

As a child develops and grows, from a baby to a toddler, the process of socialization and interaction develops too. The child's first primary sources of interaction are parents. Peer influence is the second step towards expanding the social development. Peers are basically the friends or other children that spend time with the child. Peer relationships play a significant role in social development and also personal development. Many articles and journals focus on how peer relations and influences are negative and have damaging effects.

However, throwing light to the positive aspects of peer influences, Asher and Parker in 1989 stated that, 'they provide an arena for learning and practicing a variety of social skills, including negotiation, persuasion, cooperation, compromise, emotional control, and conflict resolution'. The major negative influences on development of the child through peer influences are

- In case some peers are rejected, children may develop aggression.
- Excessive social competence caused.
- Unacceptable attitudes and habits developed.
- Disregard of parents and authorities.
- Engaging in various forms of substance abuse in adolescence.

Keeping in account, the negative aspects, we must consider how peers bring about good and positive factors too in the development of a child.

In the initial years of childhood, the child sees his peers as a constant source of recreation. There is learning in specific domains of the child which may promote the over all well being of the child. The positive impacts of peers maybe reflected in the following aspects.

THE POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF PEERS ON A CHILD



Social development

By interacting with peers, the child learns how to collaborate, relate and work cooperatively with them. There is a constant increase in communication skill of the child which is reflected gradually. The child develops a sense of self due to the connectivity with others. Social behaviors are taught- acceptable and unacceptable both. By this, social development is widely possessed.

Cognitive development.

Learning through partners, friends and groups, children share and accept certain ideas, thoughts, perspectives and plans. It increases the creativity of the child and the conflicts/ problem solving capacity of the child. It develops resolution skills and motivates the child to be more initiative and participating in activities. So, there is thorough cognitive development.

Emotional development.

Playground disputes and tiffs are sources towards developing emotional skills of a person. The child learns how to exhibit anger and frustration and how to let them out. The child learns happiness,

joy, sadness, acceptance, love, fear and related emotions. Companionship and feelings of togetherness promotes the self esteem, self confidence and coping skills of the child.

Physical development

The general physical attributes of a child can be developed through peers, perhaps playing outdoor activities build up gross motor skill, reflexes, agility and experience.

Apart from the major influences their maybe many other positive effects like.

- Peers strengthen competitiveness which is vital for ensuring learning properly and widely. Like if a child's peer group or peer is oriented towards sports or studies, it has its impact on the child too.
- In the teen years of a child, peers can provide social and emotional support, comfort and safety. School work, sticking up for each others against bullies and other examples. Children in this stage rely more on friends than adults for emotional support incase of any problems and confusions.





- Lots of teenagers reveal their innermost thoughts, feelings, expressions about certain aspects which cannot otherwise be shared with parents. Certain perspectives like physical appearances and attraction towards the opposite sex. With the flow of thoughts, the teen may feel less burdened and be accepted in an aspect more friendly and reassuring.
- Peers may act as positive role models, demonstrating and providing knowledge of acceptable behaviors and values. Reinforcements are provided mutually.
- There is exposure towards different ethnicities, races, castes and creeds. Acquiring and accepting how every person is unique and not having irrational biases and misconceptions towards peers. The child sees how every person in the end is a human and needs to be treated right.

Many researches show how peers have negative influences, how children start behaving impulsively and intolerable due to effects of another child, how the child develops into a teenager and may indulge in illegal activities and substance abuse acts, taking wrong decisions and ruining their lives.

However our concern should be focused on how peers, after parents influence us positively and how this influence lasts for life long. They play a major and huge role in the development of personality too.

And if the right guidance is given by parents, and an acceptable, loving and non rejecting environment is provided, the child would definitely be attracted towards a good peer group and avoid the negative ones themselves. Most negative effects of peers are mostly due to rejecting, neglecting and avoidant parents, due to which children aim to seek acceptance, appraisals and attention from peers who would mould them in negative aspects. In order to be accepted somewhere, such children end up performing negative behaviors and indulge in negative effects of peers.

So, positive influence of peers are not the only concern, the provoking attributes also include other aspects.

Every child should be loved, accepted and have a good environment, be it family or peers. The development is persistent, yet, what counts is the child development which forms the basics of all adulthood characteristics.

Thereby concluding that, there are positive influences of peers too, not just negative influences.



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