



**Children, Young People and Families
(BMHP5004_LON)**

Assessment Component 2

Written Essay

Student name: Ronke Olomola

Student number: 1916047

Group:

Lecturer name: Bianca Sanfilippo

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Learner declaration

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Student signature: Ronke Olomola

Date: 26/08/2020

Introduction

Families and childhood are not new concepts and have been in existence for years. These two concepts are directly affected by various factors such as the religion, believes, and cultures. This academic essay will be focusing upon the comparison and definitions of childhood in various societies. The development of the social construction of childhood from historical times to present times will be highlighted. The changes that have taken place in the lives of children and their families from historical to current times with the inclusion of policies and legislations, will be considered. The impact of the changes that have come about in the lives of children and their families due to the policies and legislations relating to children from historical times will be considered. Approaches and interventions which are used to support vulnerable children, young people and families in present times will be identified and analysed. Additionally, recommendations for improvements will be discussed and their potential impact for children, young people, and families.

What is a Child

The word child comes from a Latin word “infans which means the one who does not speak”. <https://www.humanium.childrights>. A Child could be defined as an individual from birth to the age of 18 years. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) agrees with this definition and legally defines a child “as everyone under the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child” (Children and the law 2021). The National Society for the prevention of cruelty to children (2021) also defines a child in England “as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday”. The Medical definition of a child however is different from the legal definition as it emphasizes on the growth of a child. Medically a child is an individual from birth to puberty. The Medical dictionary (2021) agrees with this definition and states that “an individual from birth to puberty is regarded as a child”. The General Medical Council (2021) explains that a child refers to a young person who does not have the maturity and capacity to make important decisions for themselves. This definition focuses on what the child can consent to and their mental capacity as regards making important life affecting decisions. The social policy definition of a child is an individual who is vulnerable and needs protection. (Kehilly, 2013). The experience of a child is known as childhood, which is a social construction concept, and it varies from country to country and from society to society, this explains why there is no universal definition of childhood. The media has a part to play as it is what the child watches on television that will also educate the child and influence their perception of how to play and also to understand the world that they are living.

In Africa for example Nigeria a child that has been brought up in the village, their experience of childhood will be totally different from a child that was brought up in the city in Nigeria, this is because in the village there are limited facilities such as schools, such a child may have to work in order to help the family, which is child labour, Uyanga et al (2019) agree with this line of thought and argue that child labour often denies children the opportunity to be educated. On the other hand, the child that was brought up in the city, there are different services available for the child such as good schools, good health care, and the early introduction to computers, which broadens the child's knowledge and horizon. This shows that even though both children are in Nigeria, their experience of childhood is totally different.

Another example of childhood is in the United Kingdom, some children must care for their parents and are known as "young carers". Joseph et al (2019) highlights that it is not uncommon to see young people taking care of their family members. There are also children that are in the same country and do not have to care for their parents will have a different experience to childhood, and probably less stress and do not have that added responsibility and can live their lives as stress free children.

In Yemen due to poverty and war in that country children are not able to go to school and almost a fifth of children on Yemen have lost their homes. (Save the children, 2021) but in the United Kingdom, due to the stability in the country, children are protected and when needed, parents are given council flats which are affordable. The House of Commons (2021) explain that the local authority after carrying out a need assessment can help with home help and are able to support children in need.

The Historical Background of Children

Children have come a long way in having rights and having a voice. Kehily (2013) explains the different historically times of children, during the medieval times, childhood did not exist children lived and worked just as adults, during the Ancient Greeks and Roman times, infants were not named as the child mortality rates were high. It was often known that children did not have a say as regards what happened to them. Historically children have tended to be hidden within the family and rarely seen as people with their own rights. (Ridge, 2012). In the Victorian times (1500 – 1800) children were subject to many diseases and their mortality rate

was very high. The poor Victorian children were not able to live in nice houses and lived in single rooms. Diseases such as scarlet fever, whooping cough killed numerous children. (Thompson, 2020). During the industrial revolution children worked in factories for long hours and were exposed to different kinds of harm, in the factories. (Wright, 2015)

