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**DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES**

**COURSE CODE: ECD 114**

**COURSE TITLE: SOCIAL INTERACTION IN EARLY  
CHILDHOOD**

*Instructional Material for BEd. ECS Distance Learning*

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## **COURSE OUTLINE**

**Credit hours: 3**

**Pre-requisites: None**

**Purpose:** To understand social interaction amongst young children

### **Course objectives**

By the end of the course the learner should be able to

- i. Identify various agents of socialization
- ii. Discuss social interaction amongst young children
- iii. Relate socialization with personality, learning and gender roles

### **Course content**

Definition of social interaction, Process of socialization, Effects of various agents of socialization, Socialization and personality, Socialization and learning, gender roles and socialization, Role of the school, emerging issues in socialization, developing social skills, social and emotional development, attachment theory, developing social competence, assessment of social development, assisting children with social problems. Language development and social development. Socialization and learning.

**Teaching / Learning Methodologies:** Lectures; Tutorials; Class discussion

**Instructional Materials and Equipment:** Handouts; Chalk board

### **Course Assessment**

Examination - 70%; Continuous Assessments (Exercises and Tests) -30%; **Total - 100%**

### **Recommended Text Books**

- i. London J.(1993) Child development from birth to eight :a practical focus .London: National children's Bureau
- ii. Bancroft, D. and Carr, R.(1995) influencing children's development. Oxford; open University press

### **Text Books for further Reading**

- i. Bandura,A.(1973)Aggression: A social learning analysis Englewood Cliffs, N J: Prentice Hall

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## **INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL INTERACTION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD**

### **Introduction**

Children enter school with a range of knowledge and skills in multiple domains— physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive. There is no exact profile of a child who is “ready” for school. Nevertheless, children whose skills are far behind those of their new classmates do enter school at a disadvantage. If they are unable to catch up, they face greater challenges throughout their school careers. Social development is an important, often over-looked factor in children’s transition to preschool and to primary school. A child who is socially ready for school should be able to make friends, get along with peers, and communicate well with peers and teachers. Children who arrive at primary school with social competencies generally have an easier time forming relationships with their peers and better school outcomes.

The purpose of this module therefore is to assist people interested in early childhood care and education understand the importance of social interactive behaviors to the holistic growth and development of young children. The module sends light on other issue related to socialization processes, socializing agents developing social competence in children among others. Some of the recipients of this module are trainers in early childhood education, teachers in early childhood education and other care givers.

### **Course Objectives**

In this module we will look at social interaction in early childhood. The following topics are systematically presented with an introduction, lesson objectives, content and lesson task.

1. Definition of social interaction,
2. Process of socialization,
3. Effects of various agents of socialization,
4. Socialization and personality,
5. Socialization and learning,
6. Gender roles and socialization,
7. Developing social skills,
8. Social and emotional development,
9. Attachment theory,
10. Developing social competence,
11. Assessment of social development,
12. Assisting children with social problems.

13. Language development and social development.
14. Socialization and learning,
15. Emerging issues in socialization.

## LESSON ONE: DEFINITION OF SOCIAL INTERACTION



### *Lesson Objectives*

*By the end of this lesson you should be able to:*

- i. Explain what social interaction is.*
- ii. Describe interactive behaviours*
- iii. Explain how we can encourage social interaction*

### **Introduction**

Young children are the most social beings and they hardly isolate themselves whenever they are together with others children or with adults. They often talk as they ask questions, share ideas, experiences and play materials with each other. They sometimes talk to themselves and regulate their behaviours as they play with their toys. All these are social interactive behaviors. Social interactions are the acts, actions, or practices of two or more people mutually oriented towards each other's selves, that is, any behavior that tries to affect or take account of each other's subjective experiences or intentions.

### **Social Interactive Behaviours**

*(a picture of two children holding each other)*

The parties to the social interaction must be aware of each other and have each other's self in mind. It does not mean being in sight of or directly behaving towards each other. Friends writing letters are socially interacting, as are enemy generals preparing opposing war plans. Social interaction is not defined by type of physical relation or behavior, or by physical distance. It is a matter of a mutual subjective orientation towards each other. Thus even when no physical behavior is involved, as with two rivals deliberately ignoring each other's professional work, there is social interaction.

Moreover, social interaction requires a mutual orientation. The spying of one on another is not social interaction if the other is unaware. Nor do the behaviors of rapist and victim constitute social interaction if the victim is treated as a physical object. Such interaction may comprise a system; it may be organized, controlled, or regimented. It is not, however, social as I am using the term.

### **Activities for social interaction**

There may be many reasons a child does not feel like interacting socially. The child may be shy, tired, uncomfortable in a new environment, hungry, feeling left out by the group, uninterested in what others are doing or even distracted by an imaginary story that (s)he is enjoying all on his or her own.

However, these are simply explanations as to why a child may not jump into a social situation, they are not excuses that mean that his or her continued solitary activities are for the best. If you are concerned about the child's social behaviour then you should become proactive and plan a number of activities to encourage social interaction.

### **Role Play at Home**

Some children may avoid social interaction with others their own age because they do not feel confident in their social skills. These young children may not be able to verbalise this lack of confidence, but a general confusion about what to do with, or how to talk to, others could be clues that this is the case.

One easy way to clear this confusion is to role play at home. Without turning it into a lesson, "play pretend" with a child to allow him or her to get used to interacting with others. Pretend to be the butcher, the baker, the teacher or even a fellow peer and allow your child to practice making eye contact, making small talk and even politely ending an interaction. When (s)he seems comfortable with these steps, then look for ways to have him or her interact with others.

### **Play Dates**

Whether you embrace or cringe away from the term "play date", setting up a formal time in which your child interacts with others is one way of forcing the issue of social interaction. If your child does not generally feel comfortable in other people's houses then you may want to start by inviting his or her peers to your home first.

Keeping the number small – just one or two friends to start – should help your child ease into social situations and become familiar with interacting with others. Providing a number of imaginative options such as arts and crafts, supervised cooking or even outdoor games will also encourage creativity and interaction.

## **Groups and Clubs**

In today's world there are groups and clubs available to children almost from birth. If your child needs a little push towards social interaction then consider signing him or her up for a more formal activity. Music lessons or singing in the choir, group art classes, a fun football league or even scouting activities may appeal to your child.

Be sure to discuss with your child where his or her interests lie however, as attempting to force a child towards an activity that holds no appeal could make the situation worse. Also, remember to discuss the rules of the group or club so that your child doesn't end up confused about when to be social and when to remain silent.

Social interactions are not always easy for children. If your child seems to need a little help in this area, consider role playing, setting up play dates and/or enrolling him or her in a group or club to get the ball rolling. No doubt you'll soon have a more social child than you ever imagined.

### ***Activities/tasks***

- a) ***What is social interaction?***
- b) ***Describe two activities that describe social interaction and two that do not constitute social interaction.***

## **Further Reading**

- i. National Education Goals Panel (1997). *Special early childhood report, 1997*. Washington, DC: U.S.
- ii. National Education Goals Panel (1995). *Reconsidering children's early development and learning: Toward common views and vocabulary*. Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel.
- iii. Meisels, S. J., Atkins-Burnett, S., & Nicholson, J. (1996). *Assessment of social competence, adaptive behaviors, and approaches to learning with young children*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

## LESSON TWO: THE PROCESS SOCIALIZATION



### *Objectives*

- i. Define socialization process*
- ii. Describe socialization and human nature*
- iii. Explain the looking-glass self theory by Charles Hurton Cooley.*

### **Introduction**

Understanding the socialization process is very important for every individual. Socialization, in simple words, is a process which is related to the development of the personality of an individual right from a very young age.

### **What is Socialization Process?**

**Socialization** is a process of learning norms, rules, regulations, values and attitudes of society. It is a lifelong process which starts from childhood till to the death of a person. Socialization is a vital process of learning through which the society exists. Each and every society socializes its members according to its own values. For example, if a baby enters a particular society, he/she socializes according to the characteristics of that society. Children of different societies are socialized according to the characteristics of their respective societies. For example, according to the Masai community children are not supposed to shake hands with the elders, instead they bend and have them touch their head. A child learns ways of attitudes, behaviors, languages, and cultures of a society through the process of socialization.

### **Socialization and Human Nature**

The debate of "nature" (heredity) and "nurture" (the social environment) is being made since decades. Some scientists think that nature plays an important role in the socialization while others view that nurture is only the way through which a member can be socialized. To answer this controversial question, one can give logical reasons that human beings do not have natural language. An infant comes in this society having only bones, flesh, and breathing system. If this very infant kept in isolation for several years, he/she cannot be able to speak even a single word. Heredity provides those essential things which are important to grow up but social environment is far important than heredity through which a children

learns the language. Without the concept of language a member cannot create relationships with others. Language is a source to create relationships and to take part into the social interaction. So, nurture or social environment is so much important that it converts an animal into a social animal.

### **Cooley and the Looking-Glass Self**

Charles Hurton Cooley was a renowned social scientist who thought that our sense of self develops from interaction with others. To describe this process, Cooley coined the term "looking- glass self theory" in the year 1902.

According to Cooley, there are three elements in the looking-glass self theory.

