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ASSESSMENT 2

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

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Contents

Introduction	3
Definition of the term “Child”	3
Childhood As A Socially Constructed Concept	4
Key Elements Of Family Life	5
History Of Childhood	6
Factors That Has Contributed In Changing The Lives Of Children And Reducing Inequalities.....	8
Policy and Legislation	8
The Emergence Of Child Development And Neuroscience	9
Sociological Factors	9
Current Interventions And Approaches To Help Children And Different Families	9
REFERENCES	10

Introduction

This essay explains the concept and perspectives of child and childhood, it also goes forward to state the concept of childhood as a social construct and to explain the meaning of the concept. It offers an outline of the changes in childhood from ancient to current times. This essay also looks at the family as a social construct and considers the changes within the concept of family in UK.

The essay goes further to discuss the elements which has influenced changes in children's lives and decrease in inequality from past times to present years. Finally, it gives a narrative on the current interventions employed by the UK government and citizens to aid vulnerable children and explains how these interventions can reduce inequalities between children from different backgrounds (the advantage and disadvantaged backgrounds).

Definition of the term "Child"

According to Kehily, (2013), most often, age is the basis of the definition of the "child" term. Normally, child is said to be any human being from birth until the beginning of puberty this covers individuals from birth to about 14 years of age. The oxford English dictionary describes a child as an underdeveloped individual under the puberty age, or the legal majority age. Apart from this general definition of child there are three perspectives of the term child, this includes the biological, legal and social perception of a child. According to *O'Toole MT, ed. (2013)*, the biological view point describes a child as any individual between the period from birth to puberty, in this perspective also, *Rathus SA (2013)* defines a child as anyone between the progressive infancy stage to puberty stage.

The legal definition of child according to the United Convention on Rights of the Child describes a child as anyone below age eighteen(18), the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) believes that a person is a child if he/she is between the 0 to 18 age group, the Juvenile Justice Act in India sees a child as one below the age of 14, and lastly the Right of Education Act 2009 limit the definition of child to individuals between ages 6 to 14 Kehily, (2013).

According to Kehily, (2013), socially, a child is seen in the social and educational policies as impending citizens of a state/nation and learners. This concept establishes that adults are handed the duty of protecting the child as well as providing quality education. In social welfare policies, a child is seen as a vulnerable individual who is effortlessly exposed to different forms of abuse (emotional abuse, sexual abuse as well as physical punishment).

Childhood As A Socially Constructed Concept

Childhood is generally seen as the age period which ranges from birth time to the puberty stage, the word childhood depict the condition of being a child Kehily, (2013). According to Roz E (2012), elements normally linked with childhood are immaturity (both emotional and physical), and the tendency of being more weak and negatively exposed compared to adults and these elements leads to social reliance/dependence as well as lack of self-rule.

According to Kehily, (2013), up until the passing of the 20th century, the notion of childhood as a distinct group had been not been handled with much concern but in contemporary times, reverse is the case.

According to Valentine (2004), childhood instead of being an unchanging, and entirely biological stage of life is rather a universal social construct. In the same vein, McDowall Clark (2013) citing Wagg (1992:10) justifies that childhood much like many other essential viewpoint of iyouth, health, social life-gender and the rest is a social construct, which means that childhood is what people in a particular community/society, at a given time in specific areas/places say it is. According to Kehily, (2013), there is no general definition of childhood as the “childhood concept” differs according to cultural, socio-economic factors as well as family influence. With regards to cultural anticipations and customs, childhood differs as adults do not see children as distinct individuals from themselves and often engage in obligate them to act the way they desire them to, which in turn tells badly on the child development.

According to Plastow, M (2015) childhood differs in several fixed means by different discourses, therefore the group described by age (child, infant, adolescent and the rest) are to an extent random division that are influenced by political, societal, clinical, and ideological discourses.

According to Heather .M, (2019), the use of the concept “ childhood as a social construct” is used to explain that understanding of childhood are not the same in all places and that why the general society would accept the fact that children are distinct from adults, the fail to acknowledge how different they really are and the limit as to what to expect from them .

experiences drawn from different countries with respect to female genital mutilation, child marriage, child labour, and child prostitution will show the concept of childhood as a socially constructed concept.

For instance, when looking at the experience of being a child in UK and that in Yemen you can tell the difference as in Yemen the normal working age of any individual is 9 years (BBC, 2019). About 24% Children from ages 5-9 leaving in and/or born in Yemen are exposed to unsafe work hazards as they are expected to work. Meanwhile, children are mandated to be in training and education until age eighteen (18) .UK., (2021). This example the difference in the concept of childhood with regards to child labour and education.

According to Aleksandra, S and Angelina, E (2016) Bangladesh allows marriage between men of 21 years old and women of 18 years old, on the contrary, Sudan allows marriage of 10 years old girls and 15 years old boys, just at the onset of puberty. Meanwhile, in Wales and England marriage is legalized for persons above the age of 16. Children's Commissioner, (2021).

Lastly, According to Walk Free Foundation, (2013), countries such as Thailand allows child prostitution but in Wales and England the act of child prostitution is punishable by law with imprisonment for sexual exploitation CPS, (2019).

