1.12 Attitudes, Values and Interests

Syllabus : Definition of attitudes, values and interests; Components of attitudes; Formation and maintenance of attitudes; Measurement of attitudes, values and interests; Theories of attitude change; Strategies for fostering values; Formation of stereotypes and prejudices; Changing others behaviour; Theories of attribution; Recent trends.

Previous Years' Questions

2016

Q. Discuss cognitive dissonance theory of attitude change. 10 marks [2016]

Q. What is meant by attribution ? Describe, citing examples the phenomena of attributional augmentation. 10 marks [2016]

Q. Explain the components of attitude and examine the methods of attitude formation. 15 marks [2016]

2015

Q."Children are not bom with stereotypes; they learn them from their family, peers, media and society."—Discuss. 20 marks [2015]

2014

Q. Is self serving bias universal in attribution process ? Comment. 10 marks [2014]

Q. Discuss the roots of gender related prejudice in the Indian Society. Why is it so resistant ? 15 marks [2014]

2013

Q.   Explain correspondents' bias. Is it universal or culturally variable? 15 marks [2013]

2012

Q. Discuss A-B-C , components of attitudes. Describe the procedure of development of a tool for measurement of attitude. 30 marks [2012]

2011

Q. Describe different psychological measures of values and outline a program for fostering values. among school- going children. 30 marks [2011]

2010

Q. What is likely to happen if a person is asked to behave in a manner contrary to the attitude the person holds ? Explain on the basis of a theory. 10 marks [2010]

2009

Q. Discuss nature, formation and measurement of attitude. Can attitude be changed? Substantiate your answer citing research finding. 60 marks [2009]

2008

Q. Describe pattern of attribution that are used by persons in supporting their interaction. 20 marks [2008]

Attitude

It is a state of the mind, a set of views, or thoughts, regarding some topic (called the 'attitude object'), which have an evaluative feature (positive, negative or neutral quality).

It is accompanied by an emotional component,

and a tendency to act in a particular way with regard to the attitude object.

In other words, if our views about a person, belief, behaviour or concept are not merely thoughts, but also have emotional and action components, then these views are more than 'opinions'; they are examples of attitudes.

Belief

Beliefs refer to the cognitive component of attitudes, and form the ground on which attitudes stand, such as belief in God, or belief in democracy as a political ideology.

Values

Values are attitudes or beliefs that contain a 'should' or 'ought' aspect, such as moral or ethical values. e.g. the idea that one should work hard, or that one should always be honest, because honesty is the best policy.

Values are formed when a particular belief or attitude becomes an inseparable part of the person's outlook on life. Consequently, values are difficult to change.

Interests

Interest is a feeling or emotion that causes attention to focus on an object, event, or process. In contemporary psychology of interest, the term is used as a general concept that may encompass other more specific psychological terms, such as curiosity and to a much lesser degree surprise.

The emotion of interest does have its own facial expression, of which the most prominent component is having dilated pupils. In social science measurement methodology, when the intensity of (sexual) interest needs to be measured, the changes in pupil size – despite its weaker, but still consistent, correlations with other measures such as self-reported measures of sexual interest's orientation – have been proposed as its appropriate measure

Q. What is the purpose served by an attitude?

Attitudes provide a background that makes it easier for a person to decide how to act in new situations. For example, our attitude towards foreigners may indirectly provide a mental 'layout' or 'blueprint' for the way in which we should behave whenever we meet one.

Components of Attitude

A : Affective component aka the emotional component

B : Behavioural component aka the conative component (yes that is correct spelling. conation means action)

C : Cognitive component aka the thought component

e.g. Suppose a group of people in your neighbourhood start a tree plantation campaign as part of a 'green environment' movement. Based on sufficient information about the environment, your view towards a 'green environment' is positive (cognitive or 'C' component, along with the evaluative aspect). You feel very happy when you see greenery. You feel sad and angry when you see trees being cut down. These aspects reflect the affective (emotional), or 'A' component of the same attitude. Now suppose you also actively participate in the tree plantation campaign. This shows the behavioural or 'B' component of your attitudes towards a 'green environment'.

In general, we expect all three components to be consistent with each other, that is, in the same direction. However, such consistency may not necessarily be found in all situations. For example, it is quite possible that the cognitive aspect of your 'green environment' attitude is very strong, but the affective and behavioural components may be relatively weaker. Or, the cognitive and affective components may be strong and positive, but the behavioural component may be neutral. Therefore, predicting one component on the basis of the other two may not always give us the correct picture about an attitude.

