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**THE FAMILY**

 The family is seen as the main pillar block of a community; family structure and upbringing influence the social character and personality of any given society. Family is where everybody learns to love, to care, to be compassionate, to be ethical, to be honest, to be fair, to have common sense, to use reasoning etc., values which are essential for living in a community. Yet, there are ongoing debates that families’ values are in decline. Moreover the same family is viewed as an ‘oppressive and bankrupt institution’.

**FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY**

First, the family is the primary unit for *socializing children*. No society is possible without adequate socialization of its young. In most societies, the family is the major unit in which socialization happens. Parents, siblings, and, if the family is extended rather than nuclear, other relatives all help socialize children from the time they are born.

Second, the family is ideally a major source of *practical and emotional support* for its members. It provides them food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials, and it also provides them love, comfort, and help in times of emotional distress, and other types of support.

Third, the family helps *regulate sexual activity and sexual reproduction*. All societies have norms governing with whom and how often a person should have sex. The family is the major unit for teaching these norms and the major unit through which sexual reproduction occurs. One reason for this is to ensure that infants have adequate emotional and practical care when they are born.

Fourth, the family provides its members with a *social identity*. Children are born into their parents’ social class, race and ethnicity, religion, and so forth. Some children have advantages throughout life because of the social identity they acquire from their parents, while others face many obstacles because the social class or race/ethnicity into which they are born is at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMIY

The typical African traditional family could be an extended family, with persons related by descent, marriage or adoption, such as a husband and a wife with their children, and at least one of their sets of parents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins all living together; or an overlapping set of nuclear families, each with the same man as the family head, his wives, and concubines who live in different homesteads with their children. The wives are the heads of their own respective households while the man runs all households.

MY NUCLEAR FAMILY: The nuclear family refers to a couple along with any dependent, unmarried children who share a residence and form a social unit. In other words, it is made up of a husband, wife and dependent children living together in a single dwelling. The nuclear family is the smallest unit of society and also called the elementary family. My nuclear family is made up of my father (the husband), my mother (the wife), my younger sister and I (the children).

**A FAMILY TREE**