Families

Over the years the structure families have changed. A family is socially constructed concept which varies according to culture, race, greed, religion, and sociological. There are families' various types of families, firstly there is the nuclear family which is the traditional family that is a mother, father, and children. Secondly there is the single parent family which is either a mother or father and the children, thirdly there is the adopted family, children in foster care. Fourthly there is the extended family, which includes uncles, aunties, grandmother, and grandfather. Lastly there is the stepfamily this is where two different families merge due to marriage. Murdock (1949) defines a family as a social group characterised by common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children, own or adopted, of sexually cohabiting adults. This definition of a family is critiqued by sociologists as it is argued that the definition is limiting. This is an old definition and families have changed as their our now same sex marriages, who have children and live as a family.

Factors Which Have Contributed to Changing the Lives of Children and Reducing Inequalities

Britto (2014) explains that in the early years of a child, the brain develops at a very fast rate, and it is important as it gives children a good start in life. This has changed the way people understand the growth of children and has shown that the early year of a child is very important and cannot be ignored. Over centuries children have been treated badly and there has being abuse and a high mortality rate of children due to the jobs they have had to be involved with, in the olden days in Europe children worked in factories and there were a lot of dangers, and sometimes it did cost them their lives. Griffin (2014) explains that the increase of Industrialisation led to the need for an increase of child labour.

The Factory Act in (1833) stated that no child younger than 9 years old was allowed to in the factories, also they were allowed to work for a limited number of hours. The Mines Act (1842)

raised the age for children to work to 10 years old. The employment law in the United Kingdom states that children can only work when they reach the age of 16 years, and they must be under an apprenticeship during this period. (Gov.UK., 2021). The Education Act (1980) highlights that all children in the United Kingdom must go to school until the age of 16 years. This bridge the gap between the rich and the poor children so that all children had the opportunity to have a decent education. In countries such as Yemen children as young as 9 years, old must work this is due to poverty. The International Labour Organisation (2021) explains that more than 1.3 million children in Yemen are child labourers which perform unpaid work. UNICEF (2016) explains that the organisation for economic cooperation and development (OECD) are focusing on the bottom end of inequality as regards children when it comes to income, education, health, and life satisfaction.

Before neuroscience discovered that human beings brain develops in the first five years of a child's development, it was not known. Britto (2014) agrees with this line of thought and explains that neuroscience allowed scientists developed studies about the human brain especially in the early years of a child's development. It is therefore very important that during these formative years if anything negative happens to the child it could affect the child later in life. This study allowed parents to spend more time with their children since it was highlighted the importance of the first few years of a child's life. Wall (2010) explains that in the 1990s parents focused on rearing children to maximize children's brain development. The sociological factor is that parents now take time out to teach their children and to bond with them, by teaching the children how to read, write on spending time with them at the park. The NSPCC (2021) highlights that the disruption to or loss of a bond with a child's primary caregiver can affect a child emotionally and psychologically even into adulthood.

The NSPCC (2021) explains that across the United Kingdom there are laws that are in place to keep children free from harm, and to uphold their rights, firstly making sure children have access to education; secondly, provide children with conducive homes; thirdly, provide support for children who are not able to live with their family; fourthly, make sure children are free from harm, when they want to get jobs; and lastly, make sure children's confidentiality is kept at all times especially when it comes to their personal data as per data protection act (2018).

The Support Vulnerable Children, young people, and families receive in present times in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has come a long way in making the lives of children more favourable, there is now free health care by the National Health Service and free dental care for children. (Children and young people's health outcomes forum, 2015). There is also the provision for child benefits for all families that are struggling which helps the lives of the children. The revenue benefits (2021) explain that an individual that has a child in the United Kingdom may be entitled to child benefit. In some parts of England there also free bus travel for children. This is also to help ease the financial burden from the children's parents. Transport for London explains that children aged five to 10 can travel free at any time by tube, DLR, London over ground and some national rail services if they are travelling with an adult.

There are services that are universal for all children and those that are targeted for children that are in need. An example of a universal service for a child is free health care and optician services for all children. Target services are for children that receive free school meals, this service is for children whose families are poor and need assistance. The Social care institute for excellence (2012) explains that there are 4 tiers. Tier 1 is the universal services like the national health services, Tier 2 which is targets services for children and families beginning to experience difficulties such as parenting classes, support for teenage mothers. Tier 3 is specialist services for families that have complex cases such as mental health services, children with learning disabilities. Tier 4 are for families with children that have special and complex needs such as adolescent mental health services.

