

12

SPECIAL ISSUES IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

12.1 Introduction

You have already studied about the development of children across ages and about the factors which affect their development. But, there are children who do not get adequate environment and facilities for their full development e.g. the neglect of girl child in Indian families is a well known fact. Many children instead of being in school have to work in hazardous occupations just because of poverty while still others may indulge in anti social acts. Some children are disabled. They all need our special attention. In this lesson we shall study about the special issues related to these children and shall try to find out some of the ways to help them.

12.2 Objectives

After studying this lesson you will be able to :

- list and elaborate some of the discriminations against the girl child and also discuss how education can enhance her status;
- explain the term 'juvenile delinquency' and enumerate its causes;
- suggest remedial and preventive measures for dealing with the problem of juvenile delinquency;
- define the term 'child labor' and list its causes and consequences;
- delineate guidelines for dealing with the problem of child labor;
- describe 'socio economic disadvantaged children' and suggest some ways for reducing their problems;
- list some major physical disabilities in children and describe the problems faced by them due to these disabilities;

- devise ways to help disabled children;
- define 'mental retardation' and suggest guidelines to help mentally retarded children.

12.3 Discriminations against Girl Child

Read the following stories -

Kalyani is a twelve year old girl living with her parents and brother. When she was in class IV her mother had an attack of paralysis which left her bedridden. She was taken out from the school to perform household chores. She was a good student and wanted to study further but no importance was given to this fact

Seema is a ten year old girl living in a small hut. She gets up at five in the morning and goes out to perform household chores in others' houses. Her brothers who are older to her are forcibly sent to school when they have no interest in studies and have failed two/three times. Whenever Seema expresses her desire to go to school she is scolded by her parents. Her brothers are considered assets to the family while Seema is considered an economic burden.

After reading these stories how do you feel about the life of Kalyani and Seema? Is it not the situation of many, if not all, girls in India?

The girl child in India faces a difficult life she is discriminated against right from birth or even when in the womb. She is an **unwanted, uncared for and an inferior being** in most of the families. Can you outline the discriminations against her? Here are some of them.

Nutrition and Health Facilities

Who takes food first in an Indian family? Is it the girl child? No, most mothers in our country tend to feed their husband and sons first. They give only left overs to their daughters. Such food is often inadequate in quality and quantity, e.g. many times girls do not get adequate amounts of dal, vegetables, chapattis, etc. The discrimination in feeding habits begins soon after the birth. Do you know that female infants are breast fed for shorter duration as compared to male children?

What happens when an individual does not get adequate amount of food? The person fails to develop resistance to diseases. But, are they taken to the doctor? No, because good health is not considered important for them. As a result many little girls fail to see their first birthday.

Education

Is the number of girls attending the school same as that of boys? The answer is 'no'. Because of the impact of media, some parents do send their daughters to school but many of them are taken out early from the school even before they complete their basic education. Can you think of the reason behind it? Yes, The reason is that girls start helping their mothers in the household tasks at a very early age. Parents may even hesitate to provide books, notebooks, etc., to them and hence they have to drop out from the school. Poor health of the girls is also one of the reasons for poor performance in school and then dropping out.

Some other Discriminations

Some other discriminations against them are that they are given less time to play, are not allowed to take part in family decisions, restrictions are imposed on their dresses, movements, hairstyle, etc. Do these restrictions exist in the life of a boy?

What could be the reasons for such a low status of girl child? Why do parents prefer boys? Consider the following:

- Son is required to perform the last rites.
- Son becomes the bread winner of the family.
- Son is required for continuance of family name.

Do you agree with the reasons given by the parents for neglecting the girl child? Should the girls be debarred of all the facilities? The answer to all these questions is 'no'.

Both boys and girls have equal importance.

All of us need to realize that it is the girl child who is the future mother. If she is not provided with adequate food and health facilities then her health will suffer. This in turn will affect the health of her future children. If she is denied the opportunity to attend school then she will remain intellectually under developed. Parents in a hurry to shift their so called burden may arrange her marriage early in life. This will lead to many more problems. Can you think of some of these problems? Early marriages lead to early pregnancies which in turn lead to higher maternal mortality rate. It also increases the risk of having more premature babies, deaths and disabled children. To avoid all these problems it is important to provide nutritious food, health and educational facilities to the girl child. Good food and health will ensure good health of her children also. Education helps her in many ways. Can you suggest some of the benefits of educations?

