

The Functions of Sub-Systems of the Family Structure

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Abstract:

The family is a fertile field of knowledge that has attracted the attention of researchers in the humanities and social sciences, both in terms of function and roles and in terms of composition and structure. The family structure has been exposed to change and renewal over the ages due to social change and cultural contact. As a result, several types and differences in the family structure have emerged, forming systems that reflect the nature of the social context of the family. In this research paper, we will discuss the concept of the family structure and its sub-systems, as well as its function.

keywords: Family, Structure, Social Construction, Function.

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Introduction and Problem Statement :

The family is considered a social system and a major social group for building society, on the basis that it is the first social bond that individuals interact with and the basic structure that they rely on in the early stages of the individual age in terms of food, clothing, care, and education (Al-Julani, 1995, p. 17). The family does not represent a collective system only, but it is the first social structure that teaches the individual various social norms, in addition to being the basic pillar and the solid foundation on which other social systems are based, on the basis that it is a major pillar of the social structure. It is one of the most social systems in society that interacts with other social systems, because it is the center of all systems, whether economic, political, or educational. Therefore, we find educators pinning great hopes on the role of the family and its cooperation with the school in educating the child and preparing him. (Al-Julani, 1995, p. 17)

The family is the first school in which the individual learns the values and social norms that individuals interact with each other, and the most important source for satisfying the individual's emotions from affection, tenderness, security, and tranquility. The individual needs these

sensations to achieve comfort and psychological stability. It is also a source for satisfying the sociological and necessary needs of the individual, from housing, clothing, food, and shelter in addition to health services (Yassin, *ibid*, p. 21) the family can be considered the basic pillar for practicing social control over individuals through the process of social development.

The family structure forms an important structural structure consisting of a set of subsystems that interact with each other through the performance of a set of roles whose function is to preserve the structure from imbalance through the distribution of tasks and roles within this structure. Each subsystem has a function that it performs. Hence, we wonder:

What are the subsystems that make up the family structure? What is its function?

It is worth pausing to define some of the fundamental concepts of the research:

Structure and Social Construction

In language: The word is derived from the word (constructivism) from (construction) or structure (structure), which is derived from the Latin origin (structure), meaning how a building is constructed (Al-Adwan, Issa Daoud)

Raymond Boudon says that the concept of structure has different meanings in sociology that are difficult to enumerate. For Murdock, the concept of social structure indicates the cohesion of social institutions, as they are not arbitrary or accidental gatherings, and in this sense, they have a structure (Boudon, 1916, p. 99)

As for **social construction**, it is synonymous with social structure. It is difficult to give a precise concept of the term social construction, as it can be considered a term that is generally imprecisely applied to any recurring pattern of social behavior, or more specifically to the relationships of organized interaction between the various elements of the social system or society. Thus, it is said, for example, that kinship, religious, economic, political, and other systems found in a particular society represent the social structure of that society with its norms, values, and social roles (Gordon Marshall, 2000, p. 289). Evans-Pritchard defines it as a social system characterized by a certain degree of stability and stability... It consists of groups and symbols such as clans, tribes, and nations, and each of them organizes the relationships of the individuals who belong to them (Issa Al-Shammas, 2004, p. 142). Radcliffe Brown defines it as the set of social relations that link all members of society in a specific period (Salim Mustafa Shaker, Dictionary of Anthropology, p. 902).

The concept of structure occupies a central position in the theories of structural-functionalism, structuralism, and post-structuralism. In all three cases, the concept is used in both a concrete and an interpretive sense. This means that any aspect of social life that is described as a structure is said to have the ability to organize other aspects of social life structurally. For example,

sociologists might argue that gender structures (the social expectations and roles associated with being male or female) organize employment opportunities. (Gordon Marshall, 2000, p. 289)

The Concept of the Family :

The concept of the family varies depending on its forms, functions, and the historical changes it has undergone. Therefore, the definition of the family varies depending on the researcher's perspective according to the family pattern being studied.

Bogards defines it as a small social group that usually consists of a father, mother, and one or more children, who are united by a bond of love, share responsibility, and raise children until they become people who behave through guiding and controlling them socially. (Yassin, 1981, p. 15)

Likewise, the family represents a basic condition for the survival of the human race. Therefore, **Sanaa Al-Khouly** defines it as follows:

The meaning of the family combines marriage and procreation. The family also refers to a set of roles and positions acquired through marriage and procreation. Thus, we find that it is customary to consider marriage a condition or prerequisite for the establishment of a family and consider it a product of marital interaction (Al-Khouly, 1984, p. 43)

Michel Aghassian, on the other hand, believes that it is a social group that contains at least a man and a woman who are linked by a socially recognized relationship, which is marriage, as well as the presence of one or more children as a result of this relationship. A family is a social act, not a biological act (Aghassian; 1975 P37)

Therefore, the family is the first natural social environment for the individual. It stands upon terms agreed upon through collective action, and rules chosen by societies. The system of the family in a nation is closely linked to the beliefs of that nation, its history, its moral character, and the systems it follows in the affairs of politics, economics, and justice (Abd al-Wahid Wafi, 1966, p. 4).

