The important assumptions underlying concept of attitudes

Attitude has been a central concept in social psychology throughout its history. An attitude is one of many constructs that social psychologists have invoked to help explain consistencies and differences in behaviour. For example, if person A responds favourably toward a particular national group and person B responds unfavourably toward that same group, the differences in behaviours can be " explained" by attributing different attitudes toward the two persons. Beginning in the 1950's, social psychologists studied areas such as: How attitudes are formed. How attitudes are changed. How attitudes relate to behavioural intentions – what people intend to do. How attitudes relate to behaviours themselves – what people actually do.

The job attitude is the middle component in a belief-evaluation-behaviour chain:

1) Beliefs about aspects of the job. " My work has long stretches with nothing to do."

2) The evaluative component, i. e., the attitude itself. " I am dissatisfied with my job."

3) Work-related behavioural intentions that follow from the attitude. " I'm intending to quit my job."

The belief, attitude, intention sequence is presumably followed by actual behaviour. For example, if I believe that my job is boring, and if my evaluation of my job is that it is unsatisfying, and I intend to quit, I may indeed actually leave my job. This traditional model suggests that

behaviours (including job performance) are largely influenced by job attitudes. Recently, this traditional model has been questioned as being too simple and some more comprehensive alternatives have been developed.

ATTITUDES & ITS COMPONENT

Attitudes are evaluative statements either in favourable or unfavourable about objects , people or events. They reflect how we feel about something.

In simple language attitude represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for an item. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event.

Example – if i say " i like my job" then that is my attitude towards work or if i say " i love my life" then that is my attitude towards my life.

Attitudes are complex. The meaning is that, the likeness or dislikeness of a person towards a particular object , person or event is simple. He may like any person or event or he may not like it but the comlex part is the reason behind it. Example if an employee says " I hate my job" then that is his attitude towards work but the reason may be very complex, so if u ask him why he hates his job he might tell you that I give my 100 % to my job, I complete all my work on time, my co workers are very happy with me, i hav a great set of frnds but my boss is very insensitive and is always taking out his frustration on me for no reason.

Hence in order to fully understand attitudes we need to consider their fundamental properties or components.

MAIN COMPONENTS OF ATTITUDES

There are three components of attitudes:

Cognitive component – The opinion or belief segment of an attitude

Affect component – The emotional or feeling segment of an attitude

Behaviour component – An intention to behave in a certain way toward someone or something

Cognitive component of an attitude arises because of the way things are. So if an employee says " my salary is low" then that is because of the way things are. Cognitive component gives rise to the affective component which is the feeling segment of an attitude. So if an employee's salary is low then he will definitely feel bad about it. It will be reflected in his statement " I am angry over how little I'm paid". Behavior component of an attitude refers to an intention to behave in a certain way towards someone or something. Continuing with the same example if the salary of the employee is low and he is feeling bad about it then he might quit his job or look for another job.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THREE COMPONENTS OF ATTITUDES

The above figure shows how the three components of an attitude are related. In this example an employee didn't get the promotion he thought he deserved, a co-worker got it instead. The employee's attitude towards his supervisor is illustrated as follows : the employee thought he deserved the promotion(cognition), the employee strongly dislikes his supervisor(affect), and the employee is looking for another job(behaviour).

In organizations attitudes are important for their behavioral component. The management has to understand the attitude of their employees , the reasons behind those attitudes and then they should take corrective measures to improve their job behavior for the benefit of the company. Example – if workers believe that their supervisors, bosses, auditors and engineers are all in conspiracy to make employees work harder for the same or less money , it makes sense to try to understand how these attitudes are formed , their relationship to actual job behavior and how they might be changed.

The Relationship between Behaviour and Attitude

Early research shows that there is a relationship between attitude and behaviour and this is logical too. It is normal that a person will watch a program that he/she likes. However in the 1960s this was challenged by some reviewers.

Let's take up the researcher Leon Festinger. Argument put forth by Leon Festinger was that attitude follows behaviour. Most of us have experienced that people often change what they say to match what they do. For example, take a simple case of someone buying a car he/she disapproved of (speak about someone saying never to buy Tata cars and he/she is gifted one then there is all support for that company). This is the effect of what is called the Cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive Dissonance may be defined as the incompatibility between the attitude and behaviour or two behaviours. Leon Festinger says that such a difference always creates discomfort and people usually try to mitigate it.

