

Assessment Component 2

Written Essay

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Module name: Children, Young People and Families

Module code: (BMHP5004_LON)

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Word count: 2541

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Introduction

This essay will be discussed the concept of childhood and the key elements of family life; it will be discussed the understanding of the development of the social construction of childhood from historical times to current times; the knowledge of the changes seen in the lives of children and their families from historical to present times including the discussion of a range of factors, developments in policy and legislation, which have influenced changes in the social construction of childhood and families from historical to present times. Additionally, the impact such factors have had in improving the lives of children, young people and families, and in reducing inequalities in health and social care service provision for children, young people and families. Identification and evaluation of approaches and interventions which support vulnerable children, young people and families as well as evaluation of their effectiveness in decreasing inequalities, will result in meaningful recommendations for changes.

Definition of Childhood and it's social construction development

Chambers (2022) defined childhood as the state or time of being a child. Furthermore, American Psychological Association (2022) stated that childhood is the time frame between the end of infancy (about 2 years old) through the commencement of puberty, which ushers in adolescence (10–12 years of age). This time frame is occasionally broken down into early childhood, which spans from two years old through the preschool age of five or six years; middle childhood, which spans from six to eight to ten years old; and late childhood, also known as preadolescence, which is the two years prior to the start of puberty. These two definitions can show that childhood can be based on biological factors, ending when a person reaches their biological puberty age, or it can be based on social factors, simply ending at the age when society considers a person to be an adult (Thompson, 2015).

In modern Britain, society defines when childhood ends and adulthood begins, with the age of 'legal entitlement' now fixed at 18. Children, on the other hand, do not abruptly become adults at the age of 18. In the United Kingdom, there is also a lengthy transition from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, with children gradually acquiring various legal entitlements as they advance through their adolescent years (Thompson, 2015).

Montgomery (2013) stated that many social scientists now argue that childhood is a social construction as a result of the changing attitudes toward children. They use this term to imply that different societies have different conceptions of childhood and that, while all societies agree that children and adults are different, the ways in which these differences are understood and the expectations that are placed on children vary depending on the society in which they are raised. Montgomery also stated that children are frequently stereotyped as being reliant and incompetent in the UK and the Western world as a whole. But not everywhere in the world is like this. Children begin working and making contributions to the family in many countries at a relatively young age. Children are sometimes required to work to support their parents' household expenses and to get married at a young age in many countries and cultures since they are viewed as miniature adults and not as children (Open Learn Create, 2022). Contrarily, childhood is considered in many rural or similarly traditional African civilizations as a time of "training" before to a child's admission into the challenging world of adulthood. Childhood is regarded in terms of support obligations between generations, as opposed to a time of complete dependency during which the child receives adult protection. Therefore, a child will always be a child in the eyes of his or her parents, who are used to expecting and having a right to any kind of support from the child when they need it. Africa also has a tendency to internalise and strictly enforce allegiance to authority during childhood.

Most African children, particularly girls, do not live like European children. They do not have the right to enjoy their childhoods since they are compelled to work as soon as they reach puberty and to marry as soon as they reach puberty. They are forced to work on plantations, in mines, quarries, or factories. They are frequently compelled to prostitute themselves. The majority of child labourers are exploited and have little possibility of attending school since they lack the time and strength to learn. According to SOS-US-EN (2010), in Sub-Saharan Africa, over 30 million children do not attend school. Girls account for 54% of them. Unfortunately this issue does not happen only in Africa but in Asia and the Pacific region too. Data from International Labour Organization (2014) shows that child labour employs an estimated 168 million children globally, accounting for over 11% of the child population between 5-17 years old. Moreover, around 85 million, are engaged in hazardous employment, which endangers a child's physical, mental, or moral well-being due to the nature of the work or the conditions under which it is performed.

Factors, policy and legislation

Many children from the working class were employed in mills, mines, and factories in the early 19th century. They frequently put in long hours and worked in hazardous settings, which had an adverse effect on their health and occasionally even led to minors getting hurt or dying at work. Children were frequently obliged to perform adult tasks at home, such as taking care of ailing family members and doing household chores.

Comparative analysis, or looking at how children are viewed and handled in times and locations other than their own, is an effective tool to demonstrate how society constructs childhood. These are three pretty well-known instances of how childhood might differ in other nations: Child Labour which in certain cultures, children are regarded as a "economic asset" and are expected to work for pay. In less developed countries, children are frequently regarded as a source of inexpensive labour on the farm; Child soldiers that in times of war, young boys, usually in their teens, may be enlisted to fight, essentially assuming very important adult obligations at a much younger age than they would in "western" society and Forced Marriage where young teenage girls may be coerced into an arranged marriage in some nations without their knowledge or consent, beginning their lives as a wife or mother at a young age. Thousands of women and girls have been sold into slavery in West Africa. Seven-year-old girls are given away by their family to atone for the transgressions of older family members (Thompson, 2015).

Children and their families rely extensively on welfare services for their present and future well-being, and social policies play an important role in their lives. The type and quality of welfare support offered has a significant impact on children's lives, and their needs are satisfied through a variety of policy initiatives such as education, health, social services, and social assistance (Ridge, 2012). Children, for the most part, live in families, and their needs are met through a variety of legal and informal welfare provisions. Although historically there has been friction between children's needs and rights, parents' needs and rights, and the role of the state in children's life, children's status inside the family has meant that their unique needs and concerns might remain concealed and unrecognised. Social policies have a broad range of effects on children's lives, including both targeted provision—such as interventions, services, and support for young children—and policies aimed at their parents and carers, like employment laws and legal restrictions on how families are formed and broken up. Children today live increasingly complex lives in a variety of various household circumstances, as modern childhood is undergoing significant social and economic upheaval. Although policies aim to address socioeconomic and demographic change, evolving conceptions of children will also have an impact on how governments create policies and deliver services.

