
UNIT 12 SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT¹²

Structure

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Learning Objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the impact of social structures on development
- identify the ways in which caste, class, gender, ethnicity, poverty, inequality and deprivation in the Indian context affect development, and
- Analyze the role of cultural factors as influencing the process of development.

12.0 INTRODUCTION

The process of development is a complex interplay of variegated influences that lead to diverse implications. Amidst the many factors that influence development, a major role is played by the social structures and the socialization processes within which people are embedded. Keeping in mind

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the inherent diversity of the human condition and the numerous social systems and processes that affect development, it is important not to generalize findings derived from specific cultural settings onto others. This Unit, thus, explores the various ways in which social structures and culture impacts a bearing on development-related processes.

12.1 Social Structure and Development in the Indian Context

Any given society presents a mosaic of many different contexts and influences that lead to a variety of psychosocial outcomes. Over the years, many psychologists have pointed towards the need for contextualizing the discipline of psychology, and explore the specific features of different cultures which account for cross-cultural differences to emerge among a variety of psychosocial variables. Within the field of developmental psychology, these cultural differences continue to provide relevant explanations about human development. Looking at the trends in research on human development in India, the blatant transplant of Western theories, linguistic practices, epistemological and ontological assumptions, and methods of research are easily visible. Many Indian researchers have thus, emphasized the need for decolonizing the discipline of psychology and offering culturally-relevant knowledge systems (Saraswathi, 1999; Sinha, 1997).

The Indian society is a complex society, one which includes significant diversity across a wide-range of dimensions. Some of such dimensions include gender, caste, social class, religion, ethnicity, linguistic diversity, family types, and regional variations in cultural practices. Needless to say, in such a culturally complex environment, development does not follow a single, uniform trajectory. Instead, the processes responsible for human development become a lot more complex, and mediated by the implications of the aforementioned social structures. Thus, even in the same cultural context, the developmental trajectories of a specific group of people may pose a contrasting picture when compared to a different group, mainly due to the kind of privilege their group may enjoy within the society. To understand such implications better, the following sections will discuss the role of such social structures in any society, while also highlighting their complexities and implications in the Indian context. Before moving forward, it is important to understand that such social structures do not influence people as an isolated phenomenon, but on the basis of an array of intersections and overlaps of these social categories.

12.1.1 Caste

The term ‘caste’ denotes a system for social stratification, wherein groups of people are accorded differential status, treatment and privileges. According to Bêteille (1965, pg. 46), caste is “characterised by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system.” The notion of purity versus impurity is also associated with caste.

In the Indian context, caste is understood in terms of *varna* and *jati*. Four varnas are described in the Hindu system of caste: the Brahmins (priests and healers), Kshatriyas (rulers and warriors), Vaishyas (businessmen), and Shudras (artisans and manual laborers), with the first three regarded as ritually purer than the Shudras. Based on this notion of purity, some groups of people are also regarded as the untouchables. Apart from the varnas, there are hundreds of culturally and hierarchically distinct subsects known as *jatis*. They are hard to define and often vary across religions, regions, and settings. Furthermore, caste is also relevant as a political construct in India, and is the basis of its reservation policies (Vaid, 2014).

As castes have a bearing in the economic, social, ritualistic, and political domains, it also impacts the developmental trajectories of people belonging to particular castes. Direct implications of the same can be seen in child socialization goals set by parents and child rearing practices employed in the family context (Rao, McHale, and Pearson, 2003). For instance, in the Brahmin community (considered to be the highest caste in India), daily practices undertaken in the family reveal a ritualistic focus on domains such as learning, cleanliness, piety, immersion in religious texts, etc. Since the higher castes enjoy greater privilege, they also enjoy greater means for achieving outcomes necessary for well-being. Thus, growing up in such a context facilitates children's academic achievement and entry into prestigious and intellectual occupations. In this way, cultural practices may enable alternative pathways in development (Saraswathi & Dutta, 2010). On the other hand, belonging to the lower castes involves social discrimination and economic deprivation, educational and occupational outcomes for many groups are severely restricted. Research shows that there is considerably lower participation of the lower caste and tribal youth in schooling (Nambissan and Sedwal, 2002).

In a study by Desai & Dubey (2011, p. 44), they pointed that, "even for children from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, something about school environment results in lower levels of skill acquisition on the part of Dalit and Adivasi children, resulting in a long-term cycle of disadvantage". Thus, even when people from disadvantaged communities secure entry into prestigious institutions and occupational settings, they continue to face discrimination (Deshpande 2011; Jhodhka, 2010; Thorat & Sardana, 2009).

12.1.2 Class

The term 'social class' indicates stratification of people in a society on the basis of factors such as, wealth, status and influence. While some people may have greater access to resources as well as social capital, others are often not as privileged, thereby leading to differential outcomes for members of different social classes. In order to build a contextual understanding of development, it becomes important to locate the influences of social class in shaping socialization processes responsible for varied developmental outcomes.

There are many descriptions of different social classes, based on three factors:

- a) Educational level of the parent or caregiver;
- b) Economic resources available with the family; and
- c) Occupation of the Parent or caregiver (Berns, 2015).

Most commonly, distinctions are made between upper-class, middle-class and lower-income groups, as explained below:

Upper Class Families - In upper class families, people enjoy considerable wealth (usually inherited) and status in society. Children are considered to be carriers of the family's legacy and they are accordingly exposed to opportunities and privileges that are expected to prepare them for adult roles. Such children grow up amidst affluence, with access to good nutrition, material goods, hired caregivers, private schooling, and live in elite neighborhoods. While such children may be equipped with many privileges to succeed, they also experience pressures to conform to the family's standard (not just the immediate family, but often from the extended family as well).

Middle Class Families - For middle class families, status is usually attained via personal achievements, education and hard-work. In such families, parents commonly expose their children to many avenues that would help cultivate their talents, and children are encouraged to become self-reliant, and achievement-oriented. Such children also receive sufficient nourishment and stimulation from their home environment as well as the other settings in which they are situated. They learn to value the role of hard-work and possessing harmonious relationships with others in facilitating their goals. Like upper-class parents, parents in middle-SES families also emphasize on cognitive and psychological characteristics, such as happiness, curiosity, self-direction, etc.

Lower-Income Families - There are many barriers for healthy development in lower income families. To begin with, depending upon family circumstances and parental income, the resources available with the family are usually limited and even insufficient. This has implications right from prenatal development based on the level of care given to the mother during the prenatal period. Infants may be born with low birth weight and birth defects. Children may suffer from malnourishment and deficiencies, like anemia.

Due to economic pressures, the socialization processes are also significantly affected. As compared to middle-class and upper-class families, parents in lower-income families tend to stress on external characteristics such as politeness, obedience, and respect for elders (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005). Lack of economic security also limits the resources and opportunities that parents can devote to their children's cognitive and academic development. In fact, in such conditions, children are often expected to contribute to family income early on. Therefore, school drop-out rates are significantly higher in children from lower-income households (Berns, 2015).

It is also important to understand the intersections of caste and class in the Indian setting, with many groups of people belonging to upper castes also

possessing higher class privilege. Thus, they tend to possess greater means for ensuring healthy development, excelling in education and occupational settings, and have better access to resources and sufficient social connections (Saraswathi, 1999).

Check Your Progress I

1) Name the different social structures which pose important implications for human development.

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2) Briefly explain the basis of division of different castes in the Indian setting.

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3) What are three major categories used to describe different social classes?

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12.1.3 Gender

As social categories, sex and gender play a major role in determining the trajectory of development across the lifespan. While sex is determined on the basis of variation in biological attributes, gender is a multi-faceted phenomenon that pertains to socially constructed notions of masculine and feminine roles, attributes, and identities that govern behavior. In this context, culture plays a crucial role in terms of shaping the variegated socialization agents that enable an understanding of gender among people.

12.1.3.1 Gender Typing

Right from infancy, gender differences across the major domains of development start becoming visible. For instance, children’s temperament and other aspects of psychosocial development that emerge during infancy seem to be shaped by gender. Studies show that boys show higher levels of activity, irritability, and impulsivity, while girls present greater effortful control and cooperativeness. This in a large part, can be attributed to the differential treatment of boys and girls right from the beginning. For instance, boys are encouraged to be physically active early on, but girls are not. Similarly, expressions of certain emotions are discouraged for girls (such as anger), while the same may be encouraged for boys. By the age of 3 to 4, children exhibit gender-stereotyped beliefs, personality traits, engage in activities accordingly, and even prefer same-sex peers. Moreover, they also

display considerable rigidity with respect to the same (Berk, 2018). However, as children age, they often experience a broadening in their view of gender.

12.1.3.2 Identifying Environmental Influences

Parents - It is important to acknowledge that it is common in most societies for parents to encourage different behaviors, activities and goals for their sons and daughters. From the smallest of things (such as which toys should the child play with; e.g., cars for boys and dolls for girls) to bigger life decisions, people are taught early in life what is suited for them based on such categorizations. This includes encouragement of gender-typed behaviors (e.g., display of aggression or compliance), beliefs (e.g., “boys are stronger than girls”), and attributes (e.g., emphasis on gender-typed personality traits) during infancy itself and further leads to the development of notions of masculinity and femininity, and enables self-categorizations on the basis of gender and fuels gender-typed behaviors.

Although, a positive influence in the context of the family is linked to maternal employment. Research indicates that children with employed mothers show less gender-stereotyped behaviors.

Peers - Apart from the influences of the family, children are also heavily influenced by their peers. Association with same-sex peers is linked with development of gender-typed play preferences, activity level and even aggression (Martin et al., 2013). Furthermore, same-sex peers reinforce gender-typed behavior, but criticise or ridicule cross-gender behaviors. Boys are more easily teased or labelled when they engage in behaviors that are associated with girls. They also show aggression more physically, while girls are conditioned to aggress relationally.

Teachers - Differences pertaining to gender are also fueled in the school setting. Like parents, teachers also reinforce gender-typed behaviors and engage in different strategies to deal with boys and girls within the classroom. Studies show that boys tend to receive more attention from the teachers than girls (Chen & Rao, 2011). Teachers also often encourage students to participate in different activities and fields on the basis of the cultural notions of what is suited for their gender. For instance, treating language arts as “feminine”, versus mathematics and science as “masculine” may enlarge stereotype threats among the students and further lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, with important implications for their success in these fields.

12.1.3.3 Gender Identity

A crucial developmental task is to formulate a gender identity - a representation of oneself on the basis of masculine and feminine attributes. Studies show that children as young as 24 to 30 months indicated their gender identity (Campbell et al 2002; Stennes et al. 2005). There are many factors that influence the development of gender identity. These are explained below:

Social Learning Theory - According to social learning theory, the acquisition of gender identity emerges during early childhood as children pick-up gender-typed behaviors based on their observations of others around them and the reinforcement of certain behaviors. In this way, modeling and reinforcement influence children's self-perception and allow the internalization of gender-typed ideas.

Cognitive-Developmental Theory - The cognitive-developmental theory, on the other hand, emphasises the development of self-perceptions before gender-related behaviors. According to this perspective, children first develop notions about gender constancy and later use this information to direct their gendered behaviors. However, support for this theory is limited.

Gender Schema Theory. Gender schema theory presents an interesting amalgamation of both the role of social learning and children's cognitions in shaping their notions about gender-roles (Martin & Halverson, 1987). Based on their observations, children learn many gender-based attitudes and behaviors that further influence their gender schemas (masculine and feminine categorizations). As these schemas become more refined, they start impacting the ways in which children process information and guide their behavior.

12.1.3.4 Implications of Gender as a Social Category

In any given society, notions related to gender have a profound impact on people's development across a variety of domains. In the Indian context, it poses many serious implications. With respect to issues related to gender, an important concern in the Indian setting is reflected in the dominant preference for the male child. Studies show that across different social groups, people believe that the male child would lead to the continuation of the family's lineage, contribute to household income and look after the parents in their old age. This preference for the male child is associated with high rates of sex-selective abortions and female infanticide in India (Agnihotri, 2003).

Gender-based discrimination is also common within the family, with the sons being provided better nourishment, education, and more opportunities than the girls. Gender disparities are salient in both literacy rates and school completion rates (Saraswathi & Dutta, 2010). Parents also often impose these gender-based expectations on their children, which affect their self-esteem. For example, there is a heightened focus on physical appearance of girls more so than the boys, leading to many young girls invariably experiencing dissatisfaction with their bodies and thus, lowered self-esteem.

In the patriarchal context of some Indian families, young girls may grow up recognizing the inferior status and lesser privileges being given to them. Another salient feature of socializing girls in Indian families also pertains to the superordinate status being given to marriage in society. Considering this, from early childhood, girls are taught to value interpersonal relationships and develop an interdependent self so that they are prepared for their future roles as wives and mothers (Saraswathi, 1999). Therefore, as children's knowledge about their own social groups rises, they may also develop in-group and

outgroup biases (Heyman, 2001; Yee & Brown, 1994) and recognize the prevalence of gender inequality in society (Neff et al. 2007).

12.1.4 Ethnicity

Another important influence on the process of development is exerted by ethnicity. Often confused with the term race, 'ethnicity' is a much broader term that is employed to categorise groups of people on the basis of their cultural identifications and expressions. Some demographic factors used to describe ethnicity include territory, common language, diet, attire, and culture. Thus, it includes both biological and socially inherited characteristics. It is also common for developmental psychologists to explore socially constructed notions of ethnicity (Quintana, 2007). Research exploring the role of ethnicity in the developmental context has pointed out many important insights. Many history-graded influences are peculiar to members of a particular ethnic group. Moreover, people in ethnic groups can also be described in terms of shared characteristics, such as collectivism and individualism. In collectivistic groups, there is greater emphasis on interdependence, group cohesiveness, social responsibilities, and success and wellbeing of the group. While individualistic ethnic groups encourage individual success, personal goals, and autonomy (Hofstede, 1991; Trumbull et al., 2001).

Furthermore, ethnic differences in physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development have been identified on many important variables. Some examples include:

- a) Ethnic differences in physical growth (such as height and weight) and even level of exercise (Santrock, 2019).
- b) Parenting practices and family environments vary according to ethnicity (e.g., Jones & Lindahl, 2011).
- c) Ethnic differences that play a contributing role in the development of temperament. As compared to American and European infants, East Asian infants reflect an easier temperament. They exhibit lower levels of irritability and distractibility, and higher levels of self-regulation, compliance and cooperation (Chen et al., 2003).
- d) Gender-role expectations are informed by ethnicity. In some ethnic groups, there is a more salient division between masculine and feminine attributes as compared to other ethnic groups (e.g., McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003).

