DISCUSSION
Chapter 6

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The present study conducted in Greater Guwahati aimed at studying the impact of home environment on the social development of children between the age group of 3-6 years. The total number of sample was 288 children and their social behaviour were observed by three different observers namely teachers, parents and the investigator herself.

Socialization of an individual helps to control his/her animal instinctive behaviour on the one hand and on the other hand it helps to develop the basic qualities of a human being. In the words of Aristotle – man is a social animal. The foundation stone of the social qualities of an individual are laid down in the home environment itself. Home environment plays a delicate and important role in moulding a child’s social behaviour. Therefore, in the present study an attempt was made to study the home environment and its influence on the social development of children.

Different types and nature of families influence the social development of children in different ways. In the present study an extensive and sincere effort was made to study the different home environments and to evaluate separately their impact, on the social development of children. Cox and Cox (1979) in their research work found the importance of parental role and adequate home environment for socialization of the children. According to them, the family in general and the parents in particular, have often been deemed to be the most important support system available to the child and they also have stated that warm, loving parents tend to create a secure unstressful environment in which
they can be more readily socialised and thus learn more appropriate behaviour. The findings of the present study is also in accordance with such earlier research findings. The present study indicates that social development of children increases with their advancing chronological age. For proper, positive and healthy social development of children, a conducive home environment is found to be necessary. In the absence of such an environment social development of children are likely to deviate from the social norms and expectations. Home provides the first social environment for a child and a child learns the first lesson of social behaviour at his/her home environment. Muralidharan and Banerji (1976) found in their study that home stimulation causes positive effects in the social and emotional domains.

Elizabeth Hurlock (1978), in her book “child development”, discussed about the contributions of family to children’s social development. The type of relationships that the children have with their different family members, are influenced by the pattern and structure of the family (i.e. whether it is joint or nuclear, normal or broken etc.) as well as by the attitudes and behaviour of different family members towards the children.

Radke (1946) in his book “The relation of parental authority to children’s behaviour and attitude” discussed about the effects of various home environments on the children’s social behaviour. Radke mentioned about the kinds of child behaviour most commonly associated with different types of home environment. According to him, a home with over protective, rejective and dominating parents with inharmonious and defective discipline provides a less conducive environment to their children whereas parents with balanced, harmonious, well adjusted, calm attitudes use to have a happy family with logical and scientific approach and provides a stimulating and conducive
environment to their children for adequate social development. In the present study it has been observed that unconducive home environment with less cooperative parents hinders social adjustment of their children even with their immediate schoolmates. In contrary to this, it has been found that children of cooperative, friendly and sympathetic parents can easily adjust themselves within as well as outside the home environment, very effectively. It is said that home is the training ground for all the basic human qualities. In the present study, it was observed that a favourable home environment favourably help children for better social adjustment. Observation of the Table No.2 revealed that children of the joint normal as well as nuclear normal families shows better social behaviour in comparison to the children of joint broken and nuclear broken families where a less conducive home environment is present for proper social development.

Similar type of research findings were stated by Baldwin, Kalhorn and Breese (1945) where they found the importance of democratic homes for proper social development of pre-school children. In their study they found that during pre-school years, children from democratic homes were retarded in overt sociability and friendliness, whereas children from indulgent homes were highly social in both friendly and quarrelsome ways. The rejectant group differed little from the norms, although they showed some resistance to adults. They found that this picture changed considerably by the time the children reached their school age. At this stage, they found that, children from democratic homes were extremely sociable and friendly; children from indulgent homes were shy and less sociable; and the children from rejectant homes were quarrelsome and resistant to adult guidance. In their study, it was further noted that, by the time children from the democratic homes reached school age, they were popular and
dominant in an integrative way, and seemed to be secured and serene and adjusted easily to school life.