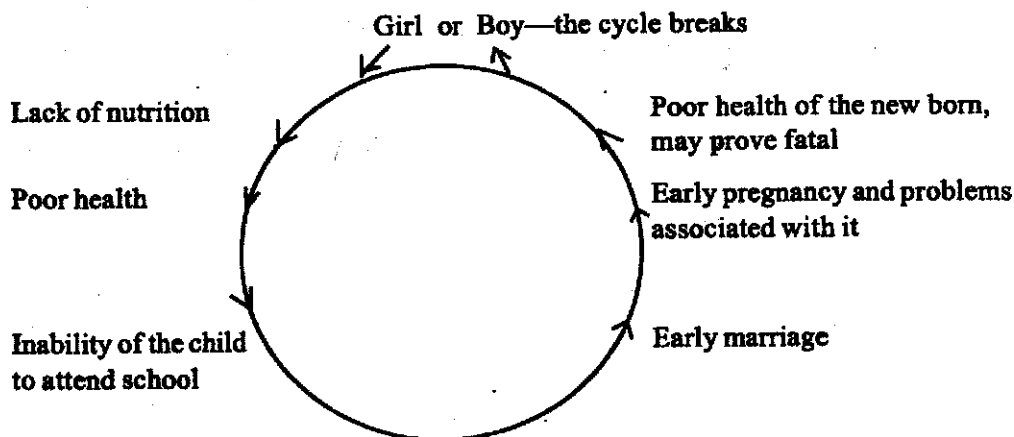


Fig. 12.1 A vicious cycle

12.4 What role can education play

What role can education play in her life? It is the girl child who will later on weave the life of every member of her family. So, education is very important for her. It helps her in the following ways.

1. *Education creates awareness among girls* : they know what is happening around them, what is good or bad, how they can use/avoid these. Educated girls can run their own lives and households more efficiently e.g. they would know their rights as consumers and can purchase best possible items for her family in the given amount. She can keep an account of household income and expenditure.
2. *Education gives them financial independence.* Education imbibes confidence and skills in girls which enables them to take up a vocation if required and hence provide financial help to the family.
3. *Educated girls who will later on become educated mothers* can look after the studies of their children. Educated mothers help their children to develop good habits and values.
4. *Educated mother understand the day-to-day problems* their children may face and help in providing more meaningful solutions to these problems.

Is it not true to say that by educating a boy we are educating only an individual but by educating a girl or woman we are educating the whole family? So, is it not important to educate girls? Yes, it is. If the parents educate their girl child they will not only help their daughter but also make her a better daughter-in-law, wife and a mother. This in turn will help the entire society.

After reading about the discriminations against the girl child and the role that education can play in the life of girl child, as parents or future parents how would you like to treat your daughter? What role can you play to change the attitude of your community towards the girl child?

INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.1

1. The girls are discriminated against because they
 - (a) do not mind the discriminations
 - (b) have low status in the society
 - (c) have less brains than boys
 - (d) are uneducated
 2. The girls are not sent to school because
 - (a) it is a waste of time
 - (b) they can learn on their own
 - (c) they are feeble minded
 - (d) they have to work with their mothers
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3. Parents prefer boys because boys are
 - (a) strong and sturdy
 - (b) more talented than girls
 - (c) required for the continuance of family name
 - (d) ready to help parents in times of difficulty
4. Education is important for girls because it
 - (a) gives them free time to think about themselves
 - (b) creates awareness in them
 - (c) helps them to make friends
 - (d) gives them the opportunity to get ahead of boys

12.5 What is juvenile delinquency

Read the following incidents :

A sixteen year old boy raped a five year old girl.

Thirteen year old 'Amit' finds pleasure in breaking the tube lights of the road.

Ten year old 'Raju' murdered his father.

Fourteen year old 'Sumeet' forged his father's signature on his school progress report card.

A XII Class girl 'Rani' committed suicide because she could not pass her examinations.

Seven year old 'Reena' stole Meena's mathematics book.

Who all are involved in these incidents ? The children and the teenagers. Do you think this kind of behavior is socially acceptable ? No, these are anti- social behaviours and cannot be accepted.

Juvenile delinquency means acts of violations of law by the young people (a boy below sixteen years and a girl below eighteen years) who as a rule cannot be punished by the law.