Q. Apart from the A-B-C components, what are other significant features of attitude ?

Four significant features of attitudes are :

1. **Valence** (positivity or negativity) : tells us whether an attitude is positive or negative towards the attitude object. Suppose an attitude (say, towards nuclear research) has to be expressed on a 5- point scale, ranging from 1 (Very bad), 2 (Bad), 3 (Neutral — neither good nor bad), and 4 (Good), to 5 (Very good). If an individual rates her/his view towards nuclear research as 4 or 5, this is clearly a positive attitude. Note that not only positive or negative, but a neutral attitude is also possible.
2. **Extremeness** : indicates how positive or negative an attitude is. Taking the nuclear research example given above, a rating of 1 is as extreme as a rating of 5 : they are only in the opposite directions (valence). Ratings of 2 and 4 are less extreme. A neutral attitude is lowest on extremeness.
3. **Simplicity** or **Complexity (multiplexity)** : refers to how many attitudes there are within a broader attitude. Think of an attitude as a family containing several 'member' attitudes. In case of various topics, such as health and world peace, people hold many attitudes instead of single attitude. An attitude system is said to be 'simple' if it contains only one or a few attitudes, and 'complex' if it is made up of many attitudes. Consider the example of attitude towards health and well-being. This attitude system is likely to consist of several 'member' attitudes, such as one's concept of physical and mental health, views about happiness and well-being, and beliefs about how one should achieve health and happiness. By contrast, the attitude towards a particular person is likely to consist of mainly one attitude. The multiple member-attitudes within an attitude system should not be confused with the three components described earlier. Each member attitude that belongs to an attitude system also has A-B-C components.
4. **Centrality** : This refers to the role of a particular attitude in the attitude system. An attitude with greater centrality would influence the other attitudes in the system much more than non-central (or peripheral) attitudes would. e.g. in the attitude towards world peace, a negative attitude towards high military expenditure may be present as a core or central attitude that influences all other attitudes in the multiple attitude system.

Formation and Maintenance of Attitudes

In general, attitudes are learned through one's own experiences, and through interaction with others. There are a few research studies that show some sort of inborn aspect of attitudes, but such genetic factors influence attitudes only indirectly, along with learning. Therefore, most social psychologists have focused on the conditions which lead to the learning of attitudes.

There can be 5 different ways that attitudes are learned:

1. Observational learning/Learning attitudes through modelling (observing others):Often it is not through association, or through reward and punishment, that we learn attitudes. Instead, we learn them by observing others being rewarded or punished for expressing thoughts, or showing behaviour of a particular kind towards the attitude object. For example, children may form a respectful attitude towards elders, by observing that their parents show respect for elders, and are appreciated for it.

2. Classical conditioning/Learning by Association :You   might have seen that students often   develop a liking for a particular subject   because of the teacher. This is because   they see many positive qualities in that   teacher; these positive qualities get   linked to the subject that s/he   teaches,   and ultimately get expressed in the form   of liking for the subject. In other words,   a positive attitude towards the subject   is learned through the positive   association between a teacher and a   student.

3. Operant conditioning/ Learning attitudes by being rewarded or   punished : If an individual is praised for   showing a particular attitude, chances   are high that s/he will develop that   attitude further. For example, if a   teenager does yogasanas regularly, and   gets the honour of being 'Miss Good   Health' in her school, she may develop   a positive attitude towards yoga and   health in general. Similarly, if a child   constantly falls ill because s/he eats   junk food instead of proper meals, then   the child is likely to develop a negative   attitude towards junk food, and also a   positive attitude towards eating healthy   food.

4. Social Learning (Bandura)/Learning attitudes through group or cultural norms : Very often, we learn   attitudes through the norms of our   group or culture. Norms are unwritten   rules about behaviour that everyone is   supposed to show under specific   circumstances. Over time, these norms   may become part of our social cognition,   in the form of attitudes. Learning   attitudes through group or cultural   norms may actually be an example of   all three forms of learning described   above — learning through association,   reward or punishment, and modelling.   For example, offering money, sweets,   fruit and flowers in a place of worship is   a normative behaviour in some religions.   When individuals see that such   behaviour is shown by others, is   expected and socially approved, they   may ultimately develop a positive   attitude towards such behaviour and the   associated feelings of devotion.

5. Learning through exposure to   information : Many attitudes are learned   in a social context, but not necessarily   in the physical presence of others.   Today, with the huge amount of   information that is being provided   through various media, both positive   and negative attitudes are being formed.   By reading the biographies of self-actualised persons, an individual may   develop a positive attitude towards hard   work and other aspects as the means of   achieving success in life.

Factors that Influence Attitude Formation

The following factors provide the context for the learning of attitudes through the   processes described above.

1. Family and School Environment : Learning of attitudes within the family and school usually takes place by association, through rewards and   punishments, and through modelling.

2. Reference Groups : Reference groups indicate to an individual the norms regarding acceptable behaviour and ways of thinking. Thus, they reflect   learning of attitudes through group or cultural norms. Attitudes towards various topics, such as political, religious and social groups, occupations, national and other issues are often developed through reference groups. Their influence is noticeable especially during the beginning of adolescence, at which time it is important for the individual to feel that s/he belongs to a group (Need to Belong). Therefore, the role of reference groups in attitude formation may also be a case of learning through reward and punishment.

