

Norms and Values :Concept, Characteristics & Classification

Norms are the very foundation of social structure and therefore it is an important area of analysis in sociology. The primary task of sociology is find out the sources of social order that society exhibits. Norms are the source of social order. It is generally known as the standards of group behavior. The term social norm firstly used by Muzafer Sherif in his book entitled as The Psychology of Social Norms (1936). He used the term for first time to describe the common standards or ideas which guide members in all established groups. Social norms simply mean a group shared standards of behavior or expected modes of behavior. They are based on social values. It is a pattern setting limits on individual behavior. It is generally the blueprints for behavior. Norms determine guide, control and predict human behavior. Sociologists differently define norms which are given below:-

H. M. Johnson defines “a norm is an abstract pattern held in mind that sets certain limits for behavior.”

Robert Bierstedt defines “a norm is a rule or standard that governs our conduct in the social situations in which we participate.”

Norms means the rules we follow in our day to day life. All people expect certain forms of behavior in different spaces like the behavior in public and private places is different. It provides certain guidelines to people for maintaining social order. Norms are closely related with culture and values.

Characteristics of norms

1. **Norms are universal:** Norms are the basis of social order. Even though the norms vary from society to society it exists in all societies. Even in uncivilized and barbaric societies we find norms.

2. **Norms are related to factual order:** Two types of order are found in society that is normative order and factual order. Normative order is the order of society on the basis of norms and factual order is the order based on the actual behavior of people. Certain actual behaviors are influenced by the norms and the norms are closely related with factual order.

3. **Norms are relative to situations and groups:** Norms vary from society to society. Sometimes within the same society they differ from group to group. The norms are varying from situations and groups.

4. **Norms are normally internalized by people:** An individual are born into a society the norms already exists. The norms are learned by the individual and they are internalized. Norms become the part of an individual's life. The norms internally regulate the behavior of individual.

5. **Norms incorporate value judgments:** Values provide general guideline for behavior and it is the measures of goodness or desirability. Value judgments mean we decide some evaluations on the basis of values. Norms provide a mould for formation of values.

6. **Norms are not always obeyed by all:** Norms are the general guidelines for living society or group. The violations of certain norms are the punishable and some others are not. Norms provide a general pattern for behaving in society or group. Norms regulate the behavior of individual and maintain the order in society. Sometimes the violation of norms is punishable, such as we insult the national flag and intrude into another peoples' life etc.

Social Values

Values are the basic structure of society and it helps to maintain social order. Values simply mean the measures of goodness and desirability. It explains the way in which social processes (social interaction) operate in a

given society. They are the sources of patterned interaction. It provides general guidelines for conduct. Values are the criteria people use in assessing their daily life and activities. It also gives guidelines in arranging the activities in accordance with priorities, measuring their pleasures and pains, choosing between alternative courses of action. It provides goals or ends for members, and it provide stabilities and uniformities in group interaction. Different sociologists differently conceptualize values which are given below:

H. M. Johnson defines “values are general standards and may be regarded as higher order norms.”

Young and Mack define “Values are assumptions, largely unconscious of what is right and important.”

G. R. Leslie, R. F. Larson, at all “values as group conceptions of the relative desirability of things.”

Michael Haralambos defines “a value is a belief that something is good and worthwhile. It defines what is worth having and worth striving for.”

Classification of social norms According to Kingsley Davis :-

1. Folkways
2. Mores
3. Laws :- (I) customary (II) enacted laws
4. Institutions
5. Custom, morality and religion
6. Conventions and etiquette
7. Fashion and fad

Functions of norms & values:

Social norms, in the sense of shared standards, have great power to motivate behaviour. Societies exist because through the internalisation of norms, human agents monitor their behaviour in anticipation of sanctions, i.e., reward and punishment from other social actors.

1. They direct, regulate and control human behaviour. The process by which norms and other behavioural regulators are transformed into personality elements is called socialisation.
2. They help in satisfying our social needs.
3. They help in establishing social order by mitigating tensions and conflicts in society.
4. They act as measuring scale to evaluate social behaviour.
5. They act as ideals and objectives in certain situations.
6. . They help in predicting behaviour.