


Please cite the Published Version

Samuels, Jessica, Keenan, Joseph  and Jolly, Allan (2022) A qualitative investigation of the impact that therapeutic recreational camps have on the psychological wellbeing of siblings of individuals with health conditions. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 48 (2). pp. 259-268. ISSN 0305-1862

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.12926>

Publisher: Wiley

Version: Accepted Version

Downloaded from: <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/628688/>

Usage rights:  In Copyright

Additional Information: This is an Author Accepted Manuscript of an article published in *Child: Care, Health and Development*.

Enquiries:

If you have questions about this document, contact openresearch@mmu.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines>)

A qualitative investigation of the impact that therapeutic recreational camps have on the psychological wellbeing of siblings of individuals with health conditions

Abstract

Background: The siblings of individuals with health conditions are often overlooked, despite being at risk of experiencing psychological difficulties. There is a lack of literature investigating interventions which could promote siblings' psychological wellbeing. Therapeutic recreational (TR) camps promote self-perception and self-worth, yet there are currently no UK studies qualitatively investigating siblings' experiences of TR camps.

Aims: This study aims to understand siblings' lived experiences of attending TR camps, providing a greater depth of understanding of whether these camps have a positive impact on siblings' wellbeing.

Method: Due to the paucity of qualitative research regarding individuals' experiences of TR camps, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight individuals who had attended TR sibling camps. Verbatim transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Results: Analysis revealed three superordinate themes. The first, an environment that facilitates autonomous challenge, demonstrated the importance of siblings having a place where they felt autonomous in a fun, care-free environment. This encouraged participants to engage in challenges, feeling determined to overcome them. The second, an inclusive and supportive environment, highlighted the importance of connectedness. Facing challenges and reflecting on this within a supportive team, encouraged a sense of belonging. The final superordinate theme, a transformational journey, revealed that siblings gained determination and a positive outlook to facing challenges in daily life. Additionally, they gained self-acceptance and a positive self-image, becoming more confident with, and accepting of, their identity.

Conclusions: This study presents a novel contribution to the existing literature and highlights the importance of camp providers ensuring their TR model incorporates autonomous challenge, success, and reflection. These encourage positive youth development and self-determination in young people. In addition, recommendations include implementing teams, promoting positive volunteer-camper relationships, and implementing reflective sessions. These recommendations could potentially enhance the positive impact that TR camps have on siblings' psychological wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

The siblings of individuals with health conditions are often overlooked. Approximately 32% of children have a chronic or life-limiting health condition, and approximately 17% of these children have a sibling (Smith et al., 2018). Siblings often internalise their difficulties, resulting in anxiety and depression (Sharpe and Rossiter, 2002). Difficulties include caregiving demands, social challenges, and having more responsibility than most children their age (Smith et al., 2018; Mulligan et al., 2019). Social challenges faced are both within the family, lacking parental attention, and outside of the family, feeling embarrassed and ostracised by peers (Dyke et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2018). Additionally, there is an increased burden and sense of responsibility to care for their sibling, often not getting the opportunity to be children (Fleary and Heffer, 2013; Mulligan et al., 2019). A meta-analysis investigating the psychological impact of having a sibling with a health condition found a significant negative impact on psychological functioning, peer activities, cognitive development, and self-concept (Sharpe and Rossiter, 2002).

The Department of Health (2015) encourages early interventions which promote positive youth development (PYD). PYD is about capturing the full potential of young people (YPs) promoting social, emotional, and behavioural competence. Despite evidence for the success of PYD approaches (Moore, 2017), interventions often focus on providing support to those already experiencing mental health difficulties, rather than those at-risk. The PYD approach is becoming more widely acknowledged (Moore, 2017) and should be utilised more within interventions due its positive outcomes. Specifically, PYD is important for siblings as they are at-risk individuals who warrant early intervention (Sidhu et al., 2006).

There are various forms of interventions for siblings including group interventions, camps, and family-based support (Smith et al., 2018). Therapeutic recreational (TR) camps focus on enjoyment and freedom in recreation, and target self-perceptions and confidence. TR camps show improvements in YPs' self-perception, self-worth, and anxiety-related symptoms (Kiernan et al., 2004; Odar et al., 2013). However, only 18% of TR interventions are camp-based (Smith et al., 2018), suggesting more camp-based interventions are needed. Moreover, previous studies found positive outcomes of TR camps for those with health conditions. Studies have not investigated the impact of these camps for siblings. Additionally, the more intimate the relationship between siblings, the higher the risk of problematic adjustment and decreased social competence of the well sibling (Labay and Walco, 2004). If siblings display social difficulties, TR camps could be a good opportunity for connecting with peers.

The minimal existing research on TR camps for siblings often uses the sibling perception questionnaire (SPQ) as an outcome measure. This suggests these studies are measuring how TR interventions change the well siblings' views and opinions on their sibling's health condition, not outcomes relating to their own psychological wellbeing. For example, Kiernan et al. (2004) used the SPQ to assess siblings increased medical knowledge and whether there was a decrease in fear of illness. This is important as siblings often become anxious, worrying about their sibling due to a lack of information about their illness (Sidhu et al., 2006), thus, measuring these outcomes does have value. However, the focus was whether camp changed their attitudes about illness and anger towards their sibling with a health condition, rather than their wellbeing. Instead, siblings' psychological wellbeing should be investigated since they

can experience significant psychological distress. For example, investigating if depressive symptoms decrease.

