially one of the first professionals who may encounter instances of sibling violence gives them a unique vantage point on the phenomenon (Stutey & Clemens, 2015). Furthermore, previous research suggests that social workers in general, play an important role in key elements in intervention work through educating, supporting, and evaluating family units experiencing sibling violence (Perkins & Meyers, 2020). Yet, throughout the interviews there appeared to be a pattern of mixed opinions on what the expectations and boundaries of this role are and ought to be. This conflict was described using Goffman's (2021) role theory and suggests that the difference in views exists between the school counsellors and the school's leadership, as well as between individual school counsellors.

The school counsellors' suggestions for how their work with sibling violence can best be facilitated through further education, added resources, and recognition and response tools, coupled with the aforementioned unclarity suggest a need for more explicit guidelines. This is to ensure that cases of sibling violence are adequately addressed when identified within a school. While the findings suggest that the interviewed school counsellors have adopted similar processes in their conduct regarding sibling violence, as described through the five-step model (Stutey & Clemens, 2015), this was achieved through years of work experience and multiple encounters with sibling violence.

6.2 Limitations of the study

Limitations have been discussed continuously throughout the relevant section of this study. There were some limitations that became evident in the later stages of data processing and analysis. These limitations stemmed from the general focus of the study as well as choices made in the construction of the interview guide. Firstly, at the transcription and analysis stage, it became evident that the data could have benefitted from being more detailed in certain areas, especially those pertaining to the school counsellor's role. Some effort was made to rectify the low level of detail in the data by adding a fictional case to the interview process. Nevertheless, more directed questions may have contributed to a greater level of detail in this matter. There is a possibility that this could influence the findings, considering the likelihood that finer nuances in the school counsellors' accounts were lost due to the question formulations.

Secondly, due to this study's generalized focus, certain nuances were left outside of its scope. These could likely have affected the findings regarding sibling violence as a phenomenon. One such unexplored nuance is that of gender. Within this study, the description of gender as a factor of nuance was strictly derived from the data, where descriptions of gender were done exclusively in a binary manner (boys and girls). Hence, the reason why there are no mentions or discussion of the effects gender might have in sibling subsystems with trans and non-binary children in this study.

6.3 Contribution to the field and future research

The previous research on sibling violence consists of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Recent research consists largely of quantitative approaches and interview studies focused on the perspective of survivors of sibling violence. It is my hope that this study which focuses on the professional experiences and perspectives of a handful of school counsellors, can generate a detailed comprehension of the topic of sibling violence, from the perspective of a relevant professional group, that compliments the existing literature in the field. To further the understanding of the material and offer a more nuanced perspective on the topic at hand, a theoretical approach consisting of a family system perspective, a model of identification and response to sibling violence, and Goffman's role theory was implemented.

By focusing on the perspective of school counsellors, this study offers insight into a less researched perspective on sibling violence. It highlights a need for further exploration of how professionals may be able to define a phenomenon such as sibling violence. Furthermore, the exploration of the identification and response work process of the handful of interviewed Swedish school counsellors may be used as a starting point for further exploring effective viable processes in the future, both for school counsellors and other relevant professionals.

Based on the findings of this study coupled with reflection on previous research, I posit that future research on the topic of sibling violence is needed in general, both in Sweden and internationally. Seeing as previous research is mainly focused on the perspective of survivors, the exploration of the perspectives of other involved parties, such as that of parents and perpetrating children, may contribute to a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the perspectives of professionals who routinely encounter sibling violence may be valuable to explore further. This includes family therapists, medical professionals and social workers specialising in domestic violence work.

In a practical sense, future research on the definition of sibling violence along with processes of identification and response is still needed for a more cohesive approach to the topic. Further testing of models such as Stutey and Clemens' (2015) model could be beneficial for both understanding and addressing the phenomenon. Additionally, I posit that the field could benefit from future research examining the difference in perspectives regarding sibling violence based on socioeconomic nuances, which is a point that has not been extensively explored in previous research or in this study.

7 References

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8 Information letter (Swedish) (appendix 1)

Skolkurator sökes för kandidatuppsats

Hej skolkuratorer!

Jag heter Eleanor Al-jumaah och ska nu skriva min kandidatuppsats på socionomprogrammet, Stockholms universitet. Syftet med min studie är att undersöka skolkuratorers perspektiv på syskonvåld, med fokus den egna uppfattning av fenomenet utifrån era professionella erfarenheter samt hur ni uppfattar den egna kompetensen i förhållande till hanteringen av syskonvåld. Jag har tagit del av forskning som visar att det saknas forskning om just skolkuratorernas perspektiv på ämnet.

