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Question

1. What is a family
2. Discuss the functions of the Family
3. Discuss the African Traditional family
4. Discuss your Nuclear family
5. Draw your family tree

WHAT IS A FAMILY

The word family comes from the Latin *familia*, which means “household,” a designation that included both servants and relatives. The term ‘Family’ is a single word, with many different meanings. People have many ways of defining and what being a 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 the people who call it a family are making clear that those people are important in some way to the person calling them his family. Family may seem like a simple concept, but there is no simple definition of family. In its most basic terms, a family is a group of individuals who share a legal or genetic bond, but for many people, family means much more, and even the simple idea of genetic bonds can be more complicated than it seems.

In the most basic definition, a group of people who share a legal bond or a blood bond is a family.

Legal Bonds: Families are legally bound through marriages, adoptions, and guardianships, including the rights, duties, and obligations of those legal contracts. Legal bonds can be changed, expanded, or dissolved to change the composition of a family.

Blood Bonds: Individuals who are directly related through a common ancestor are part of a family. This includes both close and distant relatives such as siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins. Researching a family tree or genealogical records can reveal familial blood bonds.

Legally family can be defined as:

A group of individuals who share ties of blood, marriage or adoption; A group residing together and consisting of parents, children, and other relatives by blood or marriage; A group of individuals residing together who have consented to an arrangement similar to ties of blood or marriage.

Medically family can be defined as:

A fundamental social group consisting of one or two parents and their children; People in the same line of descent; lineage; all the members of a household living under one roof; a group of individuals who share ties of blood, marriage, or adoption.

A family can also be defined as a group of usually related individuals who live together under common household authority and especially who have reciprocal duties to each other.

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 the 1950s. Today, children are also 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 addition to a more universal family definition, 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.

In Nigeria we have two major types of families: the nuclear family and the extended family.

The nuclear family is made up of the father, mother and children. The extended family is made up of the father, mother, children, aunts, grandparents, cousins. Uncles and any other family member either from the maternal or paternal side or both. A couple can also adopt a child and that child through the process of adoption becomes a part of their family.

The family is considered as the basic unit of the society, everybody comes from a family and the collection of people as a whole form a society. It is the first point of socialization for a child. The society is formed as a result of people who belong to different families.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY

Family is the most universal and fundamental social institution which performs a variety of functions in human society. Family is the most important primary group in society. It is an outstanding primary group, because the child develops its basic attitudes in the family. The family has various functions as it helps in determining how a society will be. Family, as a social institution performs several functions. Different sociologists have viewed or classified the functions of family into different types.

Famous Sociologists like Ogburn and Nimkoff have classified the functions of the family into six main types such as: (i) Affectional (ii) Economic functions (iii) Recreational functions (iv) Protective functions (v) Religious functions and (vi) Educational functions. Another famous sociologist K. Davis classified the functions of family into four main divisions such as (i) Reproduction (ii) Maintenance (iii) Placement and (iv) Socialization of the young. Davis calls these as social functions and opines that family also performs some individual functions which are a corollary of its social functions.

Similarly Goode classified the functions of family into five different types such as (i) Procreation functions (ii) Socioeconomic security functions (iii) Status determination functions (iv) Socialization functions and (v) Social control functions.

Similarly Prof. Lundberg enumerated four basic functions of family such as (i) Regulations of sexual behaviour of members and reproduction (ii) Care and training of children (iii) Co-operation and division of labour and (iv) Primary group satisfactions.

Similarly Reed classified functions of family into following four types such as (i) Race Perpetuation (ii) Satisfaction of sex needs (iii) Socialization and (iv) Economic functions. But famous Sociologist Maclver classified the functions of family into two broad categories such as essential and non-essential functions.

These two functions are also widely known as primary and secondary functions. Under essential or primary functions Maclver includes mainly three functions such as (i) stable satisfaction of sex needs (ii) production and rearing of children and (iii) provision of a home. Under non-essential or secondary functions he includes religious, recreational, educational, economic and health related functions. But one thing is clear that though sociologists have classified the functions of family into different forms still all of them gives stress on the same aspects in a different manner. However, these different functions of family are as described below:

(A) Essential functions of family:

Maclver has divided functions of family into essential and non-essential types. Under essential functions he includes mainly three functions such as, 1. stable satisfaction of sex needs, 2. production and rearing of children and 3. a provision of home. But besides these Maclverian functions of family, family may also perform some other essential functions. But it must be remembered that essential functions are those functions which are basic or fundamental in nature and no other institutions can perform these functions as successfully as family can. However family performs the following essential functions:

(1) *Stable satisfaction of Sexual needs:*

This is the Primary and essential function of family. Family has been performing this functions since the inceptions of 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. The existence of a life partner satisfies this sexual need.

