

**Name: Seun Oluwamodede**

**Matric number: 19/law01/210**

**Course code: soc 102**

**Department: Law**

**Question;**

**1 What is family**

**2 Discuss the functions of the Family**

**3 Discuss the African Traditional family**

**4 Discuss your Nuclear family**

**5 Draw your family tree**

## **What is a family?**

A husband, a wife, and two children (maybe even a pet) has served as the model for the traditional U.S. family for most of the twentieth century. But what about families that deviate from this model, such as a single-parent household or a homosexual couple without children? Should they be considered families as well?

The question of what constitutes a family is a prime area of debate in family sociology. Social conservatives tend to define the family in terms of structure with each family member filling a certain role (like father, mother, or child). Sociologists, on the other hand, tend to define family more in terms of the manner in which members relate to one another than on a strict configuration of status roles. Hence, sociologists see family as a socially recognized group (usually joined by blood, marriage, cohabitation, or adoption) that forms an emotional connection and serves as an economic unit of society.

The family is an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating or legal ties. It is the smallest and most basic social unit, which is also the most important primary group found in any society.

According to most functional definitions, a family is any unit in which there exists: Sharing of resources and economic property, a caring and supportive relationship, Commitment to or identification with other family members, Preparation of children born to or raised by the members to become adult members of the society. However, in 'Social Structure', Murdock defines family as 'a social group characterised by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults'. As a functionalist, Murdock saw family as a whole divided into various parts which each had a different role to play and contribute for the organism to operate effectively.

However, Structural definitions of the family characteristically define the characteristics of family members such as those who share a place of residence, or who are related through blood ties or legal contracts. A commonly used definition is that of the Census Bureau, “a householder and one or more other persons living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption” (Census 1990).

## **Functions of the family**

### **(A) Essential functions of family:**

MacIver has divided functions of family into essential and non-essential types. Under essential functions he includes mainly three functions such as, stable satisfaction of sex needs, production and rearing of children and a provision of home. But besides these MacIverian functions of family, family may also perform some other essential functions. But it must be remembered that essential functions are those functions which are basic or fundamental in nature and no other institutions can perform these functions so successfully as family can. However family performs the following essential functions:

(1) **Stable satisfaction of Sexual needs:** This is the most important essential function of family. Family has been performing these functions since the inception of human civilization. It is a well known fact that sex urge is the most important and powerful instinct and natural urge of human being. It is the primary duty of a family to satisfy the sexual urge of its members in a stable and desirable way. Through the mechanism of marriage, families regulate the sexual behavior of its members. Because satisfaction of sex instinct brings the desire for life long partnership of husband and wife. Satisfaction of this sex needs in a desirable way helps in the normal development of personality. Ancient Hindu Philosopher Manu and Vatsayan opines that satisfaction of sex needs is the primary objective of family. If it is suppressed it creates personality maladjustments.

(2) **Procreation and Rearing of Children**: It is another important sectional function of family. Necessary arrangement of stable satisfaction of sexual urge resulted in procreation. Family provides the legitimate basis for production of children. It institutionalizes the process of procreation. 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. Not only the production of children but also child rearing is another important function of family. Family is the only place where the function of child rearing is better performed. It provides food, shelter, affection, protection and security to all its members. It plays a vital role in the process of socialization of children. It provides a healthy atmosphere in which the personality of the child develops properly. Family takes care of the child at the time of need. Hence it is rightly remarked that family is an institution par excellence for the procreation and rearing of children. It has no parallels.

(3) **Provision of Home**: Family performs another important function of providing a home for common living to all its members. It is only in a home that children are born and brought up. Even if children are born in hospitals in modern times still they are taken care of and properly nourished in a home only. Because family and a home have no substitute. In a home all the members of the family live together and a child is brought up under the strict vigilance of all its members. All the members need a home to live happily with comfort, peace and protection. A home provides emotional and psychological support to all its members. Man's necessity of love and human response got fulfilled here. Family provides recreation to its members. In a home family performs the role of a modern club. Man got peace by living in a home.

(4) **Socialization**: It is another important essential function of the family. It is said man is not born human but made human. New born human babies become human beings after they are socialized. Family plays an important role in the socialization process. It is one of the primary agents of socialization. Living in a family human baby learns norms, values, morals and ideals of society. He learns culture and acquires character through the process of socialization. His personality develops in the course of his living in the family. From family

he learns what is right and wrong and what is good or bad. Through socialization he became a social man and acquired good character.

