

Free attitudes- how they are formed and influenced essay sample

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



“ Don’t show me attitude!” is a common phrase that one can hear being thrown every now and then at people who try to go against someone’s wishes. This phrase by itself explains what attitude actually is- a combination of belief and emotion that pushes an individual to react to a situation, person, object or group in a positive or negative manner. In simple terms, when a person ‘ shows attitude’, he or she is actually summarizing their evaluation of the situation and is predicting a future course of action based on it (Coon and Mitterer, 2013).

The Three Components of Attitude

This implies that attitude comprises of three components, namely, beliefs, emotions and actions. The belief component of an attitude refers to an individual’s personal belief about a person, an object or a situation. The emotional component is the feeling expressed by the individual to the person, object or situation whereas, the action component is a reaction given by the individual as a response to either of the above three. Together, the three components of attitude help individuals to adjust to the social world and urge them to act in a certain manner (Coon and Mitterer, 2013).

How Attitudes are Formed

It is common knowledge that different people behave differently in different situations. This is because individuals acquire attitudes based on the social world they are introduced to. Attitudes can be formed by people in different ways. To a great extent, child rearing vis-à-vis parents’ behavior helps fashion the attitudes of children. Sometimes attitudes are acquired through direct contact i. e. personal experiences whereas, at other times, the manner

of reacting to a situation is learned simply through chance conditioning. While these two ways of acquiring attitudes depend on the individual alone, another method i. e. interaction with others, largely relies on what kind of people the individual is interacting with in the society. In fact, it is this group membership that contributes considerably to the formation of attitudes in people, for human beings are after all social animals (Coon and Mitterer, 2013).

How Society Influences Attitude

Indeed, attitudes are not only formed by the society, but are also influenced by it. For example, if a person moves along with people with good habits, he or she automatically inculcates these good behaviors. In this regard, the media such as the internet, television and newspapers deserve a special mention as they have the potential to skillfully manipulate people's attitudes, the best example being that of violence on the media propagating violent tendencies in the young (Coon and Mitterer, 2013).

Social power i. e. the influential capacity of the society can leverage an individual's or a group's attitude significantly. Influence from the society comes from the mere presence of people around individuals or groups and the fact that people or groups of people do not want to risk being rejected by the society and losing their identity. This forces a person or a group to conform, comply or obey the demands of another person or a larger group that is in an authoritative position viz. a 'follow the leader' tendency.

Generally, the more important the society, the greater will be its influence on an individual or a group (Coon and Mitterer, 2013).

An individual or a group's attitude and each of its components can also be affected through persuasion, conformity or bias. Persuasion refers to deliberately causing a change in the attitude, a trick very often used by politicians and businessmen. This, in particular leverages the emotional component of attitude as the idea behind persuasion is to change the attitude of a person by changing his or her feelings towards an object or a situation (Leyton, 2013). Conformity of attitude specially becomes a necessity in group settings where the pressure is to 'fit in' rather than to 'stand out'. In such a case, the person will, without any external pressure adjust his or her attitude to the liking of the group to which he or she belongs. Conformity typically affects the action component of attitude as sans pressure it pushes people to act according social norms. Finally, bias affects attitude by either steering people away from certain beliefs or by allowing them to gravitate towards them. Bias largely affects the belief component of attitude. This is particularly true in the case of parental bias that influences the prejudices and preferences their child develops (Coon and Mitterer, 2013).

If attitude and its three components can be influenced by the society and affected by persuasion, conformity and bias, this means that attitudes can be changed. Hence, if there is dissonance i. e. contradictions between an individual's thoughts, perceptions and self-image, then efforts must be made to reduce the dissonance (Johnston, n. d.); in other words, the individual must attempt to change his or her attitude for the better.

References

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