1. We imagine how we appear to the others. For example, we can guess that others see us as intelligent or stupid.
2. We interpret others' reactions. We may come to know that how others evaluate us. Do they like us for being intelligent? Do they dislike us for being stupid?
3. We develop a self-concept. After the reactions of others, we develop feelings and ideas about ourselves.

Looking-glass self theory is like a "social mirror" in which a person can see his/her reflection. This process of self development clearly shows us the image of our personality. We can judge our personality by feedback of others. So, the process of looking-glass self plays an important role in the process of socialization.

### ***Tasks***

- a) *Describe ways in which children are socialized in your community.*
- b) *Explain the role of nature and nurture on socialization.*
- c) *Describe the implication of Cooley's looking-glass self theory to the process of socialization.*

## Further Reading

- i. Entwisle, D. R., & Alexander, K. L. (1993). "Entry into School: The Beginning School Transition and Educational Stratification in the United States," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 401-423.
- ii. National Education Goals Panel (1997). *Special early childhood report, 1997*. Washington, DC: U.S.
- iii. National Education Goals Panel (1995). *Reconsidering children's early development and learning: Toward common views and vocabulary*. Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel.
- iv. Gresham, F. M., & Elliott, S. N. (1990). *Social Skills Rating System*. Circle Pines, MN: AGS.
- v. Meisels, S. J., Atkins-Burnett, S., & Nicholson, J. (1996). *Assessment of social competence, adaptive behaviors, and approaches to learning with young children*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

## LESSON THREE: EFFECTS OF VARIOUS AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION



### *Lesson Objectives*

- a) Describe the importance of socialization*
- b) Describe the agents of socialization*
- c) Explain the effects of various agents of socialization on social interaction of children*

### **Introduction**

The development of an individual is a slow and steady process. Human beings are believed to be the most intelligent creatures on the earth. However, proper training, guidance and motivation are essential for them to understand what is good and bad for them. The socialization process aims at improving the knowledge of people by instilling vital values, customs and traditions.

In the case of a new born child, its parents are the first one who shoulder the responsibility of training it in the best possible way till the child attains the age of joining school. The atmosphere which the parents provide the child at home has a lot to do with the child's overall progress. It has been often observed that children who have a good environment which is conducive for learning at home, end up being the winners in the fields which they choose in their later life. The things which are taught in the childhood remain with the children throughout their lives. The learning of values from parents can also be referred to as primary socialization

### **Agents of Socialization**

Agents of socialization are specific sites, people and groups which influence our emotions, attitudes and behavior. Socialization can occur outside these agents but society relies on these agents doing most of the socialization. Our society relies on five major agents of socialization that are listed in the order children tend to experience them:

- Family
- Religion
- Media
- Peers
- School

## **What are the Effects of the Family on Socialization?**

The family is the earliest and without question the most influential agent of socialization. It grabs the child at birth, when the child is most helpless and dependent and doesn't let go for a whole lifetime. Socialization via the family goes from cradle to grave.

What makes socialization in the family so important and influential? It is the foundation of all civilized behavior such as the ones listed below:

- Language abilities (learning to talk)
- Body control (e.g., toilet training)
- Emotional control (e.g., "don't hit your sister")
- Rules of public conduct (e.g., "don't throw food")
- Moral values (e.g., "lying is a sin")

Family is an important agent of socialization where a child starts learning the language of family. Slowly and gradually a children learns the roles of family members. He/she recognizes the roles of father, mother, sisters and brothers. It has been seen that most of the children emulate the roles of others like putting on glasses and reading newspapers as their parents do.

## **What is the Effect of Mass Media on Socialization?**

Mass Media includes the following:

- Television
- Radio
- Movies
- Music
- Books, magazines, etc.
- Internet

Somewhere around the age of two or three, children in our society first encounter the media as an agent of socialization in the form of television. Socialization comes through from children's shows, cartoons, and most especially commercials.

Socialization comes through the characters, images, words, and narrative story lines. Some media specifically acts to be an agent of socialization (e.g., children's programs such as Jackson Junior) but most only strive to be entertainment.

Today the media seriously challenges the family. Children spend as much or more time in front of the TV as interacting with parents. Messages and values carried by the media are powerful and seductive. Many of those messages and values challenge or directly contradict what parent's teach their children.

Media influence continues and strengthens in adolescence based on a merger of teen subculture, pop culture (music & movies), and corporate marketing. Sports, increasingly a branch of marketing, become especially influential for teenage boys. The internet (web pages, e-mail, chat rooms, face book) have emerged as another media source important to teens, especially boys.

The power of the media declines in adult years but still remains strong. Pop culture continues strong but loses its subculture support. Sports and the internet continue as agents of socialization, especially for males. News (both TV and print) emerge as new agent of socialization in the adult years.

### **What are the Effects of Religion on Socialization?**

Religion is also an important agent of socialization where an individual learns about right and wrong. Religions provide basic ideas of morality which become part of our life in future. Religion teaches us about the way of dressing, speech and manners which are suitable in formal occasions.

### **What are the Effects of School and Peer Groups?**

The school and peer groups are the agents of socialization where a child meets with a large group of people of similar age. Apart from education, the students are linked with each other for common interests. In this way of sharing ideas and common interests, students find peer groups for themselves and they start learning from those peer groups. Friends, clubs, gangs, and the neighbors are some examples of the peer groups. While joining into a school or a peer group a member starts learning new norms and characteristics like athletics ability, coolness, toughness, physical appearance, attraction e.t.c.

### **What are the Effects of Day Care on Socialization?**

Day care is another agent of socialization in which children are being socialized and benefited by the others. It has been become a tradition in every society to hire a person for daily wages to take care of the children. Day care process stimulates the intellectual personality of children.

## **Task**

- a) *Describe the importance of socialization to children*
- b) *Describe the agents of socialization*
- c) *Explain the effects of various agents of socialization on social interaction of children*

## **Further reading**

- i. Billingham, M. (2007) Sociological Perspectives p.336 **In** Stretch, B. and Whitehouse, M. (eds.) (2007) Health and Social Care Book 1. Oxford: Heinemann.
- ii. Kendler KS and Baker JH (2007). "Genetic influences on measures of the environment: a systematic review". *Psychological Medicine* **37** (5): 615–626.
- iii. Oden, S. 1987. "Alternative Perspectives in Children's Peer Relationships." *In Integrative Processes and Socialization: Early to Middle Childhood*, edited by T.D. Yawkey and J.E. Johnson. Elmsford, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, Inc.,.
- iv. Westen, D. (2002) Psychology: Brain, Behavior & Culture. Wiley & Sons.

## LESSON FOUR: SOCIALIZATION AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT



### *Lesson Objectives*

- *Describe the relationship between socialization and personality traits.*
- *Explain how hereditary factors can influence personality development.*
- *Discuss other factors that influence personality development.*

### **Introduction**

An individual's personality is the complexity of mental characteristics that makes them unique from other people. It includes all of the patterns of thought and emotions that cause us to do and say things in particular ways. At a basic level, personality is expressed through our temperament or emotional tone. However, personality also colors our values, beliefs, and expectations. There are many potential factors that are involved in shaping a personality. These factors are usually seen as coming from heredity and the environment. Research by psychologists over the last several decades has increasingly pointed to hereditary factors being more important, especially for basic personality traits such as emotional tone. However, the acquisition of values, beliefs, and expectations seem to be due more to socialization and unique experiences, especially during childhood.

### **Hereditary Factors and Personality Development**

Some hereditary factors that contribute to personality development do so as a result of interactions with the particular social environment in which people live. For instance, your genetically inherited physical and mental capabilities have an impact on how others see you and, subsequently, how you see yourself. If you have poor motor skills that prevent you from throwing a ball straight and if you regularly get bad grades in school, you will very likely be labeled by your teachers, friends and relatives as someone who is inadequate or a failure to some degree. This can become a self-fulfilling prophecy as you increasingly perceive yourself in this way and become more pessimistic about your capabilities and your future. Likewise, your health and physical appearance are likely to be very important in your personality development. You may be frail or robust. You may have a learning disability. You may be slender in a culture that considers obesity attractive or vice versa. These largely hereditary factors are likely to cause you to feel that you are nice-looking ugly, or just adequate. Likewise, skin color, gender and sexual

orientation are likely to have a major impact on how you perceive yourself. Whether you are accepted by others as being normal or abnormal can lead you to think and act in a socially acceptable or marginal and even deviant way.

*(A picture of culturally deviant hair style, dressing style chosen by some young people to mark their socially marginal lifestyle)*

### **Environmental Factors and Personality Development**

There are many potential environmental influences that help to shape personality. Child rearing practices are especially critical. In the dominant culture of North America, children are usually raised in ways that encourage them to become self-reliant and independent. Children are often allowed to act somewhat like equals to their parents. For instance, they are included in making decisions about what type of food and entertainment the family will have on a night out. Children are given allowances and small jobs around the house to teach them how to be responsible by themselves. In contrast, children in most African communities are usually encouraged to think and act as a member of their family and to suppress their own wishes when they are in conflict with the needs of the family. Independence and self-reliance are viewed as an indication of family failure and are discouraged. It is not surprising that these children traditionally have not been allowed to act as equals to their parents.

