

Assessment Component 2
Written Essay

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Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to examine how childhood develops, taking into account the social and historical formation of the family. I will describe the definition of a child and childhood as a social construction from historical to contemporary times, and how their lives have changed over times, considering various influences, laws and policies that have helped to improve how society views children and families. Towards the conclusion, I will talk about the interventions that are now being used in the UK to support children who are at risk and explain how doing so can lessen associated inequalities.

Provide and compare definitions of childhood (discussion of social construction of childhood - You can compare how childhood is constructed in two different countries, such as the UK and another one)

Childhood is one of the developmental periods in human life. A human individual during this period is called a child. (Overstreet and Learning, 2022) There are many definitions of the concept of childhood, there are also many attempts to periodize this period and its descriptions. In the common belief, childhood is the happiest period in a person's life, according to many people it is a time when you do not have to worry about anything, a blissful idyllic period without worries and troubles. However, as it turns out, the early years of a person's life are often not as happy as it might seem. It is not uncommon for childhood to be difficult for both the caregiver and the child, and these difficulties are based on limited development opportunities or disturbing behaviours.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, everyone who is younger than 18 is a child (NSPCC, 2022). If a person is under the age of 18 in England, they are regarded as children. The guidelines for child protection state that even if a child is 16 years old and is, a member of the military, living alone, seeking higher education, being a patient in a hospital, or being incarcerated in a secure estate. They should be given the same protection and rights as any other child. (Department for Education, 2018a).

According to the social policy, children are vulnerable and require protection (UNICEF, 2018). Childhood is a time of innocence, development and vulnerability, because of their physical and emotional immaturity; children need adult protection and care.

Children are frequently portrayed as reliant and incompetent in the UK and the rest of the Western world. Yet, not everywhere in the globe is like this. Children start assisting with family support at a young age in many nations. At the age of four, girls are expected to be able to look after their younger siblings, bring water, and firewood. By the age of six, they should be able to pound grain, produce milk, and sell these items in the market with their moms. The Fulani people of West Africa claim this. (Montgomery, 2013) According to UK legislation a child under the age of 13 may not be employed by anyone, including parents, guardians, and family members, whether they are paid or not. (NSPCC, 2022)

Key elements of family life

For children and teens, the family is a crucial biological, social, cultural, and educational context. It transmits to the next generation cultural norms, values, traditions, and the fundamentals of education. Parents are largely in charge of their children's social development and daily lives. (stateofchildhealth.rcpch.ac.uk, n.d.) For an individual, especially for children and young people, the family is an important social, emotional and educational environment. A family provides love, intimacy, internal structure, atmosphere of home life and specific relations in-between parents and children. A child is born in a family, regardless of its type (traditional nuclear family, single parent family, adoptive family), in which it develops not only biologically, but above all, intellectually, emotionally and socially. (Nickerson, 2022) In the family environment, the child learns the language, acquires human characteristics, social norms, behaviours, interpersonal interactions, and takes over the traditions recognised by parents, their culture and system of values. (Nickerson, 2022)

Over time, the structure of a family changed and developed, the family structure has undergone tremendous alteration over the past few decades, despite there once being one that predominated all others, traditional consisting of two parents raising their children. To a more diverse interpretation of what family is, families today have a far more varied structure. It is not uncommon to see same sex couples, lone parents and households with multiple families. (Ravi, 2021) We now see greater recognition and acceptance of family diversity.

In the past, the primary role of a woman in the family was becoming a wife and mother. Young girls were brought up to be submissive and obedient to their husbands. Marriage increased the woman's respect in society. (Revision World, 2019) In contemporary times, women have a lot more choice. Contraception is widely available, and it is not uncommon for women to leave unsatisfactory marriages or pursue careers. Equal pay act means that women can now go to work and earn the same pay as men, the fore divorce is more affordable. (GOV.UK, 1970)

Demonstrate understanding of the development of the social construction of childhood from historical times to current times. You need to discuss the changes seen in the lives of children and their families from historical to present times

It is commonly acknowledged in the early 21st century that childhood is a creation of contemporary culture, the idea that parents in the mediaeval ages despised their children and that kids back then were viewed as "mini grownups", during the medieval times childhood was not acknowledged as a distinct stage of life. Particular credit for the ideas goes to Philippe Ariès. (obo, n.d.) There's no doubt that Philippe Ariès laid the foundation for childhood and the family as we know it today, he inspired a large number of historians as well as scholars from many different fields to conduct in-depth investigation on these beliefs. (obo, n.d.) High mortality rates meant less affectionate and very formal parenting methods, the bond between parents and children lacked emotional attachment.