Goswamee, G., (1994) in her study on the impact of pre-school education on the social development of children found that children from disadvantaged homes do not experience the required stimulation needed for healthy social development. According to her, this is so because the parents in these homes were not quite able to contribute much to the child’s socio-emotional development, which is in accordance with the observation made in the present study. She also stated that, harmonious social interaction is essential for an individual’s adjustment in human society and parents have a great responsibility for guiding and controlling the social development of their children during the early childhood period. Thirtha (1976) in his national research project on “Social Development of Children” found similar type of research findings in which he stated that conducive home environment and proper parental involvement is important for social development of children.

Nicholson and Mathew (1999) in their study found that family structure was the most significant predictor of child’s social behaviour characteristics and they viewed families as the key elements for child’s social development. In the present study also, it was found that different family structures, viz. joint, nuclear, normal, broken, joint normal, joint broken, nuclear normal and nuclear broken families which offers different family environments to the child, influences differently on their social development, as has been observed in the Table No.2.

Social development of children belonging to various types (joint/nuclear) and nature of families (normal/broken) were assessed in the present study by observing eight aspects of social behaviour. Social behaviour of children in the
specified aspects were observed from three different angles by three different observers namely teachers, parents and the investigator herself. Scores given by each observers on three separate observation schedules were subjected to Pearson’s Product moment method for determining coefficient of correlation which has been shown in the Table No.22. On the observation of the same, it has been found that each coefficient of correlation value is highly significant for any pair stated above, in each dimensions of social development as assessed in this study. Therefore, it is apparent from the result, (Table No.22) that each of the three observers (teachers, parents and investigator) agreed with one another regarding the social development of children belonging to different home environments and the observations made by each investigator is found to be free from biasness.

Therefore, the findings of the present study, tends to uphold the first hypothesis of this study that there is a significant relationship between the home environment and the social development of children.

Children coming from the normal families where father, mother, siblings and other members of the family are living in mutual love and cooperation, get better opportunities and a conducive home environment for proper and healthy social development. In the present study social development of the sample children were evaluated on eight specific aspects of social behaviour namely cooperation, friendship, nature of play, preference of playmates, competition, social manners, leadership qualities and aggression. In this study it has been found that children belonging to the normal families are more cooperative, more friendly, and more competitive in nature. In the aspect of social manners and leadership qualities they scored higher than the children coming from the broken families. They were found to be less aggressive and their nature of aggression
were found to decrease with their advancing age as compared to the children of broken families.

The child’s attitudes and behaviour are markedly influenced by the family in which he/she is born and grows up. Home provides the first social environment to a child and sets the pattern for his/her attitudes towards people, things and to life in general. If the integrity of a home is broken due to parental death, separation or divorce, it causes tremendous impact on the child’s social life and adjustments. This is because in the early childhood period, children’s attachment with their parents are more as compared to the later period of their life. In the early childhood period, children seek parental love, affection and cooperation in their daily activities, but if this early formative and sensitive period is disturbed by uncondusive broken family environment, it is likely to affect adversely on their healthy social development. Again, the environment of broken family is dramatically changed if it turns to a step family. The stepfamily association of America, defined stepfamily as – “A family including a child or children from a previous relationship of one or both parents”, (Burt & Burt, 1996). With escalating divorce rate and divorced or widowed individual choosing to remarry, the number of stepfamilies are rapidly increasing. The lack of stability during the periods of separation through death or divorce of one parent and then forming a stepfamily often results in feeling of anxiety and loss of control (Emily and Visher 1966) which may manifest into behaviour problems and adjustment problems of the children of such families. Many stepfamilies do experience greater conflict than other families resulting in behavioural problems and lower self-esteem of the stepchildren (Schewel, Fine and Runner, 1991). Stepchildren are distressed by ‘conflict’ and express either by threatening personal safety or by threatening their relationship with caretaker.
Exposure to high level of conflicts jeopardizes children’s emotional security, which in turn increases their risk for developing behavioural problem. (Comminhgs and Davis, 1994).

