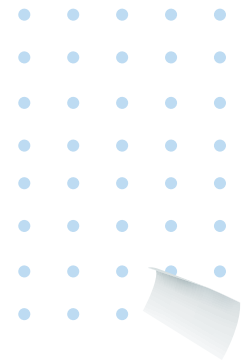




# MIDDLE/LATE CHILDHOOD: A Case **Study** of Meera



# Abstract

Middle/late childhood is state where a child begins to learn important aspects of life. There is limited focus on internal issues and more focus is on the outward expressions by the child. The stage has continuous growth in physical, social and intellectual aspects. However, middle/late childhood is important as it initiates the emotional development of a child. The current paper considers Meera, a five year old child, as a case study to understand the development of a child in the four perspectives. The research uses interview and observation techniques to explore the behavior of the child. The findings reveal a normal development of the child through interactions with the family, teachers and peers. It establishes a positive relation between the behavior characteristics and individual characteristics expressed by the child. Meera, however, comes out as a sensitive and emotional girl.

**Key words:** middle/late childhood, Meera, physical, social, emotional, intellectual

# Middle/Late Childhood: A Case Study of Meera

## INTRODUCTION

Childhood development is a crucial state for any family, community and state. The development in children influences societies by defining who they become in the future. Children develop in three stages. First, children develop as infants, toddlers and preschoolers between the ages of 0 to 4 years. In the second stage, kids enter the middle childhood era between 5 and 11 years and eventually, the third stage, as teens between 12 to 17 years.

According to CDC, middle childhood initiates various changes in the lives of a child. Children learn to do some things by themselves, thereby becoming independent from family members. The exposure to the outer world, especially school, is fundamental for the changes witnessed in a child's life. Further, friends start becoming more important. Thus, physical, emotional, social, and intellectual capabilities continue developing. The children's development in both middle adulthood and late childhood shift to internal perspectives from the physical perspectives as they start to discover themselves. Nonetheless, physical development still has a strong influence on the nature of the person of the child. Thus, a child will experience physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. Children become

more aware about their internal characteristics in growth and describe their characteristics with reference to a group. Whereas the other three parameters are continuous, middle and late childhood stage is intrinsically specific for emotional development. Children learn to appreciate events and cope with stress.

As outlined above, middle and late childhood is a crucial stage for the development of a kid. The elders around a child, such as parents, teachers and older siblings, are tasked with observing whether a child's behavior is normal. Any abnormal behavior might have an associated disorder that should be addressed early enough to guarantee a child positive behavior. In perspective, famous psychoanalysts outline negative events that arise in middle and late childhood stages. According to Eriksson's theory, if a child fails to develop confidence in this stage, a state of inferiority develops that is reflected through pessimisms. The child starts withdrawing from people, peers and events. The theory takes cognizance of failure to develop in social and emotional perspectives. Erickson equates stage 4 of his psychosocial theory to middle and late childhood. Disorders of intellectual development consider Piaget's theory of cognitive development. From the theory, it can be deduced that a child may fail to think in different situations or otherwise fail to concentrate on a single activity. As result, mental disorders such as Attention Deficit Disorder Hyperactivity Disorder, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, emotional and behavioral disorders can be observed.

The research paper seeks to describe the development of a child physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually using a case study of a child called Meera. The researcher, through observation, monitors the behavior of the child to identify conformance or deviance of Meera's behavior in relation to documented normal characteristics of children within this age bracket. The paper seeks to find out if my niece, Meera, is developing well in the above mentioned four perspectives.

## Research Objectives

By observing the behavior of Meera, the study seeks to describe the behavior of the child in relation to physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. The observed characteristics are then compared with observations from previous studies about expected behavior for children in middle and late childhood development stage. Hence, the research objective is 'to describe whether Meera has a normal middle childhood.'

## Research Questions

The researcher will split the objective into various research questions. They will include:

1. What are Meera's physical developmental characteristics?
2. To what extent is Meera social with family members, teachers and peers?

3. How does Meera relate emotionally to social interactions?
4. How is the intellectual state of Meera?

## Problem Statement and Justification of the Study

The normal development of a child is important since it contributes to the happiness of both the child and family. This is often a measure of the intellectual ability to solve life problems and positively integrate with the society. The study is important in identifying the key parameters that should be observed to ensure that a child is having a normal lifestyle. Normality in life is what will allow him or her to be a productive citizen in the society. The study is based on the understanding that theories on behavior are rather absolute in description which is rather general to a specific situation as this of Meera. Nonetheless, theories can be operationalized to monitor items about behavior that are expressed as normal behavior or characteristics for middle and late childhood.

