

## **Social Work with Families**

### **What is Family?**

A family is formed by a married man and woman living with their unmarried children. According to sociologists, family is the most important institution of a society because survival of human race is related with it. It is the family that brings up an individual by taking care and by training him. An individual passes most of his time in a family, affecting his personality most of all. Family is the center of a society and is a source of culture. However, family structure is under culture and is in harmony with its demands. The definition of family by different sociologists is given below.

### **Definitions of Family**

1. "A family is parents and their children."
2. "A family is a set of relatives."
3. "A family is all the descendants of a common ancestor."
4. "A family is small or large group of close relatives."

The definitions are limited to number of individuals and give nothing about the functions of a family. There are different societies and different cultures. So, culture is the measure to decide the structure and function of a family.

#### **1. Broom and Selznick :**

"The family is a kin-based cooperative unit."

#### **2. Murdock :**

"The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction."

#### **3. Richard T. Schaefer :**

"A set of persons related by blood, marriage or adoption who shares the responsibilities for reproduction and caring for members of society."

## **Types of Family**

The definition of family befitting every culture explain its structure. For this purpose, types of family are necessary to be explained.

### **1. Family pattern (according to membership) :**

#### **i. The Nuclear Family :**

This family consists of husband, wife and children. This is the characteristic of modern societies, however, urban societies consist of nuclear families because of its resembling

structure and harmony with the urban societies. In Western societies, nuclear family is popular whereas in Pakistan, urban societies, there are nuclear families.

#### **Characteristics of Nuclear Family :**

1. It consists of husband, wife and children with no external interference and thus, having stability.
2. Social interaction is intense and deep, closeness and sacredness is more and individual gets more attention and have a deep impression on the personalities.
3. There is no cultural rigidity but there is a tendency to change, to innovate and to accept the changes easily that take place in society.
4. The relationship of husband and wife is based upon mutual regard and harmony by giving weight to each other's opinion and also giving the right of opinion to the children.
5. It is a unit and presents the best example of economic cooperation with intense unit and dependence on each other.

#### **ii. Extended Family :**

A family consisting of parent's children and near relations like grandfather or uncle etc. living in a same house. This was current in traditional families. In Pakistan, village has extended family system and is in harmony with demands of agrarian economy. In India Pakistan, extended family generally consists of parents, children, grandsons, aunts and uncles etc. Such a family is a sign of unity and love and elders are thought a blessing of God.

#### **Characteristics of Extended Family:**

1. Its number is more, consisting of three generations i.e., parents, children, grand-children.
2. The eldest of the family, man or woman, is head of the family who decides family matters and all obey his or her orders.
3. All economic affairs are common and are spent with the approval of the head of the family just as, in India Pakistan, agricultural activities are done collectively and income is used commonly.
4. This is a custodian of social values, cultural traditions and customs. In matters of death, marriage occasions and cultural tradition are abided by this type of family and dislikes any change.
5. Education of children in such a family, is a collective responsibility, lacking individual attention and thus producing personal problems. The abilities and personality of an individual do not get chance of promotion and personal complications become serious.

#### **2. Family Pattern (According to Decent) :**

It has three basic types :

**i. Patrilineal Decent 'Family :**

It is that type of family where decent comes from father and grandfather. With reference to property, only father side relatives have importance along with emotional attachment. In the world, in most of the societies this family pattern is current.

**ii. Matrilineal Decent Family:**

It is that type of family where decent is connected with mother and grandmother. Here heredity and emotional attachment is with mother's relatives. This type is in the North India within certain tribes. In addition, in the Western societies due to certain social problems, decent is becoming attributed to mother and legally an individual is recognized by reference to his/her mother.

**iii. Bilateral Decent Family:**

In this family pattern, both father and mother decent are considered. The relatives of both father and mother have importance. This type was found in traditional societies. In Arabian countries, this type has been very popular and even today has importance.

**3. Family Pattern (According to Residence) :**

In every society, there are certain norms for newly married people's residence. These divide a family into three types :

**i. Patrilocal Family :**

If the new married people reside with father of the bridegroom, it is called patrilocal family. Its reason being the need of an emotional and economical support of kinsfolk for the couple. In Pakistan and India, this type is current.

**ii. Matrilocal Family :**

If the newly married couple lives with the parents of the bride, it is called matrilocal family. This type is less current in the Society but under specific circumstances, it comes into existence. In some tribes of India, this is popular.

**iii. Neolocal Family :**

If a newly married couple resides separately from parents, is called neolocal family and this is found in modern industrial societies. However, in Arabia, this type has been current for centuries.

