

## **MODULE 3 – UNIVERSAL VALUES**

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

At the end of this module, the students will be able to:

1. identify the different universal values;
2. explain the relationship between individual acts and carácter; and
3. discuss each stage of moral development.

### **MODULE OUTLINE:**

Basic Universal Values  
Development of Moral Character  
Stages of Moral Development

## **BASIC UNIVERSAL VALUES**

### **What is Universal Value?**

A value is a quality that weans people, things, events or situations. The term is used to designate the moral characteristics that are inherent in a subject piety, responsibility, secularism, respect, etc.

Universal, however, is an adjective that is related to what belongs or which relates to the universe. The concept refers to the set of all things created and what is common to all its kind.

Universal values are formed by implied behavioral standards that are necessary to live in a harmonious and peaceful society.

It is a notion which is not obvious to define, because a value is associated with morality and ethics, which is difficult to transpose, or refer to the level of the group. In other words, all people have certain values that come from their interior and guide their actions. Because humans do not think all the same way, values can vary from one person to the next. Universal values, however, have the particularity to be socially shared.

In addition to cultural differences, we can say that the goodness, solidarity, volunteerism and honesty are virtues you want in any country or region. So, these are universal values.

Universal values are acquired with family education and school, because the process of socialization involves that new generations internalize timeless concepts.

### **Schwartz Concept of Universal Values**

S.H. Schwartz, along with a number of psychology colleagues, has carried out empirical research investigating whether there are universal values, and what those values are. Schwartz defined ‘values’ as conceptions of the desirable that influence the way people select action and evaluate events.

Schwartz's results from a series of studies that included surveys of more than 25,000 people in 44 countries with a wide range of different cultural types suggest that there are fifty six specific universal values and ten types of universal value.

The following are each of the value types, with the specific related values.

1. **Power:** Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.
2. **Achievement:** Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.
3. **Hedonism:** Pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself.
4. **Stimulation:** Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.
5. **Self-Direction:** Independent thought and action-choosing, creating, exploring
6. **Universalism:** Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.
7. **Benevolence:** Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of the people with whom one is in frequent personal contact.
8. **Tradition:** Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide.
9. **Conformity:** Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.
10. **Security.** Safety, harmony, and stability of society, or relationships, and of self.

Schwartz also tested an eleventh possible universal value, 'spirituality' or 'the goal of finding meaning in life', but found that it does not seem to be recognized in all cultures.

### UN Charter on Universal Values

The values enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter, ***respect for fundamental human rights, social justice and human dignity, and respect for the equal rights of men and women***, serves as overarching values to which suppliers of goods and services to the UN are expected to adhere.

In a speech at Tübingen University in Germany, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan emphasized that PROGRESS, EQUAL RIGHTS, HUMAN DIGNITY, are acutely needed in this age of globalization.

Annan further stated that in the Millennium Declaration (2000), all states reaffirmed certain fundamental values as being "essential to international relations in the twenty-first century": ***freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility***.

They adopted practical, achievable targets – the Millennium Development Goals – for relieving the blight of extreme poverty and making such rights as education, basic health care and clean water a reality for all.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a collection of eight goals that focus on major issues of the underprivileged people around the globe. They were drafted by the UN in 2000 as a way to combat the most pressing issues of developing countries. The goals focus on reducing poverty, hunger, disease, and gender inequality, as well as ensuring access to water and sanitation by 2015.



The new Sustainable Development Goals aim to address the root causes of poverty and inequality in the world today. The SDGs are built from the Millennium Development Goals and aimed at continuing the latter's goals and completing the targets by 2030.

However, globalization has brought nations closer together in the sense that they are all affected by each other's action, but not in the sense that they all share the benefits and the burdens. Instead, some nations have allowed it to drive other nations further apart, increasing the disparities in wealth and power both between societies and within them.