Although studies have been conducted overseas (Packman et al., 2005), there are no UK studies qualitatively investigating siblings' experiences of TR camps. The quantitative literature investigating siblings' wellbeing often uses parental report (Sharpe and Rossiter, 2002). More focus on self-report is needed, as parental reports are often more negative than child self-reports (Sharpe and Rossiter, 2002). Data from siblings themselves is needed to gain an understanding into what their own experience of having a sibling with a health condition means to them. This is particularly relevant as siblings may not voice their concerns to not be a burden (Sidhu et al., 2006). There is also a lack of literature investigating interventions which could be effective for siblings in managing their emotional and behavioural problems (Sharpe and Rossiter, 2002). Therefore, qualitative research is needed because a greater understanding of how TR camps may or may not be helpful for siblings, could prevent detrimental psychological effects.

The current study sought to address gaps in the literature about the impact of TR camps on siblings' psychological wellbeing. The study aimed to understand siblings' lived experiences of attending TR camps, providing a greater depth of understanding of whether these camps had a positive impact on siblings' wellbeing.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative design was used to understand the nature of the phenomena surrounding siblings' experiences of TR camps. An ontological position of interpretivism was held to understand from subjective experiences how individuals construct their realities (Malterud, 2016). The analysis design is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which is based on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith, 2015). Phenomenology enabled an exploration of individuals' camp experiences, whilst idiography enabled siblings' experiences to be at the centre of the research, also allowing for convergences and divergences within participant accounts (Smith, 2015).

Over The Wall

The TR camps referred to in this study are run by a UK charity, Over The Wall (OTW). OTW provides residential camps for those with serious health conditions, their siblings, and the family (OTW, 2020). OTW is a member of the SeriousFun Children's Network, a worldwide association of camps for children with health conditions. OTW have developed their own TR model, used across their camps (figure 1).

Participants and recruitment

All participants previously attended a TR sibling camp (4-5 days). The sample ($N = 8$) consisted of six females and two males. Table 1 provides demographic information. Four stages were considered when sampling and recruiting participants, enabling coherence, transparency, impact, and trustworthiness of this study (Robinson, 2014). Firstly, a sample universe was defined using inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure a homogenous sample, compatible with IPA's philosophical foundations (Smith et al., 2009). Inclusion criteria included those who had attended an OTW sibling camp and were aged 18+, ensuring life-history homogeneity as everyone had attended camp. This ensured an understanding of siblings' experiences of TR camps could be gained (Robinson, 2014). Exclusion criteria was those without a sufficient understanding of English due to the nature of qualitative interviews, and those aged under 18. Secondly, a sample size was selected based on epistemological and practical concerns (Robinson, 2014). Eight participants ensured a relatively small sample to examine convergence and divergence (Smith et al., 2009). Thirdly, a purposive sampling strategy ensured a representative, homogenous sample. Finally, sample sourcing was used to recruit participants in an ethical manner, informing all potential participants of relevant information regarding the study (Robinson, 2014). OTW sent information sheets and recruitment media entailing details of the study to potential participants. Those interested contacted the researcher directly.

Table 1. Participant demographics ($N = 8$)

Participant*	Gender	Age	Camps attended	Age at first camp	Year of first camp	Year of last camp (all aged 17)	Camp locations
Sophia	F	19	5	8	2009	2018	South site
George	M	19	3	15	2016	2018	Midlands site
Camilla	F	18	5	9	2011	2019	Scotland site
Laura	F	18	4	13	2014	2019	South site
James	M	19	1	17	2018	2018	South site
Carly	F	19	4	13	2014	2019	Midlands site
Jennie	F	19	1	17	2018	2018	South site
Elana	F	18	4	13	2016	2019	South and Midlands

*Pseudonyms used to preserve anonymity

Data collection

Online semi-structured interviews were conducted, allowing for a small number of individuals to have a voice (Robinson, 2014). An interview schedule was used (table 2) and interviews were conducted via Skype. Participants could have their cameras on or off. Interviews were approximately 60 minutes and were recorded. Then recordings were typed verbatim into transcripts and anonymised. The researcher conducted a post-pilot interview with the first participant to allow for adaptations to interview questions, ensuring relevance to future participants. As part of Patient and Public Involvement (PPI), the interview questions were constructed with co-production from OTW. Questions were tailored from their TR model (OTW, 2019; figure 1). OTW were also consulted on recruitment media and interview questions, representing the interests of the cohort.

Table 2. Interview schedule

Can you tell me a little about your first camp?
What does the word 'challenge' mean to you in the context of being at camp?
Tell me about something you did a camp that you were surprised you could achieve.
Can you walk me through an experience of a challenge you took on and whether you learnt anything about your ability to challenge yourself?
How did you make sense of the environment at camp in relation to challenges?
What role did others play for you when facing challenges and during activities?
What was the impact for you of 'rest hour'?
Tell me about your memories of engaging in 'cabin chat'.
How did you make sense of the experience of leaving camp?
Thinking about your characteristics, what impact did camp have on you as a person?
How did your family make sense of how camp impacted on you?
How did your friends make sense of how camp impacted on you?
What was your most favourite thing you took away with you from camp?
If you had to describe camp in one or two sentences, what would you say?
If you had only 3 words, what 3 words sum up your camp experience?

