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Hiring Wet Nurses and Child Rearing in Arab Tribes: A Comparative Study with the Modern Era

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Article Details

ABSTRACT

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Breastfeeding of wet-nurses was once a widespread custom among Bedouins in the Arab tribal societies. This paper is dedicated to this epic lifestyle tradition. It will explore the reasons that lay behind the fact that it was needed in nomadic life and discuss the variety of roles the wet nurses undertook on top of the mere breastfeeding. This section follows by considering the importance of extended family in the raising of children among the tribes and the process value of the cultural transmission. The article then alternative these ways of the older generation with our modern era among fall of wet nursing due to cultural moves, expertise and development. It tells us about the fall of joint families or even extensive families and the parental concern over child growing and development. To end with, this paper illustrates the similarities and differences in raising children from both of those eras, referencing the effects of industrialization on family structures, people's cultural identity, and the preservation of

traditional practices. Through this similar study, we can learn a lot about the ways the child rearing practices have been adopted and adapted to different periods, giving us a great understanding of the interaction between the past and the present.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of mankind, the provision of wet nursing service has always been a point for conversation or discussion whenever the subject of infant feeding practice comes up. In the studies involving Anthropology, forms of breastfeeding and wet nursing differs amongst places and has always been experiencing changes throughout the centuries. This was an arrangement through which they intended to create connections between tribes and to feed the babies who would need something extra apart from their mothers' breasts. For instance, when the mother was sick or had other responsibilities to undertake, the outsider would nurse her children.

It is believed that the origin of the figure of the wet nurse can be traced back to human beings living together in groups. The earliest appearances are in the Laws of Ešnunna (1950 BC) in Mesopotamia, the Code of Hammurabi (1750 BC) in Babylon and the Ebers Papyrus (1550 BC) in ancient Egypt. The trade was also recognised by the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. Even the Prophet Muhammad was nursed by a Bedouin wet nurse, Ḥalīma, when his mother became ill and was unable to breastfeed him for more than a week. The importance that the Qur'an and the Ḥadīz gave to the wet nurse had a great impact on Muslim society at the time and today.

Additionally, it was believed that the hiring nurses were an effective way to improve health and immunity of the infant, as it was believed that nurse's milk contains calcium, vitamin D, protein, fat, and antibodies (Smith, 2019). Apart from the wet nurses, nursing and child delightment back in Arabic tribes was a bountiful group concern and all the relatives took part in it. This system played an instrumental role in the social life and community ties as the children were raised by an extensive network of community members, beyond the members of their immediate families (Yassin, 2020). Ultimately, wet nursing engrained with community traditions and events; which had been carried to generations. As such its beings valued highly in the society and culture.

In ancient Arab tribes wet nursing hiring was so to say had a classic background and was practiced for many years because there were considered so much to be benefited from and the cultural dimensions were also not ignored. Wet nursing was an important facet of child rearing since prehistoric times and still remains so trough kinship practices and pre-tribal customs. In those times

for the Arabs tribes it was not so difficult to hire nursing women, mostly the others from other tribes to breastfeed infants (Alghazal, 2018). Such act was not only beneficial and efficient for something used for child's health and nutrition but was also served as a means of establishing and fostering communication between different classes (Habib, 2016). Among these, the cultural content was building blocks for reproducing the local values and habits because the babies as wet nursing people accepted their nursing person's tribe's customs (Mahmoud, 2017). This program also served as a form of support of mothers providing them with the ability to maintain other roles but still kind enough to give their child adequate food and care. The practice of wet nursing thrived among the Arab tribes because it indicated the nature of their communal child rearing and the integration of the societies (Rashid, 2019).

This paper is published to exhibit the variations between the traditional methods of wet nursing and child care in Arab tribes with the manner of present society. The paper aims to discover the cultural, social, and economic contexts that former traditional practices depended on and the same factors that influences modern practices now. So, it will be able to identify continuity features and discontinuity points between the past and present. During the comparative study in this paper, the impacts of modernization, globalization, and variation of socio cultural norms in Arab community as they adapt to the existing child-care practices in such societies will be exposed. By this investigation we are trying to understand how these attitudes and perceptions changes and their impacts for Arab families while the time is changing. The study is conducted to investigate those customs and how they will transform in the light of social and cultural change. By doing that, the study may expand the knowledge about the evolution of culture in the world.

