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Childhood, and children's rights in historical and social context

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Introduction

Childhood is just a word or a fact? In the following paper, we will seek to discover the answer. The aim of the research is to highlight and analyses various aspects of the term childhood. We will go through history from the beginning to the present day to show how "childhood" looks in different periods of time. According to research, the term childhood has undergone major changes throughout history. From stone carving to today's hi-tech technology, children have been and will remain a vulnerable group. Analyzing the past, we can see that "young adults" have not always been a priority for society, but a cheap alternative to labor (children society, 2021). The social and economic climate of the times often forces children to survive on their own. They have often associated the term child with the term adult, but without rights. In the modern age, the silent cry of children has led to the need to stop the phenomenon of child labor. The first forms of protection appear, and the rights of children take shape. We can say that nowadays children have regained their childhood. Due to the involvement of the government through public laws and policies, it was a determining factor in this direction. It is likewise to be recognized also the struggle that social services do daily to settle into work all these laws and public policy.

Childhood social and economic perspective

Has been established from birth to death, we go through several stages in life, but the most significant stage is childhood. Childhood is the time where the foundations of our cognitive, social, and personality developed. According to article 1 of UNCRC, 1991 " a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier " (OHCHR, 1989). In fact, to define the term child, we need to look at things from several perspectives. Certainly, age is the most common attribute to define the notion of a child. So, we can say a person is a child from birth to puberty.

Children are the future of any nation. Government and parents both must bring their contribution to the children's development. However, in most cases, parents handle the education and protection of their children, but sometime the interventions of social service are necessary in order to protect children in need. Conforming to social service policy, the child is a vulnerable person who cannot defend himself against maltreatment, becoming the subject of physical and emotional aggression. Also, each child is unique, and they come to this world as innocent people, but several

social, cultural, and economic factors can influence his behaviors (Appleton and Sidebotham, 2018).

The term childhood is associated with the period between the age of 1-2 years to the age of 12-13 years. In fact, childhood does not have a universal definition. Everyone can define his own childhood according to the social and cultural climate. However, it is proved that the term childhood is constructed by society rather than determined by the biological age of the child. Those factors in society can decide on childhood restrict the right to be a child in some situations. If we look at the global situation, we can see several serious discrepancies between countries regarding the term childhood. In some parts of the world compared to the UK, the term childhood is non-existent, children being subjected to the same treatment as an adult. Makeover in other countries, children are forced to give up childhood on their own initiative in order to help the family fight for survival (UNICEF, 2021). In the UK, public laws and policies well defined the concept of childhood, with a well-defined barrier between the term child and adult. At present in the UK, children are innocent, vulnerable, and it is necessary to involve adults in their protection. Also, the transition between childhood and adult life is well structured, following the concept of duties and responsibilities of learning underage. In the UK, children receive certain social and biological rights and can make personal decisions in certain situations. From the age of 14, children may work at 16 they may decide their own sex life and at 17 they can drive. In the United Kingdom, a child becomes adult by law when he reaches the age of 18 (Thompson, 2015).

The childhood constructed is not the same in every country. In some parts of the world the terms of children's rights are just a joke, in does exist a social difference between children's and adults. Childhood should be the best time for a child, but many children are not allowed by society (Thomson, 2015). R It is no social construct in most places is influenced by social, economic, and political factors. Also, poverty, military, and religious conflicts, along with demographic disasters, have a serious impact on the concept of childhood.

Globally, the number of children's labor is estimated at 168 million. Most of them been from Asia and the Pacific. A percentage of over 50% of them do unsafe work in heavy conditions and that can affect their well-being and health. Likewise, being a child in some Asian countries has nothing in common with the term of childhood. According to a survey conducted in 7 South Asian countries, 50 million children do not benefit from school education, 30 million of them they are employed and 17 million are in child labor (ILO, 2014). In countries such as India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bhutan and a few more countries, agriculture is the one that

absorbs the most child labor. Also, the right to education of children in these countries is diminished because children must work from an early age. Also, the right to education of children in these countries is diminished because they are forced to work from an early age. Over 28 million children between the ages of 5 and 7 are out of school only in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. There is also a discrepancy between rural and urban areas in terms of children's education. Those living in rural areas are more at risk of not going to school (ILO, 2021).

