

MATRILINEAL FAMILY

This is a family type headed by a wife or woman. In other words, it is a family where a woman takes care of the family affairs.

CHARACTERISTICS OR FEATURES OF A MATRILINEAL FAMILY

1. All the family property belongs to the woman or the wife and therefore she is the one to decide on how they should be used.
2. Authority in the family is shared between the wife and the husband before making decisions.
3. The woman or the wife is given more respect than the man or husband. This is because of the woman's role of providing for the family members.
4. Both the boys and the girls have the same rights when it comes to inheriting the family property like land and houses.
5. The family is always monogamous. The man can only stick to the wife and he has no right of bringing in another wife.
6. It is possible that the wife can discipline the husband. This can be through denying him food or denying him a bed.
7. It is the wife responsible for the provision of the family needs including food and accommodation among others.
8. There can be only a wife and a husband in the family as the woman cannot accept a co-wife.
9. The woman tends to marry a young man in order for her to have full control of him.
10. A woman tends to stay with a number of relatives from her side. This is always intended to give her protection.

PATRILINEAL FAMILY

This is a family where a man or husband is the one heading the household.

CHARACTERISTICS OR FEATURES OF PATRILINEAL FAMILY

1. All the family property belongs to the man or husband and therefore he is the one to decide on how they should be used.
2. The husband is the final authority in the family. His decisions and the words are final and never questionable.
3. It is mostly the sons who have the right to inherit the family property especially land and houses.

4. It is possible for man to marry more than one wife as the woman has no say over the number of wives he should marry.
5. The man or husband is more respected than the woman or wife. The family members tend to listen to the man more than the woman.
6. The husband is the one officially responsible for providing the family needs like food and accommodation.
7. The husband has the right to discipline the wife in a way he feels like. This can be by rebuking her.
8. The relatives of both the husband and the wife can live together in the family.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF FAMILY LIFE IN AFRICA TODAY

Many people prefer to have nuclear families. This is due to the bad economic situations like poverty and unemployment which cannot support extended family.

The parents prefer to have a few children whom they can cater for fully in terms of basic needs like food, accommodation and education.

Some people live single lives within a family. Different reasons can explain this including religious influence like being a priest or a Nun or health problems.

There is individualism in the family. The family members tend to live in isolation in respect to sources of entertainment and social ways of life.

The education of the children in a family is a responsibility of mostly the family members only. It is the family members to impart values like respect and obedience. The community is excluded from having a say in the upbringing of the children.

Men prefer to marry only a wife to form a family. Factors like poverty, women emancipation and Christian teaching can explain these new developments.

The family tends to employ others commonly referred to as house maids to do most of the domestic work like cooking, cleaning the house and washing the cloth. This is brought about by the working patterns where parents tend to be a way in most of the time.

There is an increasing level of family instability. This is being caused by poverty, marital unfaithfulness and religious differences among others.

Intermarriages are common in African families today. The members have the freedom to marry from any tribe or race.

There is a wide generation gap. The parents and the children tend to lead different ways of life. Therefore, there is little understanding of the ways each group leads their lives.

Single parenthood is common in modern families. The family can have only one parent who may be a mother or father. A number of factors including death, domestic violence and divorce are responsible for this new trend.

All children in the family have equal rights especially to education, protection and the family property including land and houses.

The equality of all members in the family is emphasized and practiced. This is brought about by the Christian teaching of everybody being created in God's image and the woman emancipation.

There is also a changing pattern in family roles such as providing the family needs cooking food and cleaning the house. These roles are being shared by everyone in the family.

GENERATION GAP

A generation refers to all people within the same age brackets. Therefore, the phrase "generation gap" refers to the differences between various age brackets especially between the young and the old.

The members in the same age brackets tend to understand each other better and share a lot of information.

The old and the young tend to put their ages into consideration in their social and economic ways of life.

CAUSES OF GENERATION GAP IN THE FAMILY

The following are the causes of generation gap in modern African families.

