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Mair (1972) defined a family as a domestic group in which parents and children live together, and its element form consists of a couple and their children. Duberman and Hartjen (1979) defined a family as a universal institution whose most important functions are to socialize and nurture the younger generations. Similarly, Smith and Preston (1982) defined family as a social group whose members are related either through common ancestry or marriage and are bound by moral and economic rights and duties. Family is the most basic institution in any society and it is the social context into which members of a society derive their primary identity.

Functions of a family

1. Procreation: The family through the regulation of sexual relationship function fulfills the biological need of reproduction and perpetuation of both the immediate family and the society as a whole. By performing this function of procreation family contributes to the continuity of family and ultimately human race. Hence perpetuation of human race or society is the most important function of family,
2. Provision of basic needs: it is the responsibility of the family to provide the basic needs such as food, shelter, affection, protection and security to all its members. Family provides a home. It is in a home that children are born and brought up. Even if children are born in the hospitals in modern times still they are taken care of and properly nourished in a home.
3. Socialization: it is another important essential function offamily.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. It is one and the first agent of socialization. Living in family human babies learns norms, values, morals and ideals of society. He learns culture and acquires character through the process of socialization.

African traditional family

The subject of “traditional family patterns in Africa” is so broad. The cultural and physical diversity added with the dramatic social changes of the last three decades on the continent makes the family pattern situation so variegated as to defy any sweeping generalizations. This difficulty in generalization bone of diversity was already apparent to many early scholars of the African traditional family like Mair (1) and Goode (2).

These traditional African family patterns describe the patrilineal and matrilineal families. The case studies presented will be those of the Buganda of Uganda and Bemba of Northern Zambia. Some of the major issues raised will include polygamy, tribe, clan, the extended family, bride price and the raising of children.

As the African society has not been static, changes in the traditional family patterns will be briefly alluded to. Lastly, this author will argue that the Eurocentric nature of the descriptions and characterization of the traditional African family patterns by earlier scholars has tended to distort and obscure many of the strengths of 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. 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.

However, no single type of family exists in Africa. Societies have defined family in many different ways, and many bear little resemblance to the Western idea of the nuclear family. Furthermore, throughout the continent, traditional family patterns are changing. [Colonialism](https://geography.name/colonialism/), [capitalism](https://geography.name/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.

MY NUCLEAR FAMILY

Sociologists and Anthropologists have identified various forms and kinds of families with regard to the cultural peculiarities as obtainable in various societies over time. However, according to Ingiabuna and Obaro (2009) families are categorized based on the number and generations of people involved in the family groups and the leadership or power/authority holders in the group:

I am from a nuclear family. Sociologists consider nuclear family as the most basic form of social organization. A nuclear family consist of a father, mother and dependent children living in a single dwelling.