WET NURSING IN ARAB TRIBES

The wet nursing of Arab tribes as found among these people can be traced to a multidimensional origin shaped by the pastoral culture, higher child mortality rates and the existing social norms. The almost constant nomadic experience of many Arab tribes demanded continuous movement, a situation which impeded the ability of clock-time strict mothers to exclusively breastfeed their infants on their journeys (Abdullah, 2018). Furthermore, the stationary environmental conditions and the lack of resources on desert territories mentioned factors that were detrimental to the health of infants leading to the higher

rates of infant death (Khalil, 2019). In order to overcome these societies, a tradition of wet nurses' hiring had an expression as a highly effective way to ensure that infants were fed well and taken care of when biological mothers were sick or had any other reasons that she might not breastfeed (Rahman, 2017). Concomitantly, the social mores and cultural ethics of the time were the major contributors to the rapid popularization of wet nursing in the Arabs that followed a collectivist upbringing pattern, where extended relations and genealogies served as bases for family units (Saeed, 2020). While the simple act of providing infant nourishment through wet-nursing became associated with tribal societies' history, life and culture, it also facilitated the bonding of the individuals within the society (Tariq, 2018). In addition, it was a tool for alliance formation, social unity and culture transmission to the next generation.

In tribes in the Arab world, the position of wet nurses involved much more than just breastfeeding since its responsibilities covered an elaborate array of childcare tasks and deep emotional connection with the babies that they cared for. Yet, some cultures made breastfeeding their native nurses' responsibility as they also provided with the daily care and upbringing of the newborn including such activities as bathing, dressing, and nurturing the child (Ahmed, 2017). Along with that, the wet nurse was to feel the concern as much as the child, as she was the closest caregiver after the baby's biological mother became occupied in other duties (Naseer, 2018). Through the memories of the wet nursing nurse, the child also got influenced in the early education and the socialization phase as she was the key factor in introducing the child with the language, the culture and the values from the very early stage of his life (Omar, 2019). Moreover, wet nurses as well as companions, indeed, oftentimes, formed close relationships with the families they work for as they acted as both confidants and advisor to the children's parents, especially, to the mothers (Salim, 2020). Hence, in addition to just caregivers, wet nurses became indispensable parts of the family, as they contributed to the overall development of the child and his cultural orientation.

Among tribal societies, the selection of wet nurses would generally be a very careful thing to decide, considering issues like reputation, health status and whether the prospective applicants milked well, and this has been proven by survey research (Khaled, 2017). Wet nurses were often proffered

from within the same tribal group or from the neighboring tribes thus ensuring a reliable and intimately familiar motherly assistant (Mansour 2018). The wet nursing market was about, not only the mother's health state, but also social status, by preference giving of women of respectable lineage and moral character (Najib, 2019). Wet nurses, women who helped babies by giving them milk in exchange for some money, were regarded as very important people in their communities, that their role was viewed as everything valuable for the emotional and cognitive development of children (Omar, 2020). Moreover, the economic situation of the families might be taken as a factor that is to see who will be picked as a wet nurse as wealthy families would be able to pay higher wages or provide good circumstances for wet nurses to work under (Rania, 2021). The generalization for the wet nurses' selection in the tribal society was a diversified process which demonstrated the cultural norms, the social wants and the practical expectations.

TRADITIONAL CHILD REARING PRACTICES

In Arab clans mentality and bring up of a child is complete as it emphasize of the role of extended family and the fact that the kids should be disciplined and be able to respect society from the other kids (Abbas, 2018). Extended family involvement throughout the upbringing of children is that of central importance where children are not looked upon one parent but after care of multiple caregivers including parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles (Abd-Elrahman, 2019). Therefore, this kind of societal structure that is all about a communal approach when it comes to child raising, is what eventually leads to the building of very close-mortal relations as well as the feeling of being accountable for the welfare of the children in the tribe (Khalid, 2020). The Arab social groups not only are stricter about discipline and instilling the respect but they also expect the children to follow the traditions and societal norms (Maher, 2021). Additionally, discipline is commonly used via a system of the boosting effect which consists of the praise and support as well as multiple administration of correction and even control if it is necessary (Nasir, 2022). The notion of respect for elders, leaders as well as cultural heritage is deeply imbibed into children via modeling and reinforcement in the interaction pattern which ensures the cultural terminologies are preserved across the generation (Osman, 2017). This is a child - rearing style that involves a strong community aspect and align with various cultural norms, with the

overall aim of ensuring welfare and socialization of children in the tribe.