According to the claim that childhood is a social construct, it is socially constructed rather than being based on chronological age. The notion that children should be educated and should not be in charge of earning money is an illustration of how society constructs childhood. Theories of how childhood is socially constructed contend that it is a distinct period of life, one that is not universal, and one that is prone to cultural variation. Theorists like Ariès provide historical examples of how childhood has been socially constructed and show how opinions toward children's nature, roles, and duties have changed through time (Study Smarter UK, 2022).

❖ **Education**

It started with the Education Act 1870 which consisted in all children between the ages of 5 and 12 are required to attend school, and local education authorities are in charge of monitoring attendance. The following years saw the gradual raising of the school-leaving age and an increase in educational funding. On 1918 the school-leaving age is raised to 14 years old and the school-leaving age was raised to 15 in 1944. The school leaving age was raised to 16 in 1973. In 2013 children were required to stay in school or work with training until the age of 18.

❖ **Work**

Throughout the 19th century, there were a number of "factories acts" that gradually enhanced the rights of (usually male) workers by limiting working hours. Many of these acts also had

provisions that prohibited factories from hiring anyone under a specific age. The 1833 Factories Act was the first law to forbid the employment of children under the age of nine, and it mandated that factories give children aged 9 to 13 with at least 12 hours of schooling per week. This concept was expanded to all industries by the 1867 Factories Act, which made it unlawful for any factories to employ children under the age of eight and to fail to offer children aged eight to thirteen with at least ten hours of schooling each week (Thompson, 2020). Children under the age of 10 were completely prohibited from working under the Factories Act 1878, which complemented the implementation of educational regulations.

Children today can only begin working full-time after turning 16. In addition, they must complete training while employed. Only those who are age 18 and older have full adult working rights. Children between the ages of 13 and 15 are allowed to work, however there are limits on the number of hours and industries they can work in. One of the most popular jobs for people in this age range is babysitting.

The introduction of legislation pertaining to child welfare and protection, and the current safeguarding policies that have allowed it to be integrated into every facet of child services. Children have a number of rights, which are outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child including having a right to identification, the freedom from exploitation, the privilege of education.

Impact that have had in improving the lives of CYP, and how health and social care service reduce inequalities in provision for them

Inequality has had a significant impact on the lives of children, young people and family (CYP), despite the fact that laws and policies exist to protect them.

Health inequalities refer to the fact that young people from various origins and with various lived experiences might experience varying levels of physical and mental health. Poorer health outcomes have been clearly linked to socioeconomic position, housing, education, work, and other aspects of people's larger life, according to research. It is unfair and preventable for these socioeconomic differences to exist (McKeown and Hagell, 2021).

Health and social care services has been working to reduce this issue and give CYP opportunities to have an healthy and happy live. The consequences for children's health are the result of intricately intertwined social, economic, personal, and political forces. The world and environment in which a child grows up will unavoidably have an impact on their health. This includes not only the standard of medical care they receive but also the services they have access to and the way of life of their family. Too many children and adolescents grow up in families that are struggling with hardship and poverty. State of Child Health (2022) found that geographic variance and socioeconomic position have a big impact on children's health outcomes. Children's educational and social outcomes may also be impacted in addition to their health.

Approaches and interventions

Data repeatedly demonstrates how poverty and inequality have an effect on a child's entire life, having an impact on their housing, social environment, education, and health results.

According to UK Health Security Agency (2014), the good quality of parenting has a positive impact on children's long-term physical, emotional, and social development, and research has shown that a variety of parenting programmes created for families with children of a certain age are helpful when used as part of larger parental support initiatives. Furthermore, early childhood learning, behaviour, and family relationships improvement programmes offer lifelong benefits and can aid in ending the cycle of poverty and inequality.

The Child-Centred Approach to Safeguarding is critical to protecting and promoting the wellbeing of all children. A child approach implies putting the child first when making decisions about their lives and collaborating with them and their families (Hipsprocedures, 2022). This child-centred approach is supported by The Children Act 1989 which mandates that while deciding what services to offer and what steps to take to protect specific children, local authorities must take a child's wishes under consideration; The Equality Act of 2010 imposes a duty on public authorities to consider the need to eliminate prejudice and promote equality of opportunity and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that defends children's rights and offers a framework for the creation of services for children that is centred on children.

❖ **Recommendations**

- ✓ Instead of focusing on individual risk factors in isolation, organisations and local authorities within the new health system should adopt a life-course approach, cogently addressing the many periods of life and the important transitions;
- ✓ Continued multi-agency training in safeguarding and understanding of barriers to primary care access, with a focus on supporting children's health, wellbeing, and school attendance;
- ✓ Provide financing for a child health workforce that matches demand and guarantees the greatest possible care for children and young people.

Conclusion

Childhood is seen as the state of being a child, however, not all countries see it that way. The childhood social construction relates to the view that childhood is not a natural process, but rather that society determines when a child is a child and when a child becomes an adult. Childhood cannot be considered in isolation. It is inextricably linked to other societal variables. Poverty and health issues have a significant impact on the lives of children, young people, and family. That is why there are laws and policies in place to safeguard children's rights to education, health, housing, and nourishment.

Early childhood interventions aimed at reducing inequities in health and development, as well as their socioeconomic factors, may address these issues. This can be accomplished by focusing on measures that provide the best possible start in life for all children and are offered with intensity commensurate to the social requirements of children and their families. Improving outcomes in the several categories of early child development, including cognitive, communication and language, social and emotional, and physical, can help children get off to a good start in life. Child centred approach is another way to reduce inequality which gives children voice to express their wishes and needs.

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