**4. Family Pattern (According to Authority) :**

Family is an important unit of society. Its decisions are important. Who is to decide and who has the power to decide culturally? From this point of view, the family pattern has three forms:

### **i. Patriarchy Family :**

Such a family, where power to decide lies with father or man. Such a family is called patriarchy family. The headship of the family is with the elder man or the father. Women are not given importance and no consent or suggestion is taken from them. In Pakistan and India, such system is present.

### **ii. Matriarchy Family :**

If a woman or elder woman of a family decides matters, it is called matriarchy family. Men have no concern with family matters and an elder woman decides matters and has all economic matters and sources with her.

Anthropologists think, that this was the custom in the beginning of the societies but today there is no trustworthy example of this. However, there are certain families where in the absence of men, women decide matters under their headship and their decisions are accepted.

### **iii. Egalitarian Family :**

In this type of family, neither man nor woman is authority to decide but both wife and husband give equal importance to each other's suggestion. Decisions are made with mutual consent. Children are also included but it does not mean that every decision is made in a democratic manner but domestic matters pertain to mother and business matters and education pertain to father. In the selection of mate, children are consulted. This type is current in modern industrial society and is thought a symbol of civilization.

## **Functions of Family**

Family is the most universal and fundamental social institution which performs a variety of functions in human society. Different sociologists have viewed or classified the functions of family into different types.

### **1. Stable Satisfaction of Sexual Needs:**

A family provides both 'control and expression' of sexual drives and in doing so performs important functions for its individual members, for the family as an institution and for society as a whole.

### **2. Procreation and Rearing 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. 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 it's members. It is only in a home that children are born and brought up. In a home all the members of family live together and a child is brought up under the strict vigilance of all it's members.

All the members need a home to live happily with comfort, peace and protection. A home provides emotional and psychological support to all it's members. Man's necessity of love and human response got fulfilled here. Family provides recreation to it's 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.

### **5. 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 it's members such as food, clothing, housing etc. In the then days family was self- sufficient. But now a days almost all the economic functions of family is performed by other agencies and family only remain as a consumption unit. It do 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 distribute property among it's members.

#### **6. Educational functions:**

Family performs many educational functions for it's members. As an primary educational institution family used to teach letters, knowledge, skill and trade secret to all it's members. It looks after the primary education of it's members and moulds 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.

#### **7. Religious functions:**

Family is the centre 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.

#### **8. Health related functions:**

Family as a primary social group performs several health related functions for its members. It look after the health 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.

#### **9. Recreational function:**

Family-performs several recreational functions for it's members by entertaining them in various ways. In ancient period family was the only centre 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 grand children 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.

#### **10. 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 centre of culture.

#### **11. 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 behaviour of children and thereby they become a good citizen.

### **Importance of family**

**Parents:** A family starts with parents for everyone. Loving Parents are living forms of god as they can give unconditional love and support to their children. They steer the child's life to a great extent in a most beneficial way. Till, a certain age, a child does not know how to eat, bath, talk, behave etc. Parents are the first teachers and guide him on how to do the routine life activities. They also guide him regarding friends and tell him about harmful things and how to avoid dangers.

**Importance of family for Health:** One with a family will have good health, i.e., both mental health and physical one too. The people of the family take care of each other out of love and affection. If someone is disturbed, others will console them and help overcome the problem. If it is a physical ailment, then they will aid in getting proper medical care and also be with you till you recover. If you remember, your parents or another family member would have asked you to have food when its time. They would have awakened you from sleep also and even asked you to sleep at right time instead of late nights. So they tell you many things needed for proper health due to their own experiences.

**Responsibility:** A person with a family is more responsible in society. He takes good care of his family and also the society around. He is conscious of people's perception around about him and his character. So he tries to mend his ways so that society and also his family members' appreciate him and look at him with respect.

**Mental Stability:** A person with a family is more stable in life. He is confined to a place most of his life as per the needs of his family. So he can give a good performance in his job

or business. Moreover, as we already saw before, he is in good health and fit to perform his duties well. He will have fixed goals in life with regards to himself and his family. So he keeps working towards those goals with commitment. In doing so, he will be stable as it will make him reach his and his family's goals.

**Financial security:** By financial security, I don't mean one will be rich or live an extravagant life. But due to family one can have financial support and stability. In case of need, you have people who will help you. If one is from a poor family still possible, help can be available. Also, you will have people among the family who will guide you into education and bright career to ensure you are financially well off. Children without parents in most cases suffer from poverty.

**Support in childhood and old age:** One needs proper care and support in childhood and old age. In childhood, children parental relationship plays a role in the upbringing of the child. Due to parents most of the children avail of proper food, clothing, guidance and also health care. But those who do not have parents suffer a lot. They tend to get into the bad company of friends and even engage their life in illegal ways.

