

# CULTURAL VALUES AND SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS IN UZBEK FAMILIES: PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF SUPPORT, RIVALRY, AND RESPONSIBILITY

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## Abstract

Sibling relationships are among the longest-lasting interpersonal bonds in human life, yet their cultural regulation remains insufficiently discussed in Central Asian family psychology. This article examines sibling relationships in Uzbek families through three interconnected psychological dimensions: support, rivalry, and responsibility. The paper is designed as a theoretical and conceptual study based on international sibling research and Uzbek/Russian-language scholarship on family values, intergenerational norms, and child upbringing. The main argument is that sibling relationships in Uzbek families cannot be adequately interpreted only through the categories of warmth and conflict. They are embedded in a value-oriented family system where respect for elders, care for younger family members, collective reputation, mutual assistance, and gendered expectations structure everyday interaction. Cultural values may strengthen sibling solidarity and emotional closeness, but they may also intensify rivalry when parental attention, educational opportunities, inheritance expectations, or household responsibilities are perceived as unfair. The article proposes a culturally sensitive model in which family values influence sibling support and rivalry through the mediating role of perceived responsibility and fairness. The paper contributes to family psychology by integrating classical Western theories of sibling relationship quality with Uzbek and Russian academic perspectives on family life. Practical implications are offered for family counseling, student psychological support, and preventive work with hidden conflict in extended families.

**Keywords:** Sibling relationships; Uzbek families; family psychology; cultural values; sibling support; sibling rivalry; responsibility; emotional closeness; family system.

## Introduction

Family psychology has traditionally emphasized parent-child interaction, marital relations, and parenting styles. However, the emotional development of a person is also shaped by horizontal relations within the family, especially by relationships between brothers and sisters. Siblings share family history, parental expectations, cultural narratives, everyday responsibilities, and memories of childhood. These shared experiences can become a basis for lifelong attachment, emotional support, social learning, and resilience.



At the same time, sibling relations are not purely harmonious. They may include jealousy, rivalry, comparison, competition for parental attention, disagreement over responsibilities, and conflicts related to inheritance, marriage, education, and career success. Therefore, sibling relationships should be analyzed as complex and multidimensional family bonds rather than as simple expressions of love or conflict.

In Uzbek families, sibling relationships have a specific socio-cultural meaning. The family is not only a private emotional unit but also a moral, educational, and social institution. Uzbek and Russian-language literature on Uzbek family traditions emphasizes respect for elders, love and care for younger members, preservation of family honor, intergenerational solidarity, and the central role of family upbringing in personality development (Alimov, 2014; Kurbonova, 2020; Eriygitova, 2019). These values create a distinctive context for sibling interaction.

The present article focuses on three core dimensions: support, rivalry, and responsibility. Support refers to emotional closeness, advice, practical help, protection, and shared coping. Rivalry refers to competition for attention, affection, status, resources, or family recognition. Responsibility refers to culturally shaped expectations that siblings should help each other, respect age hierarchy, contribute to family well-being, and preserve stable relations even when emotional disagreements exist.

The originality of this paper lies in connecting the international literature on sibling relationships with Uzbek cultural-psychological realities. Many classical and contemporary studies on siblings were conducted in Western contexts (Brody, 1998; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; McHale et al., 2012). Less attention has been paid to how sibling relationships function in Central Asian families where collectivism, family reputation, intergenerational continuity, and responsibility are highly salient. This paper therefore proposes a culturally sensitive framework for future empirical research.

## 2. Aim and Research Tasks

The aim of this article is to analyze the socio-psychological role of cultural values in shaping sibling relationships in Uzbek families, with special attention to support, rivalry, and responsibility.

The research tasks are as follows:

1. to systematize international and Uzbek/Russian scholarly approaches to sibling relationships and family values;
2. to identify the psychological meanings of support, rivalry, and responsibility in sibling interaction;
3. to examine how Uzbek family values may strengthen or complicate sibling relationships;
4. to propose a conceptual model for future empirical study of sibling relationships in Uzbek families;
5. to formulate practical implications for family counseling and psychological education.

## 3. Theoretical Background

### 3.1. Sibling relationships as a family subsystem

Structural family theory considers the family as a system composed of interdependent subsystems. The sibling subsystem is important because it is the first social environment in



which children learn cooperation, comparison, negotiation, competition, emotional expression, and conflict regulation (Minuchin, 1974). Unlike friendships, sibling relations are not chosen voluntarily; they are created by family structure and maintained through shared history.

