

MODERNIZATION, THE GLOBAL CULTURE AND MOTHERHOOD

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Introduction

The paper examines the emergence of global culture from modernization and its effects on the motherhood institution. Modernization conspicuously denotes change. In fact, it is a paramount force underlying change in human society. Modernization, as used by sociologists, carries ideological connotation, in which the process of modernization is imbued with positive feelings. The modern, in contrast to the traditional, is associated with being bright, exciting, up-to-date, and attractive. However, of recent, modernization is viewed as carrying negative connotations. To most sociologists, modernization destroys much of value in traditional societies (Lawson and Garrod, 2001, p. 154).

According to post-modernists, modernization produces ultimately inhuman social formations like apartment blocks, urban decay and increased crime, to name but just a few. It is in this light that the paper critically examines the extent to which the global culture, in the wake of modernization, enhances and/or impedes the proper functioning of motherhood as an important familial institution. In other words, the paper analyzes the practices, functional and/or dysfunctional, which are creeping into the motherhood institution. The researcher gleans research findings on this topic from both empirical and theoretical sources.

What is Modernization then?

Modernization is a derivative of the term 'modern'. A definition of modernization given by Penna, O'Brien and Hays (1999),

which has a sociological undertone, is referred to “shaking off the constraints of tradition, displacing the metaphysical worldviews of the past... open[ing] up the prospect of emancipation and liberation” (Penna, O’Brien and Hays, 1999, p.1). Modernization, therefore, comes with the notion of development and progress. Technological development, shifts in the world economic order, changes in the patterns of political action at both local and global levels, changes in relationships between work and domestic, public and private behaviours, and in power are some of the attributes of modernization.

Sharma, (1988:17) gives a dichotomous or what he calls a ‘bipolar definition’ of modernization. He views modernization in contrast to tradition, under-development and pre-industrial. That is tradition and modernity; underdevelopment and development, and pre-industrial and industrial societies. Logically, therefore, modernization is a transition, as Daniel Lerner notes, from traditional to modernity (Sharma, 1988:17). As modernity contrasts traditional, it is prudent to explain what traditional societies are. Traditional societies are understood as being simple, agrarian and non-technological.

Returning to the bipolar conception of modernization, Daniel Lerner (1968) defines modernization as a “process of change where by the less developed societies acquire the characteristics common to more developed societies” (Sharma: 1988, p.20). Nettl and Robertson (1968) define modernization as “the process whereby national elites seek successfully to reduce their mimic status and move towards equivalence with other well-placed nations”. Sharma (1988) refers modernization to the “process by which the Western societies have reached economic, political, and social development, and by which the under-developed Third World nations of Asia, Africa, South America [and Eastern Europe] hope to do like wise” (Sharma, 1988, p.20).

The concept of global culture emerges here; and is defined as “those cultural elements which shape the common way of life of human communities through the process of globalization”(Hock-Tong, 2001, p.1), and I add that failure to observe such cultural elements is tantamount to backwardness and underdevelopment.

Defining Motherhood

Motherhood is a derivative of the term 'mother'. According to the Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary, a mother is the female parent. A mother takes the responsibilities, care and control involved in the raising of children. From above definition, I argue that womanhood is not necessarily motherhood. Motherhood is then operationalized as a woman who bears and rears children. It also includes women who, for one reason or another could not bear children of their own, but take the responsibility to raise children.

The Significance of Motherhood

Although, the world has never had a female prophet, but all prophets, with the exception of Prophet Adam (AS), had mothers and foster mothers and somewhat were catered for by these mothers. We should remember that in creation, God did create man without father and mother (Prophet Adam AS), and another without a father (e.g. Prophet Issah or Jesus A.S). However, we are not aware of the creation of human being without a mother. This scenario underscores the significance of motherhood. The divine wisdom behind motherhood is to create the avenue in which aging and dying generations are replaced. In all human societies a chunk of this task of procreation lies with mothers.

Positive Impact of Modernization on Motherhood

It is undeniable fact that modernization has brought a great deal of improvement in human societies. We, in the contemporary societies, are relatively enjoying more decent lives now than our predecessors. Such improvements reflect in human longevity. In the like manner, maternal mortalities which are most often associated with childbirths have reduced drastically when compared with generations before the inception of industrialization. The worrisome nature of maternal mortalities

and morbidities gave rise to numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations alike which aim at putting mechanisms in place to help reduce high incidence of such cases. Safe Motherhood, as some of the organizations are generally known, work to ensure that expecting mothers receive the care they need to be safe and healthy throughout pregnancy and child birth.

Preventing and managing these problems require a well-functioning health system that provides accessible, affordable and high-quality-care. Modern technology has made it possible for scientific researches to be conducted and potent drugs are manufactured accordingly. Scientific studies conducted on a good number of diseases and ailments revealed their causes and treatments, which were hitherto unknown. Sanitary conditions have improved tremendously due to advancement in modern technology. Also, is improvement in nutrition. Social amenities like portable water, hospitals, clinics etc, and infrastructural facilities like road network, communication etc, are in their best form now than ever before.