The age of consent for sexual relationships is 16 years old in the United Kingdom, this is to protect children. Est (2021) agrees with this line of thought and expresses that in the United Kingdom 16 years is the age of consent, however in Germany and Italy the age of consent is 14 years old. The reason why the age of consent is stipulated to be 16 years is to protect children from child rape and exploitation.

There are two important children development theories that influenced services for children, the first one is Maslow's theory (2020) which states that there are sets of needs, which come in a particular order the first layer is the basic needs for bodily functioning which is eating, drinking and going to the toilet; children need to feel secure and safe; the second layer need

for love, friendship and company, children need to feel loved and wanted, this is the psychology needs. The third layer is social recognition, status, and respect, the last layer is self- actualization, this is where the child has all that her or she needs. A diagram of the Maslow theory is in appendix 1

The second children development theory is Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (2018) which consist of different systems, the first is a microsystem which is the child, the second is mesosystem which includes the family, teachers, and nursery, this is the immediate individuals that children interact with. the third system is the exosystem which is the health services, and people in the local services, which look after children. The fourth system is the macrosystem which is the law and legislation and policies. A diagram of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory is in appendix 2

Recommendations

The care of children has come a long way from historical times, especially in the United Kingdom, there are many policies and legislations that have been put in place to protect children and to keep them safe. This essay has looked at the various definitions of what a child is, and the different families that exist. It was discussed that families are socially constructed and are influenced by various things, culturally, religion, creed, and society. The care of children can still be improved, as there are still carer children looking after their families such children need to be helped and given the assistance that would make life more comfortable for them. The United Kingdom still have areas that are suffering from poverty hence they're still a need for help to be rendered to such families. The house of commons library (2021) highlights those 3.2 million children were in relative low income 23% of children. This shows that there is still need for children in the United Kingdom to be assisted.

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Appendix 1

The Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (2021)