Classical research by Furman and Buhrmester (1985) showed that sibling relationship quality includes such dimensions as warmth/closeness, conflict, rivalry, and relative status or power. Brody (1998) later emphasized that sibling relationships are influenced by family processes, individual characteristics, and parental differential treatment. Contemporary reviews also indicate that sibling relationships affect social competence, mental health, prosocial behavior, aggression, and adjustment in childhood and adolescence (McHale et al., 2012; Feinberg et al., 2012).

Russian-language scholarship similarly describes sibling relationships as a powerful factor in personality development and interpersonal behavior. Zalevskaya (2016) stresses that sibling experience influences the formation of personal qualities and interaction with close social circles. Bulygina (2021) reviews evidence that relationships with brothers and sisters are connected with aggression, prosocial behavior, life satisfaction, and self-attitude. Almazova (2013) also shows that adult sibling relationships differ by levels of closeness, trust, conflict, and emotional distance.

### 3.2. Cultural values in Uzbek family life

Uzbek family life is strongly associated with moral education, respect for elders, mutual assistance, and continuity between generations. Uzbek and Russian sources on family upbringing describe the family as the primary environment in which children learn responsibility, modesty, respect, cooperation, and social duty (Alimov, 2014; Oila tarbiyasi asoslari, 2017). These norms are not abstract ideals; they shape everyday family behavior, including how siblings communicate, divide responsibilities, and evaluate each other.

Kurbonova (2020) notes that traditions and values in Uzbek families function as mechanisms of moral socialization and preservation of social cohesion. Eriygitova (2019) similarly highlights that Uzbek family traditions are linked with respect for older people, care for younger members, and the transmission of cultural norms across generations. Within this cultural environment, the elder sibling often receives a role close to assistant caregiver, mediator, or moral example, while younger siblings may be expected to show obedience and respect.

These cultural expectations can produce positive psychological outcomes. They may increase solidarity, emotional security, family responsibility, and willingness to help. However, the same expectations can also create emotional tension if they become rigid, unequal, or gendered in an unfair manner. For example, an elder daughter may be expected to provide care and household labor, while an elder son may be expected to represent family authority or economic responsibility. Such expectations may strengthen maturity but may also increase hidden resentment.

## 4. Key Psychological Dimensions

### 4.1. Sibling support

Sibling support includes emotional listening, advice, practical help, protection, shared humor, and assistance during stressful life transitions. In Uzbek families, sibling support is often linked



not only with affection but also with duty. A brother or sister may help with education, employment decisions, marriage preparation, care for parents, or conflict mediation within the extended family.

Supportive sibling relations may contribute to resilience because siblings often understand the family background of the individual better than peers. They may function as emotional translators between parental expectations and the personal needs of the young person. This is especially important in societies where family reputation and collective decision-making remain important.

At the psychological level, sibling support may reduce loneliness, increase perceived belonging, and help a person cope with social pressure. For university students, young professionals, and newly married adults, supportive siblings may provide a safe space for discussing problems that are difficult to discuss with parents.

#### 4.2. Sibling rivalry

Sibling rivalry is usually connected with comparison, jealousy, competition for parental attention, and perceived injustice. International research shows that rivalry and conflict are normal components of sibling relationships; the problem appears when rivalry becomes chronic, humiliating, or linked with stable parental favoritism (Brody, 1998; McHale et al., 2012).

In Uzbek families, rivalry may be expressed indirectly because open disagreement with siblings, especially elder siblings, may be culturally discouraged. Therefore, rivalry can appear as emotional distance, passive resistance, silence, avoidance, or competition through academic, professional, and marital achievements. The cultural expectation of respect may hide conflict without necessarily resolving it.

Rivalry may also arise when responsibilities are distributed unequally. For instance, one sibling may feel that he or she carries more household duties, financial obligations, or care for parents than others. Another sibling may feel that parental approval is given more to the child who conforms to traditional expectations. In such cases, rivalry is not only emotional but also moral: it is connected with perceptions of fairness and recognition.

#### 4.3. Responsibility

Responsibility is the most culturally distinctive dimension of sibling relationships in Uzbek families. It includes expectations of care, respect, help, loyalty, and participation in family duties. Responsibility may be age-based, gender-based, or role-based. Elder siblings may be expected to guide younger ones; brothers may be expected to protect sisters; sisters may be expected to maintain emotional harmony; successful siblings may be expected to support less successful ones.

Responsibility can be psychologically constructive when it is accompanied by warmth, fairness, and recognition. It teaches empathy, maturity, patience, and prosocial behavior. However, responsibility becomes problematic when it is experienced as emotional pressure, unequal burden, or loss of autonomy. Therefore, the quality of responsibility depends on whether it is supported by reciprocal respect and perceived justice.



