

Theories of Attitude: Implications for Head Teachers

Zainulabdin Rind¹

¹Department of Education, University of Sufism & Modern Sciences
Corresponding author's email: zain10763@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyse theories of attitude and future implications for headteachers. Attitudes are positive or negative feelings, perceptions, or evaluations of people, objects, events, or issues and problems. Attitude can explain human actions, in the current circumstances, changes occur in every aspect of life whether it is in the living way or the way we react. Head Teachers must work hard to educate students on the basis of emotional and Ego levels because the change of attitudes starts from these two core points. If the curriculum is more practical and easier to adopt, we are very sure that the proportion of students who transfer negatively will decrease. A good education system will only give an excellent candidate with an excellent attitude, but if the system is very on the spot in reality, without any emotions or interactions, it will be more popular in future education because of chances of turning worse due to the wrong attitude is more.

Keywords: *Attitude, cognitive, learning*

1. Introduction

If we go through history, we will come to know that there were psychologists who worked on emotions and behaviours. The world is working on the attitude of the people. According to Cherry (2021), Attitudes are the results of experiences and have a powerful effect on behaviour. In psychology, an attitude can be defined as a tendency to observe a particular response or object with a particular category of preference (Stangor, 2014). Attitudes are generally understood as mental evaluation (which includes rational evaluation of costs and benefits). Furthermore, attitude is an organization of relatively permanent belief, feeling and behavioural tendencies toward a society that is important to objects, groups, events, or symbols or a general feeling or evaluation that might be positive or negative about some person, objects, or problems (Vaughan & Hogg, 1995). According to Schneider (1988), attitudes are responses to people, events, and objects. It includes your thinking and feelings (positive and negative) about the object of attitudes. Furthermore, he also said that this attitude can guide our experience and determine the impact of experience on our behaviour.

In addition, Baron and Byrne (1987) also gave a similar attitude definition that, it can be defined as people (including their own), object or problem of lasting and general evaluations. The instant feeling is not an attitude. Vaughan and Hogg (1995) issued a statement that attitude is permanent-duration and circumstances. In a moment the feeling is not an attitude, if you come across some simple feelings, it does not count as an attitude. According to Lopper (2006), attitude is a way of thinking that tends to be optimistic and pessimistic which exerts a strong impact on people's reaction to a particular situation or things. Arul (2012) pointed out that attitudes are not only of interest to psychologists but also of everyone is involved in any persuasion or developmental activity in any one way or another. It is essential to identify the attitudes so positive attitudes can be created for the students so that their learning can be facilitated. Positive attitudes enable a person to solve problems quickly, and negative attitudes hinder scientific research efforts in both technical proficiency and interpersonal aspects of research.

Zan and Martino (2007) mentioned that attitude includes feelings, thinking, behaviours, and interactions. Many researchers and psychologists have been interested in attitude as a subject of interest. Some researchers considered it exciting and mysterious. It can serve as a human shield or

weapon. It is important to have a special attitude in life to help human beings stay calm and to know the things around them. It plays an important role in determining the individuals' personalities. It also affects the people who have experienced an event or behaviour and it can also influence people's social interactions.

From the definition, it can be seen that attitudes are only salient objects related to society. In short, attitudes are positive or negative feelings, perceptions, or evaluations of people, objects, events, or issues and problems. Attitudes include the general way in which people are important to society. Suppose, if you have been bitten by a cat, you do not like to feel that time, the emotional response is just a feeling. However, if you are tired of the cat experience you hate all the cats, and then your cat's hatred is considered your attitude to the cat.

2. Theories of Attitude

Eagle, Chaiken, and O'Keefe, (1993; 1990) stated that several attitudinal variation classification schemes have been proposed in the literature and most of them are similar. A theory of attitude is divided into three categories:

- A. Theories of Consistency
- B. Functional Theory
- C. Social Judgment Theory

2.1. Theories of Consistency

The basic idea of these theories is for the individual to have a consistent mood. There must be consistency between attitudes and behaviours. Inconsistency leads to discomfort, allowing an individual to adjust their attitude or behaviour to reduce conflict to regain balance or to have a consistent mood. According to O'Keefe (1990), balance theory was one of the oldest consistency theories.