As well, if we look from a cultural point of view, each country has different traditions and beliefs. These factors affect children's behaviors. Every child is unique in the way he interacts with the outside world, so we can say his growing up environment guides child behaviors. However, the family has a significant role in shaping the child's behavioral development. The interaction between parents and children can change its behaviors in positive or negative way, children can get used to their parents' habits, so parents must pay attention to the way they behave around them (Huang, 2018).

Despite cultural differences between countries / regions, children should have rights and these rights should be respected, but this is not happening every time. The fundamental right to life and education is has been badly violated in many countries. Prostitution and child abuse are a frequent practice in some Asian and African countries, and it is unfortunate that in the 21st century, children are still used as currency in some parts of the globe. Fortunately, in the UK, children's rights are strongly regulated by law and public policy. Every child has the right to life, survival and development, the right to health, health care and social security, the right to education, leisure, culture, and the arts. Every child in the United Kingdom is also entitled to protection against any form of physical, sexual, or mental harm, regardless of gender, race, culture, or religion (gov.uk, 2021).

Childhood history

The term childhood seems to have been invented somewhere in the middle of the 19th century. In his book "Centuries of Childhood", the French historian Philippe Aries launches the idea that in medieval society the childhood did not exist. Unfortunately, many voices today do not agree with this theory. Archaeological discoveries prove that childhood was part of history from the beginning of earth. It is true from the Stone Age to the modern era, childhood was not properly defined, sometime children being seen as small adults. Many paintings dating from the Stone Age shows us that children have been treated as part of the family. Parents have a significant role in the education and development of their behaviors. However, in the Bronze Age, the social

environment changes radically in children's lifestyle. Several of them doing "back-breaking" work in the mine or becoming bricklayers to help their family. As well children learn the art of working in clay before reaching the age of six. Following historical the bronze age, the Iron Age is described in chronicles as a bloody period. The life expectancy was around 25 years. Also, the mortality rate among children is about 75%, only 25% may reach maturity (Watson, 2018).

Throughout history, the role of children and the way they are seen in society differ from age to age. For example, in ancient Greece, children are seen on the mother's side, while in the Roman Empire the father is the one who decides the duties of the child, taking care of education, clothing and lifestyle. In ancient Greece, education is based on "heritage" children carrying on the profession learned from parents. Also, according to ancient writings, Greek boys were trained in the art of war. However, children from ancient Greece also had time to play, many toys being found in archaeological sites (Durbin and Sharp, 2020). In the Roman Empire, children receive what we call today "childhood". Their primary duties are education and play. In poor families, children are part of the daily routine of helping the family (Legends and Chronicles, 2021).

From the end of antiquity, until the 17th century, is the period name as Middle Ages. In his book CENTURIES OF CHILDHOOD, Philippe Ariès propagated the concept that "the idea of childhood did not exist". In middle age time many children do not reach the age of one year and several do not receive any education being classified as "imperfect adults" (The Economist, 2019) Nowadays there are voices that do not agree with Philippe Ariès' theory that, despite a hard life, children have been encouraged by adults to play. However, one thing is for sure: the church has a major influence on society and children's education. For example, the Puritan church preaches that the child is evil when he is born and only through obedience and strict education can purity be achieved (Colonial Column, 2021). In terms of child labor, many children work from the age of 12-14, most of the jobs are in agriculture or crafting.

Industrial evolution brings substantial changes to the economy. Industrial machines become part of people's work in many sectors. Also, new economic sectors are opening, and the job market is in constant search of labor. In the vision of large corporations, children are perfect employees, cheap workers. However, children are no longer seen as helpers, they work side by side with adults. Most times children get the worst jobs, working in difficult and dangerous conditions. The industrial revolutions are associated with the era of steam engines, so the need for coal is growing. Many mines open in England and children are the raw material for labor. In America, compared with Europe, children work in most economic sectors. Mines, agriculture, textile industry, and glass factories are just a few of them. The school is abandoned in most cases. (Griffin, 2014).