Despite significant differences in child rearing practices around the world, there are some similarities. Boys and girls are socialized differently to some extent in all societies. They receive different messages from their parents and other adults as to what is appropriate for them to do in life. They are encouraged to prepare for their future in jobs fitting their gender. Boys are more often allowed freedom to experiment and to participate in physically risky activities. For example, boys are encouraged to climb trees, herd cattle in the forest and even walk in the night among others. Girls are encouraged to learn how to do domestic tasks and to participate in child rearing by baby-sitting. If children do not follow these traditional paths, they are often labeled as marginal or even deviant. Girls may be called "tomboys" and boys may be ridiculed for not being sufficiently masculine.

*(Picture of risky activities for boys)*

### **Other Factors that Influence Socialization**

There are always unique situations and interpersonal events that help to shape our personalities. Such things as having alcoholic parents, being seriously injured in a car accident or being raped can leave

mental scars that make us fearful and less trusting. If you are an only child, you don't have to learn how to compromise as much as children who have several siblings. Chance meetings and actions may have a major impact on the rest of our lives and affect our personalities. For instance, being accepted for admission to a prestigious university or being in the right place at the right time to meet the person who will become your spouse or life partner can significantly alter the course of the rest of your life. Similarly, being drafted into the military during wartime, learning that you were adopted, or personally witnessing a tragic event such as a bomb blast can change your basic perspective.

### **Are there Personality Types?**

We often share personality traits with others especially members of our own family and community. This is probably due largely to being socialized in much the same way. It is normal for us to acquire personality traits as a result of enculturation. Most people adopt the traditions, rules, manners and biases of their culture. Given this fact, it is not surprising that some researchers have claimed that there are common national personality types especially in the more culturally homogenous societies. During the 1940's, a number of leading anthropologists and psychologists argued that there are distinct Japanese and German personalities that led these two nations view other countries as trying to destroy them.

The concept of national personality types primarily had its origins in anthropology with the research of Ruth Benedict beginning in the 1920's. She believed that personality was almost entirely learned. She said that normal people acquire a distinct *ethos* or culturally specific personality pattern during the process of being enculturated as children. Benedict went on to say that our cultural personality patterns are assumed to be "natural" by us and other personality patterns are viewed as being "unnatural" and deviant. She said that such feelings are characteristic of all people in all cultures because we are ethnocentric.

Most anthropologists today believe that Benedict and her students went too far in their assertions about the influence of culture on personality formation and in discounting heredity. They also tended to oversimplify by defining people who did not share all of the traits of the "national personality type" as being deviants. It is more accurate to see the members of a society as having a range of personality types. What Benedict was describing was actually the **modal personality**. This is the most common personality type within a society. In reality, there is usually a range of normal personality types within each society.

In the early 1950's, David Riesman proposed that there are three common types of modal personality that occur around the world. He called them tradition oriented, inner-directed, and other directed personalities.

- **Tradition-oriented personality** is one that places a strong emphasis on doing things the same way that they have always been done. Individuals with this sort of personality are less likely to try new things and to seek new experiences.
- Those who have **inner-directed personalities** are guilt oriented. This means that their behaviour is strongly controlled by their conscience. As a result, there is little need for police to make sure that they obey the law. These individuals monitor themselves. If they break the law, they are likely to turn themselves in for punishment.
- People with **other-directed personalities** have more ambiguous feelings about right and wrong. When they deviate from a societal norm, they usually don't feel guilty. However, if they are caught in the act or exposed publicly, they are likely to feel shame.

#### **Task**

- a) Describe how heredity and environment factors can influence personality development.*
- b) Giving relevant examples describe modal Personality.*
- c) Describe the relationship between socialization and personality traits.*

#### **Further reading**

- i. Bell, R. Q. (1979). Parent, child, and reciprocal influences. *American Psychologist*, 34, 821-826.
- ii. Bouchard, T. J., Jr. (1994, June 17). Genes, environment, and personality. *Science*, 264, 1700-1701.
- iii. Loehlin, J. C. (1997). A test of J. R. Harris's theory of peer influences on personality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 1197-1201.
- iv. Pinker, S. (1997). *How the mind works*. New York: Norton.

## LESSON FIVE: SOCIALIZATION AND LEARNING



### *Lesson Objectives*

- i. *Describe the effects of socialization process on learning.*
- ii. *Explain how the family, media and religion can influence learning.*

### **Introduction**

Family, school, peers, mass media, public opinion, and religion each play a major role in the socialization and ultimately the education process. Each of us proceeds through life in a manner that we often believe is under our immediate control and influence. It seems logical that the actions we take and the impact of those actions is based upon a series of logical, rational decisions selected and filtered by choice, not chance. Although this seems a reasonable manner in which to assess one's lot in life, it is far from reality, particularly in the area of education. One of the most dramatic impacts on a child's education is that of the socialization process. Forces removed from our immediate decision making process guide us all. Through the process of socialization, the hidden hand of social forces beyond our control guides our lives. The major agents of socialization – family, school, peers, mass media, public opinion and religion – exert pressure on each of us.

### **The Socialization Process and Its Impact on Children and Learning**

The evolution of “self” emerges from this mix of social forces. This is particularly true during the formative years from kindergarten through high school. The impact of these forces can vary dramatically from person to person. The consequences can be life altering and severe. The idea that each child enters school with the same opportunities that foster success is not a valid assumption. In fact, many things have a profound impact on children and teens. Among these are:

- The family from which ascribed status is derived.
- Attendance at a public school or private school
- The composition of peer groups
- Exposure to mass culture and the media
- Religious affiliation.

The socialization process, by definition, creates a system that is inherently unequal by most empirical measures of equality. This inequality has both short term and long-term implications for the academic success of children.

Given an economic system that offers equality of opportunity, but in practice fosters disparities between social classes, the questions that must be asked are: How does the education system provide the level playing field that society desires? What are the roles of school, as well as the other agents of socialization in ensuring equal opportunity for all children from the elementary through college years? Let us look at the impact of the socialization agents on learning.

### **The Family and its Impact**

As the primary agent of socialization and the first “educator”, the family, plays an essential role in the transmission of the fundamental values that encourage and nurture learning in a young child.

Studies have demonstrated that children from homes in which both parents have college educations have a much higher probability of academic success as well as personal and professional success. The opposite is also true. Children from homes in which parents do not possess a college education will have a more difficult time achieving academic success.

The disparity inherent in this environment demonstrates the importance of the family and its role as the transmitter of values. The institution of the family in Kenya is the primary purveyor of education as a core value regardless of educational background. For some, it comes by way of birth and privilege. For others, it comes by way of perseverance, hard work and persistence in the face of adverse economic factors. Regardless, the likelihood of academic success is minimal without the family as a guiding force.

### **Media and its Impact**

Mass media also has an immense impact on young minds. With the advent of the Internet, television now has a partner in the role of visual stimulant of young minds.

The culture portrayed by the mass media emphasizes glamour, sexual satisfaction and promiscuity, comedic vulgarity, violence and immediate gratification of needs. How does a parent cope with the influences of the mass media as an agent of socialization that minimizes the learning process and glorifies the values of instant gratification? Again, the role of adults in a child’s life in this environment takes on increased importance.

## **Religion and its impact**

The role of religion in the lives of children and young adults has been minimized by society. This trend has, along with the previously mentioned influences of peers and the mass media, resulted in a generation of children with a moral compass that has gone awry. The role of religion as an agent of socialization cannot be ignored. It is a primary transmitter of our core personal and societal values. The founding documents of America contain strong reference to the values of equality, freedom, fairness, and egalitarianism – all fundamental precepts of most religions. Leaders such as Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln and others have called upon religious values and teachings to awaken the moral sensibilities of the nation throughout our history. Without the socializing influences of religion, the powerful external forces faced by teens – drugs, a sexualized culture, violence, negative peer pressures, and other dysfunctional influences become more influential. Parents need to be aware of the stabilizing influences of religion in a child's life and realize that religion is not so much a polarizing issue as it is an important element of the socialization process. The socialization process has an enormous impact on children and teens in the context of the learning process.

Family, school, peers, mass media, and religion each play a role in the collective process we term as education. Parents must recognize that each of these agents of socialization maximize the role of education in our children's lives. Anything less is an abdication of our responsibility as adult role models for our children and for future generations.

### *Activities/Tasks*

- a) Describe the effects of socialization process on learning*
- b) Suggest possible solutions to socialization problems caused by media.*

### **Further readings**

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## LESSON SIX: GENDER ROLES AND SOCIALIZATION



### *Lesson Objectives*

- i. Define the following terms: Sex, Gender, Gender role, Gender identity.*
- ii. Describe how children develop the concept of gender roles.*
- iii. Discuss the role of parents in assisting children develop gender identity*

### **Introduction**

#### **Sex and Gender Roles**

**Sex** refers to the biological characteristics with which we are born.

**Gender** refers to the learned attitudes and behaviors that characterize people of one sex or the other.

**Gender roles** are the characteristics, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that society expects of females and males.

**Gender identity**, usually learned in early childhood, refers to one's perception of him or herself as either masculine or feminine.