Wet nursing in Arab tribes may have a pivotal role in child nurture and socialization, thus the culture gets transferred to the wet nurse's knowledge, education, health and socialization. Regarding education, wet nurses most certainly undertake the task of the cultural transmission of the traditions, language, and values of their child from a very early stage (Ahmed, 2019). They may teach children cultural songs, folk stories and traditions which have particular significance for tribes to preserve and maintain the identity of the cultural heritage (Hassan, 2020). Furthermore, the wet nurses can inject practical wisdom into the nutritional and sanitation procedures, which are not only common in the tribal communities but are also in the family lineups for generations (Ibrahim, 2021). Taking care of children in wet nurses is not only a way to improve their infant health, by giving nourishment and caring, but also it is a good way to make the baby physically healthy, especially in some areas where the medical services can be insufficient (Jamil, 2018). In addition to milk production, wet nurses are of limited assistance in the bonding between the baby and the mother that starts as soon as breastfeeding begins and is deemed beneficial to the infant's emotional and psychological development Khalifa (2022). And another matter is wet nurses can release children into the social environment to connect with social norms, etiquette and interpersonal relationships (Laila, 2019). Conclusively, professional wet nurses became crucial care takers that linked infant behavior and cultural assimilation of newcomers to the Arab communities.

THE MODERN ERA AND SHIFT IN PRACTICES

The growing popularity of artificial feeding among Arab societies replaced the natural tradition of the traditional wet nurse in recent Arab world due to a combination of good healthcare, social change and modern cultural attitudes. Among the numerous aspects, the availability of modern healthcare and infant formula technology that has empowered formula feeding becomes a replacement of breast milk make it the preferred way of feeding babies (Ali, 2019). Without a doubt, medical treatment and health care education are not the only factors responsible for the importance that is being attached to maternal breastfeeding and less reliance on wet nurses (Hassan, 2021). As well as the urbanization increase and the modernization of urban living arrangements with add up to the loss of extended family

networks including wet nursing (Rashid, 2020). Along with that, attracted more women to education, employment and now gender roles have changed and increasing self-sufficiency of child-rearing is a new phenomenon in society (Fahad, 2022). So, recent Arab families show much tendency of keeping their childcare system at home instead of having it outsourced to wet nurses. There is different kind of factors that influence wet nursing strategies decline, like ethical and legal considerations, the concern of exploitation or inequality between patients (Nadia, 2018). Ultimately, these factors seem to highlight a drastic change in family dynamics and practices throughout the modern Arab world and are predicted to cause the fading of conventional wet nursing.

The widespread of Nuclear Families in the Present Day Arabian world, has had a significant impact on child-raising patterns by making the communal extended families step down to the next phases of self-reliant and independent parents skills. The new Arab families that have migrated to urban living and the shift to nuclear family units has perceived a drop in the hiring of wet nurses and caring for children by relatives (Hassan, 2019). Consequently, parents tend to be closely involved in child-rearing and are more inclined to take on the responsibility of themselves, giving priority to parental involvement in the child's growth (Saad, 2020). A shift like that has required adjustment in parenting systems, with emphasizing gaining professional childcare services and education, in addition to paying an individualized attention and attention (Omar, 2021). Ultimately, the shift to nuclear families in the Arabian world is a manifestation of numerous social and cultural changes which contradict and, hence, are of revolutionary nature for old practice of providing for children.

