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COURSE: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY II

QUESTION: WHAT IS FAMILY?  
 DISCUSS THE FUNCTIONS of a family

DISCUSS THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY

DISCUSS YOUR NUCLEAR FAMILY

DRAW YOUR FAMILY TREE

DEFINiTION OF A FAMILY

Family is defined as a specific group of people that may be made up of partners, children, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. It is a group of people who share common ancestors. An example of family is all the descendants of a specific person. Generally, US case law has defined “Family” as “A group that consists of Parents and their children”, or “a group of persons living together and having a shared commitment to a domestic partnership”.

The Modern Definition of family define family as consisting of two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit.

Functions of family

Family is the most universal and fundamental social institution which performs a variety of functions in human society. Different sociologists have viewed or classified the functions of family into different types. Famous sociologists like Ogburn and Nimkoff have classified functions of family mainly into six types such as:

1. Affectional
2. Economical function
3. Recreational function
4. Protective function
5. Religious function and
6. Educational function

Another famous sociologist K. Davis have classified the functions of family into four main division such as;

1. Reproduction
2. Maintenance
3. Placement
4. Socialization of the young

Davis calls these as social functions and opines that family also performs some individual function which are a corollary of its social functions. Similarly, Goode classified the functions of family into five different types such as;

1. Procreation function
2. Socio-economic security function
3. Status determination functions
4. Socialization function and
5. Social control function.

Similarly Prof. Lundberg enumerated four basic functions of family such as;

1. Regulations of sexual behavior of members and reproduction
2. Care and training of children
3. Co-operation and division of labor and
4. Primary group satisfactions.

Similarly Reed classified functions of family into following four types such as;

1. Race Perpetuation
2. Satisfaction of sex needs
3. Socialization and
4. Economic function

But famous sociologist Maclver classified the functions of family into two broad categories such as; essential and non-essential functions. The two functions are also known as primary and secondary functions. Under essential or primary functions, Maclver includes mainly three functions which are;

1. Stable satisfaction of sex needs
2. Production and rearing of children
3. Provision of a home.

Under the non-essential or secondary functions, he included;

1. Religious functiona
2. Recreational functions
3. Educational functions
4. Economic functions and
5. Health related functions

Sociologists have classified the functions of family into different forms, still, all of them gives stress on the same aspect in a different manner. However, these different functions of family are as described below:

1. **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY**

Maclver has divided functions of family into essential and non-essential types. Essential functions are those functions which are basic or fundamental in nature and no other institutions can perform these functions so successfully as family can. However, family performs the following essential functions:

* Stable satisfaction of sexual needs: This is the most important essential function of a family. Family has been performing this function since the inception of the 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 behaviour of its 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 maljustments.
* 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 or society is the most important function of family. Not only the production of children but also children 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.
* Provision of Home: Family perform another important functions of providing a home for common living to all its members. It is only in a home that children are born and brought up. Even if children are born in hospitals in modern times, still they are taken care of and properly nourished in a home only. Because family and home have no substitute. In a home, all the family members 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. In a home family performs the role of a modern club. Man got peace by living in a home.
* Socialization: It is another important essential function of family. It is said man is born human but made human. New born Human baby become human being after they are socialized. Family plays an important role in the socialization process. It is one of the primary agents of socialization. The family teaches the baby about 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.

1. **NON-ESSENTIAL OR SECONDARY FUNCTION OF FAMILY**

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 include;

* 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 its members such as food, clothing, housing, etc. In the then days, family was sufficient, but nowadays, almost all the economic functions of family is performed by other agencies and family only remain as a consumption unit cause it does not produce anything and all the members of family now works outside the home. But in spite of all, family still performing some economic functions of purchasing, protecting and maintaining property
* Educational function: Family performs many educational functions for its members. As a primary educational institutions, family used to teach letters, knowledge, skills and trade secret to all its members. It looks after the primary education of its members and moulds their career and character. Family also teaches discipline, obedience, manners etc to its members.
* 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. Family transmits religious beliefs and practice from one generation to another. Children learn different religious values from their parents and family continues to play an important role in shaping religious attitude of its members.
* 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 in the family by providing nutritive food to its members.
* Recreational function: Family performs several recreational functions for its members by entertaining them in various ways. In ancient period, family was the only center of recreation. All the members of the family organizes family picnics, festivals etc.
* Cultural function: Family also perform several cultural functions as well. It preserves different cultural traits. Man learn and acquires culture from family and transmits it to succeeding generations. This is why family is considered as centre of culture.
* Social function: Family performs a number of social function. It teaches about social customs, norms, traditions, etiquette to the coming generations. Family exercises social control over its members and bring them into conformity with accepted standards. Senior members of family directly control the behavior of children and thereby they become a good citizen.

African traditional family

I will be talking about the Africa traditional family based on an interview that was carried out on Sir Abu Bakar where he used Nigeria, as the case of study. His talked focused on the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria but mostly the northern part of Nigeria. He said traditionally, African family practices polygamy because of the idea that the larger the family or clan, the more workers they are to work on the family farms. Hence more wealth can be possessed by the family.

However, nowadays the practice depended on the religion of the person. Muslims in Africa will take up to 3 to 4 wives, the number permitted in the religion while the Christians only practice monogamy. The tribe is bigger in terms of size compared to clan but the latter has greater influence on the family. Four factors that link the kinship were profession-derived names, tribal marks, distinguishing personal names and determining the child’s legitimacy as a clan member. The clan name is also included in a person’s name like his which is Miyim which denotes that he comes from the clan’s profession as hunters.

He also has a tribal marking on his right cheek usually given to children at about the age of seven. Tribal marks were widely used during tribal wars to distinguish members from different clans. Only legitimate children will bear the clan’s name. The naming ceremony is very important as a child will not be considered as a part of the clan till his or her legitimacy is established. The test of a child’s legitimacy in traditional Hausa customs is by dropping the child’s umbilical cord into a can filled with water and milk. The clan chief will only accept the child as a part of the clan if the cord floats. If it sinks, the child will be considered as illegitimate and disowned. He also said the children are then taken care of by their fathers’ brother, not by the biological parents. Nonetheless, the real parents do not forget their children for they will continue to visit their children. This practice was done in order to prepare the girls to become wives and daughters and the boys to become husbands and fathers.

The Hausa people are patrilineal. Hence, their household family consist of relative of the father. However, some tribes in Ghana and Northern Zambia practice matrilineal marriage as the extended family comprises of a man and his wife, their married daughters, son-in-laws, their children. He also said that the dowry is not practiced in traditional African society. The practice was introduced by European missionaries and colonialists. Abu Bakar said that African bridegrooms wok for the bride’s father as a form of dowry to wed his daughter instead of giving money or property.

My nuclear family

A nuclear family is a family unit that includes two married parents of opposite genders and their biological or adopted children living in the same residence. My nuclear family is made up of My dad and mum, and my five children, all girls. We are from a Muslim home and from Edo States. Although we have some uncles and cousins that has been with us since I was born and have been considered as members of the family now and not “relations”.

my family tree.

My nuclear family is made up of my parents and my five siblings arranged from the eldest to the youngest.