3. 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. Here is a real-life example. A driver in the army went through a personal experience that transformed his life. On one mission, he narrowly escaped death although all his companions got killed. Wondering about the purpose of his own life, he gave up his job in the army, returned to his native village in Maharashtra, and worked actively as a community leader. Through a purely personal experience this individual evolved a strong positive attitude towards community upliftment. His efforts completely changed the face of his village. His name is **Anna Hazare** of village **Ralegaon Siddhi**

4. Media-related Influences : Technological advances in recent times have made audio-visual media and the Internet very powerful sources of information that   lead to attitude formation and change. In addition, school level textbooks also influence attitude formation. These sources first strengthen the cognitive and affective components of attitudes, and subsequently may also affect the behavioural component. The media can exert both good and bad influences on attitudes. On one hand, the media and Internet make people better informed than other modes of communication. On the other hand, there may be no check on the nature of information being gathered, and therefore no control over   the attitudes that are being formed, or   the direction of change in the existing   attitudes. The media can be used to   create consumerist attitudes where none existed, and can also be harnessed   to create positive attitudes to facilitate   social harmony.

<u>Maintenance of Attitudes</u> can occur through similar routes, via :

1. regular conditioning
2. further observational and social learning
3. witnessing and experiencing confirmatory events and applying confirmation bias to them; this strengthens our **schemas** towards particular things, ideas and persons.

Attitudes and Behaviour

Q. "*An individual's attitudes may not always be exhibited through behaviour. Likewise, one's actual behaviour may be contrary to one's attitude towards a particular topic*." Justify this statement citing experimental studies.

<u>**LaPiere**'s study on Chinese couple and American hotels (1934)</u>
In the days when Americans were said to be prejudiced against the Chinese, Richard LaPiere, an American social psychologist, 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. Sometime later, LaPiere 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 guests. A very large percentage said that they would not do so. This response showed a negative attitude towards the Chinese, inconsistent with the positive behaviour that was actually shown .

Thus, attitudes may not always predict actual pattern of one's behaviour.

Q. What factors determine the consistency b/w attitude and behaviour ?

There would be consistency between attitudes and behaviour when :
• the attitude is strong, and occupies a central place in the attitude system,
• the person is aware of her/his attitude,
• there is very little or no external pressure for the person to behave in a particular way. e.g., when there is no group pressure to follow a particular norm
• person's behaviour is not being watched or evaluated by others
• the person thinks that the behaviour would have a positive consequence, and therefore, intends to engage in that behaviour.

How Attitude Affects Behavior

The red traffic light example illustrates how social laws can affect Amy's behavior even if she has conflicting beliefs. However, research has shown that such behavioral modification lasts only as long as the negative feedback is in place. So, if it's a stop sign on a quiet street where no one is watching instead of a traffic light, Amy might decide not to stop.

Attitudes that readily come to mind guide behavior when there are few outside influences. Her 'attitude' has not changed, but her behavior has been modified.

How Behavior Affects Attitude

OK, now let's put Amy on a dating game show to see how behavior affects attitude. She gets to choose between three possible dates.

Meet contestant A. Blaine is a successful, intelligent businessman who could fulfill the expected gender role of the family man and provider. According to **social norms and expectations**, Blaine would be the right choice for Amy.

Meet contestant B. Larry knows all the angles. He knows about the **foot-in-the-door method** of persuasion where people are more likely to agree to a difficult request, like a dinner date, if they first agree to an easy one, like a quick drink after work with other coworkers.

Meet contestant C. Hank isn't the kind of guy who Amy's parents envisioned for her, which makes him strangely attractive. **Reactance theory** proposes that we'll rebel against restrictions that limit our behavioral freedom.

Measurement of Attitudes, values and interests

If Amy was asked to fill out a questionnaire listing the strength of her attitudes on a scale from 1-5 (1 if she strongly disagreed and 5 if she strongly agreed), the results could be measured using the Likert scale developed by American psychologist **Rensis Likert**.

1. The **Likert scale** would quantify Amy's conscious beliefs. If asked, she would probably express a favorable attitude towards contestant A, since Blaine is the type of guy her friends and family would get along with.

2. There are other tests which measure **physiological responses** and can provide insight into Amy's unconscious attitudes, and may reveal that Amy smiles more when she's talking with contestant C. Such methods of measuring attitudes employ devices, such as an **EMG (electromyograph)**, which monitors facial muscle activity, or an **EEG (electroencephalograph)**, which tracks brain activity.

3. **TATs** (Thematic Apperception Test) may also be used to measure attitudes, values and interests.

4. Various **experimental settings** may also provide insights into the values, interests or attitudes a person holds.

5. **Self-report methods :** typically ask participants to respond to a set of questions about their perceptions, attitudes, goals, emotions, beliefs, and so on. Advantages are that they are easy to administer and can yield scores that are easy to interpret. Disadvantages are that people are not always valid assessors of their own skills, and self-reports can be intrusive for evaluating participants' in-the-moment perceptions during tasks.

Theories of Attitude Change

   1. **POX triangle theory - Fritz Heider** aka **Balance Theory of attitude change**

If a person P likes object X but dislikes other person O, what does P feel upon learning that person O created the object X? This is symbolized as such:

- P (+) > X
- P (-) > O
- O (+) > X

Cognitive balance is achieved when there are three positive links or two negatives with one positive. Two positive links and one negative like the example above creates imbalance or Cognitive dissonance.