#### **Who Teaches Gender Roles?**

Children learn at a very early age what it means to be a boy or a girl in our society. Through myriad activities, opportunities, encouragements, discouragements, overt behaviours, covert suggestions and various forms of guidance, children experience the process of gender role socialization. It is difficult for a child to grow to adulthood without experiencing some form of gender bias or stereotyping, whether it is the expectation that boys are better than girls at maths or the idea that only females can nurture children. As children grow and develop, the gender stereotypes they are exposed to at home are reinforced by other elements in their environment and are thus perpetuated throughout childhood and on into adolescence.

## **Parental Influence on Children's Socialization to Gender Roles**

A child's growing sense of self or self-concept, is a result of the multitude of ideas, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs to which he or she is exposed. The information that surrounds the child and which is internalized comes to the child within the family arena through parent-child interactions, role modeling, reinforcement for desired behaviours and parental approval or disapproval. As children move into the larger world of friends and school, many of their ideas and beliefs are reinforced by those around them. A further reinforcement of acceptable and appropriate behavior is shown to children through the media in particular television. Through all these socialization agents, children learn gender stereotyped behavior. As children develop, these stereotypes become firmly entrenched beliefs and thus are a part of the child's self-concept. Figure 1 illustrates some of the factors involved in parental influence on a child's self concept.

### **Parental Influence**

A child's earliest exposure to what it means to be male or female comes from parents. From the time their children are babies, parents treat sons and daughters differently, dressing infants in gender-specific colours, giving gender-differentiated toys and expecting different behaviour from boys and girls. One study indicates that parents have differential expectations of sons and daughters as early as 24 hours after birth.

Children internalize parental messages regarding gender at an early age, with awareness of adult sex role differences being found in two-year-old children. One study found that children at two and a half years of age use gender stereotypes in negotiating their world and are likely to generalize gender stereotypes to a variety of activities, objects and occupations. Children even deny the reality of what they are seeing when it does not conform to their gender expectations. For example, a child whose mother is a doctor stating that only men are doctors.

Sons have a definite edge as far as parental preference for children is concerned. Most parents prefer male children throughout the world. Also, people who prefer sons are more likely to use technology for selecting the sex of their child. This preference for male children is further emphasized by the finding that parents are more likely to continue having children if they have only girls than if they have only boys.

Reasons given by women for their preference for sons are to please their husbands, to carry on the family name, and to be a companion to the husband. Reasons for wanting daughters include having a companion for themselves and to have fun dressing a girl and doing her hair.

Parents encourage their sons and daughters to participate in sex-typed activities, including doll playing and engaging in housekeeping activities for girls and playing with trucks and engaging in sports activities for boys. Children's toy preferences have been found to be significantly related to parental sex-typing, with parents providing gender-differentiated toys and rewarding play behaviour that is gender stereotyped. While both mothers and fathers contribute to the gender stereotyping of their children, fathers have been found to reinforce gender stereotypes more often than mothers.

A study of children's rooms has shown that girls' rooms have more pink, dolls and manipulative toys; boys' rooms have more blue, sports equipment, tools and vehicles. Boys are more likely to have maintenance chores around the house, such as painting and mowing the lawn while girls are likely to have domestic chores such as cooking and doing the laundry. This assignment of household tasks by gender leads children to link certain types of work with gender.

Some studies have suggested that parent shaping as a socializing factor has little impact on a child's sex role development. Other research however, suggests that parents are the primary influence on gender role development during the early years of life. Because socialization is a two-way interaction, each person in the interaction influences the other; thus, parents and children engage in reciprocal interaction, with children both responding to and eliciting behaviours. Also, development is influenced by many social factors and children may best be understood in terms of their environment.

### ***Task***

***a) Explain parental influences on gender identity.***

### **Further Reading**

- a) Arliss, L. P. (1991). Gender communication. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
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## LESSON SEVEN: DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



### *Lesson objectives*

- i. Describe how children develop social skills.*
- ii. Discuss family attachment systems*
- iii. Explain factors that limit social development*

### **Introduction**

Researchers have tried to pinpoint the origins of positive social adjustment in relation to genetic, familial, educational and other factors. This lesson reviews findings on the development of social competence in infants and children emphasizing the developmental processes which take place in the family, peer groups, preschool and elementary school. Also discussed are difficulties in social development.

### **Infants as Social Beings**

Breakthroughs in methodology for assessing infants' perceptual abilities have shown that even newborns are quite perceptive, active and responsive during physical and social interaction. The newborn infant will imitate people, stick out its tongue, flutter its eyelashes and open and close its mouth in response to similar actions from an adult or older child. Through crying and other distress sounds, the infant signals physical needs for food, warmth, safety, touch and comfort.

Infants' physical requirements are best met when delivered along with social contact and interaction. Babies who lack human interaction may "fail to thrive." Such infants will fail to gain sufficient weight and will become indifferent, listless, withdrawn and/or depressed and in some cases will not survive.

Increasingly, an infant will engage in social exchanges by a "reciprocal matching" process in which both the infant and adult attempt to match or copy each other by approximation of each other's gaze, use of tongue, sounds and smiles. Bruner (1978) and others have proposed that these social interaction processes which continually undergo development also constitute a "fine tuning" system for the child's language and cognitive development.

## **Family Attachment Systems**

It is important for infants to maintain close relationships with one or more adults. Typically, one adult is the mother but others may be fathers, older siblings, or family friends. The smiling and laughing of an infant become responses to different types of social stimulation and objects provided by specific persons. A growing bonding attachment marked by strong mutual affect, with at least one particular adult, is critical to the child's welfare and social-emotional development.

Attachment, evident within six to nine months, becomes obvious when the infant shows distress as the mother (or other attachment figure) departs from a setting. Infants and toddlers who are "securely attached" are affectionate and tend not to cling to their mothers but to explore the surrounding physical and social environment from this "secure base" showing interest in others and sharing their explorations with the mother by pointing and bringing objects of interest.

The socialization of the child is facilitated not only by the parents, but also within the family context which may include relatives and friends who support the parents and children and further reinforce cultural values. Studies by Baumrind (1973) and others have demonstrated that, as children develop, parents use different methods of control or leadership styles in family management that fall into fairly predictable categories:

- authoritarian (high control)
- authoritative (authority through having knowledge and providing direction)
- permissive (low control or direction)
- combinations of the above

Some cultural groups tend to prefer one or the other of these styles, each of which encourages and controls different patterns of behavior in children. Mothers who are more verbal in their influence on children's actions have been found to use "benign" instructive direction that appears to result in the child having greater social competence at home, with peers and in school settings.

## **Peer Relationships**

As a toddler, the child moves in peer contexts which provide opportunities for learning to sustain interaction and develop understanding of others. Piaget (1932) pointed to peer interaction as one major source of cognitive as well as social development, particularly for the development of role-taking and empathy. In the contexts of school, neighbourhood and home, children learn to discriminate among

different types of peer relationships - best friends, social friends, activity partners, acquaintances and strangers. Through building and sustaining different types of peer relationships and social experiences, especially peer conflict, children acquire knowledge of the self versus others and a range of social interaction skills. Mixed-age peer interaction also contributes to the social-cognitive and language development of the younger child while enhancing the instructive abilities of the older child.

Children's social-cognitive development, including moral judgment, appears to parallel cognitive development as children's perceptions of relationships, peers, and social situations become more abstract and less egocentric. Preschoolers are less able to differentiate between best friends and friends than are elementary school-age children. But young children can provide specific reasons why they do not like to interact with certain peers. From six to 14 years of age, children shift their views of friendship relationships from sharing of physical activities to sharing of materials, being kind or helpful and, eventually, perceiving friendships that allow individuality to be expressed or supported.

### **Limiting Factors in Social Development**

The following are some of the factors that are likely to limit social development of young children:

- **A child's connection with a given family, neighborhood, center or school:** Mixed age, sex, racial or cultural peer interactions may be infrequent and highly bound by activity differences and early learned expectations, thereby limiting the extent of diversity in peer interaction. This lack of diversity limits the child's ability to be socially competent in various circumstances.
- **Formally structured educational situations:** Teacher-group interaction, tend to result in fewer peer interactions than less formal settings. Fewer socially isolated children are found in informal classrooms where activities are built around projects in which peers can establish skills for collaboration and activity partnership.
- **Positive peer interactions and relationships:** A number of studies show that greater social adjustment in high school and adulthood has been observed for people who at 9 or 10 years of age were judged to be modestly well accepted by peers. Poor peer acceptance results in fewer peer experiences, few of which are positive thus creating a vicious cycle of peer rejection.
- **Instructional approaches and experiences:** Coaching, modeling, reinforcement, and peer pairing are methods based on the same learning processes evident in early adult-child relations. With these methods, social-cognitive and behavioral skills can be developed which can provide poorly accepted peers with the ability to break the cycle of peer rejection. Children appear to

learn how to more competently assess peer norms, values and expectations and to select actions that may bring them within the "threshold of peer acceptance".

- **Societal factors:** Stressed families and those with little time for interaction with children have become a focus of research as divorce rates have risen. Poverty conditions undermine opportunities for children's positive development. Further investigation is needed on the linkage between child development and social factors.