At the same time, the sexual function of the family helps to stabilize society. ". All societies have norms governing with whom and how often a person should have sex. The family is the major unit for teaching these norms and the major unit through which sexual reproduction occurs. One reason for this is to ensure that infants have adequate emotional and practical care when they are born. The prescriptive and proscriptive rules which contain sexual activity between the spouses within the family prevent the probable disruptive effects on social order that would result if the sex drive were allowed 'free play'.

A family not only satisfies but also provides the appropriate mechanism through marriage to regulate sexual behaviour of husband and wife. Through the mechanism of marriage family regulate the sexual behaviour of its members. "Some people who might be physically attractive and geographically available—for example, sisters and brothers— come to be viewed as impossible sex partners, who arouse no conscious sex desire at all". This is because "our complex neural mechanism permits a rich conditioning to occur, by which only certain familial behavioural patterns seem right or desirable". The *incest taboo* that most societies have, which prohibits sex between certain relatives, helps to minimize conflict within the family if sex occurred among its members and to establish social ties among different families and thus among society as a whole.

The family enables adults of both sexes—husband and wife—to maintain a socially approved sexual relationship. Besides, the family shapes, channelizes and restricts the sex drive of man in all societies in terms of social norms. It is the family where the husband and wife can satisfy their sex instincts easily and comfortably because satisfaction of sex instinct brings the desire for life long partnership of husband and wife. Without family the satisfaction of sex need is almost socially quite impossible. Satisfaction of this sex needs in a desirable way helps in the normal development of personality.

A family thus provides both 'control and expression' of sexual drives and in doing so performs important functions for its individual members, for the family as an institution and for society as a whole. 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 maladjustments.

(2) *Procreation and Rearing of Children:*

Reproduction or procreation is another essential function of family. The family along with regulating the sexual behaviour in relation to the satisfaction of sexual needs secures a legitimate basis for procreation. It institutionalizes the process of 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.

Hence perpetuation of human race or society is the most important function of family. Not only is the production of children but also child rearing 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.

(3) *Provision of Home:*

Family perform another important function of providing a home or a common habitation for all its members. Here both husband and if live together for procreation, protection and care of the children it is only in a home that children are born and brought up. Even if children are born in hospitals in modern time still they are taken care of and properly nourished in a home only. Because family and a home have no substitute. 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. It is that institution which provides emotional and psychological satisfaction to all its members. Man's necessity of love and human response got fulfilled here. Family provides recreation to its members. In a home family performs the role of a modern club. Man got peace by living in a home. Members of the family exchange their love, sympathy and affection among themselves.

(4) *Socialization:*

Fourthly, "the family is the fundamental instrumental foundation of the larger social structure. The role behaviour that is learned within the family becomes the model or prototype for role behaviour required in other segments of the society. The content of the socialization process is the cultural traditions of the society; by passing them to the next generation the family acts as a conduit or transmission belt by which the culture is kept alive". It is another important essential function of family. When a child is born he is just a biological entity, it is said man is not born human but made human. New born human baby became human being after they are socialized. Family plays an important role in the socialization process.

Talcott Parsons refers to a "basic and irreducible function" which the family performs in all societies which is 'primary socialisation of children'. By 'primary socialisation Talcott Parsons refers to socialisation during the early years of childhood which takes place within the narrow circle of the family. This is to be distinguished from 'secondary socialisation' which takes place in later years when the family is less involved and the other agencies like the peer group and the school exert increasing influence.

Parsons points out that two basic processes are involved in primary socialisation: First, the internalization of society's culture; second, the structuring of the personality in terms of society's culture. The internalization of society's culture is essential for the existence of society, because society cannot exist in the absence of shared norms and values.