Besides this, a stable state is tried to be achieved to attain minimum of

dissonance. This can be reduced to a great extent by either altering the discomfort or the attitude.

Tobacco executives provide the best illustration in this case. The questions that arise in the mind is that, how do they cope up with the ongoing barrage of data linking smoking to negative health outcomes?

The common three methods that they deploy are, either they deny the reports, or they articulate the benefits of tobacco or they accept the negatives and hence quit their job. They can acknowledge that there are negative aspects of tobacco products but ultimately people are going to smoke regardless so they are promoting tobacco as a freedom of choice.

Few other examples can be cheating to pay less of income tax or asking kids to floss their teeth when they don't do so themselves.

Three important dependency factors are present to cope with dissonance.

Importance of the element creating it.

The degree of its influence, i. e. motivation can be used to reduce dissonance if the cause is important and a person thinks that it is within his/her control.

High rewards accompanying high dissonance tends to reduce the tension.

What these factors describe is that no one will reduce dissonance on their own, only if the issue underlying is important or it is perceived to be

controllable or the rewards are significant then one will be under the tension to reduce dissonance.

Many a times, attitudes are used after the facts to make sense out of an action that has already occurred. When asked about an attitude toward some object, individuals recall their behavior relevant to that object and then infer their attitude from their past behavior.

Researches have proved that attitudes predict future behaviour and there are certain moderating variables which can strengthen this relationship, some of them being:

Importance of the attitude: Attitude reflects fundamental values. It relates to the self interest or identification with the group. Behaviour is an outcome of the attitude that individuals consider the most important.

Correspondence to behaviour: Specific attitude tends to specific behaviour. For example, job satisfaction can be used to assess the general behaviour of an employee, i. e. whether he or she is motivated or not.

Accessibility: The more the people talk about their attitude on a subject the more likely they are to remember it and accordingly shape their behaviour.

Existence of social pressures: Existence of social pressures is related directly to the dissonance observed. Hence an increase in the existing social pressure results in an increase in the dissonance. For example, people carrying out research of the affects of smoking don't discourage smoking in their office.

Direct experience with the attitude: Many a times it has been observed that individuals have a direct personal experience with the attitude. It depends upon the criteria of the work experience. For instance people at the same post are more favourable to predict their outcome than a fresher.

JOB ATTITUDES

Job attitudes may be defined as " Work related attitudes that tap positive or negative evaluations that employees hold about aspects of their work environment"

Job attitudes can be broadly categorized as Job Satisfaction, Job involvement, Psychological Empowerment, Organizational Commitment, Perceived Organizational support (POS) and Employee engagement.

JOB SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction refers to as " A positive feeling about ones job". An employee's attitude towards the job is related directly to the level of job satisfaction. It can also be expressed as " An employee's cognitive and affective evaluation of his or her job."

Job satisfaction can be considered to be a collection of feelings, beliefs and thoughts about how to behave with respect to one's current job. It can be determined as a result from evaluation of certain job's characteristics namely:

Work Situation

Attitude towards the job depends primarily on the work itself, the physical working conditions, working hours, pay and job security in general.

Social Influence

Coworkers, groups and organizational culture also affects the attitude of an employee towards his/her job.

Personality

Personality refers to the enduring ways a person has of feeling, thinking and behaving.

Values – A set of intrinsic and extrinsic work values influences the way people and groups behave in an organization.

As seen in the above diagram, a proper blend of skills and challenges are required to achieve job satisfaction. A lesser skilled employee with huge no. of challenges feels stressful about his job as the work exceeds his threshold capacity. Similarly a highly skilled employee with very few or no challenges starts feeling bored of his work.

A very good example of high job satisfaction can be observed in " Google". The major reasons observed for having a high percentage of job satisfaction are:

Opportunity to work, innovate

Stress-free environment- Employees have a relaxed ambience with permission to get their family members, pets to work.

Leadership – Google has motivating leaders available that help in improvising the outputs achieved from its employees.

Higher Work Standards – The quality of work and Quality of Service (QOS) delivered at Google is quite high, which makes the employee feel good about his/her work.

Fair Rewards – Employees at Google are fairly rewarded for their efforts in any field, they receive high incentives and bonuses which helps the firm in maintaining a positive attitude of the employees.

Adequate Authority- Employees have been given adequate authority to get involved in decision making.

JOB INVOLVEMENT

Job Involvement refers to as " The degree to which a person indentifies with a job, actively participates in it and considers performance important to self-worth."