## Context

The case study is conducted by observing the behavior of Meera who is my niece. The child is five years old, and is the last born with two older siblings. Meera grows in the view of both parents though the father arrives slightly after 8 pm on weekdays but is available over the

weekends. It is the father's responsibility to drop Meera and her siblings to school. Since Meera's school is more distant, she has a special opportunity to interact with her father. Her mother works at the local municipality and leaves work early enough to pick Meera, her brother and sister aged fifteen and ten respectively. Meera shares a room with her sister. Her bed is next to a cabinet with six dolls. She has a Mickey Mouse cartoon sticker over bed and a Robocop robot on top her bed inherited from her brother. Of late, Meera likes sitting at the edge of the seat, to the left directly opposite the television during her favorite kids' shows and next to her father at the dinner table. The girl is already in grade school. Thus, her interaction has had to expound from that of the family to that among the peers and teachers. For instance, she is expected to comply with the wearing of uniform while in school. Meera sits in the second row of the classroom and is paired with a boy, Aboud, who is more daring and outgoing. There is a good relationship between them though once in a while, Meera finds Aboud to have conflicting issues. To the front, there is a paired set of both gender while at the back and sides, she is surrounded by girls.

## Literature Review

### PHYSICAL

According to Koop (2000), the growth rate of children is slower than in the previous years but faster than growth in the adolescent stage. Children experience significant development during the psycho-

motor development. As a result, more strength and physical coordination of muscles is experienced. The developments in growth allow a child to appreciate their physical competence. Therefore, the child develops a positive attitude towards muscle related activities such as dancing, sports and gymnastics. According to Charlesworth et al, children perfect their physical development by mastering the physical skills associated by a sport or dance. However, the children remain susceptible to physical injuries due to excessive training and activity.

According Ozretich, children in the later stages of their childhood experience uneven growth of their bones, organs and muscles. Critically, late childhood is important for some students because some kids get into puberty. According to Plotnik et al., this phase makes puberty relevant since it is the development stage the come immediately before it. Charlesworth et al., note that even within the same age in middle childhood, variations might be present in weight, height and sexual development. The development of height and weight reduces in this stage while the overall growth continues. The development is influenced by genetic and environmental factors. The physical development of children depends on effects from food and diseases vulnerability. The physical development can also act as an impediment for the development of social or intellectual spheres in a child. The kids are exposed to accidents, injuries, deaths and suicide whilst pursuing physical development in the middle childhood stage. The stage is associated with visible activity and physical growth as well



as the development of new patterns of the self and skills by the child. The way in which the child relates to peers and adults is influenced by his/her physical development. There may be a feeling of inferiority among late developers. On the other hand, early developers may feel that they are out of place and different to their peers. Older people should advise children that such development is normal but different between people.

## SOCIAL

According to Wiley, the evaluation of social and emotional situation of children in middle and late childhood development is due to studies on the brain. This is the stage for the development of the self of the child. For CDC, the emotional and social development witnessed by children in this stage majorly entails being independent from family and parents as well as being keen to understand the world. It also entails more interest about friendship, teamwork, attention about the future, as well as more concerned about being accepted and liked by the friends. Koop, argues that these developments are due as children seek to develop their 'personhood'. They begin to identify their position in the family, school, class and community. Ozretich finds the children in late childhood closer to their parents, though they exhibit habits such as forgetfulness with school work and home chores. Equally, the stage involves frequent sibling fights. The children's social development gets influenced by teachers, peers and family. Girls are influenced by image while boys are pressured to conform to the stereotype of masculinity.

According to Koop, social development of children requires freedom of personal expression and structures of expectations as well as guidelines they can accept. At the same time, there is need for places where there is little or no adult interference where children can interact by themselves.

Ozretich advances the maturity of relationships between children in this stage and the surrounding environment. As the children get older, friendship consider same gender based on hobbies. The kids are influenced by media though boys have more friends than girls. Nonetheless, compared to the boys, girls are more emotional with their friends. Social development is identified as self competence by Charlesworth et al., Self competence is a mix of learning new skills and doing meaningful work that is orchestrated by mastery and self efficacy. The child can identify with a particular gender and associated roles, becomes part of a team, develops friendship with peers and identify with a peer group.

## EMOTIONAL

Most scholars discuss the precincts of emotional development of kids under social development. For instance, Koop identify the social association of a child with friends and an immediate emotional response of acceptance by the same friends. Ozretich argues that a child's state develops a conscience in this stage. The emotion of children is guided by egocentric thinking considering the possible benefits that can be extended to them. That is, if you do this for me, I

will do that for you. According to Charlesworth et al., children in middle childhood positively begin identifying and articulating their emotions and those of others. Equally, the child adopts coping skills that allow them to manage stressing and traumatizing situations through emotional intelligence. The children can motivate themselves, persist and control their impulse by delaying gratification.

Charlesworth et al, while referring to Goleman's 2006 study, further argues that social and emotional intelligence are important parts of moral conduct and reasoning of the children. Thus, positive conditions and interactions epitomize emotional development. According to Ozretich, moral thinking ability does not reflect in a child's behavior. Nevertheless, the child should exhibit the ability to mentally arrange and share emotional experience, cognitive recognition of emotions, use of emotions to guide actions, ability to remain focused in result oriented processes, delaying gratification due to cognitive evaluation, effective defense mechanism and the use of social comparison. On the other hand, Plotnik noted that the child develops a sense of mastery and accomplishment. As such, there is interest in making plans and achieving goals by learning from parents on how to fix things. To the contrary, there is a tendency to be forgetful and disorganized. Charlesworth et al finds the ability to think, hope and empathize as important tools for emotional development of a child.

