

Chapter 5

Recent trends on parenting and family across contexts

Parenting and family as a social phenomenon have always attracted researchers' interest. The family is the smallest social unit in society and is seen as the core agent in a functioning milieu because of its social role and dynamics and impact on future generations. Parenting is one of these relational roles within families. However, both concepts are contextual as they are socially and environmentally construed. This chapter introduces the epochal development of parenting and family as concepts and as research areas. Specifically, it focuses on how family and parenting have been changing over time, contexts, and cultures. It discusses various forces, styles, and approaches to family and parenting that have shaped the current practices and research. It concludes by discussing the current trends in family organization including declining fertility rate and male interest in marriage which together have implications for family and parenting in the 21st century. Like the quality of early childhood education services, parenting, and family concepts have been changing across time, contexts, and generations (Fernandez et al., 2017; Roskam & Meunier, 2009). To better understand these changes, we conceptualized parenting and family within Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem framework in which time influences environmental and context changes that occur over a life course (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).

Since time immemorial, people across cultures have been becoming parents and raising families (Fernandez et al., 2017). Traditionally the two concepts have been associated with the assumptions that one may potentially lead to the fruition of the other (Roskam & Meunier, 2009). In the context of this study, parenting is generally defined as the promotion and provision of emotional, physical, social, and intellectual support to the child from conception to adulthood. A family is a social group made up of children, parents, and sometimes immediate relations – however, this does vary across cultures and time.

Observations of literature from various parts of the world (Jeynes, 2018; Gezan, 2009; McHale, Dinh, & Rao, 2014; Selin, 2014), indicate that while parenting approaches have changed over time, in some contexts, especially

among rural communities, the style has generally remained the same. If people are to lead the same kind of lives, the same kinds of parenting still exist and apply (Jaynes, 2018). However, in many societies – both Western and non-Western, urbanization coupled with increasingly more women joining the labor force, and recent scientific and technological changes have led to changes in parenting and parental beliefs (McHale, et al, 2014; Selin, 2014). For instance, in most Western societies, there is less reliance on other family members, especially grandparents which has led to limited social networks for other activities (Putnick, et al., 2018). While in some cultures the belief is that parents want their children to join better schools and colleges – this is perhaps a very Western approach (McHale, et al., 2014). Other popular beliefs include that most immigrant parents even if uneducated, do want their children to be educated, have professions, and make a place in the world (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022b; Putnick, et al., 2018). The examples below elaborate on the concept of parenting and the rationale behind the choice of a specific style in specific contexts.

In Southeast Asia, parenting has been greatly influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, which have shaped traditions and values that dictate family structure, hierarchy, roles, and one's place in society (McHale, et al., 2014; Putnick, et al., 2018). In this cultural context, grandparents are revered, husbands possess more power than wives, and sons have more privileges than daughters. Family ties with the extended members are very close and the family collectively shares roles in caregiving, socialization, and co-parenting of children (Jaynes, 2018). Children are expected to be thankful to their parents for their birth, upbringing, and education; they must always think of their parents and family first and love and care for their parents in their elder years (McHale, et al., 2014; Selin, 2014). However, given the existing wind of change across the world - increasing physical and social mobility, migration and relocation, international marriage, delayed marriages, aging population, declining fertility rate, change in attitudes related to gender roles, and more women joining the labor force; the nature, structure, and organization of parenting is prone to change.

In Turkey – which happens to fall in between Asia and Europe, hence characterized by both individualistic culture and a collectivistic society; empirical evidence has documented that parenting reflects both styles (Selin, 2014; Sen, Yavuz & Yagmurlu, 2014). However, the reported gender roles have women, even those with higher educational degrees, not to work after marriage (Sen, et al., 2014). In a typical traditional Turkish family,

parents must inculcate and emphasize patriotism, respect for authority, lovingness, and warmth toward children. As it is in other contexts, Turkish mothers are normally sensitive, and reasonable, and provide cognitive stimulation to their children - this is reflected by proportionally increases in maternal education. Relatedness and a sense of belonging among and between family members are highly valued (Selin, 2014). And there is an emphasis on autonomy and obedience which varies among families coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

In East Africa, traditionally fathers are breadwinners while mothers must stay home take care of the children, and support their husbands in whatever errands (Wadende, Fite & Lesser, 2014). Parents have the responsibility of taking care of their children and grandparents from both sides of the family – husbands and wives (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022a). In Ghana, generally, parenting is reflected by provisions to one's family and social responsibility, as such, fatherhood is both biological and social responsibility (Nyarko, 2014; Ugwuanyi, Okeke & Njeze, 2020). Mothers are oriented towards the permissive style of parenting, while fathers use an authoritarian style (ibid). This division of interests leads some parents to accept corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure, while others don't accept it. Boys are more valued than girls – regarded to be family and clan name bearers. This comes with more responsibilities and expectations such as establishing brilliant careers, taking care of parents when they get old, and producing a third-generation heir (Ugwuanyi, et al., 2020).

