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WHAT IS FAMILY?

Family can be seen to have a lot of definitions by different people from their different perspective.

Hence Mair defined family as a domestic group in which parents and children live together and its elementary form consist of a couple and their children.

Duberman and Hartjen defined a family as a universal institution whose most important functions are to socialize and nurture the younger generation.

While the dictionary definition defines family as a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children.

The above definitions prove that family can be defined in different ways by different people from their own point of view the fact is that all definitions still refer to family.

FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY

The family has functions are really necessary because it is important unit of socialization in a child’s life. Functions include:

NURTURE: when a child is born into a family he or she is meant to be fed, clothed, educated in fact cared for in general. These responsibilities lie in the hands of the family therefore the family is to provide the welfare needs of the children this will ensure the survival of the next generation of the society.

REGULATION OF SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS: one of the most necessary biological needs of man in all society is sexual relationship. Such relationship is often protected with rules and regulations in all societies and it is the family that helps enforce such rules. This is done to prevent excessive intimacy.

PROCREATION: the family through the ordinance of sexual relationship function fulfills the biological need of reproduction of both the immediate family and society in a whole.

SOCIAL PLACEMENT: an individual acquires his identity and place in a society through his family. Meaning the individual gets to know where he comes from.

AFFECTION AND COMPANIONSHIP: a family is meant to provide love and affection for the members. Children are given warm affection within the family to develop a positive self-image and adults need companionship to continue to move on with their daily struggles and cope with life this breeds a sense of belonging.

**AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY**

This is so broad that it cannot just be addressed in one chapter. In this the African family chapter we will be addressing a Nigerian family. Some issues that will be raised include marriage, naming, bride price and kinship.

**Perversity of Polygamy**

Scholars agree that the widely known aspect that distinguishes the African traditional family say from the European one is the perversity of polygamy. Polygamy is when an individual is married to more than one spouse at a time. The one commonly practiced in Africa is polygyny this is the legal marriage of one man to two or more women. The presence or absence of polygyny was a determinant and indicator of the nature of almost every African social group. Polygyny was the backbone of the traditional African family patterns. According to Mair the polygynous joint family, consist of a man, his wives and children.

Although the perversity of polygyny, there was evidence that it was on the decline. The major reason cited is that because of the increasing modern influences marrying more than one wife became a burden even traditionally a normal man could not afford to marry two wives only kings, chiefs and men with wealth that can afford it.

**Marriage**

Two types of marriages exist in Nigeria; monogamy, a marriage of one man to one woman, and polygyny, a marriage of one man to two or more wives. In most cultural groups marriage is an arrangement between two individuals. Accordingly, there is pressure on the bride and bridegroom to make the marriage work as any problem will usually affect both families and strain the otherwise cordial relationship between them. In most Nigerian cultures, the man usually pays the dowry or bride price and is thus considered the head of the family. Adultery is accepted for men, but forbidden for women. Marriage ceremonies vary among Nigerian cultures.

**Naming**

Naming a child is a very important aspect of Nigerian life. Often times Nigerian children will receive different names from each of their extended relatives. Their full names will include all these names acquired from family relatives, followed by a Christian or Muslim name and lastly by their family/surname. Babies normally undergo the naming ceremony on the 7th or 8th day of their existence.

**Bride price**

A typical Nigerian family collects bride price before the marriage of the groom and bride. It is collected for finalization of marriage rites. This was used to acquire a bride before. The bride price was paid by the groom’s family to the bride’s family and most of the time the grooms family buys items given to them by the bride’s family.

**Kinship**

The basis of kinship in Nigeria as elsewhere is descent from an ancestor. The most wide spread descent group known as clan, which can be either patrilineal or matrilineal. The members of the former type of clan comprise all those born from a single founding ancestor or ancestress through the female line only. Patriliny is far more common in Africa than matriliny. Regardless the means of descent authority in the family and elsewhere is formally held by men therefore they have more domestic authority in both patrilineal and matrilineal families.

**My Nuclear Family**

My nuclear family is made up of my father who is the head of the house and handles the expenses. Then my mother who takes care of us the children and also provides for our necessities and takes care of all our needs. My mother also takes care of the kitchen alongside me. I am the first born then my younger brother the second and my sister the last born.

**FAMILY TREE**