1. What is family
2. Discuss the functions of the family
3. Discuss the African traditional family
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6. What is family

INTRODUCTION: The family is the smallest segment of the society and the family members discuss various topics of interest sharing freely their thoughts - happiness, frustration, fear, pain and joy etc. This is possible because the pillar of trust develops right from the childhood when child interacts with father, mother and elders and as he/she grows the trust and topic they share change with time and family members. Similarly, the grown-up family members bonded by strong relationship communicate freely and discuss their topic of interest. The type of family communication varies within relations they maintain with one other. Various mass media communication sources like-newspaper, magazines, radio and new media sources like- television, computer, internet and social media have eventually occupied both time and space in households and has become the interface interpersonal communication in family system today. At the outset itself, this quotation ‘Family’ describes the position of women in practically most society. Women are there to make children, are mothers and wives, act as the ‘house-maid’, take care of their husbands and families, bear male authority, being deprived of high status jobs and position of power. So, there is this element of discrimination which has prevailed through time. Family communication is usually interface interpersonal communication.

 Every society or social structure is characterized by the basic unit i.e. family. These are the building blocks of social structure. They have a common motto, culture, rules and values. The key function of family is to preserve, protect and promote its generation year after year. Elder members of the family are responsible for rearing their offsprings. They make sure the fulfillment of basic needs of family viz. food, shelter and clothes. The basic unit in society traditionally consisting of parent(s) rearing their children‖ where children refer to the young dependent member(s) and parent(s) refer to the adults taking care of the children.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Now to expatiate on the question, ‘what is family?’ is given below. I’m not a feminist by the way.

**Meaning and Definition** of family In order to adequately examine the implications of mass media communication sources on interface interpersonal communication in family system, we must first clarify the definitions of each significant term. Though the majority of these terms are *familiar* but they were scientifically defined which explains its meaning, application and limitations in broad perspectives. Family is a multidimensional unit performing various functions in a society. It has been a great interest for sociologists to define it on the basis of its various aspects like size of the family, functions of the family, relationship between the family members etc. According to the classification by **Wamboldt & Reiss, (1989); Noller & Fitzpatrick, (1993)** ,Definitions of the word *‘family’ generally fall into three categories: family structure, task orientation, and transactional process definitions‖. Family structure definitions are based on number of family members, their blood relations and the hierarchy followed.* According to **Wamboldt & Reiss, (1989)**, *Family structure definitions surround the family of procreation (partners and children), relatives by blood, or individuals that have established biological or legal legitimacy.* **Census, 2000)** describes *family as an example of households who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.* These definitions help to divide the families on the basis of size like small, nuclear, large, combined etc. Though these definitions provide scholars with clear criteria for membership, but may not be as useful as the social definition of family continues to evolve. This categorization is beneficial for framing various policies concerned with population. Task orientation definitions focus on whether certain tasks for family life are performed **(Wambldt & Reiss, 1989),** *Families are described as a group working towards mutual need fulfillment.* **Lerner & Spanier,** (1978) *describe a family as working towards the socialization and nurturance of children.* Thus the task oriented definition gives the impression of role and motto of family and its members. On this basis a family can be categorized under backgrounds like professional, educational, religious, economy based etc.

Transactional process definitions view the family as a group of intimates who generate a group identity **(Wambldt & Reiss, 1989).** *Families therefore have strong ties of loyalty and experience a history and a future together. It concentrates towards various relations and their communication with each other. This type of definition is especially useful for communication scholars because of the strong emphasis on communication as the major vehicle in establishing intimacy***(Caughlin, et al., 2011).** *The interpersonal relationship between the family members, their communication with each other and the social challenges they face as an integrated unit is the basis of this definition.* Rnole of Family Zabriskie and McCormick (2001) stated that families are goal-directed, self-correcting, dynamic, interconnected systems that both affect and are affected by their environment and by qualities within the family itself. The structure, function or relations within the family are often common within a society or a region. They decide the social structure and shape the culture of the society. It is noteworthy that both family and society affect each other. The words goal-directed, self-correcting, dynamic, interconnected etc give family a sense of life. It is only a good family that makes house ‗a home‘. In families goals for better living are set, the drawbacks or wrong traditions or superstitions are corrected. Love, compassion, trust and cooperation play positive role and fear, hatred and selfishness play a negative role thus giving family a dynamic look. The family is the basic and important unit of society because of the role it plays in generation of human capital resources and the power that is vested in it to influence individual, households, and community behavior (Sriram, 1993). It is, therefore, a basic unit of study in most social sciences disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, economics, anthropology, social psychiatry, social work or human development.