Can you list some of the behaviors which are considered 'delinquent' ? Yes. some of them are :

1. Forgery
2. Violence
3. Stealing
4. Suicide
5. Telling lies
6. Sex crimes
7. Drug peddling. etc.

12.6 What causes juvenile delinquency

Delinquency among young people can be caused by a number of factors. Here are some of them.

Poverty is one of the major causes of juvenile delinquency. How can poverty turn an individual into a delinquent? Poor children do not have adequate facilities. They find stealing and robbery an easy means to get these facilities. So the young people indulge in thefts, robbery, etc. Sometimes because of poverty, parents also encourage their children to take up such activities.

It is also due to poverty that many people have to live in small houses. What happens when many people live in one room houses? In crowded homes children come to know about sex at an early age and get tempted to do things which are not appropriate for their age, i.e. may commit sex related crimes.

Have you seen families where parents quarrel with each other frequently? Children in such families feel insecure and inferior. They engage in delinquent activities to get rid of their extra energy.

Can bad company turn an individual delinquent? Yes, young people pick up activities like stealing, telling lies, breaking window panes, etc. in order to influence the leaders of their group. Later on these become habits.

Does violence in media encourage delinquency? Yes, violence in films and books depicts the delinquent as a strong character. The young boys who watch these acts identify with these characters and try to imitate their behavior.

These are some of the important causes of juvenile delinquency. But, it does not mean that all those who go through these circumstances will become delinquent. There are many who successfully cope with these situations and lead a normal life. The percentage of delinquent girls is much less than that of boys.

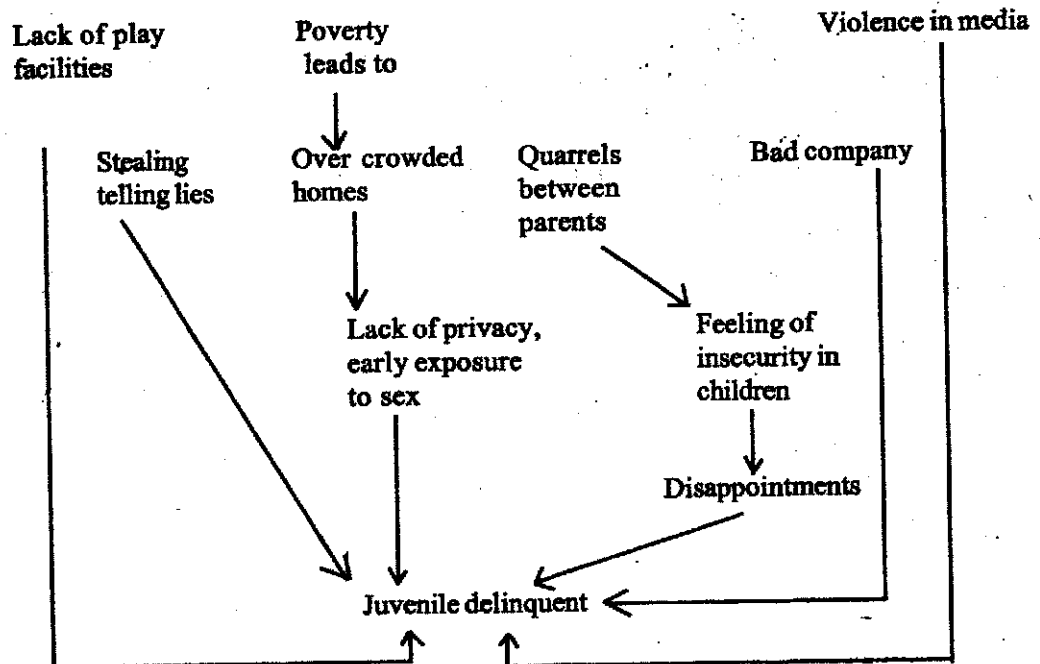


Fig 12.2 Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

12.7 Remedial and Preventive Measures

What happens to the child who behaves in a delinquent manner? On specific complaints of the people, they are taken out from their neighborhood to a place called **remand home**. What is done in the remand home? Here, the children are given opportunities to give up their delinquent manners. Facilities for vocational training are also available which enable them to stand on their own feet.

Besides these remedial measures we can do things which can prevent the problem from occurring. What are these?