(A). *Balance Theory*

This theory was given by Heider in 1958. He stated that there are three major components of this theory. The perceiver, another person, and an object and relationship between them. Each component may have a positive or negative relationship with the other. If the relationship is in a positive algebraic result, the attitude is balanced. For example; (+) (+) (+) = + or (-) (+) (-) = +. If the relationship is in negative algebraic results, the attitudes are unbalanced. For example; (-) (+) (+) = -. Relationships are positive or negative, based on cognitive perceptions (Heider, 1958). When these results are not achieved (all relationships are negative, or you have a negative attitude toward an object, person, event, or another issue that your friend likes), there is an imbalance. Heider believes people like to balance the state with imbalanced people because the imbalance leads to stress and unpleasant feeling. This theory does not take into account the strength of attitudes between people and objects in the triad. It is only classified as positive or negative relationships. Another disadvantage is that this theory only deals with relationships between three entities

(B). *Affective-Cognitive Consistency Theory*

This theory was given by Rosenberg in 1956. According to Simonson and Maushak (2001), this theory explores the correlation between attitudes and thinking. Furthermore, he argues that when an individual's attitude towards other persons, events, or objects is considered to be in an unstable state when their knowledge of events, people or thing is inconsistent. This theory shows that the effective factor of an attitude might be changed by the new information (change in the cognitive factor) by persuading the message to change. Once the new information has been dealt with by an individual, he or she will accept a change of attitude, to bring the integration of knowledge and influence into harmony. Zimbardo & Leippe (1991) stated that message processing requires audience attention and understanding of the message, and then acceptance and maintenance. This

theory proposes that by first changing the cognitive factor by providing new information the affective factor of the attitudinal system can be changed.

(C). Cognitive Dissonance Theory

This theory was presented by Leon Festinger in 1957. Dissonance means discomfort or mental stress. It is about the inconsistency of thoughts when we think of two ideas that are inconsistent with each other which is dissonance. According to Smith and Ragan (1999) when a person is convinced to act in a manner that does not consistent with the pre-existing attitudes, he or she may change attitudes to reduce dissonance.

- (i) Change a thought: Taking the above-mentioned example the regular smoker who thinks smoking is bad is also a regular smoker. It can change one of their beliefs and go on to say that smoking is not so bad and it is not unhealthy, so he changes the thought and stayed at one thought.
- (ii) Change behaviour: In this case, the smoker might say well if I acknowledged the smoking is bad then I stop smoking change in one of the behaviours that are related to inconsistency.
- (iii) Add a thought: In this case, someone might say yes smoking is bad; yes, I smoke regularly but also do a lot of healthy behaviour. I exercise a lot; take fruits and milk etc. regularly.
- (iv) Trivialize the inconsistency: In this case, smoking is bad and I smoke but don't get the care that is another way to resolve the dissonance.

2.2. Functional Theory

The functional theory of attitude was given by Daniel Katz (1960). He suggests that attitudes are formed according to how a particular person or things meet our needs. He believes that attitude is determined by the function they serve for us. People take a certain attitude because they help them to achieve their primary goals. Daniel Katz (1960) outlines four functional areas which are mentioned below in detail.

- I. Knowledge: The first function of attitude is knowledge which helps people make sense of the world. Attitudes and values govern our social world: quickly categorize people, places, and events. Attitudes provide a standard for simplifying & organizing understanding of the complex and fuzzy environment. For example; there can be a positive attitude about the Prime minister as they fulfil his political policies in meeting their needs. When students were asked about the Prime minister's education policy their reply was positive because he has distributed many laptops to the students.
- II. Utilitarian: Such type of attitude recognizes the doctrine of behaviourism, which encourages people to reap rewards and avoid punishments from their environment. This type of attitude helps to ensure positive outcomes or prevent negative outcomes. Eagly & Chaiken (1993) pointed out that Children often feel positive about December, as they relate it to holidays and gifts. If we are the business we like political parties that will advance our economic growth, if we are unemployed we are in favour of the parties that will lower our taxes and we are in favour of one that will maximize the benefits of social welfare. According to Bednar & Levie (1993), attitude research in this field did not produce a set of categories related to the attitudes of psychological needs that's why the usefulness of this theory is limited by the fact.
- III. Ego-defensive: In this type of function Katz emphasizes the principles of psychoanalytic that the attitude might be a defence mechanism that an individual use against unpleasant emotions that do not want to consciously acknowledge. For instance, A Student may think research is difficult, and I do not like research; that is why I do not want to do M.Phil. Or

a student might think; only intelligent people do M.Phil, and I do M.Phil, so I must be really smart; that is why I like research. Another example is a young woman who decides to break up with her husband and adopted a very hostile attitude even she may still have feelings for the husband because it strengthens resolve and allows to end the relationship. Research studies have shown that attitudes associated with self-concepts tend to be ego-defensive and ego defence is particularly difficult to change (Zimbardo & Leippe 1991).