Parsons defines it as a functional unit, despite the decline of functions in the modern family, yet it specializes in two fundamental functions: social upbringing and the formation of adult personalities in members of society (Al-Khashab, n.d., p. 25).

Mustafa Bounfenousht, on the other hand, considers it a social product that reflects the image of the society in which it appears and develops. Hence, if this society is characterized by stability, the family is likewise characterized by stability. However, if it exists in a changing and revolutionary society, it changes under the pattern of this change and its conditions in the society (Bounfenousht, 1984, p. 19).

From these simple definitions, we can gather a set of characteristics that distinguish the family and the family system.

The family varies in its types according to the existing patterns in society. Among the most important of the prevailing family forms, we find, for example, the extended family, which is abundantly present in rural, local, tribal, and clan communities. In such instances, the husband's dominance over the wife and the dominance of one of the relatives, such as the grandfather, uncle, or elder brother, are prevalent. It is a multi-functional family composed of the father, mother, unmarried children, married children, and their offspring, and some relatives like aunts, uncles, and widowed females (Al-Khouly, *ibid*, p. 9).

Meanwhile, **Abd al-Ati al-Sayyid** defines it as a prevalent pattern in primitive and non-systematic societies. These families are non-systematic collectives with communal ownership and authority vested in the head of the family or the eldest grandfather. In other words, it is the group formed by several interconnected families, whether lineage is traced through the male or female line, residing in a single dwelling. It does not differ much from the compound family or clan (al-Sayyid et al., 2002, p. 10). Thus, the extended family is a group of individuals connected by blood, marriage, and offspring, living under one roof under the authority of the head of the family.

In contrast, the nuclear family is a group consisting of a married couple and their unmarried children. One of the primary characteristics of the marital family is its temporary nature, as its existence ceases with the death of one of the parents (Abd al-Anani, 2000, p. 54). Meanwhile, M. Segalen defines it as a group of individuals bound by ties of marriage and origin who occupy a single geographical space and dwelling, known in the old terminology as the house (Segalen, 2002, p. 5). Additionally, **Khairi al-Jumaili** distinguishes two types of nuclear families, stating that "it is a group made up of a married couple and their unmarried children. An individual typically belongs to two nuclear families: the nuclear family in which he or she was raised, known as the family of orientation, and the second, in which he or she fulfills the role of parent, which is the family of completion and procreation (Khairi al-Jumaili, 1993, p. 15)." The nuclear family can be considered a family that includes only two generations: the parental generation and the children's generation.

The compound family, according to **Atef Ghaith**, is a family model that accompanies the system of polygamy and polyandry, where two or more nuclear families are defined through common-law marriage or a common wife (Ghaith, 1998). In recent times, new forms of family patterns have also emerged.

The family or family structure is formed by a set of subsystems that perform multiple functions, which can be identified as follows:

Sub-systems of the Family Structure and their Social Function:

1. The Biological System and its Function within the Family:

The biological system is one of the most important foundations of the family structure, and its primary function is to reproduce and preserve the species from extinction and hardship. By satisfying sexual desires in a way that society approves of, the biological system of the family is responsible for the function of preserving the human species and providing the human community with individuals. On this basis, the family preserves society from extinction and hardship. The continuation of family membership is contingent on the continuation of the family's existence. (Kassal, 1986, p. 24)

Therefore, the family is responsible for the birth of children, and for all that is related to them, such as healthy and sound health care, etc., which contributes to the child's proper biological growth, in addition to the material requirements for maintaining his life and protecting him from external dangers, and to be able to have children who have all the necessary health conditions and are fully healthy physically and mentally (Al -Jumaili, *ibid*, p. 27).