Elizabeth Hurlock (1978) in her book ‘Child Development’ discussed about the effects of broken homes on family relationships which depend on many factors, the most important of which are the causes of the break, when it occurs and whether it is temporary or permanent.

Jones and Demaree (1975) discussed about the seriousness and overall influence of broken families on their children, where they have lost both of their parents. According to them, in the early period of life, loss of the mother is more damaging to her children than the loss of the father. According to Shimada, S., (1976) lack of maternal love causes developmental problems in the areas of psychological, social and emotional growth of their children. As children grow older, loss of their father is often more serious than the loss of their mother especially for the boys. But when children lose both of their parents, they feel lonely and become unhappy. (Bossard and Boll, 1966). They start to compare themselves with the children of normal families, where those children live under the umbrella of their parental love and care and where their needs and demands are fulfilled by their parents. Although the needs of the children of broken families are often partially fulfilled by other members of the family, relatives and neighbours, sometimes they are left without much attention. Subsequently these type of deprived children of broken families are found to be fearful, insecure and attention seeking. They become jealous, aggressive, hostile and feel lonely and isolated in their society. During observation of the sample children of this study also, similar characteristics were found among children belonging to the broken families.
They develop an inferiority complex and gradually try to live away from the society. For example, in the aspect of cooperative behaviour, children of normal families generally show the tendency to share and to help others, but such type of behaviour is hardly found among the children of broken families. In our study also, we observed that the children belonging to the broken families are less social as compared with the children belonging to the normal families, which has been displayed in the Table No.2. In all the eight different aspects of social behaviour observed in the study (namely cooperation, friendship, nature of play, preference of playmate, competition, social manners, leadership qualities and aggression), social development scores of children of broken families are found to be disappointing.

Hozman and Froiland (1976) discussed about the effects of broken home on child’s social development caused by divorce. A child longs for a home where both mother and father live together and where they get love and affection, care and attention, cooperation and sympathy, from both the sides. They do not want to miss any one of them. Hozman and Froiland have found in their study that a child tries to adjust with his/her broken family environment in five different ways. These are denial of the divorce, anger which strikes out at those involved in the situation, bargaining in an attempt to bring the parents back together, depression and finally acceptance of the divorce. According to Batchelor and Napier, children from broken homes or homes where parents are “emotionally divorced”, develop personality patterns that interfere with good adjustments to people outside the home. Similar type of research findings were stated by Coates, Anderson and Hartup (1972), where they discussed about the effects of broken homes, due to divorce, on the social adjustments of their children with the peers and schoolmates. According to them, children of such
broken families tried to avoid the questions related to their missing parents or entrance of new parent. Children of such families develop a continuous fear or phobia related to this weak aspect and they prefer to avoid social functions and develop an inferiority complex. In the present study also, from the recorded data it has been found that children of broken families scores less in all the behavioural aspects under this study except aggression. Statistical analysis of the data, as shown in the Table No. 20 revealed that the difference in social development scores of children, in all the age groups, between normal and broken families are highly significant \((p < 0.01)\). On observation of the ‘t’ values, displayed in the Table No. 21, which were calculated from the total scores of the three evaluators namely teachers, parents and investigator herself, indicates a highly significant influence of different nature of families on the social development of children in all the three age groups. In the present study, statistical analysis of the data revealed that children of normal families maintained a better social development scores and their scores were found to be increasing with their advancement of chronological age. On the other hand, children of broken families were found to score less in the different aspect of observed social behaviour and shows a tendency of deterioration (less score) with the advancement of chronological age. The main reason behind such declination of social development scores is thought to be due to the increasing understanding of the limitations of their families in comparison with the normal families.

The evidence collected in this investigation along with the statistical analysis tends to uphold the second hypothesis of this study which states that social development of children coming from broken families Vs. normal families are significantly different.
It is generally accepted that the nuclear family is the basic social unit which consist of the married couple and their children, own or adopted. It is also known as the elementary, immediate and primary family that is prevalent all over the world. When two or more nuclear families live together under a common shelter and share a common health and a common purse, it results in the formation of a joint family.