## Basic Universal Human Values

The function of most of these basic values is to make it possible for every human to realize or maintain the very highest or most basic universal core values of life, love and happiness. The following are some of the basic universal human values:

1. **Happiness** – In the ancient past the founders of the big religions in the world have already taught about the reward for a religious life by an afterlife in Paradise, Heaven, or Nirvana etc., to enjoy there an ultimate and eternal happiness. And from this we can understand that in fact eternal happiness is the ultimate value of all religious people.
2. **Peace** – Peace has to be seen as a basic condition for freedom and happiness, for without peace there cannot be real freedom. Wherever there is fight, threat or hostility, our freedom and happiness are inhibited or totally prevented.
3. **Love** – Love in a general sense can best be defined as a feeling, or an experience of deep connectedness or oneness with any human being or living thing. Love can also be experienced as something far beyond any comprehension, and totally indescribable.
4. **Freedom** – means the experience of unrestricted, and to be as much as possible independent of the social pressure of others. A basic condition for happiness is however the experience of an inner, or mental freedom.
5. **Safety** – means free of threat, fear and survival-stress. Without safety, people tend to live out of their individual survival instinct, and long term insecurity creates an egocentric survival-mentality. Without safety, people in a society are burdened by emotional fear, helplessness, and anxiety.
6. **Intelligence** – it has been defined in many different ways to include the capacity for logic, understanding, self-awareness, learning, emotional knowledge, reasoning, planning, creativity, and problem solving. It can be more generally described as the ability to perceive or infer information, and to retain it as knowledge to be applied towards adaptive behaviors within an environment or context.

A tremendous challenge to our human intelligence is our ability to cooperate on a global scale, to avoid catastrophic global developments, like climate change, population growth, the ecology problem, and the nuclear problem. These problems of humanity show the urgent need for a “global intelligence,” and the very basic value of human intelligence on a global scale.

7. **Human respect** – The most basic principle of any social community is feelings of connectedness which come out of our perception, empathy and awareness that the other human is basically as we are ourselves. This creates trust and a friendly attitude towards the other. Out of this empathy and the awareness that the other is basically as we ourselves and the resulting feelings of connectedness we feel a natural and spontaneous respect for the other.

8. **Equality** – it originates from *aequalis*, *aequus* and *aequalitas*. These are all old French or Latin words. These French/Latin words mean even, level and equal. Thus the meaning of the word ‘equality’ used in political science corresponds to the meaning from which it originates.

Every person has certain claims to equality. There are two very important forms of legal or formal equality. One is equality before law and equal protection of law.

9. **Justice** – It is the proper administration of the law; the fair and equitable treatment of all individuals under the law. In general, justice is needed to realize and maintain our highest human values of freedom, peace, life, love and happiness; and injustice can prevent or inhibit these highest human values.
10. **Nature** – Understanding our physical dependence of nature, and our awareness of being part of it are needed to see the basic value of nature. Man is part of nature, and our very human existence is dependent of nature and its ecology. And hence our highest human values of life itself and freedom, safety, peace, love and happiness can only be realized in harmony with nature.
11. **Health** – World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as being “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” In 1986 WHO also said that the health is “a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities.” Also there is a term known as mental health and it describes either a level of cognitive or emotional well-being or an absence of a mental disorder.

## **The Human Dignity**

The English word dignity comes from the Latin word, *dignitas*, which means “worthiness.” Dignity implies that each person is worthy of honor and respect for who they are, not just for what they can do. In other words, human dignity cannot be earned and cannot be taken away. It’s an inalienable gift given to us by God, and every other good thing in life depends on the safeguarding of our fundamental dignity. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights puts it, “recognition of the inherent dignity ... of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

Dignity is the right of a person to be valued and respected for their own sake, and to be treated ethically.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL CHARACTER**

### **Introduction**

Aristotle tells us that there are good people in the world. These are those who exhibit excellences – excellences of thought and excellences of character – *ethikai aretai* – we usually translate as moral virtue or moral excellence. When we speak of a moral virtue or an excellence of character, the emphasis is on the combination of qualities that make an individual the sort of

ethically admirable person that he is. Aristotle defines virtuous character at the beginning of Book II in Nicomachean Ethics: “Excellence of character, then, is a state concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by reason and in the way in which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect.” In Aristotle’s view, good character is based on two naturally occurring psychological responses that most people experience without difficulty: our tendency to take pleasure from self-realizing activity and our tendency to form friendly feelings toward others under specific circumstances. Based on his view, virtually everyone is capable of becoming better and they are the ones responsible for actions that express (or could express) their character.