In Argentina, there is an affiliative culture in which groups place a high priority on constructive interpersonal relationships (Minzi, Lemos & Vargas-Rubilar, 2014). In this culture, parenting styles vary across urbanities, family socioeconomic status, and gender. For instance, typical middle-class parents must control children's outings, schedules, and friends (Minzi, et al., 2014; Selin, 2014). The most interesting or surprising part of the Argentine culture is that girls are more academically successful than boys and are known to be closer to their mothers and maternal grandmothers (Minzi, et al., 2014). For those in poverty and social risk, the three most important functions of social parenting - nurture, socialization, and education) are weakened or reduced. These parents used more physical punishment, shouting, isolation, intrusion, withdrawal from relationships, and negligence.

In Ecuador, evidence has documented that parenting is shaped by its historical, economic, and political context (Camacho, 2020; Schvaneveldt, 2014; Selin, 2014). While traditionally, within the Ecuadorian collectivist

culture, parental authority was highly valued, still parents observe gender roles and socialization practices which encourages conformity. Given the current socio-economic and technological changes taking place globally and locally, Ecuador is currently going through various changes including changes in gender roles -family separation due to emigration patterns, divorce, and single parenthood (Selin, 2014). In Ecuador, the most used parental practices are positive induction, involvement in school-related activities, emotional warmth, and closeness, and building neatly close family relationships (Camacho, 2020; Schvaneveldt, 2014).

Family as a concept has undergone various changes over time, contexts, and culture (Gezani, 2009; Li & Qiu, 2018; Selin, 2014). Ancient human societies regarded a family to consist of a father, mother, children, extended members, and clans or community members (Selin, 2014). Among collective cultures, a family consists of a father, mother, children, and close extended members such as grandparents, uncles, and aunts (Nyarko, 2014). On the other hand, the composition of a family in the more individualistic cultures includes a father, mother, and children. However, recently there has been growing single-parented families in both collective and individualistic cultures (Fagan & Cherson, 2017). This has been partly due to increasingly more women in the workforce, women empowerment efforts, and various women's rights movements (Ndijuye & Tandika, 2022b).

Recent studies from various parts of the world have pointed out the declining women fertility (Miller, 2020), and male's loss of interest in marriage and family institutions (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021). For instance, on average, a Western European woman in the 18th century could bear between 4 to 6 children, while the current one could bear between 0.4 to 1 child (Fernandez, et al., 2018; Miller, 2020). Even the child value has been changing across generations and cultures (Miller, 2020; Wiesner-Hanks 2019), and gender preferences have been shifting in the opposite direction (Miller, 2020). In non-western societies such as Chinese, where the one-child policy put a lot of pressure to reproduce a male heir to the family, more parents are increasingly expressing preference to have a girl for various reasons (Wang, et al., 2019).

Evidence has documented changes in the structure and organization of families especially marriage including same-sex marriages, divorce, and males' declining interest in marriage (Jarska, 2021). In recent years, due to various reasons, there has been a huge portion of the women population who choose to remain unmarried and childless, others choose to have been married to be or the same sex and opt to have or have no children (Bernini,

2020). Among men across the world, there is a trend of choosing to remain single due to the economic burden associated with family responsibilities (Bernini, 2020; Jarska, 2021), and the costs to be incurred in an unfortunate case of divorce (Jarska, 2021).

All the above have shaped, changed, and impacted concepts and practices of family, parenting, and marriage across contexts, cultures, and times. While the implications of the discussed factors may vary from one context to the next, their implications are significantly influencing children's development and learning. Given the available empirical evidence, there is a need to formulate integrated ECEC policies tailored to understanding of specific contexts, result-oriented parenting styles, and local cultures. Further research is needed to explore what works, how it works, and who does what to make it work in a specific locale.