1. The working patterns keep the parents away from home most of the time. This means that the children are left to grow on their own and mostly in the hands of house maids,
2. Some parents are conservatives (do not want change). They insist on doing things as they were during their old days. However, life keeps changing and therefore, their ways of life may prove to be irrelevant to the young.
3. The emphasis of children's rights is increasingly making it difficult for the parents to have full control over the affairs of their own children. This has tended to cause misunderstanding between the parent and the children.
4. Some parents are irresponsible to the point that they fail to provide for the needs of their children such as education and cloth among other. Because of this, their children grow to hate them.

5. Some parents ignore the views of their children. In such a case, the children feel neglected and develop an attitude of being less considered when it comes to making decisions.
6. The education system tends to cause generation gap. Among others, it keeps the children away from home most of the times and above all makes the children develop the “I know more attitude” and as a result, despise their parents.
7. Differences in the level of income are also causing generation gap. The adult who are always having much income compared to the young tend to lead different social and economic lives. This may create an impression on the children that their parents are not concerned about their welfare.
8. The permissiveness of our society today is responsible for generation gap. Because of the assumed freedom, some children think that they should do whatever they want regardless of their parents’ views. However, the parents feel that they need to guide their children. This tends to bring them conflict.
9. The free media today has ended up causing generation gap. Some of the programs on television stations and in the newspapers, tend to draw a line between the parents and children. The waves of soaps common today in the television stations like “Don’t mess with an angel”, “Second chance” and “The two of us” etc. from the western world have tended to cause friction between the parents and the children.
10. The influence of the western culture is also responsible for the generation gap. Some parents leave their children to live independently at an early stage.
11. Peer influence is responsible for the generation gap. The children tend to listen more to their agemates than their parents.
12. Loss of African cultural values cause generation gap. Unlike in traditional Africa, some parents ignore their children. Besides, some children are indisciplin to the disappointment of their parents.

PROBLEMS IN MODERN African FAMILIES

(CAUSES OF FAMILY INSTABILITY OR RESONS FOR FAMILY BREAKAGES)

The following are the problems in modern families. It is these very problems which are responsible for family instability and breakdown.

1. There is poverty within the families today. Many families are failing to provide basic needs adequately including food, accommodation and clothing. This has always resulted into poor standards of living.

2. Domestic violence is common in some families. The family members tend to beat or fight each other. This has always had disastrous ending bodily injuries and death among others.
3. There are cases of indiscipline among the children. The problem is made grave as the parents put blame on each other.
4. Some families have the problem of bastard children. This has always caused conflicts in between the parents especially as they tend to disagree on how to treat the bastard child or children.
5. There is also the problem of barrenness or infertility. The failure of one of the parents to produce tends to push the partner to misbehaving on contrary to their marital vows.
6. Some families are affected by alcoholism. The over drinking has always caused fighting and above all making it difficult for the family to cater for the basic needs.
7. There also cases of diseases especially the incurable ones like sickle cells and AIDS. This tends to lead to increased expenditure and misunderstanding especially as the members tend to blame each other.
8. Anti-social behavior like witchcraft exists in some families. It is associated with problems like fighting, bodily harms and death.
9. Some families suffer from the negative influence of the in - laws. Such people tend to give ill advise either against the husband or the wife. This has always resulted into domestic violence.
10. There are also cases of marital unfaithfulness, adultery and prostitution. This causes quarrels and fighting with some members killing each other.
11. There is a problem of generation gap in the families. The parents and the children tend to lead conflicting ways of life.
12. There are also political differences in the families. Multi – party politics tends to divide basing on the different parties.
13. Religious differences as a result of mixed marriages are evident in some families. The members are divided basing on religious lines.
14. Failure to satisfy the sexual desires especially that of the parents. This is responsible for marital unfaithfulness which in turn causes conflicts and fights.
15. Drug abuse like taking marijuana has always caused conflicts and violence in some families.
16. Parental negligence is a problem in some families. The children are left to fend for themselves. This is why some children abandon their homes and become thieves.
17. There are also cases of cultural clashes in some families with mixed marriages. It becomes difficult for family members to agree on a particular cultural aspect.

18. Individualism and selfishness in some families is a big problem. This brings about lack of sharing and it causes hatred among others.