Multiplying the signs shows that the person will perceive imbalance (a negative multiplicative product) in this relationship, and will be motivated to correct the imbalance somehow. The Person can either:

- Decide that O isn't so bad after all,
- Decide that X isn't as great as originally thought, or
- Conclude that O couldn't really have made X.

Any of these will result in psychological balance, thus resolving the dilemma and satisfying the drive. (Person P could also avoid object X and other person O entirely, lessening the stress created by psychological imbalance.)

To predict the outcome of a situation using Heider's balance theory, one must weigh the effects of all the potential results, and the one requiring the least amount of effort will be the likely outcome.

Heider's P-O-X model
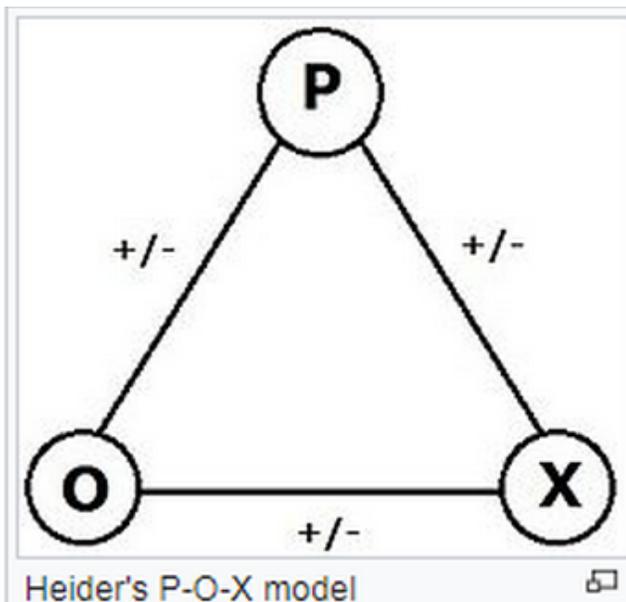
Examples

1. Balance theory is also useful in examining how celebrity endorsement affects consumers' attitudes toward products.–If a person likes a celebrity and perceives (due to the endorsement) that said celebrity likes a product, said person will tend to like the product more, in order to achieve psychological balance.

However, if the person already had a dislike for the product being endorsed by the celebrity, they may begin disliking the celebrity, again to achieve psychological balance.

2. Heider's balance theory can explain why holding the same negative attitudes of others promotes closeness (enemy of my enemy is my friend).

Criticism of Balance Theory /POX triangle theory

Claude Flament–expressed a limit to balance theory imposed by reconciling weak ties with relationships of stronger force such as family bonds:

> One might think that a valued algebraic graph is necessary to represent psycho-social reality, if it is to take into account the degree of intensity of interpersonal relationships. But in fact it then seems hardly possible to define the balance of a graph, not for mathematical but for psychological reasons. If the relationship AB is +3, the relationship BC is –4, what should the AC relationship be in order that the triangle be balanced ? The psychological hypotheses are wanting, or rather they are numerous and little justified.

At the 1975 Dartmouth College colloquium on balance theory, Bo Anderson struck at the heart of the notion:

> In graph theory there exists a *formal* balance theory that contains theorems that are *analytically* true. The statement that Heider's *psychological* balance can be represented, in its essential aspects, by a suitable interpretation of that *formal balance theory* should, however, be regarded as problematical. We cannot routinely identify the positive and negative lines in the formal theory with the positive and negative "sentiment relations", and identify the formal balance notion with the *psychological* idea of balance or structural tension. .. It is puzzling that the fine structure of the relationships between formal and psychological balance has been given scant attention by balance theorists.

2. Cognitive Dissonance Theory - Leon Festinger

A/c to this theory, there is a tendency in individuals to seek consistency among their cognitions (i.e., beliefs, opinions) i.e. the cognitive components of an attitude must be 'consonant' (opposite of 'dissonant'), i.e., they should be logically in

line with each other. When there is an inconsistency b/w attitudes or behaviors (dissonance), something must change to eliminate the dissonance. In the case of a discrepancy between attitudes and behavior, it is most likely that the attitude will change to accommodate the behavior.

Factors affecting the strength of the dissonance:

1. the number of dissonant beliefs
2. the importance attached to each belief.

Ways to eliminate dissonance:

1. reduce the importance of the dissonant beliefs
2. add more consonant beliefs that outweigh the dissonant beliefs
3. change the dissonant beliefs so that they are no longer inconsistent.

Dissonance occurs most often in situations where an individual must choose between two incompatible beliefs or actions. The greatest dissonance is created when the two alternatives are equally attractive. Furthermore, attitude change is more likely in the direction of less incentive since this results in lower dissonance. In this respect, dissonance theory is contradictory to most behavioral theories which would predict greater attitude change with increased incentive (i.e., reinforcement).

e.g. Consider someone who buys an expensive car but discovers that it is not comfortable on long drives. Dissonance exists between their beliefs that they have bought a good car and that a good car should be comfortable. Dissonance could be eliminated by deciding that it does not matter since the car is mainly used for short trips (reducing the importance of the dissonant belief) or focusing on the cars strengths such as safety, appearance, handling (thereby adding more consonant beliefs). The dissonance could also be eliminated by getting rid of the car, but this behavior is a lot harder to achieve than changing beliefs.