Family is one of the primary agents of socialization. Living in a family human baby learns norms, values, morals and ideals of society. The family is the first school for the child. He

learns culture, the norms of the family and acquires character through the process of socialization. His personality develops in the course of his living in family. The family is a mechanism of social control which has particular customs and traditions, some rules and regulations, if the child follows there he is praised or punished if he doesn't follow. From family the children learn first what is right and wrong and what is good or bad. Sometimes the family removes bad habits. Through socialization he became a social man and acquires specific habits, traits of character, attitudes and values. The role behaviour that is learned within the family becomes the model or prototype for role behaviour required in other segments of the society. The content of the socialization process is the cultural traditions of the society; by passing them to the next generation the family acts as a conduit or transmission belt by which the culture is kept alive”.

Likewise, if the child's personality is not moulded in terms of the central values of society's culture he would be a misfit in society in later life. The senior members of the family pass the family culture to the new generation through socialization process. Thus, family acts as an instrument of culture transmission. For man's survival it is necessary that the family must feed and protect him and, at the same time, teach him various cultural aids. If the family does not make adequate provision for the biological needs of man and teach him all other cultural aids that are required for his survival, he would die and obviously society also would die.

Talcott Parsons believes that family is essential for producing 'socialised' personalities. Primary socialization requires a context which provides warmth, security and mutual support. He can conceive of no institution other than family which could provide this context.

B (Non-essential or secondary functions of the family)

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

(1) *Economic functions:*

Since ancient times family has been performing several economic functions. It is an important economic unit. Labour is divided in the family on the basis of age and sex usually the female has the household work and the man the outside work.

In ancient time family was both a production and consumption unit. According to Anderson each man's a member of family and every man is a consumer. It used to fulfil almost all the economic needs of its members such as food, clothing, housing etc. The goods required by its members are produced at home. In the then days family was self-sufficient. But now a days almost all the economic functions of family is performed by other agencies and family only remain as a consumption unit. But in spite of all family still performing some economic functions of purchasing, protecting and maintaining property. It also equally distribute property among its members.'

(2) *Educational functions:*

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. Family performs many educational functions for its members. As a 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 act as the first and best teacher of a child. Besides he learns all sorts of informal education such as discipline, obedience, manners etc. from family. Of course at present many of the educational functions of family are taken over by school, college and universities sill family continues to play an important role in providing the first lessons and primary education to its members.

(3) *Religious functions:*

Family is the centre of all religious activities and religious training of the children. The family used to teach the children the religious values, moral precepts etc. All the family members offer their prayers together and observe different religious rites, rituals and practices jointly. It is through the family the religious inheritance is passed on to the next generation. All the members believe in a particular religion and observe religious ceremonies at home. Children learn different religious values from their parents. Living in a spiritual atmosphere spirituality develops among the children. Family transmits religious beliefs and practices from one generation to another. But at present family became more secular in their outlook. Common family worship became very rare and absolute. Still family continues to play an important role in shaping religious attitude of its members.

(4) *Health related functions:*

Family as a primary social group performs several health related functions for its members. It look after the health and vigour of its members. The family provides physical care for their members, including adults, children and dependent elderly. It takes care of the sick old and aged persons of the family. By providing necessary nutritive food to its members family takes care of the health of all its members both young and old. It takes up the responsibility of its members and maintains sound and good health. The duty of the family is to take care of children who are physical and mentally handicapped. Also the old and ill are too the liability of the families. The general notion that the young ones take care of the old.

(5) *Recreational functions:*

Family is the centre of recreational activities like singing, dancing, playing indoor games etc. It performs several recreational functions for its members by entertaining them in various ways. In ancient period family was the only centre of recreation. All the members together organize family feasts, visit the family relations, organize family picnics etc. Family organize different festivals which is another source of recreation. The small children are the source of recreation for the elders, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is a source of entertainment. After day's work all the members used" to assemble and exchange their view. Of course modern club replaces many recreational functions of family. But at the same time it is said that present family acts as a modern club without its evil effects.

(6) *Cultural functions:*

Family also performs several cultural functions as well. It preserves different cultural traits. Man learns and acquires culture from family and transmits it to succeeding generations. That is why family is considered as centre of culture. Man learns the long and customs & traditions of his family. Culture is different from one family to another. This culture is passed on from one generation to the next generation. To exist in society culture is very important to distinguish the society from another. Culture also provides physical security.