Guiding Questions

- Qn.1. Explain the problems common in modern families today.**
- Qn.2. Give reasons to explain why some families break today.**
- Qn.3. Explain the causes of family instability in your community.**
- Qn.4. How can the problems in the families be minimized?**
- Adequate courtship.
 - Guidance and counselling.
 - Engaging in income generation projects.
 - Respect for each other's unique personality.
 - Strict laws against domestic violence.

PROBLEMS BEING CAUSED BY HIV AND AIDS IN MODERN FAMILIES

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Orphanage
- Divorce
- Poor health
- Suicide or death
- Family neglect
- Marital unfaithfulness
- Single violence
- Witchcraft
- Alcoholism
- Unemployment

HOW THE CHURCH IS HELPING FAMILIES WITH PROBLEMS

- Providing health services at a fair price. This helps to improve on the health of the members.
- Providing employment opportunities to the family members as teachers and doctors.
- Providing homes for disadvantaged family members like orphans. For example, Watoto children's Home and Sanyu Babies Home.
- Acting as agents of forgiveness and reconciliation in the event of conflicts.
- Putting up income generating projects like through Centenary Bank, loans are provided.
- Providing basic needs like education and accommodation.
- Providing guidance and counseling services.
- Protecting marriage relationships by encouraging faithfulness and love.
- Providing education services through schools and sponsoring some family members especially the young ones.
- Formation and running of associations like mother's Unions which helps them through giving advice on how to run their families.
- Preaching the equality of every person.

FAMILY LIFE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

(Understanding characteristics and patterns of the family)

1. The family was extended in nature. The membership included the parents, their children and the relatives like uncles and grandparents. This is because of the communal way of life.
2. The man was the head of the family. The family authority and decision making rested in his hands.
3. Roles in the family were divided according to sex and age. The men had roles like hunting and digging while women mostly domestic duties like cooking, taking care of the children and collecting firewood. The children as well had different duties from the adults.
4. The children were very important in a family. They provided labour, wealth and ensured the continuity of the family line among others.
5. The education of the children was a community responsibility. Everyone had the responsibility of enforcing discipline among the children.
6. All the children in the family belonged to the man. He had his final say over the children.

7. Discipline was very strict. The children were taught morals and how to behave and relate with others. Respect in particular was highly emphasized.
8. Marriage was compulsory for every grownup member of the family. The family members put every possible effort to prepare their young ones for marriage.
9. There was the practice of inheriting widows. A woman married in that family belonged to all and therefore she could easily be taken over by another man in the family upon the death of the husband.
10. Inheritance of the family property like land and cattle was from the father's line. It was only meant for the sons. The belief was that the gifts would get married to another family.
11. The men were allowed to marry more than one wife. This ensured that many children were produced and it was a source of prestige among others.
12. Each family had a common burial ground. This was a sign to show the departed were still members of the family.
13. Each family had a shrine from which they could perform their religious rituals like offering sacrifices to the ancestors for purposes like receiving blessings.
14. Initiation rites were common in African communities. There were puberty rites to show that one was soon becoming an adult. These included circumcisions among the Bagisu.
15. Men were superior to women. The women were expected to be submissive to all the men in the family.
16. The family was built on a permanent basis. In case of any disagreement, the members were brought together on a round table in order to avoid the family from splitting.

Revision Questions

- Qn.1. Explain the family life relationship in African Traditional Society.**
- Qn.2. What was the understanding of a family in African past?**
- Qn.3. Explain the characteristics of a family in traditional Africa.**

PROBLEMS COMMON IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILIES

1. Women held the inferior status and were to be submissive to the men in the family. Their views were less considered in the family.
2. Domestic violence was a problem in some families. This was mostly against the women. It had associated problems such as bodily injuries and death.
3. Food taboos existed in African families. Women were forbidden from eating certain types of food such as chicken, eggs and liver.

