

Ethics: Attitude – Components, Features & Relevance.

GS Paper 4: Ethics, integrity and aptitude.

Attitudes are predispositions to respond towards particular people of situations in a particular manner. They are learned and relatively enduring. They are, therefore, the product of

experience but enter into subsequent experience as a directing factor. The formation of attitudes takes place over a period of time and through many sources, e.g. media, parents, education, politicians, experience and personality.

ATTITUDE: A predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action, and responses to challenges, incentives, and rewards (together called stimuli).

Components of attitude

Informational or Cognitive Component:

The informational component consists of beliefs, values, ideas and other information a person has about the object. It makes no difference whether or not this information is empirically correct or real.

Emotional or Affective Component:

The informational component sets the stage for the more critical part of an attitude, its affective component. The emotional components involve the person's feeling or affect—positive, neutral or negative—about an object.

Behavioural Component:

The behavioural component consists of the tendency of a person to behave in a particular manner towards an object.

Out of the three components of attitudes, only the behavioural component can be directly observed. One cannot see another person's beliefs (the informational component) and his feelings (the emotional component). These two components can only be inferred. But still understanding these two components is essential in the study of organisational behaviour or the behavioural component of attitudes.

SALIENT FEATURES OF ATTITUDE

Are directed towards an object, event, person or organization and give specific reaction to them.

Attitude is at times permanent, forms habit and becomes predictable.

Persuasion can change attitude of a person.

Attitude affects group behavior e.g. Jury service, racial prejudice, work environment, etc.

Attitudes can lead to intended behaviour if there are no external interventions.

Attitudes constitute a psychological phenomenon which cannot be directly observed.

The process of learning attitude starts right from childhood and continues throughout one's life.

Attitudes are evaluative statements, either favourable or unfavourable.

ABC Model of Attitude

All the three components of attitude explained above constitute, what is called the ABC model. Here, in the ABC model, the alphabet A stands for Affective component, B for Behavioural and C for the cognitive component. The importance of this model is that to have a proper and thorough understanding of the concept of attitude, all the three components mentioned above must be properly assessed.

Acquiring attitudes

Direct Personal Experience:

A person's direct experience with the attitude object determines his attitude towards it. The personal experience of an individual, whether it is favourable or unfavourable, will affect his attitude deeply. These attitudes which are based on personal experience are difficult to change.

Association:

Sometimes an individual comes across a new attitude object which may be associated with an old attitude object. In such a case, the attitude towards the old attitude object may be transferred towards the new attitude object. For example, if a new worker remains most of the time in the company of a worker, who is in the good books of the supervisor, and towards whom the supervisor has a positive attitude, the supervisor is likely to develop a favourable attitude towards the new worker also.

Family and Peer Groups: Attitudes like values are acquired from parents, teachers and peer group members. In our early years, we begin modelling our attitudes after those we admire, respect or may be even fear. We observe the way our family and

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friends behave and we shape our attitudes and behaviour to align with theirs. We do so even without being told to do so and even without having direct experience.

✚ **Neighbourhood:**

The neighbourhood in which we live has certain cultural facilities, religious groupings and ethnic differences. The people belonging to different cultures have different attitudes and behaviours. Some of these we accept and some of these we deny and possibly rebel. The conformity or rebellion in some respects is the evidence of the attitudes we hold.

✚ **Economic Status and Occupations:**

The economic status and occupational position of the individual also affect his attitude formation. Our socio-economic background influences our present and future attitudes. Research findings have shown that unemployment disturbs former religious and economic values. Children of professional class tend to be conservatives. Respect for the laws of the country is associated with increased years of higher education.

✚ **Mass Communications:**

Attitudes are generally less stable as compared to values. Advertising messages for example, attempt to alter the attitude of the people toward a certain product or service.

Functions of Attitudes

The Adjustment

Attitudes help people adjust to their work environment. Their attitude reflects the environment they are faced with.

The Ego-Defensive

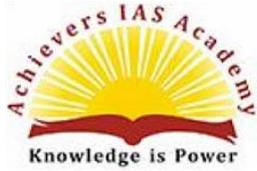
Employees defend their self-images. They develop positive perception about themselves whereas others may take them as wrong.

The Value-Expressive

Attitudes provide people with basis for expressing their values. Senior managers may force certain work ethics which they value.

The Knowledge

Attitudes provide people with knowledge that help them explain the world around them.



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Relevance of attitude

People persevere at activities they believe are possible. Convinced they have the ability to complete a task, they are willing to attempt it. Uncertain, or sure of their own inability, they will defer to others instead. Attitudes are taught. We communicate our judgements of others' abilities in many ways. If we are in positions of authority (parent, teacher, instructor), our attitudes shape others' opinions of their own abilities, and thus their willingness to act.

An individual who has the openness, honesty, and subtlety to perceive the nuances of their attitude in each moment, and the concentration necessary to make corrections as necessary is truly an unlimited person. For it is our attitude which determines the reality we live in and the opportunities and experiences we are available to. By making and maintaining attitudinal shifts that keep us at levels of higher consciousness, over time these attitudinal shifts become subconscious habits and thus our subconscious mind maintains higher levels of consciousness for us. Instead of fighting with ourselves constantly, in the ongoing battle between our ego and our infinite self, it is much more intelligent (and easier in the long run) to concentrate on aligning them.

Questions

1. Write a short note on "Attitude".
2. "You Are the Master of Your Attitude". Substantiate.