NAME: STANLEY-UBANI JENEFA CHIDIEBERE

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WHAT IS FAMILY?

Family is defined as a specific group of people that may be made up of partners, children, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. Also, it can be defined as a group of people who share common ancestors.

In the context of human society, a family is a group of people related by birth of affinity (by marriage or other relationship). The purpose of families is to maintain the well being of its members and of society.

Members of the immediate family may include spouses, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. Members of the extended famliy may include aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces and siblings-in-law. Sometimes these are also considered members of the immediate family, dependin on an individual’s specific relationship with them and the legal definition of “immediate” varies

FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY

1. PROCREATION AND CARE OF CHILDREN: 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. Not only procreation but also the care of its members as the family provides food, shelter, affection, protection and security to all its members. It plays a role in the socialization of the child and also provides healthy atmosphere in which the personality of the child develops properly.
2. 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 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. A home provides emotional and psychological support to all its members. Man’s necessity of love and human response get fulfilled there.
3. SOCIALIZATION: it is another important essential of the family. Family plays an important role in the socialization process. It is one of the primary agents of socialization. Living in a family, a human baby learns 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 is living in the family. From family he learns what is right and wrong and what is good and bad.

THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY

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. However, no single type of family exists in Africa. Societies have defined family in different ways and many bear resemblance to the Western idea of the nuclear family. Furthermore, throughout the continent, traditional family patterns are cahnging. Colonialism, capitalism, the growth of cities, exposure to Western culture and increasing opportunities for women are some of the factors that are affecting the shape of family life.

Each of the many family systems in Africa can be defined in terms of two broad kinds of relationships. Relationships of descent are geneological that is, based on the connections between generations and this can be either patrineal, matrineal or both. Relationships of affinity are based on marriages. The interweaving of these relationships creates the family that an individual sees everyday, as well as the wider network of kinship that surrounds each person.

African marriage can be polygnous that is a man may have more than one wife. When polygyny occurs, the family unit is based on mothers. Each wife has her own house and property that are generally transferred to her own children. In some African societies, nuclear families are contained within larger social groups that may include kinfolk, neighbours, people of the same age or gender and others. The nuclear family does not always have its own property or decide what tasks its members will perform. Rather, relationships between husbands and wives and between parents and children often unfold within larger domestic units called households, which amy consist of joint or extended families.

MY NUCLEAR FAMILY

My nuclear family consists of my father, my mother and four children. We are the Stanley-Ubani’s and we are six altogether. We live as a family in Lagos,Nigeria. Our home is located in the deep parts of Ikeja. As a family our duties are shared. The children are made of three girls and a boy. Our parents are well to do and as a nuclear family, our source of socialization and ethics are drawn from our parents and the family as a whole.