4. Widow inheritance was a common practice that proved to be a problem. A woman could be forcefully taken over by the male relative of the deceased husband.
5. Divorce was another problem in some African families. Although it was not easily accepted, men were allowed to send their wives away without giving them the chance of defending themselves.
6. Poverty was also common in African families. In such cases, members lacked the basic requirement in life such as food. This rendered the family members vulnerable to diseases because of malnutrition.
7. Forced marriage was recognized and accepted in African families. This meant that such families were not built on love but. This was responsible for the later conflicts in marriages.
8. Early marriages existed in many traditional African families. Both boys and girls engaged in marriage affairs at early ages. This subjected such young couples to the burden of caring for their families at tender ages.
9. Diseases such as malaria, typhoid, small pox etc., caused suffering in African families. Many members had to lose their dear lives because of lack of proper treatment.
10. Marital unfaithfulness like adultery caused misunderstanding among the family members. To make it worse, it was only women who were punished for involving in adulterous practices. This gave men the opportunity to be unfaithful to wives.
11. Witchcraft was common in African families. The witchcraft took the form of poisoning food and casting evil eyes among others. This was responsible problems like death, conflicts and fighting.
12. There was witch hunting in some families. This was attributed to the belief that anything bad such as death and barrenness to happen had some one behind it. Thus, the innocent were victimized.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN IN AN AFRICAN FAMILY

The children played important roles in African traditional families. It was for this reason that a marriage without children was regarded useless.

The children prolonged to life span of the family. As the adult members continued to die, the children were left to continue with the family business. Therefore, producing insured against old age and death.

The children provided labour for the family. They were assigned lighter duties like grazing animals and cleaning the compound for boys and cooking food and fetching water for the girls.

Children were a source of security against external threats. The boys were trained how to defend the family from any intruder be it human beings or wild animals.

The children provided wealth to the family. The boys could bring wealth through cultivating crops and the girls contributed the family wealth through bride price wealth such as cattle and goats among others.

Producing children proved that the married couples were normal. Childlessness was an illness and an abnormality.

The children gave status to their parents in the community. Such parents were respected and could be given community responsibilities like leadership.

Children stabilized the family. Parents with disagreements or conflicts could easily forgive and reconcile because of their children.

Children expanded the bond of kinship. The people in the community are made relatives through marriage of their children.

The children provided and brought happiness to the family members. The parents were always happy to see their children play around in the compound.

The children gave company to their parents. This was especially to the mothers who were always left at home as the fathers were away on duties like hunting.

The children were taken as a source of blessings from the ancestors. This showed that the parents were in good terms with the ancestors.

The children were the heirs to the family. They were there to inherit and take over the family property in the events of old age and death of the parents.

The children provided the comfort and satisfaction to their parents. The parents were easily consoled in case of family wrangles.

The children cemented the love between their parents. The love for a woman kept on growing as she continued to produce children especially boys.

The children linked the living and the living dead. The dead were remembered through their children and others by their names beings given to the new born.

Revision Questions

Qn.1. Explain the importance of children in African traditional families.

Qn.2. Why was a childless marriage regarded as useless in African traditional family?

THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN TRADITIONAL AFRICA (VALUES PASSED ON TO THE CHILDREN)

1. The children were taught to respect the elderly people. They had to respond to the parents with humility. They were also forbidden from calling their parents by real names. In Buganda, a father was referred to as “taata” and a mother “maama”.
2. The children were taught how to do domestic duties like cleaning the compound or cooking food. The boys were taught by their fathers and the girls by their mothers.
3. The children were taught the heart of sharing. This was based on the communal way of intended to help them avoid being selfish in the future.
4. The children were taught the names of the family, the clan and their language. This was to help them identify themselves and relate with other members of the community.
5. The children were taught to be self-reliant and to be creative. This was aimed at helping the children to be independent in the future.
6. The children were taught about their environment. They had to know and identify the names of the different trees and grasses some of which were used as medicine.
7. The children were taught the values of sex. Sex was shown as something holy. It was an adult duty and therefore emphasis was put on protecting and preserving one’s virginity till marriage.
8. The children were taught how to welcome visitors. They had to welcome them with smiles, respect and kneel down while greeting.
9. The children were taught to live as a community. Work like cultivation and harvesting were jointly done.

HOW THE CHILDREN WERE EDUCATED IN TRADITIONAL AFRICA.

The following explains below the ways or methods through which the children were taught in African Traditional Society.

- (i) The children were instructed to imitate or copy the work of the adult. This could help to introduce them slowly into doing that particular task.
- (ii) The children were rewarded for anything well done. Praises or prizes were given intended to make the children keep up in the same direction.
- (iii) Punishments were also given for any wrong doing with the aim of eliminating the bad behavior shown.
- (iv) The Africans used proverbs in the teaching of the children. These were wise sayings with hidden meanings. Such sayings were always followed up without questions.