All these positive attributes of modernization have acted collectively to reduce the incidence of maternal cum infant morbidities and mortalities. The health of mothers and their babies are better catered for now than before. Pre-natal and post-natal services are now more effective, regular and rampant than two or three decades ago.

Ironically, these positive attributes of modernization, which seem to enhance the institution of motherhood are out-paced by the repercussions of the material culture of modernization i.e., liberalism and materialism, which form the next segment of the discussion.

The Global Culture and the Role of a Mother

Modern-day mothers are faced with two competing options. The first is the ideology of practicing intensive mothering. The second is devaluing child-rearing and placing primary emphasis on "profit, efficiency and getting ahead" (Hays, 2001, p.40). A good mother, or for a better term, a responsible mother is the one who

indulges in intensive mothering. Hays (2001) note that for any mother to be considered a good mother she must be an intensive one. 'Intensive mothering' is explained as the kind of motherhood in which mothers stay at home with the kids and dedicate their energies to the happiness of their families. According to Hays (2001), intensive mothers cheerfully study the latest issue on how to maintain happy families. "They place flowers in every room, and have dinner waiting when their husbands come home. Intensive motherhood focuses on attending to the children and ensuring their proper development or up-bringing. This observation begs the question whether paid-working mothers can at the same practice intensive mothering. In other words, can career mothers be good or responsible mothers?

In the wake of modernization, the global culture dictates that what men can do, women can also do, and in some cases even better. As a result, more mothers the world over hold paid-works. More than half of mothers in the USA, as Hays (2001) observes, "participate directly in the labor market on a regular basis" (Hays, 2002, p.40). In Malaysia, women constitute nearly half, i.e. 45%, of the total workforce (Hock-Tong, 2001, p.1). Also, in Japan, according to Sumiko (2001), "when men were the sole bread winners for the family... [Mothers] focused their responsibilities on unpaid work and looked after family and home" (Sumiko, 2001, p.114). This pattern no longer holds. Young Japanese women have revolted against this pattern, and the net results of such revolts translated, according to Iwao (2001), into low birth rates, which were unparalleled in the history of Japan.

Currently in Japan, about 40 per cent of the employed paid workers are women, and 57 per cent are married or are mothers (Iwao, 2001, p. 114). This scenario has attracted the attention of the government of Japan. In effect, various socio-economic policies have been put in place to induce single people to marry (Iwao, 2001).

Viewed from another perspective, the generated pattern of family life, as the global culture dictates, generates stress and strain on the institution of motherhood. With more and more mothers joining the labor force, life-styles, norms, values etc, are

fast changing from bad to worse. Material gains and self-glory become the norms and values of the global culture, and to which most modern-day mothers aspire to. Most mothers, as the global culture requires, had little time at their disposal to spend with their children.

The emerging global culture is slowly but surely pushing to the background the conventional culture in which husbands are widely regarded as the heads of the house. He is the provider, and the woman is the wife and a provider in the house. "Now, these days, according to Mecca – a welfare mother- it is not that way. Now the people that stay at home are classified lazy people, we do not want to work" (Hays, 2001, p.41).

Again, the global culture preaches liberalism; individual liberty is of paramount importance now. For that matter, a fertile avenue has been created for domestic crises as some mothers claim equality at home. On a higher note, some modern-day mothers have chosen to remain single mothers for their entire lives. Such attitudes promote lesbianism and related vices. Reacting to such instances, Roya Manna (2000), in her article entitled *Womanhood- Motherhood: Lost Soul*, retorts that:

women born to feminist or non-traditional mothers are somehow only physically females. They are not brought up like women, and as a result, they do not have a distinct well-defined self-identity, and when they do, it is mainly an intellectual self-identity. What is constantly conveyed to them-implicitly and explicitly- is that there is no difference between men and women.

Roya Manna (2000) then concludes that while the general life of men has remained more or less the same despite the industrial revolution; women's life has undergone a radical change. I, therefore, take the initiative to remind mothers here that the existing differences between men and women are but complementary.

Human Development of the Child

The fact that modernization catered for the material needs of the individual can never be denied. However, human development transcends material development alone. Ethics, values and norms form an integral dimension for a holistic human development. The most crucial point-of-reference in the formative years of a child is the parents, especially the mother. It is within their formative years that children internalize the required values and norms.

Unfortunately, the hectic demands of our modernized society do not allow our mothers to spend much time with their growing children. For instance, a study conducted by Levy Patricia (1993) revealed a whopping figure of 90 per cent of mothers in Malaysia have difficulty combining role of mother and work (Patricia, 1993, p.118). No sooner are majority of these infants born than they are dumped in Day- Nurseries and Kindergartens. As Rose (1999) remarks "Day-Nurseries became mother's equivalent, taking on a mother's job". Levy Patricia (1993) observes that Day-Nurseries have become dumping grounds for majority of modern-day mothers.

A report from the US Commission on Children at Risk (CCR), summarizing its latest neuroscientific research (2005), concluded that the existing world culture, most especially that of the USA, was harmful to children's mental and emotional health, and that unless radical changes were effected, children, the world over, would continue to suffer.

