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1 What is family

2 Discuss the functions of the Family

3 Discuss the African Traditiona family

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1. What is family?

**Family** is a socially recognized group (usually joined by blood, marriage, cohabitation, or adoption) that forms an emotional connection and serves as an economic unit of society. Sociologists identify different types of families based on how one enters into them. A **family of orientation** refers to the family into which a person is born. A **family of procreation** describes one that is formed through marriage. These distinctions have cultural significance related to issues of lineage.

1. Discuss the functions of family.

First, the family is the primary unit for *socializing children*. As previous chapters indicated, no society is possible without adequate socialization of its young. In most societies, the family is the major unit in which socialization happens. Parents, siblings, and, if the family is extended rather than nuclear, other relatives all help to socialize children from the time they are born.

*One of the most important functions of the family is the socialization of children. In most societies the family is the major unit through which socialization occurs.*

Second, the family is ideally a major source of *practical and emotional support* for its members. It provides them food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials, and it also provides them love, comfort, help in times of emotional distress, and other types of intangible support that we all need.

Third, the family helps *regulate sexual activity and sexual reproduction*. 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 *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.

Fourth, the family provides its members with a *social identity*. Children are born into their parents’ social class, race and ethnicity, religion, and so forth. As we have seen in earlier chapters, 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.

Beyond discussing the family’s functions, the functional perspective on the family maintains that sudden or far-reaching changes in conventional family structure and processes threaten the family’s stability and thus that of society. For example, most sociology and marriage-and-family textbooks during the 1950s maintained that the male breadwinner–female homemaker nuclear family was the best arrangement for children, as it provided for a family’s economic and child-rearing needs. Any shift in this arrangement, they warned, would harm children and by extension the family as a social institution and even society itself. Textbooks no longer contain this warning, but many conservative observers continue to worry about the impact on children of working mothers and one-parent families.

1. Discuss 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.

**FAMILY STRUCTURE**

Each of the many family systems in Africa can be defined in terms of two broad kinds of relationships. Relationships of descent are genealogical—that is, based on the connections between generations. Relationships of affinity are marital—based on marriage. The interweaving of these relationships creates the family that an individual sees every day, as well as the wider network of [kinship](https://geography.name/kinship/) that surrounds each person.

**Relationships of Descent**

Everyone is part of some sort of descent system, either patrilineal, matrilineal, or both. In patrilineal systems, property and political power pass through the male side of the family; the female side determines descent in matrilineal systems. In these relationships, senior generations have more power or status than junior ones. Younger people are expected to show respect toward older family members. In the past, this power could take the form of ownership. Among some peoples in the Congo Basin, for example, a man could sell his sister's child into [slavery](https://geography.name/slavery/).

**Relationships of Affinity**

[MARRIAGE SYSTEMS](https://geography.name/marriage-systems/) in Africa are highly diverse. In sub-Saharan Africa, some pairings of men and women are temporary, others permanent. Depending on the culture, a couple may live in the husband's home or the wife's home. Among some groups, such as the [ASANTE](https://geography.name/asante/), each spouse continues to live in the home in which he or she was born. Children may stay with their parents until they marry, or they may spend part of their adolescence in the home of another relative. In some cultures, young people leave their families at puberty to live in villages of adolescents.

African marriage can be polygynous—that is, a man may have more than one wife. In practice, though, only the senior or wealthy individuals in a society have been able to have multiple wives. 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. The mother and child, rather than the husband and wife, thus form the basis of family and kinship in such communities. Christian marriages in Africa, as elsewhere, are generally monogamous, with a man having only one wife.

In some African societies, nuclear families are contained within larger social groups that may include kinfolk, neighbors, 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 may consist of joint or extended families.

**Households**

In a household community, several generations and several nuclear families live and work together. In joint family households, all members live together in a single large homestead or compound. In extended family households, the nuclear families within the household each live in separate compounds. A joint or extended family is under the authority of its senior member, typically a grandfather or great grand-father. Such families may be patrilineal or matrilineal.

Most members of a joint or extended family household are born and raised within it or marry into it. Some, however, such as adopted children or adults, may be unrelated to the others. In sub-Saharan Africa, distant relatives are sometimes invited to settle with a household, but they usually have lower status than their hosts. A household might also include servants or, in the past, slaves.

The household functions as an economic as well as a family unit. It can be described in material terms—for example, by acres of land, number of buildings, or certain tasks performed by certain members. A family compound among the Tswana of [Botswana](https://geography.name/republic-of-botswana/) might include the huts and grain sheds of a man and his wife (or wives) and children, an unmarried brother, and an elderly mother. In rural areas, household members work together to produce food and other goods; in a town or city, the members might work to pay rent and buy groceries. In either case, the household needs to maintain itself, which means that productive new members must be added to replace the elderly, the disabled, and those who die. In this way, households are more flexible and inclusive than other family groups.

4 Discuss your Nuclear family

**Nuclear family**, also called **elementary family**, in [sociology](https://www.britannica.com/topic/sociology) and [anthropology](https://www.britannica.com/science/anthropology), a group of people who are united by ties of partnership and parenthood and consisting of a pair of adults and their socially recognized children. Typically, but not always, the adults in a nuclear family are married. Although such couples are most often a man and a woman, the definition of the nuclear family has expanded with the advent of [same-sex marriage](https://www.britannica.com/topic/same-sex-marriage). Children in a nuclear family may be the couple’s biological or [adopted](https://www.britannica.com/topic/adoption-kinship) offspring.Bottom of Form

Our family consists of five members- my father and mother, my brothers and myself. My dad is self employed and he deals with foreign exchange. My mum is an accountant/business woman. My brothers attend Chrisland high school in V.G.C, Lekki, Lagos while I attend Afe Babalola Unuversity Ado Ekiti, Ekiti state.

My parents in our nuclear household have a higher consistency with raising us, meaning teaching discipline and appropriate behavior. We receive consistent messages about behavioral expectations. Nuclear families have more daily routines, like eating dinner together, and spending more time together, adding to consistency which we do.

My nuclear family plays an important role in the development of personality of my brothers and I. we the children are more close to our parents and can have more free and frank discussion about our problems with our parents which helps for the better development of our personality.

My mother who is the lady of the house gets enough time to look after us. She also gets time to plan and manage her house independently, according to her own idea. There is no interference of elders. Her husband can also devote more attention to her in nuclear family in discussing their plans for the future, our education, etc.

In a nuclear family - which is an immediate family - there can be no misunderstanding of any sort, and we enjoy a harmonious atmosphere.

5 Draw your family tree