(7) *Social functions:*

Family performs a number of social functions. It teaches about social customs, mores, traditions, norms, 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 behaviour of children and thereby they became a good citizen.

Other functions include:

Protection and care:

“The family is the only social institution charged with transforming a biological organism into a human being” What is the nature of this biological organism? Like many other animals, man is helpless at birth and would die quickly without care. Unlike most other animals, however, man cannot become self-reliant until several years have passed after birth.

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 fulfils all other needs to make him fit in the society

There are a few other traits which are unique to man as compared to other animals. Man matures much later than any other animal. At what age man reaches enough maturity so as to be self-reliant is a matter of speculation, because maturity does not amply mean physical maturity. Even if he develops physically, he cannot protect himself or collect his food simply on the basis of physical strength.

“This-is because of the fact that, unlike lower animals, he is not endowed with instinct which may simplify his adjustment to the environment.” “No instincts impel him to build a shelter, to kill other animals, to grow plants, or to create tools”.

His reflexes are very limited in scope and do not seem sufficient to enable him to survive alone. His lack of instinct is, however, compensated by his possession of the most complex brain among all animals.

The last named trait enabled man to build several cultural aids to protect himself, to collect food, to build shelter, etc. Among many other cultural aids, the family is one which he builds in order “to be fed, protected and taught what nature has not provided”.

Family thus transforms a biological organism into a human being introducing him to several cultural aids by way of compensating, as it were, nature's failure to teach him the instinctive art of survival.

Development of integrated personality:

The family helps an individual develop an integrated personality. Man is a cultural being and, as such, he has both emotional and physical needs. He needs food, protection and care for his survival. He also needs love, affection, understanding and sympathy for satisfaction of his emotional needs.

In their absence, he would fail to develop a well-rounded personality. The family creates the necessary environment in which his personality may blossom basked by the warmth of family affection. Family is, therefore, described by Talcott Parsons as a 'factory' which produces human personality.

Cultural transmission status ascription (one is ascribed to the status of his family):

Since an individual is born in a family, he acquires a social status or identity at birth—the son or daughter of a particular family, the membership of a particular class or caste, etc. This kind of social status which we acquire at birth through our family fulfils our sense of security. We become conscious very early age in life what we should or should not expect from others and what others may expect from us.

Children are born into their parents' social class, race and ethnicity, religion, and so forth. Social identity is important for our life chances. Some children have advantages throughout life because of the social identity they acquire from their parents, while others face many obstacles because the social class or race and ethnicity into which they are born is at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Stabilisation of the adult personalities of the population of the society:

Parsons argues that it is not enough to produce the personality. Once produced, the personality must be kept stable. This is the second important function of family to which Parsons refers. Family creates a situation in which the spouses provide emotional security and affectionate sympathy for each other. This enables the couple to stand the strains and stresses of everyday life which tend to make the personality unstable. Besides, the family relationship allows the adult members to act out 'childish' elements of their own personalities which they "have retained from childhood but which cannot be given expression in an adult company. For example, the father plays with his son's toy train and indulges in many other childish pranks in his child's company. This is as necessary for father as for his son. The family, therefore, provides a situation in which 'husband and wife can express their childish whims, give and receive emotional support, recharge their, childish whims, give and receive emotional support, recharge their, batteries and so stabilise their personalities'".

THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY

Family is considered a basic cell of the society. All social and cultural practices find their connection with a notion of family, either supporting or distorting it.

Family plays a crucial role in Africa, and many African authors have expressed their ideas of family, including saying that each person in African traditional life lives in or as a part of the family; that the family community was the fundamental element of the African, this basic sphere of action, through which he became integrated with the larger, human community... he always acted from within the sphere of the family.

Some other author considers the family as a minimal effective group of relatives by blood and or marriage and analogous groups. By analogous groups it means those members who are not related by blood or marriage, e.g. adopted children.

There are two basic types of families: the nuclear and the extended families. Nuclear family would consist of parents and their own children as autonomous and operating without reference to other relatives. Often their place of residence would be neolocal

In Africa, the extended/wider family comprises of more people, with a much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe or North America. In traditional society, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives. The relationships within extended family would be based on kinship (biological or putative blood relationship) and affinity (relationship between blood relationships of one marriage partner and those of the other marriage partner). Such a family would include adopted and fostered children.

