GENDER INEQUALITY AND PARENTS ROLE ON CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT: AN HISTORICAL TRENDS AND CONTEXTUAL DIFFERENCES

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Abstract- Gender inequality as well as gender bias, both blatant and subtle, are causing boys and girls to be raised in separate societies, with separate expectations, and widely diverging treatment based on gender. This is perhaps not preparing them for future together or enabling them to fulfill their own potential in life. Invariably, parents tend to distribute household tasks along gender lines, pushing boys to do yard work and take out the garbage, while girls are instructed to clean the house, wash dishes and babysit. Both males and females have standard based on their biological sex. Their gender role or how they live a male or female role determines their behaviour, attitudes, values, and beliefs. Interestingly, there is evidence to suggest that parent-child pretense and physical play may affect children's gender-role socialization by promoting or constraining the expression of certain types of behaviour by parent and child. Therefore, this study made use of secondary data to link the descriptive assessment of an historical trends on gender development in sex roles over a period of time in discussing how parental role influences child's development. It concludes on how society should cease having cultural distaste for ambiguity when it comes to gender, thus providing children with the freedom to grow up and become what they truly are regardless of gender.

Key Words- Females, Gender, Males, Parents,

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender as noted by Eitzen & Maxine, (2000) refers to the social identity of men and women. It cannot be understood at the level of individual. Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles as well as biologically through chromosomes. However, going the memory lane, the year 1960s and 1970s significantly marked an important turning point when research was carried out in gender development. Worthy of mentioning in this significant turning point came into limelight in 1975 when sex roles was established as a forum in the field of gender research (Frieze, et al, 1978).

Moreover, socialization in gender started when parents prepare for the arrival of their child and immediately the child is born, parents remark, react to, and begin to question the origin of their child's behaviour. However, all these related to how they treat their child, or might they be related to their genes or personality. Rubble & Martin (1998) argued that parents are concerned with how and why behaviours emerge and change over time, in view of this disposition; gender developmental scientists narrow their focus to the study of origins of gendered behaviour and that of gender thinking.

Similarly, how early do children learn to identify themselves and others as males or females, and what are the consequences of learning to discriminate and label gender? At what point in development do girls and boys begin to diverge in their behaviours and interests and why do these gender differences emerge? When do children develop a sense of male privileged status and when do they form negative attitudes about the other sex? It is to be noted that for a young child, every moment with a loving and engaged family provides an opportunity for healthy development. For a parent each day brings opportunities and moments to engage and observe child's expanding potential

Historically, the late 1960s through the 1970s remained an important turning point in gender research field. These periods provided a thorough discussion of the complexities surrounding the relative contributions of biological and social factors in understanding the psychology of women. Since that time, the field of gender studies has evolved and research on the development of gender related behaviours and processes have grown considerably. Along this line, in 1972, Man and Woman, Boy and Girl which was a book written by 'Money & Ehthard really advanced a provocative theory about gender identity and gender differentiation that continues to spark debate. In addition, in 1974, Macoby & Jackin's came up with another book referred to as ''The Psychology of Sex Differences'', which presented a parallel synthesis of research finding on gender differences in development.

It was innovative simply because the book challenged the idea that there were numerous differences between the genders, rather it argued for only a few well established differences. Significantly, thought about the concept of sex and gender began to change in the 1970s when Unger's (1979) came up with an influential paper, ''Toward a Redirection of Sex and Gender''. Unger asserted that the use of the term ''gender'' serves to reduce assumed parallels between biological and psychological sex or at least to make explicit any assumptions of such parallel.

From this her ideas as Poulin (2007), pointed out, researchers became to be more selective in their case of the terms and gender and to avoid framing research in ways that might hint at biological determinism. At this period also, researcher started moving away completely from undimensional and relatively simplistic models about the origins and meaning of gender differences and began challenging conceptualizations of masculinity and feminity as representing bi-polar opposites.

II. CONTEMPORARY THEORETICAL TRENDS ON GENDER INEQUALITY

Undoubtedly, the field of gender development has been dominated by a few prevailing theoretical perspectives that have driven progress and debate in the field. Indeed, some of these perspectives have given rise to concepts (and related terms), methods, and research studies that have shaped the literature (Rubble, et al, (2006). Far more importantly, because developmental researchers are interested in the origins of behaviours, it is not surprising that issue of nature and nurture are theoretically important and that there is great attention that surrounds biological versus socialization approaches to understanding gender development.