### ***Task***

- a) ***Suggest activities for developing social competence in children***
- b) ***Explain factors that limit social development***

### **Further Readings**

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- c) Hallinan, M.T. "Recent Advances in Sociometry." *In The Development Of Children's Friendships*, edited by S.R. Asher & J.M. Gottman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
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## LESSON EIGHT: ATTACHMENT THEORY



### *Lesson Objectives*

- i. Define attachment*
- ii. Describe the characteristics of attachment*
- iii. Explain Ainsworth's styles of attachment*
- iv. Describe various theories of interaction*
- v. Explain activities for helping children get along with others*

### **Introduction**

#### **What is Attachment?**

Attachment is an emotional bond to another person. Psychologist John Bowlby was the first attachment theorist, describing attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194). He believed that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have a tremendous impact that continues throughout life. According to Bowlby, attachment also serves to keep the infant close to the mother, thus improving the child's chances of survival.

The central theme of attachment theory is that mothers who are available and responsive to their infant's needs establish a sense of security. The infant knows that the caregiver is dependable, which creates a secure base for the child to then explore the world.

#### **Characteristics of Attachment by Bowlby**

- **Safe Haven:** When the child feels threatened or afraid, he or she can return to the caregiver for comfort and soothing.
- **Secure Base:** The caregiver provides a secure and dependable base for the child to explore the world.
- **Proximity Maintenance:** The child strives to stay near the caregiver, thus keeping the child safe.
- **Separation Distress:** When separated from the caregiver, the child will become upset and distressed.

## **Ainsworth's "Strange Situation"**

In her 1970's research, psychologist Mary Ainsworth expanded greatly upon Bowlby's original work. Her groundbreaking "Strange Situation" study revealed the profound effects of attachment on behavior. In the study, researchers observed children between the ages of 12 and 18 months as they responded to a situation in which they were briefly left alone and then reunited with their mothers.

Based upon the responses the researchers observed, Ainsworth described three major styles of attachment:

- Secure attachment
- Ambivalent-insecure attachment, and
- Avoidant-insecure attachment.

### **Characteristics of Secure Attachment**

- Securely attached children exhibit distress when separated from caregivers and are happy when their caregiver returns. Remember, these children feel secure and able to depend on their adult caregivers. When the adult leaves, the child may be upset but he or she feels assured that the parent or caregiver will return.
- When frightened, securely attached children will seek comfort from caregivers. These children know their parent or caregiver will provide comfort and reassurance, so they are comfortable seeking them out in times of need.

### **Characteristics of Ambivalent Attachment**

Ambivalently attached children usually become very distressed when a parent leaves. This attachment style is considered relatively uncommon, affecting an estimated 7-15% of U.S. children. Research suggests that ambivalent attachment is a result of poor maternal availability. These children cannot depend on their mother (or caregiver) to be there when the child is in need.

### **Characteristics of Avoidant Attachment**

Children with an avoidant attachment tend to avoid parents or caregivers. When offered a choice, these children will show no preference between a caregiver and a complete stranger. Research has suggested that this attachment style might be a result of abusive or neglectful caregivers. Children who are punished for relying on a caregiver will learn to avoid seeking help in the future.

## **Problems with Attachment**

What happens to children who do not form secure attachments? Research suggests that failure to form secure attachments early in life can have a negative impact on behavior in later childhood and throughout the life. Children diagnosed with oppositional-defiant disorder (ODD), conduct disorder (CD) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) frequently display attachment problems possibly due to early abuse, neglect, or trauma. Clinicians suggest that children adopted after the age of six months have a higher risk of problems with attachment.

While attachment styles displayed in adulthood are not necessarily the same as those seen in infancy, research suggests that early attachments can have a serious impact on later relationships. For example, those who are securely attached in childhood tend to have good self-esteem, strong romantic relationships and the ability to self-disclose to others.

## **Social Interaction Theories**

Social interaction theory studies the ways that people engage with one another. Scholars from many disciplines including anthropology, sociology, psychology and linguistics, are interested in social interaction and the patterns that can be found in such interactions. Observed patterns help social scientists develop theories to describe and predict human behavior. Some of these theories include:

- **Vygotsky's Theory**

The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky (1978) states: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals." (p57).

A second aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD): a level of development attained when children engage in social behavior. Full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction. The range of skill that can be developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration exceeds what can be attained alone.

Vygotsky's theory was an attempt to explain consciousness as the end product of socialization. For example, in the learning of language, our first utterances with peers or adults are for the purpose of communication but once mastered they become internalized and allow "inner speech".

Vygotsky's theory is complementary to the work of Bandura on social learning and a key component of situated learning theory.

**Scope/Application:**

This is a general theory of cognitive development. Most of the original work was done in the context of language learning in children, although later applications of the framework have been broader

**Example:**

Vygotsky provides the example of pointing a finger. Initially, this behavior begins as a meaningless grasping motion; however, as people react to the gesture, it becomes a movement that has meaning. In particular, the pointing gesture represents an interpersonal connection between individuals.

**Principles:**

1. Cognitive development is limited to a certain range at any given age.
2. Full cognitive development requires social interaction.

- **Max Weber's Theory**

German sociologist Max Weber's theories on many topics are still widely referenced and his theories on social interaction formed the basis of the field. Weber's definition of social interaction is still the most commonly accepted. According to Weber, social behavior has two components.

- i. The action or the behavior itself.
- ii. The meaning that the actor attaches to his or her behavior.

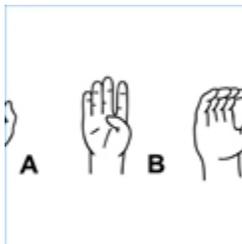
That meaning, which Weber referred to as orientation, is how a person perceives his behavior in relationship to other people. It is that knowledge of another who is affected that makes an action or interaction social.

- **Kurt Lewin and Group Dynamics**

Kurt Lewin, developed the concept of group dynamics. Lewin was concerned with the interaction not just between individuals but between individuals and the groups that they belong to. The main contribution of group dynamics to later theories is that human behavior results from the interaction between a person and his or her environment. Lewin wrote this theory as a mathematical equation, making behavior equal to the function of individuals and the environment.

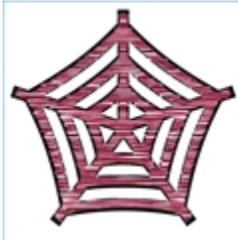
Behavior=Function of individuals + Environment

- **Symbolic Interactionism**



All languages consist of arbitrary symbols. Symbolic interactionism is a set of theories that explore social interaction from a linguistic perspective. In the first half of the 1900s, American philosopher, sociologist and psychologist George Herbert Mead and later his student, Herbert Blumer, developed this theory. Their main contribution is the idea that humans interpret meanings through symbols. The theory holds that human behavior in general and speech in particular does not have inherent meaning. Instead, humans interpret the behavior of others as a sort of symbolic cipher to be decoded.

- **Networks**



A network can be pictured as a web of interactions. The idea of networks developed in the 20th century from the desire to study whole groups of people rather than just individual interactions. Scholars who study networks try to map out connections between members of a group. Connections can consist of conversation, written communication and any other type of information exchange between people. Networks are generally fluid, meaning they change and evolve over time.

- **Status**

The study of status and power dynamics in human interactions is related to the study of networks. This field grew out of a growing concern with social inequality in the 1970s. Scholars began to examine not just the lines of communication between group members, but the lines of power those communications created. They found that individuals with the largest networks, who interacted with and gained information from the largest number of people, were those with the highest status and the most power in the groups.



### **Getting along together:**

#### **Developing Social Competence in Young Children**

Childhood is a time for children to learn about the world-and that includes learning how to get along with others. Parents and other care givers play a crucial role in helping children figure out how to form satisfying relationships and develop into socially competent people. Social competence allows children to be cooperative and generous, express their feelings and empathize with others. Below are some of the strategies for helping children develop social competence.

- **Modeling Behavior**

Modeling the behavior you want to encourage is the best way to help children develop socially. Every time you say "please" or lend a helping hand, you are showing your children how you would like them to act. Ask for your children's help with daily tasks and accept their offers of help. Look for the things your children are doing right and find opportunities to comment on them. Praise can reinforce good behavior, but it is equally important to help children recognize the sense of satisfaction that comes from within when they act on a generous impulse or get along well with others.

- **Sharing from the Heart**

Good feelings about oneself and others is the root of social competency. Try to create a climate of kindness and generosity so that the children can help each other and begin to take responsibility for each other naturally. In this way they will begin to share "from the heart"-not just because you want them to.

Talk with the children about being generous with each other. Point out that sharing and being considerate of feelings makes other people feel happy and makes them feel good too. You can encourage acts of generosity throughout the day and be generous yourself by providing enough satisfying experiences and materials for your children. In group settings, try to let young children use toys and materials until they feel ready to pass them on to someone else. Point out when a playmate has waited a long time to have a turn. Reward generous acts with words of praise.

Empathy, the ability to imagine what another person is feeling, is a very important concept for children to understand. You can foster empathy by talking about your own feelings ("That story made me sad"); helping children express their own feelings ("How did you feel when it started to rain and we had to leave the animal orphanage?"); and encouraging them to listen to other people's feelings ("Let's ask Sonia how she felt when his puppy got lost.") Responding to the needs of children who have disabilities provides excellent opportunities for children to share from the heart. Keep in mind that the kindest thing children can do is to simply include others in their play.