Since poverty is the main cause of juvenile delinquency we can do some thing to remove it. Do you know that **poverty removal programs** are going on in our country? Yes, there are many. Encourage poor people to make use of them. These programs are for them. Try and find out those institutions which provide loans at a very nominal rate of interest to start a vocation. Besides this, provide vocational training to young people. Is there any voluntary organization working in your neighborhood? Can you approach it to provide vocational training to poor people?

Parents must spend time with their children. Discuss their problems and patch up their differences. Enable them to develop good habits and sound values. After studying this, how would you like to behave as parents or future parents with your children?

Provide **recreational facilities** to young people. You can encourage them to form drama clubs, hobby centers and encourage them to play group games. How will it help? The young people will stay engaged in healthy activities and will not get free time to interact with delinquents and indulge in delinquent acts.

Look around and see if there are children who remain unattended? What do these children do? Are there any reasons or signs of their becoming delinquent? Can you help them in any way to avoid delinquency? Can you organize some useful and recreational activities for them? How and why would this help?

INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.2

Choose the correct answer (s)

1. Juvenile delinquents are :
 - (a) children below fourteen years of age
 - (b) boys below sixteen years of age
 - (c) girls below sixteen years of age
 - (d) girls below eighteen and boys below sixteen years of age

 2. Which behavior is delinquent?
 - (a) watching a movie full of violence
 - (b) slapping a child to discipline him
 - (c) forcing a child to work
 - (d) breaking window panes of somebody's car
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3. The factors which lead to delinquency are
 - (a) discussing a personal problem with the parents
 - (b) poverty
 - (c) availability of play facilities
 - (d) telling lies to influence the leader of the group
 - (e) frequent fights between parents
4. If delinquency is due to poverty provide the delinquent with
 - (a) a house
 - (b) recreational facilities
 - (c) vocational training
 - (d) food
5. Play facilities will enable the young people to
 - (a) increase their height
 - (b) become bold and strong
 - (c) spend time gainfully
 - (d) learn new games

12.8 Child labour-Causes and Consequences

Look around in your neighborhood and try to find out the jobs where children are involved. You will find that they are selling newspapers, working in dhabas, cleaning cars, polishing shoes or working in houses as domestic help, etc. Is there anything wrong when children work? Yes, because this is not their age to work and earn a living. They need to be in school and acquire knowledge. Long hours of working denies them of the opportunities for their development.

How do you classify a labourer as a child? Yes, on the basis of the age.

Any child who is below fourteen years of age and is engaged in work to earn a living is a child labourer.

Causes

Can you think of some of the causes of child labour? Let us try to list some of them. These are :

- Poverty
- Illiteracy and ignorance of parents
- Orphaned, abandoned and rejected children
- Nimble fingers and keen eyesight which are assets in traditional craft e.g. carpet weaving
- Demand for such labour which is cheap, silent and uncomplaining.

Consequences

- Children are made to work for long hours (12-16 hours) in uncomfortable body positions and this may cause permanent disability.
- They work in unhygienic conditions and often suffer from infectious diseases.
- They miss schooling and thus add to the number of illiterate in the country.

12.9 Dealing with the Problem of Child labour

Do you know that there is a law to deal with child labor ? Yes, the **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act** was enacted by the Government in 1996. It forbids children to work in hazardous occupations and also regulates the conditions of work in certain other occupations. In a country like India, *we can not totally eradicate child labour*. What do you think is the reason behind it ? Yes, because of poverty, children are forced to work. However, if the following arrangements are made by the employer at the work site, they can improve the lot of working children.

Do you recall how we dealt with the problem of poverty in section 12.7 ? Can those methods be adopted here also ? Yes, those methods can be adopted here also.

- Make provisions for *non formal education*. The employers must motivate them to attend school by freeing them for a few hours during working time. The employer should also make arrangement for schooling if necessary.
- *Educate parents* so that they can realize the negative consequences of child labour and the importance of educating children.
- Provide *medical facilities* and arrange regular health check up camps.
- Allow children to work in clean, *well ventilated and illuminated* rooms for fewer number of working hours as compared to adults.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.3

Choose the correct answer :

(1) Child labour means forcing a child to work before

- (a) 5 yr
- (b) 10 yr
- (c) 14 yr
- (d) 18 yr

(2) Parents send their children to work because

- (a) they like to see them working
 - (b) work prepares them for adulthood
 - (c) they will not have to go to school
 - (d) they earn money which is needed by the family
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- (3) The conditions under which children work are
- good for their health
 - the best that the employer can give
 - enjoyed by the children
 - harmful to their health
4. The problem of child labour can be dealt with by providing
- educational facilities at work place
 - mid day meals
 - higher wages
 - facilities at work place

12.4 Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Children

Read the following story.

