

# Family as a basic social institution

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Social Institutions are the important components of a society that fulfill the needs of its people. They are a system of behavioral patterns that are interwoven and functions across a society. These institutions are part of a social order that govern the behavior and meet the expectations of an individual. They are the core elements of societies that perform specific actions. Without these institutions, modern societies will cease to exist. There are six social institutions and these are: family, economics, politics, religion, education, and health.

Family is the basic unit of society. It is defined as a component of a kinship that links a person to his or her ancestors. Family plays the most important role in shaping and defining a person's personality and opinions. It also plays an important role in giving stability to the society. Given that it is a basic social institution, the existence of every other social institution is dependent on the functions carried out by it.

Sociologists see family not only as a component that unites people by blood relation or adoption, but also sees it as a provider of support (emotionally, physically, financially, etc) that will help its members carry out their purpose. Families are important because as social beings, humans cannot live alone. We are all made to make connections and join groups. According to Aristotle, man is naturally a social being, anyone who is naturally unsocial is more than human. Everyone needs someone to support, love, and accept them, as well as someone to go back to when there's no other place to go.

As a member of the family, one is also expected to reciprocate the support and care that he/she gets. There are certain roles in the family that one must

achieve. For instance, if you are a parent, you are expected to provide financial and emotional support to the family. If you are a child, you are expected to be a responsible and obedient one. If you have siblings, you are expected to help look after them and to also help in some household chores.

Traditionally, the definition of family is limited to that of a “ nuclear” family, which is consisted of two parents and their children. Nowadays, there are already various definitions and types of families that are accepted in our society. According to the Michelle Blessing, there are six types of family namely: nuclear family, single parent, extended family, childless family, stepfamily, and grandparents.

The Nuclear Family, also known as the elementary family, is the most basic and widely accepted form of family in society. Its main idea is that a married couple raises their biological or adopted children in their own home. Nuclear families are said to be financially stable since the parents’ salaries go to the expenses of the family. They are also more focused on communication and the needs of everyone since it is only a small group. However, they isolate them-selves from their extended families which leads to a weak support system. In addition to that, this also leads to harder conflict resolutions.

Second is the single parent family where there is only one parent raising his/her child. This occurs when the single parent is widowed, divorced, or unmarried. Single parenting has become more common in the last 20 years. (American Psychology Association, “ Single parent-ing and today’s family. Web. 07/25/18). Some strengths of this family include closer bonds and division of labor within the family. However, all the family’s weight is on the

single parent's shoulder. This can make the family financially unstable. If the reason for single parenting is di-vorce or legal separation, some children may feel the struggles and emptiness of a broken family.

Third is the extended family where there are two or more adults bonded by blood or marriage with their children. This is usually for social support and they look forward to a com-mon goal. This type is considered traditional for other cultures. Having more family members is advantageous since they can help look after the children, help in chores, and are there in case of emergencies. On the other hand, having a lot of family members to support may lead to fi-nancial problems.

Fourth is the Childless Family where in the couple either cannot bear a child or does not want to. This type of family is often left out in society since the “norm” for families is to have a child. Childless couples are said to be more adventurous and closer. Some own pets or take care of their nieces/nephews. However, some couples may feel empty and lonely as they grow old.

Next is the Stepfamily where in two separate families merge into one family. A partner in this type of family may either be divorced, unmarried, or widowed (with or without a child). Some pros of this family include having closer bonds with the new family, more income (unlike single parent families), and the benefit of having two parents. The cons, however, include having a hard time adjusting and disciplining the other children.

Last are the grandparents, which is the least common but fastest growing type of family. In this case, grandparents step up to take care of their grandchildren in place of the parents. Circumstances may be because the parents are dead, incarcerated, abroad, and many more. Grandparents form a closer bond with their grandchildren since they are under one roof. This also saves the children from worse situations such as ending up in foster care. However, grand-parents may have a hard time looking after the children since they also need to look after themselves. The family may also face financial instability since the grandparents may not have full-time jobs to cover the expenses.