

Cooper Jones

2511923

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The aim of this essay will be to discuss a range of factors that influence children's behaviour (both positively and negatively) in a learning environment. This essay will discuss a variety of theorist, theories, policies and legislations within the learning environment.

Behaviour is a form of communication; there are various perspectives in which behaviour can be defined by such as the psychology perspective which believes 'Behaviour is the result of stimulus response' (Simply Psychology, 2025). John B. Watson described the psychology perspective as 'to predict, given the stimulus, what reaction will take place; or, given the reaction, state what the situation or stimulus is that has caused the reaction' (Watson, 1930, p.11). Another perspective in which behaviour can be defined by is the education perspective believes 'behavioural learning theory explains learning as a change in observable behaviour shaped by environmental stimuli, reinforcement and punishment' (National University, 2023).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system will be the first theory discussed within this essay. The ecological system was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, this system is made up from 5 systems, these being; microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem which are all believed to influence growth and behaviour. 'Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory posits that an individual's development emerges from interconnected environmental systems, spanning intimate (family) to societal (culture) levels' (Simply Psychology, 2025). The microsystem; immediate environment and direct relationships (family, school, peers). 'The mesosystem; connections between the microsystems, such as how parents and teachers communicate about a child's progress. The exosystem; indirect influences the child doesn't directly experience (parent's workplace stress, community resources, extended family networks). The macrosystem; broader cultural context shaping all systems: societal values, beliefs, laws and socioeconomic status. The

chronosystem; time dimension including life transitions, historical events (pandemic, wars), and societal changes that reshape development across the lifespan.' (Simply Psychology, 2025). The Bronfenbrenner theory is a systematic factor that could influence a child's behaviour both positively and negatively within a learning environment. A child's most effective source of motivation is their family/careers therefore if the parents and teachers work cooperatively and build a relationship the parental figure will have a positive attitude towards learning and education. This will help the child show positive attitudes and behaviour towards their learning and increased efforts in their work, skills and capability to show their parental figures which in turn will feel rewarding for the child. Potential barriers that cause the child to display negative behaviours in learning environments is if parental figures are unwilling to build relationships or work cooperatively with schools and teachers which can lead to the child not receiving motivation from home and lead to displaying lack of care and unwanted behaviours. It is important for schools and teaching staff to put interventions in place for parents/ parental figures of learners such as daily communication, feedback on what is working and what is not, providing support, coffee mornings and creating plans based off the child's needs to help them reach their full potential both out of a school setting and in a school setting. The Children's Act 1989 Legislation states, 'Key provisions include parental responsibility, child arrangement orders, and the duties of local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need' (UK Public General Acts, 1989). Bronfenbrenner's theory is supported by this as it is the duty of the microsystem to ensure the child's wellbeing and welfare is supported.

Mindblindness also known as ToM (Theory of Mind) was a theory created by Simon Baron-Cohen's research on children with autism. Baron- Cohen states that individuals mindread constantly, effortlessly, automatically and mostly unconsciously. 'Baron – Cohen concludes that children with autism, suffer from mindblindness as a result of a selective impairment in mindreading. For these children, the world is essentially devoid of mental things' (The MIT Press, 1995). Autism is a triad of impairments, these being; 'qualitative impairment in social interactions, severe communication impairment and restricted/ repetitive patterns of behaviour' (National Autistic Society, 2023). Learning environments typically look different for children with autism, classrooms are neutral toned and toys/ desirable items are stored

away to avoid distraction. Following the triad of impairments, one being severe communication impairment it is important for children with autism so receive a format for them to communicate to parental figures/ school staff such as; AAC boards, Makaton, sign or pictures of necessities in reach (food, toilet, break, quiet room). Children can grow upset or frustrated when unable to communicate their needs and therefore can lead to displaying unwanted behaviours physically and becoming dysregulated. By having communication interventions in place for children with autism it will allow them to express their emotions and needs without growing upset or frustrated and give children the chance to become independently with their voices. Communication interventions can promote positive behaviours in children with autism by parental figures and school staff providing positive feedback instantly as a child communicates through their form of communication in turn this will motivate the child and therefore lead to the child displaying positive behaviours frequently. Qualitative impairment in social interactions is another one of the triad of impairments, there are various interventions available for children with autism to build their social and interaction skills with others which can positively impact their behaviour. Small play groups of children within a similar age group is an intervention which helps children with autism build their tolerance with turn taking, sharing toys and sharing spaces. 'Participants can engage in meaningful interactions, enhance communication skills and, practice self-regulation. With a focus on play, children can explore their interests while learning important social norms' (Rainbow, 2023). 'The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026' (Department of Education, 2021) is a legislation committed to providing better and more inclusive support to children and young people with autism within education. Schools have the responsibility to provide behaviour policies which will set the expectations of learners along with the respect for learners encouraging positive behaviours in classroom environments.

Cognitive development is another factor that could influence a child's behaviour both positively and negatively. Jean Piaget theory had a high level of influence on cognitive development within children. 'This theory outlines how children think, reason and develop mentally. Piaget proposed that cognitive development occurs in four distinct stages' (Care Learning, 2024). The four stages are; sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and

formal operational. Sensorimotor; the child understands the world through senses and actions between the ages of birth to 2 years old. Preoperational; the child understands the world through language and mental images between the ages of 2 to 7 years old. Concrete operational; the child understands the world through logical thinking and categories between the ages of 7 to 12 years old. Formal operational; understands the world through hypothetical thinking and scientific reasoning from the age 12 years old and onwards. 'Adversity in childhood experiences can create harmful levels of stress, which impact healthy brain development. This can result in long-term effects on learning, behaviour, and health' (Liverpool CAHMS, 2026). Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) supports Piaget's cognitive development theory as children understand the world through senses and actions from the age of birth therefore experiencing ACEs from a young age can impact their behaviour seen in learning environments as children grow older. Children could display four different responses due to experiencing an adverse childhood experience, these could be; fight, flight, freeze or dawn. Some children could display more than one response. 'Fight; signs include anger, irritability, hypervigilance. Flight; Restlessness, panic and hyperactivity. Freeze; dissociation, brain fog, memory gaps and difficulty making decisions. Fawn; people- pleasing, over- apologizing, lack of boundaries.' (Intergrative Life Center, 2026). Children with adverse childhood experiences can display negative/ unwanted behaviours within classrooms which can often be seen as disruptive, avoidance and defiant. There are various interventions in place across schools to support children such as nurture groups, ELSAs, Thrive and Emotional Literacy. With these interventions in place, it can allow the child to navigate their emotions and how to communicate them with peers and staff. Allowing the child to express their emotions and understand what they have been through interventions will allow them to input strategies to improve behaviour within classrooms, strategies to regulate emotions and positively impact the child for the future. Policies and legislations throughout schools in the UK follow the Children's Right Act which states 'The ability to make well balanced decisions; to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner; and to develop a healthy lifestyle' (UNICEF UK) which proves that children with adverse childhood experiences have the right to receive interventions and strategies to help them achieve and display positive behaviours in learning environments.

All factors discussed within this essay can impact children both positively and negatively in learning environments. Children have the right to receive interventions, strategies and support that can help them display positive behaviours within classrooms. Cognitive, Biological and Systematic barriers can impact children both positively and negatively therefore it is essential for schools, parents and careers to work closely to allow the child/ young person to reach their full potential.

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