

## **Middle Child Syndrome: An Overview of Perceptions Regarding this Concept and its Implications in Developing Countries**

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Middle child is the one who has one or more older as well as younger siblings. The term middle child syndrome is actually used to describe the feelings of the middle child that they are not special like their first-born or the last-born sibling. Middle child has low self-esteem and tendency to feel this way and develops this perception; which is his/her own [1]. Past research has shown that in many cases middle children often feel identity crisis; and many a times they have to try very hard to carve out their own unique identity in order to feel special [2].

In developed countries special attention has been given to this particular situation in the light of psychological research advancements; in order to deal with it and to minimize the effects on a child's personality. Sadly, situation in developing countries like in Pakistan is quite opposite to this. Pakistani society by all cultural norms is a conservative and patriarchal society; where having psychological and psychiatric issues among children is a taboo or stigma for parents as well as for the child in question. Parents to their utmost desire, try not to declare that a child of theirs is having any psychological or emotional problem. Simultaneously, number of child psychologists is minimal in our country [3]. Recently in the past decade some few researches have been conducted related to emotional and behavioral problems of children; and consequently psychologists and psychiatrists also have become very concerned about the ever increasing emotional and psychological problems among younger generation [4]. It's my personal observation that educated parents are now aware of existence of such problems, and they do try to seek professional help when needed.

In my humble opinion, somewhere in this bigger picture, emotional and psychological problems of the middle child are overlooked by the parents and immediate family; and are thus not taken care of at an early stage. Another contributory factor towards this situation is that parents themselves do not have any idea about what middle child syndrome is and what impact it can have on the personality of the child? In a recent ongoing Qualitative study by myself, in the category of perspective of middle child; we found very strong evolving themes such as: under confident, low self-esteem, quite and emotional, hatred towards siblings and parents, feeling of worthlessness, occasional frequent lack of communication with parents and siblings, blaming parents, finding fault with parents, and feeling of alienation from family at times. In the same study it was evident that parents have no idea about this particular concept and hence they are unable to identify the evident clues in the behavior of their middle child at the very onset of the problem.

Since I am a mother of three children who have now crossed their teen ages, and somewhere down the road I also struggled; I would emphatically say that it is very crucial that parents should be educated about the emotional and psychological problems of growing children and the impact it can have upon their personality and future life; be the elder, middle, or youngest child. It definitely needs comprehensive awareness programs in order to expose parents to such situations that should not get overlooked on account of ignorance.

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