Attitude And Social Cognition

NCERT TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

1.Define attitude. Discuss the components of an attitude.

Ans. Attitudes are state of the mind, set of views or thoughts or ideas regarding some topic which have an evaluative feature (positive, negative or neutral). These are relatively stable predispositions. .

Various components of an attitude are as follows:

(i)The **thought component** is referred to as the **cognitive aspect** of attitude.

(ii)The **emotional component** is known as the **affective aspect.**

(iii)The **tendency to act** is called the **behavioural (conative) aspect.**

These three aspects have been referred to as the A-B-C (affective-behavioural-cognitive)components of attitude. Attitudes are themselves not a tendency to behave or act in certain ways. They are part of cognition, along with an emotional component which cannot be observed from outside.

2.Are attitudes learnt? Explain how?

Ans. By enlarge attitudes are learnt. They are formed on the basis of learning.

Formation of Attitudes: The term 'attitude formation' refers to the movement we make from having no attitude toward an object to having a positive or negative attitude. There are some factors which contribute to the formation of attitudes:

1.Learning: The attitudes are acquired through learning. Many of our views are acquired in situations in which we interact with others or merely observe their behaviour.

-Classical Conditioning/Leaming by Association:

•A basic form of learning in which one stimulus, initially neutral, acquires the capacity to evoke reactions through repeated pairing with another stimulus.

•Player often develop a strong liking for the bat by which they made good runs. Many students start liking a subject if they like the teacher.

-Instrumental Conditioning/Leaming Altitude by Reward and Punishment: A basic form of learning in which responses that lead to positive outcomes or that permit avoidance of negative outcomes are strengthened.

•It applies to the situations when people learn attitudes which are systematically rewarded by significant others, such as parents, teachers or friends.

-Observational Learning: A basic form of learning in which individuals acquire new forms of behaviour or through observing others.

•Children are keen observers and learn a whole lot of things from their parents and other family members.

•They learn many attitudes about other ethnic groups, neighbours and idealize simply by observing the behaviours of adults.

2.Learning through Exposure to Information:

•Many attitudes are learnt in a social context without physical presence of others. Print media, electronic media, biographies of self-actualized people facilitate attitude formations.

3.Learning Attitudes through Group or Cultural Norms:

•Norms are unwritten rules of behaviour. Gradually these norms may become part of our social cognition, in the form of attitudes, e.g., offering money, sweets, fruits and flowers in a place of worship is a normative behaviour in various religions. People imitate such behaviour shown by others as socially approved and develop positive attitude towards it.

3.What are the factors that influence the formation of an attitude?

Ans. The following factors provide the context for the learning of attitude through various processes:

(i) Family and School Environment: parents and other family-members play a significant role in attitude formation. Learning of attitudes within the family and school usually takes place by association, through rewards and punishment and through modelling.

(ii)Reference Groups: Attitudes towards political, religious and social groups, occupations, national and other issues are often developed through reference groups. Reference groups indicate to an individual the norms regarding acceptable behaviour and ways of thinking. Various institutions, religion, culture and communities are form of reference groups.

(iii) Personal Experiences: Many attitudes are formed, not in the family environment or through reference groups, but through direct personal experiences which bring about a drastic change in our attitude towards people and our own life.

(iv) Media Related Influences: Technological advances have made audio-visual media and internet as very powerful sources for attitude formation. School textbooks also influence attitude formation. The media can be used to create consumerist attitude. The media can exert both good and bad influences on attitudes.

4. Is behaviour always a reflection of one's attitude? Explain with a relevant example.

Ans. An individual's attitude may not always be exhibited through behaviour. Likewise one's actual behaviour may be contrary to one's attitude towards a particular topic. Psychologists have found that there would be consistency between attitude and behaviour when:

(i)The attitude is strong and occupies a central place in the attitude system.

(ii)The person is aware of his/her attitudes.

(iii)Person's behaviour is not being watched or evaluated by others.

(iv)Person thinks that the behaviour would have a positive consequences.

Richard La Piere, an American social psychologist, conducted the following study. He asked a Chinese couple to travel across the United States, and stay in different hotels. Only once during these occasions they were refused service by one of the hotels. La Piere sent out questionnaires to managers of hotels and tourist homes in the same areas where the Chinese couple had travelled asking them if they would give accommodation to Chinese guest. A very large percentage said that they would not do so. This response showed a negative attitude towards the Chinese, which was inconsistent with the positive behaviour that was actually shown towards the travelling Chinese couple. Attitudes may not always predict actual pattern of one's behaviour.

