CHILDHOOD PERIOD – THE STAGE WHEN A PERSON BEGINS TO ASSIMILATE SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL NORMS AND CULTURAL VALUES AND STARTS SOCIAL ADAPTATION AS AN INDIVIDUAL

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Abstract. *This topic highlights the role of childhood in the process of socialization in human life. It analyzes the behavioral norms, cultural values, and communication skills that are formed in a child's early years within the family, and later in social environments such as kindergartens and schools. The study examines children's adaptation to social life, mechanisms of learning, imitation, communication, and the influence of educational processes. In addition, the psychological and pedagogical characteristics of childhood and its significance in personality development are explored. This work contributes to a deep understanding of the process through which children acquire the social norms and values necessary for full integration into society.*

Keywords: *childhood, socialization, social norms, upbringing, family environment, preschool education, communication skills, behavioral norms, personality development, psychological characteristics, pedagogical process, imitation and learning, social experience, cultural values, adaptation.*

Introduction

Preschool Age Period – is the developmental stage of children aged 3 to 7 years and is considered the primary foundation in the formation of a person's personality. During this stage, a child develops rapidly physically, mentally, verbally, emotionally, and socially. It is precisely at this age that the child begins to become familiar with the people around them, the rules, and norms of society, learning and applying them through observation and practice.

So, what are social norms?

Social norms are a set of rules accepted in society regarding behavior, communication, etiquette, labor, and relationships. For example: addressing adults respectfully; waiting for one's turn; sharing toys; not lying; asking for or offering help—simple yet essential norms.

How does a child acquire social norms at this age?

A child acquires social norms through the following processes:

- Imitation – the child observes the actions, words, and manners of adults and repeats them. For example, seeing parents greeting someone, the child learns to greet as well;
- Play activity – the main type of activity for preschool children, where the child performs roles ("mother," "doctor," "teacher"), experiments with social interactions, and feels like a member of society;
- Interaction with adults – caring, consistent, and explanatory behavior from adults helps the child understand norms of behavior. For example, a teacher or parent explains what is right and wrong;

- Group activity – playing in a group, singing together, performing small plays allows the child to learn collaboration and communal life skills.

Stages of Social Development in Preschool Children

№	Age	Characteristics of Social Development
1	3–4 years	The child begins to understand the concept of "I." Imitates adults but wants to do everything independently.
2	4–5 years	Begins participating in group play; friendship and cooperation develop.
3	5–6 years	Understands norms and consciously follows them.
4	6–7 years	Develops social responsibility, self-control, obedience to rules, and patience skills.

The Role of Upbringing – upbringing is essential in acquiring social norms.

A teacher or parent should focus on:

- being a positive example;
- reinforcing good behavior through encouragement;
- teaching norms through play, conversation, storytelling, role-play;
- using explanation, clarification, and discussion methods.

Outcomes of Acquiring Social Norms

By the end of preschool age, a child learns to:

- communicate politely;
- wait their turn;
- understand others;
- be responsible for their actions;
- know their role in a group.

This stage prepares the child for school life and future social adaptation. Preschool age lays the foundation for socialization, teaching children not only to read or play but also to live according to societal rules. Therefore, love, patience, attention, and proper upbringing are essential during this period, as the social norms acquired here form the basis of the child's personality for life. What is socialization? – Socialization is the process through which a child adapts to social life, internalizes norms, values, and behavioral rules. The child learns to become a "member of society" through interactions, environment, culture, and experience. Socialization is not only learning but also a process of forming as a human being.

The main goal of socialization – to help the child find their place in society. To instill moral, ethical, and cultural values. To form an independent, responsible, and active individual. Socialization is influenced by various external and internal factors, which serve as primary sources for learning behavior, speech, thinking, emotions, and values.

Main Factors of Socialization and Their Influence on Child Development

Family – the primary agent of socialization

Role: The child first meets social life in the family. Parents' behavior, words, and actions serve as a model. Through the family, the child learns love, respect, help, unity, and patience.

Impact on development: Emotional stability (a loving environment creates confidence and calmness); moral qualities (honesty, politeness, respect); language and communication development (imitating adults); self-evaluation (parental attitude shapes self-confidence).

Preschool Educational Institutions

Role: The child enters group life for the first time; communicates with teachers and peers; learns social rules in practice (waiting for turns, helping, sharing).

Impact: Develops peer communication skills; learns to work in a group and obey rules; develops responsibility, diligence, discipline; improves social adaptation.

Peer Groups

Role: The child compares and evaluates themselves with others; experiences leadership, friendship, cooperation, and competition; learns to defend opinions and resolve conflicts.

Impact: Develops independence and personal opinion; social skills (cooperation, communication, empathy); positive peer pressure reinforces good habits; lack of control can lead to bad habits.

Mass Media and Digital Environment

Role: Provides information about the world, culture, heroes, labor, and technology. Today this includes media, internet, games, and social networks.