Radha is a ten year old girl. Her parents work at construction sites. Being the oldest she takes care of her four siblings in the absence of her parents. The whole family is living in utter poverty. To forget his miseries, her father often comes home drunk and fights with his wife. Earlier, Radha used to go to school but she was taken out because her father could not afford the fees.

Children like Radha are called *socio-economic disadvantaged children*. They live in *extreme poverty*. These children are under privileged and their parents fail to provide adequate facilities for their proper physical, mental, social and emotional development.

Helping Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Children

How can we help socio-economic disadvantaged children? What can be done to facilitate all round development of such children? Here are some suggestions.

- **Provide education.** Give them *incentives* like free books, stationery, uniforms, scholarships and mid day meals in schools. This will encourage their parents to send them to school. This has already started in some of the schools at some places.
- Along with education, **provide them vocational training** so that they can take up a vocation after completing school. This will infuse *self confidence* in such children and help them handle different situations in life.

After studying about these children, try to find out such children in your neighborhood. Think of the services which you can provide to them. Can you start teaching them in your free time? If yes, go ahead and start the mission!

INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.4

Choose the correct answer :

- Children are categorized as socio-economic disadvantaged because of
 - juvenile delinquency
-

- (b) poverty
 (c) gender
 (d) broken homes
2. The best way to deal with the problem of socio-economic disadvantaged children is by
- (a) tackling poverty
 (b) providing education
 (c) improving living conditions
 (d) providing play facilities

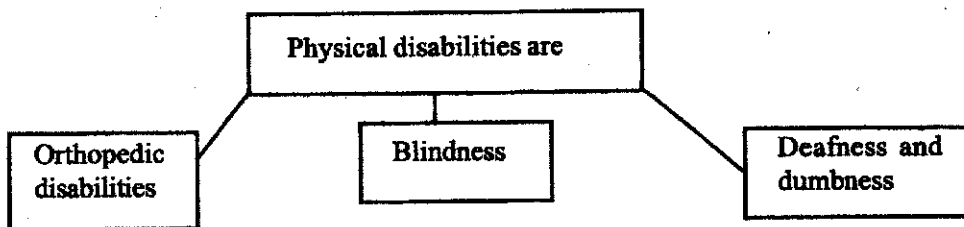
12.11 Major Physical Disabilities

Ramesh can not walk because he had suffered from poliomyelitis when he was younger. Rani, a two year old girl, finds it difficult to control her head. Subodh, can not read Pinky's story books he is blind. Ajay can not speak and hear but understands his mothers gestures.

What is wrong with these children ? Yes, they are unable to perform some of the activities which you and I can. Such children are called **physically disabled children**.

The disabled children can not perform one or more activity in a manner which is considered normal for a human being.

Can you list some of the major physical disabilities found in children ?



Have you seen children who do not have or can not use their hands or legs or any other part of the body.? These children are called **Orthopaedically disabled**. The *major causes* of orthopaedic disability are *malformation of bones, deficiency of calcium and vitamin D, accidents*.

Some children have stiff muscles. Such children are called **spastics**. What kinds of problems do they face ? These children have *problems in movements and body positions*. They often have slow and faulty movements of hands, head or legs. The degree of stiffness in spastics varies from child to child.

Have you seen blind/partially blind children in your neighborhood ? What is their problem ? This can see very little or nothing. Many children have problems in seeing things clearly. We may not pay attention to the fact that the child has a seeing problem until we notice that the child has *difficulty in threading the needle, reading bus numbers or reading letters from the black board*. Such children can see much better with eye glasses. Do you know that only some children are born blind and in majority of

the cases blindness is acquired ? *Lack of vitamin A and eye injuries are the major causes.*

There are some children who can not hear or speak. They are called *deaf and dumb*. How do parents recognize whether their child is deaf ? Parents often notice early that their child can not hear because the child does not respond to even loud noise. Deaf children have difficulty in acquiring language. Can you guess the reason for it ? This is because they can not hear either their own voice nor of their parents and hence do not attach meaning to them. *Loud noise, ear infections, putting pins, crayons, etc., into the ears* to take out ear wax are some of the major causes of deafness which children may acquire during their life time. However, such hearing defects may be corrected by using hearing aids.