5.Highlight the importance of schemas in social cognition.

Ans. •Social schemas (schemata) are mental structure.

•They function as a framework to process social information. These schemas lead to emergence of prototypes.

•Prototypes are concepts which have most of the defining features of a concept, class or family.

•These are best representatives of the population.

•Various stereotypes emerge from these schemas. In other words stereotypes are category-based schemas.

6. Differentiate between prejudice and stereotype.

Ans. Prejudices are negative attitude.

•These are bias about others.

•Prejudices are baseless and false.

•It refers to biased attitude formed about an individual or a group of people.

•These are usually negative.

•It has three components, i.e., A-B-C-

(a) Affective (Emotional i.e dislike or hatred).

(b)Behavioural (i.e., discrimination).

(c)Cognitive (Believes, i.e., stereotypes).

Stereotypes are cognitive **component of prejudice.** It is strongly influenced by the processing of incoming social information.

•These are **over-generalized beliefs,** e.g., girls are talkative.

•Stereotypes are category based schemas.

•These may be positive or negative or neutral.

•Stereotype has no emotional blending.

•From stereotypes, prejudices may emerge very easily.

•Stereotypes are usually formed for the groups.

•Stereotypes are pre conceived notions.

7. Prejudice can exist without discrimination and vice-versa. Comment.

Ans. Prejudices can exist without being shown in the form of discrimination. Similarly, discrimination can be shown without prejudice.

•Wherever prejudice and discrimination exist, conflicts are very likely to arise between groups within the same society.

•We all witnessed many instances of discrimination, with and without prejudice, based on gender, religion, community, caste, physical handicap, and illnesses such as AIDS.

•Moreover, in many cases, discriminatory behaviour can be curbed by law. But, the cognitive and emotional components of prejudice are more difficult to change.

8. Describe the important factors that influence impression formation.

Ans. Impression formation is a process by which impression about others is converting into more or less induring cognitions or thoughts about them.In short, **impression formation** is a process through which we draw quick conclusion/ inferences regarding others.

Factors facilitating Impression Formation:

•Nature of the phenomena (familiar or unfamiliar).

•Personality traits of the perceiver.

•Social schemas stored in the mind of perceiver.

•Situational factors.

The process of impression formation consists of the following three sub-processes:

•**Selection:** We take into account only some bits of information about the target person.

•**Organization:** the selected information is combined in a systematic way.

•**Inference:** We draw a conclusion about what kind of person the target is.

Some **specific qualities,** that influence impression formation, are:

•The information presented first has a stronger effect than the information presented at the end. This is called the **primacy effect.**

•We have a tendency to think that a target person who has one set of positive qualities must also be having other specific positives that are associated with first set. This is known as **halo effect,** e.g., if we think that a person is 'tidy' then we are likely to think that this person must also be hard/working.

•Whatever information comes at the end may have a stronger influence on impression formation. This is known as the **recency effect.**

9.Explain how the attribution made by an 'actor' would be different from that of an 'observer'.

Ans. Actor observer phenomena refers to the tendency to attribute our own behaviour mainly to situational causes but the behaviour of others mainly to internal (dispositional) cause.

A distinction is found between the attribution that a person makes for actorrole and observer-role.

Person makes attribution for his/her own positive and negative experiences, it is actor role and the attribution made for another person's positive and negative experience is observer-role. For example, if we get good marks, we will attribute it to our own ability and hard work (actor-role, internal attribution for a positive experience). If we get bad marks, we will say we were unlucky or test was difficult (actor-role, external attribution for negative experience).

On the other hand, if our classmate gets good marks, we will attribute his/her success to good luck or easy test (observer-role, external attribution for positive experience). If same classmate gets bad marks, we are likely to feel that his/her failure was because of low ability or due to lack of effort (observer-role, internal attribution for a negative experience).

The reason for the difference between the actor and observer roles is that people want to have a nice image of themselves, as compared to others.

10.How does social facilitation take place?

Ans. • It is form of group influence.

•Social facilitation refers to a concept that performance on specific task is influenced by the mere presence of others.

•Norman Triplett observed that individuals show better performance in presence of others, than when they are performing the same task alone.

Better performance in presence of others is because the person experiences arousal, which makes the person react in a more intense manner.

The **arousal** is because the person feels he or she is being evaluated. Cottrell called this idea **evaluation apprehension.** The person will be praised if performance is good (reward); is criticised if performance is bad (punishment). We wish to get praise and avoid criticism, therefore we try to perform well and avoid criticism.

As in case of complex task, the person may be afraid of making mistakes. And the fear of criticism or punishment is stronger.