Impact: Broadens knowledge and worldview; appropriate information serves moral and cultural education; incorrect or uncontrolled information can lead to aggression, fear, and indifference. Parents and educators must guide children in selecting information.

Cultural and Religious Environment

Role: Each society has its unique national values, traditions, and beliefs. The child grows up in this environment and finds answers to “Who am I?”

Impact: Develops moral and spiritual values; strengthens respect, patience, honesty, tolerance; fosters national identity and patriotism.

Environment and Social Experience

Role: The child’s living space, neighborhood, nature, and social conditions directly affect socialization. Active life experiences teach the child social roles.

Impact: Learning through observation and experience; develops responsibility, helpfulness, and care; increases social adaptation through interactions with diverse people.

Interaction of Socialization Factors

These factors are interconnected. For example: family provides fundamental values; preschool reinforces them; peers allow practical testing; media extends social context. Socialization is thus a unified system where each factor is important. Childhood is one of the most critical periods in human life, during which a child begins to acquire social behavioral norms and cultural values. Through this process, the child understands societal rules and customs, successfully adapting as an individual. Therefore, attention to child upbringing and support for social development is crucial for building a stable and healthy society in the future. Conclusion: Socialization factors have a decisive influence on a child’s behavior, worldview, moral qualities, societal adaptation, and personality development. A child raised in a positive social environment becomes a respectful, responsible, and active individual. Hence, the combined responsibility of parents, educators, and society is to organize a healthy and positive socialization environment for children.

The Role of Environment in the Social Process

A social process is the system of interactions, relationships, and changes among people, groups, and society. It reflects a person’s adaptation, development, and impact on society throughout life. Through social processes:

- societal values are renewed;
- individuals interact;
- culture and experience are passed from generation to generation.

At the center of this process is the individual, but one of the most crucial shaping factors is the environment.

Definition of Environment – The set of external social, cultural, natural, and psychological conditions surrounding a person. It directly influences the worldview, behavior, values, knowledge, and experience of both children and adults.

Main Types of Environments – To understand its role in personal and social development, the environment can be categorized in several types:

№	Environment type	Description	Impact on social processes
1	Natural environment	Nature, geography, climate, natural resources	Types of work, lifestyle, health, influence the formation of culture
2	Social environment	Interpersonal relationships, family, education, community	Determines a person's behavior, moral qualities, and social activity
3	Cultural environment	Values, customs, religion, art, language, traditions	Spiritual world, national identity and social identity
4	Information (Media) Environment	Internet, television, social networks, advertising	Expands worldview, but can have a negative impact in an uncontrolled state
5	Spiritual and psychological environment	Emotional climate between people, respect, affection, support	Strengthens mental stability, confidence, and self-esteem

Main Functions of Environment in Social Processes

The environment performs the following main functions in the social process:

1. **As a socialization environment** – the individual learns social norms, values, and behavior rules through the environment; family, preschool, groups, and neighborhood are key components; a positive environment fosters a positive personality, whereas a negative one can create social problems.
2. **As an educational environment** –
   a) shapes moral, aesthetic, and spiritual qualities;
   b) a clean, cultured, loving environment raises polite, honest, and tolerant children.
3. **As a source of knowledge and experience**
   a) provides knowledge, skills, values, and life experiences;
   b) individuals learn about the world through people, events, and cultural traditions.
4. **As a factor in social control and norm formation**
   a) In the social environment, there are systems such as law, etiquette, customs, and beliefs.
   b) they regulate human behavior and ensure social stability.
5. **As a stimulus for personal development**
   a) a developed, active, and innovative environment allows individuals to realize their potential;
   b) a passive or indifferent environment limits opportunity.

Impact of environment on personality development – the influence is multifaceted, affecting nearly all aspects of the personality.

№	Development area	Environmental impact
1	Physical development	A healthy ecological, clean environment forms a healthy lifestyle in a child.
2	Mental development	An enlightened and intellectual environment expands thinking.
3	Moral development	The concepts of "good" and "bad" are formed through values in the family and society.
4	Spiritual development	Through national traditions, religion, and culture, qualities such as patriotism, love, and patience emerge in a person.
5	Social activity	An active social environment encourages a person to be an initiator, leader, and partner.

Positive and negative environmental influences mean that every society, family, and education system must strive to create a healthy, cultured, and moral environment for children and youth.

№	Environment type	Result
1	Positive atmosphere	Positive character, responsibility, empathy, independence, creativity are formed
2	Negative environment	Aggression, indifference, lying, social isolation, lack of self-confidence arises

Interconnection of Environment and Upbringing

- Upbringing occurs through the environment, and the environment influences the quality of upbringing.
- If educators, parents, and society collectively create a healthy social environment, children naturally undergo positive socialization.

This process raises well-rounded, responsible, and humane individuals.

Conclusion: The environment is the foundation and driving force of social processes. It shapes an individual's worldview, values, behavior, and activity. A positive environment contributes to the development of the individual and society. A negative environment becomes a source of moral decline and social problems. Therefore: "A good environment raises good people." This principle is a fundamental truth for any social system.

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