



PATNA UNIVERSITY
M.A (PSYCHOLOGY) SEMESTER-1
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY (CC2)
TOPIC: FORMATION OF ATTITUDE

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- There are three process in attitude formation. It is similar to how beliefs are formed. They include:-
- **Past experience:** People develop attitude on the basis of their past experience.
- **Available Information:** A piece of information that is happy will influence the beliefs. This will consequently affect the attitude formation. For eg: If an employee hear about the promotion of many people in an industry his attitude changes.
- **Generalization** : Generalization comes from similar situations or events. Eg: No one in a job is promoted. This will give a general feeling that there is no promotion.
- The most important thing to remember about attitude formation is that it is learned. Family, friends, experiences co-workers, are involved in attitude formation.

- Attitudes are not innate. They are learned through the process of social learning or through social comparison. Also, some research findings have indicated that genetic factors play a role in Attitude formation.
- **1. Social Learning-** People learn Attitudes by interacting with others or observing their behaviour. Social learning occurs through the following processes:-
- **Classical Conditioning-** It is learning based on association. When two stimuli occur together, they come to be associated with each other. In this learning, one stimulus, initially neutral, acquires the capacity to evoke reactions through repeated pairing with another stimulus. Studies indicate that classical conditioning can occur below the level of conscious awareness – even when people are not aware of the stimuli that serve as the basis for this kind of conditioning. Classical conditioning could play a role in establishing some of the emotional components of attitudes and prejudice. Further, through classical conditioning, people may come to have powerful attitudinal reactions to social objects even in the absence of firsthand experience.

- **Instrumental conditioning-** This is a basic form of learning in which responses that lead to positive outcomes or that permits avoidance of negative outcomes is strengthened. By rewarding children with smiles, approval, or hugs for stating the right views - the ones they themselves favor parents and other adults play an active role in shaping youngsters' attitudes.
- **Observational Learning-** In both classical and instrumental conditioning approaches to attitude formation, the person has direct get in touch with or experience with the attitudinal object. Though, it is also true that people may acquire attitudes simply through observing the rewards and punishments that others get for their attitudes. Individuals also learn many things and new forms of behaviors merely through observing the actions of others. One important thing is that with regard the formations of different types of attitudes, mainly everyone uses modeling. Mass media, especially Television, Social Media has considerable impact in shaping our attitudes.



- **2. Social Comparison-** Festinger introduced the concept of social comparison. It is process through which individuals compare themselves with others in order to determine whether their view of social reality is or is not correct. On some occasions, moreover, the process of social comparison may contribute to the formation of new attitudes, one's that individuals didn't previously hold. We change our attitudes so that they are in agreement to or are somewhat similar to the attitudes that others hold.
- **3. Direct Experience-** Our attitudes are formed through direct contact with attitude objects not simply borrowed from other persons through some form of social learning Attitudes that are formed through direct experiences are difficult to change.
- **4. Genetic factors-** Genetic factors can influence our height, eye color, and physical characteristics, the idea that they might also play a role in our thinking seems strange, to say the least. In fact, a small but growing body of empirical evidence indicates that genetic factors may play some small role in attitudes (e.g, Arvey et al., 1989; Keller et al., 1992).

- **5. Mere Exposure effect-** The mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968) is the tendency to develop more positive feelings towards objects and individuals the more we are exposed to them. No action or interaction with the object is required, and we do not need to possess or even develop any explicit beliefs about the object.
- **6. Self Perception-** The idea behind self-perception theory (Bem, 1965) is that we form attitudes not from exposure or associative learning, but from observations of our own behaviour. According to Bem, attitudes are formed from observing our own behaviours (e.g. the opinions we openly express on particular issues) and then attributing them to either internal or external causes, with internal attributions (inference that the behaviour is indicative of an attitude) more likely when the behaviour was freely chosen.
- **7. Functional approach-** According to the functional approach attitudes are sometimes formed based on the degree to which they satisfy different psychological needs, so this is an active rather than passive attitude theory.



- There are four basic psychological needs that adopting different attitudes can address: utilitarian, knowledge, ego-defensive and value-expressive (Katz, 1960; Smith, 1956) for more recent research on the impacts of attitude functions on racial attitudes, (Watt & Maio, 2007).
- **Utilitarian Function-** Attitudes are sometimes formed because they help us to gain approval from others. This function creates what can be referred to as instrumental attitudes. These attitudes help us get along and make our lives better. where it is in our interests sometimes to go along with a majority, even though we may disagree with them; our public attitude may be different from our privately held attitude, but this might serve to prevent us from being ridiculed and excluded from a group to which we belong.



- **Knowledge Function-** Holding particular attitudes can also help us to organize and predict our social worlds, providing a sense of meaning and coherence to our lives. Attitudes can be thought of as cognitive schemas. Stereotypes, for instance, can be thought of as attitudes that define our expectations about different social groups.
- **Ego-Defensive Function-** Attitudes formed to satisfy ego-defensive psychological needs help people protect themselves from acknowledging threatening self-truths, enabling them to maintain a positive view of themselves. For instance, we may develop an unfavourable attitude towards a co-worker who is enjoying more success than us. Such an attitude serves to protect us from acknowledging a potentially damaging social comparison.
- **Value-Expressive Function-** Finally, sometimes we may develop an attitude that expresses values that are important to us. For example, we may develop a sense that wasting food is not a good act as the farmers work very hard for the growing of foodgrain. It express more general beliefs and values that we hold.