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QUESTION:

1 What is family?

2 Discuss the functions of the Family

3 Discuss the African Traditional family

4 Discuss your Nuclear family

5 Draw your family tree.

ANSWER

1. According to the Oxford dictionary, Family can be described as a group consisting of two parents and their children living together as a unit. It can also be described as all the descendants of a common ancestor. Altogether, a family is a group of people, either related by blood, marriage or adoption living together as a singular unit.

 **2. 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, stable satisfaction of sex needs, production and rearing of children and 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 so successfully as family can. However, family performs the following essential functions:

**(1) Stable satisfaction of Sexual needs:**

This is the most important 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.

 **(2) Procreation and Rearing of Children:**

It is another important sectional function of family. Necessary arrangement of stable satisfaction of sexual urge resulted in procreation. 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. Hence perpetuation of human race or society is the most important function of family. Not only the production of children but also child rearing is 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 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. 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. The members need a home to live happily with comfort, peace and protection. A home provides emotional and psychological support 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.

**(4) Socialization:** It is another important essential function of family. 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 of the primary agents of socialization. Living in a family 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 his living in family. From family he learns what is right and wrong and what is good or bad. Through socialization he became a social man and acquires good character.

**(B) Non-essential or secondary functions of family:**

Famous Sociologist MacIver 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. In ancient time family was both a production and consumption unit. It used to fulfill almost all the economic needs of its members such as food, clothing, housing etc. In the then days, family was self- sufficient. But now a day almost all the economic functions of family is performed by other agencies and family only remain as a consumption unit. It does not produce anything. All the members of family now working outside the home. But in spite of all family still performing some economic functions of purchasing, protecting and maintaining property. It also equally distributes property among its members.

**(2) Educational functions:**

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 molds 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 center of all religious activities. All the family members offer their prayers together and observe different religious rites, rituals and practices jointly. 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 looks after the health and vigor of its members. 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. Of course modern family delegates some of its health related functions to hospital. The child is born today in a hospital or in a clinic and taken care of by nurses.

**(5) Recreational function:**

Family-performs several recreational functions for its members by entertaining them in various ways. In ancient period family was the only center 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 relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is another 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 center of culture.

**(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 behavior of children and thereby they became a good citizen.

### 3. The extended family system

According to [Degbey (2012](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities#B7)), the family is usually the major source of the basic necessities of life and health; the love and tenderness, food, water, clothing, shelter and sanitation which are made possible by the socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions. Thus in discussing major issues with regards to parenting, it would be impossible to overlook the functions of the family ([Degbey, 2012](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities%22%20%5Cl%20%22B7)).

It is basically known that there are two types of the family. These are the nuclear and the extended family. The nuclear family is made up of only both parents and the children. The extended family is also made up of the nuclear family; in addition are the uncles, aunties, grandparents and cousins. It would be emphasized that in the African community, the extended family is traditionally practiced ([Degbey, 2012](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities%22%20%5Cl%20%22B7)). 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 ([Gyekye, 1996](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities%22%20%5Cl%20%22B9)).

According to [Degbey (2012](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities#B7)), the extended family system includes several generations plus cousins, uncles, and aunts living in a compound or close to one another. Similarly, [Adinlofu (2009](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities#B2)) stated that the extended family is composed of a number of joint, compound, elementary and nuclear families occupying separate but nearby homesteads. [Degbey (2012](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities#B7)) and [Adinlofu (2009](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities#B2)) further noted that 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. [Adinlofu (2009](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities#B2)) made mentioned that the extended family ensures procreation of children and provides for the early care and training of children. [Degbey (2012](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities#B7)) also added that 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”. [Degbey (2012](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities#B7)) emphasized that 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. Most of us went to school on the strength of this system; otherwise we would have been stark illiterate and walking about aimlessly ([Adinlofu, 2009](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities%22%20%5Cl%20%22B2)). According to the author, some of us must have read and heard comments like: “my parents were so poor that it was my mum’s brother or father’s sister, that helped towards my education” or, that “it was my father’s brother that trained me to read medicine, law or pharmacy and it was my in-law that gave me money to go into business”. It is intriguing to know that this system is where a brother trained a younger brother or sister and they in turn help to train younger ones or older siblings’ children. 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 cushion or parent the child.

Another uniqueness of this extended family system is that children or the youth stay at home i.e. live with the family until they are ready for marriage. Even if the young adult is staying with the nuclear family, the practice is that you marry before you leave the house. According to [Gyekye (1996](https://www.intechopen.com/books/parenting-in-south-american-and-african-contexts/parenting-and-culture-evidence-from-some-african-communities#B9)), growing adults are generally expected to live at home-in the family house and they may leave only after they 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.

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.

###  Relevance

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 learns to be respectful, responsible and supportive member of the extended family and society.

4. My Nuclear Family.

I come from a family of 3. The name of my family is The Daniels’ family. My father hails from Bamgbose, Lagos Island while my mother hails from Ijebu-ode, Ogun state. I am the only child of my parents. We are a family of Christians. My father is a civil servant while my mother is a Caterer. They both work really hard to provide for the family. They’ve taught me the importance of family and although we are a small family, we achieve a lot when together.

5. **My Family Tree.**

Mother

Father

Daughter