 The first thing we must look at in explaining family, is its definition.

According to Sociologists, the family is an intimate domestic group of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating, or legal ties. It has been a very resilient social unit that has survived and adapted through time. So, the element of time referred to above, is again present here.

The family acts as a primary socialization of children whereby the child first learns the basic values and norms of the culture they will grow up in. a child needs to be carefully nurtured, cherished and molded into responsible individuals with good values and strong ethics. Therefore, it is important to provide them the best childcare so that they grow up to be physically, mentally and emotionally strong individuals.

Similarly, The United States Census Bureau (2007) defines the family as a relatively permanent group of two or more people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption and who live under the same roof.

Stephen (1999) defines the family as a social arrangement based on marriage including recognition of rights and duties of parenthood, common residence for husband, wife and children are reciprocal economic obligations between husband and wife.

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’.

George Peter Murdock (1949) defines the family as a universal institution. According to him, the family is a ‘social group characterised by common residence, economic corporation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children owned or adopted of the sexually cohabiting adults’. However, K. Gough (1959) criticises Murdock definition and argues that the family is not universal. The critics were founded in the Nayar society.

1. Discuss the functions of the family

1) Stable satisfaction of Sexual needs:

This is the most important essential function of family. Family has been performing this functions since the inceptions 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 family to satisfy the sexual urge of its members in a stable and desirable way. Through the mechanism of marriage family regulate the sexual behavior of it’s 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 child. It provides 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 perform another important function of providing a home for common living to all it’s members. It is only in a home that children are born and brought up. Even if children are born in hospitals in modern time 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 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 family. 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 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 family. From family he learns what is right and wrong and what is good or bad. Through socialization he became a social man and acquires 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 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 time family was both a production and consumption unit. It used to fulfill almost all the economic needs of it’s members such as food, clothing, housing etc. In the then days family was self- sufficient. But now a days almost all the economic functions of family is performed by other agencies and family only remain as a consumption unit. It do not produce anything. All the members of family now working outside the home.

But in spite of all family still performing some economic functions of purchasing, protecting and maintaining property. It also equally distribute property among it’s members.

(2) Educational functions:

Family performs many educational functions for its members. As an primary educational institution family used to teach letters, knowledge, skill and trade secret to all its members. It looks after the primary education of its members and make their career and character. Mother act 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 sill 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 religious attitude of its members.

(4) Health related functions:

Family as a primary social group performs several health related functions for its members. It look 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 family takes care of the health of all. Of course modern family delegates some of its health related functions to hospital. 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 ancient period family was the only centre of recreation. All the members together organize family feasts, visit the family relations, organize family picnics etc. Family organize different festivals which is another source of recreation. The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is another source of entertainment. After day’s work all the members used” to assemble and exchange their view. Of course modern club replaces many recreational functions of family. But at the same time it is said that 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 centre of culture.

 3.Discuss the 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. Sub Saharan Africa has one of the fastest annual population growth rate (Merrick 202:41).

Overview of family patterns in sub Saharan Africa

 Despite the changes taking place in sub Saharan African societies due to the modernization process, the family still remains a prominent nexus in the social life of Africans. In Africa, there is considerable importance attached to the respect for elders and ancestors. African communities are characterized by the prevalence of collectivism as opposed to individuality. Paulina Makinwa-Adebusoye (2001:5) outlined the major characteristic features of African household to be that they are mostly rural, patriarchal and hierarchical, polygamous and open to kinship networks, and finally they attached substantial importance to lineage continuation. These features in all play a pivotal role in influencing the number of children women give birth to. The social organization of most African families is embedded in a patriarchal and hierarchical system that precludes the possibility of women, who generally have lower status than men in the society to make deliberate choice on the number of children they want to have (Makinwaadebusoye2001:5). At marriage women tend to have lower status than all the members of their husband’s family (Makinwa-adebusoye (20016). In traditional rural societies in most sub Saharan societies, women were voiceless and powerless. According to Göran Therborn (2006) African societies have experienced slight distortion in the patriarchal tradition, following the advent of urbanization, as well as due to the drop in the importance attached to land and cattle in the economy. Male supremacy has also being altered a bit even though it still has a prominent strong hold in the society. There is the existence of substantial cultural importance attributed to fertility and lineage continuation, tight patriarchal traditions, wide rate of polygamy prevalence. These are the prominent features that characterized most traditional African societies. Contemporary African family patterns are subjected to changes that emanate as a result of the ameliorated economic conditions, education and health opportunities. These factors continuously exert tremendous impact on contemporary family patterns in the sub-continent. Socioeconomic circumstances in the sub-continent are encountering alterations that have to a considerable extent triggered changes in the fundamental cultural values most especially in the domain of the family. The occurrence of competition between traditional and modern family patterns illustrates a dichotomy. There is a rise in the pace towards the abandonment of traditional practices for modern ones (western). However, the most popular trend is that of the prevalence of family patterns that are increasing merging traditional and modern marriage norms, values or practices (Kalu1981:2). The next section provides information on marriage; it is followed by information on family size.