### What is Moral Character?

- Moral character or character is an evaluation of an individual’s stable moral qualities.
- The concept of character can imply a variety of attributes including the existence or lack of values such as empathy, courage, fortitude, honesty, and loyalty, or of good behaviors or habits.
- Moral character primarily refers to the assemblage of qualities that distinguish one individual from another – although on a cultural level, the set of moral behaviors to which a social group adheres can be said to unite and define it culturally as distinct from others.
- Psychologist Lawrence Pervin defines moral character as “a disposition to express behavior in consistent patterns of functions across a range of situations.”
- A moral character is defined as an idea in which one is unique and can be distinguished from others. It implies to how individuals act, or how they express themselves. In other words, it is “human excellence,” or unique thoughts of a character.
- When the concept of virtue is spoken, this would emphasize the distinctiveness or specialty, but it all involves the combination of qualities that make an individual the way he or she is. Based on this definition, the insight of a moral character can be viewed differently.

### Importance of Having a Strong Moral Character

When you have strong moral character, you’ll be judged by who you are rather than who you pretend to be. The following are some of the consequences of having a strong moral character:

1. ***Achieve peace of mind.*** People with character sleep well at night. They take great pride in knowing that their intentions and actions are honorable. People with character also stay true to their beliefs, do right to others, and always take the high ground.
2. ***Strengthen the trust.*** People with character enjoy meaningful relationships based on openness, honesty, and mutual respect. When you have good moral character, people know that your behavior is reliable, your heart is in the right place, and your word is good as gold.
3. ***Build a solid reputation.*** People with character command a rock-solid reputation. This helps them attract exciting opportunities “like a magnet.”

4. ***Reduce anxiety.*** People with character carry less baggage. They are comfortable within their own skin, and they accept responsibility for their actions. They never have to play games, waste precious time keeping their stories straight, or invent excuses to cover their behind.
5. ***Increase leadership effectiveness.*** Leaders with character are highly effective. They have no need to pull rank or resort to command and control to get results. Instead, there are effective because they're knowledgeable, admired, trusted, and respected.
6. ***Build confidence.*** People with character don't worry about embarrassment if their actions are publicly disclosed. This alleviates the need for damage control or the fear of potential disgrace as a result of indiscretions.
7. ***Become a positive role model.*** People with character set the standard for excellence. They live their life as an open book, teaching others important life lessons through their words and deeds.
8. ***Live a purpose-driven life.*** People with character live a life they can be proud of. They're driven to make a difference and to do right by others rather than trying to impress others with extravagance.
9. ***Build a strong business.*** Doing the right thing is good business. Talented people would rather work for – and customers would rather buy from – companies that do right by their people, customers, and communities.

Although you may not be able to quantify the benefits of being a good person, there's great truth in the saying, "good people finish first." Strong moral character is like a boomerang that causes good things to find their way back to you. So promise yourself to be true to yourself and do what's right, even when nobody is looking – Character matters.

### **Development of Moral Character**

If you believe developing your character is an endeavor you want to pursue, the following are some steps:

1. ***Define your core values*** – Know what is important to you by determining your values for your professional and personal life. These are the principles that are the foundation for your priorities, choices, actions, and behaviors.
2. ***Practice the habits*** – Pick one or two of the traits of good character to practice for several weeks. Write down the actions you want to take or the behaviors you define that reflect this trait, and implement them in your daily life and interactions.
3. ***Find people with character*** – Surround yourself with people who reflect the character traits you want to embrace. They will inspire and motivate you to build these traits in yourself. Try to avoid people who have a weak character and make bad decisions.

4. ***Take some risks*** – Start taking small actions toward a goal or value that involve some level of risk. When you face the possibility of failure and challenge yourself toward success, you become mentally and emotionally stronger and more committed to your principles.
5. ***Stretch yourself*** – Create high standards and big goals for yourself. Expect the best of yourself and constantly work toward that, even though you will have setbacks and occasional failures. Every stretch builds your confidence and knowledge that your character is getting stronger.
6. ***Commit to self-improvement*** – Realize that building your character is a lifelong endeavor. It is something that is practiced both on the minutiae and the defining moments of your life. There will be times your step up to the character traits you embrace and other times you falter. By remaining committed to personal growth and learning about yourself, your character will naturally improve, even though the failures.