Size of the family plays a very important role in the social development of children. According to Forer (1976) – Family size is an important determinator of social behaviour of children. Each family category is subjected to different influences which results in different home climates and different kinds of family relationships.

In the present study an attempt has also been made to make a comparative study of social development between the children coming from the joint families and the children coming from the nuclear families. Within the joint family, children get a wider environment for interaction within the family, whereas in nuclear family they get comparatively a narrow environment for their social interaction. According to Bossard and Boll (1966), each family type has its own advantages and disadvantages. Each type influences differently on child’s personality development.

Hurlock (1978) has reported in her book on ‘child development’ that the factors that influence family relationships in each family category will reveal that each has some conditions that are likely to lead to good relationships as well as some that are likely to lead to poor relationships. Therefore, it is practically impossible to say which category is the best, from the point of view of the effect it has on family relationships; nor is it possible to rank the categories in order of merit. However, it is generally agreed by sociologists who have made extensive
studies of the effects of family size, after all things considered, the medium sized family especially that with three or four children – is probably the best from the point of view of healthy family relationships and the large family is probably the worst.

In the present study, it has been found that for healthy social development of children, joint family environment is much more beneficial than the nuclear family environment. It is also observed that the children of joint family enjoy a wider environment for social interaction in the early period of their life, which enhances their skills of inter-personal communication with various types of persons of different age and sex having variety of temperament and attitude. In the wider environment of joint family, they learn quickly to deal with different persons effectively and they also learn to adjust inside as well as outside the home environment.

Kaur, Aneja and Meenal, (2000) in their study found that type of family is also an important factor behind child’s intellectual development. They found that intellectual development of the children of joint families are poorer than the nuclear or extended families, there by they highlighted the importance of family environment during the early childhood period. According to them in joint families, parents get less time to devote to their children and issues other than children’s development get priority, which causes less intellectual development of their children.

But, in respect of the social development of children, it is found in the Table No.21 that children of higher age group (5-6 year) belonging to the joint families are much better and highly significant statistically (p< .05), than the children belonging to the nuclear families. Although the difference in social development, which was also seen in the lower level of age groups (3-4 and 4-5
years), is not statistically significant. On the basis of the findings of this study, the third hypothesis, which states that social development of children coming from joint vs. nuclear families are significantly different, may also be partially accepted.

Shukla’s (1984) interesting study on the social competence of 5-6 years old children in relation to the family structure and pre-school background was designed to determine the effect of the structural composition of the family, ordinal position of the child, school environment and socio-economic status on the social competence of children. The findings of the present study is not in accordance with some of the Shukla’s findings where he mentioned that family size did not have any effect on the social competence of children. But the present study findings shows that children belonging to the joint families shows better social behaviour as compared with children of nuclear families. In an another findings of his study, Shukla stated that presence of grandparents did not have any effect on the social competence of children. But the observations made in this present study reveal that the presence of grandparents along with other members of joint family do have some favourable effect on the social competence of children. Children of the joint family acquire knowledge on various subjects through the medium of story telling by their grandparents. They also learn quite early to communicate with each member of the family and also to talk and deal intelligently with outsiders. Love and affection, care and attention from each member of the joint family are likely to have a favourable influence on their social behaviour. It was also observed in the present study that in case of busy and working parents, presence of grandparents and other members of the joint family are quite beneficial for early social competence. In an another research findings of Shukla it has been stated that sex did not have
any influence on social competence. But in the present study on observation of
the results in sex category wise, we found in the Table No.2 that the overall
scores of the girls are better than the boys in the aspect of cooperation,
friendship and social manners. On the other hand boy’s scores are found to be
better than the girls in the aspect of competition and leadership qualities. Also in
the aspect of aggressive behaviour, we found that the boys are more aggressive
than the girls.

