

For first school where  
socialisation takes  
place. parents



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For example, a child who has studied in a coeducational, secular, urban school will have a completely different personality as compared to one who has studied in a religious non- coeducational school located in a backward region. Peer group, mass media and cultural environment also considerably shape our personality development. We shall discuss the following social factors that shape our personality:

1.

### **Home Environment and Parents:**

Family is one of the most important factors shaping an individual's personality. It is the child's first school where socialisation takes place. Parents serve as a model whom the child imitates. Their influence is considerable on the child. Parents influence the development of a child's personality in a wide variety of ways.

Children learn the moral values, code of conduct, social norms and method of interacting with others from parents. Psychological research has shown that children of anxious parents become anxious. They have observed that certain interactions within families and early relationships can set the stage for children to develop neurotic life styles in later life. For example, parents who overprotect or give very little freedom to children may prevent them from developing independent personality and effective coping techniques required in adult life. As a result these children become too much dependent. They develop an introvert personality and external locus of control (i. e.

they believe that external events like luck, fate, etc. are more important than hard work). Similarly, insecure parents instill their own excessive concern  
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over ailments into their children which leads to the development of somatoform disorders. Bateson and his colleagues have clearly shown that schizophrenia, a severe psychological disturbance develops in families where there is a communication problem which they labelled as double-bind communication. In this type of communication, the parent presents to the child ideas and feelings that are mutually incompatible. Children who are achievement-oriented and healthy come from families, whose parents are talkative, show concern for the child, give them enough independence and are not critical about the child's activities and are realistically demanding and provide periodic feedback to the children about their performance.

Thus, from the above discussion we see that home environment and parent's influence not only the development of normal behaviour but also help the child to develop certain personality characteristics that will help them to develop positive personality traits which will help them to adjust better with the environment.

## **2. School Environment and Teachers:**

They also influence our personality. Some schools give more emphasis on formation of certain personality traits as compared to others. This is the reason why parents insist that their children should get admission in a particular school.

The school environment in a municipal school is generally found to be less stimulating as compared to that in private schools. Teachers, like parents, influence us considerably. Critical, punitive and over controlling teachers are "likely to create helplessness and aggression among children.

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Teachers have the power not only to motivate children but also to influence them to model many aspects of their behaviour or personality. Teachers play an important role in the normal development of children.

### **3. Peer Group:**

The influence of the peer group on the behaviour and personality of a child is felt from primary school years. Peer group refers to other children of the same age who study with or play with the child. Peer group is much more influential than siblings (brothers or sisters) or parents. Even at preschool age, playmates are highly influential. Children imitate peers and like to be like them in many respects.

The peer group serves as an important reference group in shaping personality traits and characteristics of the growing child. As we grow up our peers become progressively more influential in moulding our self concept. We learn many forms of behaviour, some socially appropriate and other socially undesirable from our peers.

### **4. Sibling Relationship:**

Sibling means a brother or a sister. The number of siblings as well as their sex and age has a considerable influence on the development of our personality. For example, if a child has an elder sister he will be more comfortable in interacting with female peers as compared to when he does not have an elder sister. Similarly, one's birth order has also been found to considerably influence development of many personality traits.

It has been found that firstborns tend to be more reserved and achievement oriented. They seem to ally themselves more closely with their parents in order to overcome a sense of being displaced in the parents' affections by younger siblings. A younger siblings may attempt to compete for parental attention by being rebellious and outgoing. In many cases younger sibling's often model themselves on an older sibling. There is a tendency, for example, for boys to show a more feminine style of personality, during childhood at least, if they have an older sister. Younger siblings, in general, receive less parental attention, especially in large families.

Research studies have shown that as the age gap between the two siblings increases, the probability of sibling rivalry also increases. Thus, from the above discussion we see that presence or absence of siblings and their birth order considerably influences the development of a wide variety of personality traits like aggressiveness, co-operativeness, jealousy, etc.

#### **5. Mass Media:**

It is another factor that influences an individual's personality. Mass media includes films, television, radio printed literature, etc. Social learning theorists like Bandura and Walter Mischel, on the basis of their research studies have conclusively shown that mass media has a considerable impact on our personality, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviour patterns. According to social learning theory, a model is an individual who has some significance or impact on our life.

Baron and Bryne have shown that individuals, especially children, imitate specific aggressive acts of models. They have proposed that human

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personality formation is a result of modeling and imitating the behaviour of significant others. Many abnormal forms of behaviour can be learned by imitating models from the mass media.

#### **6. Cultural Environment:**

Cultural environment influences- our personality because every culture has a set of ethical and moral values, beliefs and norms which considerably shapes our behaviour and thought. Cross-cultural studies have pointed out the importance-of cultural environment in shaping our personality.

Individuals of certain cultures are more generous, open-hearted and warm whereas individuals of some other cultures are suspicious, introvert and self-centred. An average American is more achievement- oriented as compared to an average Indian. Similarly, it has also been found that certain cultural communities are more prone to development of certain abnormal behaviours as compared to others, probably due to the influence of geographical, dietary, hormonal or genetic influence within that community. Many psychological traits are also influenced by the culture to which one belongs. Latin American or Danish children are less inhibited as compared to an average Asian child.