" Bharti Airtel Limited" has a high level of job involvement in its organization. It encourages its employees to get involved in decision making by having group discussions and group meetings comprising of individuals of all grades. Airtel ensures that the employees are given the discretion to innovate and give their opinions/ideas and their reviews are looked forward to.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

Psychological empowerment refers to the " Employee's belief in the degree to which they impact their work environment, their competence, the meaningfulness of their job, and the perceived autonomy in their work."

High levels of psychological empowerment are related to organizational citizenship and job performance. Generally psychologically empowered feel loyal to the organization and maintain long term relation with the firm and deliver efficiently.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Organisational commitment refers to the " Degree to which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization."

Nowadays, organizational commitment is given lower importance. Organizational commitment is being replaced by " Occupational Commitment" where employees are more loyal to the occupation they are in and lesser to the organization they are in. This has resulted in a high employee turnover ratio in firms.

Organizational Commitment can be Affective, Continuance or Normative in nature.

Affective Commitment refers to the " Emotional attachment to the organization and belief in its values". The concept can be explained by the common " Kissing the Badge" event present in sports where the players kiss the badge to show their affection to the organization/team and belief in its

vested interests. Another example of affective commitment are organizations like PETA, PFA (People for Animals) where the employees are emotionally attached to animals and blindly believe in the goals of the organization.

Continuance Commitment refers to the " Perceived economic value of remaining with an organization compared to leaving it". The principle can be compared to the case of an employee leaving a well paid job which might directly affect his/her family. Many a time's employees are committed to their organization because of better economic value of the organization.

Normative Commitment refers to the " Obligation to remain with the organization for moral or ethical reasons". For example the Founder/Initiator of a company/project leaving the organization may feel it would leave the company/project in a lurch. Imagine Steeve Jobs (Apple Inc. founder) leaving Apple Inc to join its competitor like Microsoft, Google. He would feel quite awkward to leave the organization he had started and would prefer to remain in Apple Inc. itself due to moral or ethical reason.

In the previous years, apart from the various job attitudes already discussed, two new attitudes have been classified. These are more or less advancement on the theory developed over the years and give the latest development in research of job attitude of employees towards organization. These are:

PERCIEVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) refers to employees' perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well being. POS has been found to have important

consequences employee performance and well-being. POS is generally thought to be the organization's contribution to a positive reciprocity dynamic with employees, as employees tend to do better.

Research on POS began in 1986 with the observation that managers were interested in promoting employees' commitment to the organization, but employees were interested in the organization's commitment to them. Thus, commitment is a two-way street. Research on POS began to accelerate in the mid 1990's and is now proceeding at a rapid pace, with over 325 scholarly studies on the topic.

POS is typically measured with the eight-item perceived organizational support scale. Respondents are asked to indicate the extent the extent to which they agree with the following statements on a seven-point scale.

My organization cares about my opinions.

My organization really cares about my well-being.

My organization strongly considers my goals and values.

Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.

My organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part.

If given the opportunity, my organization would take advantage of me. (item is reverse-coded)

My organization shows very little concern for me. (item is reverse-coded)

My organization is willing to help me, if I need a special favor.

These ratings on a 7 point scales can help managers identify the attribute of POS in an employee.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

An " engaged employee" is one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about, his or her work, and thus will act in a way that furthers their organization's interests. Thus we can define employee engagement as a measureable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization which profoundly influences their willingness to learn & perform at work.

Looking at ten C's of employee engagement:

Connect: For engaging employees, they must be shown about their value to the organisation. Employee engagement is directly related to the feeling that employees have about their relationship with their boss.

Career: In order to engage employee, it's the duty of a leader to provide its employees with opportunities and challenges for career advancement. This can be done by providing rotating jobs to top talents and by assigning stretch goals to employees.

Clarity: Employees must be clear about the objectives and the requirements of the firm. To obtain this, leaders must properly inform them and must have a proper communication channel. The organizational success is directly

related to the level of communication within an organisations and the extent of clarity of individuals about their goals.

Convey: Effective managers generally clarify their expectations about employees and usually employ a mechanism for providing them with feedback regarding their performance within the organization.

Congratulate: To engage the employees, exceptional leaders give recognition quite regularly so as to motivate the employees.

Contribute: In many organisations, good leaders help employees feel and see their contribution to the organization's success. Employees feel it quite important to know whether their input matters and how much they are contributing to the organization's success.

