



**COURSE CODE: SST 101**

**COURSE TITLE: National Values & Orientation**

**COURSE UNITS: 2 UNITS**

## **Module 1: Foundations of National Values**

### **Lesson 1: Introduction to Value Systems**

#### **Introduction**

Value systems are the bedrock of any society, representing a set of deeply held beliefs, principles, and ideals that guide individual and collective behavior. These values act as a moral compass, shaping our understanding of right and wrong, good and bad, desirable and undesirable. They influence our choices, actions, and interactions with others, ultimately defining who we are as individuals and as a society. A value system is not simply a collection of individual preferences; it's a shared understanding of what is considered important and worthy of pursuit within a community. These shared values provide a framework for social cohesion, enabling individuals to cooperate and live together harmoniously. They form the basis for social norms, laws, and institutions, providing a sense of order and predictability in social interactions.

#### **Lesson Objectives**

- State the definition and nature of value systems in society.
- Explain the importance of value systems in shaping societal norms.
- Differentiate between core value systems in Nigeria.
- Explore the historical evolution and current state of value systems in Nigeria.

#### **Definition and Nature of Value Systems in Society**

Value systems are complex and multifaceted, existing on multiple levels and interacting in intricate ways. They can be explicit, formally expressed through laws, policies, public pronouncements, and educational curricula, clearly articulating the values a society deems important. They can also be implicit, subtly embedded in cultural traditions, customs, folklore, art, and social norms, unconsciously shaping behavior and attitudes.

Value systems are not static; they evolve over time in response to changing social, economic, political, environmental, and technological conditions. Factors such as technological



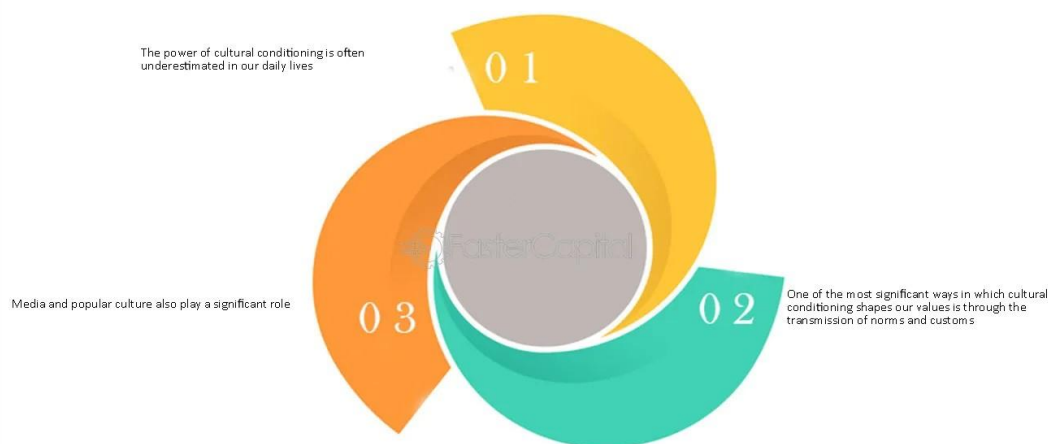
advancements, globalization, migration, urbanization, industrialization, internal and external conflicts, social movements, and exposure to different cultures can all contribute to shifts in a society's value system. These shifts can be gradual and incremental or rapid and transformative, leading to periods of social change and adaptation.

Furthermore, value systems are not monolithic. Within any society, diverse groups based on factors like age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, education level, and geographic location – may hold different values or prioritize values differently, leading to tensions, conflicts, and competing interpretations of what is "good" or "right." Understanding these different perspectives, fostering dialogue, and finding common ground through negotiation and compromise are crucial for maintaining social stability, promoting inclusivity, and building a shared vision for the future.

### Importance of Value Systems in Shaping Societal Norms

Value systems play a crucial role in shaping societal norms. Norms are the unwritten, often implicit, rules that govern behavior in specific situations. They tell us what is considered acceptable or unacceptable, appropriate or inappropriate, polite or rude, efficient or inefficient. Value systems provide the moral and ethical compass for these norms, justifying their existence and influencing their enforcement. For example, if a society values honesty and integrity, norms will likely discourage lying, cheating, and stealing, and will prescribe truthfulness and fairness in interpersonal and professional interactions.

## How Society Shapes Our Values



**Figure 1: How Society Shapes Our Values**



Image Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/Wb9PiqfKR1sviewLJ9>

Conversely, if a society values individualism above all else, norms may be more permissive of behaviors that prioritize personal gain over collective well-being, and will encourage competition and self-reliance.

