

Fitting the full range of contextual factors into the ICF model: One size does not fit all.

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Contextual factors are clearly an important component of the ICF model. This model shows contextual factors as being associated with all the other components, namely body function and structure, activities and participation. However little guidance is given as to the nature of these associations. The classification of environmental factors likewise gives little guidance as to how it should be used other than that 'these factors must be considered for each component of functioning and coded accordingly' (1). This paper will present a conceptual analysis which suggests that there are differential relationships of various types of environmental factors with the different components of the ICF model. This analysis further illustrates that environmental factors can act as independent, mediating or moderating variables in the disability models. The findings have implications for the choice of environmental factors to included in studies and surveys and for statistical analyses relating to disability.

1. International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health: ICF. World Health Organization, Geneva 2001. page171.