NAME: OKOFU ADAORA GABRIELLA

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QUESTIONS:

WHAT IS FAMILY?

DISCUSS THE FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY

DISCUSS THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY

DISCUSS YOUR NUCLEAR FAMILY

DRAW YPUR FAMILY TREE

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WHAT IS FAMILY?

Family traditionally means, a group of two parents and their children living together as a unit. It can also be defined as a group of people related by blood or marriage or persons from a common ancestor. According to scholars, Mair (1972), family is a domestic group in which parents and children live together, and its elementary form consists of a couple and their children. While, Duberman and Hartjen (1979) defined it as a universal institution whose important functions are to socialize and nurture the younger generation and also Smith and Preston (1982) said 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. (*Musings on Culture, History and the Nigerian Peoples; Chapter 3 by Juliana Esoso; Pg 25*)Family can also be defined as a group of people that may be made up of partners, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. According to the definitions following our dynamic and accepting century, a family consists of two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit. Lastly apart from the traditional definition, families today are often a mix of stepparents, half siblings, same sex parents, and extended family members.

FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY

There are many known functions of the family, written by known scholars and classified by textbooks, researchers and dictionaries. Here are some of them.

Economic Functions

The family since ancient times has been performing several economic activities. In ancient times the family was both a production and a consumption unit. It used to fulfill all the economic needs of its members such as food, clothing, housing etc. then, family was self- sufficient. But now the family is basically responsible for consumption as the production part has been taken over by other outside agencies. But in spite of that change the family still does some economic activities such as purchasing, protecting and maintaining property.

Educational Functions

The family performs many educational roles for its members. As it is the primary educational unit which teaches basic functions such as how to speak and letters and skills. These early teachings, more or less moulds the child’s future career and character. Mothers are usually the first and best teachers of their children. The child also learns informal education such as discipline, obedience, manners etcetera from the family. And although outside agencies such as the school, college, and universities take over, the family continues to take over the first and primary lessons of each child.

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 patterns and values from their parents. Living in a spiritual atmosphere helps spirituality to develop from the children. Family transmits religious belifs and practices from one generation to another. But presently, families are beginning to have a more secular outlook. Common family worship is rare and absolute. But it still has a role in defining the religious paths of its members.

Health Functions

The 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. It nurtures the newborns and it provides necessary nutritive food to its members. Basically the family takes care of the health of all.

Recreational Functions

The family as a group is responsible for the recreation and entertainment of its members. In ancient times the family was the only source of entertainment as it held together feasts, family visits or reunions, family picnics. It also has a tinge of cultural functions involved as some of these activities may be culturally based. Man learns culture from his family and transmits it to his succeeding generations. The Family is also known as a center of culture.

Social Functions

The family in itself is a social group. And from this union the members are socialized into society and know their social placement. It teaches morals, values, norms, sanctions, language, tradition. The family ascribes many statuses to its members such as race, ethnic affiliation, nationality, religion, royalty, etc. senior members of the family exercise direct control over the behaviors of its younger members teaching discipline and thereby making the good citizens. It also teaches them skills to help in relating and working with others. It also maintains and motivates members to participate in societal activities.

Procreation Functions

 The family’s main purpose for being together is to bring forth children to continues the family lineage and generally the human race.it fulfills the biological need of reproduction. It also provides the legitimate basis for production of children and the sexual relationship members of the family can have. It has rules and regulations guarding sexual activities within the family to prevent incestuous relationships. It also screens and approves sexual partners and spouses for members.

THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY

To my understanding, the above phrase refers to the families which existed before the pre-colonial time and which invariably shaped our present understandings of the family. For Africans, the concept of family has first and foremost a wider circle of members than the word suggests for the Westerners. In the traditional society, it included the children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, and sisters who may have their own children or immediate relatives. The relationships within the extended family would be based on kinship (biological or putative blood relationship). Also polygynous marriages were preferred for various reasons such as it showed wealth in the number of wives one was able to marry and also the number of children. The sons, who would help grow whatever business the father had set his mind to, and the daughters would represent their father’s house in whichever clan they are married into. Having just one wife, showed lack of wealth and less economic prowess, as the children gotten from such marriage would be small in number. The traditional African communities placed considerable importance in the power of collectivism over individualism. The traditional families were also mainly rural, patriarchal and hierarchical, polygynous and open to kinship networks and also they attached substantial importance to lineage continuation. The women of this time had no say in their marriage affairs, as well as the number of children they gave birth to, which was to mainly consist of the male gender. Also, respect was held in high regard to all seniors, and elders.

 MY NUCLEAR FAMILY

My Nuclear family consists of my immediate family, that is, my father, mother and siblings. We are five in number. I have two sisters and no brother. I am the first born. My father is Delta-Igbo, from Delta state and he is an Economist, my mother is Esan from Edo state and she’s a business woman. I am in my first year at the university, and I am seventeen years old. My immediate younger sister is in her last year at secondary school and is fifteen years old. My last sister is in her last year at primary school and is eleven years old. My sisters and I learnt all we know from our parents; our religion which is Roman Catholic, our tribes (delta-igbo) and the cultures and festivals. Thanks to them I do know that as the first daughter of this family, I represent the interests of my family in the meetings of the Ummuada in my village. We were taught all the values they know. They supported us in all our decisions regarding our career paths and stayed with us through all the experiences. They try not to cage us and give us measurable freedom. We pray together and attend our religious activities together. They try to be fully involved in our school activities notwithstanding the distance from our schools and home. My dad is the breadwinner basically and my mom is our disciplinarian and perfectionist, I’m in charge of the kitchen duties and helping my sisters with anything they might need help with and my sisters help me with anything I tell them to.

MY FAMILY TREE