This article argues that responsibility mediates the relationship between cultural values and sibling outcomes. Cultural values do not automatically produce either harmony or conflict. Their psychological effect depends on how family members interpret and distribute responsibility among siblings.

## 5. Proposed Conceptual Model

The proposed conceptual model contains four levels:

Level	Core elements	Psychological meaning
Cultural value level	Respect for elders, care for younger siblings, family honor, mutual assistance, collectivism	Defines what is considered proper sibling behavior
Family process level	Parental comparison, division of duties, communication style, gender expectations	Translates cultural values into everyday interaction
Psychological perception level	Perceived fairness, emotional recognition, autonomy, role burden	Determines whether values are experienced as support or pressure
Sibling relationship level	Support, rivalry, responsibility, closeness, distance	Produces psychological outcomes for personality and family well-being

According to this model, sibling relationships in Uzbek families are shaped by the interaction between cultural norms and subjective perception. Respect for elders can increase harmony when it is combined with emotional closeness, but it can increase distance when it is used to silence younger siblings. Responsibility can create maturity when it is recognized, but it can create rivalry when it is unevenly distributed. Mutual assistance can strengthen family solidarity, but it can become a psychological burden if it is demanded without reciprocity.

## 6. Methodological Recommendations for Future Empirical Study

For a future empirical article, a mixed-method design is recommended. A quantitative stage may measure sibling relationship quality, perceived sibling support, rivalry, and family value orientation. A qualitative stage may use semi-structured interviews to understand how participants interpret duty, respect, fairness, and emotional closeness in relation to their siblings.

Recommended sample: 250-350 participants aged 18-35 who have at least one sibling. It is useful to include participants from urban and rural areas, different family sizes, and different sibling positions. The following variables may be analyzed: gender, birth order, age gap, number of siblings, living arrangement, marital status, and level of education.

Possible instruments include a sibling relationship quality questionnaire based on Furman and Buhrmester's dimensions, a perceived family values scale, and author-developed items on responsibility and perceived fairness. Statistical analysis may include descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression, mediation analysis, and comparison by birth order or gender.



## 7. Discussion

The analysis shows that sibling relationships in Uzbek families are best understood as culturally embedded bonds. They combine intimacy and hierarchy, emotional closeness and duty, support and comparison, solidarity and hidden rivalry. This complexity is not a weakness of Uzbek family culture; rather, it reflects the richness of a family system in which interpersonal relations are regulated by moral expectations.

International sibling research provides strong concepts for analyzing warmth, conflict, rivalry, and relative power. However, these concepts need cultural adaptation. In Uzbek families, the psychological meaning of being an elder brother, younger sister, only daughter among sons, or successful sibling in an extended family may differ from meanings found in individualistic contexts. Therefore, culturally sensitive research should not simply transfer Western scales but should supplement them with local concepts such as hurmat (respect), mehr-oqibat (compassionate relatedness), burch (duty), and oila sha'ni (family honor).

The role of parents is also central. Parental comparison may intensify rivalry, while fair recognition may strengthen sibling solidarity. In extended families, grandparents and relatives may additionally shape sibling roles. For this reason, sibling relationships should be studied not as isolated dyads but as part of the whole family system.

## 8. Practical Implications

- Family counseling should assess not only parent-child conflict but also sibling responsibility, hidden rivalry, and perceived unfairness.
- Psychoeducational programs for parents should emphasize that cultural values are most effective when combined with emotional recognition and fair distribution of duties.
- Student counseling services should consider sibling support as a psychological resource for young people experiencing stress, adaptation problems, or family pressure.
- Preventive family work should encourage open communication between siblings while preserving culturally appropriate respect and dignity.
- Researchers should develop culturally adapted instruments for measuring sibling relationships in Uzbek families.

## 9. Conclusion

Sibling relationships in Uzbek families represent a psychologically rich and culturally regulated sphere of family life. They are shaped by support, rivalry, and responsibility, and these dimensions are deeply connected with cultural values. Respect for elders, care for younger siblings, mutual assistance, family honor, and intergenerational solidarity can strengthen sibling closeness and prosocial behavior. At the same time, unequal responsibilities, hidden comparison, and perceived favoritism may create rivalry and emotional distance. The proposed conceptual model suggests that the psychological consequences of cultural values depend on perceived fairness and emotional recognition. This approach can enrich both international family psychology and local research on Uzbek family culture.



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