



Assessment Component 2

Written Essay

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Introduction

Childhood, as a distinct stage of life, is a relatively recent phenomenon in human history. Prior to the emergence of modern childhood (Ali Norozi and Moen, 2016), children were seen as small adults, expected to contribute to their family's livelihood from a very young age. However, with the rise of industrialization and urbanization in the 18th and 19th centuries, new social and economic conditions led to the emergence of childhood as a distinct stage of life (Frassetto and Herlihy, 2019).

The family has always been the primary social unit in human societies, but the way it has been constructed and understood has varied widely across time and cultures. In pre-modern societies, the family was usually extended, with several generations living together and sharing resources (Sharma, 2013). Children were not seen as a separate category of people, but rather as part of the larger family unit. They were expected to contribute to the family's economic wellbeing from a young age, often by working in the fields or helping with household chores. This essay aims to explore the emergence of childhood, focusing on the social and historical construction of the family.

Discussion of social construction of childhood

The idea of childhood has changed over time and is not a static, global idea. Instead, it is a social construct that differs across various cultures and societies (StudySmarter UK, n.d.). Childhood is a stage of life when people are not yet considered adults and need others to take care of them and protect them. To demonstrate how childhood is socially constructed, we shall present and contrast definitions of childhood from the UK and Japan (Thompson, 2015).

Childhood is commonly described in the United Kingdom as the time of life between birth and adolescence. This definition is based on a variety of social and cultural variables, such as education, law, and cultural standards. Children in the United Kingdom are required to attend school from the age of five until they reach the age of sixteen, and the educational system is designed to promote their growth and prepare them for life. Childhood is also defined by the law as a period of reliance, with legislative safeguards in place to guarantee that children are cared for and protected from harm. Finally, cultural norms in the United Kingdom frequently emphasise the need of safeguarding children's innocence and providing a safe and caring environment. In Japan, however, childhood is historically regarded as the span of life between birth and the age of 20, when people are believed to have reached the age of majority. This description is founded on a variety of cultural and societal variables, such as the value of family bonds, Confucian principles, and the educational system (Backes and Bonnie, 2019). Children in Japan are expected to respect their parents and elders and to prioritise family obligations over personal interests. In Japan, the education system is likewise highly valued, with a heavy emphasis on academic accomplishment and workforce readiness (Chawala, 2021).

The varied ways in which childhood is defined and perceived in these two countries demonstrate the social construction of childhood. Childhood is characterised in the United Kingdom as a period of innocence and vulnerability, with legal safeguards in place to ensure children are cared for and protected from harm (Revisionworld.com, 2019). Childhood in Japan is defined as a period of preparation for maturity, with a focus on family ties and the value of education. Diverse various notions of childhood have consequences for how children are treated in diverse societies. In the United Kingdom, children are frequently shielded from adult obligations and encouraged to play and explore their surroundings in a safe and supportive setting. Children in Japan are expected to take on more responsibility and contribute to their family's well-being, with an emphasis on academic accomplishment and workforce preparedness (Taguma, Litjens and Makowiecki, n.d.).

childhood is a social construct that varies across different societies and cultures. The definitions of childhood in the UK and Japan illustrate how social and cultural factors can shape our understanding of this concept. Understanding the social construction of childhood is important for recognizing the ways in which our ideas about children and families are shaped by broader social forces, and for promoting the well-being of children in all societies.

Key elements of family life

The composition of a family and the relationships among its members are referred to as family structure. Depending on cultural, historical, and social reasons, family configurations can vary greatly, such as nuclear families, extended families, single-parent households, and blended families (Sabourin, 2003). In many Western societies, the nuclear family is the most frequent family arrangement. A nuclear family is made up of two parents and their children who usually live in the same residence (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). The nuclear family is frequently regarded as the ideal family structure, with parents providing financial and emotional support to their children while keeping a close and loving relationship with them.

