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BSc HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILY
BMHP5004_LON

ASSESSMENT 2
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INTRODUCTION

Today, the children we see in the United Kingdom (UK) have passed through different times with their accompanying stories or events. But are these children the same as every child in other parts of the world? Do all children globally enjoy the same care and protection? These are some of the questions this essay seeks to answer. Different conditions in other parts of the world have given various meanings to the word "child." Diverse religions, cultures, and socio-economic conditions come into play in considering childhood.

Nevertheless, there has been a rich history in childhood. The essay seeks to address factors in the changing process in children's lives to the present times. Finally, the paper would discuss what the governments are doing to protect the children.

The primary theme of this essay is "Childhood as a Social Construction". Social construction tells the reality from theory in addressing children and childhood knowledge. It highlights who constructs this knowledge. In addition, it describes the reason for the building and for what purpose the knowledge would serve. Childhood is not the same across boundaries of countries, different cultures, different societies, and different periods in history. The social construction of childhood highlights different situations and circumstances in which the child's life is identified (Norozi & Moen, 2016).

James and James (2008) define social construction as "a theoretical perspective that explores how reality is negotiated in every life through people's interactions and sets of discourses." (p.122).

What is a Child?

It is not correct to refer to someone as a child unless the subject in question is a child (Schapiro, 1999). There are rules to follow when considering the concepts "adult" and "child." A child is a minor between infancy and puberty (Meriam-Webster, 2019). According to the Cambridge dictionary (2019), a child is a boy or girl from birth to adulthood. The social policy explains the child as a young person whose needs the parents or the government should provide. Through their social services and the multi-agencies, Local authorities work together to protect the child (Ridge, 2019; Kehily, 2013). There is a legal definition of the word child. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1991 puts the child in a particular age range. "Everyone under the age of 18 is a child."

A childhood, which is the life stage of when human beings are children, is not the same everywhere. Such factors as socio-economic conditions, different cultures and families and religions create varying experiences of being a child in other parts of the world. For example, in the UK, a child is to be in school until 16 (Government Digital Service, 2011). However, for reasons of poverty in Zimbabwe, a girl dies at 14 during childbirth. A disadvantaged family forced Memory Machaya into child marriage, probably at 13. The BBC reported this incident on the 8th of August. Memory's family considered her a source of income instead of a child to care for or protect (BBC, 2021).

Another sad story happened in Cameroon. Habiba, a beautiful school girl of 14, was forced into marriage by the family. The underpinning factor is again poverty. In poor areas, a child cannot be a child. There are no government policies and agencies to safeguard the educational development of these girls. The UNICEF has Habiba's video on Youtube (United Nations, 2020). Sex tourism seems to be a legal phenomenon for adult males from Western countries to Thailand. Female children prostitute for money to take care of their families. The perpetrators seem to enjoy liberty because the government agencies have closed their eyes to the crime (Lau, 2008). The same type of prostitution would have been going on in the UK, but the laws are not lenient on the men. The laws punish those men who commit sexual abuse on young girls severely (CPS, 2019). The English, the Scottish, the Welsh or the Irish child can enjoy beautiful and peaceful childhood, unlike the child from Cameroon, Thailand or Zimbabwe. For one child, some adults make provision of their needs. However, another child sacrifices his life on the line as a source of income to the family.

Family life:

The family, like childhood, is also a social construction concept. It keeps changing depending on cultures, religions and socio-economic standards. A family is a social group bonded by marriage to provide social, emotional and economic well-being (Rory McDowall Clark, 2016). The child receives care and provision from the family (Wright, 2015). From the preceding fact, the child would be affected if the family changes in a wrong way.

Traditionally, a family consists of two parents and children. Grandparents and aunts have no space in the traditional unit. This type of family gained popularity in the Western world, but industrialization brought the middle-class phenomenon to dominate (Wright, 2015). Women now earn enough money, opening the way for marriages to dissolve quickly. Recognition and respect for religion hit the floor. Therefore many single-mother families surfaced to the detriment of the children (Wright, 2013). The unfortunate truth that many children would experience is poverty. Many of these children would grow to be victims or perpetrators of crime. Others would not perform well at school and drop out. Experiencing poverty early in a child's life can hurt their brain development (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2018).

