1 Scope of the Element

This Element starts with a review of concepts of problems in childhood. It examines the need for specific and universal concepts as well as the need for contextualising and linking of problems in childhood. In order to identify the common causal factors of problems in childhood, it first discusses the social construction of childhood with reference to adultism, sexism, schooling, and Western development sciences, and the extension of childhood to include adolescence. It then discusses the implications of industrialisation and globalisation for childhood. The Element proposes a universal comprehensive and longitudinal conceptual framework of problems in childhood, their differential context, and their cyclical effects. Based on the linkages identified in the children's problems, they are divided into three consecutive levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

The Element then reviews the concepts and the service delivery approaches of child welfare, protection, and justice with reference to their limitations, because of which these services have not helped to break the cycle of problems in childhood. The Element identifies a child rights–based, comprehensive, preventive, and systemic conceptual framework of service delivery systems for child welfare through Family Service Centres. This framework helps to develop service delivery for children at primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention levels in order to break this cycle of problems at these levels.

Finally, the Element details the tertiary-prevention-levels integrated service delivery systems in four categories. These include integrated alternative childcare services for children without parental care, integrated child protection services for child victims of violence, integrated child welfare services for children in emergencies, and integrated child reintegration services for children in conflict with law and those associated with armed conflict.

2 Conceptual Framework of Problems in Childhood

2.1 Overview

This section starts with a review of the need for specific and universal concepts as well as the need for contextualising and linking problems in childhood. In order to identify the common causal factors of problems in childhood, it first discusses the social construction of childhood with reference to adultism, sexism, schooling, and Western development sciences, and the extension of childhood to include adolescence. It then discusses the implications of industrialisation and globalisation for childhood. Finally, The Element proposes a universal comprehensive and longitudinal conceptual framework of problems

in childhood, their differential contexts, and their cyclical effects. Based on the linkages identified, the problems are conceptually divided into three consecutive levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

2.2 Review of Concepts of Problems in Childhood

2.2.1 Need for Specific and Universal Concepts of Problems in Childhood

In Western countries, the discussion on children's problems started with a focus on poverty and crime among children. Beginning around 1825, it became gradually recognised in the United States that public authorities had a duty to intervene in these cases, the cause of which was identified as parental neglect. The first juvenile court was set up in Chicago in 1899, with the understanding that there should be no real distinctions between neglected children, then legally classified as 'dependent', and child offenders if society was to achieve a realistic approach to crime prevention. In the mid-twentieth century, modern X-ray technology provided new documentation of physical abuse of children at home that forced a reappraisal of society's responsibility to protect children, even from their own parents. The child protection movement began in the United States where child abuse was added to child neglect, both of which require protection of children from parents (Thomas Jr, 1972).

For a long time now, the trend in the Western countries has been to use the terms 'child abuse' and 'child neglect' together in knowledge development, laws, and child protection programmes. Today, the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect publishes an international journal called *Child Abuse and Neglect*. The US Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), as amended and reauthorised by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, defines child abuse and neglect as, at a minimum, 'any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation (including sexual abuse), or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm' (cited by Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).

Child neglect was rightly linked to poverty. However, poverty may not be the parents' fault. Neglected children, especially in countries with high levels of poverty, need childcare or welfare and not necessarily legal recourse in the same sense that child victims of abuse need. The concepts and services for the two, therefore, need to be separated and made more appropriate.

Because of the greater prevalence of child abuse but less commercial exploitation in Western countries, not only is commercial exploitation of children neglected in Western books, some Western authors use the term 'child abuse'

to include commercial exploitation of children, even when they examine child abuse across the globe (e.g., Schwartz-Kenney, McCauley, & Epstein, 2000). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) uses the term 'child maltreatment' to include abuse and neglect of children. Thus, neglect, abuse, maltreatment, and exploitation are often used synonymously, and the terms do overlap. However, the terms need to be distinguished and made specific. Child neglect, abuse, and exploitation are significantly different, with different causes, as discussed later in this Element. Therefore, strategies to prevent and address them will also have to be different.