2. The Educational and Developmental Family System:

The educational system of the family means the set of principles and foundations that the family follows in performing its educational and developmental functions. It is natural for the family to have an important role in raising children in a healthy way that is consistent with the standards and values of the society to which it belongs. Therefore, the family is the social container in which the roots of the human personality grow, as it contains complex psychological and social interactions. Childhood is one of the most dangerous stages in a child's growth because it has the utmost importance in forming his personality through the transfer of skills, beliefs, and different patterns of behavior. This is because the child during his first years of life is more vulnerable to abuse, and more adaptable to the characteristics of the environment, whether within the family or outside it. Therefore, education is among the important matters that psychologists and sociologists pay great attention to, and it takes care of human behavior, its development, and its change (Al-Najiji, 1974, p. 17)

The home is the most important place for raising a child to be healthy, and the family facilitates the process of integration for him into the environment in which he lives. The process of social upbringing of the family remains the most important social function performed by the educational system of the family, which appears clearly in the first five years of the child's life. This led to interest in the issue of culture and its impact on the family. With the emergence of the true function of the family and it's joining more and more with time, represented in the function of building the social and cultural personality of the individual, no other social institution can perform this function with such efficiency, or even with similar efficiency (Shukry 1998, p. 184).

Despite the multiplicity of social institutions that participate in the educational system of the family in this function, it is responsible for shaping the individual's personality according to the patterns and behaviors of the culture that exists within the community. As **René König** explains by saying: The biological birth of the individual is not the decisive factor in his existence and continuity, but the decisive factor is the second birth, that is, its formation as a social and cultural personality that ends up in a specific society and owes its own culture, and the family is the one that decides to achieve this second birth (Shukry, *ibid*, p. 184).

3. The Moral System of the Family:

It refers to the set of moral values and norms that constitute the moral system and is responsible for transferring and instilling them in family members through the process of moral upbringing, which is considered the most important process whose function is to develop the individual's personality. It is known that through this process, the individual acquires the values of society, its ideals, standards, rules, systems, laws, customs, traditions, customs, language, religion, and patterns of behavior that are acceptable and prevalent in society. Through this process, the child transforms from just a biological being to a social and moral being (Al-Isaoui, 2000, p. 12). Through this process or function that the moral system performs, the individual acquires good morals and ways of dealing with others.

4. The Psychological System of the Family:

It refers to the set of psychological principles, knowledge, and principles that the family follows in performing its psychological function, which is related to achieving the emotional and affective integration of its members by providing them with affection, tenderness, stability, and security, with the constant need for affection and tenderness with the father and mother. The continuous relationship between the mother and the child does not only satisfy the child emotionally, but it also satisfies all that motherhood provides in terms of tenderness, so the healthy psychological atmosphere stabilizes and the family then becomes a source of security and peace of mind (Haseed, 1967, p. 23). The nature of the stable atmosphere in the marital relationship of love, affection, and tenderness, all this tranquility affects the psychology of the children and the building of their future.

5. The Economic System of the Family:

It refers to the set of resources that the family provides to meet the material needs of its members. In the past, the family used to perform all aspects of economic activity and was self-reliant met its needs, and produced what it consumed. This was done by all members working in the field, and the kinship bond was strong living together and cooperating in production, as work was divided and each family member did a specific job. The physiological difference between the body of the woman and the man has made the family a fully integrated unit with a high degree of efficiency. The man, with his physical strength that exceeds the strength of the woman, can perform better

the works that require some strength, and the woman also performs the economic functions that are compatible with her physiological nature. Economic cooperation leads to strengthening the social relations between all family members (Wasfi, 1977, p. 94)

The economic functions of the family have evolved and the family system has transformed from a productive economic unit, by providing its livelihood and necessary demands through cooperation and solidarity in production and consumption, to a marital consumption unit independent of the rest of the relatives of brothers, parents, and uncles. Therefore, it secures its livelihood based on its monthly income represented in the salary of the working head of the family. (Al-Sweedi, 1990, p. 89)

In addition to the family structure, it includes a variety of systems, including the political system, which is responsible for managing family relations, carrying out social control, and power within the family. In traditional societies, power was in the hands of the head of the tribe and the clan according to the patriarchal system, which is known as the tribal system. With social changes, power within the family is controlled by multiple variables. Of the power variables, we have the economic side. Whoever has economic power within the family has the right to manage the affairs of the family, among other variables that control the rationalization and management of family relations.

In addition to the political system, we find the therapeutic or health system, which is responsible for providing the therapeutic and preventive methods that the family follows to protect, preserve, and prevent diseases. In the olden days, the family used to rely on natural resources in their original form in their treatment style. With the change in society, the pattern of thinking and treatment has changed. Today, the individual resorts to duality in treatment between what is formal and what is traditional.

Conclusion:

Through this presentation, it can be said that the family structure has changed according to the types of families that we have gone through in the presentation. Therefore, the concept and type of the family varies according to the social context to which these families belong. The social structure of the family is formed by a set of subsystems, each with its function, represented in the biological, psychological, educational, moral, etc. subsystems. On this basis, the family is not just a biological entity, but rather a social entity in which the subsystems work hard to maintain the stability of the family and the stability of the social structure.

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