In the traditional society polygamous marriages were a preferred form of marriage. Such marriages contributed to the extension of relationships of the family by incorporating more people.

In the African tradition, the extended family would include the deceased members of the family as well as those who are yet unborn. The unborn children were an important element in such a family, because they were assuring the survival of the family.

The members of the extended family could live together in a traditional compound consisting of several houses, live close to one another or be separated by some distance. In case of geographic separation, they would gather together to make important decisions concerning the family. Usually the members of the wider family would belong exclusively either to a paternal or maternal descent.

Family plays a central role in African society. It shapes such daily experiences as how and where individuals live, how they interact with the people around them, and even, in some cases, whom they marry. It can determine a person's political identity and the way money and property are transferred. In rural areas, the family typically remains the basic unit of agricultural production.

In African Traditional Religion, morals, values, beliefs and culture among other things play a critical role in society. The upholding of societal norms and values is a sacred affair especially in African society where religion is a way of life. In addition, the younger generation is also inquisitive about the history of the society that it lives in.

Family - Community Involvement in Education. The traditional African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” has been widely quoted for years stating that the whole community plays a role in raising a child. It is a clear message that still holds true for today – the entire community shapes the growth and development of its young people. Aside from the vital roles of family members and teachers, community members are also responsible for the moral upbringing of the children within the community.

The African parent brings up a child in order for the child to imbibe the cultural values of the land and also be a responsible adult. Some of these forms of parenting are through story telling (folktales), the extended family, traditional rites and the mother's care, attention and love. It would be emphasized that in the African community, the extended family is traditionally practiced. In the same vein, it is a common knowledge that when one speaks of the family in an African context, one is referring not to the nuclear family but the extended family.

A family is generally constituted by three processes, which are blood relations, sexual unions or adoption.

African families are typically extended to aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and other relatives that form a family that functions in unison. The broad concepts of family in many African societies is illustrated in Nelson Mandela's autobiography “Long Walk to Freedom” where he states, “My mother presided over three huts at Qunu, which as I remember, were always filled with babies and children of my relations. In fact, I hardly recall any occasion as a child when I was alone. In African culture, the sons and daughters of one's aunts and uncles are considered brothers and sisters, not cousins.” In several African communities, family is not limited to space and time, thus, it cuts across generations, relatives living far and near, the living and those who have joined the ancestors, as well as the ancestors themselves who continue to play a role in the lives of the living.

The extended family system includes several generations plus cousins, uncles, and aunts living in a compound or close to one another. The extended family is composed of a number of joint, compound, elementary and nuclear families occupying separate but nearby homesteads. The extended family provides emotional needs to all involved. It is a cohesive unit which ideally provides economic, social and psychological security to all its members. The extended family ensures procreation of children and provides for the early care and training of children. This same family system defines social and moral norms and safeguards both material and spiritual customs and traditions as well as providing a variety of role models preparing the way for adulthood. The dominance of the elders/aged has a relatively high degree of social control on the individual especially, the youth.

The uniqueness of this system with regards to parenting in our traditional African communities is that the responsibility in taking care of the child is not only to the biological parents. This is shared by all in the extended family. This is buttressed by the African proverb on parenting which says that, “a single hand cannot nurse a child”. This implies that although the mother has the responsibility of taking care of the child, the responsibility is being shared by all. Many children went to school on the strength of this system; otherwise they would have been stark illiterates and walking about aimlessly.

This is why it is even said that even when parents are dead, a child would always have ‘parents’. This is because the extended family is there to function as foster parents to the child.

At other instances, the extended family may not be together, but then the nuclear family may live with other nuclear families who may not be relatives. This system of living is what we call the “compound house” system. Also, this system allows any elderly person to discipline or correct a child.

The extended family is a strong tool in parenting. It helps to develop a strong sense of social responsibility in the child from his early years and he/she learns to be respectful, responsible and supportive member of the extended family and society.

In African traditional family, there is considerable importance attached to the respect for elders and ancestors. African families and communities are characterized by the prevalence of collectivism as opposed to individuality. African family still maintains its strong bond through traditional practices such as the upbringing of children and maintaining strong family values.