In ancient Greece and Roman times, infants had a hard time surviving, names were not given to them until seven to ten days after birth. Physical perfection was very important, when a baby was born with abnormalities, it was often abandoned, typically more female babies were abandoned. (Wondrium Daily, 2020) Sometimes people would take these abandoned babies and make them into slaves. Girls typically had to stay at home with their mothers while obtaining education and training, whereas boys would start attending school from the age of seven and obtain training from their fathers in the same work field. (Wondrium Daily, 2020) Wealthy families encouraged boys to be educated, play music, draw and become athletes. The poorer households required their children to start working to support the family from a young age.

In ancient Greece, it was common for girls to marry at a young age, often around the age of 15 or 16, while men may have chosen to delay marriage until their thirties, it was more important for men to establish themselves financially and socially before getting married. It is also worth noting that marriage in ancient Greece was not necessarily a romantic arrangement, but rather a practical and social one that was often arranged by families. The role of women in ancient Greek society was often limited to the domestic sphere, and marriage was seen as a way to ensure the continuation of the family line and the proper upbringing of children. (savvyleo.com, 2019)

In ancient Roman society, the male head of the household was known as the "paterfamilias" and held significant power over his family. (www.legendsandchronicles.com, n.d.) He was responsible for providing for and protecting his family, as well as making important decisions about their lives. As the head of the household, the paterfamilias had authority over his wife, children, and other members of his household, including slaves. He had the power to arrange marriages for his children, disinherit them, and even sell them into slavery in extreme cases. (www.legendsandchronicles.com, n.d.) However, it is important to note that not all men in ancient Rome were paterfamilias. This status was reserved for the head of a specific household, typically a wealthy and powerful individual. Other men, particularly those from lower social classes, may not have had the same level of authority within their families. (www.legendsandchronicles.com, n.d.) Additionally, while the paterfamilias was responsible for the welfare of his family, women and children still held significant roles within Roman society. Women were often responsible for managing the household and raising children, and some even held positions of power and influence outside of the home. (www.legendsandchronicles.com, n.d.)

The Industrial Revolution, which began in the 18th century in Britain and later spread to other parts of Europe and North America, had a profound impact on family life. The Industrial Revolution led to the emergence of the nuclear family as the primary unit of society. In rural areas, extended families were common, with multiple generations living and working together. The Industrial Revolution also had a significant impact on child labour, during this period, children were often employed in dangerous and physically demanding jobs, such as working in textile mills or coal mines. They were also often paid very low wages and forced to work long hours in harsh conditions. Many children suffered from injuries or illnesses as a result of their work, and their education and overall well-being were often neglected. The movement to end child labour gained momentum during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with activists pushing for stronger labour laws and greater protections for children in the workplace. This included efforts to establish minimum age requirements for employment, limit the number of hours children could work, and improve safety conditions in factories and mines.

Overall, the struggle to end child labour during revolutionary times was a complex and ongoing process, with many different factors at play. While progress was made over time, it was often slow and difficult, and it took many years of activism and advocacy to achieve significant change. The Cotton Factories Regulation Act, also known as the Ten Hours Act, was passed by the British Parliament in 1844. The act was aimed at improving the working conditions of children and young persons employed in cotton mills. (www.liquisearch.com, n.d.) It limited the working day for women and young persons (defined as those between the ages of 13 and 18) in cotton mills to a maximum of 10 hours. Children under the age of 13 were banned from working in the mills altogether. (www.liquisearch.com, n.d.) The act also required factory owners to provide education for children working in the mills. Children were required to attend school for at least two hours each day, and factory owners were required to pay for their education. The Cotton Factories Regulation Act was significant because it represented a major step forward in the regulation of working conditions in factories.