Social development of a child is a very sensitive and delicate process in
the life cycle of a human being. This process takes place right from the time of
birth of a baby and continues throughout the life of a person. The early
childhood period is considered to be the most important period for social
development of a person. The present study was an effort to evaluate the impact
of home environment on the social development of children as different home
environments, viz. joint, nuclear, joint normal, joint broken, nuclear normal,
nuclear broken, are thought to have different types of impact on the social
development of children. This study was done by incorporating a number of
behavioural aspects, namely cooperation, friendship, nature of play, preference
of playmate, competition, social manners, leadership qualities and aggression, to
observe and also to evaluate the social development of a child.

From observation of the collected data, and also after statistical analysis
of the data, we have found that different types of home environment have
different types of impact on the social development of the children.

Friendship which is an important aspect of social behaviour of small
children, was observed in each of the sample children. Because, it is generally
accepted that through the medium of friendship a child gets a tremendous scope
for healthy social development. According to Northway and Detweiler (1956),
friendship is a bilateral social relationship between two individuals which are mutually satisfying where each individual seeks the companionship of others as a socially desirable and satisfying state of affairs. Thompson (1969) also stated that a child seeks the company of another child and fulfills a number of his/her social needs through association with that child. Various studies have been made to study on maintaining the stability of friendship. Gershman & Hayes (1983) found in their study that stability of friendship increases with age. According to them, children’s friendship are remarkably stable at all ages. Even during the pre-school years, two-thirds of children who identify one another as friends do so again 4 to 6 months later. They found that lasting friendship at younger ages are more a function of the constancy of social environments, such as home, neighbourhood and preschool, than social cognition. In another study conducted by Schaivo and Soloman (1981), it was found that preschoolers maintained friendship over a summer vacation only when parents made special arrangement for children to play together. In the present study, it is observed in the Table No.2 that social development scores (SDS) in respect of friendship increases with the advancing age of the children. This research finding is also accordance with the findings of Marshall (1961). In the present study, children of normal families scored higher in friendship than the broken families. Within the normal families children of joint families scored higher than the nuclear families. On sex wise distribution girls were found to be more friendly than boys. In the present study, though the scores were not separately calculated for determining stability of friendship, it was observed that friendship stability increases with age. Again, during naturalistic observation, it was observed that a child prefers to maintain stability in friendship with children of similar sex and with whom they frequently meet, talk and play. This observation is also in accordance with the
research findings of Hartup, (1970), who found that proximity in time and place, sex and age have been found to be crucial factors in children’s friendship.

In the present study, nature of play and preference of playmate as one of the aspect of social behaviour were also observed. Play is a highly motivated form of pleasurable activity specially for the children. Various research findings have already established the fact that the play is an important and readily available medium for early socialization of a child. For observation of social behaviour of children in the aspect of nature of play and preference of playmate, the researcher tried to find out whether the child prefer solitary play or cooperative play and also whether the child prefers to play with the children of the same age or the child prefers to play with younger/older children. It was also observed whether the child likes to play with the same sex or opposite sex.

Mitchell and Mason (1948) interpreted variously children’s play activities. According to them, different types of children’s play activities clearly demonstrates developmental trends towards greater social sensitivity and social responsiveness. They found that the play of children at different ages reflects an increasing tendency and desire for wider social interactions with other children. Lehman and witty, (1927) found in their study that with the advancement of children’s age, solitary and parallel play activities are gradually replaced by cooperative play and organized sports.

Parten (1933) found in her research work that with increasing age, the pre-school child engages in more and more parallel, associative and cooperative play than the solitary play. According to her, little children prefer to spend their time in solitary play in contrast to the older children who prefer to engage in cooperative play signifying their involvement in the process of socialization. Goswamee, G., (1994) in her similar type of research findings stated that as
children advance in age, their play pattern also changes, from solitary play it gradually becomes cooperative play. The findings of these research work are in accordance with the present study where it was found that children belonging to the lower level of age group specially in 3-4 years, prefer solitary play while children belonging to the 5-6 years age group prefer cooperative play.