12.1.4.1 Development of Ethnic Identity

Another important focus of developmental researchers pertains to exploring people's ethnic identities that reflect their sense of belongingness to a particular ethnic group and influences a broad array of their experiences. There is considerable evidence that highlights that ethnic identity exploration is a salient feature of adolescents' and young adults' identity-related processes (Phinney, 1989; Quintana, 1998). Adolescents' values, worldviews

and goals also reflect the ideologies of their ethnic community (e.g., Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007).

Notable work in this area was conducted by Phinney (1989), where they extrapolated Marcia's (1966) work on ego identity statuses (i.e., identity achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion) to explain ethnic identity development. Findings show that during adolescence, development of racial-ethnic explorations and identifications reveals consistent, normative patterns (Quintana, 2007). Feelings of pride associated with one's ethnic group are linked with positive psychosocial outcomes, such as adjustment, wellbeing, etc. On the other hand, ethnic differences also become a basis for discrimination. In many societies, poverty and marginalization is magnified among ethnic minorities.

Understanding issues related to ethnicity poses much complexity in the Indian context considering the massive diversity prevalent in the country. For instance, there are numerous bases on which people make their identification, such as identities based on religion, caste, class, language, political ideology, rural/urban context, region, nation, affiliation with tribes, etc. Thus, the development of ethnic identity can turn out to be considerably complex.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What are the various environmental influences which enable gender typing?
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- 2) Name the theories used to explain the development of gender identity.
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- 3) What are some common domains in which ethnic differences in development have been highlighted?
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12.1.5 Poverty, Inequality and Deprivation

While we have discussed the types of social classes earlier, a crucial developmental context in which a huge part of the world exists is marked with poverty. Social inequality is prevalent in most societies to variable degrees, and many marginalized communities find themselves struggling with poverty. Although there are many definitions of the term 'poverty', simply put, it can be described as a state of severe deprivation which renders people incapable of meeting their basic needs, such as access to food, safe

drinking water, sanitation facilities, shelter, health, and education. A major feature of poverty pertains to lack of income, however, it is also explained vis-a-vis the experience of exclusion, lack of choices and dignity, and susceptibility to violence.

Researchers often attempt to understand deprivation as a continuum, that is, depending upon the extent of deprivation, it can be labelled as mild, moderate, severe, and extreme. Thus, people in poverty-stricken families and communities face a wide array of negative outcomes, such as malnutrition, ill health, increased mortality, illiteracy, joblessness, homelessness, insecurity, and social discrimination. Furthermore, the effects of poverty are more salient for members of minority groups and women.

In the developmental context, the implications of poverty are complex and multifold. Children from deprived backgrounds suffer from many physical, cognitive, and social limitations. They may experience poor physical health, slow or deficient cognitive development, limited access to education, mental illness, and a host of externalizing behavioral problems. Child labour is also a serious threat in the Indian context (Sarawathi & Dutta, 2010).

In poverty-stricken families, due to the level of deprivation experienced, many stressors persist on a daily basis which contribute to a tumultuous family environment. This includes negative impacts on family members' mental health (it is common for people to experience irritability, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse), strain in parents' relationship with each other, as well as their relationship and communication with their children (Berns, 2015). Under such stressful environments, it is common for parents to employ harsh, punitive disciplinary practices (Conger & Dogan, 2007).

Furthermore, children growing up amidst high-poverty contexts are also often situated in high-risk neighborhoods, accompanied by unsafe environments, lack of prosocial or positive role models, limited institutional resources, and negative peer influences (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005). Schools in poor communities are also underfunded and lack sufficient facilities and resources. It becomes even more difficult for teachers to motivate students in such poorly stimulating environments, thus, delinquency and drop-out rates remain high.

To tackle such problems, a range of interventions directed at helping children and adolescents overcome the challenges posed by poverty are implemented across different social settings. While some target the upliftment of the school setting, others focus on the family environment and children's academic, emotional, and social skills. An important consideration in this context is to create holistic and multifaceted programs that would target a host of social issues that together create many barriers in children's development (Kagan, 2013).

12.2 CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

The process of human development and culture are inextricably entwined. Across all major domains of development, the changes undergone by an

individual take place in many contexts, with their cultural context having a significant bearing on many important variables. However, a focus on the cultural context as an important consideration in the field of developmental psychology has been largely limited. Academic discourse in the field continues to remain embedded in the Western models, with scholars from many cultures simply trying to emulate the findings produced in an alien context into their own. This appears to be particularly prevalent in the Indian context (Saraswathi, 1999).

Research has highlighted that philosophical and linguistic constructs from one's own culture are better at explaining our behaviors and experiences than when they are adapted from a different cultural setting. In the Indian context, Kakar (1979, 1982) emphasised the role of the Indian philosophical tradition, heritage, and social institutions in the ways in which they influence the process of development. Kakar stressed on the limited application of Western knowledge systems in indigenous contexts, emphasised the imperative need for contextualizing human development according to the cultural contexts particular to Indian society. For instance, the epistemological assumptions that may be effective in one cultural context, may not be suited for another. In such a scenario, external generalizability of such studies conducted in India is questionable. On the other hand, culturally-rooted epistemological positions and its congruent methodologies may provide a more insightful understanding of development within that particular culture.

In the Indian context, traditional systems such as yoga, meditation, introspection and even healing practices rooted in religion may offer a more meaningful understanding of many psychological phenomena. Furthermore, the adoption of Western tools and methods may not only be a poor fit because of their cultural underpinnings, but may be completely unsuited for many people from socially-disadvantaged groups who may not possess the necessary experience to properly participate in such endeavors (Mohanty and Prakash, 1993). An ongoing problem, thus, pertains to the selection of samples from fairly privileged sections of society while ignoring the marginalized classes. In this scenario, the picture of human development that emerges remains incomplete and exclusionary.

Keeping this in mind, a reframing of a researcher's positionality is crucial and to better understand the nature of development, it becomes important to first raise the right kind of questions which would be inclusive of and representative of a wider population. Considering this, moving away from the Western obsession with positivism and towards seeking culturally-relevant, lived experiences of members of a community will be more helpful (Saraswathi & Dutta, 2010). Finally, researchers also stress on increasing investment and engagement in applied research which would be more suited for countries like India.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Define the term 'poverty'.

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2) Briefly describe some of the outcomes associated with living in poverty.

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3) Which traditional systems in the Indian context can help explain many psychological phenomena?

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12.3 SUMMARY

Now that we have come to the end of this Unit, let us list all the major points that we have learnt:

- The process of development is a complex interplay of variegated influences that lead to diverse implications. A major role in this regard is played by the social structures and the socialization processes within which people are embedded.
- The Indian society is a complex society, one which includes significant diversity across a wide-range of dimensions. Some of such dimensions include gender, caste, social class, religion, ethnicity, linguistic diversity, family types, and regional variations in cultural practices.
- As an important social structure, caste mediates people's diverse experiences and has a bearing in the economic, social, ritualistic, and political domains, while impacting people's developmental trajectories.
- The category of social class is usually divided in three groups i.e., upper-class, middle-class and lower-income groups, and profoundly impacts the opportunities available to people of the different groups.
- Gender is another important variable. Right from infancy, gender differences across the major domains of development start becoming visible, with children being socialized to internalize gender-typed values and behaviors. A major task also pertains to the development of a gender identity i.e., a representation of oneself on the basis of masculine and feminine attributes.
- Furthermore, people belonging to the same ethnic group share common biological and social characteristics. Ethnic differences in physical,

cognitive and socio-emotional development have been identified on many important variables, such as physical growth, parenting practices, temperament, and gender-role expectations.

- Social inequality is prevalent in most societies to variable degrees, and many marginalized communities find themselves struggling with poverty. Children from deprived backgrounds suffer from many physical, cognitive, and social limitations. They may experience poor physical health, slow or deficient cognitive development, limited access to education, mental illness, and a host of externalizing behavioral problems.
- Finally, academic discourse in the field continues to remain embedded in the Western models, with scholars from many cultures simply trying to emulate the findings produced in an alien context into their own. Thus, future researchers need to focus on cultural specificity and relevance of the work undertaken by them.

12.4 KEYWORDS

Caste	A system for social stratification, wherein groups of people are accorded differential status, treatment and privileges. It is characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life, and involves a ritual status in a hierarchical system.
Social Class	Stratification of people in a society on the basis of factors such as, wealth, status and influence.
Gender	Socially constructed notions of masculine and feminine roles, attributes, and identities that govern behavior.
Gender Identity	Representation of oneself on the basis of masculine and feminine attributes.
Ethnicity	A categorization of groups of people on the basis of their cultural identifications and expressions. It also involves demographic factors such as territory, common language, diet, attire, and culture.
Poverty	A state of severe deprivation which renders people incapable of meeting their basic needs such as access to food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, shelter, health, and education.

12.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the role of culture in shaping development across the lifespan.

2. Discuss the influence of caste in determining development in the Indian context.
3. Explain the characteristics of different types of social classes.
4. What is the difference between gender typing and gender identity?
5. Using research evidence, elucidate the implications of ethnicity for human development.
6. Describe the consequences of living in poverty for children's psychosocial development.
7. What are some issues that developmental psychologists should keep in mind when studying human development in the Indian context?

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12.7 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- For more information on patterns of gender development:

https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev.psych.093008.100511#_i31

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-lifespandevelopment/chapter/gender-differences-in-life-expectancy/>

<https://www.lifespan.org/lifespan-living/understanding-gender-identity>

- For more information on caste in India:

<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043303>

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/culturalanthropology/chapter/indian-caste-system/>

- *For more information on culture and lifespan development:*

<https://mathias-sager.com/2017/08/21/approaches-to-lifespan-development-and-cultural-considerations/>

- *For understanding poverty as a developmental context:*

<https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1196/annals.1425.023>

<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.18.1.463>



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UNIT 13 SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN SCHOOLS¹³

Perspectives On
Human
Development II:
Cognitive
Perspective

Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Social Pressures
 - 13.1.1 School-age Children and Friendships
 - 13.1.2 Peer and its Importance in Adolescence
 - 13.1.3 Academic Pressure
- 13.2 Victimization and Bullying
 - 13.2.1 Cyberbullying
 - 13.2.2 Characteristics of a Bully
 - 13.2.3 Victims of Bullying
 - 13.2.4 School Violence
- 13.3 School Refusal
- 13.4 Intervention
 - 13.4.1 Managing Bullying
 - 13.4.2 Managing Peer Influence and Peer Pressure
 - 13.4.3 Managing Academic Pressure
 - 13.4.4 Managing School Violence
- 13.5 Summary
- 13.6 Keywords
- 13.7 Review Questions
- 13.8 References and Further reading
- 13.9 Additional Online resources

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- explain various social pressures that may exist at a school level;
- identify the influence of peers on children and academics;
- describe the nature of bullying and victimization;
- explain school refusal and identify possible causes behind it, and
- manage various social pressures and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

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13.0 INTRODUCTION

School is a formal institution designed with an intent to disseminate knowledge and skills needed by children to become productive and righteous members of the society. Schools are vital forces in child's socialization process and play an important role in their development. Schools may impact a child's motivation to learn, ways of remembering, problem solving, and also social and moral understanding. When children enter school, they must adjust to and accommodate to new physical settings, adult authority figures, daily schedules, routines, peers, and academic challenges as well.

Some students are seen struggling with completing their classwork, homework, assignments on time, or staying focused in class. These struggles could be a part of academic related issues specifically or could also be germinating from other greater problems that the parents, guardians, and educators are unable to identify. Some of these challenges could be poverty, child abuse, neglect, homeless families, bullying, violence, body image issues, self and identity related issues, sex and pregnancy, suicide, drugs, and dropping out. In this unit, we would discuss some of these social pressures faced by children and adolescents, along with victimization and bullying and how it may lead to school refusal or impact with academic achievement or social and emotional development of the individual. In the last section, we will discuss some intervention strategies which could be used to help them.

13.1 SOCIAL PRESSURES

Social pressure can be defined as consisting of attitudes, criticisms, and emotions of people directed against others who act or say things contrary to the belief of the person or group applying the pressure. It is a predominant issue among children, adolescents and young adults (Brown in Bursztyn & Jensen, 2015). Childhood and adolescence are believed to be the period of vulnerability, especially to peer pressure, when there is a desire to be popular and to 'fit in' is most acutely felt. The aspect of social pressure is also based on two important factors: conformity and acceptance. In order to feel accepted, children and teenagers end up conforming and this is getting even more complex in the present generation of likes and followers on Facebook, Instagram etc. as these are significant factors in evaluating an individual's popularity and acceptance. Thus, social pressures are the combined pressures that are around the individual during everyday life such as peer pressure, academic pressure, and socioeconomic pressure. These pressures can be confusing and hurtful. Those of us who are more vulnerable to adverse social pressures (in families or schools) are also at a higher risk for substance misuse. Their coping skills are not very good to deal with the demands and stresses and they often have a low self-image and absence of positive identity (Banwell & Young, 1993).

13.1.1 School-age Children and Friendships

Peer interaction is an important aspect which comes with the school life of a child. Two of the most important aspects involved with this are close friendships and general acceptance or rejection within the peer group. Children from the age of 6-12 years almost pay attention to and value having a best friend. They spend time together, do similar kind of things, help each other, and even offer emotional support whenever required. Social status (position of the individual in the group or between friends), or acceptance or rejection (in general) of an individual within the peer group. An interesting technique used to study peer acceptance or rejection is called *sociometry*. Here, a child names the children they like the most or like the least (Poulin & Dishion, 2008). After combining choices of all the children, researchers determine the overall level of acceptance or rejection of each child in the peer group. This information can be combined to produce five sociometric status groups and they are as follows (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982):

- Popular children: high on peer acceptance, low on peer rejection
- Rejected children: high on peer rejection, low on peer acceptance
- Controversial children: high on peer acceptance, high on peer rejection
- Neglected children: low on peer acceptance, low on peer rejection
- Average children: average level of peer acceptance and peer rejection

There are two ways a child may become popular within the peer group- popular-prosocial children who are high on characteristics that are societally desirable- helpfulness, sports or academic competence, while the other one is popular-antisocial children who are considered “tough” and who may combine social manipulation with sporting ability, aggression etc. to do what they like and get their things done. These children are considered as bullies but are also seen as influential leaders (de Bruyn & Cillessen, 2006). Similarly, rejected children can also be categorized in two groups- rejected aggressive children are the ones who are rejected because they are annoying, irritating, aggressive and/or socially unskilled (Sandstrom & Zakriski, 2004). Then, rejected-withdrawn children are the ones who are socially anxious, withdrawn, shy, or nervous (Juvonen, 2013). Both these children are not attractive or engaging to the other playmates and thus are rejected by them.

