**Factors Influencing Development of youth:**

Factors that impact on youth development can be categorize into the following groups.

* Biological and physiological changes
* Psychological Factors
  + Love and security:
  + Violence:
  + Conflicts / Wars
* Economic Conditions:
  + Family
  + Society
  + Country
* Family
  + Family Type
  + Educational level
  + Parenting styles and practice
  + Parent-child interactions:
  + Mental Health difficulties of parents (depression, drug use, mental or intellectual health illnesses)
  + Neglect / Abuse from parents or siblings which may be physical, emotional or sexual
  + Family dysfunction may increase risk-taking behaviours in young people.
* School Factors
  + Syllabus
  + School system
  + Teachers behavior / interaction
* Social Factors
  + Peer
  + Culture
* Other Factors
  + Religion
  + Discrimination:
  + Media
  + **Services and Resources:**
  + Political circumstances

All affect young people's development.

**The Family**

Parents are the role models for their children. Parents who are secure and competent offer children a model of security from which to build their own social skills.

Children who experience the security of loving parents and have strong attachments to their parents are better able to reach out to relate with others. According to attachment theory, children who enjoy a secure attachment relationship with their parents and caregivers use this relationship as a support to venture out and explore their environment (Maccoby, 1993).

Youth development is affected by the nature of their family and early educational experiences. In the family, children become socialized through interactions with parents, siblings, relatives, and neighbors;

**Family type:** Whether in a nuclear, blended, or extended family; a communal arrangement; or a single-parent family, the youth learns social patterns and skills within this context.

**Love and security:** youth find love and security and form attachments with people who protect and care for them.

**School:** In addition to a child’s parents and family, the teacher becomes an agent of socialization. once in a school setting, they need new ways of acting, relating, and socializing. The teacher and perhaps the principal set rules, limits, and standards for behavior. Even other children also become models, setting new or different standards for social behaviors.

Children who feel good about themselves can make the difficult, complex adjustments necessary for group living. Having aided the child’s development of self-esteem, the school then uses this strong sense of self as the basis for guiding children into positive group experiences where they can learn the skills necessary for living in a society. While on the other side youth who have not fully developed strong attachments to another person may have a more difficult time adjusting to the complexity of the social system of the school.

**Parent-child interactions:** The nature of parent-child interactions is also related to a child’s development of social skills. Children who are raised in democratic families, where reasons are given along with the rules, are more likely to be socially active and open-minded. On the other hand, parents who are more authoritarian, who demand obedient, conforming, and dependent offspring, may have children who are never really comfortable exploring the world for themselves. Often, these children fail to develop the ability to relate effectively with others throughout their life (Dorsey, 2003).

**Gender differences:**

**Role of Culture**

The characteristics of culture also affect children’s developing social skills.

**Social Environment:**

All of us are affected socially and emotionally by violence, wars, threats of wars, and terrorism (Avery et al., 1999). Some children and their families have been directly and deeply affected by war and terrorism. During these frightening, sad, and uncertain times, even children who live in relatively safe environments are exposed to a great deal of violence. Children who live in violent or unsafe communities may be fearful and withdrawn in his social life.

**Violence:** Those exposed to domestic abuse, gang violence, and petty or not-so-petty criminals do not feel safe or secure. Their feelings of insecurity will interfere with their total development, especially social skills development. Even children with no direct contact with war, however, can be deeply affected. Children who witness violence or have been personally affected by violence will express their needs, grief, fears, apprehensions, and thoughts in different ways Some may withdraw, become irritable, or stop eating or sleeping; others may act out.

**Media:** Many children view far too much violence on TV or in games, toys, stories, and other media.

**Social factors**:

* + Current social condition of the society / issues impacting on young people.
    - Like, unemployment, health issues, discrimination, suicide, mental health issues etc.

**Services and Resources:**

* + - What kinds of community do young people in your area belong to?
    - Availability and types of services/resources in the area for young people and their families.
      * Do these resources adequately address the needs of the young people in your area?
      * What additional services/resources are needed?