Data analysis

Five steps were followed during analysis, guided by Smith and Osborn (2015). Firstly, the transcript was read and re-read to gain familiarity with content. Secondly, themes were identified and connected. Thirdly, themes for each participant were developed into master tables. Fourthly, these processes were repeated with all transcripts, looking for convergence and divergence. Finally, the write up involved outlining the meanings inherent in participants' experiences, translating themes into narratives. Following the hermeneutic phenomenological epistemology ensured the researchers reflected on how individuals made sense of their experiences (Malterud, 2016). The author JS conducted the original analysis and coding. The author JK helped to refine and label themes. The author AJ acted as a source of confirmability on behalf of OTW following a period of triangulation.

Reflexivity and quality assurance

The epistemological position of interpretivism means the researcher's interpretation of the data cannot be removed. Thus, to ensure a true representation of the data the researcher bracketed preconceptions by keeping a reflective journal, noting insights about how the researcher made sense of participants making sense of their lived experiences. This encompassed the double hermeneutic feature of IPA and enabled the research to be aware

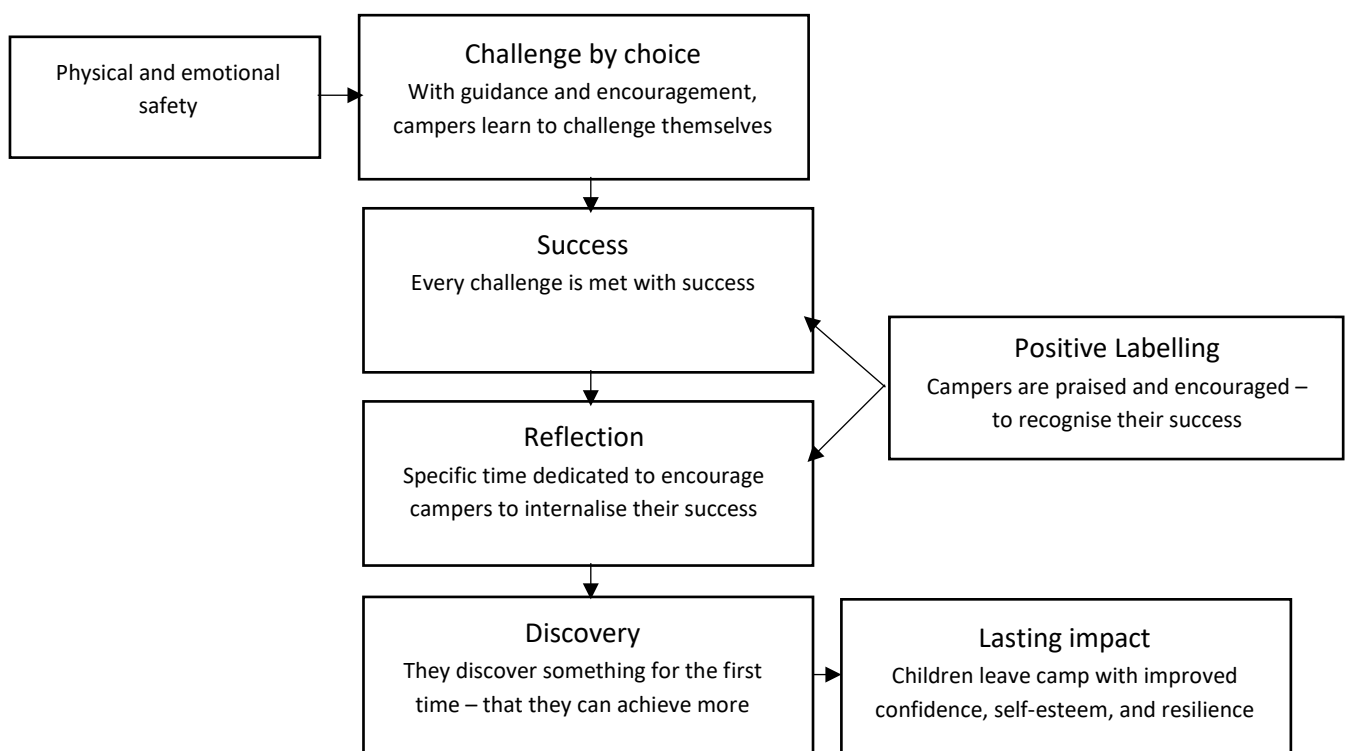
of prior beliefs about OTW camps. The research adopted a curious perspective so that new perspectives and questions emerged (LeVasseur, 2003). The researcher intended to investigate whether the impact of TR camps influenced the sibling-sibling relationship. However, using a reflective journal enabled the researcher to recognise that it was inappropriate to ask how camp impacted participants' relationships with their sibling. OTW camps aim to increase a sense of independence, helping siblings foster their own identity. The researcher wanted to mirror the camp environment whereby participants could intrinsically focus on themselves. Thus, the sibling-sibling relationship was not investigated based on this reflection.