Biological arguments according to Shields (1975) have long been advanced to justify gender inequality and are often interpreted as deterministic. As such, there is much at stake when biological theories are proposed and research findings are interpreted. Nonetheless, with advancements in research methods and theories addressing biological mechanisms, this field of inquiry has gained considerable acceptance and visibility. Current biological approaches do not imply determinism and instead emphasize the ways in which biological and social factors interact to product behaviour (Cohen-Bendathan, et al, 2005).

Another theoretical trend that has received attention considerably in this field has to do with socialization and cognitive approaches to gender development. These two approaches highlight the shaping of children's behaviour to match cultural gender role norms. Be that as it may, the socialization and cognitive perspectives differ in the degree to which they emphasize the role of the social environment, especially reinforcement and modeling of adults and peers, relative to cognitive developmental processes, such as the emergence of children's gender identity and knowledge of gender stereotypes.

Despite the disagreements over relative contributions of socialization and cognitive processes, there are number of similarities in these approaches, and both groups of theorists have conducted studies of cognitive and socialization factors. Along this line, Bussey & Bandurn (1999) describe some cognitive information processing mechanisms, such as selective attention, forming cognitive representations, and forming plans of action, that mediate observational learning.

Cognitive theorists describe the ways in which children interpret and respond to messages provided by socialization agents. In view of this disposition, researchers have increased efforts to understand early origins of gender differences and have done so by focusing research on younger ones, when gendered cognitions and behaviours first emerge (Zosuls, et al, 2009). More research has also turned to focusing on links among various cognitive and socialization processes, thus leading to more complex models and studies of gender development (Tobin, et al, 2010).

III. CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Males and females are different from the moment of conception. Chromosomal and hormonal differences make male and females physically different. Therefore, in explaining gender inequality, sociologist turns to the surrounding systems that affect all human behaviour. Most theories highlight the institutional structures that assign women and men different positions, different roles and consequently different behaviours.

Historically again, the most compelling explanations of gender inequality are materialist theories that made use of cross-cultural data on the status of women and men. Materialists' theories explain gender inequality as an outcome of how women and men are tied to the economic structure of society. Such theories stress control and distribution of valued resources as crucial facts in producing stratification. Further afield, they point out that women's role of mother and wife, although vital to the well-being of society are devalued and also deny women access to highly valued public resources.

They equally point out that gender stratification is greater where women's work is directed inward to the family and men's work is directed outward to trade and the market place (Eitzen, 2000). When women do enter the labour markets, they often are concentrated in lower-paying jobs. Women also enter labour market later than those men and often have to leave periodically because of child care responsibilities. However, women have had lower levels of education than men, but recently this trend seems to have begun to reverse. Be that as it may, the most complex demanding and an all-involving role that a member of society must learn to play is that of male or female.

From infancy through early childhood and beyond, children learn what is expected of boys and girls, and they learn to behave according to those expectations. Girls and boys are perceived and treated differently from the moment of birth. As such parents describe newborn daughters as tiny, soft and delicate, and sons as strong and they interact differently with new born daughters and sons. Perhaps, how parents treat their children may be the most important factor in the creation of sex stereotypes. Comparing the life of the young girl to that of the young boy a critical difference emerges.

It is instructive to note that, fathers provided the strongest pressures for gender specific behaviour; in addition, they use different techniques with daughters and sons. They rewarded their daughters and gave them positive feedback and punish them for gendered behaviour. With their sons they use most negative feedback and punish them for gender inappropriate behaviour. Mothers were more likely to reinforce behaviour of both boys and girls with rewards and positive feedback. Peers, in contrast, were more likely to use punishment on both sexes.

IV. NATURE OF PARENTING ON CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

Understandably, parenting is both a biological and a social process (Lerner, et al, 1995). Parenting is the term summarizing the set of behaviours involved across life in the relation amongst organisms who are usually co specifics, and typically members of different generations or, at least, of different birth cohorts. Parenting interactions provide resources across the generational groups and function in regard to domains of survival, reproduction, nurturance, and socialization.

Therefore, parenting is a complex process, involving much more than a mother or father providing food, safety, shelter, and a succor to a child. It involves bidirectional relationships between members of two (or more) generations, can extend through all or major parts of the respective life spans of these groups; may engage all institutions within a culture (including educational, economic, political and social ones); and is embedded in the history of a people-as that history occurs within the natural and designed settings within which the group lives (Ford & Lerner, 1992).

In view of this disposition, through the diverse interactions a child has with his or her parents, the child influences the parents that are influencing him or her. The child is thereby shaping a source of his or her own development. In this sense, children are producers of their own development (Lerner, 1982) and the presence of such child efforts constitutes the basis of bidirectional relations between parents and children.

