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Department: Law

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ASSIGNMENT

1. **What is family:**

‘Family’ is a single word, with many different meanings. People have many ways of defining a family and what being part of a family means to them. Families differ in terms of economic, cultural, social and many other facets, but what every family has in common is that people who call it a family are making clear that those people are important in some way to the person calling them family.

**Dictionary definition of family:** The dictionary defines family in several ways. One definition is ‘a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children. While this definition is a good starting point, there are several modern family structures that are excluded by this definition, such as childless couples or other variations on the family unit. Another definition is ‘Two or more people who share goals and values, have long term commitments to one another and resides usually in the same dwelling’.

**Who makes a family:** The traditional family consists of a father, mother and children. This is the family shown on television as the standard family. However, the 21st century showcases a variety of family units, some very different from the standard of 1950s. Today, children are often raised in single parent homes, by grandparents or by homosexual parents. Some families opt to have no children, or cannot have children due to some medical or emotional barrier. The idea that parents and children make a family is a basic definition; however, in order to accurately acknowledge other family structures, a broader definition is necessary. In there are also plenty of people who consider a group of friends to be family and adults who consider pets from goldfish to horses as defining members of the family unit.

**Friends as family:** Many people consider friends to be as close or even closer than extended (or immediate) family. People who have lost close family members may create a family unit of friends with similar interests and goals to become replacements or enhancements to a lacking family structure. This type of family unit, while unlike traditional, can just be as close, if not closer, than traditional structure, Friends are chosen by an individual; at times, these people may be more special or important than a family a person was born with. In addition, some people who have supportive families also have an extensive network of friends who they consider to be s second family or as addition to their blood or legal relatives.

**Pets as family:** pets can also become members of a family unit. Pets add an element of responsibility to a family, particularly for children. For couples who cannot, or choose not to have children, pets can be replacements and be loved as dearly as children. Pets, such as dogs and cats, are cared for as additional family members by many people and are mourned as such as well when they pass away.

**Redefining family:** Rather than simply defining family by a dictionary definition, each individual should look to define a family by its own standards, enriching the dictionary’s definition. Regardless of how you choose to define your family unit, whether it is traditional or unique, your definition is of the family unit that works for you.

1. **Functions of family:**

* Responsible for the addition of new members through reproduction. Society must maintain a stable population in order to survive. Population growth provides a competitive advantage that usually enables society to become wealthier.
* Provide physical cares for their members, including adults, children and dependent elderly. When families are unable to care for their members, hardship results unless the society is organized to replace family in this function. (Eg; Retirement homes)
* Socialize children by teaching skills, knowledge, values and attitudes of the society. Children who learn these can work and relate to others within appropriate adult roles.
* Controlling the behavior of members to maintain order within the family and society in which they live. Families monitor and evaluate the behavior of individuals and provide feedback. This control contributes to the socialization process and protects the reputation of individuals identified with family group within society.
* Maintain morale and motivate individuals to participate in society. Commitment to family may be based on a spiritual sense of duty or economic necessity. People assume that affective nurturance, meeting the emotional needs of individuals, is the function of our commitment to each other. Participation in appropriate social roles contributes to the health of the society as well as providing the means with which families care for their members.
* Economic functions of producing and consuming goods and services. At one time, each family produced all the goods and services it consumed, and used only what it could provide. Now individuals sell their time and skill by producing goods and services within a specialized economy.

1. **Discuss the African traditional family:**

A family which is usually made up of people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption, is very important to most Nigerians. There are two major types of family; the nuclear and extended family. The nuclear family is made up of one man, his wife and children while extended family is made up of a series of nuclear families. Culturally, most Nigerian cultural groups practice patrilineal descent,have patriarchal authority, have patrilocal rule of residence, and are generally patricentric in outlook. The children socialized with this arrangement in mind, and female children are consciously socialized to serve and be surbodinate to males. This hierarchial structure has sometimes led to dissolution of marriage on the grounds of the birth of only or mostly female children.

In Nigeria, having many children is fashionable and is a status symbol, For example, although a large family brings a greater economic burden, many families in the eastern part of Nigeria have ten or more children. A unique feature of the Nigerian family is the existence of a loose matrilineage and use of various terms to describe household and unions. For example, some households are headed by woman. This may be result of the woman being widowed or divorced. The women might also be out-side wives. This term describes women who function as wives to married men who live with their original wives and have extra wives outside their homes. The Nigerian legal system has improvised ways of accommodating such women and their children. In many cultures in Nigeria, there is no such status as illegitimate child. Nigerian families are also distinctive in their loose use of words uncle when referring to all older male relatives and sometimes nonrelatives as well. Also, all older female relatives and nonrelatives may be referred to as “aunty”. People of greater status, regardless of age, are addressed as sir or madam. This maybe based on their traditional cultural deference to elders or superiors, which is very important to most Nigerian cultures.

The Yoruba’s of southwestern Nigeria practice bilateral descent. Thus, many of the current traditional rulers (obas) have ascended the throne from their mother’s lineage. In most part of Nigeria, family linkage and consanguinity are very important. Thus, people have fourth, fifth, sixth or even seventh cousin. They may refer to people from their village or town as brothers or sisters and create associations to perpetuate linkage

1. **Discuss your nuclear family:**

My nuclear family is the description of the definition of what a nuclear family is. My family comprises of my father, my mother and seven children making up eight members in my family. Each individual starting from my father down to the last born of the family knows his/her duties and responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of our household. My father is the head of the family and is a business man and also a very good father. HE makes sure his children gets the best out of life and provide for them so they can be comfortable and to live better than he did in his own younger days. While my mother is a business woman also and she takes care of her children and she is teaches them the basic knowledge of life. My both parents are the bread winners of the family because the both provide financial support to the household. For the children roles are distributed according to gender, I can also my family is a typical Igbo family. The females which are four in number, are giving the roles of cooking, washing and basically anything that has to do with the kitchen while for the males are giving the roles of anything that involves immense use of strength like fetching water, sweeping the whole compound, running errands to far places and so on. In my family, respect to elders is mandatory and defaulters are giving accurate punishment by my parents in that way there would be peace and harmony in my family.

1. **THE ONUCHUKWU FAMILY TREE**