2.2.2 Need for Contextualising and Linking Problems in Childhood

Because Western literature focuses on child abuse and neglect, the literature on child protection in developing countries often lists problems faced by children. The explanation for this can be found in the history of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s with reference to child protection. Until the mid 1980s, UNICEF focused its work around the world on children's basic needs of education and health. In 1986, it carried out a policy review of 'children in especially difficult circumstances' that included abandoned children, street children, child victims of abuse and neglect, and children in armed conflict, and one year later, child labour (UNICEF, 2006). It used this list of problems of children in developing countries. However, mere listing results in children being labelled neglected, socially handicapped, deficient, illegitimate, delinquent, a street child, child labourer, trafficked child, child prostitute, and so on, focuses only on manifestations of the problems. A consequence of such symptoms-based targeting is labelling which leads to reduction of people's whole life stories to a specific problem. People are often labeled in ways that convey misinterpretations of an underlying problem. Labels stigmatise children. Moreover, people may use labels to gain privileged access to resources. Although labels are used to indicate diversity, they may homogenise people into stereotypes (Power of Labelling, 2006). The response to labelling has been development of separate schemes of services for each 'category' of children. Such a scheme approach has led to fragmentation of service delivery that addresses only symptoms, although most problems have common causes. As a result, causes of the problems have remained untouched.

Children and their problems do not exist in isolation; there are linkages among problems faced by children, with common causes, in the context of family and community. These linkages are necessary in order to understand the cycle of problems as well as the differential contexts, manifestations, and consequences in each problem situation to help prioritise preventative services.

A conceptual framework is proposed here to deconstruct problems in childhood. That framework is universal, comprehensive, and longitudinal.

2.3 Social Construction of Childhood and Adolescence

2.3.1 Introduction to Social Construction of Childhood

To identify the common causal factors of problems in childhood, this section first discusses the social construction of childhood. According to Aries (1962, cited from James & James, 2004), childhood did not exist in medieval society, as younger members of society were not granted special or distinctive social status. They participated in society according to their abilities, just as adults did. Jans (2004) noted that until the eighteenth century, children were protected and cherished till they were six or seven years old, after which they were considered pocket-sized adults, mostly involved in employment. Industrial capitalism has led to science, policies, and programmes that shaped the social construction of childhood. According to the sociological paradigm, childhood is neither a natural nor a universal feature of human groups. It is a variable which can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity (Prout & James, 1997, cited in Gallacher & Kehily, 2013). Biology does not determine childhood or adolescence, but provides a context for it, just as biology (sex) does not determine but provides the context for the gendered lives of girls and women.

The prejudicing ideologies such as adultism, sexism, ableism, racism, casteism, etc., justify role stereotypes, and therefore create social constructions of hierarchy, exclusion, domination, intolerance, oppression, exploitation, and violence against all children, and more so among girls, children with disability, children from marginalised ethnicities/castes/indigenous people/tribes, etc. This section focuses on social construction of childhood created by adultism and sexism.

2.3.2 Social Construction of Childhood by Adultism

According to Le Francois (2013), adultism is understood as the oppression experienced by children and young people at the hands of adults and adult-produced/adult-tailored systems. It relates to sociopolitical status differentials and power relations endemic to adult–child relationships. Adultism may include experiences of individual prejudice, discrimination, violence, and abuse, as well as social control and systemic oppression. At an individual level, it is characterised by adult authoritarianism towards children and adult-centric perspectives in interacting with children and in understanding children's experiences. Systemic adultism is characterised by adult-centric legislation, policies, rules,

and practices that are embedded within social structures and institutions which impact negatively on children's daily lives and result in disadvantage and oppressive social relationships.

