

Family social institution



EXPLAIN THE MAIN WAYS IN WHICH THE CONCEPT OF THE FAMILY HAS CHANGED OVER TIME AND ACROSS CULTURES

Family is regarded as a major social institution by many sociologists; it is a place where much of a person's social activities occur. The concept of the family is considered as a social unit or a group of kin connected by blood, marriage or adoption, living in the same residence and can be described as nuclear (a family structure made of parents and their children) or extended (a family structure made up of three generations for example grandparents, parents and children). The extended family is associated with the pre-industrial society; parents were mainly responsible for the well-being and education of their children. This type of family unit was the main source of production and due to extended kinship; families used to own for example large agricultural land or farms and would trade for other resources like clothes with other families.

The nuclear family on the other hand is considered by sociologists to be the typical type of family structure in an industrial society. Because it consists of fewer members than the extended family it makes it easier for them to relocate to industrial areas where their labour and skills are in popular demand. Graham Allan and Graham Crow argued that there was no longer a clear family cycle through which most people pass. They said, ' individuals and families are now more able to exercise choice and personal volition over domestic and familial arrangements than previously, their option no longer being constrained by social convention and /or economic need. {Haralambos and Holborn (2004) pg 496}

The main ways in which the concept of the family has changed over time and across cultures, is evident in both pre- industrialisation and industrialisation societies. In the past fifty years, family life has become increasingly diverse. High earnings and less responsibility to other family members have attracted extended families to split up. Families in the pre-industrial society had an important economic function in society but have lost its purpose as a production unit.

However in the industrial society economic progress is taking place but the concept of the family is going through significant changes in its structure. A majority of women are employed, so fewer women are staying home to look after the family needs. Societal changes are believed to highly have contributed to the reduction of mainly the nuclear family. Divorce rates are very high across all cultures and a replacement of lone-parent, childless, remarried, homosexual, foster and adoptive families have been established. Breaking down of marriages, and anti-social behaviour is increasingly destroying families. People are increasingly cohabiting, in various industrial nations. Family life is no longer a picture of harmony and happiness. Socialists say that greater individualism with modern society has also had its contribution to the changes of the family structure.

The transformation that is taking place in the traditional concept of family in diverse cultures is a big problem and some psychologists argue that it needs to be addressed, for any hope of retaining the family institution, especially the nuclear family. According to Murdock, “ the nuclear family is the basic form of family. He sees all other family forms as extensions of the nuclear family”. {Harlambros M. & Langley P. (2003) page 74}. As people from <https://assignbuster.com/family-social-institution/>

different cultures increasingly search for greener pastures, immigrating has been inevitable. Adopted cultural backgrounds and losing sense of identity has occurred across cultures.

Differences in the lifestyle of different ethnic origins and different religious beliefs, has helped some cultures to preserve the extended family unit. In Arab countries, family is still highly preserved due to strong religious beliefs. Many families still live under the same household and own large shop businesses, same as in India and Japan.

Bibliography

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Haralambos and Holborn (2004) pg 496 Sociology Themes and Perspectives
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