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were addressed to ensure rigor and trustworthiness of the data (Shenton, 2004). Credibility was enhanced by establishing rapport with participants to ensure honesty in data collection (Shenton, 2004). Transferability was demonstrated by providing contextual information and detail of the research process, and dependability was demonstrated as a series of steps were followed to conduct the analysis (Smith and Osborn, 2015). This encouraged consistency, facilitating future researchers to repeat the study (Shenton, 2004). Finally, confirmability was demonstrated as the researcher remained reflexive and noted preconceptions, reducing investigator bias (Shenton, 2004).

Ethical considerations

Data were collected following ethical approval (Reference:17141). Firstly, procedural ethics ensured procedures were followed regarding informed consent and a debrief with participants. Necessary protocols, safe working policies, and health and safety guidelines were followed (Chatzidamianos, 2016). Secondly, conceptual considerations accounted for the sensitivity of the topic, therefore the distress protocol was in place (Haigh and Witham, 2015). The protocol was created by an inter-disciplinary team at the University, of experienced nurses and social scientists who research chronic conditions. Sensitivity of interview questions was also ensured due to PPI.

Figure 1: Over The Wall therapeutic recreation model (OTW, 2019)



RESULTS

From the analysis, the following themes were identified: an environment that facilitates autonomous challenges; mutuality: an inclusive and supportive environment; and a transformational journey (table 3).

Table 3: Table illustrating the superordinate themes and subordinate themes within them

An environment that facilitates autonomous challenge	Mutuality: an inclusive and supportive environment	A transformational journey
An escape from home: freedom and autonomy with no strict rules or pressures	A sense of belonging; being part of a supportive team	A new outlook on life and challenges faced
A fun, care-free, and mischievous time	Facing challenges and reflecting on successes together	Looking forward: an evolution of the self-concept

An environment that facilitates autonomous challenge

This theme was resonated across all participants, illuminating how the freedom they experienced at camp made them determined to partake in challenges. Camp was an escape from home. Participants experienced a pressure-free environment. This meant they could have a fun, care-free, and mischievous time; something they cannot often do at home.

An escape from home: freedom and autonomy with no strict rules or pressures

Five participants reported feeling free from pressured responsibility, wanting to engage in challenges. This can be seen in Camilla's extract:

"Like in terms of challenge, like it does push you a little bit but not over push you. Like, it sort of makes you come out your bubble a little bit because when you're living with somebody who's got an illness...you have to follow certain rules and you have to be quite, like careful...but when you're a child and you're just at camp, you can just be free. You can like challenge yourself but in a way that like, you're not pushing yourself too much" [Camilla].

Camilla repeatedly used the words "be free". At camp there was no pressure compared to usual routines at home. She could simply be "a child" with no responsibility. She was able to "come out her bubble" implying the care-free camp environment was novel and exciting compared to her usual environment. She discussed pushing herself without too much pressure, suggesting she wanted to engage in challenges because of the pressure-free environment.

Participants expressed the importance of having autonomy and being trusted with responsibility:

“It would be a nice way to be like, ok how are we kicking off ‘cabin chat’ today? Do you want a volunteer to do it or do you want to do it?...It was a nice way to get to decide things for ourselves” [Jennie].

Jennie enjoyed being able to “decide things”, suggesting it was important to have autonomy and make decisions. She later discussed the importance of having the volunteers beside her but making the decisions herself, suggesting she felt supported and empowered. Jennie most likely enjoyed having responsibility and wanting to make decisions, due to feeling autonomous within a pressure-free environment.

A fun, care-free, and mischievous time

When asked to describe camp in three words, seven participants chose “fun” as one of their words. When asked to discuss something they were surprised they could achieve, Jennie responded:

“I just think how silly and immature...I could be...I’ve always been in charge, trying to act like mum...So, when we like went to go and do some music and dance and instruments and stuff...everyone’s got their face paint plastered...and the way they were just acting. Obviously like just having that silly moment where you could just laugh and enjoy yourself and realise...I don’t have to be worried about being judged” [Jennie].

At first, Jennie discussed her hesitance to join in with activities but realised that she did not “have to be worried about being judged.” Seeing others engaging in fun activities encouraged her to join in and be “silly”. This suggests that having positive relationships and a supportive social environment with no judgement, enabled Jennie to be worry-free. Therefore, she engaged in child-like behaviours, something she is unable to do at home where she is often “in charge.” Participants made sense of acting silly and having fun by sharing the experience together, creating a fun, care-free camp environment.

Mutuality: An inclusive and supportive environment

Participants felt a sense of belonging within supportive teams of other campers their age and several volunteers. Individuals provided support and felt supported by their team, helping them to face challenges. Seven participants voiced the value of ‘cabin chat’; a time to reflect on successes together. Facing challenges and reflecting on successes together, reinforced the supportive environment through group reflection.

A sense of belonging; being part of a supportive team

Participants were encouraged to face challenges in a non-pressured, supportive manner, such as rock climbing:

“They’ll (the volunteers) always ask you...If you’re not comfortable with it then they won’t force you to do it. It’s more like a suggestion like...do you want me to come up to the top with you and we can do it together? but then if you get to the top and you suddenly don’t want to do it it’s like, no worries you came this far and we are really proud of you” [Carly].