- **Fairness**

Children know from their own experiences that words can hurt, and that name-calling, teasing or excluding others affects how people feel. Children want to be treated fairly, but they don't always

understand how to treat others the same way. One way to teach fairness is to explain a rule to your child, pointing out that it applies to him as well as to others. Children have the right to have their feelings and choices respected and you can model this throughout the day. Be sure to acknowledge and respect your child's feelings, never insisting that she stop crying if she is sad or say she's sorry when she isn't. At the same time, you can help her understand what may have gone wrong in the situation.

- **Cooperation Versus Competition**

Provide plenty of opportunities for children to play together cooperatively. Play is one of the most important ways children learn how to relate to other people. As they play, young children will find cooperation less frustrating and more satisfying than competition. When children compete, only one person or team wins; everyone else loses. Children will have plenty of opportunities to express their competitive spirit later on.

You can help your children learn problem-solving skills that can be used in challenging social situations. As they interact with siblings and other peers, children can be helped to negotiate, "bargain," and compromise with each other. Most children love it when an adult has a problem and everyone is encouraged to pitch in their ideas and help solve it.

**Task:**

- a) With examples describe Ainsworth styles of attachment.*
- b) Describe John Bowlby's theory of attachment.*
- c) Explain how parents and other caregivers can help children develop social competence.*

**Further Reading**

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## LESSON NINE: ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE



### *Lesson Objectives*

- i. Define social competence*
- ii. Explain why social competence is so important during childhood*
- iii. Describe how a child can develop social competence*
- iv. Describe ways of evaluating social competence*
- v. Develop social attributes checklist*

### **Introduction**

#### **What is social competence?**

Social competence refers to a person's ability to get along with other people. A child's social competence is affected by how well he/she communicates with other children and with adults. A child's views of himself/herself in relation to her family, peers, and the wider world also affect her social competence.

#### **Importance of Social Competence skills in childhood?**

A young child's ability to get along with other children contributes much to all aspects of his development. How well a child gets along with others may be "the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation," according to W.W. Hartup. For example, "Children who are generally disliked, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are unable to sustain close relationships with other children, and who cannot establish a place for themselves in the peer culture are seriously at risk" (Hartup, 1992, p. 1). Recent research suggests that children who do not have a basic level of social competence by the age of 6 may have trouble with relationships when they are adults. The long-range risks for a child who cannot interact well with other children may include:

- poor mental health
- dropping out of school
- low achievement

- school difficulties, and
- poor employment history.

On the other hand, a child is more likely to have better mental health, stronger relationships and more success in school and work if he has many chances to strengthen his social competence by playing, talking, working out disagreements and collaborating with peers and adults. It is not necessary that a child be a "social butterfly." Quality matters more than quantity when it comes to a child's friendships. Children who have at least one close friend usually tend to increase their positive feelings about school over time. Some children may simply be more shy, more inhibited or more cautious than others. Pushing such children to interact with peers can make them very uncomfortable. Unless a child is so extremely shy that she cannot enjoy many of the "good things of life" (parties, picnics, family outings), she will probably outgrow her shyness if adults around her handle it with calm understanding.

### **How does a child develop social competence?**

A person's social development starts at birth. Even tiny babies begin to interact with the people around them. They respond to voices. They cry to let caregivers know they need something. They make eye contact and smile at those who feed them, hold them or play with them.

Adults and older children, intentionally or not, are models for young children of how to behave with other people. In fact, a great deal of children's social behavior is influenced by what they observe other people doing.

Most children's social skills increase rapidly during the preschool years. It is important to keep in mind that children of the same age may not have the same levels of social competence. Research shows that children have distinct personalities and temperaments from birth. Some children may face special challenges when they interact with peers and adults. A visually impaired child may not be able to "read" peers' gestures and facial expressions. A child with hearing, speech or language difficulties may have trouble with the day-to-day talk that helps children become friends.

Relationships within the family may also affect a child's social behavior. Behavior that is appropriate or effective in one culture may be less so in another culture. Children from diverse cultural and family backgrounds thus may need help in bridging their differences and in finding ways to learn from and enjoy one another. Teachers can help by creating classroom communities that are open, honest and accepting of differences.

Much research suggests that pretend play can contribute to young children's social and intellectual development. When children pretend to be someone or something else, they practice taking points of view other than their own. When they pretend together, children often take turns and make "deals" and decisions co-operatively. Such findings suggest that children in early childhood programs ought to have regular opportunities for social play and pretend play. Teachers can observe and monitor the children's interactions.

### **How can we evaluate a child's social competence?**

The checklist below was created to help teachers and caregivers check to see whether a child's social competence is developing well. The intent of this checklist is not to *prescribe* correct social behavior but rather to help teachers observe, understand, and support children whose social skills are still forming. The list is based on research on elements of young children's social competence and on studies comparing behavior of well-liked children with that of children who are not as well liked.

Many of the attributes included in the checklist indicate adequate social growth if they are *usually* true of the child. Illness, fatigue or other stressors can cause short-term variations in a child's apparent social competence. Such difficulties may last only a few days. Teachers or caregivers will want to assess each child based on their frequent direct contact with the child, observation of the child in a variety of situations and information given by parents and other caregivers.

If a child seems to have most of the traits in the checklist, then she is not likely to need special help to outgrow occasional difficulties. On the other hand, a child who shows few of the traits on the list might benefit from adult-initiated strategies to help build more satisfying relationships with other children.

### **The Social Attributes Checklist**

#### **I. Individual Attributes**

##### **The child:**

- Is usually in a positive mood.
- Usually comes to the program willingly.
- Usually copes with rebuffs or other disappointments adequately.
- Shows interest in others.
- Shows the capacity to empathize.

- Displays the capacity for humour.
- Does not seem to be acutely lonely.

## **II. Social Skills Attributes**

### **The child usually:**

- Interacts nonverbally with other children with smiles, waves, nods, etc.
- Expects a positive response when approaching others.
- Expresses wishes and preferences clearly; gives reasons for actions and positions.
- Asserts own rights and needs appropriately.
- Is not easily intimidated by bullies.
- Expresses frustrations and anger effectively, without escalating disagreements or harming others.
- Gains access to ongoing groups at play and work.
- Enters ongoing discussion on a topic; makes relevant contributions to ongoing activities.
- Takes turns fairly easily.
- Has positive relationships with one or two peers; shows the capacity to really care about them and miss them if they are absent.
- Has “give-and-take” exchanges of information, feedback or materials with others.
- Negotiates and compromises with others appropriately.
- Is able to maintain friendship with one or more peers, even after disagreements.
- Does not draw inappropriate attention to self.
- Accepts and enjoys peers and adults who have special needs.
- Accepts and enjoys peers and adults who belong to ethnic groups other than his or her own.

## **III. Peer Relationship Attributes**

### **The child:**

- Is usually accepted versus neglected or rejected by other children.
- Is usually respected rather than feared or avoided by other children.
- Is sometimes invited by other children to join them in play, friendship and work.
- Is named by other children as someone they are friends with or like to play and work with.

## **IV. Adult Relationship Attributes**

- Is not excessively dependent on adults.
- Shows appropriate response to new adults, as opposed to extreme fearfulness or indiscriminate approach.

**Task:**

- a) ***Define Social competence***
- b) ***Why is social competence important in early childhood***
- c) ***Suggest and explain five strategies of enhancing children's social competence skills.***

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## LESSON TEN: ASSISTING CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL PROBLEMS



### *Lesson objectives*

- i. Describe the nature of children with ADHD*
- ii. Suggest the strategies for assisting children with ADHD cope with other people.*

### **Introduction**

Children with Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learning disabilities may need extra help in developing social skills. The impulsivity and the short frustration tolerance of an ADHD child can lead to poor peer relationships. Children with poor attention and concentration fail to tune in to the social cues in their environment and thus don't learn social skills through experience. Children with learning disabilities may have difficulty processing information from the social environment or have difficulty with self-expression. An excellent resource for helping these children to make and keep friends in *No One To Play With*.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can affect a child in many different ways. Most people know that ADHD can cause children to struggle with things like sitting still, being quiet, paying attention and staying organized. But ADHD also can make it hard for children to make friends.

### **What is ADHD?**

**Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD or AD/HD or ADD)** is a neurobehavioral developmental disorder. It is primarily characterized by "the co-existence of attention problems and hyperactivity, with each behaviour occurring infrequently alone" and symptoms starting before seven years of age.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

Inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity are the key behaviors of ADHD. Predominantly inattentive type symptoms may include:

- Be easily distracted, miss details, forget things and frequently switch from one activity to another.
- Have difficulty maintaining focus on one task.

- Become bored with a task after only a few minutes unless doing something enjoyable.
- Have difficulty focusing attention on organizing and completing a task or learning something new or trouble completing or turning in homework assignments, often losing things (e.g., pencils, toys, assignments) needed to complete tasks or activities.
- Not seem to listen when spoken to.
- Daydream, become easily confused and move slowly.
- Have difficulty processing information as quickly and accurately as others.
- Struggle to follow instructions.

Predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type symptoms may include:

- Fidget and squirm in their seats.
- Talk nonstop.
- Dash around, touching or playing with anything and everything in sight.
- Have trouble sitting still during dinner, school and story time.
- Be constantly in motion.
- Have difficulty doing quiet tasks or activities.