In old age, after retirement one is not able to handle himself well due to physical instability. One may need good care to take medicines in time and also sufficient food and rest. Presence of family helps derive these benefits. Even if not wife, one can have their children to take care of him. So besides pension plans, one should develop a good family for a comfortable life in old age. Even having grandchildren is one of the time passers and helps enjoy life with fun.

Also if both the wife and husband are out on work, grandparents can take of kids at home instead of babysitters.

**Happiness:** Being a part of a family is one of the factors for happiness. Many argue that people might have a difference of opinions and clashes emotionally due to the family. But still, being in a marriage or having a good family provides happiness. It is in the hands of us to change our family members for a better life. Family life is one of the means to derive happiness filled with honesty and trust.

**Guidance:** Everyone needs a guide to steer him in the right direction in life. A family is one where one can get this guidance with complete trust and love. Members of the family can guide without any expectations or benefits in return. Family guides in career, marriage, health, relationship and other aspects of life. Hence, it can be noticed, those with proper family support from elders would have fewer chances of breakups in marriage.



**Strength:** Having a loving family gives strength and courage in life. That is the reason why many people from minority community give rise to many kids. They are of the view that having a big family gives an edge in social dealings. Since many countries are democratic, even we can notice that politicians try to value big families for the sake of gaining votes from that family. Also in social life, it can notice people giving more weight to those people coming from big families. The feel of having relationship helps one communicate better and move along well with the society.

**Education:** Family especially parents educate their children. In fact, the process of learning starts with the parents itself. Mother is considered the first teacher for every child. By experience, they know the importance of education, so they encourage and sometimes force their children to go to school at such a young age.

Those kids without parents tend to be illiterate as they have none to guide them in that direction. But those kids with a family always are pursued to join the school and attend them on regular basis. Many parents treat educating their kids an important duty. So education is initiated and provided by the family.

**Spiritual path:** Many of us get into the spiritual path due to the family. It is the family who tells us to worship the almighty and go to mosques, temples or other places of worship. So the thought of God and the importance of spirituality starts with family.

**Social security:** Presence of families enhances social security. A person during his childhood does not know what to and how to do. Presence of family like parents, grandparents guides him in the right path. Since, he has avoided associating himself with the wrong company like drug addicts, goons, etc. he follows a humble path. Thereby he avoids problems to himself and also the people around. Thus, society can be secured.

**Human well being:** Human, in general, is a social animal. He always likes to live in a fellow company. Presence of a family gives him the company for life. This helps to grow well during childhood due to parents. Live a dedicated life after marriage due to love for spouse. He will also get proper support during old age after retirement until death. So, the family contributes to the overall well being of humans.

**Growth and development:** A person with a family tends to focus on his career, business and other activities very well. Because most of families provide opportunities for growth and development to its members.

**To enhance communication:** Not everyone has similar levels of communication. This communication is essential for ease of life and doing things. Presence of a family greatly helps improve communication.

Comparatively, if you see someone who is alone without a family. You will notice, he would have some sort of communication issues. Of course this does not apply to all. Like those who have many friends and better office relationships etc. may not have these problems. But still families play a large role in enhancement of communication.

**Better health:** Health is one of the key areas which indicate the importance of family. A family takes care of health of its members since birth. Even when we are not matured to know if we are healthy or not, our health is taken care of. Without families, it would be tough to grow up well and lead a healthy long life.

**Organized life:** Organized life is essential for a peaceful flow of life. This organized life comes with a family. Family members ask you to go to school, take up college education and right career etc. Thus life goes on in an organized pattern. This is not only beneficial to the individual but also to the whole society.

**Physiological support:** This is the biggest asset of having a family during adulthood and old age. When you have problems due to office politics, strained relations with other family comes to your rescue. They would like to advise how to deal with and if should be worried about it at all etc. Thus you could relax without further agony at home. Even, if you fail an exam or lose a career, the members of family help you manage the mental pressure.

**Retain memories:** Memories are useful to avoid making the same mistakes again. And memories are always carried by families. It is not the books or memory drives but the people living in a family. The mistakes of the past like a few decades or centuries ago would be remembered in families. Such mistakes are avoided in the future.

**Live in a responsible manner:** A person with a family lives responsibly. This is because of attachment for them; he never tries to bring the problem to home. He lives as a better citizen, use his voting rights properly as a part of democracy, etc. Once imagine why a person would need a job, or business without a family. Doing a job or business is a way you contribute to your nation. So, having a family makes you be a better citizen.

**Sustenance of humanity:** Humanity means family values, ethics of life, sympathy, tolerance, etc. Being a human is possible only with a family. Since, you have better health, mental support and a feeling of betterment; you are a little stressed. So, you can think of living by values and be sympathetic to those in trouble. You tend to be kind to others around including animals and plants. Without family, you would be stressed and have no patience to show kindness to others. Thus, families help in the maintenance of human values and beliefs.