Dissonance theory applies to all situations involving attitude formation and change. It is especially relevant to decision-making and problem-solving.

Telling a lie for 20 $: Festinger and Carlsmith : Application of cognitive dissonance

After participating in a very boring experiment, a group of students were asked to tell another group of students waiting outside that the experiment was very interesting. For telling this lie, half of them were paid $ 1, and the other half were paid $ 20. After some weeks, the participants were asked to recall the experiment, and to say how interesting they had found that experiment to be.

The responses showed that the $ 1 group described the experiment as more interesting than the $ 20 group. The explanation was : the $ 1 students changed their attitude towards the experiment because they experienced cognitive dissonance.

In the $ 1 group,

The initial cognitions would be :	The changed cognitions would be:
(Dissonant cognitions)	(Dissonance reduced)
"The experiment was very boring" ;	"The experiment was actually interesting" ;
"I told the waiting students that it was interesting";	"I told the waiting students that it was interesting" ;
"I told a lie for only $ 1."	"I would not have told a lie for only $ 1."

The $ 20 group did not experience cognitive dissonance. So, they did not change their attitude towards the experiment, and rated it as very boring.
The cognitions in the $ 20 (No dissonance) group would be :
"The experiment was very boring";
"I told the waiting students that it was interesting";
"I told a lie because I was paid $ 20."

3. **Two-step Theory - S.M. Mohsin**

Proposed by S.M. Mohsin, an Indian psychologist, a/c to him, attitude change takes place in the form of two steps.

The **'target'** is the person whose attitude is to be changed. The **'source'** is the person through whose influence the change is to take place.

Step 1 : the target of change identifies with the source. Identification means that the target has liking and regard for the source. S/he puts herself/himself in the place of the target, and tries to feel like her/him. The source must also have a positive attitude towards the target, and the regard and attraction becomes mutual.

Step 2 : In the second step, the source herself/himself shows an attitude change, by actually changing her/him behaviour towards the attitude object. Observing the source's changed attitude and behaviour, the target also shows an attitude change through behaviour. This is a kind of imitation or <u>observational learning</u>.

e.g. Preeti reads in the newspapers that a particular soft drink that she enjoys is extremely harmful. But Preeti sees that her favourite sportsperson has been advertising the same soft drink. She has identified herself with the sportsperson, and would like to imitate her/him. Now, suppose the sportsperson wishes to change people's attitude towards this soft drink from positive to negative. The   sportsperson must first show positive feelings for her/ his fans, and then actually change her/his own habit of consuming that soft drink (Step I) — perhaps by substituting it with a health drink. If the sportsperson actually changes her/his behaviour, it is very likely that now Preeti will also change her attitude and behaviour, and stop consuming the harmful soft drink (Step II).

Factors affecting attitude change

All 4 properties of attitudes mentioned   earlier determine   attitude change. They are :

1. valence (positivity or   negativity),
2. extremeness,
3. simplicity or   complexity (multiplexity),
4. centrality   or significance of the attitude,

Apart from the above ,

5. direction and extent of attitude change : **Congruent** or **Incongruent** change of attitude
6. Source characteristics : **credibility** and **attractiveness** of the source
7. Message Characteristics
    - amount of info in the message: should be just enough - neither too much , not too little
    - rational or emotional appeal
    - motives in the message
8. Mode of spreading   the message : face to face or indirect
9. Target characteristics : e.g. persuasibility, strong   prejudices, self-esteem, and intelligence

In general, positive   attitudes are easier to change than negative   attitudes.

Extreme attitudes, and   central attitudes are more difficult to change   than the less extreme, and peripheral (less significant) attitudes are. Simple attitudes   are easier to change than multiple   attitudes are.

An   attitude change may be congruent — it may   change in the same direction as the existing attitude (for example, a positive attitude   may become more positive, or a negative   attitude may become more negative). For   instance, suppose a person has a somewhat   positive attitude towards empowerment of   women. Reading about a successful woman   may make this attitude more positive. This   would be a congruent change. On the other   hand, an attitude change may be incongruent — it may change in a direction   opposite to the existing attitude (for example,   a positive attitude becomes less positive, or   negative, or a negative attitude becomes less   negative, or positive). In the example just   given, after reading about   successful women,   a person may think that women might soon   become too powerful, and neglect their family responsibilities. This may make the

person's existing positive attitude towards empowerment of women, less positive, or even negative. If this happens, then it would be a case of incongruent change.

It has been found that, in general, congruent changes are easier to bring about than are the incongruent changes in attitudes.

Moreover, an attitude may change in the direction of the information that is presented, or in a direction opposite to that of the information presented. Posters describing the importance of brushing one's teeth would strengthen a positive attitude towards dental care. But if people are shown frightening pictures of dental cavities, they may not believe the pictures, and may become less positive about dental care.
Research has found that fear sometimes works well in convincing people but if a message generates too much fear, it turns off the receiver and has little persuasive effect.