12.12 How to help disabled children

With your love, care, help and encouragement, physically disabled children can develop skills as early and as well as other children. Can you think of some of the ways to help them ?

1. Let the child undergo medical examination as early as possible and assessment of disability be made soon. Why do you think it is important ? Because , the earlier the disability is detected, greater are the chances of recovery from it.
2. Encourage disabled children to make use of *artificial substitutes* for missing body parts. Can you name some such substitutes ? These are *braces, splints, artificial limbs, etc.* From where can one get them ? These are given free of cost or at a very nominal rate in government hospitals.
3. After learning to deal with the disability it is better to let the child be with normal children. It is good to admit a disabled child in a special school. Here the special aids and methods are used to help them get used to the disability. How does a blind child learn to read and write ? Yes, with the help of Braille. *Braille is the arrangement of dots representing alphabets and can be read by finger tips.* Similarly deaf child learns to read the lips and use sign language.
4. Encourage the blind child to use the remaining sight and other senses. How will you teach about shapes to a four year old child ? Yes, by using the sense of touch.
5. Help the blind child to *use stick* while walking. Why do they need it ? It helps them in finding the way and makes them more confident.
6. Encourage the hearing impaired child to use and properly maintain *hearing aids*.
7. Encourage the child to make use of *speech and lip reading*. How is lip reading important to them ? It helps them in understanding what other people are talking by focusing their attention to certain cues in lips and facial movements.
8. Allow the deaf child to use *gestures and sign language*.

Do you know that after finishing education the physically disabled children can take up many different kinds of jobs ? They only need your support to unfold their potentials. Will you provide that to them ?

INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.5

1. Orthopaedically disabled children are those who have problem in
 - (a) speaking
 - (b) seeing
 - (c) listening
 - (d) walking
2. The best way to teach a blind child to recognize various shapes is by
 - (a) drawing pictures
 - (b) oral descriptions
 - (c) using the sense of touch
 - (d) asking them to draw the pictures
3. The deaf children have difficulty in learning to speak because they
 - (a) get startled by the voices of their parents
 - (b) cannot hear their own babbling
 - (c) prefer to listen than to talk
 - (d) dislike loud noise
4. A child who has hearing problem should
 - (a) get his ears cleaned
 - (b) use hearing aids
 - (c) get practice in listening
 - (d) do all the above
5. To help rehabilitate disabled children it is important to
 - (a) deal with them with love and care
 - (b) provide medical help as early as possible
 - (c) spend time with them
 - (d) do all the above

12.13 What is mental retardation ?

Mental retardation is *delay* or *slowness* in child's mental development. The child who is mentally retarded learns things at a slower rate than other children of the same age. The development milestones of such children are delayed. Can you give an example of it? Yes, the child may be late in learning to walk, talk etc. What do you think could be the reason for the delay? The reason is that either the brain has not been fully developed or has been damaged. Mental retardation can be caused by diseases and injuries affecting the development of brain of the child e.g. brain tumors, poisoning from pesticides, etc. The degree of mental retardation depends upon the extent of damage that has taken place in the brain. Some children are more retarded than others.

Helping Mentally Retarded Children

You might be wondering what can be done to help mentally retarded children? All mentally retarded children can be helped to learn self help skills to some extent. Some of them can also learn to read and write while some always require somebody to take care of them. How can you help these children to grow up to their maximum potential? Following are some of the guidelines :