An important aspect to note here is that the context of peer relationship also has a role to play in deciding who is popular and who is rejected. So, we can also infer here that these characteristics may differ from one group to another. For instance, a child who is more aggressive is likely to get rejected in groups that are more withdrawn but will not be rejected in a group that is more aggressive in nature. Sometimes the adverse effects of rejection by the peers can be relieved or moderated even by having one good/close friend. It can be enough to buffer the child from stress experienced by rejection (Peters et al. 2011).

The effects of peer rejection could also be dependent upon how sensitive the child is to rejection, that is how strongly a child responds to rejection in comparison to others. This can impact a child’s wellbeing- both physical

health and mental health. A child who does not notice rejection or is low on rejection sensitivity is less likely to be affected negatively in comparison to the one who is high on rejection sensitivity. Research (London, Downey, Bonica, & Paltin, 2007) has also concluded that people who are sensitive to rejection are likely to analyze and interpret responses of other people as hostile and aggressive. This may either make them angry or anxious, which may result in an aggressive act by the individual as a response or may make the child socially anxious leading to withdrawal from different social situations.

Rejection sensitivity may also have its roots in childhood experiences, for example, rejection from parents. When a child feels that she/he is being rejected by the parents (and later on by peers), they start expecting that they will be rejected in future as well by them and by others also in different situations. Thus, they may view every situation with this lens and may perceive rejection even if it is not there (Rudolph & Gemberck, 2014), creating a vicious cycle eventually. A study by Ayduk and colleagues (2007) concluded that if the children (who are high on rejection sensitivity) are able to control the expression of their emotions (withdrawal or aggressive), they may have better outcome as adults.

Studies have examined peer status over the years over intervals from 6 months to several years and have found that almost half of the children are more likely to retain their peer status (of rejected or popular) over time (Cillessen, 2011). It could be due to the fact that they receive positive feedback from others which reinforces their behavior. Both popular and rejected statuses have been found to be quite stable categories (Peets, et al., 2007). It is slightly difficult to understand why rejected children maintain their behavior because negative feedback from peers should ideally change the behavior, but high levels of aggression which often contributes to peer rejection is quite a stable characteristic of an individual so, this continuous behavior of theirs alienate them from others. Both peer rejection and lack of friends are related to difficulties in adulthood. According to a study by Juvonen (2013), preadolescents who were rejected by their group were more inclined to have trouble with law later in their life, perhaps because they are more likely to form friendship with “their kind” who may engage in criminal behavior.

Box 13.1 Activity

Think about a situation or time when you wanted to get together with someone (parent, friend or anyone) and they said ‘no’ to you.

- Write down the situation in detail.
- How did you feel at that time?
- How did you interpret the situation?
- What did you do?
- Did this affect your relationship with that person? If YES, how?
- Did this affect your relationship with other people? If YES, how?
- How do you see the same situation now and what do you feel about it?

13.1.2 Peers and its Importance in Adolescence

We have already discussed that peers are important during childhood and middle childhood, but their role becomes all the more crucial in the context for development during adolescence. By this time, their friendships involve different levels and different forms- individual friends, association with larger group related to academics, sports, the hobby or passion they may follow etc. It has a role in development of intimacy, social skills, self-concept (Klarin, 2006), and identity. Research has associated better emotional and mental adjustment with those who enjoy high-quality peer relationships, even if the number (of friends) is not so large (Demir & Urberg, 2004). Through these relationships they may learn how to negotiate, compromise, understand the other person's perspective and be more sensitive to their needs. However, the benefits that are associated with friendships may not necessarily remain so in case of a larger group that may lack intimacy, warmth or closeness. According to Falci and McNeely (2009), with an increase in number of friends, the individual may also feel the strain of maintaining these social relationships with these many people, at least as an obligation and it may take a toll on them. Gender differences exist in the nature and kind of friendships (Vaquero & Kao, 2008; Rose et al., 2012) but equality and reciprocity are two important characteristics of all adolescent friendships.

Adolescents (like children) select friends who are similar to themselves (Hafen et al., 2011) and there could be two possible reasons for this selection and influence (Kandel, 1978). When they find things common with each and start interacting more, they start finding more similarities or end up finding new things together which become common. This process can be very positive and special but there is a risk involved in here. The teens can also play a role in initiating their friends into risky or problematic behavior- unprotected and risky sexual behavior (Baumgartner, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2011), smoking, (Kobus, 2003), substance use and abuse (Dishion & Owen, 2002), delinquency (Hafen et al., 2011), developing a negative or casual attitude towards school, social anxiety and depression (Acar & Kılınc, 2017). Peer pressure may also impact their academic performance, socialization at school (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014), academic achievement and level of engagement in school (You, 2011).

Friends establish these norms for the group directly or indirectly by specifying them, discussing about them, or modeling these behaviors. Teenagers, because they want to be accepted by their peers, may abandon many of their norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors that they may have learned earlier (from parents or other elders). Therefore, at times children and adolescents are encouraged by their friends and people around them (of their age) to do something that they might not be very comfortable with.

Peer pressure can be direct (using rewards or punishment for compliance) or more subtle in nature (modeling, norms as discussed in the group in general) and it can also be an intentional attempt to influence the behavior of another person or an unintentional act. It is often used to transmit group norms and foster loyalty to the group (Vander Zanden, 2000). Majority of the reports from adolescents' state that peer pressure is often subtle (ignoring or

ostracizing someone who is not conforming to group norms) and very rarely direct in nature. The nature of the peer pressure on the individual experiences may depend on the nature of the peer group itself- well functioning groups supporting positive and adaptive behavior and deviant groups supporting deviance.

Brown and colleagues (1986) identified peer pressure domains (areas in which they perceive pressure from their peers) for teenagers and reported five such domains- (i) family involvement, (ii) school involvement, (iii) peer involvement, (iv) peer norms (following their food habits, dressing etc.), and (v) misconduct. So, it can be concluded that peer pressure occurs in all the key domains of an adolescents' life.

However, peer groups do not exist as binaries-good or bad. Every group involves some shade and element of both but could be leaning more towards one side. Although, parents and adults are most concerned about the fact that peers are a constant source of pressure, especially to behave in a negative way (using drugs, alcohol, engaging in delinquent behavior, being sexually active etc.), they are also quite likely to influence each other away from these type of behaviors (Brown, Bakken, Ameringer, & Mahon, 2008; Gulati, 2017). Having high-achieving peers can exert a positive influence on an adolescent's academic achievement (Robnett & Leaper, 2013). They can also be a source of support for health-promoting behaviors (good diet, exercise, and healthy lifestyle) (Cappella & Hwang, 2015). These supportive friendships may also boost adolescent's self-esteem and promote adaptive strategies to cope with stress (Kaplan, 2004) along with providing encouragement in developing new skills and abilities. School a child attends to serves as an institution that determines their learning capacity based on the school environment that gives the learning experience towards students (Korir, 2014). So, while choosing certain courses or clubs which is an important decision a child makes in school, it is highly affected by their interaction with other students (Porter & Umbach, 2006). Kinderman (2016) concluded that interactions between students with their agemates enhance their learning under the guidance of an adult educator.

We generally associate peer pressure with adolescents, but there is enough evidence to suggest that peer pressure can be found in even 4-year-old children. Haun and Tomasello (2011) found that they are likely to give answers they knew to be wrong when they were with three other peers who gave those answers before them. Box 13.1 mentions what could be some of the possible factors behind susceptibility to peer pressure. Similarly, Figure 13.1 presents factors that would determine if a teenager would try illegal drugs or not.

Box 13.2 What makes an individual susceptible to peer pressure?

Individual characteristics have an important role making people more/less susceptible to peer pressure and engage in different sort of activities. These characteristics will also determine their perception of self and how often they would act in a socially acceptable way (Lebedina Manzoni et al., 2008).

Anxiety has been found to be an important factor in increasing susceptibility to peer influence. Children with high anxiety tend to focus on threats, dangers and other negative outcomes. Therefore, it is possible that adolescents with high anxiety focus on being rejected by peers. So, here conformity can be seen as a way of avoiding potentially threatening situation.

Lashbrook (2000) found that adolescents experienced negative emotions (feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and shame) when they perceived to be subjected to peer pressure. These feelings were also associated with symptoms of depression. An individual who was either depressed or prone to depression had higher chances of succumbing to peer pressure.

Steinberg (1987) pointed various family characteristics such as family structure and family dynamics are related to susceptibility to peer pressure. Parents who are permissive, inconsistent in discipline, and unlikely to monitor their child's behavior may make their children or adolescent more susceptible to peer pressure (Tolan & Cohler, 1993). Parental conflict, abuse, alcoholism, lack of communication, lack of affection, rejection by parents or difficult circumstances (street children, children from juvenile home) could also be contributory factors. Similarly, children with low quality relationships with significant others are more prone to peer pressure.

Self-esteem forms over a period of time and once formed, it makes a frame of reference for a person's perception and organization of the world. Researches have also suggested that a person's level of self-esteem may impact how easily and how much that are influenced by others (Rhodes & Wood, 1992; Uslu, 2013).

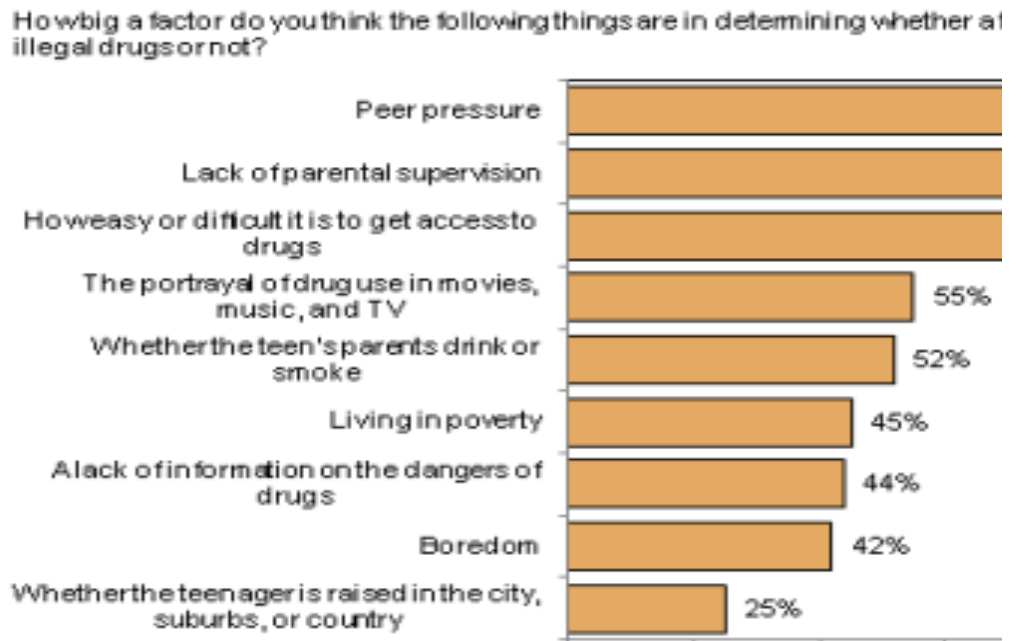


Figure 13.3 Factors involved in determining if teenagers would try illegal drugs or not

Box 13.3 Teenage Bill of rights

It is not easy to resist peer pressure. The following bill of rights may help whenever you are facing some sort of pressure.

- ✓ It's okay to change your mind.
- ✓ You can say 'no' and mean it too.
- ✓ If you don't want to do/follow something, you don't have to do/follow it.
- ✓ Decide for yourself what you think is right and what is wrong or off limits.
- ✓ You are responsible for your own feelings.
- ✓ If the pressure is too much, leave the situation.
- ✓ Express your opinions, feelings, wants, needs, and desires. Don't manipulate or hurt others in the process.

Source: adapted from <https://www.smith.edu/ourhealthourfutures/socialpress.html>

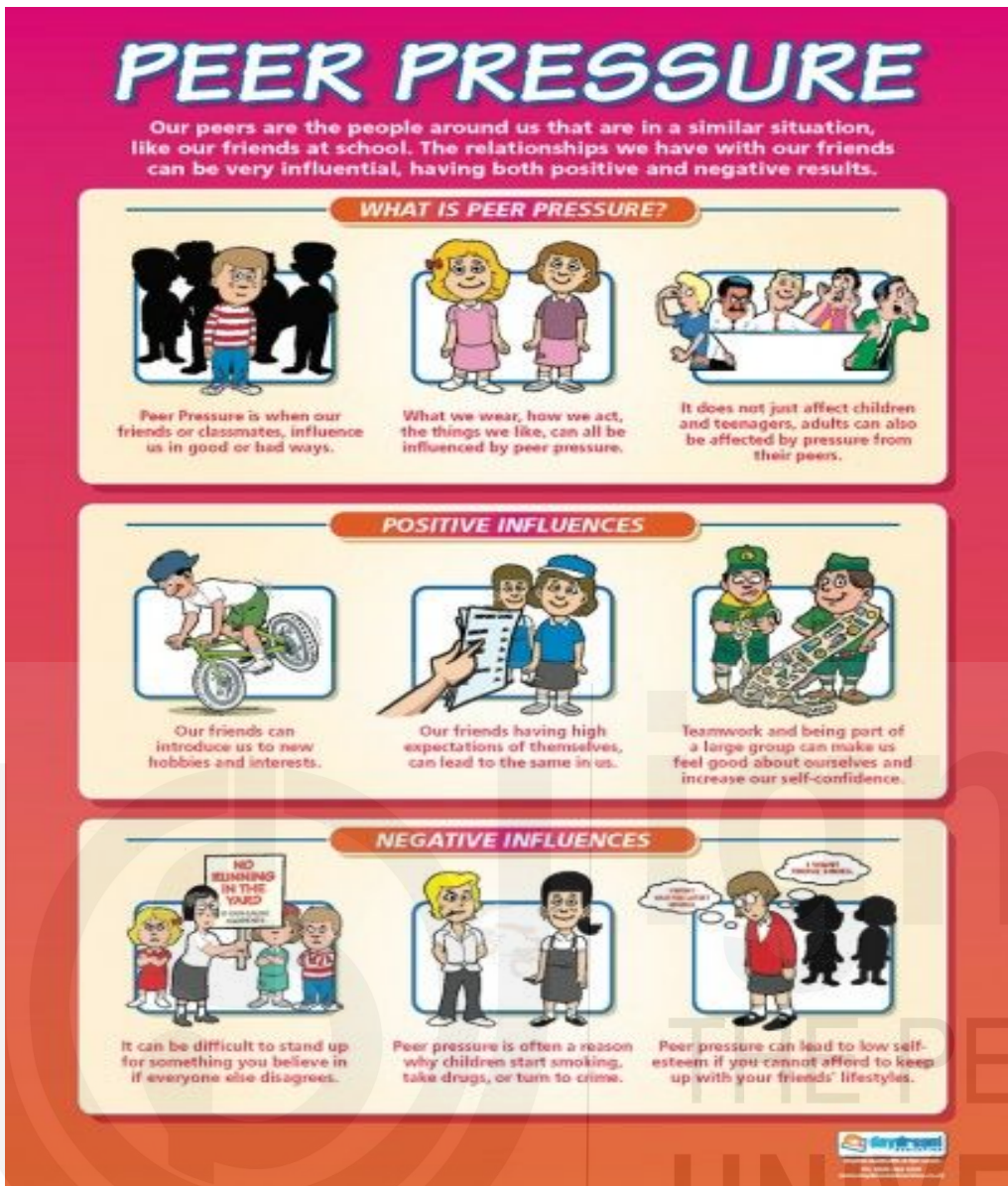


Figure. 13.2 Understanding Peer Pressure

Source: Peer Pressure/PSHE Educational School Posters. From daydreameducation.co.uk.