**(B) Non-essential or secondary functions of family:**

Famous Sociologist Maclver has divided functions into essential and non-essential functions. Under non-essential or secondary functions he includes economic, religious, educational, health and recreational functions. Along with the essential functions family also performs these non-essential functions. These functions are non-essential or secondary in the sense that these are also performed simultaneously by other social institutions in the family. These functions are as follows:

(1) **Economic functions:** Since ancient times family has been performing several economic functions. It is an important economic unit. In ancient times family was both a production and consumption unit. It used to fulfill almost all the economic needs of its members such as food, clothing, housing etc. In the then days family was self-sufficient. But nowadays almost all the economic functions of family are performed by other agencies and family only remains as a consumption unit. It does not produce anything. All the members of the family are now working outside the home. But in spite of it all families still perform some economic functions of purchasing, protecting and maintaining property. It also equally distributes property among its members.

(2) **Educational functions:** Family performs many educational functions for its members. As a primary educational institution family used to teach letters, knowledge, skill and trade secrets to all its members. It looks after the primary education of its members and moulds their career and character. Mother acts as the first and best teacher of a child. Besides he learns all sorts of informal education such as discipline, obedience, manners etc. from family. Of course at present many of the educational functions of family are taken over by school,

college and universities still family continues to play an important role in providing the first lessons and primary education to its members.

(3) **Religious functions:** Family is the centre of all religious activities. All the family members offer their prayers together and observe different religious rites, rituals and practices jointly. All the members believe in a particular religion and observe religious ceremonies at home. Children learn different religious values from their parents. Living in a spiritual atmosphere spirituality develops among the children. Family transmits religious beliefs and practices from one generation to another. But at present family became more secular in their outlook. Common family worship became very rare and absolute. Still, family continues to play an important role in shaping the religious attitudes of its members.

(4) **Health related functions:** Family as a primary social group performs several health related functions for its members. It looks after the health and vigor of its members. It takes care of the sick old and aged persons of the family. By providing necessary nutritive food to its members, the family takes care of the health of all. Of course modern families delegate some of their health related functions to hospitals. The child is born today in a hospital or in a clinic and taken care of by nurses.

(5) **Recreational function:** Family-performs several recreational functions for its members by entertaining them in various ways. In the ancient period family was the only centre of recreation. All the members together organize family feasts, visit the family relations, organize family picnics etc. Families organize different festivals which is another source of recreation. The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is another source of entertainment. After the day's work all the members used to assemble and exchange their views. Of course the modern club replaces many recreational functions of the family. But at the same time it is said that the present family acts as a modern club without its evil effects.

(6) **Cultural functions:** Family also performs several cultural functions as well. It preserves different cultural traits. Man learns and acquires culture from family and transmits it to succeeding generations. That is why family is considered as the centre of culture.

(7) **Social functions:** Family performs a number of social functions. It teaches about social customs, mores, traditions, norms, etiquette to the coming generations. Family exercises social control over its members and brings them into conformity with accepted standards. Senior members of the family directly control the behavior of children and thereby they become a good citizen.

### **African traditional family**

Traditional African family patterns are slowly but progressively being altered as a result of the process of modernization which is exhibited through trends like urbanization. Family patterns that were the norm in traditional rural African societies are gradually being altered and substituted by modern values. However, 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 generalizing the bone of diversity was already apparent to many early scholars of the African traditional family like Mair and Goode.

Scholars of the African traditional family agree that the one widely known aspect that distinguishes the African traditional family, say from the European one, is the pervasiveness of polygamy. In traditional societies in most sub Saharan African countries, there is a high value accorded. Although polygamy is the act of an individual being married to more than one spouse at the same time, the more commonly practiced in Africa is polygyny “....the legal marriage of one man to two or more women concurrently – is permitted.” This author argues that because of its pervasiveness, the presence and absence of polygyny was a significant determinant and indicator of the nature of virtually every African social group; whether tribe, clan, or extended family, whether matrilineality or patrilineality was practiced, bride price existed, and how children were raised. Polygyny was widely practiced in Africa and it often formed the backbone of the traditional African family patterns. According to Mair, “....the polygynous joint family, consisting of a man, his wives, and their children, is the ideal for most Africans.” Studies conducted from the 1930s to 1950s indicate that polygyny was common virtually in all regions of Africa.

In the late and early 19th century, a detailed study conducted among the Baganda found that, “Polygyny, the type of marriage in which the husband has plural wives, is not only the

preferred but the dominant form of marriage for the Baganda.” Commoners had two or three, chiefs had dozens, and the Kings had hundreds of wives.

