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Aspects and Functions concerning the Family and Family Life

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Abstract: The family is the setting in which the child learns to interact and communicate, therefore being the main one responsible for our formation as individuals. In other words, the child's future depends largely on how the parents fulfilled their role: that of educate and socialize with the child. The family group brings together women and men, parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, united by strong ties of marriage, blood, kinship, as well as by specific forms of organizing the relationships between them. As a dynamic structure of social life, the family is determined by the general laws of development of society, being subject to rapid changes parallel to social life.

Keywords: parents; children; institution; values

1. Introduction

The family is one of the oldest institutions created by man throughout his socio-historical existence and represents a form of human community whose relationships between its members allow the continuation of the human species and the evolution of society. In the specialized literature, over time, a series of definitions of this fundamental social institution have been imposed by various authors.

Regarding this, Claude Levi Strauss defined the family as a group that originates in marriage and consists of a husband and wife and the children born of their union(a group to which other relatives can be added), who are united by moral, legal, economic, religious and social rights and obligations (including sexual rights or prohibitions).

R. Vincent defines the family as a group endowed with its own characteristics, with certain customs, which respects certain traditions, even unconsciously, which applies certain rules of education, in a word, which creates an atmosphere.

A. Berge considered that: the family constituted a kind of collective personality whose general harmony influences the harmony of each of the parts (Mitrofan, 1991, p. 144).

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2. Concept and Terms

Family unity is determined by the types of relationships that exist between members of the family group (Neculau, 1987, p. 29):

- *natural-biological relationships*, determined by the attraction between the sexes, by biological needs and by the natural tendency to perpetuate the human species; in addition to relationships between parents, there are also consanguinity relationships that connect parents to children;
- *spiritual-psychological relationships*, which take into account the affective side of family life and are represented by: conjugal love, maternal and paternal love, filial love and brotherly love;
- *moral relationships*, expressed in attitudes and conduct such as: dignity, parental and family honor, mutual respect between parents and between parents and children, mutual duty between family members, their solidarity, the common duty of spouses towards society, etc;
- *legal relationships*, relating to parental responsibility and parental protection, to which are added the legal implications determined by the set of rights of family members over the family's material assets.

The family as a social group is characterized by the existence of certain specific functions, which depending on the period had different manifestations, nuances and intensities.

G. P. Murdock, starting from the affirmation of the universal character of the nuclear family, highlighted the following 4 functions:

1. sexual function;

2. reproductive function;

3. economic function;

4. educational function (Zamfir, Vlăsceanu, 1998, p. 23).

Parsons identified only 2 fundamental functions of the family, namely:

- *primary socialization of children to become members of a given society;*
- *stabilization of the adult personality* (Parsons in Voinea M., 1978, p. 11).

However, it is considered that the most concrete and adequate classification of family functions is that formulated by H. Sthall, who divided these functions into 2 large categories: external functions and internal functions. The first category included:

1) biological and hygienic-sanitary functions;

2) economic functions;

3) family solidarity functions;

4) pedagogical-educational and moral functions.

External functions mainly ensure the natural development of the personality of each member of the group, socialization and proper integration into social life (Sthall in Mihăilescu I., 2003, p. 205-206).

However, by summarizing the number of family functions, four fundamental functions were identified that require a more detailed analysis:

1. biological and hygienic-sanitary function:

Biological function is an essential dimension of the family, within which sexual needs are satisfied. Thus, the analysis of this function starts from the idea that the family presupposes the existence of sexual relations between spouses, influenced by society, which result in the birth of children. This function is essential for society, ensuring the maintenance and survival of humanity, as well as for the family, given that the birth and raising of children gives parents a sense of self-fulfillment.

2. the economic function, which refers to the fact that both partners of a married couple are engaged in productive activities that bring them certain material income necessary for the entire family group, as well as for the raising and education of children.

3. family solidarity function:

Family solidarity is of particular importance within a family and is formed and strengthened only when both partners of a married couple live positively with each other, mutually adjust their requirements and respond to the needs and expectations of the other, while the partners complement each other and transform from two more or less different individuals into a couple based on common aspirations, common interests, and last but not least on common feelings, while also sharing common responsibilities.

Without love, attachment, affection, respect, mutual understanding, admiration, without the predisposition to unconditionally help the loved one, without trust in the other, the foundation of a solid family cannot be built and therefore this function cannot be fulfilled.