Carly felt no pressure to face challenges as she was not “forced.” Five participants mentioned the volunteers offering to face challenges with them, which “felt kind of like family very much, because...they were just as much part of the experience” [James]. Carly appeared to feel supported whether a challenge was completed or not because she felt pressure-free. Support from the volunteers increased a sense of team belonging and inclusivity, as everyone provided encouragement for one another. Not only was encouragement from the volunteers important, but also support amongst teammates:

“I’d say the environment encouraged you cos you had your friends around you and you were encouraging others as well...You were always encouraging them to go off and do it and not miss out” [George].

George outlines not wanting others to “miss out,” demonstrating the importance of inclusivity. He later explained “it’s quite a nice feeling to encourage someone and help them get through something that they’re struggling with” [George]. This team support made participants feel “like you belong” [Sophia]. All participants continuously referred to themselves in relation to being part of a team, suggesting they made sense of their camp experiences through team belonging.

Facing challenges and reflecting on successes together

Every participant made sense of facing challenges by experiencing them together which “brings the team closer cos you always did it as a team” [Carly]. Seven participants placed emphasis on sharing their experiences and reflecting on their achievements in cabin chat:

“It was just a time to calmly sit down and reflect and, reflect as a team. Saying what your greatest achievement of the day was and the new things you tried as well as listening to what another teammate found particularly challenging and what they had overcome...It was just great to sit and reflect on the whole day, every day” [Laura].

Group reflection enabled Laura and her teammates to share the experiences of facing and overcoming challenges. It was important to do this “every day” because “if cabin chat wasn’t a thing, I don’t think we’d be half as close” [Laura]. This suggests that in addition to the importance of sharing team achievements, it was equally important to simply have time to be together as a team. The supportive environment explains why Laura felt comfortable sharing her struggles and achievements that day, as this environment enabled participants to continuously face, overcome, and share challenges. Additionally, reflecting on their day enabled participants to recognise their “greatest achievements” which was important for participants in recognising their capabilities.

A transformational journey

This theme considered the impact of camp after participants returned home. Regardless of how many camps they attended, they all discussed positive benefits such as *looking forward*, with a new outlook on life and challenges, and an evolution of their self-concept. Participants defined self-concept in relation to their confidence and self-image.

A new outlook on life and challenges faced

Participants remembered challenges they faced and overcame at camp, feeling determined to tackle subsequent challenges:

“I think during those activities, I really did push myself to come and expand my comfort zone. So, reflecting upon those experiences definitely...made a great impact to me because it made me believe that I could do it...I can do it with other things in life” [James].

James “expanded his comfort zone” and was successful in doing so at camp, thus, he began to believe in himself and his abilities to face challenges. James appeared to feel proud of himself for pushing himself, leaving a “great impact” on him. This illustrates that he began thinking about how he could apply what he achieved at camp, to everyday life. Camp taught the participants to recognise their abilities and be proud of themselves, making them “confident that I could do whatever without having to doubt myself all the time” [Elana].

Laura explained how she adopts the determined mindset she had at camp to remind herself she can achieve things:

“When I try something new, I put my mind into my mind of Laura at Over The Wall. I was like, ok how would I, at Over The Wall, overcome this? And that’s pretty much how I try anything new now...but now that my Over The Wall journey is over, I put the skills that I learnt during Over The Wall into practice. But in post-Over The Wall-Laura” [Laura].

Laura uses her camp mindset to overcome new challenges, as camp was a happy time for her. She associates these positive memories, with a new determination and confidence to challenge herself. The quote suggests that “Laura at Over The Wall” had her own identity, and now her camp journey is over, she has merged her camp-self with her other-self to form “post-Over The Wall-Laura,” someone who now approaches challenges with a less anxious, more determined response.

Looking forward: an evolution of the self-concept

The supportive social environment meant participants felt accepted for who they are, leading to self-acceptance:

“I wasn’t a very erm, open person, because of everything that we go through as a family...so it was nice to be in a place where I could open up to people similar to me...about who I was as a person and let me become more comfortable with myself” [Carly].

Carly overcame the social challenge of opening up because everybody was “similar” to her due to home experiences. This allowed Carly to be open with others, and herself. This was likely due to the supportive environment in which Carly would not be judged. Becoming “comfortable with herself” suggests Carly has struggled with this previously. People being “similar to her” helped Carly connect with them whilst being herself. Participants began to gain

acceptance of their identity, usually when they realised others would not judge them, which demonstrated a temporal change in the way participants viewed themselves:

“It showed me that being me is fine and if that’s who you are, be it and don’t be afraid of it. Other people from camp loved it and loved you being that goofy person so it’s fine to be that goofy person” [Sophia].

