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Assignment questions

1. What is family?
2. Discuss the functions of the family.
3. Discuss the African Traditional family.
4. Discuss your nuclear family.
5. Draw your family tree.
6. **What is family?**

A family (from the Latin word: “Familia”) is a group consisting of parents and children living together in the same household. It means a group of people related by blood or ancestry. The popular made up full form of the word Family is: Father and Mother I Love You. There are several ways in which the dictionary defines family. One definition is: Family is “a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children.” Another definition is: “Two or more people who share goals and values, have long term commitments to one another and reside usually in the same dwelling.”

The family is an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating or legal ties. It is the smallest and most basic social unit, which is also the important primary group in any society.

It is the simplest and most elementary group found in the society. It is a social group consisting of a father, mother and one or more children. It is the most immediate group a child is exposed to. Family has been defined by different social scientists as:

According to Kingsley Davis.

“Family is a group of persons, whose relations to one another are based upon consanguinity and who are therefore kin to one another”.

According to Burgess and Locke.

Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting and inter-communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture.

The family is a universal group. It is found in some form or the other, in all types of societies whether primitive or modern. It is based on marriage, which results in mating relationship between two adults of the opposite sex; the mating relationship is established through the institution of marriage. Every family provides an individual with a name, and hence, it is a source of nomenclature. Family is the group through which descent or ancestry can be traced. Family is the most important group in any individual’s life. Family is the most basic and important group in primary socialization of an individual. A family is the most important role in society; it is the nucleus of all institutions, organizations and groups. Family is based on emotions and sentiments. Mating procreation, maternal and fraternal devotion, love and affection are basis of family ties. The family is a unit of emotional and economic cooperation; every family needs an economic provision to satisfy economic needs. The head of the family carries on certain profession and earns money to maintain the family. Every family is made up of different social roles, like those of husband, wife, father, mother, children, brother, sisters, and so on. A family requires a home or household for its living. Without a dwelling place the task of child bearing and child rearing cannot be adequately performed.

1. **Discuss the functions of the family.**

As a social group and as an important social institution, family performs various functions that are as follows:

* Family is a unit through which procreation takes place. Marriage sanctions sexual relationships, and it also establishes a family, which is further reinforced with the birth of children.
* It provides an individual with an identity.
* It is an important agent of socialization. The primary socialization takes place within the family.
* The family provides an individual with a home, and establishes enduring social relationships.
* The family is the basis of division of labour, where all members have their duties and obligations towards each other.
* A family fulfills the economic needs of its members.

Maclver has divided the functions of family into essential and non-essential types. Under essential types he includes mainly three functions such as, stable satisfaction of sex needs, production and rearing of children and a provision of home. But besides these Maclverian functions of family, family may also perform some other functions which are basic or fundamental in nature and no other institutions can perform these functions so successfully as family can. The family performs the following functions.

* **Stable satisfaction of sexual needs.**

This is the most important essential function of family. Family has been performing these functions since the inceptions of human civilization. It is well known fact that the most powerful and important instinct and natural urge of human being. It is the primary duty of the couple in the marriage to satisfy the sexual urge of the spouse in a stable and desirable way.

* **Procreation and rearing of children.**

It is another important function of family. 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 the human race. Hence perpetuation of the human race or society is the most important function of the family. Family is the only place where the function of child rearing is performed. It provides for food, shelter, affection, protection, and security to all its members. It plays a vital role in the process of socialization of child. It provides a 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 remarked that family is an institution par excellence for the procreation and rearing of children. It has no parallels.

* **Provision of home.**

Family performs another important function of providing a home for common living to all its members. It is only in a home that children are brought up. Children are taken care of and properly nourished in a home only. 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. Family provides recreation to its members.

* **Socialization.**

It is another important essential function of family. It is said that no man is born human but made human. A new born human baby became a 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 culture and acquires character through the process of socialization. His personality develops in the course of his living in the family. From family he learns what is right and what is wrong and what is good or bad. Through socialization he became a social man and acquire good character.

**NON ESSENTIAL OR SECONDARY FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY.**

Famous Sociologist Maclver has divided the functions of a family into essential and non-essential functions. Under non-essential or secondary functions he includes economic, religious, educational, health and recreational needs. 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. They are as follows:

* **Economic functions**

It is an important economic unit. In ancient times, family was both a producing and a consuming unit. It is used to fulfill almost all the economic needs of its members such as food, shelter, clothing, housing, etc. It also equally distribute property among its members.

* **Educational functions.**

Family performs educational functions for all 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 moulds their career and character. Mother acts as the first and best teacher of a child. He learns all sorts of informal education such as discipline, obedience, manners, etc. from family. At present many of the educational functions are taken over by school, college and universities, but still families continue to play an important role in providing the first lessons and primary education to its members.

* **Religious functions.**

Family is the centre of all religious activities. All members offer their prayers together and observe different religious rites and practices jointly. Children learn different religious values from their parents. Family transmits religious beliefs and practices from one generation to another. It plays an important role in shaping the religious outlook of its members.

* **Health related functions.**

Family as a primary social group performs several health related functions for its members. It looks after the health and vigour of its members. The modern family delegates some of its health related functions to the hospital.