In contrast, extended families comprise not just parents and their children, but also other relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Extended families can offer a strong sense of connection and support, as well as shared resources and childcare duties (sciencedirect.com, n.d.). In non-Western societies, where intergenerational life is valued, extended families are more common. Single-parent families are made up of a single parent and their children, with the other parent being deceased, divorced, or abandoned. Single-parent households have special obstacles, such as financial insecurity and a lack of social support. However, with persistence and resourcefulness, many single-parent families are able to offer a caring and supportive home for their children (Stack and Meredith, 2017).

When two individuals with children from prior relationships get together to build a new family, they form a blended family. Blended families, which may include stepparents, stepsiblings, and half-siblings, can have a complex and challenging family dynamic. Blended families necessitate excellent communication and conflict resolution abilities, as well as patience and understanding (psychologytoday.com, n.d.). There has been a rising acceptance of the diversity of family arrangements in recent years, including same-sex couples, cohabiting couples, and families with adopted or foster children. These family forms call into question

traditional concepts of the nuclear family and emphasise the value of acceptance and inclusion.

Family structure is a multidimensional and complicated notion that reflects the diversity of human experience. Understanding the many types of family structures can help us recognise the particular challenges and strengths of each, as well as promote the well-being of all families.

The social construction of childhood from historical times to current times

Childhood is a social construct that has evolved over time in various communities. Children were once regarded as small adults who were expected to work and contribute to the family's economic well-being. However, in modern times, childhood is regarded as a distinct stage of life in which children are entitled to protection, care, and education.

Children were not given particular treatment in ancient societies, and their lives were typically harsh and brief. Child mortality rates were high, and many children died before reaching the age of five. Children were expected to contribute to the economic well-being of their families by working on farms, in mines, or in factories. Childhood was viewed as a period of labour and survival rather than play and learning.

During the Renaissance period, the concept of childhood began to shift. Children were regarded as pure and innocent beings in need of protection from the harsh facts of life (Stirler, 2013). This viewpoint was represented in art and literature, which depicted children as cherubs or angelic beings. This idea, however, was reserved for wealthy families who could afford to keep their children out of labour and educate them. Children were exploited for labour throughout the Industrial Revolution. Many youngsters were forced to labour long hours in hazardous conditions in factories, mines, and mills. There were no child labour rules, and youngsters were paid less than adults for doing the same task. During this time, children were considered as cheap labour, reinforcing the concept of childhood as a time of work (Griffin, 2014).

The concept of childhood began to evolve again in the late 19th and early 20th century. Child labour laws were enacted, making it illegal for youngsters to work in factories, mines, or mills. Children were also given access to education, allowing them to learn and play in a secure setting. During this time, the concept of childhood as a time of play and learning began to emerge (History.com Editors, 2009).

Finally, it should be noted that childhood is a social construction that has changed over time in various countries. Childhood is now viewed as a period of play, learning, and growth, in contrast to past eras when kids were required to labour and contribute to the family's financial stability. Children now have a right to protection, care, and education, which has had a huge impact on their lives and those of their families. Social, economic, and cultural variables have affected the evolution of childhood, and it will continue to alter as societies advance.

Factors which have contributed in changing the lives of children and reducing inequalities including policy and legislation.

Over the past few decades, the lives of children have undergone significant changes, with a number of factors contributing to a reduction in inequalities. These factors include policy and legislation, Education, increased awareness of the needs of children and advancements in technology (OECD, 2012).

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

All children now have access to the resources and support they need to thrive thanks in large part to the factors that have changed and improved the lives of children and young people. Here are some reasons for why these elements have been successful in lowering inequalities and improving children's lives:

First, policies and laws have significantly contributed to the improvement of children's life. In order to safeguard children's rights, advance their health and wellbeing, and reduce inequality, governments have passed laws and programmes. For instance, the 1989 adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which many nations have since ratified and implemented into their national laws, has contributed to the promotion of children's rights. The 2014 Children and Families Act was passed in the UK, these laws recognise that every child has a right to survival, development, protection, and participation, and have helped to guarantee that they have access to the tools and assistance they need to live happy and healthy lives, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances.