We can see that peer pressure is a strong determinant in the school environment. Thus, it is vital for educators to understand the complex structure of peer relationships and peer pressure and the role it plays in psychological development of an individual.

13.1.3 Academic Pressure

We have already discussed how peer influence or pressure may have an impact on academic achievement, attitude and beliefs related to it. In this section we will discuss academic pressure and stress. Academic stress can be defined as the anxiety and stress that comes from schooling and education. It could be due to studying, reading, homework, assignments, and tests. They could be stressed about balancing their academics, co-curricular activities and also finding time to socialize and for themselves. Students sometimes also underestimate the amount of time it may take to complete a particular

assignment or work and this may add on to their stress which over a period of time may be manifested as anxiety, depression or burnout.

Academic stress among students is an area that has been under research since long. They have identified a number of stressors, such as too many assignments, fear of failure, competition with others, failure, and poor relationships with other (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). Sometimes the perception a child has about knowledge required (for a course, to appear for the exam) and inadequacy of time given for it may act as a stressor. When the stress is perceived negatively or becomes too much to handle, students experience physical and psychological impairment which hampers their daily life functioning. The pressure to perform well when being assessed in a given period of time (examination set up) makes academic scenes very stressful (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). A study about academic stress among private secondary school students in India revealed that all students reported higher levels of academic stress, but the ones who had lower grades reported higher levels of stress in comparison to the ones with higher grades. Students who engaged in co-curricular activities reported higher exam anxiety than the ones who did not engage in any such activities (Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2012). Parental pressure on children to perform well in academics as well as in co-curricular activities is very high and cause of extreme stress. Lack of support and interaction from parents and teachers may lead to doubts and confusions which could also be a cause of great stress (Jain & Singhai, 2018).

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Describe the categories of popular children.
.....
.....
- 2) Explain the impact of rejection sensitivity on the child.
.....
.....
.....
- 3) Discuss the positive and negative side of peer pressure.
.....
.....
- 4) What is academic stress?
.....
.....

13.2 VICTIMIZATION AND BULLYING

A darker side of peer relationships include bullying, harassment, intimidation, and violence. In this section, we will try to understand what is bullying, characteristics of bullies and their victims and what are its

consequences. Bullying occurs when a person (victim) is “exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more students” (Olweus, 2003, p.12). The victim is repeatedly targeted with aggression as a way to assert social dominance over them. A wide range of behavior comes under the category of bullying- physical (hitting, punching), verbal (teasing, name calling), and emotional (intimidating, threatening others). It also includes damaging someone’s property, spreading rumors, forcing someone to do something, excluding them and cyberbullying. Bullies have been classified in two major categories: (i) pure bullies-children who are only bullies (ii) bully-victims- they are bullies in some situations while victims in others. Those who are only victims in all the situations are called as pure victims. An interesting line of thought in both of the bullies is that they can get other people to respect them with their display of aggression. This could be an important motivation behind them being bullies.

Peeters, Cillessen, and Scholte (2010) identified three types of bullies: (i) bullies who are popular and also have good social intelligence (used to manipulate their peers) to dominate others, (ii) popular bullies with average social intelligence, and (iii) unpopular bullies with lower levels of social intelligence (they see hostile intent even in ordinary/normal situations and act as per that). Both boys and girls are capable of bullying their peers but according to literature, more bullies are male than female and more victims are females (Faris & Felmlee, 2014). It has been found that male bullies tend to use physical intimidation more and female bullies use psychological or emotional intimidation more in comparison (Wang et al., 2009). Peer acceptance or rejection has an important role to play in understanding bullying. For instance, popular children are the ones who are liked by their peers and thus show balanced and well-adjusted social behavior. A group of controversial (high on both acceptance and rejection) children may also become popular because of their ‘cool’, ‘trendy’, or ‘tough’ behavior which can be disruptive for others and may also involve ill-treatment of others. Rejected and neglected children also have immense potential to become bullies and mistreat others. Bullying usually peaks in middle school years and then may decrease gradually by young adulthood.

13.2.1 Cyberbullying

Another form of bullying that is comparatively recent is cyberbullying. It involves use electronic technology and communication to harm others. It may include e-mails, text messages, digital images, social media platforms, webpages, blogs, chatrooms etc. to intimidate, threaten or harm others. A cyberbully may post threats, victim’s personal identifying information, disapproving labels, hate speeches, or sexual remarks about an individual. It is usually identified by repeated behavior and the intent of the individual to harm others (their victims in this case). Victims may display various negative emotions due to this such as being scared, frustrated, angry, anxious, or even depressed. Some may also have suicidal ideation. A particularly hurtful form could be sexting. This may involve using distributing embarrassing photos or lewd messages of an individual or flooding another individual with such messages (who does not want to see it). At times youngsters exchange semi-

nude or nude pictures or sexually explicit messages with their friends (girl/boy), or but after the relationship ends or just to take revenge on something, those pictures can be used as weapon when they are forwarded to others within the peer group, shared with parents or made available to public. Internet trolling is a very common form of bullying that has emerged recently in the online community over social media, in order to elicit a reaction from others, to instigate others, or is sometimes used as by someone for their amusement (Diaz, 2016). Cyberstalking is another form of harassment in which electronic communication is used to stalk a victim, posing a credible threat to the individual and their privacy. Some aspects of cyberbullying make it more damaging than any other form of bullying. They are as follows:

- Electronic messages can be sent in a short span of time to a large number of people. Now-a-days with due to technologically advanced internet connections and networks, the message can be sent at a lightning speed. This also means that impact can be far worse than face-to-face bullying.
- Cyberbullying can “get you” anytime and anywhere. For instance, when can avoid face-to-face bullying by escaping the presence of the bully, school absenteeism etc. but it is very difficult to hide, avoid or escape from cyberbullying.
- Cyberbullying provides the bully with an advantage of being anonymous (if they want) and with the advancement in technology this has become all the more possible. Thus, they might say things electronically which they otherwise may not say on their victim’s face. Another possibility is that sometimes visible impact the bullying behavior has on the victim may stop the bully (in face-to-face interactions) as they can see the hurt, they are causing the victim (especially when they do not want to harm the victim that badly) but that is not possible in the cases of cyberbullying.

13.2.2 Characteristics of a Bully

Bullies are often seen engaging in deviant behaviors, such as drinking, smoking, drugs, damaging property, stealing, carrying a weapon (Hay, Meldrum, & Mann, 2010). Research also suggests that bullies tend to have lower academic achievement, school adjustment and bonding to school environment (Harris, 2004). Their targets are usually those people who do not have or have minimal social support, so the victims do not have others to stand by them. In a study by Ladd and colleagues (2011), it was concluded that bullies tend to choose children who are “anxious solitary”, that is the ones whose fears and vulnerabilities are apparent to others and not the ones who are unsociable or socially withdrawn otherwise. But, in order to become popular or enhance their social status, sometimes they may target popular children and victimize them. Lack of parental supervision, harsh punishments by parents, family violence could be the possible contributory factors towards bullying as these actions model resolution of problems using aggression. Parents of bullies might be uninvolved in the lives of their children, making them feel unloved, unwanted and uncared for (Demaray & Malecki, 2009).

13.2.3 Victims of Bullying

Those who are victims of bullying suffer serious physical, emotional and/or psychological consequences. Victims often feel unsupported by others and their sense of loneliness, powerlessness and despair could make them feel anxious and/or depressed. In some cases, it can also contribute to suicidal thoughts or even a suicidal attempt (Sassu et al., 2004). They may often miss attending schools, do not participate in class activities or in co-curricular activities, might be low on confidence, esteem and their academic performance may also decline. (Harris, 2004).

Victims are usually at a higher risk of developing internalizing disorders, such as depression, anxiety, school refusal, etc. and bullies on the other hand may end up being prone to externalizing disorders and criminal behavior, such as using violence, involved in illegal drug related activities. Bullies have a long-term effect on their victims and sometimes what was started as prank in childhood may have severe consequences later in adult life as well. As mentioned above, a victim can turn into a bully (or vice-versa) when the victim's response could take a form of violence against others and this may also have negative outcomes in adulthood (Klomek, Sourander, &Elonheimo, 2015).

13.2.4 School Violence

In recent years, some the most tragic and horrifying incidents have taken place in school which pose great danger to children and even teachers (at times) while in school. This may include physical violence, psychological violence, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, corporal punishment, forms of bullying (already discussed above), mass shootouts, carrying weapons (guns, knives etc.) in schools. It is important to note here that there are a number of obstacles in determining the occurrence of such violence, especially at a school level. In school soften many crimes go officially unrecorded mostly because of lack of cooperation and sincerity on the part of administrators. This is mainly done to avoid any sort of embarrassment or political pressure. Some of the acts classified as school violence are discussed below:

- **Physical fights:** it usually occurs between two students of same of similar strength who fight each other to resolve a matter or establish their domination over the other. According to the Indian Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2007, two-thirds of school children were victims of physical abuse (mainly student- on-student) in or near the school.
- **Sexual violence:** this may involve non-consensual sexual acts such as rape, unwanted touching, threatened sexual violence, verbal sexual harassment, or exhibitionism.
- **Corporal punishment by teachers:** using physical force with an intent to cause some pain or discomfort. It may involve hitting the child with hand or using a stick, or any other such means. Anything which may cause physical harm to the child may come under this category. Apart from this, psychological harm, such as verbal use, taunting, passing sarcastic

remarks may also come under this category. The Young Lives (YL) survey finds a prevalence of physical punishment used by teachers to be about 78% among 8-year-olds and 34% among 15-year-olds. In another study in Mumbai, (n=1040) for boys among the age of 10-16 years, it was found that almost eight out of ten were victims of violence including violence at school perpetrated by other students (Bolton, 2017). Physical violence reported including being beaten, kicked, slapped, hit with an object, or threatened by a weapon. Emotional violence included being insulted, shouted at, or locked in a room or toilet.

13.3 SCHOOL REFUSAL

School refusal is the motivated refusal by the child to attend school or difficulty faced by them to remain at school and attend classes for the entire day. The essential features of school refusal are as follows:

- Displaying severe emotional reactions, sadness, physical illness or complaints on the prospect of going to school.
- Child expresses to remain usually at home with parents or other family members.
- Absence of severe antisocial behavior or conduct disorder

The emotional upset displayed by the child could be confined to the situation of leaving home to go to school, or it could be due to any other disorder such as anxiety or depression. In many cases, school refusal as an act is a means to avoid and/or escape peer pressure, academic pressure, and bullying (which has been discussed above). Although, it is important to note that distinction should be made between mild fear of school which could be a part of normal developmental process or the serious condition of school refusal to due to any of the above cited reasons.

Symptoms of anxiety are often associated with school refusal. They may differ from individual to individual, over the course of school refusal problem, or over the course of the school day. This anxiety might not be expressed or experienced when there is no pressure to attend school or during the school holidays. The anxiety is exhibited physiologically, behaviorally, and cognitively.

Physiological symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, sweating, headaches, dizziness, diarrhea, frequent urination, sore throat, and fever. These symptoms usually appear in the morning, when the child is under the pressure to attend the school. At a behavioral level, the most common or obvious indication is simply the refusal to attend school. For this they may remain in bed for long, refusing to get ready, refusing to get in the school bus or the vehicle in which parents would take the child to school. They may resist getting down from the vehicle when they arrive at school. They may complain about school more than often, cry, throw a tantrum, threaten parents of self-harm or running away. Some are also seen trembling, shaking, hiccupping with the idea of going to school or when are pressured to go to school. The cognitive symptoms of school refusal may involve

irrational fears related to school attendance. They usually end up overestimating the likelihood of anxiety provoking situations which may occur at school and undermine their own ability to cope with these situations.

As mentioned above, clinical evaluation of these symptoms may or may not reveal an anxiety disorder. But common diagnosis may include generalized anxiety disorder, social phobia, specific phobia, adjustment disorder with anxiety, and school refusal. When a child with school refusal displays a phobic start of response, it is usually in related to social and evaluative situations (fear of being criticized, teased, etc.). Reports of the prevalence of depressive symptoms and depression in children exhibiting school refusal are also present.

It can be an overwhelming feeling for the families as in the beginning they may feel that their child is perhaps ‘acting difficult’ and may even drop out. But such behavior requires professional attention as it may lead to conflict, academic issues, friction with school officials, teachers and missing academic work for the child (Kearney & Albano, 2000).

Check Your Progress 2

1) Who is a bully?

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2) Name different types of bullies.

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3) Why is cyberbullying more threatening than face-to-face bullying?

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4) Describe the symptoms of school refusal.

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13.4 INTERVENTION

Educators, teachers and parents can play a major role in addressing the issues associated with bullying, peer pressure, academic pressure, victimization and school refusal. Some of these programs and techniques would be discussed in this section.