* **Recreational functions.**

Family performs several recreational functions for its members by entertaining them in various ways. In past times, family was the only centre of recreation. All the members together organize family feasts, visit the family relations, and organize public picnics and so on. The family organizes different festivals which is another source of recreation. The relationship between grand parents and their grandchildren is another source of entertainment. Family outings, family picnics, family vacation, these and many more contribute to the ways in which the members of a family get entertained.

* **Social functions.**

Family performs a number of social functions. It teaches about social customs, morals, traditions, norms, etiquette to coming generations. Family exercises social control over all its members and bring them into conformity with accepted standards. Senior members of the family directly control the behavior of children. This ultimately results into bringing up good children as well as good citizens.

1. **Discuss the African Traditional Family.**

The subject of traditional family patterns in Africa is so broad that it cannot be adequately addressed completely. The cultural and physical diversity added with the dramatic social changes of the last three decades on the continent makes the family pattern so variegated as to defy any sweeping generalizations. The major features of the traditional African family includes: polygamy, tribe, clan, the extended family, bride price and the raising of children.

**PERVERSITY OF POLYGAMY**.

Scholars of the African traditional family agree that one widely known aspect that distinguishes the African traditional family, say from the European one, is the perversity of polygamy. The more commonly practiced in Africa is polygyny – the legal marriage of one man to two or more women concurrently – is permitted. Because of its perversity, the presence and absence of polygyny was a significant determinant and indicator of the nature of virtually every African social group; whether tribe, clan, or extended family, whether matrilineality or patrilineality was practiced, bride price existed, and how children were raised. Polygyny was practiced in Africa and it often the backbone of the traditional African family patterns. According to Mair, “… the polygonous joint family, consisting of a man, his wives, and their children, is the ideal for most Africans.” Studies conducted from the 1930s indicate that polygyny was common virtually in all regions of Africa.

In spite of the perversity of polygyny, there was evidence that it was on decline. The major reason cited is that with increasing modern influences, marrying more than one wife became an economic burden. Even traditionally, ordinary citizens could not achieve marrying one wife. Often only kings, chiefs and men who had wealth could afford it. Polygyny though set the tone and often determined the strength of the society and pattern of social organization of the traditional African family. The Baganda people of Uganda provide the best illustration. As was not only the preferred but dominant form of marriage for the Baganda. It even existed among commoners.

**DOWRY AND BRIDE-PRICE.**

The predominance of dowry and bride-price practices dates back to the centuries of human existence as a way of meeting the requirements of marriage. Dowry and bride-price are two forms of alliance building exchanges between couples-and families. The exchange or transfer of goods and services signifies a form of contract between and among groups of people with negotiated interest. The transfer of wealth during the process of marriage is a significant aspect of inheritance as well as an invaluable cultural practice that carries far more connotation than any argument as to whether or not it is important. Implications for dowry and bride-price practices span across historical, economic, public health, mental health advocacy, and diversity.

Dowry is the transfer of wealth, an invaluable component of bridal wealth. Historically, the term dowry implies the transfer of a large wealth of goods and services to parents of the bride during the marriage. Bride price is payment to the family of the bride. Payment is typically done by the groom.

**KINSHIP.**

Kinship can be understood as a culture’s system of recognized family roles and relationships that define obligations, rights, and boundaries of interaction among the members of a self-recognizing group. It could be defined through genetic relationships adoption, or other ritualized behaviours such as marriage and household economies. Kinship systems range in size from single, nuclear-family or tribal or intertribal relationships. Above all, kinship creates a network that gives its members a sense of belonging. The kinship network, when properly harnessed can be a vehicle for development in Africa, which can take social, economic, political and moral dimensions. Africans are known world-wide for their sense of kinship or family. This is one of the most vital features of the African heritage. Reflecting on the dividend of African kinship, Achebe (1949) writes,

A man who calls his kinsmen to feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their homes…. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. (P.155).

1. **Discuss your nuclear family.**

A nuclear family, elementary family or conjugal family is a family group consisting of two parents and their children (one or more). A group of people who are united by ties of partnership and parenthood and consisting of a pair of adults and their socially recognized children. Children in a nuclear family may be the couple’s biological or adopted offspring.

My nuclear family is quite a simple but quite fun and definitely a loving one. I was born and brought into the legal union of Mr. and Mrs. Amechi-Igwe (my parents), I was an only child for 12 years until we were finally blessed with my twin siblings. My father is an International trader (a business man), due to this he’s hardly ever around. He always tries to make it up to us though as well as perform all his duties such as: paying our school fees, providing my mum with the monthly upkeep money, placing me on a constant allowance, taking us shopping constantly, taking us on family retreats, ensuring our protection and so on. My mother on the other hand works as an Assistant General Manager (AGM) as well as the Head of the Information unit in the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN). She cooks for the family, she provides us with all our needs, she monitors all our activities, as well as guides us in most if not all our affairs. While I cook the meals sometimes, I take care of my siblings; I concentrate on my studies as well as run errands for my parents.

1. **Draw your family tree.**

MR. OTUONYE

Grand father

MRS OTUONYE

Grand mother

MR OKAFOEZE

Grandfather

MRS OKAFOEZE

Grandmother

Gr

AMECHI

EDITH

SUSAN

SAMUEL

UZOMA

JUNIA

PATRICE

DAVINA

- Means marriage

-Means children**/**descendants.