- (v) The Africans used riddles in educating their children. This involved asking questions or making incomplete statements that required quick response. This was intended to sharpen the thinking ability of the children and to keep them alert.
- (vi) Africans used plays or drama to educate their children. Such plays were intended to bring out real life situations in the community as the children grew and were like meet them.
- (vii) The Africans used stories to teach their children. The stories were related to particular events in the life history of the people. They were intended to link the past and the present in order to predict the future.
- (viii) The Africans used myths to educate their children. They were beliefs which were not proved either to be true or false but were carefully developed to help in the teaching and learning. This was with special reference to the community events.
- (ix) The Africans used threats in teaching their children. The children were made to believe that if they could behave in a certain bad way, something bad could equally happen to them.

FAMILY LIFE IN CHURCH HISTORY

The Early Days of Christianity

The following were the main teachings about family life in the early days Christianity.

This was immediately after the ascension of Jesus Christ.

- The married couples were called upon to love and give respect to each other in their family relationship.
- Emphasis was put upon monogamy in the family. The man was expected to marry only one wife.
- The Christians were encouraged to make their families permanent and live in unity with one another.
- The Christian families could marry the pagans. They believed that it was possible for the believers to change the non-believers into followers of Christ.
- They encouraged the family members to be faithful. Therefore, immoral behavior like prostitution was discouraged.
- There was no fixed marriage ceremony in the family that every member was expected to follow.

The Middle Age and after reformation

The period was marked by great changes in respect to family life and married relationship.

It became possible for a person to remain single in a family. The people started practicing celibacy for the sake of the gospel of Christ.

Prostitution became common in the family set up. This meant that the family members became unfaithful.

Marriage laws came to be written down. These were intended to protect the family relationship from breaking up.

Re-marriage was accepted as something normal. It was possible for a family member to get married elsewhere after separation with another family.

The Christians came to look at marriage as a sacrament and something holy for them to achieve salvation.

MISSIONARIES AND AFRICAN FAMILIES IN THE 19th AND 20th CENTURY

The coming of missionaries in Africa brought a number of changes in the family relationship as explained below;

- ✍ The missionaries introduced a nuclear type of family as opposed to extended type of the family Africans were used to.
- ✍ The missionaries encouraged some family members to live single for the sake of the gospel of Christ. They were the people they called the priests, brothers and sisters.
- ✍ The missionaries called for equality of all family members saying that they were created in God's image. This opposed the superior status of men over women in an African family setup.
- ✍ The missionaries took over the education of children. They built schools where the children had to go for formal education. This meant that the community played little role in the education of their children.
- ✍ The missionaries encouraged the widow to live on their own or choose to marry elsewhere. This was opposed due to inheritance of widows in an African family setup.
- ✍ The missionaries put emphasis on monogamy as the ideal type of marriage in the family. They said that this was because God created only a woman and a man to start up a family.
- ✍ The missionaries encouraged love and respect of each and every family member.

- ✍ They encouraged freedom of choice of marriage partners. This opposed the African traditional life where parents had a role of choosing for their children marriage partners.
- ✍ The missionaries encouraged their family relationship to be permanent as opposed to cases where divorce or separation could be allowed in African families.
- ✍ The missionaries discouraged bride wealth in African families. They looked at it as buying women into marriage.
- ✍ They encouraged family members to be prayerful. They had to come together as one family and communicate to God.

Revision Questions

Qn.1. Explain the changes that the missionaries introduced in African traditional families.

Qn.2. How did the families respond to the family life relationship in Africa?

THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING ABOUT FAMILY LIFE

By creating human beings both male and female, God instituted family life relationship.

Equality in the family is emphasized. God created both the human beings as male in his likeness.

Sex is a divine gift between a man and a woman in the family for God created human being with unique sexual features.

By commanding the man and the woman to multiply and fill the world, God intended that children had to be produced in the family.

Monogamy is the ideal type of marriage in the family. God created the human beings as a male and a female.