If the others present are also performing same task, this is called a situation of co-action. When task is simple or a familiar one, performance is better under co-action than when the person is alone.

Task performing can be facilitated and improved or inhibited and worsened by the presence of others. If we are working together in a larger group, the less effort each member puts in. This phenomena is called **social loafing,** based on diffusion of responsibility. Diffusion of responsibility can also be frequently seen in situations where people are expected to help.

11.Explain the concept of pro-social behaviour.

Or

Describe the factors influencing Pro-social behaviour. (CBSE 2013)

Ans. Pro-social behaviour is any positively valued behaviour that does good to another person, is done without any pressure from outside and without any expectation of a reward or a return.

Humans are social beings. Most of their activities are organized with the help of others. We cannot live and grow unless there is support from others. We often engage in helping others. Such efforts are considered as pro-social behaviour. For any behaviour to be pro¬social, it should fulfil the following conditions:

•There has to be an intention to benefit the other person. Any pro-social act, which one accomplishes by compulsion or as a requirement of a job, does not merit to be called 'pro-social'.

•The behaviour should be considered socially desirable by the other members of the society. Obviously, helping a thief in stealing is not a pro-social behaviour.

•If an act intended to benefit others is also expect to benefit the helper, it cannot be termed as 'pro-social'.

The intentions and the consequent positive behaviour are more important considerations of pro-social behaviour than the actual benefits.

The other term which are used interchangeably with pro-social behaviour is **altruism**. The literal meaning of **altruism** is "doing things or acting for the interest of others without any ulterior motive." It is a behaviour that reflects an unselfish concern for the welfare of others. All charitable, humanitarian, philanthropic activities, which people do without any self-interest, come under the category of altruism behaviour.

Determinants of Pro-social Behaviour: The pro-social behaviour depends on many factors.

(i)Pro-social behaviour is based on an **inborn**, natural tendency in human beings to help other members of their own species.

(ii)Pro-social behaviour is influenced by **learning** through modelling and positive reinforcement in the family.

(iii)**Cultural factors** influence pro-social behaviour. Some cultures actively encourage people to help the needy and distressed. Individuals in cultures suffering from a shortage of resources may not show a high level of pro-social behaviour.

(iv) Pro-social behaviour is expressed when the situation activates certain **'social norms'** that require helping others. Three norms have been mentioned in context of pro-social behaviour:

(a)The norms of **social responsibility**. We should help anyone who needs help without considering any other factors.

(b)The norms of **reciprocity**. We should help persons who have helped us in the past.

(c)The norms of **equity.** We should help others whenever we find that it is fair to do so.

(v)Pro-social behaviour is affected by the expected reactions of the person who is being helped. For example, people might be unwilling to give money to a needy person because they feel that the person might feel insulted, or may become dependent.

(vi)Pro-social behaviour is more likely to be shown individuals who have a high level of **empathy**, that is, the capacity to feel the distress of the person who is to be helped, e.g., Mother Teresa.

Factors inhibiting Pro-social Behaviour:

(a)Diffusion of Responsibility: Pro-social behaviour may be reduced when the number of bystanders is more than one. On the other hand, if there is only one bystander, this person is more likely to take responsibility and actually help the victim. It happens because each person thinks that others will take the responsibility.

(b)Feeling State of the Individual: Person in a bad mood, being busy with one's own problems or feeling that the person to be helped is responsible for his/her problem, may not help others.

12.Your friend eats too much junk food, how would you be able to bring about a change in his/her attitude towards food?

Ans. Since my friend eats junk food, it will have some reinforcing value to him/her. In order to bring about a change in his/her attitude towards food, following techniques could be used:

First of all what needs to be targeted is 'the way he/she thinks about junk food, i.e., the cognitive aspect of his/her positive attitude towards junk food. The modification in his/ her attitude can be achieved through using rational as well as emotional appeal and, if required, help of a dietician whose credibility in this area is very high will be of great use. Attitude changes may be brought about by:

1.Encouraging him/her to read about what is required for a healthy development, e.g., minerals etc. which are not found in junk food.

2.Showing him/her the negative consequences of eating junk food like obesity, other health-related problems by exposing him/her to real life examples.

3.Request people around him/her like family-members, elders and teachers whom he/ she likes. If they provide a role model, i.e., not to consume junk food then he/she will imitate their behaviour.

4.Giving his/her choice and space to decide what is right for him/her considering both the aspects of the food and asking him/her to focus and think about the future problems associated with his/her liking.

All these things can bring about cognitive dissonance which might ultimately bring about the attitude change.