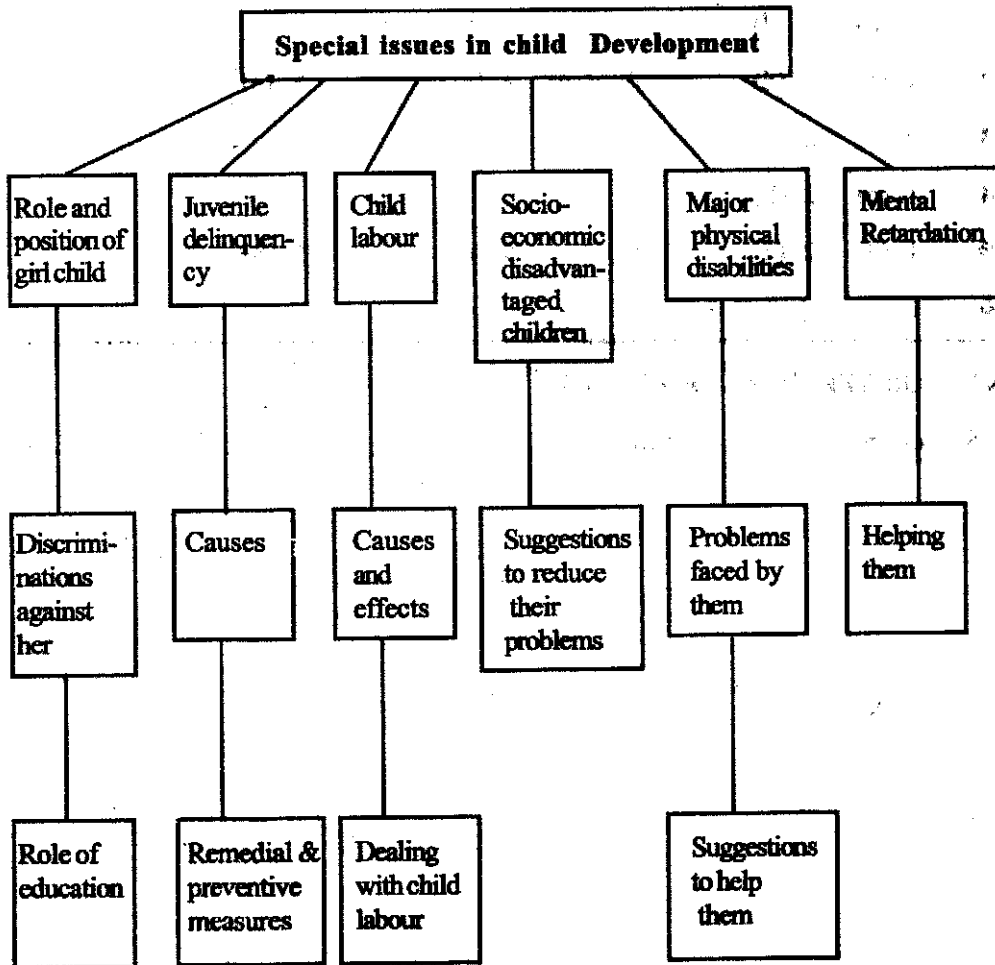
- Never call these children 'stupid' or 'idiot'. It hurts them as it would hurt you.
- Let the children do as much as they can by themselves. Help only when asked for. Slowly teach the children to dress and undress themselves, eat properly, share things with others and follow simple directions.
- If the degree of mental retardation is not very high then involve the children in simple household tasks, e.g., to clean and mop the floor, to cook simple food items like rice, make tea, boil potatoes, etc.
- Enroll mentally retarded children in special schools where they are given training in self help skills and income generating activities.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.6

Choose the correct answers :

1. Mentally retarded children
 - (a) may have brain injuries
 - (b) like to play with the children of their own age group
 - (c) have slower rate of mental development
 - (d) find no difficulty in learning new things.
 - (e) take more time to learn to walk
 2. Mentally retarded children can
 - (a) make tea
 - (b) make chalks
 - (c) not work with others
 - (d) clean and mop the floor
-

12.14 What You Have Learnt



12.15 TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Describe some of the discriminations against the girl child. What role do you think education can play in enhancing her status?
2. Ramesh, a fifteen year old boy lives in a slum. His father often fights with his mother. Ramesh and his friends love to watch violent films and often snatch food items from children. What kind of behavior problem may develop under such conditions? How can he be helped?

What are the causes and effects of child labour?

3. Who are socio-economic disadvantaged children? List any four ways to help them.
4. What are major physical disabilities in children? How will you help a deaf and dumb child?

Define mental retardation. List some of the activities in which you can involve mentally retarded children.

12.16 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 12.1** 1. (d) 2. (d) 3. (c) 4. (b)
- 12.2** 1. (d) 2. (d) 3. (b, d, e) 4. (c) 5. (c)
- 12.3** 1. (c) 2. (d) 3. (d) 4. (a)
- 12.4** 1. (b) 2. (b)
- 12.5** 1. (d) 2. (c) 3. (b) 4. (b) 5. (b)
- 12.6** 1. (a, c, e) 2. (a, b, d)
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HINTS FOR TERMINAL QUESTIONS

2. Ramesh may become delinquent.