Control: Employees usually value control over the flow and pace of their jobs and leaders can help them by creating new set of opportunities for employees to implement this control. When employees are given opportunities to get involved in decision making process, it often helps in reducing their stress and also helps in creating a new level of trust and a better organisational culture wherein employees want to take ownership of the problems faced by the organisation and are quite keen to find their solutions.

Collaborate: Researches have proved that team work amongst employees with trust and cooperation amongst the team members leads to better performance as compared to individuals and teams having poor inter-personal relationships. A good leader ensures about team-building activities

in order to engage employees and tries to create an environment of trust and collaboration.

Credibility: A good manager must ensure and strive to maintain the organisation's reputation and must him self demonstrate and enforce high ethical standards within the organisation.

Confidence: A good leader helps in creating high levels of confidence in a company by setting up examples of high ethical and performance standards.

CASE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN SUN MICROSYSTEMS

Employee engagement is of utmost importance for any organization, especially the giants, as their products are unique and frequent dissatisfaction of employee may lead to lower work efficiency. Therefore, companies take very strict measures to curb this inefficiency. Taking an example of Sun Microsystems, the company is spread over the world at various locations. This has resulted into flexible working practices. This may be a born in disguise for some employees but many feel its ill effects of isolation and loneliness and increase personal distractions. Therefore the challenge faced is how to keep the employees engaged. For this purpose, Sun Microsystems adapts various techniques in their daily routines.

At Sun, the concept of employee engagement starts right from the top:

Net system called WSUN, and through forums, the CEO interacts with the employees. It is used to sustain an active an ongoing dialogue on the

corporate goals and direction. In interactive through the WSUN, he expects to get feedbacks and responses from every employee.

Seniors managers also play their part of interacting by creating blogs and posting information which every employee can read and comment on.

As company policy, it's a rule to hold six ' town halls' within a year, conducted by the business unit heads across the globe.

A far sense of company's goals and mission is maintained by organizing various events and competition all year round, regionally to maintain the excitement and passion within the employees. Even the families of the employees are invited to such events, so as to create a big SUN family across the globe.

This example shows how the organization takes care of the emotional attachment and engagement of employees.

Techniques used for measuring " Attitude" temperamental

The basic techniques to measure attitude of employees are

SURVEYS: survey and questionnaires provide employees with various options to present his or her feeling about certain issues, or organization as a hole. Analyzing these survey can give an insight into the employee well being, beliefs, needs and problems, and thus help in identifying solution for many. The surveys can be of fill in the blanks type or yes or no types, or point ratings. These surveys can be also done for specific departments or issues in the company.

Through MIS: as various management information systems are used by every organization and every employee is directly or indirectly involved with the MIS, it is possible to find out employee efficiency and engagement by simply looking at the work records for employees.

REPORTS: evaluations are conducted by the organization, on regular basis for various purposes. The seniors give job satisfaction reports and the juniors can also submit their concerns with seniors. If notices carefully, engagement of every employee can be measured assuming the information by his seniors and juniors is unbiased.

Workplace Diversity effects on Employee Attitude

Today, no one business can run without support from others. Especially in the large scale organizations, influence of the global phenomenon is direct. Thus the infiltration of other cultures, countries, economies is advent and cannot be restricted if growth of the organization has to be increased substantially.

Thus, the global communication has lead to organizations becoming international and thus, different cultured employees have to deal directly with remotely similar belief people in the organization. Thus it can leads to a negative attitude in the organization and create differences and thus lead to groupism. This could result due to various racial, communal, regional, religious and gender factors, which are human perceptions and cannot be seen and checked before hand until stumbled upon. For this purpose, global organizations have to be very vigilant, so that this kind of discomfort can be

prevented. Various organizations provide training and interactive sessions, just for bonding between employees.

Organizations like IBM make sure that every office has some kind of diversity, and employees find unity in diversity.

IBM says " Diversity in IBM means welcoming all people to the workplace regardless of factors unrelated to job performance. IBM's definition of diversity includes all human characteristics that make us unique as individuals. It includes everyone and excludes no one. Race, gender, geographic origin, culture, lifestyle, age, disability, sexual orientation, economic status, marital status, and religion are just some of the characteristics that define us as people. Our needs are also characteristics that define us as people, for example, the need to take care of our children or aging parents. Diversity is the bridge between the workplace and the marketplace. Integrating these two is one of our key diversity imperatives. "

Thus this is a very important phenomenon and diversity is to be encouraged in an organization for better and efficient work practices.