### **Some Good Character Traits to Practice**

1. Attract the trust and respect of other people.
2. Allows you to influence others.
3. Changes your perspective about failure.
4. Sustains you through difficult times or opposition.
5. Improves your self-esteem, self-respect, and confidence.
6. Creates a foundation for happy, healthy relationship.
7. Helps you stay committed to your values and goals.
8. Improves your chance of success in work and other endeavors.

### **Character Traits that Impact One's Happiness**

Good character consists of defining your values and integrity based on time-tested principles and self-reflection and having the courage to live your life accordingly.

1. ***Integrity***
2. ***Honesty***
3. ***Loyalty***
4. ***Respectfulness***
5. ***Responsibility***
6. ***Humility***
7. ***Compassion***
8. ***Fairness***
9. ***Forgiveness***
10. ***Authenticity***
11. ***Courageousness***
12. ***Generosity***
13. ***Perseverance***
14. ***Politeness***
15. ***Kindness***
16. ***Lovingness***



17. *Optimism*
18. *Reliability*
19. *Conscientiousness*
20. *Self-discipline*

## **STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Introduction**

A major task beginning in childhood and continuing into adolescence is discerning right from wrong. Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987) extended upon the foundation that Piaget built regarding cognitive development. Kohlberg believed that moral development, like cognitive development, follows a series of stages. To develop this theory, Kohlberg posed moral dilemmas to people of all ages, and then he analysed their answers to find evidence of their particular stage of moral development.

### **Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development**

Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development, a comprehensive stage theory of moral development based on Jean Piaget's theory of moral judgment for children (1932) and developed by Kohlberg in 1958. Cognitive in nature, Kohlberg's theory focuses on the thinking process that occurs when one decides whether a behavior is right or wrong. Thus, the theoretical emphasis is on how one decides to respond to a moral dilemma, not what one decides or what one actually does.

The framework of Kohlberg's theory consists of six stages arranged sequentially in successive tiers of complexity. He organized his six stages into three general levels of moral development.

#### **Level 1: Pre-conventional level**

At the pre-conventional level, morality is externally controlled. Rules imposed by authority figures are conformed to in order to avoid punishment or receive rewards. This perspective involves the idea that what is right is what one can get away with or what is personally satisfying. Level 1 has two stages.

**Stage 1:** *Punishment/obedience orientation* – Behavior is determined by consequences. The individual will obey in order to avoid punishment.

**Stage 2:** *Instrumental purpose orientation* – Behavior is determined again by consequences. The individual focuses on receiving rewards or satisfying personal needs.

#### **Level 2: Conventional Level**

At the conventional level, conformity to social rules remains important to the individual. However, the emphasis shifts from self-interest to relationships with other people and social

systems. The individual strives to support rules that are set forth by others such as parents, peers, and the government in order to win their approval or to maintain social order.

**Stage 3:**      ***Good boy/Nice Girl orientation*** – Behavior is determined by social approval. The individual wants to maintain or win the affection and approval of others by being a “good person.”

**Stage 4:**      ***Law and order orientation*** – Social rules and laws determine behavior. The individual now takes into consideration a larger perspective, that of societal laws. Moral decision making becomes more than consideration of close ties to others. The individual believes that rules and laws maintain social order that is worth preserving.

### **Level 3: Post-conventional or principled level**

At the postconventional level, the individual moves beyond the perspective of his or her own society. Morality is defined in terms of abstract principles and values that apply to all situations and societies. The individual attempts to take the perspective of all individuals.