African traditional families and households are mostly rural, patriarchal and hierarchical, polygamous and open to kinship networks, and they attach substantial importance to lineage continuation. Polygamy constitutes a prime feature of African Traditional families. Africa is considered to have the highest rate of polygamy prevalence in the world. Traditionally, the African family practices polygamy because of the idea that the larger the family or clan, the more workers there are to work on the family farms. Hence, more wealth can be possessed by the family.

The practice of polygamy was centred on the notion of precluding the situation of husband shortage.

These features in all play a pivotal role in influencing the number of children women give birth to in African families. The social organization of most African traditional families is embedded in a patriarchal and hierarchical system that precludes the possibility of women, who generally have lower status than men in the society to make deliberate choice on the number of children they want to have. The locus of most traditional Africa countries is centred on the perception of large families as an asset especially in rural subsistence agricultural societies.

In African traditional families (taking Nigeria as an example) having many children is often seen as an achievement. Most families are polygamous and the women often compete to see who will give birth to the highest number of children so as to secure the love and affection of the husband. High fertility was perceived as a source of joy. High fertility is perceived as a means of prolonging the lineage with the replacement of older members with new ones. Children have always been regarded as a prolongation of self and therefore in some way a fulfilment of immortality. As one African put it, "A man who had no child would consider himself dead and finished. His life has come to an end: it has no continuation." Infant mortality and infertility are among the worse tragedies to befall an individual, the family and lineage.

There has not been any traditional fertility control in the light of limiting family size. Limiting family sizes to four or five children was viewed to increase the potential of extinction in the face of high mortality rates.

Decision making pertaining to childbearing to a considerable extent lies on family status, and concerns surrounding the preservation of the lineage and respect for ancestors. This mode of reasoning rests on the belief, that ancestors are reincarnated through the birth of additional children. The male child is often held in high esteem compared to the female child. The male child is seen as the heir to the property and the person to continue the legacy of the family. A

man can go on marrying and remarrying as many wives as possible all in the quest for a male child.

Women are usually relegated to the background as the man takes the central stage in the family and rules the house according to his set out rule which all must follow without question. At marriage women tend to have lower status than all the members of their husband's family. In traditional rural societies in most sub Saharan societies, women are voiceless and powerless.

In Traditional African families female children who have reached the age of maturity are given off to be married, and the marriage is usually an arranged marriage. The girls are in most times married off as virgins as virginity is held in high esteem in the African traditional families. Virginity brings respect and it is a sign of proper upbringing.

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. Yet, the fact is that many of these marriages "worked," and so the spouse or the spouses may, in the end, have remained grateful for pressure which had helped them to find a solid marriage and home. This was often done without regard for the opinion of the children. Despite this development, the selection of marriage partners is still done with the consent of family members.

In African Traditional culture, marriage is never just an affair between two individuals. It is also an alliance between two families. And in a certain sense whole villages or clans are involved. Africans at times will even say that it is not two individuals but two clans that marry. Even after marriage the parents would still want to offer advice and guidance since they believe they the adults have richer experiences than their children at any age.

In traditional societies in most sub Saharan African countries, there is a high value accorded to marriage; this has been marked by the practice of early marriages and childbearing which in most cases continues till the end of productivity age. Polygamous marriages dominated traditional societies.

Statistics has it that as of 1999, in Nigeria, 32.7 percent of married women were in polygamous marriages that were made up of two or more wives. This is characterized by the trend of early marriage; most of the women got married quite young, mostly to older men.

The tribe is bigger in terms of size compared to clan but the latter has greater influence on the family. Four factors that link their kinship were profession-derived names, tribal marks, distinguishing personal names and determining the child's legitimacy as a clan member.

Tribal marking is usually given to children at about the age of seven. Tribal marks were widely used during tribal wars to distinguish members of 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.

Using Nigeria as a case study, there are various practices for determining a child's legitimacy. In traditional Hausa customs, this is done 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.

A Nigerian ethnic group called the *Ijaws* will throw babies in the river to test their legitimacy. The infant will only be considered as legitimate if he or she floats.

In some cultures, 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 mothers and the boys to become husbands and fathers.

The Hausa people are patrilineal. Hence, their household family consists of relatives 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, and their children.

Dowry is not practiced in some traditional African society. In such societies the African bridegroom works for the bride's father as a form of 'dowry' to wed his daughter instead of giving money or property.