13.4.1 Managing Bullying

There are several programs such as parent meetings, improved playground supervision, and firmer discipline for students who engage in bullying behaviors that has led to reduction in bullying behaviors. However, **Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)** (2003) is the most effective intervention program that has had tremendous success globally, with reduction in bullying among students. The objective of the program is to reduce existing bullying problems among students and psychoeducation about the appropriate behaviors to further avoid the development of incidences of new bullying. This program achieves these goals by restructuring the school environment and also strives to improve the relationships between the students. The re-organization of the school environment is proposed by the program to reduce chances for students to engage in bullying and to bring the school together as a community. The OBPP is based on four significant principles that the adults should:

- 1) Show interest in their students;
- 2) Establish what is intolerable behaviour;
- 3) Be consistent when dealing with consequences, that is, when rules are broken use appropriate means of actions/punishment; and
- 4) Function together and present positive role models in front of children

This program is extremely beneficial for children as well because they learn to:

- Report bullying to school, parents and educators,
- Counter it,
- Take appropriately actions when bullied and reframe the experience, and
- Understanding the feeling of bullying and help fellow students

The principles of the OBPP are conveyed to educators, parents and the school authorities. The principles of OBPP and its components have remained largely unchanged but ongoing research has led to the adaptations of the program so that it can be used in different cultural contexts as well. The program addresses the *perceived reasons* for a bully's behavior, such as a dislike of the victim or that an action that the victim has supposedly initiated that led to the behavior. Thus, for the victim, counselling would lessen the scars of these incidences and minimize the impact on social development.

Another program is *Steps to respect* that can be used by teachers and educators in classroom to prevent bullying behavior and promote positive behavior expectations. This program is designed to reduce bullying, victimization, improve school climate, and increase school connectedness among the students. The program is not just for students but for teachers, staff and school as a whole. During the training period the students are given lessons to identify bullying, increase empathy for students that are being bullied, build friendship skills to increase protective social connections,

improve assertiveness and communication skills to help students prevent and report bullying, and how they can teach other people to respond to bullying. This program seeks to change the attitudes of people about the acceptability of bullying through clearly labelling. The program wishes to promote that bullying behaviors are unacceptable and wants to increase empathy for students who are being bullied. Figure 13.3 explains the intervention components and their outcomes in school setting.

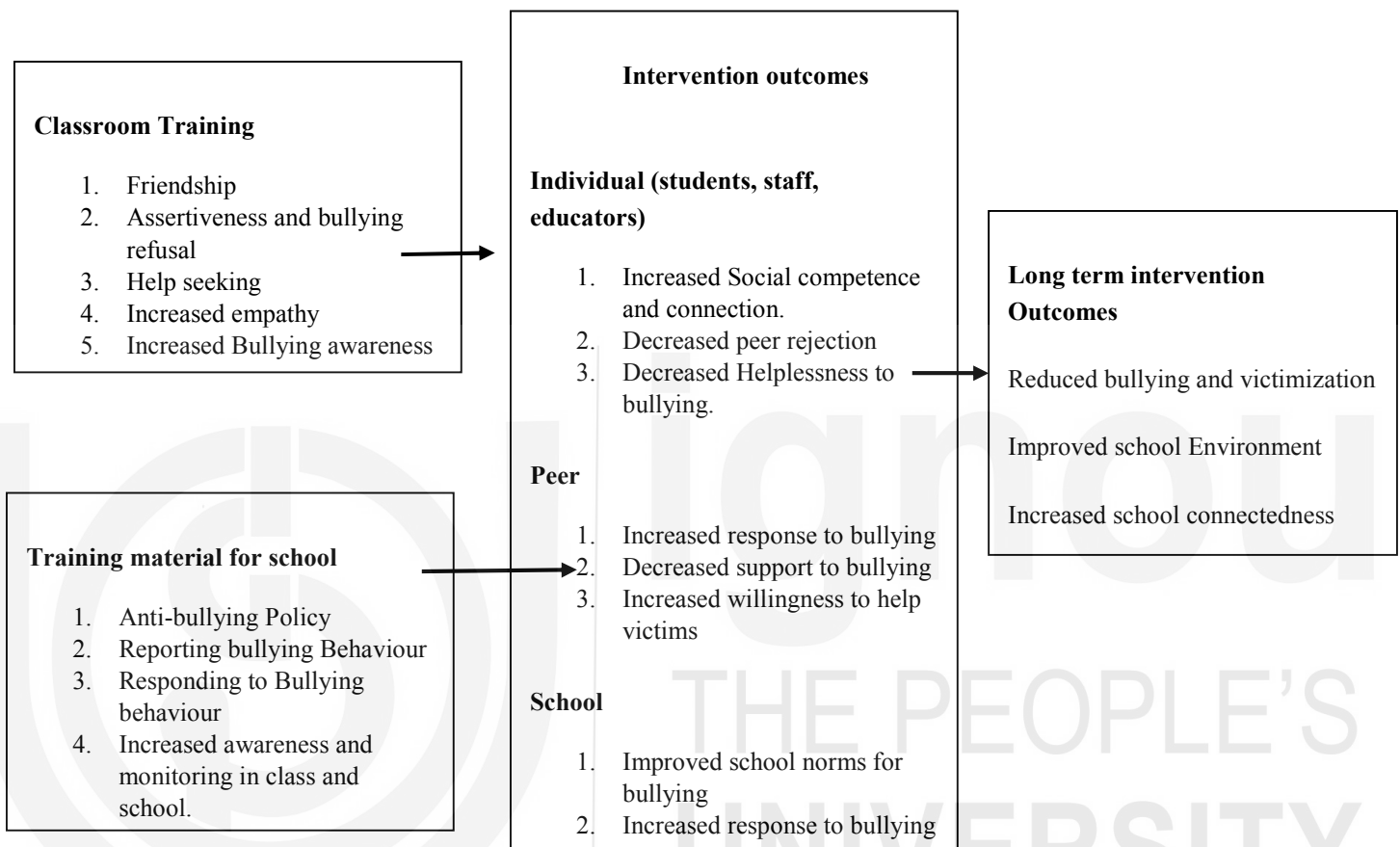


Figure 13.3 Intervention for Steps to respect in school and its outcomes.

Source: Brown, E. C., Low, S., Smith, B. H., & Haggerty, K. P. (2011). Outcomes from a school-randomized controlled trial of steps to respect: A bullying prevention program. *School Psychology Review*, 40(3), 423-443.

Box 13.4 Anti-Bullying Approaches for School/Colleges

Peer-Led Support Group Approach:

This approach involves student community working together and providing support to each other. It also involves educating the students regarding conflict resolution between students and developing attitudes, values, skills and beliefs that will help them to address bullying in school premises.

Restorative Justice Approach:

The goal of this approach is to have an understanding and thoughtful behavior around the perpetrator and victim while at the same time not tolerating harmful or inappropriate behavior. The bully is opposed over the wrong doing within a community of support, or people who care about both

the individuals (bully and victim). The process is deemed to be restorative in the sense that it makes it clear to the perpetrator that the behavior will not be tolerated and is not condoned. However, the teachers, school and educator will be supportive, respectful and will help in improving their behavior.

No Blame Approach:

This approach gives responsibility to the student groups to tackle the bullying problem and promotes the principles of encouragement, understanding, shared responsibility, and problem solving, with a de-emphasis on holding the perpetrator or victim responsible. This approach has been criticized as it was felt that it the wrong message to students, that their inappropriate behaviour has no consequences. Thus, the program does not promote the importance of being a socially responsible member of society. However, studies mention that perpetrator or bullies do not develop empathy for their victim and rather, they learn to pretend to be pleasant to the victim while adults are around. So, proponents of this method suggest it allows for the bullies to reconstruct their relationship with the victim without the shame of being labelled or punished.

Zero-Tolerance Approach:

This program mentions that there are predetermined consequences for students who engage in inappropriate behavior, regardless of the seriousness or context of the behavior. This policy in school and colleges assumes that if some students are punished for their disruptive behavior then gradually the knowledge of the consequences will deter others students from engaging in inappropriate behavior. Thus, improving the social climate of the school and university.

13.4.2 Managing Peer Influence and Peer Pressure

A child or an adolescent can be helped in resisting peer influence and peer pressure if we:

- Listen to them actively
- Are being non judgmental
- Give correct and scientific information
- Develop faith and trust in them and vice versa
- Value the capacity and ability of adolescents
- Present role models to them (non- preachy)
- Inculcate acceptance and self-respect

It is important to note here that the parents, teachers etc. should learn to work with peer influence in the context of their children and not against it. Encourage children to involve themselves in organized group activities in school events or join different clubs in schools rather than keeping them away from it. Invite their friends to home earnestly try to know about them and what their generation actually thinks and feels. Let them explore but also set limits for certain things, at least the ones that eliminate the opportunity for

negative activities. For instance, deciding upon a curfew time etc. Try and help your child to adopt a style of thought and behavior through which they can manage peer pressure and not succumbing to it. Some of the following techniques can be used to say “no”:

- “No thanks” technique: “Would you like a drink?” “No, thanks”.
- Give a reason or excuse: “Will you come to the party today evening?” (No thanks, I have my music class then”.
- Walk away: “Are you coming outside for a chat?” Say “no, I do not wish to” and walk away while saying it.
- Broken record technique: “Try this new stuff”

“No way”

“Come one, it’s so cool.”

“No way”

“Come on, just try once!”

“No, I don’t want to”

“Don’t worry. You won’t get caught”

“I said, no way!”

- Avoid the situation: if you already know the places or people who often cause trouble, try to stay away from those places and people or go another way. Try not land yourself in any awkward opportunity and if you end up in it, do not succumb.
- Cold shouldering: “Hey, you are coming to the party, tonight right? There will be lots of booze and fun!” Just ignore the person and walk away.
- Strength in numbers: try to be in the company you trust and can fall back upon, especially in problem situations or uncertain scenarios.
- Humor: if you want you can turn around a pressure or conversation into a joke, in order to enjoy a laugh out of it and getting away from it.
- Reverse the pressure: “I saw that packet in her room. We must go and get it.” “Hey, didn’t I tell you that I do not want it”.
- State a health problem: “Hey, lets go for a fun bike ride!” “No thanks, I have a bad headache”.

Either one or a combination of the techniques can be used to deal with peer pressure and peer influence and asserting oneself in the situation.

Another intervention that helps in dealing with others, prevent other people from harassing someone, and to express a wide range of positive and negative thoughts, and needs without feeling guilty is **assertiveness training**. Assertion is related to people’s emerging sense of autonomy. People develop positive feelings about their own abilities when they can express themselves and when they can exert some control and influence over others. It is a very important social skill that has a power to enhance the social relationships,

academic success and personal development. It is a necessity to empower people especially school children with the knowledge, understanding and skills to choose their own appropriate and effective patterns of behaviors and the ability to express feelings that are unsatisfactory. These training programs became increasingly effective for improving interpersonal relationships as well. They have two goals and they are:

1. To increase individual awareness of verbal patterns, behaviors, intentions, feelings, rights, risks and consequences both for the asserter and the other person encountering the behaviour,
2. To increase the verbal and listening skills of the asserter.

There are four types of assertion training groups that are (Lange & Jacobowski, 1976):

1. **Exercise oriented:** All the group members of the training initially participate in a pre-set series of role play exercises. Then the members generate their own behavioral rehearsal situations.
2. **Theme oriented:** Each session is devoted to a particular theme and behavioral rehearsal is used through the role plays. It may not include highly structured exercises.
3. **Semi-structured:** Use some role play exercises in combination with other therapeutic procedures such as problem solving, social perception skill training, and self-instruction training etc.
4. **Unstructured:** The role play experience is based entirely on the needs of the members present at each session.

Moreover, assertiveness training can be conducted by using cognitive behavioral intervention techniques as well. Cognitive restructuring is the process by which individuals become aware of their own thinking patterns which lead to non-productive behaviors and thinking patterns and change these thought processes to more productive and efficient ones. Behavioural rehearsal is another important way of teaching assertiveness in which teachers, parents, and clinicians attempt to improve a person's interpersonal skills. This can be done by simply encouraging them to participate with other children and get involved in more activities which will probably not be effective in their interventions unless additional instruction in social behaviour is provided. Assertiveness training teaches skills which empower people to handle difficult personal, social and professional situations in a way which does not violate their rights. There are some important steps that should be considered by educators, teachers and parents when providing assertiveness training to children. Appropriateness is a crucial skill when teaching assertiveness to children. For example: Teachers or parents respond positively to some assertive behavior in the children such as expressing positive feelings or making requests. However, young people asserting their rights or expressing negative feelings may alienate some teachers or parents. Thus, it is important for some children when to use the skills as well as it is important to know how to use them. We all have the right to choose how, where and when to express our feelings but assertive behaviors in some

situations could be counter-productive. Thus, situation in which assertiveness is required is another important factor that needs consideration.

13.4.3 Managing Academic Pressure

It is important to deal with academic stress at a personal, social and institutional level. Some of the remedies could be constant and constructive feedback, yoga, life skills training, mindfulness, meditation, and psychotherapy. These techniques can be quite useful in dealing with stress and calming oneself down when feeling anxious (Reddy et al., 2018). Take professional help to identify the main reason of stress and develop individual specific strategies to deal with it. Dimitrov (2017) argued that stress can be addressed by ensuring that students give attention to their welfare and wellbeing. Food, exercise, work and recreation could be some of the areas where they can focus.

The education system and teachers should not focus on grades, marks and academic qualifications, rather should go ahead with the idea of holistic growth and development of the student. The students should be allowed to explore, become a go-getter, 'make their own mistakes' and learn. The teachers and parents, can have their back but should not try to shield them from everything. There is a need to draw a line between being ignorant or overprotective and being supportive and caring parent, caregiver or a teacher.

Subramani and Kadiravan (2017) tried to understand the link between academic stress and mental health concerns among students. He concluded that these two are correlated and parents and school pressurize the child way too much to achieve higher grades which may eventually burden the children and also dishearten them if they are unsuccessful. At times, parents and teachers are seen just putting pressure on the child to be a certain way or achieve certain ideals, without offering them any support, guidance or knowing their wishes and desires.

Indulging in some physical exercise, outdoor activity, following a leisure activity, or the one an individual is passionate about can address some of the stress related concerns. One can also adopt various time management tools for effective utilization of time and energy (Sharma et al., 2016). Conducive environment provided by the institution, change in the style of teaching and delivery from teachers' end, listening actively to concerns with a motive to address them can be some important steps in dealing with academic pressure.

13.4.4 Managing School Violence

In order to reduce school violence, an important strategy is to take professional help that is designed as per the individual child who is at a risk for perpetrating violence. Apart from this, a violence prevention program can be used at different levels to provide some help and change the school environment in positive direction. Some of such strategies could be:

- Society level strategies: the aim is to change social and cultural conditions to reduce violence. For instance, reducing media violence,

reshaping social norms and expectations, and restructuring educational systems.