Patriarchal families are adultist, where children are supposed to be obedient to elders and have little say in decisions which are made for them. Patriarchy developed as a system of control and distribution of resources by hierarchies of age, gender, and generation, leading to strict determination of roles and responsibilities. The father or the eldest male is considered the patriarch or 'head of the household'. Control over resources and assumption of superiority give the patriarch the power to make decisions about his dependents, which mainly include women and children. If a child asserts himself or herself, in the process of disagreeing with the elder or making his or her own life choices, the family's unity and stability are perceived to be threatened. Thus, children are made vulnerable to subordination and control in such families.

White (2003) emphasised that, because children and young people are of course vulnerable and in need of adult protection in some senses and situations, approaches to analysis or action that focus on vulnerability alone are problematic. They are likely to encourage notions of the young as passive, helpless victims, obscuring their strengths and competences, their own ideas about ways of coping with adversity, and their rights to take part as active agents in their own development. James and James (2004) noted that adult control over children is often justified as necessary for their welfare. However, adult control is often a means to maintain conformity and social order between the generations as adults seek to preserve and recreate the childhood they remember. Children are known to have agency by birth; however, the life-cycle approach is useful to understanding the evolving capacities of children, and the need to balance dependency and autonomy across the stages of early and middle childhood and adolescence, broadly covering zero to six years, six to twelve years, and twelve to eighteen years, respectively.

According to the EU Canada Project (2003), adultism may lead to protective exclusion in the following ways: withholding information and access to entitlements on the basis that children are too immature or incapable of using them 'properly'; acting 'on behalf of a child or young person' using the same rationale; making decisions about a child or young person based on generalised representations of children and young people rather than consulting with or treating situations on their individual merits; and acting as a barrier to the autonomy, independence, and empowerment of children and young people individually or collectively. Moreover, when adults are given the authority to control children under their care by disciplining them, child abuse comes to be institutionalised in the family, schools, and society. Thus, from an adultist

perspective, child abuse is not an anomaly, but it is built into the way in which childhood is defined.

2.3.3 Social Construction of Female Childhood by Sexism

Sexism implies stereotypes of women's physical and mental capabilities, which have led to role stereotypes of earner for men and housewife for women, headship for men and subordination for women and, therefore, discrimination against women. Sexism consists of attitudes, policies, institutional structures, and actions that discriminate against one sex (often but not always, against women), limiting freedom and opportunities (Griffin, 2008).

'Sex' refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia, and the related difference in procreative function (Connelly et al., 2000). For ages, it was believed that the different characteristics, roles, and statuses accorded to women and men in society were determined by biology (that is, sex), that they were natural and, therefore, not changeable. The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with this tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy. Gender is a matter of culture; it refers to the social classification of men and women into 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Gender has no biological origin; the connections between sex and gender are not natural (Bhasin, 2000).

From a very early age, children learn their gender roles and societal expectations from them, along with their respective future social, productive, and reproductive roles. Girls are often trained as passive, submissive, and emotional human beings, whereas in most cultures boys and men are expected to be physically strong and sexually successful, to be risk-takers and decision-makers, and to provide financially for their wives and children. Such socialisation leads to discrimination against girls from childhood with reference to education, health, and other social services. Boys are socialised into a sense of superiority over girls and this may cause some boys to be aggressive towards girls, and most girls are socialised to be submissive and tolerant of this violence (Save the Children, 2009).

2.3.4 Social Construction of Dependency in Middle Childhood by Schooling

The eighteenth-century philosopher Rousseau is credited with inventing the modern notion of childhood as a distinct period of human life with needs of stimulation and education. There was an outrage over the conditions of child labourers in factories in the West in the late eighteenth century, which had less to do with exploitation of the child labourers than with fears of their unruly and potentially undesirable activities made possible by an independent income

(Burman, 2008). Ruddick (2003) noted that the modern childhood and youth that emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century in industrialising nations also had strong links to the anxieties of a growing middle class in those countries about their children's future. For this class, the rise of industrial capitalism required a shift in strategies of social reproduction towards an increasingly educated (male) progeny, as the paths into clerical and managerial work. These paths were directed increasingly through the classroom and away from the 'shop floor'. Such a shift from child labour work to clerical work required schooling, especially in middle childhood.