Victorian times did not bring any change to children's lives. Society is divided into rich and poor. For this fact poor children must work 16 hours to get food while rich children are well fed and lots of time to play games for fun. The major problem in England is poverty and lack of involvement of the authorities. Many children die of hunger or from various diseases (Cody, 2021).

Policy and legislation in the UK

The "Factory Act" gives the beginning of the abolition of child slavery in 1833. The employment of children under 9 years became prohibited (Factory Act, 1883). Also, the involvement of the political class in the fight against "child slavery" conducted in 1947 to (Home Factory Act of 1833The Ten Hour Act, 1847). By the law, children should not work over 10 hours a day. As well, in 1870 the education law was radically changed, the foundations of compulsory and free education were built. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, children's lives changed radically, gaining the right to "childhood". Children are protected against harm and maltreatment by law. Nowadays in the UK the law requires all children to continue in education or training until they reach the age of 18 (Child law advice, 2021). "The Children Act 1989' defines a child's right to health in a safe environment and aid for future education. If in the past equality between persons was established on certain criteria in the Equality Act 2010 as part of the "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1992" states that all children are equal regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, etc. Also, in terms of social service protection, "The Children and Social Work Act 2017" and "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018" come to strengthen the protection of children in need (Johnson, 2019). The impact of all these laws and public policies can be seen today. The government is taking the pulse of society daily, looking for new ways to protect and support children and young people in the UK. Social services can be defined as government entities that have the role of providing protection and safety to all children in need. No child should suffer domestic abuse from any adult, including parents. As well, the duty of social services care is to ensure that children are properly cared for, healthy and safe in the environment they grow up in (Hunt, 2020).

Bronfenbrenner's and Maslow's theory impact in modern society

Complies with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, the environment plays a vital role in the child's development's needs. Family, school, relatives, and close friends make their mark on child behaviors. For this reason, children who are victims of domestic abuse or grow up in a violent environment may develop physical or emotional disorders in adult life. Another risk factor that can affect the child is discrimination. All children may be treated in the same way, regardless of

gender, race, or ethnicity. Poverty and family conflicts are also a well-illustrated risk factor in Bronfenbrenner's theory. Because of poverty and domestication, many children do not meet the minimum living conditions in the UK, which makes it necessary for social services to address the problems (Sincerely, 2021).

Maslow's theory is based on the personal needs of everyone. The needs can be material and spiritual. In the UK, the Maslow theory can be associated with needs assignment framework. Most of Maslow's principles theory being found in needs assignment framework. As a social worker, it is especially important to understand a child's basic needs to draw up a safety plan to solve those problems. Children in the UK are treated with respect regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or religious belief and this can increase their confidence and self-esteem. It is also the duty of the social protection system to ensure that children have a place to live and food on the table (McLeod, 2020).

Although the social and child protection system in the UK is among the first in the world, there are still gaps to be solved. It is especially important for parents to go to work so that they can buy food daily and pay the bills. But for families with small children, it is exceedingly difficult because the extra nursery hours are expensive, and parents prefer to stay home with children instead of going to work. That is why it is necessary to increase from 15 to 30 the free children's nursery hours up to 4 years

Conclusion

Although, throughout history, childhood has been a controversial topic. Nowadays children have regained the right to childhood, the right to feel safe and to have an education and it is sad to see that in many parts of the world, this right is not respected. That in the 21st century there are still children who live in conditions hard to imagine fighting hunger and disease is like a slap in the face of modern society. It is inadmissible that in some countries time has stuck children living as they did 2 centuries ago. While in developed countries, children enjoy privileges in other countries, they are still seen as cheap labor. This has happened because civil society and large corporations are ignoring child abuse most of the time. Even if social services do everything possible to combat the phenomenon of family abuse among children, it is growing. Lack of information and distrust of social services make children not always report the abuse they are subjected to. In conclusion, a better collaboration in the triangle of children-parents-social services can improve the quality of life of children in need.

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