- School-wide strategies: these are designed to modify school characteristics that could be associated with violence. Schools should also promote classroom management techniques, cooperative learning and supervise students closely. Some of the issues can be tackled at an elementary level itself by modeling good behavior, teaching students how to manage their negative emotions etc. Techniques can be used to cultivate and foster empathy, impulse control and channeling their physical energy. Taking necessary steps to eliminate bullying can also help in combating school violence.
- Some intervention programs should aim at improving family relationships. Honest communication in the family is very important which should be encouraged along with keeping a check on the kind of behavior that is being modeled in front of the child.
- Some prevention and intervention programs should focus on individual level strategies which should aim at altering or reducing aggression and violent behavior of the child. The programs may include teaching appropriate and constructive ways for conflict resolution and team problem solving.

Teachers and parents spend a great deal of time in meeting the challenges of their classroom and other daily activities, trying to make things workable and children and students. But it is also important for them to be aware of some of these social issues and conditions which may hamper the growth and well-being of their children and affecting their school performance as well.

Check Your Progress 3

1. What are the goals of Olweus Bullying Prevention Program?
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2. What is assertiveness training?
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3. How can we effectively deal with academic pressure?
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13.5 SUMMARY

Now that we have come to the end of this Unit, let us list all the major points that we have learnt:

- As the child enters school, it brings with itself a range of social problems. Their social status becomes important for them and they start understanding and judging themselves on the basis of it.
- Based on the nominations by others, they can be classified as popular, rejected, average, neglected, or controversial and there are different developmental outcomes for children in different statuses.
- Adolescents spend a lot of time with their peers and a great deal of similarity can be found between adolescent friends. Although peers exert pressure, it is usually subtle and can be for both positive and negative behavior.
- Bullying can be a threat to the well-being of a number of children and adolescents and cyberbullying in particular could be a very vicious form of bullying.
- Bullies can be popular and socially skilled or they might be unpopular and socially unskilled. Victims may feel anxious or depressed and may react by withdrawing themselves from their peers.
- School refusal can be described by the signs of anxiety a school-aged child has and the refusal to go to school. It can have a physiological, behavioral, and cognitive manifestation.

13.6 KEYWORDS

Bullying Hurting, frightening, or threatening someone less powerful and exerting their domination by forcing them to do something they do not want.

Controversial Children Those who receive both- a large number of nominations for “like most” and “like least” from their peers on a sociometric measure.

Cyberbullying Use of electronic technology (emails, texts, social media, digital images, blogs etc.) to socially harm, defame or provoke others.

Peer Pressure Influence exerted by peers to get others to agree and comply with their wishes and expectations.

Popular Children Those who receive lot of nominations (on sociometry measure) as “like most” and few as “like least”.

Popular-antisocial Children Those who are popular with their peers as they are able to combine their prosocial behavior with social manipulation.

Rejected Children Those who receive lot of nominations as “like least” and very few as “like most” on sociometric measure.

Rejected-aggressive Children They are rejected by peers as they are aggressive or socially unskilled.

Rejection Sensitivity The extent to which a child is affected by peer rejection.

Social Status Level of peer acceptance or peer rejection of an individual in the peer group.

Sociometry Technique used to assess child's social status in the peer group.

13.7 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do peer relationships change from childhood to adolescence?
2. How do bullying and school violence impact children and adolescents?
3. What type of peer relationships are important during adolescence?
4. How much and what type of peer pressure do most adolescents experience?
5. Discuss a few acts of school violence.
6. What is school refusal? How is it manifested in children?
7. How would you manage peer pressure effectively? Suggest some techniques.

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13.9 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- *Top 10 forms of Cyberbullying:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Xo8N9qlJtk>

- *When children refuse school? By Effective child therapy:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHKc866afVw>

UNIT 14 PROSOCIAL TENDENCIES AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN CHILDHOOD¹⁴

Perspectives On
Human
Development II:
Cognitive
Perspective

Structure

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Prosocial Behavior
- 14.2 Development of Prosocial Behaviour
 - 14.2.1 The Evolutionary Perspective
 - 14.2.2 Beginnings of Empathy
 - 14.2.3 Forms of Prosocial Behavior in Childhood
- 14.3 Factors Affecting the Development of Prosocial Behavior
 - 14.3.1 Biological Factors
 - 14.3.2 Psychological Processes
 - 14.3.3 Socialization and Environmental Influences
- 14.4 Antisocial Behavior
- 14.5 Aggression
- 14.6 Development of Aggression
- 14.7 Gender Differences in Aggression
- 14.8 Factors Affecting Development of Childhood Aggression
 - 14.8.1 Biological Factors
 - 14.8.2 Psychological Factors
 - 14.8.3 Role of Socialization Agents
- 14.9 Bullying
- 14.10 Conduct Disorder
- 14.11 Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- 14.12 Summary
- 14.13 Key Words
- 14.14 Review Questions
- 14.15 References and Further Reading
- 14.16 Additional Online Resources

Learning Objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- explain the development of prosocial tendencies in childhood;

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- identify the factors affecting the development of prosocial behavior in childhood;
- discuss the development of aggression and antisocial behavior in childhood; and
- examine the factors which affect the development of aggression.

14.0 INTRODUCTION

A major part of development in childhood is centered on a gamut of social experiences which govern children's lives. Deeply rooted in the various socialization processes, children pick up a wide range of behaviors and action tendencies which exert a significant bearing on their psychosocial outcomes. Two such crucial aspects of children's social behavior are concerned with the development of prosocial tendencies as well as the emergence of anti-social behavior during childhood.

Looking at children's behavior, it can be easily noticed that they are capable of engaging in a number of positive social behaviors, such as cooperating with others, offering help and protection to playmates and siblings, sharing their toys, expressing compassion and comfort, etc. However, on other occasions, they also act in aggressive ways towards others, such as engaging in physical violence, bullying, stealing, and so on. Although developmental researchers and social scientists have focused on anti-social behavior more considerably than prosocial behavior, to develop a holistic understanding of psychosocial development it is imperative that both are explored in detail. Thus, in this Unit, we will be exploring the nature of such behaviors, the factors which impact their emergence as well as their developmental implications.

14.1 PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Prosocial behavior (also sometimes known as helping and altruistic behavior) encompasses a broad range of social behaviors which are generally aimed at helping other individuals (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998), with no immediate benefit to the helper. It involves behavior that is voluntarily and intrinsically generated (without any external reward or expectation), with the specific intention of helping others. For instance, a child offering their toy to a distressed playmate can be considered as a prosocial behavior.

14.2 DEVELOPMENT OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

The development of prosocial behavior becomes visible with the beginnings of empathy and as the child grows older, more concrete forms of prosocial behavior start emerging and evolve into more complex mechanisms with time.

14.2.1 The Evolutionary Perspective

According to the evolutionary perspective, human survival in a large part is dependent on the innate tendency among humans to help each other. Prosocial behavior is thus exhibited by humans because it has its advantages in supporting survival directly as well as indirectly through social reinforcement of altruism. In this regard, the phenomena of kin selection (Hamilton, 1964) and reciprocal altruism (Trivers, 1971) provide major explanations (McAndrew, 2002).

As per the phenomenon of kin selection, people are likely to help those who are biologically related to us. Here, the focus is not on the survival of the individual but on the survival of the individual's genetic material, thereby ensuring the sustenance of altruistic behavior. Furthermore, when it comes to helping those unrelated to us, the reciprocal altruism theory offers valuable insight. According to this theory, helping people who are unrelated to us can directly or indirectly increase our chances of survival as help is usually reciprocated. Research shows that even among toddlers' behavior, both direct and indirect reciprocity is observed (Vaish & Tomasello, 2014).

14.2.2 Beginnings of Empathy

The emergence of prosocial behavior is largely nested in our capacity to experience empathy. Empathy can be defined as the ability to understand other people's experiences, by identifying with their emotions and taking on their perspective. It comprises of three distinct components - the emotional component i.e., emotional empathy, which involves sharing others' feelings; the cognitive component i.e., empathic accuracy - the capacity to accurately perceive others' thoughts and feelings; and lastly, empathic concern i.e., feelings of concern for another person's well-being (e.g., Gleason, Jensen-Campbell, & Ickes, 2009). Empathy is often confused with the term sympathy, however, the latter is denoted by experiencing sorrow or concern for the distress of others, while the former is characterised by feeling the same emotion that the other person is experiencing (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Knafo-Noam, 2015).

Eisenberg and colleagues (2015) have thus noted that this capacity to empathise with others begins developing during early childhood and serves as a basis for the emergence of prosocial behavior. Glimpses of a complex emotional life become evident during early infancy itself, with the emergence of basic emotions which infants use to communicate a range of their needs, albeit non-verbally. With regards to empathy, Hoffman (2000) argued that since young infants do not possess the capacity to differentiate their own self from others, they quickly experience distress in response to others' distress (i.e., a form of global empathy). For instance, it is quite common to see an infant cry in response to the sound of another child's cries (Dondi, Simion, & Caltran, 1999).

In the second year of life, toddlers learn to differentiate between their self and others, although their capacity to differentiate between their own and others' internal states is not much refined. Therefore, they exhibit higher empathic

concern but their capacity to comfort others remains limited as their prosocial behavior is rooted in an egocentric perspective. For instance, a toddler who feels comforted by a hug would offer a hug to a sibling who's suffered a physical injury. He/she would not be able to recognize that a hug would not suffice in this scenario.

Moreover, between the ages of 2 to 4, the child is able to develop a more complex and layered understanding of the self, others and emotions, as supported by early socialization experiences as well as refinement in language and thought. Such advancements pave the way for a more accurate recognition of other people's feelings and perspectives, making expression of empathy and prosocial responding more appropriate (Hoffman, 2000).

14.2.3 Forms of Prosocial Behavior in Childhood

As stated previously, the emergence of prosocial behavior becomes visible during the early years of infancy. Infants display many spontaneous, positive behaviors targeted towards others, such as sharing objects with others, engaging in cooperative interactions, participation in play-related activities and showing distress at others' distress. As the diversity of such behaviors increases, it becomes important to recognize that different forms of prosocial behavior stem from responses to different needs. Keeping this in mind, prosocial behavior can be categorized in the following three forms: *helping* is aimed at solving instrumental needs i.e., responding towards another person to help them in accomplishing a goal-directed action. *Comforting* is linked with meeting others' emotional needs i.e., it is directed towards reducing another individual's negative arousal. And finally, *sharing* involves reducing material needs i.e., providing another person with a material good that they need. Another common form of prosocial behavior is *cooperation* which involves working with others on a shared goal, however, the aim of cooperation is not necessarily to provide assistance to the other individual (Dunfield, Kuhlmeier, O'Connell, & Kelley, 2011).

Similarly, Hay and Cook (2007) also described three strands of prosocial behavior involving *feeling for another* (showing affection and being friendly), *working with another* (assisting others in accomplishing tasks) and *ministering to another* (responding to others' needs). These classifications can thus help us understand the various forms of prosocial behavior. Some common forms of prosocial behaviors are explained below:

Sharing – Research has highlighted that during the first year, infants show simple compliance i.e., when asked to do something they behave according to the request of another person. For example, handing over a toy when a parent requests them to do so. By the age of 12 months, infants start showing signs of voluntarily sharing information with their parents. Sharing of food and other objects like toys with parents, siblings and peers starts occurring regularly between 18 to 24 months (Brownell, Svetlova, & Nichols, 2009). As children enter school and form a social circle outside their family, it becomes important that they learn to share information and resources with others. Enough cross-sectional studies point towards age-related increases in sharing from early to middle childhood (e.g., Dunfield & Kuhlmeier, 2013).

Cooperation – Cooperative interaction also appears within the first year of life, with infants playing games involving mutual participation with other people (a simple game of peek-a-boo shows infants’ ability for joint attention). During the second and third year, toddlers’ capacity to cooperate with others increases, not just with those who they are familiar with but also with unfamiliar peers and adults (e.g., Warneken, Chen, & Tomasello, 2006). Greater participation in cooperative games and collaborative problem solving emerges during this time and continues to foster as children age. Children who show a fair capacity to cooperate fit-in better with their peers and experience less adjustment problems as they transition into adolescence.

Helping – Helping others is another major form of prosocial behavior. During the second year, attempts by children to offer assistance to others becomes visible in small gestures such as helping their parents with household chores or caring for their younger siblings. At this juncture, children also start expressing empathic concern for others and take instrumental efforts to help them (Svetlova, Nichols, & Brownell, 2010), with autonomous pro-sociality becoming consistently visible by the end of second year. Another important aspect that unfolds during this time is children’s capacity to consider moral principles and notions of fairness. Research also shows that by the ages of 2.5 to 3 years children start to believe in equal distribution of resources (Rakoczy, Kaufmann, & Lohse, 2016).

It is also important to note that while many researchers have offered that the frequency and dynamicity of prosocial behavior increases as children age and their cognitive capacities advance in the toddler and preschooler period, continuing (albeit slowly) even after adolescence (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 2006; Brownell, Ramani, & Zrewas, 2006). It is also suggested that as children start showing signs of carefully considering whether or not to help under specific circumstances, their pro-sociality may decrease overtime (e.g., Hay, 1994). As children age, choosing to help starts depending on many factors such as their relationship with the recipient (e.g., known or unknown), features of the task (e.g., easy or difficult) and social norms (Malti & Dys, 2018). For example - during middle childhood, children often start to help with a greater number of household chores such as tidying their room, helping with laundry, babysit a sibling, etc.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Define prosocial behavior.

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2) List the different forms of prosocial behavior.

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14.3 FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Research indicates that the development of prosocial behavior is a complex mechanism, which can be understood vis-a-vis the interaction between various biological factors, psychological processes as well as socialization/environmental influences (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Malti & Dys, 2018).

14.3.1 Biological Factors

Psycho-physiologists have highlighted considerable evidence for a biological basis for empathy and providing support for a genetic predisposition for prosocial behavior (Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, & McShane, 2005). Many cross sectional and longitudinal twin studies have consistently shown that heritability contributes to individual differences in such capacities among children, with its influence becoming more salient during adolescence and adulthood. The variations in the results among these studies largely depends on the ways in which the researchers conceptualized pro-sociality and the types of methods that were used.

For instance, focusing on multiple aspects of prosociality, Knafo-Noam and colleagues (2015) took a sample of 183 seven-year-old twin pairs and asked their mothers to report their twin children's behaviors in five areas: sharing, kindness, helping, social concern, and empathic concern (Knafo-Noam, Uzefovsky, Israel, Davidov, & Zahn-Waxler, 2015). Results showed a moderate correlation ($r > .39$) among these sub-domains. Another study using parents' reports found 55% heritability among 2- to 9-year-old twins in South Korea (Hur & Rushton, 2007).