For Sophia, camp was a place that she could be herself and be “goofy.” She felt accepted and had a positive experience with peers at camp, resulting in no longer being afraid to show her true identity. Due to this acceptance, Sophia feels able to be open and confident in daily life. Confidence was a prominent outcome, with all participants discussing how they had gained confidence within themselves due to camp enforcing a positive self-image. This gained confidence was likely due to the supportive environment and feeling accepted.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to obtain a rich understanding about the lived experiences that siblings of individuals with health conditions had when attending TR camps. Discussion of the identified themes is structured into four sections based on the OTW TR model which explains how challenge, success, and reflection, lead to personal discovery (figure 1).

Challenge and autonomy

Participants enjoyed facing challenges and having unpressured responsibilities, such as involvement in planning cabin chat. Lerner (2004) explains how it is necessary for effective positive youth development (PYD), that YPs have the opportunity for participation in and leadership of activities. Being given the ability to lead certain activities promoted participants’ autonomy. Having responsibility allowed them to feel in control of decisions, thus, empowered (Hui and Tsang, 2012). Environments which support autonomy are associated with greater wellbeing in YPs (Véronneau et al., 2005). According to self-determination theory (SDT), autonomy is one of three components individuals need to feel (alongside competence and relatedness) to achieve psychological growth (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Feeling autonomous, empowered, and in control with no pressure, increased the participants’ self-determination, explaining why they wanted to, and enjoyed, partaking in challenges.

Success, reflection, and competence

Challenging themselves in fun recreational activities allowed participants to recognise their full potential after reflecting on their achievements in cabin chat. According to SDT, competence is crucial for PYD, and comes when people achieve success (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Feeling successful built participants’ confidence, increased their wellbeing, and enforced a positive self-image (Véronneau et al., 2005; Hui and Tsang, 2012; Carter and Van Andel, 2019). The more competent individuals view themselves to be, the more resilient they become. Resilience theory suggests that both assets (e.g. self-efficacy) and resources (e.g. interventions which provide opportunities to learn and practice skills) provide adolescents with the individual and contextual attributes needed for optimal PYD (Zimmerman, 2013). Camp therefore played a role in helping strengthen the participants’ resilience, as they became more competent and confident when facing challenges.

Supportive social environment and relatedness

Relatedness (or connectedness) is also key for individuals to achieve psychological growth (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The supportive social environment encouraged a sense of belonging, as being at camp with other siblings allowed participants to feel safe and not fear judgement, a usual social apprehension outside of camp. TR camps can therefore provide a place for siblings to normalise their experiences and feel connectedness with their peers, encouraging resilience, greater wellbeing, and higher self-esteem (Véronneau et al., 2005; Incledon et al., 2015). Participants also felt accepted, promoting their social competence, and helping them gain a positive identity. Adolescence is a crucial time in identity development as those with a strong sense of identity are better able to flourish in adulthood (Griffin et al., 2017). Feeling a sense of belonging through connectedness, recognising their positive qualities, and gaining a positive self-image, encouraged participants to accept their identity.

This finding recognises the importance for siblings to feel continuous support and an ongoing sense of belonging. OTW are currently creating a virtual platform which provides an online safe environment for siblings to experience virtual camp all year round, maintain their connection with others, and reduce isolation. This will enable siblings' sense of belonging to be maintained outside of residential camps.

Personal discovery

Emphasising individuals' capabilities and their awareness of themselves, provides the opportunity for self-acknowledgement, which is important for PYD and SDT (Hui and Tsang, 2012). Acknowledging their potential appeared to continue after camp. At camp, participants began their journey of self-discovery. Self-discovery involves challenging experiences which encourage recognition of potential (Schwartz et al., 2005). Due to continuously recognising their potential, participants now approach daily challenges with a less anxious, more determined, and more resilient response. SDT explains how gaining mastery over challenges and taking in new experiences are essential for developing a cohesive sense of self (Ryan and Deci, 2017). This means participants would gain a more stable sense of their identity, personal worth, and acceptance of who they are. Participants became aware of their full potential and capabilities at camp, resulting in a positive self-image, which has been sustained.

The positive encouragement from camp, regarding both external challenges and internal qualities, increased participants' personal worth and motivation to challenge themselves, enabling them to feel autonomous, competent, and connected to others. This boosted their self-determination and enabled personal growth (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Activities and environments that enhance self-determination lead to greater wellbeing and identity ratification (Griffin et al., 2017), demonstrating the value of TR camps for siblings of individuals with health conditions.

Strengths and Limitations of the study

This is the only qualitative UK study exploring the impact of TR camps on the psychological wellbeing of siblings of individuals with health conditions. This study used IPA, ensuring that YPs' voices were at the centre of the research. Furthermore, the researcher previously attended OTW camps and is a similar age to the participants. This enabled the researcher to

connect with participants and facilitated participants in sharing their stories about their camp experiences (Knapik, 2006). Additionally, the researcher was reflexive to ensure that her previous positive experiences and perceptions of camp did not influence responses or guide questioning during interviews.

Although multiple perspectives enabled examination of convergence and divergence of views, these perspectives were limited to the experiences of eight 18-19-year olds in the context of one TR camp provider. Therefore, caution should be used when drawing conclusions about the influencing factors within TR camps and their outcomes on psychological wellbeing. However, these perspectives might represent other YPs of a similar age who also attend TR camps. Therefore, these findings may be tentatively considered as an example to other camps which provide TR interventions for siblings. Furthermore, participants may have had more positive experiences of attending camp than others who did not participate. Individuals who participate are more likely to disclose personal information as they are more open and interested in the topic (Robinson, 2014). Therefore, the results may not be representative of those with different experiences. However, purposive sampling meant that overlapping and diverging experiences were illuminated, and it is reasonable to suggest that the insights have value given the lack of similar research in existing literature.

