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# DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SKILLS OF CHILDREN - BRIEF THEORY -

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**Abstract:** This brief text focuses on the development of social, cognitive and emotional skills of young children.

It aims to define the theoretical concept of "psychosocial skills" defined by World Health Organization (WHO) in 1997 (WHO, 1997, 2003; Mangrulkar et al., 2001), and to demonstrate the way it is articulated with the Ottawa Charter to promote a global positive health, both physically and mentally (WHO, 1986).

The goal requires the development of psychosocial competences, which must be transmitted to the new generation, for it to be able to cope with everyday life situations and to build life conditions favorable for their good physical and mental health.

**Key words:** psychosocial skills, children, community health, health determinants, countries with limited resources.

This brief text focuses on the development of social, cognitive and emotional skills of young children. It aims to define the theoretical concept of ‘psychosocial skills’ defined by World Health Organization (WHO) in 1997, (WHO, 1997, 2003; Mangrulkar et al., 2001), and to demonstrate the way it is articulated with the Ottawa Charter to promote a global positive health, both physically and mentally (WHO-1986).

According to the Ottawa Charter (1986), the social determinants of health are: socio-economic support of health, and socio-economic support of

child development, through the next factors: peace, living conditions, nutrition, education, a sustainable and stable ecosystem, equity, social justice and social responsibility of health (WHO, 1986).

A study of investigation of the health of Canadians, that was carried out in 1994, shows that a healthy child development is part of the key determinants of health promotion (<https://quizlet.com/78617587/social-determinants-of-health-flash-cards/>).

The health of a population is measured through health statistic indicators, like: Death Rate, Standardized Mortality Rate (SMR), Life Expectancy, Child Mortality Rate (CMR). These indicators can be improved through health education (Gavrilă & Gavrilă, 2016).

Knowing how to solve problems, to communicate effectively, to be aware of oneself and others, and knowing how to regulate one's emotions are all psychosocial skills that have been implemented all over the world, under the impulsion of WHO. This concept is part of the 'empowerment' (WHO) that gives a person the power over the direction of their life. The Ottawa Charter pleads for acting on health determinants. Urie Bronfenbrenner's *Theory of Ecological Systems* (1979-1986) presents the systemic interaction between the various states of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986).

The prevention programmes 'Life Skills Training' (WHO, 2010; UNDOC, 2010) are based on the development of psychosocial skills. They are recognized as a determinant of health and well-being. Thus, effective intervention becomes one of the public health and community health levers, for both northern and southern countries, with more limited resources (UNICEF, 2012). By integrating this concept into education, there are created favorable conditions for a good physical and mental health of young children. The actors of the macro-system (policies, decision makers, funders), by promoting the implementation of development programs of psychosocial capacities, allow health, social and educational professionals (meso-system), to transmit to parents and children (micro-system) positive values and attitudes for their good health and well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986).

The insufficiency of psychosocial skills is one of the determinants of risky behaviors: psychoactive substance use, violent behaviour, risky sexual attitudes. Developing the psychosocial skills of children allows the prevention of mental health problems, mental disorders, and suicide. Their reinforcement enhances social interactions, allows positive relationships with their parents, increases well-being, and decreases unfavorable health behaviour. Together with increased self-esteem and resilience, psychosocial skills promote better academic results and good social skills. In addition, parents' psychosocial skills represent protective factors for behavioral problems and substance abuse disorders (Kumpfer, Fowler, 2017; Hutchings, Lane, 2005; Pettit, Bates, 1989).

Dunn and Hayes Sodh (1999) show, in their study, that health indicators are influenced by socio-economic and physical environments, level of education, psycho-social skills, genetics, early childhood development, and level of health services (<https://quizlet.com/78617587/social-determinants-of-health-flash-cards/>).

A practical example is the study of Gavrilă, about the deviant behaviour of adolescents. It shows how environmental factors, like different residential areas, are ethiological determinants of teenage deviancy (Gavrilă, 2014). Teenagers with behavioural disorders, 'through social and educational formative influences, can form positive character traits to dominate over the negative ones, their dominance leading to a balanced personality' (Gavrilă, 2014, p. 232). The study aimed to establish a relationship between the gender and family background of teenagers, and their deviant behaviour. The research comprised 60 Romanian teenagers, 29 living in urban areas, and 31 in rural areas. As a research method, the following questionnaires have been used: *Importance of Goal Scale*, *Paired Comparisons Survey*, and *Say-Say Correspondence Survey*. The results of the study show that there are differences between the adolescents living in villages and those from urban areas, both in terms of personal well-being and psychosocial abilities. Adolescents from rural areas are focused on developing community relational qualities, as altruism, while urban teenagers are more pragmatic and focus on personal self-development, professional autonomy and empowerment, regardless of gender (Gavrilă, 2014, p. 237).

In accordance with *International Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), respecting children's rights represents an assessment tool for the social and economic level of development of different states (Gavrilă & Gavrilă, 2017, p. 128).

This approach is illustrated by experiments carried out in Europe in the living environments: schools, villages, sports activities. They can be transferable to resource-poor countries.

In the framework of respecting the human rights and children's rights, good physical and mental health of people constitutes a public health challenge. This goal requires the development of psychosocial competences, which must be transmitted to the new generation, for it to be able to cope with everyday life situations and to build life conditions favorable for their good physical and mental health.

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