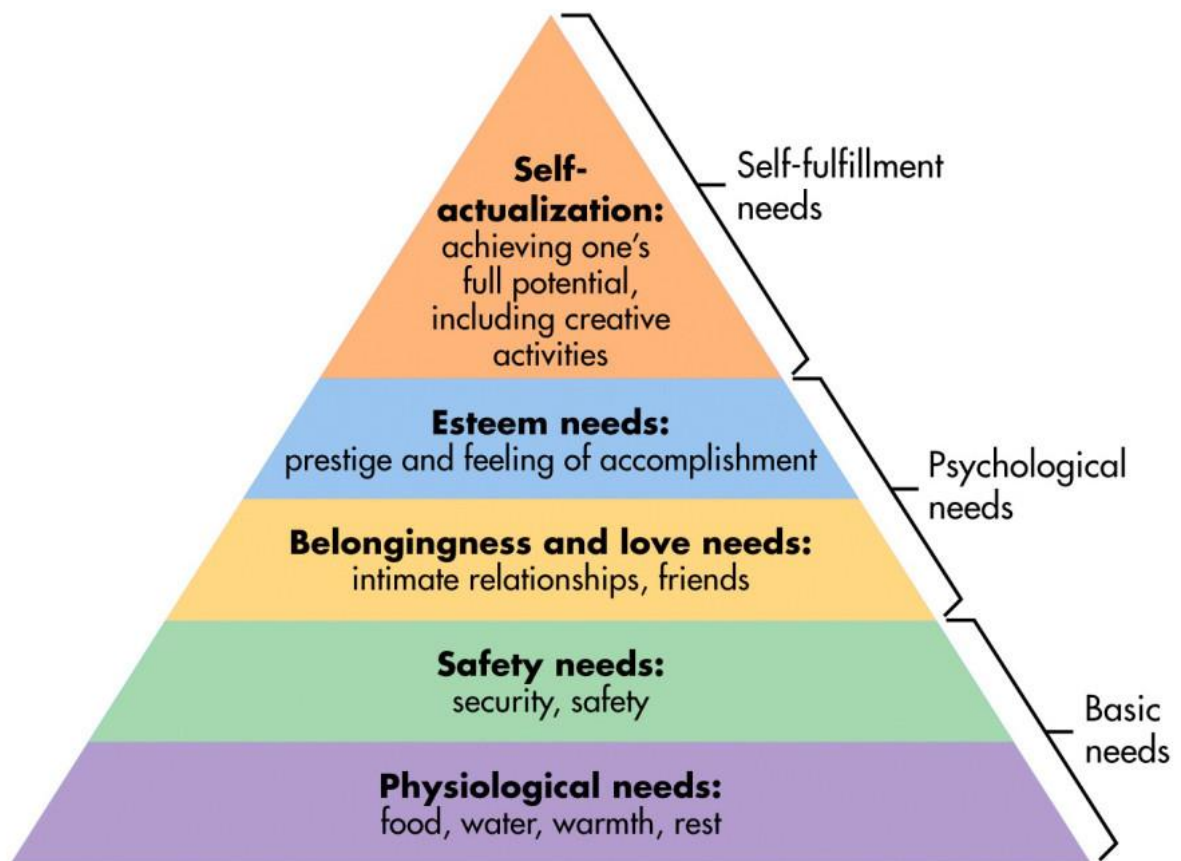


Image from simply psychology

Appendix 2

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (2021)

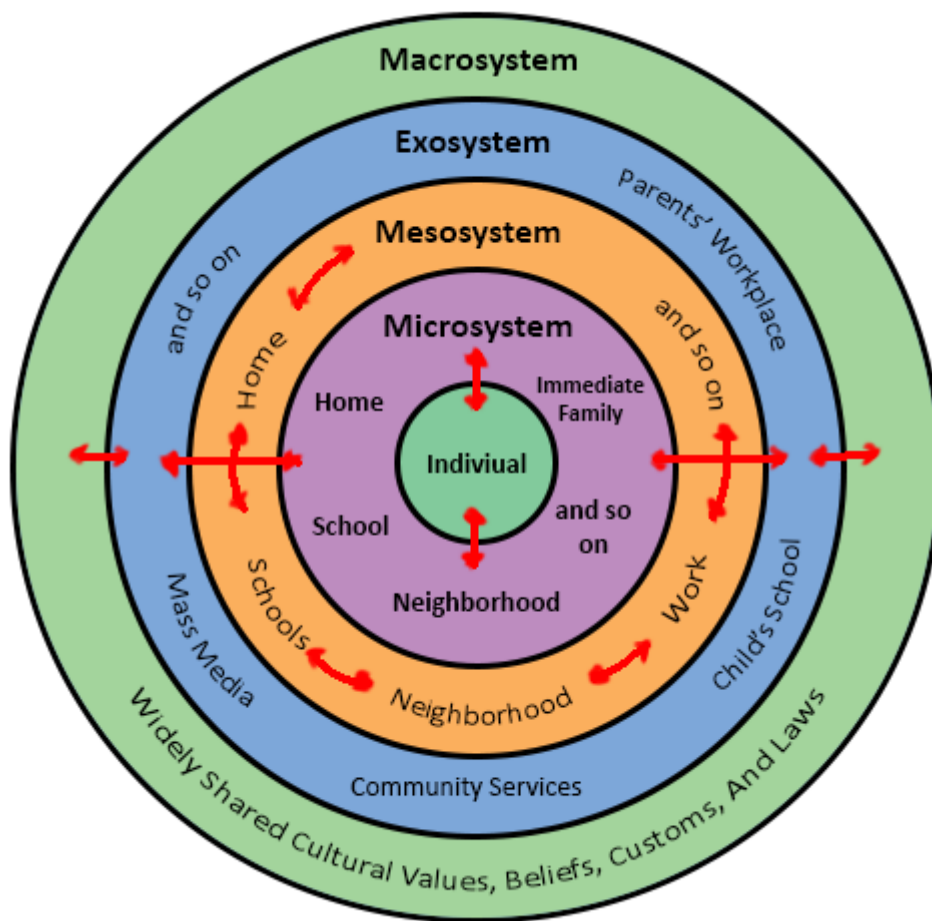


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