- IV. Value Expression: This function recognizes the significance of self-expression and self-actualization. It also helps us express core values and cherished beliefs Attitude is a means of expressing personal values and other aspects of self-concept. For instance, if one considers oneself as a Catholic, one can consolidate that image by using Catholic beliefs and values. Another example is that we have an enlightened conservative or a self-image and we influence the mindset that we believe in such core values.

The fundamental theme of functional theories is that changing attitudes requires understanding the motivations or their function to individuals. Understanding the impact of an attitude on a person helps to guide the designer of the persuasive message that wants to change attitude. The theory of functional attitudes also explains why attitudes change. Attitude changes, it no longer plays its function, and individuals feel blocked or depressed. According to Katz's point of view, changes in attitudes are not changed by changing people's information or perception about objects, but by changing the individual's underlying motivational and personality needs. For example, as your social status increases, your attitudes to the old car may change and you need to better reflect your new state. For that problem, your attitude toward your old friends may also change.

2.3. Social Judgment Theory

This theory is a persuasion theory given by Sheirf and Hovland (1961) and is different from other consistency theories of attitude. It is useful for explaining why people develop strong attitudes or opinions on social issues. It also explains why persuasion is often difficult to accomplish and it offers a common-sense approach for trying to persuade in the real world. The theory of Social judgment is an attempt to apply the principles of justice to the study of attitude change. According to Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall (1965), the initial attitude of an individual is the basis for judging the exchange of relevant attitudes. Opinions are evaluated on this reference point and placed on the attitude continuum. The point of view that best represents the individual's own opinion is in the latitude of acceptance. Those opinions considered the most offensive are placed in the latitude of rejection.

In short, the social judgment theory of attitude change is based on the study of research literature and by practice. Recently, on the other hand, researchers have questioned how the basic principles of social judgment theory and the principles of the theory are interrelated. The important thing is because it shows the importance of people's previous attitudes. Most of the other approaches are just mild with the previous attitudes. Wood (1982) mentioned that newer theories transform social judgment principles as covariates and control variables into experimental design.

2.4. Learning Theories

This part can be more correctly called behavioural attitude theories. One of the main commonalities of these theories is that they all emphasize the stimulating characteristics of communication situations. Staat (1967) reflected the thought of classical conditioning and almost exclusively focused on the formation of the attitude. Events in the environment produce emotional reactions in individuals. Since the new stimulus is always paired with the old stimulus, the new stimulus develops the power to generate emotional responses in the individual (O'Keefe, 1990).

Hovland, Janis, and Kelly (1953) attached great importance to the Learning theories of attitude change. They pointed out that unless one experiences some new learning experience, opinions will often persist. Acceptance of the suggested answers depends on opportunities for mental rehearsal or attitude response practices, and the number of incentives included in the communication. Hovland and his colleagues hypothesized that when people deal with persuasive message content,

they rehearsed the attitude response of the message's recommendation and their initial attitude. To change attitudes, more practice is needed.

In Yale's attitude change model, the focus is attention, understanding, and acceptance. Before accepting, the individual should pay attention and understand the communication. In this stage of attention and understanding, individuals have the opportunity to practice the recommended new opinions. Bem (1967) used the Skinner's approach to study attitude changes, whose main hypothesis reflected the viewpoint that attitudes were learned from previous environmental experiences. He pointed out that due to a lack of direct knowledge of the internal stimuli available to learners, people trying to change attitudes.

3. Implications for Head Teachers

Attitude cannot predict behaviours directly. To solve problems, it is often necessary to predict the behaviour of the people. "Attitude can explain human actions", in the current circumstances, changes occur in every aspect of life whether it is in the living way or the way we react. In this kind of change, if the result is good we call it Positive change, and on the other side of the result is bad we call it Negative change. For those observable actions, we assume positive and negative attitudes. Head Teachers at the school level are change agents and always keen for changes in the school. Therefore, changing trends directly affect institutions and students because they hold the future of the country. Many people believe that attitudes are more likely to have nothing to do with behaviour or are only slightly related to behaviours because early theories presented the relationship between attitude and behaviour as a one-way association. However, if the attitude itself is affected or influenced by past behaviour, then this connection is bound to be more complicated. Researchers describe changes in students' attitudes, so they make very brief responses through their behaviour, so learning theories are very important for predicting student behaviour. Head Teachers must work on the behaviour of the teachers and students in the schools. He should work on the punctuality, discipline, and emotions of teachers. Teachers must pay attention to the student's Moral, Intellectual, Physical, emotional development, and social interaction of the students. They must convert students' bad habits into good ones.