## INTELLECTUAL

In the middle and late childhood development, there is rapid

development of thinking skills. Children also express better ways of talking about their experiences and talking about their thoughts. The thinking is also concerned about others than personal issues. According to Koop, the physical development enables children to develop their cognitive skills. In the end, they can understand the world and people better. Further, the stage allows for kids to independently function in their activities. In fact, Koop summarizes the development in this stage into self-efficacy which is the ability to know what to do and how to do it. The success of self-efficacy which can be expressed by positive performance in school is only possible if the achievement is appreciated by the family. In other words, families that appreciate the effort of their kids motivate them to progress and apply their intelligence and knowledge productively.

Koop noted that the synthesis of knowledge, perception, abstraction and creativity depends on the child's experience. Ozretich stipulates interest of children in learning life skills like cooking and fixing things just as adults in their surroundings. Intellectually, the child can develop logical thinking that has limited application of the logic to abstract concepts. As a result, there is accumulation of general knowledge which is applied gradually as the child is exposed to new tasks. According to Charlesworth et al., cognitive development of a child in the middle childhood helps in communication of thoughts. Such development is controlled by public education. Middle childhood is also known as the preoperational thought stage. The children are introduced to conceptual thinking, complicated object systems and

problem solving. Cognitive developments in the stage allow children to learn in a variety of environments. As a result, children can intellectually interact by understanding people, situations, and events.

## Methodology

The data collection was mainly guided by observation that monitored the behavior of the child's at home and school. At home, the child was observed when playing in her room, sitting room, and yard. Equally, the interaction when playing with older people was also observed. The other observation items were ability to solve homework, attention in class, school field and interaction with school mates. There were two brief interviews with the family and teachers. The data collection was a two day observation session at school, a fifteen minute interview session with the class teacher and several chats with family members. Meera was also interviewed about herself and friends at school.

## FINDINGS

### Physical Development

According to Meera's parents, it is not certain that Meera physical development has slowed. They find her growth normal and are not worried because Meera's doctor is okay with her development. Meera's teacher also finds Meera's physical health as normal in comparison to

other classmates. The mother, however, feels that Meera has developed slightly faster than her sister; an opinion which the sister differs with. The father finds Meera as a hands' on person like the brother who likes touching everything to see how they work. To the contrary, Meera thinks she is growing slowly and would like to be like her elder sister. She, however, appreciates herself noting that hair is longer than those of her peers though Aboud is physically stronger than her.

## Social and Emotional

Meera identifies more with the two girls behind her than Aboud, her desk mate. However, during classes, there is more interaction between the two children. When answering questions, the teacher finds Meera a little bit hesitant until after one or two trials from other students unless directly pointed out by the teacher or when she is very certain. Meera's best friend sits directly behind her. She enjoys her company and that of other girls. In her room, Meera plays with her dolls. Robocop is for protection at night especially after watching the movie with her brother early this year. The brother reported a situation, where Meera sulked for two days before he could release the doll to her. Every time Meera acquires a new doll or cloth, she has to show it to her and seek her concerns about it. In the yard, Meera enjoys swinging, skipping ropes and hide and seek with her friends. Occasionally, they tap hands with her sister in the sitting room. There is a special bond between her and her sister. In the absence of her father, the sister takes her to bed.

# Intellectual

Meera's teachers find her bright but hesitant in making mistakes through verbal answers. During her homework sessions, the child tackles parts she is comfortable with before embarking on difficult parts. If she realizes an oversight in answering a question, she will claim to be becoming stupid. The child expresses happiness the next day when she scores in her homework and shows it to everyone except when she fails. Nonetheless, she rarely hesitates to ask during occasions when she experiences difficulty with the homework. According to the class teacher, Meera's ability is constant whether she directs the students to seek assistance or work on assignments individually. Meera often identifies issues while referring to an activity. For example, she noted that '*a cow is herbivore because it eats grass.*'

## CONCLUSION

From the literature review and findings, it can be concluded that:

### **1. Meera has a normal physical development.**

The expression of her body is normal to children within the middle childhood stage. Meera is more agile touching everything around and wanting to discover how such things operate.

### **2. There is a strong bond between Meera and members of her**



### **family, peers and teachers.**

Meera identifies more with her gender in school as well as her sister at home. She learns to do things on her own. As a result, she is becoming increasingly less dependent on the family. Equally, she is more receptive when engaged directly by the teacher.

### **3. Meera seeks emotional approval to social interactions.**

It is noted that Meera only responds directly to questions she is sure of their answers. There is fear of failure in her. Furthermore, she considers the approval of her best friend on her possessions and interactions.

### **4. Meera also has a significant strong intellectual state.**

The child performs well with her school work that ranks her in the top five of the class. She is able to comprehend situation such as the acquisition of Robocop after watching the movie as well as inference like that of the cow.