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**QUESTION**

* What is family?
* Discuss the functions of the family.
* Discuss the African Traditional family.
* Discuss your nuclear family.
* Draw your family tree.

THE FAMILY

The most common definition of family is that the family is an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by blood, marriage or adoption. It is the smallest and most basic social unit, which is also the most important primary group found in any 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. In fact, it is the most enduring group, which has tremendous influence on the life of an individual from birth till death.

However, as a sociology student, looking at it from different perspective, family is a single word with many different meanings. Different people have different ways of defining a family and what being part of a family means to them. Families differ in terms of economic, cultural, social and many other facets, but what everyone has in common is that the people who call others family are making it understood that those people whom they call family are important to them in some way.

The dictionary defines family in several ways. One definition is “a fundamental social group typically consisting of one or two parents and their children.” Although this definition is a good starting point, many modern families are excluded from this definition such as childless couples, single parents, etc. The 21st century showcases a variety of families, such as children raised by grandparents, aunties and uncles, single parents or even homosexual parents. Some couples even decided to have not children or are incapable of having children and decide to stay childless; are they not to be called families as well? The idea that parents and children make a family is a basic definition, but in other to truly understand what a family is, we must look at the various categories and criteria people use to identify family. From friends who share similar interests and have helped a person and been there for a person through good times and bad times, people who you get to decide with your whole being that they are your family beyond all doubt, to pets who add an element of responsibility to a family especially the children, couples who cannot have children and instead have pets that they take care of with their whole being and mourn just as well when they pass, different people have different meanings of family.

Rather than simply defining family by its dictionary meaning, each person should look at what family means to them. A person can have various families in their lifetime or all at once. Regardless of how a person chooses to define their family unit, whether it is in the traditional or unique sense, your definition of family should be what works for you. Whether made of blood relatives, friends, pets or a combination of all, your family should be the one to support you and help you thrive.

So when asked what a family is, I will say that as the saying goes, “Family is what you make it.”

FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY

* 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.
* Family helps in propagation of human species and perpetuation of human race.
* Family provides an individual with identity.
* Family is responsible for the production and upbringing of children.
* Family is an important agent of socialization. The basic rules and norms of social life are taught by a family to the child.
* Family is an important agent of cultural transmission. All aspects of culture are learnt within the family structure.
* Family is a great source of strength, emotional and psychological support to its members.
* Family provides an individual with a home and establishes enduring social relationships.
* Family is traditionally responsible for the education of the children.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY

Traditional African family patterns are slowly but progressively being altered as aresult of the process of modernization which is exhibited through tends like urbanization. Family patterns that were the norm in traditional rural African societies are gradually being altered and substituted by modern values. African families are increasingly faced with the challenge and pressure emanating from the competition prevailing between traditional and modern family values. Traditional African families bordered on respect. It was usually large as polygamy was accepted during those time and those who had enough wives, children and yam were regarded as rich in the community. In the traditional setting, the role of the family was clearly defined and so was the role of members of the family. The fathers were responsible for working on the farm, going to war and other things of the sort while the wives were responsible for taking care of the household, cooking and bringing up the children. There were laws that governed the community as well as the family and they were strictly followed in order not to attract penalties. Unlike the modern times, women generally did not have a say in the running and decisions made in the household, they were to be entirely submissive like puppets whose only function was to breed and care for the man. Traditional African families are better in some ways as respect was duly given and elders were treated as they should be. The traditional African family was usually very large as the men married more than one women and each woman typically had at least a child or more.

MY NUCLEAR FAMILY

With not much to say, my family is probably like any other household. My father’s name is Humphrey Imene and my mother’s name is Dora Imene. I had three other siblings; an elder sister and two younger brothers. Like most families, we have arguments sometimes but they are resolved. As is typical for most families today, both of my parents work but my mom does not forget her duty as a mother and a wife and my father assists in our upbringing and even does chores in the house sometimes. We, the children, perform our responsibly like cooking (because my sister and I are grown), washing the cars, sweeping the home and basic chores of such manner. All in all, my home, my family is one I love and would probably not exchange for anything in the world.

MY FAMILY TREE