Head Teachers must work on the school's priority skill areas such as students' social, moral, and intellectual skills. Pro-social skills training should be provided in the target area during the month. Different teaching and non-teaching staff members and volunteer must lead the different tasks and they should be free to choose any way they like to teach skills in schools. They should provide role-playing methods, lead art projects such as posters showing skills, or offer to give speeches in their targeted areas. The plan should emphasize self-monitoring and internal inspections in monitoring students' behaviour. Appropriate behaviours should be broken down into teachable units, so the students can build on what they have learned.

The school-wide assembly should be held at the end of each month to provide an opportunity to issue certificates for students who have shown improvement in their current interests and skills. Parents should support the plan by providing opinions at school meetings and reviewing goals for the month with their children at home.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the above analysis of attitude theories is that changes in attitude can be modified internally so that the external behaviours cannot be controlled to handle. We must provide a common environment for all students. Perseverance varies due to the above factors. The student should be able to easily recognize the good and bad environment; just like being forced to accept a negative behaviour change. When the situation exceeds a safe level, he/she can immediately change himself. Students must be educated on Emotional and Ego levels because the change of attitudes starts from these two core points. If the curriculum is more practical and easier to adopt, we are very sure that the proportion of students who transfer negatively will decrease. A good education system will only give an excellent candidate, but if the system is very on the spot in reality, without any emotions or interactions, it will be more popular in future education because

of chances of turning worse due to the wrong attitude is more. The best system for direct learning should also be updated to a more user-friendly system and make the student sincerer than that of other forms of learning because they not only teach but also care about shaping them for their future.

5. References

- Aect (2001). *The Handbook of Research for Educational communities and Technology*. Retrieved from <http://www.aect.org/edtech/ed1/34/34-03.html>.
- AlGhamdi, K et al., (2014). Perceptions, attitudes, and practices toward research among senior medical students. *Saudi Pharmaceutical Journal*, (22), pp 113-117.
- BONNER A. & SANDO J. (2008). Examining the knowledge, attitude, and use of research by nurses. *Journal of Nursing Management*, issue: No. 16, pp. 334-343.
- Brien L. Bolin et al., (2014). Impact of Research Orientation on Attitudes Toward Research of Social Work Students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 48(2), 223- 243.
- Cherry, K. (2021). Attitudes and Behaviour in Psychology. <https://www.verywellmind.com/attitudes-how-they-form-change-shape-behavior->
- D. Katz. (1960). "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, pp. 163-204.
- Jr guan et al., (2014). Attitude and anxiety towards Research, Its Influence on the students' achievement in the course. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education* 3(4).
- Kumar, S. (2015). Attitude towards Research among M. Ed Students. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, Vol: 2 (Issue: 8,), pp. 85-87.
- Maio & Haddock. (2009). Chapter two: The Three witches of Attitudes. Page No. 24.
- McLeod, S. (2009). Attitudes and Behaviour, retrieved from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/attitudes>.
- Michael Orey. (2015). "Theories of Attitude Formation and Change." *Introduction to Emerging Perspectives on Learning, Teaching, and Technology*.
- O'Keefe, D. J. (1990). *Social Judgment Theory*. In *Persuasion: Theory and research*, 29- 44. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Overwalle & Siebler (2005). A Connectionist Model of Attitude Formation and Change. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 9 (3), 231-274.
- Papanastasiou, E. (2014). Rasch rating scale analysis of the Attitudes toward Research scale. *Journal of Applied Measurement*, 15 (2).
- Sherif, M., Sherif, C., & Nebergall, R. (1965). *Attitude and attitude change: The Social Judgment-Involvement Approach*. Philadelphia, PA: W. B. Saunders.
- Savitha, R., & Kannadas, P. (2014). Attitude and Behavioural Problems among Students. 6(9), 847-852.