African culture Story telling (folk tales) which used to be part and parcel of us is no more seen in our daily lives. During storytelling, we will have the older ones telling the younger ones stories which depicted attributes such as giving, caring for one another, dangers of greed and selfishness, and so on. These elderly people serve as parents in that their word of advice during the story time helps to shape the younger ones. For instance in Ghana, the Spider (traditionally called Kwaku Ananse) is mostly used in our folktales as the main character. He is used to depict acts of greed, love, forgiveness, wisdom, pride etc. Let us bear in mind that these stories are not told by parents alone, but by any adult who is depicted as responsive and caring and can impact good morals to the children.

A folktale in traditional setting is an effective means of inculcating the virtues in children. It is obvious from the explanations given and their examples that these folktales carry with them values and morals which are being handed from one generation to the other. They teach good morals which help in parenting the child so that he/she will learn to be a responsible adult.

African traditional family and values see the mother as the keeper of the house. She is a housewife and while the father is the bread winner, she must cater for all the domestic aspects of the home, including taking care of the children. The mother serves as a support to the child especially, when the extended family is not around.

In traditional African society, men guarded the home and the cattle, or went to war. The women *worked*, caring for the house, the crops, and the children. In traditional African society, and families divorce has been extremely rare.

In African traditional families the indissolubility of marriage is conditioned to its fruitfulness. Practically speaking, the birth of a child marked the "consummation" of the marriage. Once a child has been born the marriage is indissoluble. As one African put it, "Children became a real external sign of this indissoluble unity." So, if an African woman did not give her husband children, she was considered to have failed him—and society—in the most serious way possible. And if he choose to consider his marriage null and send her back to her family, society, and the woman herself would agree.

There is the African conviction that sex and marriage are *sacred realities*. Traditional African sexual morality derived from the sense of the sacredness of the procreative function. Open discussion of sex was a taboo matter; hence to "play" with sex was held to merit a curse. Even husband and wife, within an African home, are reserved in their behaviour before their children. The public expression of any type of sexual familiarity is repugnant to the African sense.

Virginity was held in high esteem. If a girl came to marriage as a virgin, the bride wealth (dowry) that her suitor's family had paid would have to be increased. In some tribes, for instance, her mother might be given a cow as a tribute to her successful upbringing of the girl. In such a case, the fact of the virginity would be a matter of public knowledge, and would earn her special respect from her in-laws. As against this, a girl known to be loose could hope, at best, to be married to an old man, as helper of his first wife. To be married to an old man was a grave disgrace for her and her family, before the rest of the tribe.

Within marriage itself, it was an accepted norm that there must be periodic abstinence; for instance during weaning periods, or for specifically religious motives (e.g., during drought) as a sacrifice to obtain favours from the gods.

The desire for children has always been the main motive inspiring the African to marry. It would be inadequate to interpret this as placing the recreational or biological aspect of marriage above the aspect of personal fulfilment.

There is another way in which family involvement has had an important effect on personal freedom in African marriage. If a marital crisis arose - a serious situation or quarrel between the spouses that threatened the marriage with collapse - the families would intervene in an effort to save the marriage. The father or mother of the husband, and then perhaps the elders of the clan, would speak with him - and the wife's relatives similarly with her - and in the end there might be an interplant session. The stability of the African family has been in a large measure due to this type of social support.

One refers to the African tradition of "bride wealth" i.e., the payment of dowry (so many cows or goats) by the *man's* family to the family of the girl whose hand he was seeking. In a moment of matrimonial crisis such as we have been considering, the relatives of a disgruntled wife would undoubtedly exercise all the pressure possible to avoid her walking out on her husband for, if she were to do so, the bride wealth or dowry would have to be returned to the husband's family.

Within the community dimension of African marriage, which is the total integration of the parents of the spouses into the home, especially in their old age. African tradition in which divorce was almost unknown.

In a traditional situation the mother and the small children are seldom separated. The mother works on the land with her youngest child strapped to her back, and is helped in her work by those who are slightly older. The rural home is still *the* African home. The grandparents are in charge of it, cultivate it, and are often visited by their children and grandchildren. Traditional role in the education of the children just as the traditional prestige of the aged. For the African, it is basically uncivilized to neglect older people or to fail to help relatives who are in difficulties or not to welcome them into one's home.