Source characteristics : **Credibility:** adults who are planning to buy a laptop are more convinced by a computer engineer who points out the special features of a particular brand of laptop, than they would be by a schoolchild who might give the same information. But, if the buyers are themselves schoolchildren, they may be convinced more by another schoolchild advertising a laptop than they would be by a professional giving the same info.

Attractiveness : However, in the case of some products such as cars, sales may increase if they are publicised, not necessarily by experts, but by popular public figures.

Message characteristics : Message is the information that is presented to bring attitude change.

Attitudes will change when the amount of information that is given about the topic is just enough, neither too much nor too little.

Whether the message contains a rational or an emotional appeal, also makes a difference.

e.g. of rational appeal : an advertisement for cooking food in a pressure cooker may point out that this saves fuel such as cooking gas (LPG) and is economical

e.g. of emotional appeal : that pressure-cooking preserves nutrition, and that if one cares for the family, nutrition would be a major concern.

Motives: activated by the message also determine attitude change. e.g. drinking milk may be said to make a person healthy and good-looking, or more energetic and more successful at one's job.

Mode: of spreading the message. Face-to-face transmission of the message is usually more effective than indirect transmission, as for instance, through letters and pamphlets, or even through mass media. For example, a positive attitude towards Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) for young children is more effectively created if community social workers and doctors spread the message by talking to people directly, than by only describing the benefits of ORS on the radio. These days transmission through visual media such as television and the Internet are similar to face-to-face interaction, but not a substitute for the latter.

Target Characteristics : People, who have a more open and flexible personality, change more easily. Advertisers benefit most from such people. People with strong prejudices are less prone to any attitude change than those who do not hold strong prejudices. Persons who have a low self-esteem, and do not have sufficient confidence in themselves, change their attitudes more easily than those who are high on self-esteem. More intelligent people may change their attitudes less easily than those with lower intelligence. However, sometimes more intelligent persons change their attitudes more willingly than less intelligent ones, because they base their attitude on more information and thinking.
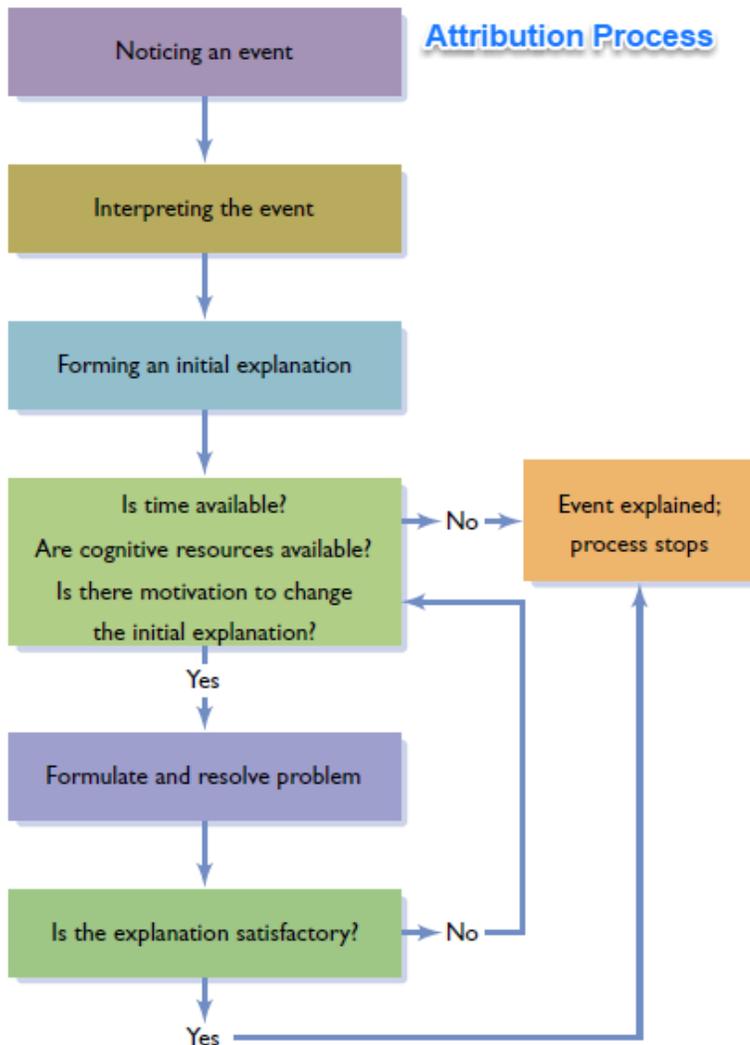
Attribution

Attribution - to explain by indicating a cause

Humans are motivated to assign causes to their actions and behaviors. In social psychology, attribution is the process by which individuals explain the causes of behavior and events. The development of models to explain these processes is called attribution theory. Psychological research into attribution began with the work of Gestalt psychologist **Fritz**

Heider (aka "father of attribution theory") in the early part of the 20th century, subsequently developed by others such as Harold Kelley and Bernard Weiner.