Key Elements Of Family Life

According to Sarah J and Isabella, P (2008), childhood needs as well as experiences are greatly affected by the family. The family has the sole responsibility of ensuring child's health and general welfare. The concept of family in the UK is continuously undergoing changes as the day. There has been tremendous changes in attitudes, legislation, expectations, and technology, and this has led to great feminisation in workspaces immediately after World war 2, prevalence in the use of contraceptives which has put off the needs to begin a family, and the general acceptance of the cohabitation, marry, re-marry, divorce concept. All these changes in the society's view of the concept of marriage has led to the build of complex and complicated family structures all through UK.

In recent times, family is no longer composed of married parents living with children, it is now a combination of stepfamilies, traditional nuclear family, cohabiting parents, civil partnerships, those living apart together as well as single parent families. The result of this family structural

changes in the UK has led to the emergence of more unstable families compared to other generations. Children are now often seen growing up under different parents single parents, step parents, grandparents, etc., and these children are exposed to poor health and welfare, engaging in unlawful activities, and poverty. This trend escalates as more women strive to be more career oriented, and men and women fight to pick a place and role in their families. Sarah J and Isabella, P (2008).

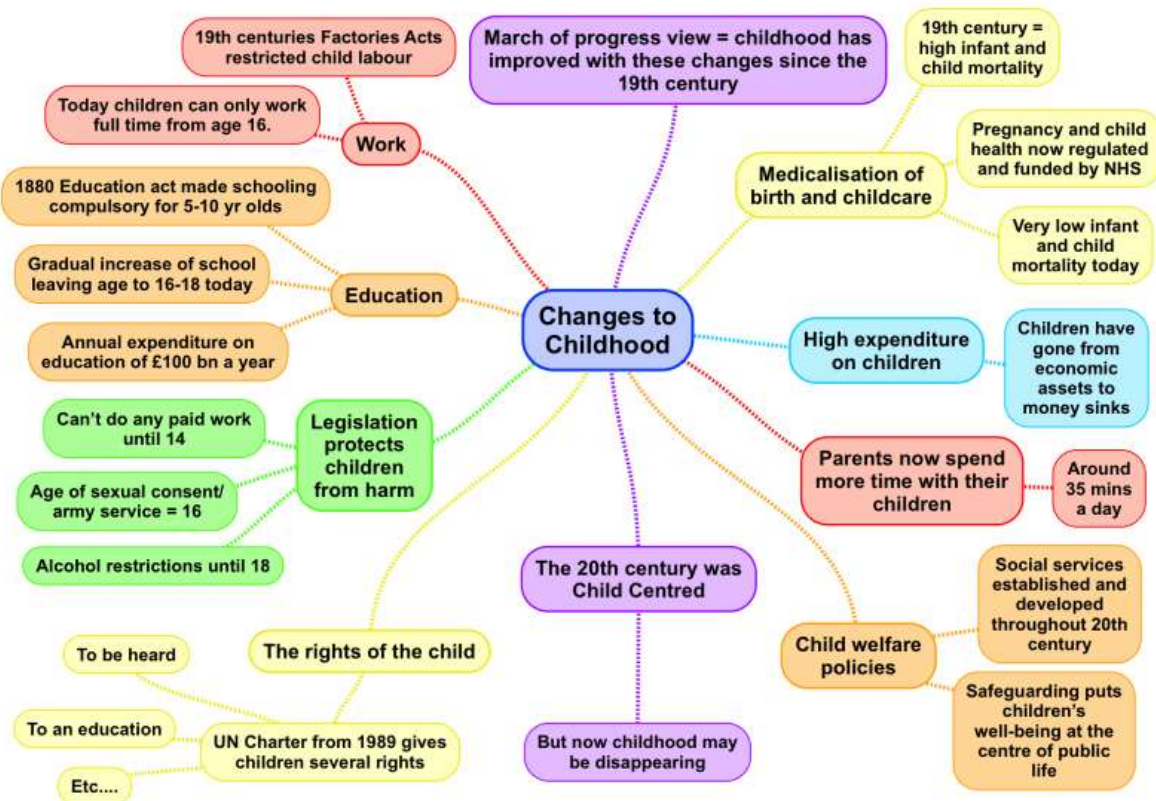
As with childhood, family is also seen as a socially constructed concept as it varies with difference in culture, religious systems and beliefs, society's view and personal perception.

History Of Childhood

According to Trisha, M and Nigel T (2009), the history of childhood in Europe has often had great pressure between the two contrasting views and this views happens to be extremely opposing to each other. In general, there are three main perspectives that governs the story from ancient Europe perspective of childhood to that of the current times. The three perspectives includes the Christian view, which covers the 16th and 17th century puritans, and this perspectives propose that a child is an inherently evil entity even from the point of birth, and holds to the fact that at least a child needs amendment and correction, and it is the responsibility of adults and parents around this child to train him/her into perfection/ a perfect adult. This perspective is the reason for the appearance of children dressed in white robes to signify purity during religious ceremonies in the middle age.