Furthermore, recent attempts have also been made to discover the role of specific genes in influencing prosocial behavior. So far, studies have mainly focused on genes involved in dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin and vasopressin activity (see Fortuna & Knafo, 2014). However, the impact of any single gene on pro-sociality seems to be small and work in this area remains fairly limited (Conway & Slavich, 2017).

The postnatal development of the brain also influences the development of various perceptual, cognitive and emotional abilities which support prosocial behavior. In this regard, research has highlighted the importance of brain lateralization and the prefrontal cortex (Hay, & Cook, 2007).

Finally, another important biological mechanism involved in prosociality is the autonomic nervous system (ANS). Many sympathetic and parasympathetic responses including changes in blood pressure, heart rate, pupil dilation, skin conductance, etc. are also active during empathic responding.

14.3.2 Psychological Processes

Another set of factors that contributes significantly towards the development of prosocial behaviour pertains to a gamut of psychological processes that evolve as children get older.

Socio-Cognitive Changes One type of such age-related change is reflected in our evolving socio-cognitive capacities. Between 18 to 30 months, children's capacity for language expands and they become more capable of joint attention, which is reflected in their increasing ability to work with others. Using language, toddlers become more responsive and better capable of explaining the reasons behind their prosocial behavior or lack thereof. Similarly, as children get older, they become better capable of perspective-taking and understanding others' internal states and intentions. This allows them to figure out other people's emotional cues and respond to their needs appropriately (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Knafo-Noam, 2015).

Understanding of Emotions In order to cater to others' needs, it becomes imperative for children to develop a nuanced understanding of emotions which can support appropriate social skills. Around 3 years of age, emotional development sees considerable gains with children becoming more and more capable of recognizing and distinguishing between emotions. This in turn allows them to understand when others' need assistance and behave accordingly. Four- to five-year-old children also start recognizing the positive emotional consequences associated with successful prosocial behavioral attempts (such as feeling happy, proud or relieved after helping others) as well as when one fails to act prosocially or causes harm to another; for instance, feeling guilt or remorse after having caused another person distress (Hay, & Cook, 2007).

Motivation Motivation also plays an important role. Younger children may be motivated by external factors (to gain rewards for "good" behavior or to avoid punishment) to help others. This gradually changes as the need for generalized reciprocity and social approval takes over, thereby changing the motives behind prosociality. Finally, children also start to internalize altruistic motives and help others for unselfish reasons and mainly for others' welfare (Eisenberg, 1986). This becomes evident in the kind of moral-reasoning children across ages provide, with more abstract moral ideas emerging closer towards the onset of adolescence.

Dispositional Variables A key dispositional factor responsible for the development of prosocial behavior is temperament. Appearing in infancy, a child's temperament provides the basis for stable individual differences in their reactivity and self-regulation (Berk, 2014). Easy children exhibit positive mood, considerable adaptability and a certain capacity to self-regulate. They are more likely to offer comfort to others and show prosocial behavior. On the other hand, difficult children tend to show poor self-regulation and often react aggressively in early and middle childhood (Bates, Wachs, & Emde, 1994; Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Knafo-Noam, 2015; Ramos et al., 2005). Another important dispositional variable in this context is sociability. Children who are sociable and extroverted are more likely to help

other children, versus those who experience social anxiety or withdrawal (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Knafo-Noam, 2015). This becomes especially true when the person in need of help is a stranger or when prosocial behavior is required to be spontaneously emitted.

14.3.3 Socialization and Environmental Influences

As mentioned above, many biological and psychological processes may predispose a child to behave in particular ways, however the role of environmental factors on children's prosocial behavior cannot be denied. There are various ways in which parents and other agents of socialization shape children's capacity for prosocial actions, both by endorsing certain values and modeling appropriate behaviors.

Role of Parenting Practices In this regard, parents undoubtedly play the biggest role as they provide the most immediate context for a child's development. Although research has mostly focused on the mother-child relationship as the most important, a recent shift towards locating the impact of both the parents on their children's prosociality have taken place. Studies in this area have highlighted that a positive and healthy parent-child relationship may be associated with prosocial responding in childhood and adolescence. Parents who are responsive to their children's needs, who display warmth and sensitivity and appear to be emotionally available enable their children's capacity to be empathetic/sympathetic to others (see Tong et al., 2012). Furthermore, actively talking to children about social and emotional issues can help enhance their understanding of emotions. Such children are often more capable of self-regulation and possess considerable emotional intelligence which allows them to respond positively to others' (both family and outside) needs. Studies have also shown that parental abuse and neglect is associated with low levels of children's prosocial behaviour and empathic responding (see Eisenberg et al., 2006).

Parents may also actively encourage behaviors (verbally and by providing opportunities for hands-on experiences) which can enhance their children's connectedness with other people. For instance, asking their child to share their toys with a peer and giving explanations to the child about why this behavior is needed can have a strong impact. Over time, children internalize the values that are repeatedly taught to them and start exhibiting behaviors corresponding to those values on their own. Thus, it is important for parents to be clear and consistent with their instructions.

Parents also employ reinforcement and punishment for enhancing children's prosocial tendencies. It is quite common for parents to reinforce good behaviors with praise and even other instrumental rewards, but too much dependence on a reward-system may diminish intrinsic motivation. Prosocial behavior may thus become limited to the ones that are actively reinforced by the parents and will not spill over in other domains. However, using attribution to link prosocial behavior to the child's underlying dispositions (e.g., "You are so responsible to be helping your younger brother with his homework) can be helpful, especially with older children. Parents should also refrain from using extremely punitive discipline techniques, as they are found

to be inversely related to prosocial responding. Such techniques might work in the short run and induce compliance, but overtime may become counterproductive.

Furthermore, it must be noted that it is not just enough to preach good behavior, what is equally important is that parents should themselves model good behavior. Parents who model empathy and sympathy, help others around them, exhibit kindness, engage in volunteer work often have children who follow in their footsteps (Eisenberg et al., 2006).

Other Family Members Apart from parents, other family members also play an active role in shaping children's prosocial behavior. In this context, most research has focused on the role of siblings. Since siblings spend considerable time with each other, they share many opportunities for learning about diverse forms of social interactions and skills, including prosocial behavior. Interactions among siblings require sharing of toys and other resources, cooperating to complete household chores, offering comfort to each other, etc. Research also shows that assigning caregiving roles to children may enhance their prosocial tendencies (see Grusec, Hastings, & Almas, 2011). In many families, older siblings are relied upon by parents to generally look after the younger sibling (for instance, helping them with their homework, baby-sitting if the parents are not around, etc.), this in turn, also encourages younger siblings to display reciprocity and exhibit positive behaviors modeled by their older siblings. Thus, sibling warmth and affection has been linked with greater empathy and prosocial behavior.

Influences Outside the Family As the child gets older, they come in contact with more agents of socialization. Although research in this area is fairly limited, scholars have shed some light on the role of peers, teachers and institutions in influencing children's prosocial behavior.

Peers includes individuals who come in frequent contact with each other and enjoy the same status with each other. Friendships with other children often leads to varied forms of social interactions, with their peers becoming a major reference point as children age and coordinate with each other on a variety of tasks. Children learn from each other and try to align their own attitudes and behaviors with those of their peers. Studies show that being affiliated with prosocial peers encourages positive behavior among young preschool and kindergarten aged children (e.g., Fabes, Hanish, Martin, Moss, and Reesing, 2012), with this effect being visible even during adolescence. The positive impact of peers can be traced to two major factors. One, close peer-relationships are largely based on mutual reciprocity, which automatically encourages sharing and helpful behaviors among peers. Secondly, such behaviors are readily reinforced within the peer-group and supports children's social adjustment and social status.

Teachers also exert tremendous influence on children's socioemotional development. Similar to parents, teachers who display warmth, nurturance and motivate their students to engage in helpful behaviors succeed in creating a positive influence on their students. Successful strategies to motivate students include providing feedback for students' behavior, using

reinforcement, enabling contexts where students can feel a sense of connectedness with the school and their peers, etc.

Media as an Agent of Socialization In today’s world, children’s immersion in different forms of media start early and increases exponentially over time. Television, cinema, video games, the internet and social media offer many opportunities for children to pick up important prosocial attitudes and behavior. While some television programmes may be intentionally educational and promote good behaviors, others may inadvertently offer moral dilemmas that enable a context for children to engage in moral reasoning. Research has also focused considerably on the role of video games. Many studies have highlighted that playing aggressive video games is inversely related to prosocial behavior. Since children may lack the ability to decipher which type of content is inappropriate for them, parental supervision and continual guidance is crucial to ensure that they pick prosocial attitudes from the various media avenues available to them.

Role of the Cultural Context Socialization processes in a large part are also shaped by the cultural context in which people are situated. In many societies, engaging in other-oriented behaviors and having a strong sense of community is especially valued; children raised in such cultures thus, depict more helpful behaviors towards others (although these behaviors may be mostly limited to known individuals). In a study comparing children from the Philippines and the United States, it was found that the former was more likely to help members of their extended family, but the latter were more prosocial towards people outside their family (de Guzman, Carlo, & Edwards, 2008). Furthermore, in collectivist societies (such as in Asian countries like China and Japan), children are more likely to engage in diverse forms of prosociality as compared to their Western counterparts. For instance, research shows that Indian middle-class families strongly focus on interpersonal relationships and responsibilities (Chaudhary, 2004). In many cross-cultural studies, Miller and colleagues with a sample of Hindu Indians found that they considered helping other people as part of their general moral conduct, compared to Euro Americans, who viewed helping others as a matter of personal choice (Miller et al., 1990; Miller & Luthar, 1989).

Check Your Progress 2

1) List the psychological processes involved in the development of prosocial behavior.

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2) Briefly explain the impact of parenting practices on the development of prosocial behavior.

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14.4 ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Children experience a gamut of emotions; thus, it is quite common for them to experience negative emotions from time to time. It is also normal for most children to engage in some form of destructive or aggressive behaviors at some point or the other, but the type and frequency of such behaviors offers different implications. For instance, it is common for toddlers and children to display anger when they are frustrated. This could include throwing a temper tantrum, name-calling, breaking things, etc. Most parents may not be too alarmed by such behaviors if they do not occur regularly, it is only when such behaviors occur too often and in high intensity, that they are considered to be requiring attention. Nonetheless, it is important to keep an eye on such tendencies in children to ensure that they do not turn into destructive habits which may lead to the development of a pattern of antisocial behavior which might not be conducive to change at a later stage. Antisocial behavior, therefore, includes aggressive and non-aggressive behaviors that violate social and legal norms. In this context, the following sections will focus on the development of aggression and will also briefly cover childhood disorders such as Conduct Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder. (the disorders have been covered in detail in Unit 15).

14.5 AGGRESSION

Aggression can be defined as “behaviour directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment” (Baron & Richardson, 2004). Developmental researchers consider aggressive behaviors as externalizing behaviors i.e., antagonistic behaviors directed outside the individual. Therefore, this includes behavior which is defiant, aggressive, impulsive and disruptive (Eisner & Malti, 2015). Display of aggression also emerges during infancy itself, although it is not often considered to be a problem at this point since such behavior is usually low in intensity. However, the various forms and functions of aggression can easily be traced from this time.

Researchers have distinguished between two types of aggression - proactive (or instrumental) aggression and reactive (or hostile) aggression. Children engage in proactive aggression when they want to achieve a particular goal. For example - snatching a toy from a friend because they want the toy for themselves. On the other hand, reactive aggression is often in response to a perceived threat from outside. For example, a child hits another child who had teased him. Both these types of aggression can take the following three forms:

Physical aggression involves harming others through physical injury, such as pushing, hitting, kicking, etc.

Verbal aggression harms others through words, such as yelling, name-calling, hostile teasing or threatening to harm physically.

Relational aggression includes purposefully damaging another's relationships or inclusion within a group. Such behaviors are more manipulative and may include saying bad things about people behind their backs, excluding them from social activities, or giving them the silent treatment.

Out of these, verbal aggression is always direct. However, physical and relational aggression can be expressed directly or indirectly. For instance, hitting a peer is a direct form of physical aggression, while breaking their toy would be considered as indirect. Similarly, telling a friend that you will not be their friend unless they do what you want them to do is direct relational aggression, while spreading rumors about them would be called engaging in indirect relational aggression (Nelson, Springer, Nelson, & Bean, 2008).

14.6 DEVELOPMENT OF AGGRESSION

Aggressive tendencies become visible during the first year of life itself. Even around the age of one, infants show aggression when frustrated. Between the ages of 1 to 3 years, children increasingly exhibit behaviors such as hitting, pushing, biting, and snatching things from other children (Eisner & Malti, 2015). During this stage, children largely engage in physical aggression as their verbal, cognitive and social skills are insufficient at this point; as they grow older, they start displaying more of verbal and relational aggression. This occurs as their skills expand and also because they realize that physical aggression is easily identifiable and could lead to more negative consequences from others around them.

As they get even older, their capacity to delay gratification increases, this reduces many forms of proactive aggression. On the contrary, reactive aggression (both verbal and relational) continues to rise over early and middle childhood and manifests in different ways. For instance, display of relational aggression is often crude among preschool children as they are unable to disguise their feelings towards others. However, as children progress towards middle childhood such strategies become more manipulative and complex.

It is also during middle childhood that children's social circle expands and they become more concerned about their ties with their peers. In this context, many children continue to employ tactics of relational aggression to boost their own social status and lower others', while some may continue to show direct and physical forms of aggression due to poor impulse control, lack of social skills, etc. At this point, children also show a tendency to form friendships with peers who possess the same behavioral tendencies and attitudes as them, leading to most aggressive children also forming friendships with other aggressive children. Moreover, a common problem that emerges during the school years of middle to late childhood is bullying (explained later in this Unit). Finally, as children exit childhood and enter adolescence, new risk factors emerge across different domains of development giving rise to greater antisocial activities in some cases (see Eisner & Malti, 2015).

With regards to development of aggression, some important theoretical models offer significant insight. For instance, Granic and Patterson (2006) in their Dynamic Systems Model of Antisocial Behavior described transition periods during which children are more prone to external influences. For instance, when starting school or at the end of childhood when they transit into adolescence.

Sampson and Laub's (2005) age-graded theory of informal social control recognizes the impact of individual biographical events rather than developmental periods. Another important model which describes the role of both situational and person factors is the General Aggression Model proposed by Anderson & Bushman (2002). According to them, a variety of situational variables (frustration, provocation, exposure to aggressive models and cues linked to aggression) and person variables (beliefs about aggression, negative affectivity, irritability, pro-aggression attitudes, etc.) cause aggressive behavior via their influence on arousal, affective states and cognitions. These change the individual's current internal state thereby affecting their appraisal and decision processes that may lead to hostile, aggressive behavior.