Many children would not grow with their two parents but possibly with foster carers or in residential care. The court might give them out for adoption as the Children Act (1989) may allow. We see families of same-sex couples. The public does not stigmatize the children that would grow with same-sex couples because of the effectiveness of education and legislation (Gov.UK, 2013).

Families with children with Disabilities:

The families with disadvantaged children no longer think of keeping them in closed doors. As a result, the public embraced the Warnock Report 1978 and the recommendations. In addition, the families had a breath of relief because the mainstream schools admitted the

disadvantaged children. Education Act 1981 came to safeguard both the families and the children. The term "handicap" changed with "Special Educational Needs." Inclusion Policy documents for integration launched to relieve families with children with disabilities. As a result, all disadvantaged children have access to every part of the facility (Gov. UK, 2014).

Children and their families through history to the present times:

The history of childhood started in France. Philippe Aries wrote a book in 1960 which initiated the study of the history of childhood. Aries came up with many thoughts. One such hypothesis was that counting in the medieval period meant almost nothing. It came out of this hypothesis that childhood idea was not well-defined or not recognized at all. There was no reference to any particular age or periods of development of a child. According to Aries, adults brutally treated and forced children into the labour market. In the Middle ages, children were seen as miniature adults. It was around the 18th century that childhood was understood to be a stage of life. Through various ways, the acknowledgement was shown: children's clothing came into being, absolutely different from that of adults, no more seen as tiny adults. There came out children games and gradually a sense of innocence of childhood. Aries also suggested that parents did not attach themselves to their children to avoid emotional stress, as a result of the fact that the infant mortality rate was very high (Lowe, 2009)

There was literature around Europe mainly, the UK, that the child at birth was evil. The Christian literature stressed the need for redemption, confirming the thought that all children are born bad. Contradicting the idea that all children are born evil came children are born innocent but change while growing in society. Jean Jacques Rousseau confirmed in his book Emile (1762).

Ancient Greek and Roman Times:

Parents did not name infants immediately after birth, unlike today, where infants are given names even before labour. They justified this behaviour by the high infant mortality rate. At this period, parents did not attend to any child with a defect at birth. A proof that physical perfection was highly considered. The well-to-do parents employed wet nurses to care for their children. The children under seven years stayed at home with their mothers. Girls stayed and helped in the house chores until they are fifteen. At fifteen, they are ripe for marriage. The boys are allowed to socialize with men, encouraged to learn a trade. (Builders, Coppersmiths and land workers). The males rarely married before thirty years (Wright, 2015).

Medieval Society: (Middle Age):

The term childhood did not exist in the medieval period. Therefore, parents did not consider their sons and daughters as children that needed care and protection. Instead, the children lived and worked alongside adults. Middle age was the period from the end of Roman

Empire to the beginning of the 14th to 15th century. It was a period once considered as ignorant, superstitious and socially oppressive but now understood to be a dynamic period during which the idea of Europe emerged. Not surprising that the child workforce was an order of the time. Around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, affluent and reasonable middle-class adults appeared who could fight to stop an early entry of children into the labour market. As a result, the idea of childhood got an understanding among the men (Aubin and Judith Eleanor Herrin, 2018)

Industrial Revolution (1760-1830)

Many factories were built and needed the child workforce to fill up the places. The physical sizes of the children were an advantage. The children were employed and made to work long hours for small pay. The employers exploited the vulnerable children.

Victorian Society (1837-1901)

During this period, Britain enjoyed a demographic increase and welcomed different classes. As a result, society became more conscious of children and their needs. Children of the upper and middle classes are cared for by nannies. The lower class children were heavily exploited (Wright, 2015).

Policy and Legislation

Neuroscience says the child's development happens in the early stages of the child and takes him into adulthood. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory takes the load from families. It says the development of children does not depend only on parents. Under this theory, we have a microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Then there is Maslow hiererchical theory. The base should be satisfied first. Laws and policies are made around these to care for all children equally.

Conclusion

Much is done about childhood, however there is still poverty around that needs to looked into according to Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

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