According to Jamie G,(2006) in the 1600s , another concept of childhood began to evolve in Europe and this was by an English philosopher named John Locke who began seeing children as distinct beings, who are blameless and needing the training and protection by adults the come in contact with. He went ahead to establish that the child's mind is like a tabula rasa which he defined as blank sheet or slate, and that children are neither good nor bad but are defined by what is inputted on them by their surrounding environment.

According to Trisha, M and Nigel T (2009), the third perspective is that of Jean Jacques Rousseau's in the 18th and 19th century in his book called Emile, where he establishes that children are born pure until they are negatively painted/formed by adults and their surroundings.



Source: [Changes to childhood since Victorian Times – ReviseSociology](#)

Changes Since Victorian Time To Current Times

According to *Bruce R (2011)*, in the nineteenth century there was a great record of working class children found working tirelessly in mills, mines and factories. These children were exposed to working for long hours and in very hazardous environments and situations which posed negative effect on the child's health, and most times could result to serious injuries and death. There was no exemption at home as children were often given adult tasks, caring for sick relations and doing domestic chores.

Finally, social behaviors towards children was altered in the middle of the nineteenth century, and the childhood phase gradually got recognized as an entirely different phase of life, differing from adulthood and people began to protect children from life's hardship and offering them access to education, training and guidance.

Factors That Has Contributed In Changing The Lives Of Children And Reducing Inequalities

Changes that were put in place to enhance the lives of children and make it different from the Victorian times includes the emergence of child development and Neuroscience, changes in sociological factors, and changes in legislation and policy.

Policy and Legislation

Changes in policies and legislation where the first and immediate changes that were put in place to better children's lives and make it differ from that in the Victorian Age. For instance, when it comes to policy and legislation, England has instigated legal codes in relation to child health, work, safety, education as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1991).

The major law associated with child work or labour that has modified child's life is the 1833 Factories Act in the nineteenth (19th) century the National Archives, (2021), this law put an end to and eliminated children having to work before they get to age 9 and in recent times, the law on child employment affirms a child is only allowed to work full time if he is above the age of 16 GOV.UK., (2021). The code associated with child labor made sure that a child obtain an education and is shielded from exploitation, abuse and harm (UNICEF, 2016).

Another factor that contributed to the alteration and improvements in children lives is the law regarding education. The Education Act brought about obligatory education in 1880 and this was slated for children from ages five(5) to eleven(11). In recent times, in the United Kingdom, children must mandatorily attend school until they are up to 16 years old and must be involved in different trainings until they attain 18 years of age. GOV.UK., (2021). This has immensely contributed to bettering the lives of children living in the present UK.

The laws protecting children from abuse (including sexual permission only from 16 years old upward as well as restraint from alcohol consumption until the 18 years old), and harm has also greatly contributed to the refinement of child's life from what it used to be. According to NHS (2021) alcohol consumption at an early age will have negative health impact on the child and also, according to Childline (2021) the law code make sure to safeguard children from all forms of sexual abuse as having sex with a child below the benchmark of 16 years is unlawful because the child does not have the ability to grant permission.

The influence of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1991) is another safe space in child life enhancement as the institution of this Convention was necessary

to make sure that every child has the right to protection from harm and abuse, education, life, healthy development, and non-discrimination (Save the Children, 2021).

The Emergence Of Child Development And Neuroscience

The beginning of child development as a course or subject of study has also advanced the essentiality of giving a great childhood experience to all children, it has help in improving child's life as it focuses and emphasis the importance of giving a child the best childhood as it contribute to who he becomes in the future. This development also draws attention to the effect of harmful childhood experience on the child's development in the future. Neuroscience goes ahead to offer confirmations of the harm on child's brain caused by adverse experiences in the first five years of a child's life.

Sociological Factors

The sociological factors comes to play in improving and enhancing childre's lives as parents now make out quality time to be with their children and the governemnt also spend adequate amont of money to ensure that children's genral welfare is being taken care of. For instance, the NHS offers free healthcare services NHS (2019).

All these factors are in line with Benferbrenner's ecological theory and Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs (Berk, 2000). As seen in the factors, the child has been taken care of, which covers for the mesosystem, the child's environment has also been immensely taken care of which covers for the macrosystem layers in Benferbrenner's theory, and also the child's needs have been taken care of, the psychological, physical and safety needs according to Maslow theory

Current Interventions And Approaches To Help Children And Different Families

There has been current interventions that have been set up to aid children as well as their families these includes the universal services, and the targeted intervention. The universal intervention/ services includes general practitioners, schools, NHS. NHS has room for assessing free medical health care and this can help poor children and solve inequality by making sure that they health is taken care of without discrimination and despite their backgrounds. Also, there has been free lunch provided in schools to ensure that there is no child inequalities and children from both advantaged and disadvantaged background do not experience the differences, furthermore, for universal services, there has been an increase in

the number of general practitioners and this helps to maintain health of children without any form of bias.

For targeted intervention, according to Vivian L et al (2011), there are specific research based interventions for parent of children with developmental disabilities, , severe medical illnesses, mental and behavioural disorders, premature infancy, and extremely low birth weight, these intervention and attention provided here are regardless of the social status of parent or child, the Equality Act ensures that everyone is treated the same.

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