Recommendations

The findings showed reflection to be a crucial element of TR camps, encouraging insight into participants' abilities and competence. Reflection was likely enhanced due to being done alongside others (Costa and Kallick, 2008). Firstly, group reflection is recommended for TR camps. Additionally, participants' enjoyment of challenge and reflection was enhanced through team belonging. This suggests that secondly, TR camps should utilise teams to increase connectedness with peers. Furthermore, six participants discussed the importance of the volunteers joining in with activities. Numerous studies have found that PYD and resilience can be facilitated by supportive relationships with non-parental adults (Futch Ehrlich et al., 2016). Thirdly, volunteers should support campers by joining in activities as positive volunteer-camper relationships are crucial at TR camps.

Future research

Participants had attended camp one or two years before interviewing for this study. Longitudinal interviewing would better aid the understanding of benefits experienced and increased psychological wellbeing over time. This would show if positive changes are maintained further into adulthood. Furthermore, investigating parents' perceptions of the benefits of camp for siblings would allow for further credibility checking of the data (Shenton, 2004). If TR camps are effective in promoting siblings' psychological wellbeing, the quality of family relationships could be increased. Therefore, parents' views could offer an interesting addition because this would help to understand families' experiences of their child attending a TR camp.

Conclusions

This study highlights that TR camp-based interventions have the potential to promote psychosocial benefits for siblings. Camp instilled attributes of confidence, social

connectedness, a positive self-image, self-determination, and self-discovery. These resulted in participants having a more positive outlook during daily life, promoting greater wellbeing and PYD. Consequently, TR camps could help siblings face challenges and stressors in life more confidently, by enabling them to become more resilient and view things more positively, aiding the prevention of mental illness.

TR camps can also provide a place where siblings of those with health conditions can intrinsically focus on themselves. It is currently unknown, based on existing literature, which intervention elements are most effective in facilitating positive outcomes. This study provides insight into what elements could be effective: autonomous challenge, a supportive environment, and reflection.

Key Messages

- TR camps can provide an 'escape from home' for the siblings of individuals with health conditions. This is important as they often face responsibilities and pressures at home. Siblings can have fun in this environment, where they can simply be children, promoting their positive youth development.
- Siblings can face social challenges, as others their age often do not understand the responsibilities they face at home. TR camps can provide a place where siblings feel accepted and not judged, resulting in them being their true selves. For participants in this study, attending a TR camp with other siblings led to self-acceptance.
- Reflection is key in enabling siblings to recognise their success. Participants discussed the importance of feeling acknowledged for their achievements through reflection. Therefore, a crucial element of TR camps should be to provide a time of the day where individuals can process what they did together (encouraging team bonding), reflect on activities completed (encouraging competence), and feel acknowledged for their achievements (encouraging self-belief).
- TR camps can encourage a growth in confidence, a determined mindset, and a positive self-image, in the siblings of individuals with health conditions.

Data availability statement

The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

References

Biggerstaff, D. and Thompson, A. R. (2008) 'Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A qualitative methodology of choice in healthcare research.' *Qualitative research in psychology*, 5(3) pp. 214-224.

Carter, M. J. and Van Andel, G. E. (2019) *Therapeutic recreation: A practical approach*. 5th ed., Illinois: Waveland press.

- Chatzidamianos, G. (2016) *Safe Working Practices*. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University. [Online] [Accessed on 10th March, 2020]
https://moodle.mmu.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/3491449/mod_resource/content/0/Safe%20Working%20Practices%20Oct%202016_V1.0.pdf
- Costa, A. and Kallick, B. (2008) 'Learning Through Reflection.' In Costa, A. and Kallick, B. (eds) *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind 16 essential characteristics for success*. Virginia: ASCD, pp. 221-235.
- Department of Health. (2015) *Future in mind Promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing*. Unknown place of publication: National Health Service. [Online] {Accessed on 18th May 2020}
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414024/Childrens_Mental_Health.pdf
- Dyke, P., Mulroy, S. and Leonard, H. (2009) 'Siblings of children with disabilities: Challenges and opportunities.' *Acta Paediatrica*, 98(1) pp. 23.
- Fleary, S. A. and Heffer, R. W. (2013) 'Impact of growing up with a chronically ill sibling on well siblings' late adolescent functioning.' *ISRN family medicine*, 2013.
- Futch Ehrlich, V. A., Deutsch, N. L., Fox, C. V., Johnson, H. E. and Varga, S. M. (2016) 'Leveraging relational assets for adolescent development: A qualitative investigation of youth-adult "connection" in positive youth development.' *Qualitative Psychology*, 3(1) pp. 59-78.
- Griffin, L. K., Adams, N. and Little, T. D. (2017) 'Self-determination theory, identity development, and adolescence.' In Wehmeyer, M. L., Shogren, K. A., Little, T. D. and Lopez, S. J. (eds) *Development of self-determination through the life-course*. Unknown place of publication: Springer, pp. 189-196.
- Haigh, C. and Witham, G. (2015) *Distress Protocol for qualitative data collection*. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University. [Online] [Accessed on 26th April 2020]
<https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/media/mmuacuk/content/documents/rke/Advisory-Distress-Protocol.pdf>
- Hui, E. K., and Tsang, S. K. (2012) 'Self-determination as a psychological and positive youth development construct.' *The Scientific World Journal*, 2012.
- Inclendon, E., Williams, L., Hazell, T., Heard, T. R., Flowers, A. and Hiscock, H. (2015) 'A review of factors associated with mental health in siblings of children with chronic illness.' *Journal of Child Health Care*, 19(2) pp. 182-194.
- Kiernan, G., Gormley, M. and MacLachlan, M. (2004) 'Outcomes associated with participation in a therapeutic recreation camping programme for children from 15 European countries: Data from the 'Barretstown Studies'.' *Social science & medicine*, 59(5) pp. 903-913.
- Knapik, M. (2006) 'The qualitative research interview: Participants' responsive participation in knowledge making.' *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(3) pp. 77-93.
- Labay, L. E. and Walco, G. A. (2004) 'Brief report: Empathy and psychological adjustment in siblings of children with cancer.' *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 29(4) pp. 309-314.