Jag skulle därför verkligen uppskatta om du som arbetar eller har arbetat som **skolkurator med barn mellan åldrarna 13–19 år** skulle vilja ställa upp på en intervju om just dina professionella erfarenheter av syskonvåld. Jag ser helst att intervjuerna sker under v. **16–20**. Om du är intresserad kan läsa mer om vad det innebär att delta i studien här nedan:

- Intervjun beräknas ta mellan 45–60 minuter
- Intervjun kommer genomföras av mig, Eleanor Al-jumaah
- Intervjun sker digitalt (via videotjänst eller telefon)
- Medverkan är frivilligt och kan avbrytas närsomhelst
- Du svarar endast på de frågor du vill svara på
- Intervjuerna kommer att spelas in (ljudinspelning) och sedan transkriberas.
- Allt material från intervjun kommer att anonymiseras och användas endast i forskningssyftet.
- När uppsatsen är slutförd skickas resultaten till dig och du har då möjlighet att komma med synpunkter.
- Efter godkännande från examinator kommer uppsatsen att publiceras på DIVA (en offentlig plattform)

Jag ser fram emot att höra från dig!

Vid frågor eller funderingar får du gärna kontakta mig!

9 Interview Guide (Swedish) (appendix 2)

Viktiga punkter från informationsbrevet

- Intervjun tar 45–60 minuter.
- Deltagande är frivilligt och kan avbrytas när som helst.
- Du väljer vilka frågor du vill svara på
- Intervjumaterialet kommer att anonymiseras i studien (dina personliga uppgifter hanteras endast av mig).
- Intervjun kommer att spelas in via teams/zoom för att sedan transkriberas. Inspelningen raderas efter transkriberingen av materialet.

Bakgrundsfrågor

- Hur länge har du arbetat som skolkurator?
- Vilken utbildningsbakgrund har du?
- Har du arbetat med barn som målgrupp inom andra yrkesroller?
- Har du stött på fenomenet ”syskonvåld” under din utbildning?

Tema 1: Begreppet syskonvåld

- Hur skulle du definiera begreppet syskonvåld
- Finns det andra begrepp som du kan tänka dig använda för att beskriva fenomenet?
- Hur skulle du dra gränsen mellan vanligt syskonbråk och syskonvåld

Tema 2: Erfarenheter av syskonvåld

Du kan utgå från din erfarenhet av syskonvåld allmänt för de kommande frågorna...

- Hur upplevde du din egen förmåga att hantera ärendet?
 - Tycker du att du kunde ha gynnats av några ytterligare kompetenser (vilka då)?
- Hur brukar ärenden om syskonvåld uppmärksammas i ditt arbete?
- Hur initieras kontakten med barnet?
- Hur initieras kontakten med föräldrarna?
 - Hur upplever du att föräldrarna/vårdnadshavarna reagerar?
 - Hur har du upplevt samarbetet med föräldrar när det gäller syskonvåldet?

- Upplever du att det finns vissa omständigheter eller faktorer som kan bidra till uppkomsten av syskonvåld?

Tema 3: Upplevd förmåga för identifikation och hantering

- Finns det riktlinjer eller arbetssätt för hur du som skolkurator ska arbeta med syskonvåld utifrån?
 - Om ”nej” vad tänker du kan vara effektiva riktlinjer rent hypotetiskt?
 - Om ”ja” vilka då och hur effektiva upplever du att dessa är?
- Upplever du att kunskapen om syskonvåld inom skolvärlden //eller din egen skola\\ (lärare, rektorer, övriga i elevhälsan) är godtagbara?
 - Vad tänker du kan behöva förbättras där?
- Hur tänker du att skolkuratorers arbete med syskonvåld kan underlättas och förbättras?

Tema 4: Observationer om det påverkade barnet

- På vilka sätt kan du tänka dig att ett barn med erfarenheter av våld i syskonrelationer kan påverkas ?
- Hur skulle du beskriva ett barn som har upplevt våld i sina syskonrelationer?
- Hur upplever du att barn som påverkas av syskonvåld är med andra jämnåriga?

Avslutning ”Stäm av”

- Är det något du vill lägga till?
Har du några frågor eller funderingar?

10 Example Case (appendix 3)

Maja har varit nere på sistone. Hennes skolfrånvaro har ökat en bit och hon verkar delta mindre i samtal och aktiviteter med sina kompisar och klasskamrater. Men Majas skolarbete har inte lidit av den ökade frånvaron eller nedstämdheten. Lärare beskriver henne fortfarande som en exemplarisk och högpresterande elev och hennes relationen med vänner verkar lika bra som förr. Majas mentor ber dig ta kontakt med henne för att ta reda på om det är något på gång.

Under samtalet med Maja, berättar hon att det är inget särskilt på gång men att hon föredrar att vara hemma när ingen annan är där, för då kan hon göra som hon vill utan behöva tjafsa med sin 14 åriga bror Magnus. Hon berättar att det blir ganska mycket bråk mellan dem och att han alltid är på henne och säger elaka saker som att kalla henne ”ful och dum” och säga ingen vill ha henne. Ibland kan han spotta på henne och ibland kan det bli lite slagsmål mellan dem. Hon menar att hon inte tycker om det, med syskonbråk är vanligt och hon är äldst och ska inte göra en stor sak av det. Men att hon ibland vill ha några timmar för sig själv hemma utan att behöva tjafsa hela tiden. Hon berättar att mamma och pappa kan säga till Magnus ibland om de ser ett bråk, men att de ser det så sällan och Maja vill inte ösa på med problem för sina föräldrar som jobbar så mycket. Hon är ju äldst och ska kunna ta ansvar och va mogen.