14.7 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN AGGRESSION

Research shows that with regards to physical aggression, boys tend to be more aggressive than girls - a finding which seems to be consistent across ages (during the preschool, early, and middle childhood) and cultures. Whereas, girls may depend mostly on verbal or relational aggression. Boys' high physical aggression also remains stable over time, while highly physically aggressive girls show a marked decline in such behaviors as they age (Lee, Baillargeon, Vermunt, Wu, & Tremblay, 2007). Archer (2004) obtained similar findings in the United States, India, Japan, Iran, China, Israel, Singapore, Slovenia, and Spain.

These differences can be attributed to a number of factors. Biologically, the presence of androgens and certain aspects of temperament (irritability, impulsivity and activity) play a significant role. But differences in boys' and girls' socialization with regards to aggression also exert tremendous influence. While girls' aggressive responses are often discouraged by the people around them, boys are frequently taught to react aggressively. For instance, telling a young boy who cries after being in a fight, "Toughen up. Next time, hit them back." communicates that aggression is a worthy tool which can be employed to maintain one's social position. Similarly, relational violence is more common among girls as they are socialized to value relationships more than boys. However, research showing gender differences on relational violence shows mixed findings. Overall, boys are shown to be more aggressive than girls (Berk, 2014).

14.8 FACTORS AFFECTING DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDHOOD AGGRESSION

Similar to the multiple determinants of prosocial behavior, aggressive behavior is also influenced by a variety of factors as explained below:

14.8.1 Biological Factors

Research supports a strong biological basis for childhood aggression. In a review by Moffitt (2005) of more than 100 studies, it was found that across different research designs involving twin studies (reared together or apart) and adoption studies, the heritability for aggressive behavior turned out to be around 50%, with physical aggression being estimated to be 60% heritable, while relational aggression being 20% heritable (Coyne, Nelson, & Underwood, 2010).

Genes are also assumed to impact certain structural features of the brain, such as reduced volume in the prefrontal cortex and in the amygdala are both related to antisocial behavior (Raine, 2008). The prefrontal cortex is responsible for processing risk-posing stressors and fear and impacts decision making processes, while the amygdala is linked with processing of emotions and connects with other body systems such as the sympathetic nervous system, facial responses, and the release of neurotransmitters related to stress and aggression. For example, low levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin (associated with mood), is linked to irritable and impulsive behavior. When these areas of the brain are impacted, they can produce lack of impulse control, poor emotional regulation, poor decision making, thereby increasing the chances of aggressive behavior (Raine, 2013).

Furthermore, the biological basis for certain features of temperament may predispose children to react aggressively. The male sex hormone testosterone is also associated with increased aggression and impacts aspects of physical aggression such as body mass, muscle strength, and height which may enhance boys' ability to aggress. Finally, birth complications, lack of nourishment and exposure to pathogens are also some of the biological factors which affect aggression.

14.8.2 Psychological Factors

Cognitive Functioning Research has consistently shown that low intelligence and cognitive ability is associated with higher levels of aggression, visible even during early childhood. More specifically, a negative relationship between verbal abilities and aggression has been proven in many studies across cultures (e.g., Giancola & Mezzich, 2000; Kikas, Peets, Tropp, & Hinn, 2009; Séguin, Parent, Tremblay, & Zelazo, 2009). Another aspect linked with childhood aggression is poor executive functioning which can reduce children's capacity for inhibition, effective planning and self-monitoring (Eisner, & Malti, 2015).

Moral Reasoning As covered in Unit 9, moral development remains a major domain of development throughout childhood and has significant

implications for children's aggressive behaviors and violence. As children grow older, it is expected that they will pick up moral cognitions and motives and develop notions of fairness. However, a failure in this regard could potentially motivate aggressive behavior, although research in this area is quite limited.

Neurodevelopmental Disorders Many externalizing difficulties also emerge as manifestations of certain neurodevelopmental disorders. For example, Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by hyperactivity, impulsiveness and a limited capacity for focused attention. Studies show a positive association between aggressive behavior and ADHD across cultures. Children on the autism syndrome spectrum have also been found to have a higher rate of aggressive behavior. Furthermore, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and Conduct Disorder (CD) are also considered to be leading causes of aggression in childhood.

14.8.3 Role of Socialization Agents

Role of Family As mentioned under the section on prosocial behavior, parents and family members exert important influences on children's social development. While the presence of a warm parent-child relationship can enhance prosocial behaviour among children, a hostile parent-child relationship is associated with many behavioural problems. Such children may find themselves to be easily irritable, lack emotional and self-regulation and engage in a number of externalizing behaviors (Eisenberg et al., 2003). A turbulent home environment where the child is repeatedly subjected to criticism, punitive disciplinary practices and allowed limited autonomy (or too much permissiveness) is shown to be connected to children's adjustment problems and aggressive behavior (Coyne, Nelson, & Underwood, 2010). Factors such as parents' mental illness, parental criminality, marital difficulties, lower education, and financial deprivation makes it harder to foster a healthy environment within the family.

Children also learn to model aggressive behavior by watching their parents behave in a similar way (Bandura, 1973). If parents or other members in the family routinely express various forms of aggression and if that aids them in getting their way, such responses are normalized and easily picked up by children in such families.

Influence by Peers Peers' influence on children's physical aggression is seen early on, during the pre-school years onwards. Research shows that physically aggressive children are often friends with children who are also aggressive, and exposure to aggressive peers can increase likelihood of aggression among previously non-aggressive children. Such trends are visible throughout children to adolescence and become more potent if the groups children belong to are high in status (Coyne, Nelson, & Underwood, 2010).

Socialization processes also encourage same-gender peers, which ultimately enhances gender-typical behaviors. Thus, young boys easily pick certain aggressive tendencies that are normalized for boys in many cultures (Martin

& Fabes, 2001). The peer context also influences relational forms of aggression. Children engage in relational aggression to enhance their own popularity, deal with jealousy, and assert power over others.

Role of Media There is robust evidence highlighting the role of media in the development of aggressive behavior in children (Anderson et al., 2003). It is common to see both direct and indirect aggression as commonly being portrayed in most programs on Television and also in cinema. Such influences are prevalent even when programs are specifically targeted towards children, communicating to children that violence can be justified under certain circumstances.

Studies show that engagement with violent content can have both short-term and long-term implications for children, since children are particularly impressionable. In the short run, children may be primed to respond aggressively (e.g., Bushman & Huesmann, 2001), and in the long-run such tendencies may become patterned and visible during adolescence, and in adulthood as well.

Much of the research has also focused on the role of immersion in violent video games. Studies have shown that playing such games increases aggressive thoughts, affect (feelings of hostility, anger, and revenge), and behavior (Anderson et al., 2010). In addition, playing aggressive video games reduces empathy for others and the tendency to engage in prosocial behavior. Anderson and Bushman (2002) suggest that repeated exposure to media violence can strongly affect cognitions relating to aggression, gradually creating a hostile expectation bias—an expectation that others will behave aggressively. This, in turn, causes individuals to be more aggressive themselves as they anticipate provocation even when it may not exist. Finally, there is also neuroscientific evidence which shows that frequent exposure to violent media can actually suppress emotional arousal, accessed via skin conductance responses, thereby desensitizing people towards aggression (Krahe et al., 2011).

14.9 BULLYING

Another common problem among children is bullying i.e., repeatedly targeting another person (the victim) with aggression as a way to assert one's social dominance. It can take the form of physical violence, verbal aggression, use of intimidation strategies, damage to others' property, spreading rumors/gossip, coercing or excluding others and cyberbullying. Bullying is often about asserting one's power over others and strengthening one's group's status. Research shows that bullies can be classified in two categories: pure bullies and bully-victims. While pure bullies are children who are only bullies, bully-victims tend to be bullies in some scenarios, while victims in others. Individuals who are always victims are called pure victims. Both bullies and bully-victims experience low self-esteem and often believe that others' respect can be won with display of aggression.

In this regard, peer-acceptance or rejection plays a strong role. Popular children who are well-liked by their peers mostly show well-adjusted social

behavior, however a small group may be popular because of their “tough” or “cool” behavior which is often disruptive and involves mistreating others to enhance their own status. Similarly, rejected and neglected children also engage in mistreatment of others via a variety of means.

Many intervention programs targeting the school setting have been designed to counteract the problem of bullying. Such programs are centered on implementing anti-bullying policies at school, training the staff and parents to deal with it and helping students understand what constitutes bullying. Exposing students to social-skills and assertiveness training have proven to be helpful in this regard (Santrock, 2007).

14.10 CONDUCT DISORDER

Children may be diagnosed as having conduct disorder if they display actions that are considered to be inappropriate according to their age, violate family and society’s norms, and infringe upon the rights of others. As stated previously, most children engage in certain destructive behaviors on some occasions, but regular and consistent patterns of behavior that violates rules and disregards others’ rights may lead to the diagnosis of conduct disorder. Such children show many forms of rule-breaking behaviors, such as bullying, swearing, displaying physical aggression, stealing, cruelty to animals, etc. (Butcher, Mineka, & Hooley, 2017). Such children also show comorbidity such as presence of substance-abuse issues or depression. Consistent findings report that conduct disorder is highly associated with later development of antisocial personality disorder.

Found more commonly in males than females, conduct problems are linked to a number of factors such as inherited temperament, improper parenting, anti-social role models and peers. Rectifying such problems requires multi-system interventions by family, school, and other people around the child (Santrock, 2007).

14.11 OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is also closely linked to conduct disorder and often becomes apparent by the age of 8 years. It is categorized under Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders in DSM-5 and comprises three subtypes: angry/irritable mood, argumentative/defiant behavior and vindictiveness. Essentially, children with oppositional defiant disorder display a recurrent pattern of negativistic, defiant, and hostile behavior toward authority figures that persists for at least 6 months. Studies also show that children with ODD may develop conduct disorder as they grow older, however, this is not true for all children with ODD. Risk factors include turbulent home environment, antisocial behavior by parents and socioeconomic disadvantage (Butcher, Mineka, & Hooley, 2017).

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Describe different forms of aggression.
.....
.....
- 2) Briefly explain the impact of socialization on the development of aggression.
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.....

14.12 SUMMARY

Now that we have come to the end of this Unit, let us list all the major points that we have learnt:

- Children exhibit a diverse gamut of social behaviors. Two important tendencies which emerge in childhood include the development of prosocial and antisocial behavior.
- Prosocial behavior includes behaviors which are aimed at helping other individuals, with no immediate benefit to the helper.
- The development of prosocial behavior has a strong evolutionary basis, as human survival in a large part is dependent on the innate tendency among humans to help each other. This tendency is mainly rooted in our capacity to experience empathy which becomes apparent during infancy itself and becomes more refined as the child ages.
- Many prosocial behaviors become visible throughout childhood and can be categorized as the following four forms: helping, comforting, sharing and cooperating. Each of these include a diverse range of specific behaviors which usually increase in frequency and dynamicity as children age.
- Research highlights many factors which impact the development of prosocial behavior. These include biological factors (for e.g., role of heredity as depicted by twin studies, role of specific genes, postnatal brain development and the autonomic nervous system), psychological processes (such as understanding of emotions, motivation, and role of dispositional variables), and socialization & environmental influences (such as role of parenting practices, other family members, peers, teachers, media as well as the larger cultural context).
- Apart from prosocial behavior, it is also common for children to exhibit some forms of antisocial behaviors. Antisocial behavior includes aggressive and non-aggressive behaviors that violate social and legal norms.
- The most common form of antisocial behavior depicted by children is aggression. Aggression can be defined as behaviour that is intended to

harm or injure another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment. Aggression can be proactive and reactive, and can manifest at the physical, verbal and relational level. Some forms of aggression are direct, while others indirect.

- The development of aggression is a complex phenomenon, with many theoretical models offering crucial insights. Studies also highlight consistent gender differences in the development of aggression.
- Although aggressive behavior is often exhibited by children, excessive aggression is associated with many factors. Biologically, genes, specific brain areas, neurotransmitters and birth complications play an important role. Many psychological factors such as cognitive functioning, moral reasoning and neurodevelopmental disorders contribute towards aggression. Lastly, family, peers, and media pose as important socialization agents.
- Another common problem among children is bullying i.e., repeatedly targeting another person (the victim) with aggression as a way to assert one's social dominance. Such behaviors can take many forms. In this regard, peer-acceptance or rejection plays a strong role. Many intervention programs targeting the school setting have been designed to counteract the problem of bullying.
- Finally, childhood disorders such as conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder depict important aspects of antisocial behavior in childhood.

14.13 KEY WORDS

Prosocial Behavior	Behaviors which are aimed at helping other individuals, with no immediate benefit to the helper.
Empathy	The ability to understand other people's experiences, by identifying with their emotions and taking on their perspective
Parenting Practices	Specific behaviors that parents use to socialize their children. Such behaviors have a significant impact on children's development.
Antisocial Behavior	Aggressive and non-aggressive behaviors that violate social and legal norms.
Aggression	Behavior directed towards the outcome of harming or injuring another being who is motivated to avoid such treatment.
Bullying	Repeatedly targeting another person with aggression as a way to assert one's social dominance.
Conduct Disorder	Childhood disorder diagnosed in children if they display actions considered to be inappropriate according to their age, violate family and society's norms, and infringe upon the rights of others.

14.14 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Define prosocial behavior. What are the major factors responsible for the development of prosocial behavior?
2. Differentiate between empathy and sympathy. Explain the process of development of empathy.
3. Differentiate between the various types of aggression.
4. How do males and females differ in the ways in which they engage in aggression?
5. Explain the factors responsible for the emergence of aggressive behavior.
6. What are the reasons behind children engaging in bullying?

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14.16 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

For more information on prosocial behavior in childhood:

- <https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/prosocial-behaviour/introduction>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4306462/>

For more information on the developmental origins of antisocial behavior in childhood:

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2782636/>
- *For more on conduct problems in children:*
- [https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/behavior.html#:~:text=Conduct%20Disorder%20\(CD\)%20is%20diagnosed,law%20and%20result%20in%20arrest.](https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/behavior.html#:~:text=Conduct%20Disorder%20(CD)%20is%20diagnosed,law%20and%20result%20in%20arrest.)
- <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=conduct-disorder-in-children-90-P02560>

For more on dealing with bullying in school:

- <https://www.apa.org/topics/bullying/prevent>
- <https://schoolsnet.derbyshire.gov.uk/site-elements/documents/keeping-children-safe-in-education/anti-bullying/identif>