Theory of Attribution : The theory of personality that seeks to explain how we decide, on the basis of samples of an individual's behavior, what the specific causes of that person's behavior are.

Attribution Process

Noticing an event

↓

Interpreting the event

↓

Forming an initial explanation

↓

Is time available?
Are cognitive resources available?
Is there motivation to change the initial explanation? — No → Event explained; process stops

Yes ↓

Formulate and resolve problem

↓

Is the explanation satisfactory? — No → (loop back)

Yes ↓ → Event explained; process stops

Attributional Augmentation (*2016*) - the strength of a facilitative force will be perceived as greater if an event occurs in the presence of an inhibitory force. The augmentation principle is the attributional tendency to assign greater influence to a particular cause or rationale of behavior if there are other factors present that normally would produce a different outcome. Internal attributions are augmented (altered) when there are factors that are unexpected and would normally be a constraint. When an action or behavior has limits or constraint on it the individual's motive must be stronger than the constraints or inhibitions present.

For example, you learn that a person just ran a marathon. That in itself is a great feat but you then learn the person had previously had a stroke and had been completely paralyzed the year before. The augmentation principle would present itself and your internal attributions may shift and your perception of the marathon runner would increase from being generally impressed to extreme admiration and awe.

ATTRIBUTION THEORY - motivational theory looking at how the average person constructs the meaning of an event based on his /her motives to find a cause and his/her knowledge of the environment.

Att. Theory basically looks at how people make sense of their world; what cause and effect inferences they make about the behaviors of others and of themselves. Heider states that there is a strong need in individuals to understand transient

events by attributing them to the actor's disposition or to stable characteristics of the environment.

The purpose behind making attributions is to achieve COGNITIVE CONTROL over one's environment by explaining and understanding the causes behind behaviors and environmental occurrences.

Making attributions gives order and predictability to our lives; helps us to cope. Imagine what it would be like if you felt that you had no control over the world. (talk about later)

When you make attributions you analyze the situation by making inferences (going beyond the information given) about the dispositions of others and yourself as well as inferences about the environment and how it may be causing a person to behave.

Two basic kinds of attributions made: INTERNAL and EXTERNAL

INTERNAL - dispositional

EXTERNAL - situational

Consequences of making inferences

  1) gives order and predictability;

  2) inferences lead to behavior - you will or will not behave in certain ways toward the actor based on your inferences and you will form expectations as to how the actor will behave.

The meaning of a behavior depends on the cause to which it is attributed (e.g. bystander studies - if we don't perceive the situation is caused by an emergency then we don't act like it is an emergency).

INACCURACIES in attribution may lead to :

1) misplaced blame (trials, eyewitness studies, whites vs. blacks);
2) blinds people to other causes

ATTRIBUTION THEORIES

1) **CORRESPONDENT INFERENCE THEORY (HEIDER AND JONES)**

Given that an individual has POWER (is capable of being responsible for his own behavior) the factors affecting attributions that the observer will make are:

  1) the observer's (o's) knowledge of environmental factors impinging on the actor (a)

  2) the observer's motives

  3) the observer's perspective as a bystander or an actor

  1) o's knowledge of the envir.

  a) free choice? was the A pushed into his action by environmental forces (Bill hit Mary) or did he freely choose his action

CORRESPONDENT INFERENCE - describing a person's disposition in terms of his/her behavior

DISCOUNTING PRINCIPLE - the greater the awareness of the env. the less likely one is to make a C.I. The role of a given cause in producing a given effect is discounted if other plausible causes are present

NONCOMMON EFFECTS - the tendency to infer dispositional causes is influenced by what we initially expect an A to do. Unexpected events elicit a search for explanation.The more deviant the behavior from the expected, the greater the

likelihood of making a CI

   b) rewards and punishments

social approval (social desirability) - if A acts in a socially approved manner, can we be sure that the behavior was truly intended?

   If a person acts in a socially disapproved manner what do we think?

Jones and Davis - interview study: Ss(subjects) listened to an interview . They were told what the ideal candidate would be like. The candidate acted either consistently or inconsistently with the description. Ss judged the true dispositions of the As. What do you think happened? What kinds of attributions were made of the As?

   c) status relationships

   if a person has a high status, envir. factors are perceived as playing less of a role in his/her good behaviors and more in h/h bad behaviors. (e.g. Bill Clinton)

   Thiebaut and Riecken (1955) each S participated in a project with 2 other students (confederates)

   Confed 1 - new Ph.D. (high status) and Confed 2 - freshman veteran (low status)

The S had to ask the confeds for help and both helped . Ss rated both students in terms of how much their behavior was internally/or externally motivated

Findings: C1 - high internal ; C2 - external

2) the observer's motives an observer's interest and needs become entangled in h/h (his/her) attributions in many ways:

1.) they determine whether an attribution will be made;

2.) whether h/h seeks understanding in an open-minded way;

3.) whether h/h is preoccupied with a particular causal question;

4.) whether h/s will arrive at certain explanations rather than others

   a) Hedonic Relevance and Personalism to the extent that the A's actions are rewarding or costly to the O, the behavior has hedonic relevance

Bershied Study - videotapes of blind dates in interaction with others were viewed. Ss made more attributions of the blind date than others on the tape, why?