Middle childhood was thus constructed through schooling, justifying making children dependent and imposing a middle-class ideal of childhood as a period of helplessness (Hendrick, 1990, cited in Burman, 2008). This model of childhood upheld the innocence of children. Childhood thus emerged as a domain to be colonised and civilised (Burman, 2008). Education took children away from work to schools. As families detached from kinship communities, children became the focal point for parents' gaze. Both school and family now acted as disciplinary structures through which children were domesticated (Wyness, 2012). Due to schooling (and family), the position of children evolved from strong social participation with minimal protection during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to strong protection with minimal participation during the twentieth century (Jans, 2004). Separation was realised between environments of children and adults. As a result, children came to spend most of their time among themselves, secluded from the rest of society, in a psychosocial moratorium (Dasberg, 1965, cited in Jans, 2004).

2.3.5 Social Construction of 'Normal' Childhood by Western Development Sciences

Developmental psychology has contributed significantly to understanding childhood in its various stages; however, developmentalism and its 'ages and stages' model of childhood based on biology, has several implications. Boyden and Levison (2000) noted that the overall trend in developmental science accepts transformation from immature child to mature adult, simple to complex, irrational to rational behaviours, and dependent childhood to autonomous adulthood. Children are thus understood to be immature beings in a state of development and training for competent adulthood. The concept of 'developing' children into adults by 'teaching' them implies that children are not developed or are incomplete and adults are 'developed' or 'complete' (Levison, 2000).

The Western standards of 'normal' childhood are based on 'adultist' notions of childhood as a basically biologically driven 'natural' phenomenon in which children are distinguished from adults by specific physical and mental (as

opposed to social) characteristics. In this 'normal' childhood, children are seen as separated from the world of work and devoting their time to learning and play and thus economically worthless, apolitical, and asexual (White, 2003).

Although children all over the world worked before the advent of formal education, according to most economic models, children are perceived both as a cost to society and as the passive receptacles of benefits and knowledge imparted by adults. In other words, children's integration into society is portrayed, in effect, as a one-way process in which adults give and children receive (Boyden & Levison, 2000). As Wyness, Harrison, and Buchanan (2004) noted, a political community has an exclusive adult membership with children not considered competent for entry. Children's apolitical nature is associated with family being considered their primary social environment, which is seen as the personal and private sphere, shielding children from the public sphere of politics.

Developmentalism has also led to universal chronologisation, based on Western, white, middle class, male constructs of 'normality'. It has institutionalised chronological age within the life course; age is now key to the definition of what a child is. The ways in which developmental science has used age to chart children's development is problematic as not all children achieve the same stages at the same age (James & James, 2012). In different cultures, the movement of individual children through childhood is not followed with much precision, and age is frequently treated as only an approximate benchmark. Many different kinds of criteria – although seldom age – are used to demarcate childhood (Boyden & Levison, 2000). Sigelman and Rider (2006) noted that age means different things in different societies. Each society has its own ways of dividing the life span and of treating the individuals who fall into different age groups. Each socially defined age group in a society is assigned different statuses, roles, privileges, and responsibilities.

2.3.6 Social Construction of Adolescence as an Extension of Childhood

The 'age of majority' is the legal age at which an individual is recognised by a nation as an adult and is expected to meet all obligations attendant to that status, such as voting, marriage, military participation, property ownership, and responsible alcohol consumption. Below the age of majority, an individual is still considered a 'minor'. There is a wide variation in national laws setting minimum age thresholds for participation in these activities. In many countries, the age of majority is eighteen, which is consonant with the upper threshold of the age range for children under the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989).

Adolescence originated in the late nineteenth-century United States when the need for advanced education produced a greater economic dependence on parents between puberty and the time when an individual achieved economic and social independence. Education introduced two important factors: delay in achieving economic self-sufficiency and social experiences separated from adult life (Lesser & Pope, 2007).

