

What is a family?

According to the Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary, '*family*', is a group consisting of one or two parents and their children. It is also a group consisting of one or two parents, their children and close relations.

Family is also said to be the basic unit of every society and the first unit of any form of socialisation for a child.

There are basically two types of family; *the nuclear* and *the extended* family.

### ***The Nuclear Family***

The nuclear family consists of the parents and children.

### ***The Extended Family***

The extended family consists of parents, children and close relatives. These close relatives may include; aunts and uncles, grandparents and great-grandparents, cousins and second-cousins, nieces and nephews, and in-laws.

Some functions of family are;

1. Provision of primary education
  - Primary education such as how to speak and ethics are first taught at home.
2. Maintenance and physical care.
  - The family is responsible for caring for the healthcare of each other, that is; making sure that family members are well taken care of when they are down with illnesses. Helping them during these times, taking them to the hospital and administering drugs.
3. Social control of children
  - Primary socialization begins with the family. The family responsible for imbuing good and morally acceptable character, how to relate with other people in the society, knowing the difference between what is right and what is wrong. And also supporting social clubs, for example; a football club.
4. Imbibing cultural values.
  - The family is responsible for teaching each child culture values and beliefs. It is responsible for passing down cultural norms as well. In order for culture values to remain, it is important for families to teach themselves about their culture. For example, how to greet in a culture and how to speak one's native dialect.
5. Political socialization
  - Political beliefs are supported from the family. Political beliefs are first introduced to the child by family members. What political party to support, what political ideology to prefer and the likes. For example, a child may support the same political party as her mother.

### ***The African Traditional family***

While looking at the 'The African Traditional family', I shall be considering how the people of Africa have decided to structure their families over the years.

In South Africa and some other parts of the continent, when polygyny occurs, the family unit is based on mothers. Each wife has her own house and property that generally transferred to her own children.

Broadly speaking, most African societies however, are patriarchal in nature, having the male spouse rule over the family. Traditionally, they live in compounds with their extended families and the women are expected to do house work, while the men go to the farm or to hunt. The male is considered '*the man of the house*'; being the head of the house and the one in charge.