MARRIAGE

Traditional tenets of African marriages are increasingly subjected to stabilize amidst sporadic societal changes emanating from modernization and globalization. This, Wilhelmina Kalu (1981:350) emphasized inherently brings in to perspective the need for the redefinition of the role and features of marriage unavoidable.

 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.

 In traditional societies in most sub Saharan African countries, there is a high value accorded to marriage; this has been marked by the practice of early marriages and childbearing which in most cases continues till the end of productivity age. At marriage women tend to have lower status than all the members of their husband family (Makinwa-adebusoye (20016). Polygamous marriages dominated traditional societies. Paulina Makinwa-Adebusoye (2001 5) explained that as of 1999, in Nigeria, 32.7 percent of married women were in polygamous marriages that were made up of two or more wives. This is characterized by the trend of early marriage; most of the women got married quite young, mostly to older men. Polygamy constitutes a prime feature of rural Africa. Africa has the highest rate of polygamy prevalence in the world (Therborn2006:13). Marriage in contemporary sub Saharan Africa is substantially marked by the movement from polygamous marriages to monogamous marriage. This is prominent in urban areas in the region mostly amongst the younger generation. The practice of polygamy was centred on the notion of precluding the situation of husband shortage. Monogamous marriages have become the norm, based on the fact that the contraction of marriage has substantially drifted from polygamy to monogamy. This however does not mean that polygamous marriages do not occur; its scale is smaller nowadays than it was before. The introduction of Christianity in most of the countries, to a certain extend has a great role to play for this as well. The contraction of marriage in the region is increasingly marked by the union of one man and one woman. This in principle has not been the case in rural Sub Sahara African societies, where marriages between one man and two or more wives dominated. Urbanization and modernization as well have been pinpointed to be responsible for these changes.

1. Discuss your Nuclear family

Nuclear Family Definition

What is a nuclear family? Well, the traditional definition is pretty simple to understand. As mentioned above, a nuclear family is made up of two parents and their children. This is the most basic understanding of the nuclear family model. You would traditionally have a father, mother, and several children making up a traditional nuclear family.

Originally, people would think of the mother and father in the nuclear family model as being a married couple. This married couple would typically have two or more children and would form a close-knit family unit. The relationship of the people in this nuclear family is all about the dynamics between parents and their children. It is about those raising the children and the children that are being raised.

Things have changed drastically in the world since the first ideas of the nuclear family model came to fruition. People don't adhere to the same social standards that they did when the traditional nuclear family was the norm. Although many people do see the ideal nuclear family as being the most common, that isn't necessarily the case in all areas. Many family units in modern times are split into two, and some feature homosexual parents.

What does this all mean for the idea of the nuclear family? Does the nuclear family model even have a place in modern society? This is all very much open to debate. It partially depends on your feelings about the subject, but it is still worth digging into the facts about the nuclear family and how everything has changed in the world.

My nuclear family consists of My Father, My Mother, My two Sisters, Me, and My Brother. My Father and Mother are both the bread-winners of my family. My parents are very hardworking and understanding when it comes to their children. My parent don’t completely follow the traditional method of training their children or the traditional customs of everything else because they believe that their nuclear family does not need to follow any tradition.

For my conclusion, my nuclear family is one of the most unique family’s I know. And I would know that, this I my family after all.

5. Draw your family tree

= MALE = FEMALE

1. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary [↑](#footnote-ref-1)