In a classroom of 30 children, it is likely that at least 2 students are affected by ADHD. Exactly how ADHD adds to social problems is not understood fully, but children with ADHD often have trouble with simple social interactions and struggle to follow social cues. Children with ADHD are half as likely to have many good friends and are less likely to play with a group of friends compared to children without ADHD.

Having good friends adds to children's happiness and impacts their mental health and development. In some cases, children with peer problems may be at higher risk for anxiety, behavioral and mood disorders, substance abuse and delinquency as teenagers.

Having ADHD does not mean children always have poor relationships with their peers. Parents and caring adults often can help children with ADHD to make friends. Here are a few ways to help:

- Parents should keep in regular contact with the adults who are involved in the lives of children with ADHD. These adults include teachers, school counselors, after-school care givers, health care providers and faith leaders. Keep them informed about the child's treatments and, when possible, ask them to help the child improve his peer relationships.

For example, ask the adult leaders to make sure that they avoid belittling him in front of his peers. If the adult in charge belittles the child, other children may think it's okay for them to belittle the child as well.

- Involve the child in activities with her peers. Many children with ADHD do well with structure in their daily routines, so look for a class or program that interests your child and that meets consistently. Find the child's interest and build on it! Many children with ADHD also do better in small groups of people rather than large groups.

For example, an art class of 8 students that meets every Wednesday at 3 p.m. may suit a child with ADHD better than a soccer team of 20 people that practices on both Tuesday at 6 p.m. and Friday at 3 p.m. and holds games on random weekends. Find an activity the child really likes and support her efforts.

- Coach the child about the social settings he might face and help him come up with ideas about what to do. For example, if he finds himself sitting alone on the bus, help him practice asking, "May I sit here?" Even though it may feel uncomfortable, roleplay these scenes so that the child starts to feel more confident in social settings. Also talk about how to handle positive and negative outcomes. It's not easy to prepare the child to respond to rejection but learning to cope when things don't go his way is an important social skill.
- Help build the child's self-esteem. It's easy for kids with ADHD to feel like they're always in trouble and that no one-not even Mom or Dad-likes them. Let your child know that-in addition to loving him/her-you like him/her. That will help the child feel likeable and may make it easier to share his/her wonderful traits with others.
- Look for a social skills group geared towards children with ADHD. These classes are being offered in more and more communities, and they can help the child learn how to act in social settings.

Regular, everyday activities can be challenging for children with ADHD-and this includes making friends. Parents often want children with ADHD to direct their energy toward getting good grades and staying out of trouble, but helping kids with ADHD make friends is important, too. With help from their parents and other caring adults, children with ADHD can build lasting friendship and in doing so they will build their own health and happiness.

## **Disabled children**

### **Behavior Management Tips - Control Behavior Problems**

Is Your Child's Behavior a Problem at home or school? If so, you're not alone. A teacher or counselor can help with your child's specific behavior problems. Some children with learning disabilities or ADHD need a behavior modification plan in their Integrated Education Programs (IEP), but many behaviors can be minimized by controlling your response to them. The following tips can decrease behaviour problems using redirection. The goal of redirection is to teach the child to monitor and correct his own behaviour.

#### ***1. Ensure the child understands why his/her behavior is a problem***

While it may seem a child should "know better," talking about behaviour is an important first step in behavior management. Some children do not think about their behavior or anticipate consequences when they have impulse control problems and difficulty picking up on social expectations. Describe problem behavior in a firm but non-confrontational tone. Some children respond better to a whispered reminder than a loud voice. Explain the behavior in specific terms the student will understand and state why it is a problem.

- **Do Say:** "Throwing the ball in the house can hurt someone".
- **Don't Say:** "Stop rough playing in the house".

#### ***2. Explain Why Behavior is a Problem and What Will Be Done About It***

Clearly state the problems caused by the children's behavior. The children may be getting on your last nerve, but avoid criticizing him in a personal way. Realize you may need to repeat this strategy over time until the child stops the problem behavior.

- **Do Say:** "Your clothes are dirty because they were under your bed and not placed in the laundry basket. I'll show you how to wash them".
- **Don't Say:** "If you're too lazy to put your clothes in the basket, I'm not washing them".

#### ***3. Show Behavior Expectations- Model Appropriate Behavior for the Child***

Before responding to the behavior, it can be helpful to take three deep breaths to relax and think about what the best response would be. Calmly but firmly, explain the behaviour you want the child to perform. Use specific language to describe what the child should or should not do. Strive to keep a firm but unemotional tone that is free from sarcasm.

- **Do Say:** Use a quiet voice inside the restaurant.
- **Don't Say:** Act right.

#### ***4. Show by Your Actions and Attitude that You Believe in Your Child***

Encourage and reinforce the child's positive behaviors whenever possible. Although you may be frustrated by behavior, speak positively to the child and let her know you have confidence in him/her.

#### ***5. Recognize That Behavior Change Can Take Time***

Give honest, specific praise for any progress the child makes toward meeting behavior goals, even if he does not meet the goal in its entirety.

#### ***6. Plan Ahead for Safe and Appropriate Options When Behavior is a Problem***

Know what situations cause problems for him/her and prepare safe alternatives for her. Young children may enjoy role-playing ahead of time to learn the rules and expectations of the setting you will be in. Rehearse with them what they can do if they become angry or need to release some energy. Breathing techniques, taking a quick walk with a parent, playing word games, practicing math facts, and guessing games are often helpful for children of all ages.

#### ***7. Share Your Behavior Management Strategies***

Do you have a story about behavior management you would like to share? We want to hear about it. Readers would love to hear your experiences and tips. Have you tried a program that was great? Have you used a strategy that just didn't work for you? If so, share with the experts in this field and with other parents who may be having similar children.

#### ***Task***

- Observe three children who have ADHD and compare their social interactive behaviours.***
- Explain how you can assist a child who has ADHD learn to socialize and cope with others.***
- Describe seven behavior management tips for children with behaviour problems.***

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## LESSON ELEVEN: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.



### *Lesson Objectives*

- i. Explain how language develops before birth*
- ii. Describe language development in early childhood.*
- iii. Explain the relationship between social interaction and language development.*
- iv. Highlight effects of social interaction on language development.*

### **Introduction**

Even from within the womb, babies are trying to communicate. A return kick to a tummy rub, a punch to a loud song, these are the earliest forms of communication. The awareness of speech sounds is also developing at this time. Researchers have been able to determine this by using the foetal heart rate test to track an unborn baby's heart rate in relation to external sounds. They have discovered that unborn baby's heart rate will decrease at the sound of their mother's voice. An important strategy for early promotion of language is introducing the unborn baby different types of speech. Having continual communication is important. By reading stories, singing and even talking to the baby, parents can help to promote developing language skills.

### ***Language Development in Early Childhood***

There is perhaps nothing more remarkable than the emergence of language in children. Have you ever marveled at how a child can go from saying just a few words to suddenly producing full sentences in just a short matter of time? Researchers have found that language development begins before a child is even born, as a fetus is able to identify the speech and sound patterns of the mother's voice. By the age of four months, infants are able to discriminate sounds and even read lips.

Researchers have actually found that infants are able to distinguish between speech sounds from all languages, not just the native language spoken in their homes. However, this ability disappears around the age of 10 months and children begin to only recognize the speech sounds of their native language. By the time a child reaches age three, he or she will have a vocabulary of approximately 3,000 words.

## **Theories of Language Development**

So how exactly does language development happen? Researchers have proposed several different theories to explain how and why language development occurs. For example, the behaviorist theory of B.F Skinner suggests that the emergence of language is the result of imitation and reinforcement. The nativist theory of Noam Chomsky suggests that language is an inherent human quality and that children are born with a language acquisition device that allows them to produce language once they have learned the necessary vocabulary.

## **How Parents Facilitate Language Development**

Researchers have found that in all languages, parents utilize a style of speech with infants known as **infant-directed speech**, or *motherese* (aka "baby talk"). If you've ever heard someone speak to a baby, you'll probably immediately recognize this style of speech. It is characterized by a higher-pitched intonation, shortened or simplified vocabulary, shortened sentences and exaggerated vocalizations or expressions. Instead of saying "Let's go home," a parent might instead say "Go bye-bye."

Infant-directed speech has been shown to be more effective in getting an infant's attention as well as aiding in language development. Researchers believe that the use of motherese helps babies learn words faster and easier. As children continue to grow, parents naturally adapt their speaking patterns to suit their child's growing linguistic skills.

## **Stages of Language Development and Social Interaction**

From birth until about 4 months of age, the baby's communication consists mainly of reflexive crying to express feelings. At this point, it is imperative to continue speaking with the baby. Mirroring sounds and early words, responding to her communication and answering her cries are all ways to start an infant on the road to speech. Studies of babies' interactions with their caregivers show that these interactions foster behaviors that contribute to their emerging identities. At this stage, reacting to crying is extremely important. The best strategy at this level is understanding his/her cries and expressing the desired response. Showing interest and attending to the baby's needs shows that the communication is working and builds the attachment and trust between child and caregiver.