Undoubtedly, this bidirectional relation continues when the child is an adolescent and an adult. Along this line, corresponding relations exist between the person and siblings, friends, teachers and indeed all other significant people in his or her life. There is diversity in these child-social context relations. As a consequence of their characteristics of individuality, children elicit differential reactions in their parents, and these reactions provide the basis of feedback to the child, that is, there is return stimulation which influences his/ her further development, the bidirectional child-parent relationships may be referred to as ''circular functions'' (Lerner & Busch-Rossnagel, 1981, Lerner, 1982).

The parent shapes the child, but part of what determines the way in which the parent does this is the child himself or herself. Moreover, the child-parent relationship is embedded in social networks which, in turn, are embedded in still larger community, societal, cultural, and historical levels of organization. Similarly, the nature of parent-child relations, of family life and development, and of societal and cultural influences on the child-parent family system are influenced by both ''normative'' and ''non-normative'' historical changes (Baltes, 1987).

To a very large extent, the key function of a child's family is to raise the young person in as healthy manner as possible (Bornstein, 1995). The parents' role is to provide the child with a safe, secure, nurturing, loving, and supportive environment, one that allow the offspring to have a happy and healthy youth; this sort of experience allows the youth to develop the knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviours necessary to become an adult, making a productive contribution to self, family, country, and society (Lerner, et al, 1995).

At this juncture, it is to be understood that whatever style parents use to rear children, the goal of parenting is to raise a child who is healthy and as well successful in life, who can contribute to self and to society, who accepts and works to further the societal order. Indeed, the process the behaviours that are used over time to reach these goals are termed socialization

Although all societies socialize their children (in order that as future contributions to society, society can survive and prosper), there are marked differences in what different societies, or groups within society want to see in the children who has been ''successfully'' socialized. Said another way, there is great diversity in the specific goals parents have in socializing their children.

Put succinctly, one way of illustrating this contextual variation and, as well, of judging whether parents and society at large have been successful in shaping children to accept social values, is to ask children what it means to be a good or a bad child (Crystal & Stevenson, 1995).

Another way of understanding the socialization process as Weller, Florian & Mikulincer, (1995) argued is to appraise whether different groups within

a society direct their children to comparable developmental achievements. For instance, research in Israel suggests that children from Arab- Israeli families are raised to view the father as having more power than the mother, in turn, Jewish Israeli children see more maternal than paternal power. How successful are parents' attempts at socialization. By virtue of the fact that society continues to evolve, and is not characterized by intergenerational warfare or revolution, and that the vast majority of children become contributing adults to society (Steinbers, 1990).

V. CONFLICT AND STRESS IN PARENT-CHILDREN RELATIONS

Fisher & Johnson (1990) noted that family conflicts seem inevitable, at least conflicts are a ubiquitous part of all families at sometimes in their history, just as the reasons for conflicts between individuals, on the one hand, or nations, on the others varies, so too do the reasons for conflicts in families. For instance children report that conflicts often arise because they feel that parents are not providing the emotional support they want because of a lack of consensus about family or societal values.

Moreover, other research reports that children and their parents are in conflict about the same sorts of issues-chores, appearance, and politeness-there is a decrease in arguments about these issues as children develops into adolescents (Galambos, et al, 1995).; however at older age levels, conflicts over finances tend to increase. In turn as children develop to youths, they are less likely to concede an argument to parents; as a result, and conflicts may be left unresolved especially it seems in families with boys (Smetana, Yau & Hanson, 1991).

Nevertheless, despite its developmental course, the presence of conflict at any point in the parent-children relationship may influence their behaviour and development. As pointed out by Shagle & Barber (1993) family conflicts may lead the children to think negatively about suicide. Conflicts in the parent-children relationship results in problems in youth development (Rubstein & Feldman, 1993). Clearly, parents' negative emotions can lead through the creation of problematic parenting behaviours, to negative outcomes in children development. Moreover, the presence of problem behaviours in parent's parse is linked to problems in children development.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Without doubt, gender development has progressed a long way from initial study of gender differences and has continued to move forward steadily. The emphasis on gender socialization and stereotyping has also been consistent with the prominence of socialization theories beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s Be that as it may, parents are charged with the responsibility by society in proper upbringing of their children. Through the family they create, parents must develop the human resources-the people-who will carry society forward into the future. The children reared by the parents constitute a group to this future. Thus, society expects parents to do a good job, to create healthy and productive citizens. In most cases, parents fulfill these expectations; however, there are failures as well.

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