Factors which have contributed in changing the lives of children and reducing inequalities

There have been several factors that have contributed to changing the lives of children and reducing inequalities, some of these factors are, improved access to education, this has played a critical role in changing the lives of children and reducing inequalities. Policies and legislation aimed at promoting universal access to education have helped to ensure that more children have the opportunity to learn and improve their lives. Child labour laws: Legislation aimed at eliminating child labour has helped to improve the lives of children by protecting them from exploitation and abuse. Such laws have helped to reduce the number of children working in hazardous conditions and ensure that they receive appropriate education and care. Healthcare policies: Policies aimed at improving healthcare access and affordability have also helped to reduce inequalities and improve the lives of children. This includes policies aimed at improving access to healthcare services, promoting healthy behaviours and lifestyles, and reducing disparities in healthcare outcomes. Poverty reduction policies: Policies aimed at reducing poverty have also played a key role in improving the lives of children and reducing inequalities. These policies include social welfare programs, income support measures, and employment and training programs aimed at helping families move out of poverty. International agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child have helped to raise awareness about children's rights and create a framework for protecting them. These agreements have been instrumental in promoting policies and legislation that prioritize children's well-being.

Provide the reasons why these factors changed and improved the lives of children, young people including right for all the children and in reducing inequalities

The factors contributed to changing and improving the lives of children, young people, and reducing inequalities for several reasons: International conventions and agreements have helped to create a framework for protecting children's rights. These agreements have made it clear that children have the right to education, healthcare, and protection from exploitation and abuse. By promoting and enforcing these rights, policies and legislation have helped to improve the lives of children and reduce inequalities. (ReviseSociology, 2020) Policies and legislation aimed at promoting universal access to education have helped to ensure that more children have the opportunity to learn and improve their lives. This has helped to reduce disparities in education outcomes and promote social mobility. Policies aimed at improving healthcare access and affordability have helped to reduce inequalities and improve the lives of children. This includes policies aimed at improving access to healthcare services, promoting healthy behaviours and lifestyles, and reducing disparities in healthcare outcomes. Policies aimed at reducing poverty have played a key role in improving the lives of children and reducing inequalities. These policies include social welfare programs, income support measures, and employment and training programs aimed at helping families move out of poverty. By reducing poverty, policies have helped to improve children's access to education, healthcare, and other critical resources.

Overall, these factors have contributed to improving the lives of children and young people by promoting their rights, protecting them from harm, and ensuring that they have access to critical resources like education and healthcare. These policies and legislation have helped to reduce inequalities by promoting equal opportunities and ensuring that all children have the chance to reach their full potential.

Identify and analyse a range of approaches and interventions which support vulnerable children, young people and families in present times and evaluate their effectiveness in reducing inequalities

There are a variety of approaches and interventions that have been implemented to support vulnerable children, young people, and families in present times. Early intervention programs aim to identify and provide support to vulnerable children and families before problems escalate. These programs may include home visits, parent education, and support services aimed at improving parenting skills and family functioning. Research has shown that early intervention can be effective in reducing inequalities and improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Family support programs aim to provide families with the resources and support they need to promote positive outcomes for children. These programs may include parenting education, counselling services, and financial assistance. Research has shown that family support programs can be effective in reducing inequalities by promoting positive family relationships and improving child well-being.

Youth development programs aimed at promoting positive youth development and preventing negative outcomes can be effective in reducing inequalities. These programs may include sports programs, arts programs, and community service projects aimed at promoting positive youth development and reducing the risk of negative outcomes such as substance abuse and delinquency.

Ongoing evaluation and improvement are essential to ensure that these interventions continue to be effective in promoting positive outcomes and reducing inequalities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there have been significant improvements in the lives of children, young people, and families due to policy and legislation aimed at protecting their rights and reducing inequalities. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that all children have access to the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. Here are some recommendations for further improvements. Increase support for families: Providing support for families, particularly those experiencing poverty, can help to promote positive family relationships and improve child well-being. Policies aimed at providing financial assistance, housing support, and other resources to families in need could have a significant impact on reducing inequalities and promoting positive outcomes for children.

Increase funding for early intervention programs: Early intervention programs have been shown to be effective in reducing inequalities and promoting positive outcomes for children and families. Increasing funding for these programs could help more vulnerable children and families receive the support they need to succeed. In order to achieve these recommendations, it is important to engage in ongoing evaluation and improvement to ensure that interventions are effective and equitable.

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