



Assessment Component 2

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Childhood

Introduction

Childhood is a stage of human development that has led many researchers to venture into its research. This is because of the various disparities that occur between different societies or different countries when it comes to the usage of this terminology (Bröder et al., 2017). Different societies have different definitions and as a result a person may move from one country as an adult but reaches to another country and is defined as a child. Therefore, it is necessary for people to understand what this terminology necessarily means and the various definitions that exist (Bröder et al., 2017). This paper seeks to evaluate the whole topic about childhood, including the historical background of childhood and how family and childhood are intertwined. The paper will seek to create more comprehension about the phenomena.

Part One

The definitions of childhood vary greatly from one environment to another. Definitions of childhood range from the biological definition to the psychological definition. We try to comprehend all these definitions in this part and evaluate the development of social construction from historical times to where we are now (Nakata, 2015). In psychology a child is defined as a person who is physically and emotionally immature. As a result of this, that individual is vulnerable in comparison to adults. The characteristics that emerge from this definition of a child are that that person lacks autonomy and has social dependence. However, this definition has some challenges (Nakata, 2015). The main question that arises is whether a person who is disabled mentally and physically, will the individual be counted as child, yet he or she has lived way longer than a child? This was a contrast however, that individual can be considered to be a child (Nakata, 2015). He or she is vulnerable as compared to the other adults within the same environment.

As time went by, there came a time that in some environments childhood is determined by chronological aspect. This aspect of determining childhood using chronological aspect is the method that is being used in many jurisdictions where there are some years that a child is no longer counted as a child (Nakata, 2015). In many countries, any person above 18 years is not a child. Chronological approach differs from one jurisdiction to another jurisdiction. For instance, in the Netherlands, an individual is considered an adult, thus not a child, when he or she crosses the age of 16 (Nakata, 2015). That individual has legal identity and as a result, a person of 16 years in Netherlands can acquire a driving license (Nakata, 2015). This method of

defining childhood is used across many industrialized countries where the birth date is very important to be able to determine the legal identity of an individual.

In other societies, childhood is determined by social, cultural and economic factors. In such areas childhood is determined by the social experience of a person. If a person has not experienced or has experienced some phenomenon within the social setting then he or she can be termed as a child or not a child (Nakata, 2015). For instance, in the African Setting and some parts of Asia labor migration and marriage are indicators of whether an individual is a child or not. If a person gets married, then that person is considered an adult regardless of their age. In other areas, physical markers such as height, facial hair and start of menstruation is used to define childhood (Nakata, 2015). When a young person experience any of the three physical markers, then they are considered to be mature enough to become adults. From this illustration, it is evident that there are different definitions of childhood (Nakata, 2015). However, universal biologically and psychological definition is the one accepted across many jurisdictions where childhood is defined as a phase of human development which is capped at a chronological age of 18 years.

The development of the social construction of childhood from historical times can be dated back into the 19th Century. During this century childhood was considered to be children that cannot do things on their own and thus they have to depend on the society, the society being the family and the general community. Therefore, Children would work with their parents in the farm, and other places of work (Nakata, 2015). Particularly, in the Industrialized countries, children would go to the factories with their parents. Therefore, in the past, there was no clear description of childhood. However, during the same century people came across a terminology called child labor. This led to many countries abolishing children to work and introduced compulsory schooling (Bröder et al., 2017). Compulsory schooling was introduced for children between the age of 5-13. Coming down to the 20th Century and 21st Century, different countries have different rules governing children (Bröder et al., 2017). Culture and social setting still stand, however, in any democratic country, if there are customary laws, they can be practiced, but the constitutional law is the supreme law.

Part Two

Suppose the children today were living in the past during the 19th Century? Would they survive? This is a question that individuals ought to ask themselves when trying to venture into this research topic. This is because it creates a situation when one wants to gather more information. This part will seek to answer that question while evaluating the changes that the lives of children have experienced from historical times to present times. In general, the world

has come from a point of child labor to a point where children rights are respected. To begin with in the Centuries before the 19th Century, Children were going to work just like normal adults (Fass, 2013). Children were not protected or rather separated from work, sex or politics since they were considered as equals in the society despite children lacking that full cognitive ability (Fass, 2013). In the past, a family was considered as a unit where people were living together and working together (Fass, 2013). Boys would accompany their father to the factories whereas girls would stick with their mother in doing house chores and other jobs.

In the beginning of the 19th Century, things started to change with regard to how lives of children are protected. It began to become evident that children do exist, and they do not have full cognitive ability and therefore they should be separated from politics, work and sex until they grow (Fass, 2013). Children were seen to be vulnerable to the other adults and therefore child labor existed in the factories and the other places where the children were working. As a result, legislations were made to relax or rather solve this situation. In 1830s laws were passed in Western Europe. Where children had to be removed from the work force and compulsory schooling occurred (Fass, 2013). It was against the law for a parent to deny the child the freedom of attending school (Fass, 2013). As a matter of fact, the government set up education instructions to encourage children to go to school. In 1870, the Education Act was passed in the United Kingdom and Wales (Heywood, 2017). This Act was outlining there was compulsory schooling for children between the age of five to thirteen, in the United Kingdom and Wales. Failure to attend school was a considered as a violation of the law and punishable in a court of law.