- Lerner, R. M. (2004) *Liberty: Thriving and civic engagement among America's youth*. New York: Sage.
- LeVasseur, J. J. (2003) 'The problem of bracketing in phenomenology.' *Qualitative health research*, 13(3) pp. 408-420.
- Malterud, K. (2016) 'Theory and interpretation in qualitative studies from general practice: Why and how?' *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 44(2) pp.120-129.
- Moore, K. A. (2017) 'Commentary: Positive youth development goes mainstream.' *Child Development*, 88(4) pp. 1175-1177.
- Mulligan, S., Guerin, S., McKiernan, A., Brown, A., Hartnett, M., Gray, D., and Kiernan, G. (2019) 'The core features and outcomes of a specialised camp programme for children with life-limiting conditions and their families: A qualitative multi-perspective approach.' *Journal of Child Health Care*, pp.136749351987559.
- Odar, C., Canter, K. S. and Roberts, M. C. (2013) 'Relationship between camp attendance and self-perceptions in children with chronic health conditions: A meta-analysis.' *Journal of pediatric psychology*, 38(4) pp. 398-411.
- Over The Wall. (2019) *What is Therapeutic Recreation?* [Online] [Accessed on 6th May 2020] <https://www.otw.org.uk/what-is-therapeutic-recreation/?fbclid=IwAR3vPMf4bJ7XuH-YPyGW1CXMQd7TCqsZfLJSE2kmukUt2uahIBWePBidTxM>
- Over The Wall. (2020) *Our camps*. [Online] [Accessed on 6th May 2020] <https://www.otw.org.uk/ourcamps/>
- Packman, W. P., Greenhalgh, J., Chesterman, B., Shaffer, T., Fine, J., VanZutphen, K., Golan, R., and Amylon, M.D. (2005) 'Siblings of pediatric cancer patients: the quantitative and qualitative nature of quality of life.' *Journal of Psychosocial Oncology*, 23(1) pp. 87-108.
- Robinson, O. C. (2014) 'Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide.' *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(1) pp. 25-41.
- Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. (2000) 'Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and wellbeing.' *American psychologist*, 55(1) pp. 68.
- Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. (2017) *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Sharpe, D. and Rossiter, L. (2002) 'Siblings of children with a chronic illness: A meta-analysis.' *Journal of paediatric psychology*, 27(8) pp. 699-710.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004) 'Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects.' *Education for information*, 22(2) pp. 63-75.
- Sidhu, R., Passmore, A., and Baker, D. (2006) 'The effectiveness of a peer support camp for siblings of children with cancer.' *Pediatric Blood & Cancer*, 47(5) pp. 580-588.
- Smith, J. A. (2015) *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods*. 3rd ed., London: SAGE.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., and Larkin, M. (2009) *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research*. London: SAGE.

Smith, J. A. and Osborn, M. (2015) 'Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.' In Smith, J.A. (2015). *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. (3rd Edition). London: SAGE. pp. 53-81.

Smith, M. M., Pereira, S. P., Chan, L., Rose, C., and Shafran, R. (2018) 'Impact of wellbeing interventions for siblings of children and young people with a chronic physical or mental health condition: A systematic review and meta-analysis.' *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 21(2) pp. 246-265.

Schwartz, S. J., Kurtines, W. M. and Montgomery, M. J. (2005) 'A comparison of two approaches for facilitating identity exploration processes in emerging adults: An exploratory study.' *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 20(3) pp. 309-345.

Véronneau, M. H., Koestner, R. F. and Abela, J. R. (2005) 'Intrinsic need satisfaction and well-being in children and adolescents: An application of the self-determination theory.' *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 24(2) pp. 280-292.

Zimmerman, M. A. (2013) 'Resiliency theory: A strengths-based approach to research and practice for adolescent health.' *Health education and behaviour*, 40(4) pp. 381–383.