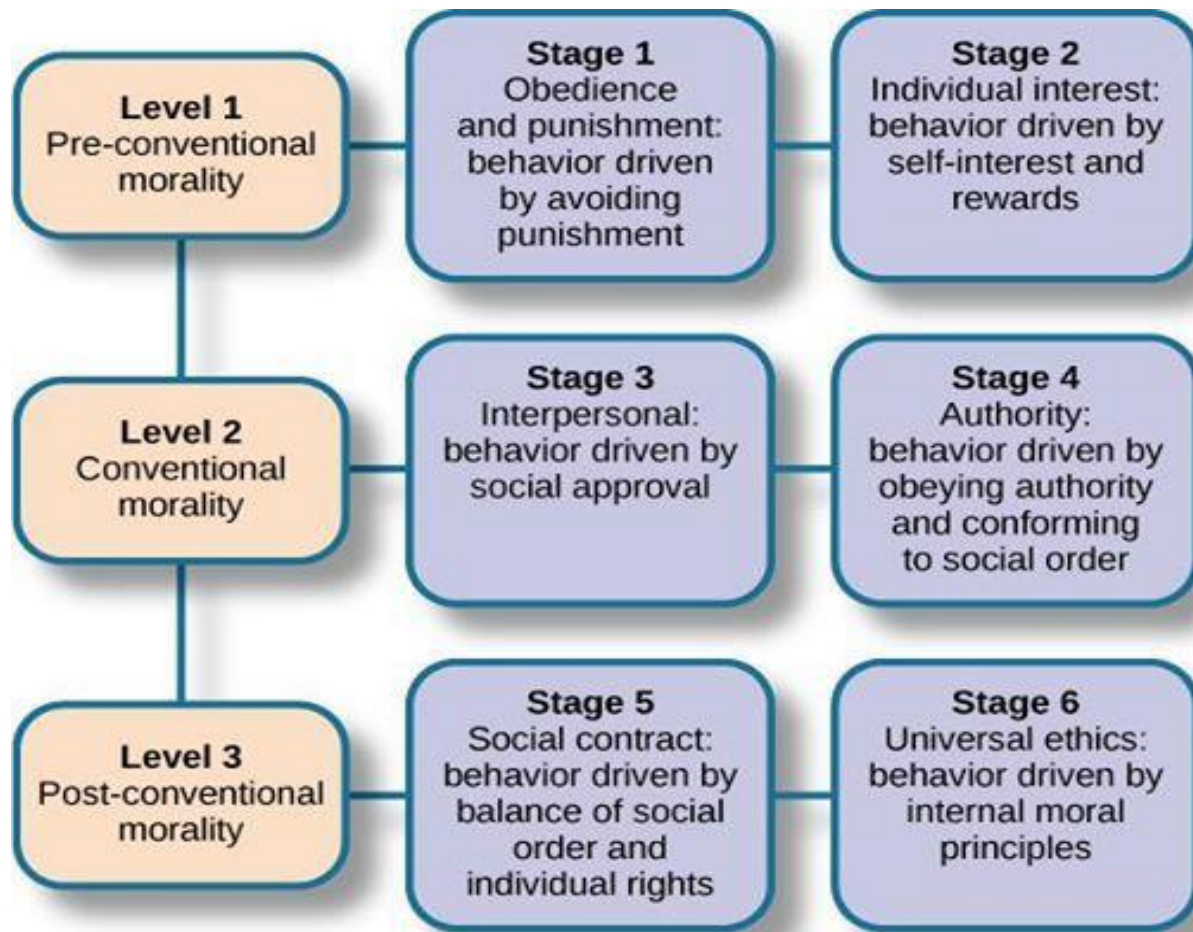
**Stage 5:**      ***Social contract orientation*** – Individual rights determine behavior. The individual views laws and rules as flexible tools for improving human purposes. That is, given the right situation, there are exceptions to rules. When laws are not consistent with individual rights and the interests of the majority, it does not bring about good for people and alternatives should be considered.

**Stage 6:**      ***Universal ethical principle orientation*** – According to Kohlberg, this is the highest stage of functioning. However, he claimed that some individuals will never reach this level. At this stage, the appropriate action is determined by one’s self-chosen ethical principles of conscience. These principles are abstract and universal in application. This type of reasoning involves taking the perspective of every person and or group that could potentially be affected by the decision.

### **Arguments Against Kohlberg’s Theory**

How does this theory apply to males and females? Kohlberg felt that more males than females move past stage four in their moral development. He went on to note that women seem to be deficient in their moral reasoning abilities. These ideas were not well received by Carol Gilligan, a research assistant of Kohlberg, who consequently developed her own ideas of moral development. In her groundbreaking book, in a “Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development,” Gilligan criticized her former mentor’s theory because it was based only on upper class white men and boys. She argued that women are not deficient in their moral reasoning – she proposed that males and females reason differently. Girls and women focus more on staying connected and the importance of interpersonal relationships.

Moral development plays an important role in our social interactions. Understanding how and why individuals make decisions regarding moral dilemmas can be very useful in many settings. Kohlberg’s theory of moral development provides a framework in which to investigate and begin to comprehend how moral reasoning develops within individuals.



Kohlberg identified three levels of moral reasoning: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Each level is associated with increasingly complex stages of moral development.