The current, global trend in the sense of parenting in Arab countries is that parents are inclusive and development is focused on individuals to reflect values and parenting styles' shift. As evidenced in the prevailing situation, parents are usually found to increasingly gravitate towards their hands-on involvement in their children's upbringing, thereby cognizant of the great significance attributed to the creation of a close-knit emotional bond and provision of a personalized guidance (Salim 2019). The inclination of parents to attend such training or seminars as a way of obtaining the right knowledge and skills to deal with children who may differ from any other kid will be witnessed in the rise of parenting workshops, materials, and support groups (Hassan, 2020). Moreover, there is higher tendency of

teaching kids via understanding learning styles and interests of the kids that is seen in the development of alternative educations such as home schooling and private tutoring (Amir, 2021). Those moves reflect a more progressive cultural trend that considers the comprehensive development of every child with the parents, not the teachers or just the state actors, being the center of child's growth and potential.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

Analysis of child rearing in traditional Arab tribes of old, and in the contemporary society presents some major aspects of significance and similarities, related to the place of family, education and health styles. In traditional tribal communities parenting was very specialized affair between expected family members and suckling who took key role in care, nourishment, and a culture (Rashid, 2019). This can be translated into an obedient behavior in return for being disciplined in a way whereby respect for elders and the authority figures are emphasized later on while corrective measures would be either being spoken to or with mild physical punishments (Hassan, 2020). Traditional health methods used were on rudimentary healing knowledge and herbal remedies, which in turn were given a supplement of milk on the child's growth and upbringing (Khalifa, 2018).

On the contrary, in the modern set-up, the shift has been on nuclear families, the parents taking a charge of child rearing and taking a protagonist position that is led by individual developmental family patterns (Saad, 2021). Before when it comes to discipline solutions were based on punishment and harshness until the social studies started to change and gentle parenting started to be the methods to be chosen (Omar, 2022). In addition to practice in healthcare, the science of modern medicine has transform too, thereby making health care practices, especially professional healthcare and medicine more available to households (Ali, 2019). Modernization brought many changes to historic values concerning the job of wet nurses and breastfeeding patterns which is one of the major factors in childcare. There is a chance for women to post-secondary education and job employment which boost their confidence, they more likely to breastfeed own children and make use of childcare services as when necessary (Salim, 2020). The emergence of healthcare and baby food options that are modern has in a way further reduced the market for this (Fahad, 2018). In these circumstances, some winged practices like cultural traits and the strong role of family is still an essential part of the contemporary Islamic child rearing.

Throughout the modern child raising process in Arab countries, several traditional or leftover practices are noticeable even though the role of the new advance was strong. One more correlation is the emphasis given to the family and extended network in ensuring that there is a process of child development (Nasser, 2020). As was mentioned earlier, traditional nuclear families are a common phenomenon in urban places, but many families still keep in touch with their extended relatives who stay involved in the childcare process while also providing emotional support (Abdullah 2019). Beyond this, facets of traditional discipline methods being elders and authorities are respected place of different parenting styles in society today (Ahmed, 2021). Although the gravity of disciplinary action has faded, the values of respect and conduct remain the key foundations for child behavioral development. Not only that, but also cultural rituals and customs, the example of celebrating religious holidays and participating in cultural ceremonies, are still being used today for child-caring and they indeed help children to develop a sense of identity as well as their sense of origin (Hassan, 2022). In spite of the reformations which we witness (due to monetization), those left over conventional customs as an indication of cultural values and norms in practices of parenting across Arab societies.

CONCLUSION

In traditional Arab tribes, child-rearing practices are extremely different from those in the modern era in several respects, such as family position, punishment methods, and healthcare. In traditional Arab tribes, distant and extended family members played a part in taking care of upbringing of their children in cooperation that empowered wet nurses with additional duties such as instilling respect, discipline, and above all, cultural values. Unlike traditional Arabic families, who give preference in nuclear family structures and individualized child rearing, parents taking care of the child and choosing modern healthcare and education, contemporary Arab families put more emphasis on parents being the one responsible for childcare to provide the children with more contemporary healthcare and education options. Those shifts are characteristic of a transition from traditional family structure to new family norms when housewife responsibilities are fixed together with career pursuits. Leading to current child-rearing models that support veneration of the elders, maintenance of the cultural traditions etc.,

these are pioneers that are ensuring that cultural identity is retained. These transformations uncertainty have deep implications for Arab society as they intersect particularly with family structures and the integrity of cultural traditions. At the same time both modernization as well as its actual challenges have added new opportunities for households, the continuing influence of traditional customs just underlines the complicated connection between past and now that determines their future in Arab families. The better option to consider is how Arab societies will deal with the dichotomies between saving cultural heritage and getting more modernization in the styles of childcare. This poses a dilemma and the need for further studies on the effect of the emerging surroundings of family life and culture identity in the Arab world.

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