Christianity brought some challenges to traditional African practices such as polygamy by equating it with adultery and sin. It also promotes monogamy as the only morally accepted

type of marriage. Monogamy, though present and practiced in traditional Africa, is not as widely spread as polygamy.

On the other hand, the wider family support system seems also very much alive. Those members of the family who are better off are expected to support the other members of the family. Many Africans virtually live with relatives, either seeking job or getting education. The spirit of 'haram bee' is another good example of mutual support that is rooted in the concept of wider family.

Families are expanded through marriages, for instance, and it is also not uncommon for a close friendship to mature into 'family', or a friend to be named, regarded and treated as family in acknowledgement of length of friendship and felt levels of closeness, trust and reliability. This is one way through which the family is linked to the broader community.

Nevertheless, multi-generational and extended families remain the most common family structure among the majority of the African people. Thus, families may live far apart or be dispersed 'across national borders and stretched kinship networks across vast geographic space'. Both mobility and migration are common in African families that function as a unit. It is common in Africa for families to straddle areas of origin and areas of work, moving fluidly between the two, and creating divided loyalties, and this has an impact on family.

MY NUCLEAR FAMILY

My nuclear family is made up of my father, mother, two sisters, me and my adopted sister. My father is the breadwinner of the family; he goes to work very early in the mornings and comes back in the evenings. My mother on the other hand has a small cooking gas distributing business which she does from home. She supplies gas to members of my estate and others. My mother is the one who teaches us most of the times and helps us with our assignments as my father is usually very tired when he comes back from work. Despite his coming home late, he still finds time to help us with our assignments after having a bath and his meal. My father pays the school fees, electricity bills and other necessary bills. My mother cooks the meals with help from my sisters and I and my adopted sister. She delegates house chores to us while she does the strenuous chores which we can't do. Every morning my dad wakes my siblings and me up for Morning Prayers which lasts for about an hour. After Morning Prayers, my siblings and I would do our various chores of cleaning and mopping the house and arranging the furniture, after which my siblings and I would have our baths and go to the kitchen to prepare the breakfast, we then serve our parents their breakfast, and take ours. After eating each person washes his or her own plates, then we the children go upstairs to have our leisure time while my parents watch television downstairs. We come downstairs by one pm to prepare lunch for ourselves and our parents. Around four in the evening my mum calls my siblings and I downstairs to prepare supper. We prepare the things for supper under the direction of my mother. When supper is ready we serve our parents, and eat ours, we wash our plates like done in the mornings. We then go back to our various means of leisure. Around nine in the evening my dad comes upstairs and calls my siblings and me downstairs for night prayers. The prayers last for about an hour, after which we all go outside where we do various means of exercise like running, push-ups, sit ups planks, skipping, stretches and so on. After which we all take our bath and go to bed.

We bake cake as a family during each member's birthday when the cake is done; we gather together sing a birthday song for the celebrant, pop wine and eat the cake. During Easter we go to church after which we cook food and go to visit people to wish them happy Easter. During Christmas we all bring out the Christmas tree, clean it, bring out the Christmas decorations and decorate the whole house with beautiful lights. We sing Christmas songs, go to church then cook Christmas rice during this period. From time to time we play football in the evenings as a family in our compound after which my mum tells us moonlight tales.

We also go on a treat to places like Whispering Palms, High Impact Planet, Eko hotel, Federal Palace hotel to mention but a few. Silver Birds is one of the places I had visited and cannot easily forget. There, I had the most fun, ate, watched movies, and played video game. We equally go to shopping malls like Shoprite and eateries like Dominos, Cold Stone, and Mr Biggs etc. During summer we travel in and out of the country for about a month. When we travelled to America we visited the Bronx Zoo at New York, where we saw different animals; the White House in Washington DC; and the Holocaust Museum in Houston. We equally went to London and visited the London Eye, the National Library, Buckingham Palace, and Trafalgar Square and so on. We took a trip to Ghana and visited the Kwame Nkrumah National Park. During Christmas we went to the village there I saw my maternal and paternal grandmothers and my cousins. We visited my mum's uncle's house where I saw a live poultry and we ate a lot.

MY FAMILY
TREE