The next stage of communication is what has been referred to as "babbling." At the age of around 4 to 6 months babies start to make many more sounds. Before speaking words, babies practice the sounds, intonations and rhythms of language. Through interactions with caregivers and other members of their

community and environment, babies mirror and learn early language skills. They also become linguistically and culturally competent members of their community. Much of this relates to the way that caregivers react and respond to the communication attempts of the baby. In a “child-centered” context, caregivers engage babies in conversations and routines such as greetings and question-answer from birth, directly speaking with baby so she will understand. These caregivers often adjust their speech to children by using baby-talk and trying to interpret unintelligible utterances. This helps to socialize children with simplified language and introduces them gradually to adult language.

Another type of context is called “situation-centered” where caregivers do not mirror babies’ voice patterns and babbling. In situation-centered contexts, caregivers expect babies to learn and understand adult language. Although this is often frustrating, the interpretation skills that children acquire are considered essential to being competent in the use of speech. An important strategy for language promotion at this stage is to repeat words that a baby tries to utter. Also, continue to be attentive to the point the child is trying to make.

By around 14 to 20 months of age, a child will usually speak actual words. They begin with simple words that they have heard often, such as “mama” or “dada.” These words eventually turn into two-word phrases, which is the next step on the journey of speech. Two-word phrases such as “come baby” or “doggie gone” begin around the age of 2 years. By this point, a baby should have around 50 words in her vocabulary. When a child can link two words together, it shows an understanding of both words and content. Object and action words are understood and expressed. Language socialization research provides important insight into young children’s linguistic and cultural development and helps us understand the relationships between the cultural context and the use of language with and around children.

As children age and interact with other people, they continue to learn more new words every day. By the time they enter formal school around the age of five, children typically have a vocabulary of 10,000 words or more.

### **The Effects of Interaction on Children's Language Development**

The amount of face-to-face time that adults spend with young children directly correlates to their language development and later success in school. Below are some factors that can influence language development.

**Acquisition:** Children rapidly acquire their language skills in the first three to four years of their life. Those who for some reason don't gain language skills early in life are at a greater risk to never fully

develop their language abilities. For example, some parents adopted two children from separate orphanages. One orphanage ran like a preschool; the other was a warehouse. The child from the first not only learned her native language but also rapidly learned her adopted family's language. The other child didn't speak his native language and is significantly behind in learning a new language.

**Caregivers:** Recent studies indicate that infant and toddler caregivers have significant influence upon their child's ability to develop language. One such study by the researchers at the University of Washington's Center for Mind, Brain & Learning (CMBL) concludes infants who heard language spoken directly to them by a person distinguished sounds better than babies exposed to video or audio only.

**Building Foundations:** Children learning language through interactions with others learn to talk as well as build literacy and social skills foundational for future academic success. Parents and caregivers who read early and often to infants and toddlers establish reading readiness years before children enter school. The young ones learn about sounds, fluency, syntax, vocabulary and other key concepts important to reading comprehension.

**Playing:** Adults role-playing with children further models the importance of language to communicate thoughts and feelings. Re-enacting everyday situations teaches children social rules like taking turns and advocating for their needs.

### **Task**

***Describe the relationship between social interactions and language development of young children.***

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## LESSON TWELVE: EMERGING ISSUES IN SOCIALIZATION



### *Lesson Objectives*

- i. Define what an emerging issue is.*
- ii. Describe emerging issues and their effects on children's socialization*

### **Introduction**

#### **What is an emerging issue?**

This is an issue that is emerging, something that is not yet an issue that everyone is concerned about but which is shortly going to be an immense headache to us all.

#### **Effects of emerging issues on children's socialization**

Emerging issues that commonly affect children and their interactive behaviors can be grouped under the category of neglect issues. Neglect issues are problems that affect children and are well known but ignored for political, economic and social reasons.

They include:

- Girl child
- HIV /AIDS
- War (IDP)
- Drug abuse
- Divorce
- Disability

#### **The girl child**

In many Kenyan communities girls undergo many challenges that include poverty, culture and traditions, insecurity, poor shelter, family labour, travelling long distances to schools, discrimination, early marriages and harassment among others. A combination of all and some of these issues has denied the girl child an opportunity to be socialized in the normal way. Those living in absolute poverty are likely to

drop out of school and become house helps or get into prostitution. Other girls have to go through female genital mutilation and soon after drop out of school “ready” for marriage.

Studies show that in a number of communities, it is girls, who spend more time on household chores than boys, leaving them with very little time to play, interact with other children or study at home. In case a family member falls sick, girls drop out of school to look after the sick relative.

The situation gets worse when a mother dies, forcing the girl to take over her responsibilities. The situation has been exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has forced children out of school to take up odd jobs in order to play the role of their parents.

## **HIV/AIDS**

Children who are either infected or affected by HIV/AIDS are likely to be affected in their social life. Those that are infected are more likely to be prone to infections that may hinder them from interacting with the other children. In case other children learn that they are infected they are also likely to keep off and reduce their interactive behavior with the victim child. The infected child on realization that he/she is infected may withdraw interaction with the other children.

Children whose parents are infected with HIV/AIDS are likely to be affected socially in the following ways:

- Withdraw from other children.
- Child labour; some of them have to look for food(s) and cater for basic needs of the family members
- Drop out of school to take care of their sick parent and other siblings.

## **WAR (IDPS)**

Children in the IDPS camps in Kenya had and still some have a number of challenges to cope with. They include:

- Inappropriate shelter. In order for children to comfortably socialize with others their basic needs should be met first.
- Inadequate food. Hungry children cannot engage in a social activity for long.
- Lack of play ground. There is no space for them to exercise their small and large motor skills.
- Some of the children may be traumatized and could still be nursing their emotions.

- Lack of conducive learning environment.

## **DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

A drug is any substance (solid, liquid or gas) taken by an individual that alters or interferes with the normal functions of the body. In many cases when we talk about drugs and substances, we are referring to psychoactive agents that affect the central nervous system; they affect the way a person thinks, feels or behaves.

The most commonly abused drugs and substance in Kenya are alcohol, tobacco, cannabis (bhang), miraa (khat) and glue.

### **Reasons why children abuse drugs and other substances**

There are many varied reasons why children engage in drug and substance abuse. These reasons include:

- Media influence.
- Stress and other mental problems.
- Emulating significant with others.
- Availability of the drug/substance.

### **Effects of drugs and substance abuse on socialization**

Children who abuse drugs are likely to suffer from the following:

- Spread of diseases. Drugs that require injection can lead to spread of diseases as the abusers share needles. Children who are sick will be affected physically and emotionally and may not be able to interact and socialize with other children.
- Death. Overconsumption may cause death. The child will therefore not have a chance of socializing with other children.
- Addiction. Many drugs and substances that children and adults abuse often cause addiction. With addiction the child becomes dependent on the drug or substance. The child is able to function after using the drug or substance.
- Poor performance at school as the drug interferes with the child's concentration and ability to recall. A child who does not perform well may not socialize well with other children as they may think of him/her being stupid and thus fear to be associated with him/her.

## **Signs of drug and substance abuse**

They include:

- Bloodshot eyes
- Needle marks
- Appearing dazed
- Poor coordination and clumsiness
- Vomiting
- Increased talkativeness
- Stealing, especially of money
- Moodiness
- Slurred speech
- Smell of the substance on breath
- Excessive need for privacy
- Dishonesty and shifty behavior.

## **DIVORCE**

More than 50% of couples who divorce have children. Researchers have found that households of divorced people are substantially more disorganized than those of intact families. Divorced parents do not communicate well with their children, are less affectionate and are more inconsistent in discipline than parents in intact families. Studies show that children of divorced parents are likely to suffer from the following:

- They are often fearful, depressed and guilty.
- They may become whiney, dependent, disobedient and disrespectful.
- Many have poor relations especially boys versus mothers during the adolescence crisis.
- May have behavior problems both at home and at school
- Academic adjustment difficulties at school.

These problems are likely to affect the social relationships and interaction of children. It is therefore important for teachers of young children to understand the social background of the children they teach and interact with. This will help them to handle each child as an individual, correct unwelcome behavior and also assist those with behavioural and social problems at individual level.

## **DISABILITY**

Disability is not inability. This means that those children who are disabled can be assisted to become able and independent. There are different types of disability that affect children ranging from physical, mental, socio-emotional, hearing and visual. The ease with which each disability can be managed depends on the severity and the onset of disability. Many children who are not severely disabled are trained to manage the challenges and are living a relatively normal life. They are also integrated into the normal learning system. However although the children are integrated in the education system they are likely to suffer from the following:

- a. They may not engage fully in play activities.
- b. They may feel emotionally offended if they are not fully engaged in activities performed by others
- c. They may withdraw and keep to themselves
- d. They are likely to be aggressive
- e. They may be too dependent on other children
- f. They can refuse to go to school

These and many other problems are likely to influence social interaction of disabled children. Teachers should encourage disabled children to participate in children's activities. They should also help other normal children understand the challenges of disabled children and learn to assist them whenever necessary. The school environment should be friendly; classes should be organized in such a way that they are able to reach the necessary learning materials, avoid obstacles on the runways, the field should be leveled, desks and chairs should be appropriate for them.

### ***Task***

- a) *Giving examples describe how the school environment can be set to take care of the disabled children.*
- b) *Explain how emerging issues have influenced social interactive behavior of children in today's society.*

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