### **Discrimination and prejudice:**

Discrimination and prejudice based on race, gender, ethnicity, social class can have a powerful impact on a young person's development.

## Social factors

### Economic climate and employment conditions

Work is an important way for young people to achieve a number of important developmental tasks including financial and emotional independence. However changes in the economic climate and in the structure of the workplace have seriously impacted on this area of opportunity for young people.  
  
Youth unemployment is a significant issue of concern. Over the past 10-20 years a large number of young people have been completing school to year 12. At the same time there have been significant structural changes in the workplace which have led to a reduction in the number of full-time employment opportunities available for school leavers. For Indigenous school leavers the problems are even greater.

This rise in youth unemployment has meant that a significant number of young people have had to struggle to achieve financial independence. In many instances they have been forced to remain at home with their parents, making it much more difficult to achieve psychological independence. Of particular concern is the reduction in unskilled and semi-skilled work. Young people who do not have the intellectual capacity or interest in pursuing high school, tertiary level or university education options are finding that their careers of choice have been replaced by computers or machinery (e.g. couriers, factory workers, clerical/administrative workers). Promoting young people's development is extremely difficult when labour market conditions are so poor.

## Community factors

Communities directly and indirectly teach people to behave in certain ways. Communities are where people learn to connect with each other and feel a sense of belonging.

## Community resources

High-quality, easily accessible services that provide support not only to young people but also to their families are important in minimising the impact of social and cultural risk factors such as unemployment or single parent families.

Just as important as access to 'structured' community resources are the intangible community supports which allow families and their children to feel a connection and a sense of belonging within the community.

Family factors

### Quality of parent-child relationships

Research evidence has indicated that the healthier the emotional connection between parents and their children, the less likely the young person will experience problematic behaviours (e.g. crime and drug use) or mental health problems. Young people require some freedom of choice and independence but also rely on parents for emotional support and guidance in decision-making.

### Parenting styles and practice

Parenting style and practice also has an important impact on a young person's development. Research evidence indicates that when parents show an interest in their children through monitoring their behaviour and disciplining them in a consistent and caring way, they are more likely to develop as individuals in a healthy manner (Barnes et al, 1986; Clark, 1991; cited in CSR, Inc., 1997). Monitoring and discipline by parents sends a strong message of care and concern and needs to be balanced with positive reinforcement when appropriate.  
  
Similarly parenting style and practice has an important impact on a young person's development. Research evidence indicates that parents who have in the main shown an interest in their children through monitoring their behaviour and disciplining from a base of consistency and caring are more likely to have young people who individuate in a healthy manner (Barnes et al. 1986; Clark, 1991; cited in CSR, Inc., 1997). Monitoring and discipline from parents sends a strong message of care and concern and needs to be balanced with positive reinforcement when appropriate.

### Family structure

Major changes that have occurred in society have had a direct impact on parents' role in helping young people move through adolescence to adulthood. For example, in the last few decades there has been an increasing incidence of family breakdown due to separation or divorce resulting in a greater number of single-parent families. This has had a major impact on the family structure.  
  
Evidence indicates that how well the family functions rather than the structure of the family is the more important influencing factor in a young person's development.  
  
The following factors add stress on families and increase the risk for tensions between young people and their parents:

* + Reductions in income support forcing young people to stay at home longer.
  + Breakdown in community
  + Economic system which can seriously disadvantage many people e.g. casualisation of the workforce
  + Rising unemployment
  + A society which creates expectations for a standard of living which is unachievable for many young people and families.

# 4.5 School and peer factors

## Peers

Peers can have a great influence on adolescent behaviour in social settings, in many cases more so than their families. A peer does not have to be a close friend, but certainly should be someone that the young person feels comfortable to be around.

### Overhead transparency

* Young people's development involves an interaction between the individual and his/her environment. Individual, family, community, cultural and environmental factors interact together at the same time to have an impact on a young person's development. Young people experience and are changed by a range of social and cultural supports, pressures and expectations.