

# FACTORS INFLUENCING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The rate and pattern of development can be changed by conditions within and without our body. Physical growth depends partly upon food and general health conditions and partly upon environmental factors such as sunlight, fresh air and climatic conditions. Personality patterns may be influenced more by attitudes than by social relationships, or the reverse may be true.

As has been hinted, development is not one to one factor alone but too many, each related to the other and all interdependent. The relative importance of the different factors has never been determined, though it is evident that some play a more important role than others. These factors, as nearly as possible in order of their importance, are as follows:-

## 1. INTELLIGENCE:

Of all the factors influencing the development of the child, intelligence seems to be the most important. High grade intelligence is associated with a speeding up of development, while low grade intelligence is associated with retardation. Several examples will be sufficient to illustrate this point. The age of first walking and talking has been carefully studied in relation to the child's intelligence, and it has been found that, in the case of walking, very bright children first walk at 13 months, average children at 14 months and morons at 22 months, and idiots at 30 months. In talking, very bright children talk first at 11 months, average children at 16 months, Morons at 34 months, and idiots at 51 months.

## 2. SEX:

There is ample evidence available at the present time to show that sex plays an important role in physical and mental development of the child. Differences in the rate of physical growth are especially apparent. At birth, boys are slightly larger than girls, but girls grow more rapidly and mature sooner than boys. Girls, on the average, mature sexually a year before boys, and at this time they are larger than boys. This is definitely apparent at the pre-puberty age, from nine to twelve years. Girls also attain their full size sooner than boys. In mental growth, as measured by intelligence tests, there is a slight difference in favor of girls. Girls develop mentally earlier than boys and reach their mental maturity slightly sooner.

### **3. GLANDS OF INTERNAL SECRETION:**

In recent years, studies in the field of endocrinology have shown importance of the role played by certain glands in the physical and mental development of the child. These glands affect the development in both the prenatal and postnatal stages of growth. A few of those that are definitely known to influence growth will be used as illustrations.

The level of calcium in the blood is regulated by parathyroid glands, located in the throat, near the thyroids. Deficiency of these glands results in defective bone growth and hyper excitability of the muscles. Thyroxin, produced by thyroid glands, is essential to physical and mental growth. Deficiency of thyroid activity, during the growth years, stunts the physical and mental development of the child, producing the “cretin” or deformed idiot.

A too active thymus gland (located in the chest), or a too active pineal gland (located in the base of the brain), will retard normal development and keep the child physically and mentally childish too long. Deficiency in the activity of the sex glands delays the onset of puberty, while hyperactivity brings about a precocious sexual development.

### **4. NUTRITION:**

At every age, but especially in the early years of life, feeding is of great importance to the normal development of the child. Not only the amount of food eaten is important but the vitamin content is also very important. Defective teeth, rickets, skin diseases, and innumerable other disturbances can be traced directly to incorrect diet during babyhood and early childhood.

### **5. FRESH AIR AND SUNLIGHT:**

The size, general health condition, and maturing age of the child are influenced by the amount of fresh air and sunlight the child gets, especially during the early years of life. This is very evident when comparisons are made between children from good and poor environments, there is visible difference. Whether these factors affect mental development as or physical is yet debatable.

## **6. INJURIES AND DISEASES:**

Any injury to the child, such as head injuries, toxic poisons from diseases and drugs, bacterial poisons from diseased tonsils or typhoid fever, will retard to a certain extent the child's development. Except when these conditions are very pronounced the effect is limited almost exclusively to the physical development.

## **7. RACE:**

Racial difference in development show that children of the Mediterranean races develop physically sooner than do the children of the countries of northern Europe. Likewise, children of the Negro and Indian races are slower in their development than are the children of the white and yellow races. Comparisons of white and Negro babies during the first year of life revealed that the developmental level achieved by the Negro babies was about 80 percent as mature that of the white babies. When environmental factors are taken into consideration by comparing white and Negro babies of approximately equal socioeconomic status, it was found that by the third half year, the Negroes began to be slightly lower in their developmental trend than the whites.

## **8. Culture :**

Culture is the way of life of a society or group. This often includes customs, traditions, values, beliefs, language, etc. It is the learned behavior that passes from one generation to another. Culture is dynamic in nature; it is not static. It further has subcultures like tribes and ethnic groups.

Nowadays migration is very common. It can be from one state to another, from one region to another and one country to another. This is because of varied factors, like employment, education, marriage, etc. So, the immigrant group or minority group learns the language of the majority group. They also learn the customs of majority groups. As it is important to get along in the dominant culture. While the minority group tries to preserve some of their own cultural practices. They also try to preserve their own values. We call this process as *acculturation*.

For example, families from Pakistan may live Canada. They learn and try to adopt the eating habits of the Canadians. But they celebrate their functions and festivals according to their

cultural norms. Culture also influences human development in many ways. It might be direct or indirect.

### **9. Position in the family:**

The position of the child within family may influence his development more through environmental than through native factors. The second, third or fourth child within a family generally develops more quickly than the first-born, not because of any pronounced intellectual difference, but because of the fact that the younger children learn from imitating their older brothers and sisters. On the other hand, the youngest child of the family, especially if distinctly younger than the other children, is apt to be slower in his development because he is “babied” and given little incentive to develop his latent abilities.