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## 1What is family?

**family**, by definition, is a group of people affiliated by a specific relationship. Basically, the family is the most fundamental unit of social organization that with which we most intimately identify. Your family influences your personal, emotional, intellectual, and social development, so if you really need to know who you are, look no further.

## 2 Functions of a family

### *1. Stable Satisfaction of Sex need:*

This is the Primary and essential function of family. Sex instinct is the natural urge of human being. The satisfaction of this need requires that both male and female should live together as life partners. It is the family where the husband and wife can satisfy their sex instincts easily and comfortably. Without family the satisfaction of sex need is almost socially quite impossible. A family not only satisfies but also provides the appropriate mechanism through marriage to regulate sexual behavior of husband and wife.

### *(2) Reproduction or procreation:*

Reproduction or procreation is another essential function of family. The family along with regulating the sexual behavior in relation to the satisfaction of sexual needs secures a legitimate basis for procreation. Since the inception of family, it has been performing this fundamental function. This function of family contributes to the continuity of family and ultimately perpetuates the human race as a whole.

### *(3) Protection and care of the young:*

Protection and care of the children is another essential function of family. It is regarded as an institution par excellence for the production and rearing of children. It is true that no other institution can take required care of the child like family. The child at birth is complete helpless and cannot survive at all without the help of the family. It is the family which provides care, protection, security (Physical, mental) and fulfills all other needs to make him fit in the society.

### *(4) Socializing Functions:*

Family is one of the primary agents of socialization. Family members teach the child the norms, value morals, beliefs and ideals of society. In the family the children first learn what is good and

bad, what is right and wrong. They develop specific habits, traits of character, attitudes and values. The senior members of the family pass the family culture to the new generation through the socialization process. Thus, family acts as an instrument of culture transmission.

*(5) Provision of a home:*

Family makes a provision of a home or a common habitation for its members. Here both husband and wife live together for procreation, protection and care of the children. It is a place of multifarious activities. All the members of the family depend on home for comfort, protection and peace. It is that institution which provides the mental or the emotional satisfaction. Members of the family exchange their love, sympathy and affection among themselves.

**Non-essential / Secondary Functions**

The non-essential functions of family are:

*(1) Economic function:*

The family fulfils the economic needs of its members. This has been a traditional function of family. Family fulfils all the economic needs of its members such as food, clothing, shelter etc. The goods required by its members are produced at home.

*(2) Educational function:*

Mazzin says, "The first lesson of child is learnt between mother's kiss and father's care". Family is regarded as the first school of children. The family provides the basis for the child's formal learning and gives the child his basic training in the social attitudes and habits.

*(3) Religious function:*

The family is a centre for the religious training of the children. The family is used to teach the children the religious values, moral precepts etc. It is through the family the religious inheritance is passed on to the next generation.

*(4) Recreational functions:*

Family is the centre of recreation. It serves as a centre of all recreational activities like singing, dancing, playing indoor games etc. The small children are the source of recreation for the elders.

*(5) Protective function:*

Family always looks after the health of its members both young and old. It takes up the responsibility of its members and maintains sound and good health.

### **3 African 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). It has the fastest rate of urbanization presently taking place in the world. The

transformation of societies in the sub-continent from rural to urban settings has immensely contributed in triggering changes in family structure. This has triggered the distortion of cultural /traditional norms and values that characterized rural communities in the region. African families are increasingly faced with the challenge and pressure emanating from the competition prevailing between traditional and modern family values. Hence, Contemporary family patterns in the region are increasingly subjected to transform and adapt to changing times. Discussions of family patterns in contemporary Sub Saharan Africa are usually made in reference to the process of acculturation, urbanization (the movement from rural to urban areas), which have helped to shape modern family structures, as well as fostered the prevalence of demographic changes (Kalu 1981:353). Family in sub Saharan Africa is experiencing changes which are felt in fertility rates that is the number of children women give birth to, and age at marriage to name a few.

This article seeks to examine the trends that depict family patterns in most sub Saharan African countries. It aims at examining two key issues connected with African family patterns, that is; marriage and family size, with the goal of illuminating the changes that are characterizing their prevalence. Discussion on the latter will be limited to the discourse of fertility rate which in this paper encapsulates the number of children women in the region give birth to. In essence, it is centred on the discourse of childbirth that is number of children per woman. It is unconceivable to discuss family patterns in the region, without assessing the issue of marriage. The main interest is that of portraying the changes taking place in marriages in region, from which information can be derived on the changes that have so far been encountered in its contraction.

## 1.2 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. Marriage in sub Saharan Africa is universal. There is early and universal female marriage (Caldwell and Caldwell 1987:411). The age at first marriage is experiencing slight delay than it was before. Marriage in Africa is subjected to the task of adapting amidst sporadic changes emanating from the society. This in essence set the pace for the redefinition of its role and characteristics (Kalu1981:350). Marriage is still quite important in African communities, the age at first marriage ranges between 17 to 22 years for women (Boogaarts et al 1984). It varies across regions depending on regional and ethnic practices. Göran Therborn (2006:36) portrays the fact that the age of first marriage has experienced a slight increase in most countries. It has risen since the 1950s to 1990s in Guinea from 16 to 19 years, from 15 to 18 years in Niger. In Nigeria it has risen from 19 to 20 years, Ivory Coast from 19 to 21 years and Zimbabwe from 19 to 21 years during the 1980s and early 1990s. Countries like South Africa and Botswana have much later ages of marriage which has rose from 26 to 27 years. The percentage of the female population that is married by age 20 was 82 percent in Mali, and 90 percent in Niger. Both of these countries have relatively high fertility rates (Makinwa-Adebusoye2001:5). Michael Boogarts (1984) remarked that before, the average age of marriage in the sub-continent ranged between 15 years and beyond. Contrary to this, contemporary sub Saharan African countries are gradually experiencing slight changes in the age of marriage at which women get married. 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.

4 My nuclear family consists of my father my mother and the children which are two.

My father is the provider of the family, my mother is the homemaker of my father and us the children

Help our mom around the house, and help to take the house clean also we help our parents out.

### My nuclear family tree

. Nsofor