4. the socialization function or the educational function, which represents a kind of continuation of the functions presented previously, namely the function of family solidarity because the relationships existing between the partners of a conjugal couple and between the members of the family group, existing within the family, are of particular importance in terms of the formation of the child's personality.

In order to highlight the decisive role that the family plays in achieving this function, it must be taken into account that it constitutes the primary environment for caring for children from the first days of life, being considered as the social world of infants and young children, the main arena of their experience (Goodman, 1992, p. 120).

3. Analysis

Socialization is an extremely complex process, which begins in childhood and continues throughout life, involving the acquisition of the way of life in society. Through this process, society regulates the individual's behavior, exerting a particularly important influence on new generations, teaching them how they should be and how they should behave. In addition, parents and family members transmit language, norms and values, traditions, beliefs, and behavioral patterns and principles of conduct to children.

Also, regarding this process, it must be said that there are variations from one family to another. Therefore, over time, the child observes that people behave both according to their way of being, their self, and according to what they are, in relation to their place in the family (parents, siblings, grandparents), their gender (men or women), their age (children, young people, adults, elderly), but also to their social categories to which they belong (respectively, professional category).

Regarding the socialization process, no reductions can be made to the fact that it consists of passive imitation of pre-existing models in society. Although transmission is usually done in one direction only, namely from ascendants to descendants, from parents to children, there are also cases when influences

can be done the other way around, of course only after the child reaches a certain age. But compared to other agents of socialization, the family occupies the central place in this process, because it is the first to take charge of education.

In relation to this function, it should also be noted that not all families are guided by the same educational values and attitudes, the differentiation resulting in relation to:

1) socio-professional affiliation;

2) educational level;

3) residential environment: rural or urban (Stănciulescu, 2000, p. 61).

From the above, it follows that the socio-economic and moral structure of the family, the social class it belongs to, the cultural values it preserves are reflected in the mentality and conduct of its members, implicitly of the children.

However, there are other differences depending on the socio-professional categories of origin, the educational level differs because in working-class families, the formation of manual skills and the spirit of observation is important, while in families belonging to significant upper classes, the development of intellectual, creative capacities is important, they focus their attention on conceptualization: naming is more important than handling (Schifirnet, 2003).

The family is the one that ensures the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of its members, has the responsibility of caring for children, promotes communication between its members, but at the same time must be able to ensure social relationships outside the family, responsible relationships with the community, the ability to help oneself, but also to accept help from others, flexibility in distributing roles and functions, mutual respect for the individuality of each member, loyalty, a spirit of cooperation within the family and outside it, flexibility and adaptability in crisis situations (Ciofu, 1998, p. 105).

The most *important function* of the family is that of *educating and socializing the child*, as the family represents the most conducive environment for his or her education, during a period when he or she is most susceptible to being influenced. The warmth and affection of parents represent powerful incentives for developing the skills and abilities necessary to acquire the capacity for adequate social integration.

In the middle of the family, which constitutes a representative sample of society through the diversity of the people it integrates: parents and children, female and male persons, linked by living together, the child discovers the mechanism of social relations, at the same time shaping the profile of his own personality. The family's imprint on the child remains particularly strong throughout life (Banciu, Rădulescu, Voicu, 1987, p. 76).

Regarding the role of parents in educating children, it is known that the role played by the mother is much greater compared to that of the father, who is less involved in the care and education of children. The mother is the one who creates the climate of tenderness and attention in the family.

4) She also performs household activities (meal preparation, clothing maintenance), activities related to supervising schoolwork, activities related to playing together, and moments of confession. Unlike the mother, the father comes into contact with the child only to play, to experience the satisfaction of reciprocal gestures of tenderness, or to convince himself that everything is okay. If the father intervenes at other times, he does so only to help the mother, sometimes even being asked to do so by her (Stănciulescu, 2000).

4. Conclusions

The irrational distribution of forces in the family, especially in the case of the mother, who takes on all household obligations, lacking the charm of her personal life by living „between four walls" and devoting herself entirely to family life, has as a consequence her deformation as an educator.

In general, parents who place the child at the center of their attention and concerns, sacrificing themselves for them and depriving themselves of any joy, are not good educators. Burdened and living a gray life, they are eternally grumpy, tense, and create an oppressive atmosphere in the family that is inappropriate for the normal development of children. Under these conditions, only a tonic family climate, characterized by moral, affective and equitable relationships, is favorable to the optimal development of children's personalities (Neculau, 1987, p. 84).

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