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SOCIOLOGY

FAMILY

Sociologists have come up with different definitions of the family and this is owing to the fact that the family has various manifestations, organization and structures in various societies. Hence, Mair (1972) defined a family as a domestic group in which parents and children live together, and its element form consists of a couple and their children. Duberman and Hartjen (1979) defined a family as a universal institution whose most important functions are to socialize and nurture the younger generations. Similarly, Smith and Preston (1982) defined family as a social group whose members are related either through common ancestry or marriage and are bound by moral and economic rights and duties. Family is the most basic institution in any society and it is the social context into which members of a society derive their primary identity.

Functions of a family

1. Procreation: The family through the regulation of sexual relationship function fulfills the biological need of reproduction and perpetuation of both the immediate family and the society as a whole. By performing this function of procreation family contributes to the continuity of family and ultimately human race. Hence perpetuation of human race or society is the most important function of family,
2. Provision of basic needs: it is the responsibility of the family to provide the basic needs such as food, shelter, affection, protection and security to all its members. Family provides a home. It is in a home that children are born and brought up. Even if children are born in the hospitals in modern times still they are taken care of and properly nourished in a home.
3. Socialization: it is another important essential function offamily.it is said man is not born human but made human. New born human baby became human being after they are socialized. Family plays an important role in the socialization process. It is one and the first agent of socialization. Living in family human babies learns norms, values, morals and ideals of society. He learns culture and acquires character through the process of socialization.
4. Social placement: An individual acquires his identity and place in society through his family. The family ascribes many statuses to its members such as race, ethnic affiliation, nationality, religion, royalty etc.
5. Affection and companionship: The family is expected to provide affection and companionship for its members. Children are given warm affection within the family to develop a positive self-image, and adults in the family need intimate companionship to cope with life. This breeds a sense of belonging.

African traditional family

The subject of “traditional family patterns in Africa” is so broad. The cultural and physical diversity added with the dramatic social changes of the last three decades on the continent makes the family pattern situation so variegated as to defy any sweeping generalizations. This difficulty in generalization bone of diversity was already apparent to many early scholars of the African traditional family like Mair (1) and Goode (2).

These traditional African family patterns describe the patrilineal and matrilineal families. The case studies presented will be those of the Buganda of Uganda and Bemba of Northern Zambia. Some of the major issues raised will include polygamy, tribe, clan, the extended family, bride price and the raising of children.

As the African society has not been static, changes in the traditional family patterns will be briefly alluded to. Lastly, this author will argue that the Eurocentric nature of the descriptions and characterization of the traditional African family patterns by earlier scholars has tended to distort and obscure many of the strengths of the African traditional family.

Family plays a central role in African society. It shapes such daily experiences as how and where individuals live, how they interact with the people around them, and even, in some cases, whom they marry. It can determine a person's political identity and the way money and property are transferred. In rural areas, the family typically remains the basic unit of agricultural production.

However, no single type of family exists in Africa. Societies have defined family in many different ways, and many bear little resemblance to the Western idea of the nuclear family. Furthermore, throughout the continent, traditional family patterns are changing. [Colonialism](https://geography.name/colonialism/), [capitalism](https://geography.name/capitalism/), the growth of cities, exposure to Western culture, and increasing opportunities for women are some of the factors that are affecting the shape of family life.

**FAMILY STRUCTURE**

Each of the many family systems in Africa can be defined in terms of two broad kinds of relationships. Relationships of descent are genealogical—that is, based on the connections between generations. Relationships of affinity are marital—based on marriage. The interweaving of these relationships creates the family that an individual sees every day, as well as the wider network of [kinship](https://geography.name/kinship/) that surrounds each person.

Everyone is part of some sort of descent system, either patrilineal, matrilineal, or both. In patrilineal systems, property and political power pass through the male side of the family; the female side determines descent in matrilineal systems. In these relationships, senior generations have more power or status than junior ones. Younger people are expected to show respect toward older family members. In the past, this power could take the form of ownership. Among some peoples in the Congo Basin, for example, a man could sell his sister's child into [slavery](https://geography.name/slavery/).

[MARRIAGE SYSTEMS](https://geography.name/marriage-systems/) in Africa are highly diverse. In sub-Saharan Africa, some pairings of men and women are temporary, others permanent. Depending on the culture, a couple may live in the husband's home or the wife's home. Among some groups, such as the ASANTE, each spouse continues to live in the home in which he or she was born. Children may stay with their parents until they marry, or they may spend part of their adolescence in the home of another relative. In some cultures, young people leave their families at puberty to live in villages of adolescents.

African marriage can be polygynous—that is, a man may have more than one wife. In practice, though, only the senior or wealthy individuals in a society have been able to have multiple wives. When polygyny occurs, the family unit is based on mothers. Each wife has her own house and property that are generally transferred to her own children. The mother and child, rather than the husband and wife, thus form the basis of family and kinship in such communities. Christian marriages in Africa, as elsewhere, are generally monogamous, with a man having only one wife.

In some African societies, nuclear families are contained within larger social groups that may include kinfolk, neighbors, people of the same age or gender, and others. The nuclear family does not always have its own property or decide what tasks its members will perform. Rather, relationships between husbands and wives and between parents and children often unfold within larger domestic units called households, which may consist of joint or extended families.

In a household community, several generations and several nuclear families live and work together. In joint family households, all members live together in a single large homestead or compound. In extended family households, the nuclear families within the household each live in separate compounds. A joint or extended family is under the authority of its senior member, typically a grandfather or great grand-father. Such families may be patrilineal or matrilineal.

Most members of a joint or extended family household are born and raised within it or marry into it. Some, however, such as adopted children or adults, may be unrelated to the others. In sub-Saharan Africa, distant relatives are sometimes invited to settle with a household, but they usually have lower status than their hosts. A household might also include servants or, in the past, slaves.

MY NUCLEAR FAMILY

Sociologists and Anthropologists have identified various forms and kinds of families with regard to the cultural peculiarities as obtainable in various societies over time. However, according to Ingiabuna and Obaro (2009) families are categorized based on the number and generations of people involved in the family groups and the leadership or power/authority holders in the group:

I am from a nuclear family. Sociologists consider nuclear family as the most basic form of social organization. A nuclear family consist of a father, mother and dependent children living in a single dwelling.

My nuclear family consists of two parental bodies which include my father Prince Ben Ossy Nwoye who is the head of the home. Then my mother Mrs Charity Ossy Nwoye and also my nuclear family consist of five children. Three female children and two children and we all live together in a home.

MY FAMILY TREE

This is my nuclear family tree. My siblings are not yet married tho we are all students

BENNET OSSYNWOYE

SON

MIRACLE OSSYNWOYE

DAUGHTER

GIFT OSSYNWOYE

DAUGHTER

PRAISE OSSYNWOYE

SON

MARVELLOUS OSSYNWOYE

DAUGHTE

MRS CHARITY OSSY NWOYE

MOTHER

PRINCE BEN OSSY NWOYE

FATHER

1ST 2ND 3RD 4TH 5TH