

Cultural influences in child rearing



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Introduction

Child development refers to the patterns of transformation over time, which commences on at conception and extends throughout the life span of an individual. This development occurs in different aspects, such as biological, which involves changes in physical being, social, emotional and cognitive changes (Keenan & Evans, 2009). Physical development addresses the change in body cognitive process, which involves mental processes, while social and emotional ones pertain to how children relate with others, and how they understand their feelings (Grisham-Brown, 2009). Maschinot defines culture “ as a shared system of meaning which involves beliefs, values and assumptions articulated in the day-to day transactions of individuals within a group through an unambiguous pattern of language, customs, behavior, practices, and attitudes” (Maschinot, 2008). Multicultural societies are characterized by cultural pluralism. In these societies, cultural varieties, such as linguistic and religious diversity, are tolerated. This paper addresses the cultural influence on child rearing, and how it affects their behavior during the child development. There are unique differences between children and adults, and before they achieve adulthood, they require several stages. Globally, children are treated differently and are seen to have different purposes.

Child Development

The idea of disciplining and teaching children self-control has been around for a long time. Most theories of development do not encompass baser instincts concept. However, they tend to include the ideas of control and self-

discipline. Even though children develop naturally without an unnatural influence, there is a wider agreement that they must be taught to control their own impulses. Children are born innocent, bestowed to build up a natural sense of right or wrong (Cote, 2006). This is as far as the society does not corrupt the process of development. This concept has been influential in the establishment of what is developmentally appropriate in guiding the child to institute a balance between the natural play and structured learning. In contrast to these assumptions, the other assumption is that children are born blank for them to be written. Then, they are formed through learning and experience brought to them by parents and the society at large (McCloskey, 2009). The repetition of these moments of learning and experiences during development leads to the formation of a child's personality. Finally, the interaction theory of child development combines the concepts of nature and nurture. It recognizes that children have certain structures that enable them to interact with and interpret environmental factors presented to them. This theory is more appealing to the majority of people as it incorporates ideas that children are actively engaged in their own development. Children have an impact on how environment responds to people, and how they act in response to environment (McCloskey, 2009).

The Influence of Culture on Child Rearing

Child rearing is a monumental responsibility, when vested in an individual. In early years of rearing a child, the sole responsibility of providing physical, emotional and intellectual base lies with the person raising the child. Various factors play a prominent part in influencing the behavior of children.

The upbringing of children throughout the stages of development changes substantially, depending on the environment and culture, in which the child is growing. This happens when a child is brought up in a culture, where they are required to provide an additional income. For example, the child would face monumental implications in its natural stages of development. It is impossible to say that a child who develops and grows up in a society, where they are required to play a certain purpose, will necessarily require caretakers, such as parents, who support a fully control and discipline theory of development (Cote, 2006).

Child development is universal, regardless of the environment and culture, in which the child is growing. This takes into account three different aspects such as physical or social environment, which includes the basic elements of the environment, cultural customs and development practices, along with the belief systems of the child's parents and social groups. The belief systems, which surround the child developing, influence how a child is treated, what opportunities exist for the child, and how the environment influences the process of this child's growing. For example, a child, who is brought up in an industrialized culture, may develop motor control skills by using natural objects that make up their future adult environments (McCloskey, 2009).

Parenting conflicts have a positive influence on the development of a child. The conflict can arise due to different expectations and concerns on boundaries and methods of disciplining. This inconsistency in parenting leads to different sets of rules that lead to undermining of the authority of one parent. This undermining can lead to the competition, where one parent tries

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to win by putting the child in conflict with unclear guidelines or expectations for behavior (Lohrie, 2010). Nonetheless, the divorce of the parents may have adverse effects on child development. The extent of the effect is not manifested at the time of divorce. However, sometimes it occurs later during the life of the child. Children experience resentment, hurt, anger, sadness and guilt because of separation of their parents.

Individualistic culture encourages children to make choices. Again, they become assertive to achieve them. In this culture, personal assertiveness is encouraged to the detriment of group harmony. Children brought up in such a society concentrate on the individual success rather than that of a group. However, research indicates that individual from such societies are labeled with traits such as hardworking, intelligent and even athletic (Maschinot, 2008). This culture of individualism is the most dominant in the U. S., where these cultural ideals influence the trend of development in individuals.

Related to this culture is the interdependent culture, which encourages a group harmony. These two value systems shape the cultural scripts that are transmitted through generations. Either this transmission occurs implicitly through modeling or explicitly through verbal messages, such as this, is what ought to be done or not done (Maschinot, 2008). Through these ways, the child internalizes the scripts. Furthermore, it comes to affect their perception, motivation, affect regulation and social behavior in different ways. Act of these two cultures normally contains a psychological cost. In socially oriented societies, the cost of interdependence is the suppression of the individual development. Alternatively, there is a tendency of alienation. Individualistic cultures stress on the independence; and, hence, children in

these cultures are introduced to situations, where they are to make individual choices earlier in life. On the other hand, children of the interdependent value system are encouraged to take care of their families, who in turn take care of them. The child develops with the idea of being able to sacrifice his own goals for the goodness of the group (McCloskey, 2009).

Culture has an influence on the language development of an individual. Language, regardless of culture, serves the same purpose of communicating information, building and maintaining the relationship, and building identity- using symbols that represent one's identity. Babies in all cultures are seen to perceive speech sounds in terms of different categories. Moreover, the more languages a child is exposed in its earlier life, the more vocabulary it develops (Maschinot, 2008). The development of language is also dependent on the social class of the parents. Professional parents tend to talk more to their children than working class parents do and, consequently, those from poverty backgrounds. This element aids in the development of language. Exposure to bilingual languages at an early age may have a delaying effect on precursors of the speech development (Maschinot, 2008). Although bilinguals may seem as if they have a social advantage, prejudice against them can create a dichotomy, in which bilinguals are looked down on by children studying another language are socially rewarded (Maschinot, 2008).

Recommendations

For a child to develop to an all round adult, its entire physical, intellectual, emotional, and social welfare must be fully developed. Different theories exist to explain the development of the child. Most of theories have some

misgivings; however, the interaction theory best explains child development. It takes into consideration all aspects of the growth of a child. Individualistic society encourages the development of a child, making its own choice devoid of interference from the society. This is the best society that can be recommended. It helps the child to achieve its full capacity in the wide society. In addition, this culture allows easy transmission of all aspects of the culture from one generation to the other.

Conclusion

Different cultures exist, and they have varying effects on the development of a child. It is exceptionally clear that when trying to figure out the effect of society and culture on child development, there is a difficulty in separating the child's natural development from the normal development. There is no one single theory that covers all aspects of child development. There is either no society or culture, which has the best answers or ways, in which to help a child through its developmental stages. It is necessary to understand the theories of development and know how to incorporate them in the diverse social and cultural aspects. These practices enhance a better understanding of how elements of development play. However, culture and environment are universal elements in child development. Different cultures have various impacts on the development of a child. Some of the impacts influence the character of a child during development. These include certain aspects such as language and the right to make certain choices. There is the individualistic culture, which encourages a child to make its own choices and be self-reliant. In contrast, interdependent culture encourages reliance on the community and especially the extended family.