Although among the Baganda, the nuclear family of the mother, father, and their children constitutes the smallest unit of the Baganda kinship system, the traditional family consists of “..... several nuclear units held in association by a common father.” Because the Baganda people are patrilineal, the household family also includes other relatives of the father such as younger unmarried or widowed sisters, aged parents, and children of the father’s clan sent to be brought up by him. Included in this same bigger household will be servants, female slaves, and their children. The father remains the head of the nuclear family units.

Having so many people in this household should not be confused with other types of large families like, “.....’the joint’ family, with its several married brothers and their families living together or the ‘extended’ family, consisting of a group of married offspring living in one household under a patriarch or matriarch.” The Baganda are also patrilocal. Therefore, the new families tend to generally live near or with the husband’s parents.

Also, In traditional rural African societies, the contraction of marriage was dominated by arranged marriages whereby parents usually indulged in the selection of marriage partners for their children; this was mostly common for their daughters. This was done without the consent of the children. However, in contemporary African societies this has been altered to the extent that some countries have adopted policies that strive to advocate for the consent of both parties that are to be married as was the case of the Tanzania marriage act of 1971 and the Ivory coast civil code of 1964 (Therborn 2006:29). This does not imply that the involvement of parents in the marriage of their children has been halted. The adoption of these acts has helped to promote the recognition of the consent of the parties to be married, and as well as fostered the existence of the acknowledgment that it is the right of prospective partners to select their partners. Despite this development, the selection of marriage partners is still done with the consent of family members.

Discuss your Nuclear Family

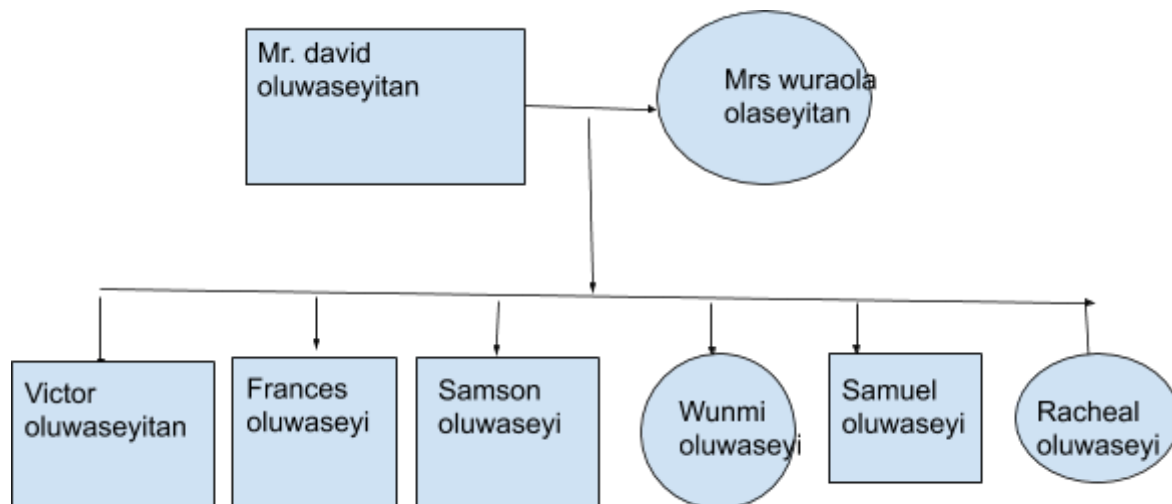
a nuclear family system is a family structure that consists of two parents living with their children, also known as an immediate family, elementary family or conjugal family. Mr David Olaseyitan and Mrs Wuraola Olaseyitan are the names of my parents, and they live with six children; victor, frances, samson, samuel, Racheal and I, which constitute my Nuclear family.

One major thing in my family is that my mother stands as the heart of the home, and Just as the heart gives vital and continuous signals to the head, so does my mother communicate what she sees and hears to my dad, and together they make wise decisions, most especially on religion and educational aspects. However, for this communication to take place, my father schedules times for meaningful discussion with mother and most times, they insert this discussion while having the morning devotion. Apart from this, my mother is also the light of



learning and no wonder the bible says; “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother...For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life”(Proverbs 6:20, 23). My mother has a listening heart that helps us to develop both our character qualities and practical skills, in the sense that, while Many mothers feel inadequate to educate children, especially when they reach the high school and college learning levels, my mother praise us for our learning attitude no matter the level of it, and this has being helping us go beyond their learning achievements.

It is true that one real father is better than a thousand headmasters. This is seen in the case that my mother is not the only teacher in my home but my father also takes a large responsibility on teaching us how to go about our religious beliefs (christianity). However, both of my parents work to provide financial stability for the household, and this helps to create a larger cash flow to supply the basic family needs of housing, food and healthcare.



**MY FAMILY TREE**