Children can break the cycle of poverty and enhance their prospects for the future by obtaining an education, which is a crucial tool. Governments have made enormous investments in education, and access to education has significantly increased in many nations. Many kids

who were previously denied access to education because of their gender, race, or socioeconomic standing can now do so. Education has also contributed to a decrease in child labour since it allows kids to get the knowledge and skills, they need to find better-paying employment. As an example, The Sure Start programme, started by the UK government in 1998, sought to give children from low-income family's access to high-quality early education and care. This programme, which has been adopted in other nations across the globe, has been credited with reducing educational outcomes inequities.

Thirdly, cultural perceptions of childhood have evolved, and there is now a greater appreciation for the significance of this formative, distinctive stage of life. The importance of giving children a secure and nurturing environment is becoming more and more clear to parents and other carers. Additionally, they are more conscious of the significance of giving kids the chance to play, learn, and grow as individuals. By encouraging greater equality of opportunity for children from all backgrounds, this shift in cultural attitudes has reduced inequities.

Fourthly, the lives of children have changed significantly as a result of technology improvements. Children now have access to knowledge and opportunities that were previously out of reach thanks to the internet and social media. They can now access education online, communicate with people around the globe, and learn new skills. A need for laws and policies to safeguard children from dangerous internet content and cyberbullying exists due to worries about the detrimental effects of technology on children's wellness.

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.

Today's vulnerable children, youth, and families are supported through a variety of approaches and interventions. The impact of the examples in reducing inequality is examined below.

Programmes for early intervention and prevention: These initiatives seek to spot problems and deal with them before they worsen. Examples include parenting courses, family support services, and health visits (NSPCC, 2019). As they offer assistance to families who might have limited access to resources and give them the chance to address problems before they worsen, such interventions can be successful in reducing inequalities.

Mentoring and support programs: These programs provide young people with a supportive adult role model who can offer guidance, advice, and support. Examples include Big Brothers Big Sisters and youth mentoring programs (Oxford Hub, n.d.). Mentoring and support programs can be particularly effective for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, as they may not have access to positive role models within their family or community.

Education and training programs: These programs provide young people with access to education and training opportunities, which can increase their chances of future employment and social mobility. Examples include apprenticeships, vocational training, and access to higher education. Education and training programs can be effective in reducing inequalities by providing young people with the skills and qualifications needed to access higher-paid and more secure employment opportunities (Anderson et al., 2018).

Counselling and therapy services: These services provide young people with a safe and confidential space to talk about their feelings and issues (NHS, 2021). Examples include school-based counselling services, online counselling services, and family therapy. Counselling and therapy services can be effective in reducing inequalities by providing support to young people who may not have access to mental health services due to financial or social barriers.

Financial support programs: These programs provide families with financial assistance to help cover the costs of childcare, education, and other essentials. Examples include child benefit, tax credits, and free school meals. Financial support programs can be effective in reducing inequalities by providing families with the means to meet their basic needs and access essential services (Child Poverty Action Group, 2017).

In terms of evaluating the effectiveness of these approaches and interventions, it is essential to consider the specific needs of the target group and the wider social, economic, and political context in which they operate (Public Health England, 2019). Some programs may be more effective than others depending on the context, and there may be variations in outcomes depending on factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and social class. Despite the potential benefits of these interventions, some challenges remain. For example, there may be issues with funding, access, and sustainability, and some programs may reinforce existing power dynamics and stigmatize the target group. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of these interventions should consider not only their immediate impact but also their long-term outcomes and broader societal implications.

Conclusion

vulnerable children, young people, and families can benefit from a range of approaches and interventions that aim to reduce inequalities and provide support. Early intervention and prevention programs, mentoring and support programs, education and training programs, counselling and therapy services, and financial support programs are all potential ways to provide support to those who need it the most (Ludlow, Hurn and Lansdell, 2020).

The recommendations for improving the lives of children, young people, and families include investment in early intervention and prevention programs, accessible and affordable mental health services, education and training programs, provision of financial support, and implementation of policies that promote inclusion and tackle discrimination. The potential impact of these recommendations can be significant in improving the lives of vulnerable children, young people, and families. Overall, policymakers, practitioners, and communities can work together to reduce inequalities and provide support to those who need it the most.

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