Coming down to the 20th Century, the rights of children started developing especially with organizations coming up to defend the rights of children and protect children. Among the organizations that came up include the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund which is under the United Nations (Heywood, 2017). At around 1959, the United Nations General Assembly which is among the highest organs of the United Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Among the rights that are highlighted in this Declaration include the right to education, right to play, right to health care and the right to a supportive environment (Heywood, 2017). Similarly, in 1973, the International Labor Organization adopted Convention 138 that sets the age of 18 as the minimum age for a child to undertake any work. Since then, various countries have come up with their laws in accordance with those that UNICEF highlights (Heywood, 2017). In the modern world, there are Juvenile courts where children are taken when they commit crimes (Heywood, 2017). Therefore, despite children having their rights, they are not exempted from committing crime.

Part Three

Various factors as depicted in the previous section have led to changes in the lives of children. The lives of children have improved due to intervention of these factors such as the formation of new laws to protect children (Jenks, 2013). One of the impacts is that the growth pyramids of the industrialized countries has shifted a lot. Exposing children to chemicals at a younger age and harm in the factories, translates to the death rate of children being high. The organs of a child are not as developed as the organs of an adult (Jenks, 2013). For instance, the lung capacity of a child is different from an adult and once they are both exposed to harmful chemicals, then the death rate of children is high due to such factors. Similarly, the lives of young people have improved due to the rights that came up (Jenks, 2013). The right to education has led to the knowledge of young people increasing. From the current global observation many young people have ventured into innovative technology and this is because of the exposure that they have been given by the right to education (Jenks, 2013). Families have also become a compact unit unlike in the past where everyone was working and therefore children did not have someone to give them attention (Jenks, 2013). Now, due to the development of the rights, parents know that children are vulnerable and as a result they present themselves to support the children.

The inequalities in health that were previously existing were due to the life that children were being subjected to. From a biological point of view, the body of an adult is so different from that of a child (Stearns, 2016). Similarly, the two are different mentally. Therefore, in the past, healthcare facilities would experience a lot of children patients which was due to their daily-to-daily activities. They are exposed to harm which their general body cannot handle. When people are at their workplaces, they experience challenges daily (Stearns, 2016). Adults are able to come up with solutions to solve these challenges, however, for a child, that is difficult because cognitive development of the child is still underway (Stearns, 2016). Thus, those challenges can lead to mental illnesses for children (Stearns, 2016). Therefore, the development of the lives of children from the 19th Century to present time has helped the world to raise a stringer generation with a good foundation and also a generation with knowledge based on the education being offered.

Part Four

It is necessary to first understand the meaning of the term child vulnerability. This is a situation where if anything negative occurs in the society there are high chances of getting a negative outcome on the child (Nadan & Korbin, 2018). There is the lowest level of well-being of

the child. There are several factors which lead to child vulnerability which are evaluated with respect to the family and the society (Nadan & Korbin, 2018). The first category of factors is the individual factors which include disability, mental health difficulties and immigrant background among others (Nadan & Korbin, 2018). These factors make a child vulnerable thus having the lowest level of well-being. The second category is the environmental factors which operate at both family and community levels (Nadan & Korbin, 2018). The family factors that can make a child vulnerable include poverty thus a child lacks all the basic needs, parent's health being poor such that the parent who is the bread winner is not able to support the child; and family stress. In regard to the community factors there are factors where children with vulnerability are put together and therefore this demoralizes them leading to a low level of well-being (Nadan & Korbin, 2018). Similarly, a community may lack schools that ensure children begin learning and acquiring knowledge at a young age. Communities also differ in terms of the support system, and this can make a child vulnerable (Nadan & Korbin, 2018). Some neighborhoods have opportunities while others lack these opportunities e.g., a poor community which leads to a poor family.

There are several interventions towards child vulnerability. The first intervention is foster parenting whereby families take in vulnerable children and treat them as their own. They provide all the basic needs of that child (Bright, 2017). This helps the child get a better living and also eliminates a burden on the family of that child. In future that child will take their family out of the vulnerability situation. Another intervention is donation where a person can donate to the families and communities of the vulnerable children (Bright, 2017). They can either donate directly or through organization which exist in the society that help the vulnerable children (Bright, 2017). This ensures that that child does not lack anything and as a result the challenges that make that child vulnerable are eliminated.

There are several ways through which child vulnerability can be mitigated. Among the key recommendations there includes the government and philanthropist investing in areas that have been left behind for a long time. This investment is in terms of childcare, early education and lifelong acquisition of skills (Staba Hogan et al., 2018). The investment can also work of optimizing the natural resources for sustainable growth to ensure that the coming generation is not vulnerable (Staba Hogan et al., 2018). The next recommendation is for the government to support business dynamism which includes innovation and technology and also manual work. This enhances strong competition and vibrant entrepreneurship making a community develop (Staba Hogan et al., 2018). Once the community develops there are quality jobs, a vibrant community government and aligned policy packages among others. The final intervention is

building of a working and responsive government (Staba Hogan et al., 2018). A good government with quality leaders will ensure that all aspects of the society are dealt with to ensure a vibrant society where every person is treated equally.

In the above recommendations, they are mainly concerned with the work of the government. The government is the supreme authority and budgets the activities and money of a country (Staba Hogan et al., 2018). Therefore, it is easier for them to eradicate child vulnerability easily. The overall impact is that children from all parts of a jurisdiction get equal chances and thus eliminating vulnerability.

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