Hurlock (1978) in her book on 'child development' discussed about the preference of playmate of children. According to her, in the early budding years, children play with both sexes but later on, even before children are ready to enter school, they show a preference for playmates of their own sex. Various research work have been done on children’s preference of playmates at early childhood stage. Bigelow and Lagaipa (1975) in their research found that at the lower level, sex does not play any significant role for selection of playmates, but with the advancement of their age children prefer to play with same sex. Similar observation was also found in the research study of Britto (1977). He observed that while the two year old tends to be solitary in play and remain aloof from other children, the three-year old shows an interest in playing with others of his own age. According to him, there is both a growth of sociability and independence throughout the third year of life. Murphy (1927) found in his research work that on entering school, the child enters the first stage of his socialization and immediately becomes a member of the group of his/her own sex and age. Boys become members of group with boys and girls with girls. In the present study also, it was observed that children of the lower age group 3-4 year prefer playmate of their own age irrespective of age but with their increasing age, they become conscious about sex of their playmates. Adams and Lavoie (1974) found that with the advancement of age children become more interested in their own sex because of the social learning and pressures which
encourages them to play their sex role according to the social norms. In the present study, it was observed in some cases that two children of opposite sexes become quite friendly and intimate due to reasons of proximity or convenience or the absence of other children. The reason behind this sex distinction among children’s play is the result of criticism or interference from seniors.

In the present study, aggression was considered as one of the several aspects of observed social behaviour. Hurlock (1978) in her book on 'child development' viewed aggression as an unsocial behavioural pattern. She considered, aggression to be an actual or threatened act of hostility, usually unprovoked by another person. According to her, children may express their aggressiveness in physical or verbal attacks on another, usually a child smaller than they are.

A summary of the studies conducted on sex differences in aggression has been published by Oetzel (1966). The majority of the studies in this summary indicated that the boys were more aggressive than the girls. Goswamee, G., (1994) in her study on the social development of pre-school children found a significant difference between the aggressive behaviour of boys and girls. In this study she found that boys were more aggressive than their counter parts.

In the present study also, it has been found that boys are more aggressive than the girls. It was also observed in this study that the aggressiveness of the boys of broken families increases with the advancement of their age in contrary to the boys of the normal families, where their aggressiveness decreases with their advancement of age.

Social development of children were also assessed by observation of another four aspects of social behaviour, namely cooperation, competition, social manners and leadership qualities. According to Thompson (1969), cooperation is
an aspect of social behaviour where two or more individuals joint their efforts in order to reach a mutually desirable goal, while competition results when two or more individuals are vying with each other for the same goal attainment. Social manner is an important aspect of social behaviour where by an individual perform the daily social activities in accordance with the expected social norms, where age, sex, culture and religious faith and belief of a society are counted. Leadership is considered to be a special quality of a child which helps the child for his/her early socialization. By virtue of his/her special qualities, he/she holds a unique position in a group and leads the group for a common purpose.

In the present study, on observation of the Table No.2, it has been found that children belonging to the normal families scored higher in each aspect of the social behaviour mentioned above than the children of broken families. Within the normal families children belonging to joint normal families scored higher than nuclear normal families. On sex category wise observation, the girls were found to be more cooperative and well mannered while the boys were found to have more leadership qualities and were more competitive than the girls.

From the results and analysis of the data of the present study, it has been found that home environment plays a very important and crucial role in the overall social development of children between the age group of 3-6 years. It has also been found that normal families provide better conducive environment for the overall social development of their children in contrary to the broken families. From the statistical analysis of the data, we also noted that in respect of the normal families, joint normal families are better for encouraging the overall social development of the children.