As adolescence is a social construct, its age group differs widely between cultures and social classes. Even though physical maturation may be completed by the age of eighteen years, there can exist much variation in the ages at which children functionally become adults in a society by assuming adult roles and responsibilities. These criteria include the commencement of work, end of schooling, betrothal and marriage, among others. Normally, the criteria that are applied differ according to gender and class. For street or working children, or girls married off in their mid-teens, adolescence may end even earlier. By contrast, during the early years of adulthood, the tasks of adulthood may not yet be completed for those going through advanced education. Thus, it is essential to bear in mind that experiences of adolescence can differ considerably, as a result of differences in socio-economic class and cultural practices; rural, urban, or semi-urban environment; involvement in the labour force instead of the formal educational system, and so on (Boyden & Levison, 2000). Jones (2009) rightly noted that youth is a middle-class phenomenon, a luxury to which the poor have no access as they need to start earning early in life.

Chronologisation has created an artificial dichotomy between childhood and adulthood, as though the two are distinctly different from one another. The distinction between childhood and adulthood at the age of eighteen is arbitrary, fixed first by the sciences and then the UNCRC, negating childhood as a social construct. The prevalent adultist perspective of childhood considers children dependent, incomplete, changing, ignorant, becoming, and therefore rendered powerless; and, by contrast, adults as independent, complete, stable, knowledgeable, being, and therefore given power over the other, alienating one from the other. The former is given rights, and the latter is given duties to protect these rights. In fact, as James and James (2004) emphasised, it is the supposed differences between children and adults that underpin the institution of childhood. Such discontinuities between childhood and adulthood raise the need for and problems with reference to age verification, as two different sets of norms and laws apply to those below and those above the age of eighteen.

Erikson's theory of ego development saw the adolescent mind as a 'mind of the moratorium' and youth as a period of 'structured irresponsibility' (Jones, 2009). However, Jahoda and Warren (1965, cited in Jones, 2009) argued that in traditional societies, where physiological maturity and social maturity occur

simultaneously, there are no problems with youth. It is only in industrialised societies, where there is neither appropriate training for adulthood nor a sure place in the social world, that young people face an adjustment problem and could find themselves temporarily in a 'marginal world' (Reuter, 1937, cited in Jones, 2009). This prolonged emotional, psychological, and economic dependency led to a century-long enduring mythology of adolescence, depicted as a period of 'storm and stress' subject to hormonally induced mood swings (Ruddick, 2003). Thus 'adolescent disorder' is not biological, but socially constructed.

As childhood is now seen as a period when the real world of sexual, economic, and public action is suspended, children who assume a different position within the generational hierarchy are considered a social and moral threat (Wyness, 2012). In fact, without opportunities for productive civic engagement, young people's frustrations can boil over into violent behaviour and lead to economic and social instability, sparks that can ignite long-simmering disputes (World Bank, 2006). 'Juvenile delinquency', especially with reference to status offences, is thus socially constructed. Status offenders are children who commit an act that violates a law or ordinance designed to regulate behaviour with reference to age. Status offences, therefore, need to be decriminalised.

2.4 Implications of Industrialisation and Globalisation for Childhood

On one hand, the social construction of childhood and adolescence has made all children vulnerable. On the other hand, industrialisation and globalisation have brought about far-reaching changes in economic, societal, as well as family structures, that have led to several positive changes, but also aggravated problems in childhood. With industrialisation, societies have become more modern, family has become nuclear, community orientation has loosened, and kinship supports for families have weakened. This nuclear family type is characterised by aggravation of patriarchy by housewifisation of women and increases in family violence, dual career families, consumerism, and individualism, etc.

Globalisation is the development of an increasingly integrated world-wide economy marked by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labour markets that transcend nation-state boundaries. An increasingly integrated world economy enables human trafficking to thrive. Comparative advantage in goods and cheap labour in developing states have played significant roles in objectifying and exploiting humans for economic ends. Women and children are the most vulnerable and thus, principal victims of traffickers who coerce their services, predominantly in the sex industries (Brewer, 2008).

Globalisation has made the poor poorer and more vulnerable due to weakened social structures that ordinarily serve as a safety net to help meet basic needs. As