A similar three year-longitudinal research conducted by McKenna, J James (2000) in the USA, in which infra-red video photograph combined with physiological monitoring of mother and infant, simultaneously while sleeping together and apart revealed significant differences between solitary and co-sleeping (bed sharing) environments. The study revealed that co-sleeping (bed-sharing) facilitates infant's neurodevelopment, and contributes to both maternal and infant well-being. Infants who routinely slept with their mother, the study continued, exhibited more transient EEG-defined arousals than did routinely solitary sleeping infants.

EEG is an acronym for Electroencephalogram. It is a process in microbiology to examine and record the electrical activity of the brain. It is important for diagnosis of seizures and epilepsy and other brain-related problems.

Routinely bed-sharing infants, the findings continued, breast fed twice as frequently each night than did routinely solitary sleeping breast-feeding infants, and breast-feeding is widely regarded as the best way to feed infants. Breast milk offers balance of nutrients, growth stimulants, and anti-infectious properties for healthy physical and mental development of infants (Ahn, and MacLean, 1980). However, breast-feeding practices, according to Ahn and MacLean (1980), are impeded by a variety of factors, and the prominent factor is urbanization as a result of modernization. The study continued that bed-sharing babies faced in the direction of their mothers' bodies for nearly the entire night, but showed no preference for either side when they slept alone

Bed-sharing mothers, according to the research findings, spent less time in deep sleep stages (stages 3 & 4) or the Non-rapid Eye Movement (NREM) stages and more in light stages (stages 1 & 2) or Rapid Eye Movement (REM) stages than did solitary sleeping mothers, but both bed-sharing mothers and their infants slept longer total time. The study concluded that the decline in stages 3 and 4 sleep (deep sleep stages) and the increase in partner-induced arousals among infants while co-sleeping may provide infants with some practices in arousing. Such practices in arousing, particularly for those infants with arousal deficiencies may better prepare infants to resist a serious respiratory crisis during sleep, since arousal is an infant's major defense against hypoxia precipitated by prolonged breathing pauses or apneas. It is a glaring fact that most modern-day mothers do not co-sleep with their infants for reasons best known to them.

For this reason, Barr, Ronald and John (2001) warn that replacing longstanding, customary pre- and post-natal practices with modern methods inadvertently results in outcomes that are detrimental to mothers and their young ones. In acknowledging the adverse effects of modernization on the lives of children, the US Mother's Council Task Force on the Needs of Children has urged their fellow mothers the world over, and especially in the USA, to try and build a more caring culture for their children and families.

Gather Around the Children (GAC) - a Mothers' club in the USA- at one of their general meetings sent out a message to all adult care-takers of children, especially mothers, to remind them about the fact that children have an innate need to connect deeply with other people, and that children longed for a sense of moral and spiritual purpose. These innate needs of children, according to GAC-the Mothers' Club-are imperatives, when they are not met; a child's potential is stifled.

These needs are met through nurturing communities in which children's parents, particularly mothers, spend ample time with children, telling them stories, and sharing traditions. In their wonderment, GAC wanted to know why is it that in a world of unprecedented material abundance "growing numbers of children are suffering from depression, addiction, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and other grave mental health and behavioral problems particularly in the USA,? Why, in spite, of the world's un-matched scientific, technological, and economic progress, especially in the USA, children are hurting themselves and others?" (GAC, 2004).

In a study conducted by Elle Galinsky(2001) to find out from children how they think about their working mothers, revealed that majority of the respondents wished that their mothers spent more with them and less time on their jobs. When a question like "if you were granted one wish to change the way that your work affects your child's life, what would that wish be?" Majority of mothers wished to "have more time with their children". They also wished to work fewer hours, but the global culture. Majority of career mothers agreed spending less time with their children. Mothers in the labour force hardly spent of their time on their children.

Conclusions

To this far, one would have noticed that modernization has created opportunities which support safe and efficient motherhood. A second look at modernization and its attendant culture reveals that such opportunities are materially oriented. The ethical and spiritual aspects, in terms of values and norms,

have been aggravated. Modernization places much premium upon individual liberty and materialism at the expense of ethics, values and norms. Most mothers seek domestic equality instead of domestic partnership.

I, therefore, contend that the high incidence of moral decadence, juvenile delinquencies and domestic upheavals in the contemporary society could be attributed largely to the adverse influence of the existing global culture on motherhood. As evident in the modernization theory; as societies modernize they influence fertility and alter the value of children.

Recommendations

The solution does not inhere in their complete withdrawal from the labour market; however, mothers should ensure an equitable distribution of their time and attention between the home especially their children and work.

Mothers should seek domestic partnership with fathers to enhance the motherhood institution instead of seeking domestic equality.

It is the right of the infant child to sleep close to the mother's body and to breast milk at all times. Mothers should begin to respect and accord their infants these inalienable rights.

We should remember especially mothers that a holistic human development depends not only on the material aspect, but also on values and ethics (the spiritual dimension).

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