Value systems influence societal norms in several ways:

- **Justification:** Values provide the rationale for norms. They explain why certain behaviors are considered right or wrong. For instance, the value of respect for elders justifies the norm of deference and obedience towards older members of the community.
- **Enforcement:** Values motivate individuals to enforce norms. When people believe in the importance of a particular value, they are more likely to correct those who violate the corresponding norm. This can take the form of social sanctions, such as disapproval, ostracism, or even legal punishment.
- **Guidance:** In situations where there are no clear-cut norms, values can guide behavior. When faced with a moral dilemma, individuals can refer to their values to make decisions about how to act.
- **Socialization:** Value systems are transmitted from one generation to the next through socialization. Families, schools, religious institutions, and other social actors play a role in teaching children and young people the values of their society. This process of socialization ensures the continuity of the value system and the stability of social norms.

### Value Systems in Nigeria

Nigeria, as a diverse and complex nation, possesses a rich tapestry of value systems. These values are derived from its numerous ethnic groups, religions, and cultural traditions. While there are variations across these diverse groups, some core values are widely shared. These include:

- **Family and Community:** Family and community ties are highly valued in Nigeria. Extended family structures are common, and individuals are expected to support and care for their relatives. Communalism, the emphasis on collective well-being, is also a significant value.



- **Respect for Elders:** Respect for elders is a cornerstone of Nigerian culture. Older members of the community are seen as repositories of wisdom and experience, and they are treated with deference and honor.
- **Hospitality:** Nigerians are known for their hospitality and generosity. Visitors are often welcomed with open arms and offered food and shelter.
- **Hard Work and Industry:** Hard work and industry are highly valued as means of achieving success and social mobility.
- **Religious Belief:** Religion plays a significant role in the lives of many Nigerians. Religious values often influence behavior and social interactions.

### Historical Evolution and Current State

Nigeria's value system has evolved significantly over time. Pre-colonial Nigerian societies had their own distinct value systems, often rooted in indigenous religions and traditions. The colonial era brought about significant changes, with the introduction of Western values and the influence of Christianity and Islam. These external influences interacted with existing indigenous values, creating a complex and dynamic cultural landscape.

In the post-colonial era, Nigeria has grappled with the challenge of forging a unified national identity while respecting its cultural diversity. Efforts have been made to promote national values that can serve as a foundation for national unity and development. However, challenges such as corruption, ethnic tensions, and economic inequality continue to threaten the fabric of Nigerian society and undermine its value system. The rapid pace of globalization and technological change also presents new challenges to traditional values. Navigating these challenges and finding a balance between tradition and modernity is crucial for Nigeria's future.

### Lesson Summary

This lesson introduced the concept of value systems, defining them as a set of deeply held beliefs and principles that guide individual and collective behavior. We explored the importance of value systems in shaping societal norms, explaining how they provide justification, enforcement, guidance, and are transmitted through socialization. We also examined the nature of value systems in Nigeria, highlighting some core values such as family and community, respect for elders, hospitality, hard work, and religious belief. Finally, we



touched upon the historical evolution of Nigeria's value system and the challenges it faces in the contemporary world.

### **Evaluation Questions for Module 1 Lesson 1**

1. State the definition and nature of value systems in society.
2. Explain how value systems influence the formation and enforcement of societal norms.
3. Differentiate between the core value systems prevalent in Nigerian society.
4. Explore how Nigeria's value system has evolved historically and describe its current state.

### **Notes on Evaluation Questions for Module 1 Lesson 1**

1. **State the definition and nature of value systems in society.**
  - Value systems are sets of deeply held beliefs and principles that guide individual and collective behavior. They act as a moral compass, shaping understandings of right and wrong, and influence choices, actions, and interactions. They are both explicit (laws, policies) and implicit (cultural traditions).
2. **Explain how value systems influence the formation and enforcement of societal norms.**
  - Value systems justify norms by providing rationales, motivate enforcement through belief in their importance, guide behavior in ambiguous situations, and are transmitted through socialization.
3. **Differentiate between the core value systems prevalent in Nigerian society.**
  - Core values in Nigeria include:
    - Family and Community: Strong extended family ties and communal well-being.
    - Respect for Elders: Deference and honor towards older community members.
    - Hospitality: Generosity and welcoming of visitors.
    - Hard Work and Industry: Value placed on effort for success.



- Religious Belief: Influence of religious values on behavior.

**4. Explore how Nigeria's value system has evolved historically and describe its current state.**

- Historically, pre-colonial values were rooted in indigenous traditions. Colonialism introduced Western values, Christianity, and Islam. Post-colonial Nigeria faces challenges in unifying national identity amidst diversity, with issues like corruption and globalization impacting traditional values.