In the family, the man and a woman are dependent on God. He provided some grains for Adam and Eve to eat for their survival.

The man and the woman were companion in the family. This was shown by the loneliness that Adam suffered before the creation of Eve.

The man and woman were complete in the presence of each other. Adam felt that he could not do much without Eve.

In the family, the man and the woman were expected to live in joy and harmony. This was proved by the happiness that Adam felt when God created a woman out of his rib and brought her to him.

It was right for a man to leave his father and mother and get united to his wife. This meant that unity is called for in a family.

Children were a sign of blessings in a family for God blessed Abraham and Sarah with their first borne.

Jealousy in the family caused instability. In the family experience of Elkanah, his wife Peninnah became jealous of her co – wife Hannah who was loved despite her barrenness (1 Samuel 1:1ff).

Among the Israelites, the children were expected to respect their parents so that they would live together (Exodus 20:11). God later rejected the two sons of priest Eli because they had disrespected their father (1 Samuel 2:35-36).

God echoed the role of parents in the upbringing of their children. He urged the Israelites were to teach their children the Ten commandments and about their history (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

The Israelites were instructed to bring up their children properly as one way of fulfilling their parental obligations.

The children were called upon to listen to their parents. God punished the sons of Eli for their failure to listen to the advice of their father.

The parents were expected to discipline their children. Eli was rejected as a priest because of his failure to discipline his two sons.

Barrenness in the family was a curse. Hannah – the infertile wife was bitter that she was unable to produce a child of her own.

The family was expected to be a centre for the children’s education. The parents had to teach their children social and moral values (proverbs 22:15).

The basis of family relationship was both extended and nuclear. Abraham stayed together with his family and his nephew Lot.

Marriage within a family was expected to be permanent (Malachi 3:13-26).

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ABOUT FAMILY

Jesus Christ encouraged the family members to stay permanently in their relationship. He said “what God has put together no man has the right to separate”. (Mark 10:9).

Jesus encouraged the parents to respect the unique personality of their children. At the age, twelve he challenged his parents as to why they had to look fir him yet he was doing his father’s work (Luke 2:49ff).

Jesus said that all the righteous belonged to the family of God. He said that such people would live with God in his Kingdom (Mark 3:31-36).

Jesus encouraged reconciliation and forgiveness among the family members. He gave the example of the prodigal son whose father gave him a warm welcome after he had spent all the shares of his riches but which made his brother unhappy (Luke 15:11-32).

Jesus advised the family members to live in joy and be happy like a joyful mother who has given birth (John 16:21).

Jesus said that it is right for a man to leave his father and mother and get united to his wife (Mark 10:5-6).

Jesus encouraged the family members to look onto him in times of their troubles or hardship.

Each family member was encouraged to fulfill his or her duties in order to satisfy the needs of others (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

Husbands and wives were advised to love each other creatively and unselfishly. St. Paul emphasized that the body of woman belongs to a man and that of a man belongs to a woman.

Saint Paul advised the parents to make their children happy all the time. They should not be annoyed with them (1 Corinthians 3:12).

On the other hand, Saint Paul advised the children to obey their parents. He said that obeying the parents pleases God (1 Corinthians 3:20).

Saint Paul advised the family member to obey the state. He pointed that God is the giver of authority (Romans 13:1-7).

Jesus encouraged the parents to treat their children equally. He emphasized that they are all the same since they belong to the same parents.

Jesus called upon the parents to tolerate the behavior of their children and guide them accordingly.

Jesus showed the children of how they have to help their parents with domestic duties. He showed this by helping his father Joseph with carpentry work.

Jesus advised the parents to discipline their children using their God-given authority. Parents were encouraged to teach their children moral values of the society like honesty, love and humility among others.

Jesus encouraged the parents to be responsible for the welfare of their children. He advised them to fulfill their obligations or responsibilities.

Widows in families are to be given respect and comfort they need (1 Timothy 5:3-16).

Saint Paul advised the wives to be submissive to their husbands in order to change their personalities.

The family members are advised to be united to each other just like Christ is united to the church.

Revision Questions

Qn.1. Explain Jesus' teaching on the ideal family relationship.

Qn.2. What is the New Testament teaching about family life?