To the extent that the O believes that the A's actions are meant to affect h/h, the action is personal. Think about the inferences you draw about others who you are interested in, especially if you perceive that h/h action was intended to gratify or spite you.

   Pepitone Study - tickets to BB playoffs versus tickets for a high school game Ss interviewed by :

   Mr. Friendly or Mr. Negative or Mr. Neutral

   Ss had to rate their interviewer on friendliness and power

   Findings?

b) self presentation motives "how do I look to others and to myself" The A's motives to present him/herself in as positive a way as possible.

self-enhancement and self-image protection (attributions for success and failure). Success has potential for enhancement of ourself-esteem if we perceive ourselves as responsible for that success. Failure has potential for destroying our self-esteem, if we perceive ourselves to be responsible for the failure.

Success - we make internal attributions for our successes

Failure - we make external attributions for our failures

Other's successes - we make more external attributions

Other's failures - we make more internal attributions

Studies on ego-enhancing or self-serving biases:

classroom teachers were asked to teach to student A or student B. student A performed well, B failed teacher's attributions of students, A is a good student, B a poor student continue the lesson test again, A does well, B does poorly or for some teachers, B does well . What were teacher's attributions? A smart (internal), B who did poorly (poor student - internal), B who did well - I'm a good teacher (external)

Coaches (Carver): assistant coaches and head coaches - team lost, why?

Self-handicapping - active attempts to arrange circumstances of behavior in order to protect self-perceptions as competent, intelligent people. Do things to avoid diagnostic information about their own characteristics and capabilities. Select settings that render performance feedback ambiguous. By finding impediments that make a good performance less likely, the self-handicapper protects his/her sense of competence. Regardless of the outcome, the handicapper can't lose. Underachievement is a self-hand strategy. Self Handicapping also helps protect intrinsic motivation.

c) motive for belief in effective control - the belief that a person can satisfy his/her owngoals through h/h own efforts. The need to believe that the world is orderly and not arbitrary. The need to believe that you have control over the world. "If I had just been in the right place at the right time", a need to believe that you can control your own destiny.

Lottery study: people were either given lottery tickets with the numbers already selected or were given the tickets but were allowed to select their own numbers. Then the Ss were asked to sell their tickets back to the E. Who was more willing to make the sell? Why?

Derogation of victims: the more negative the event that falls on someone the more internal attributions are made

Walster - presented stories about Carl. Ss were asked to assign responsibility for the consequences of the actions

Findings: as the consequences became more severe, greater responsibility was assigned to Carl.

Patty Hearst Syndrome - victim assumes responsibility for what has happened

3) perspective of the observer as bystander or actor - (Actor/Observer effect) leads to the fundamental attribution error

Two roles: Actor and Observer

Fundamental attribution error: the actor tends to attribute his/her behaviors to the situation while the observer tends to attribute the actor's behavior to his/her disposition.

Contributing factors: cognitive - information processing and perception differences motivational - differences in self-presentation concerns and other motives

Perception and information processing: (Cognitive reasons) meaning is heavily related to the context in which it occurs and contextual information may be interpreted differently by A and O. There are two types of contextual information : cause and effect.

cause:

2. COVARIATION MODEL - Harold Kelley /aka ANOVA Model

Kelley's **covariation model** is an attribution theory in which people make causal inferences to explain why other people and ourselves behave in a certain way. It is concerned with both social perception and self-perception (Kelley, 1973).

The covariation principle states that, "an effect is attributed to one of its possible causes with which, over time, it covaries". That is, a certain behaviour is attributed to potential causes that appear at the same time. This principle is useful when the individual has the opportunity to observe the behaviour over several occasions. Causes of an outcome can be attributed to the person (internal), the stimulus (external), the circumstance, or some combination of these factors. Attributions are made based on three criteria: Consensus, Distinctiveness, and Consistency (Kelley, 1973).

Consensus

Consensus is the co-variation of behavior across different people. If lots of people find Lisa attractive, consensus is high. If only Johnny finds Lisa attractive, consensus is low. High consensus is attributed to the stimulus (in the above example, to Lisa), while low consensus is attributed to the person (in this case, Johnny).

Distinctiveness

Distinctiveness refers to how unique the behavior is to the particular situation. There is a low distinctiveness if an individual behaves similarly in all situations, and there exists a high distinctiveness when the person only shows the behaviour in particular situations. If the distinctiveness is high, one will attribute this behaviour more to the circumstance instead of person (Gilovich et al., 2005).
If a teacher praises only one or two particular students and not others, one will attribute this behaviour to those students good qualities. Whereas , If the same teacher praises almost all students, one will attribute this behaviour to the teacher's innate quality of being praiseworthy in general.

Consistency

Consistency is the covariation of behavior across time. If Jane is generous all the time, she shows high consistency. If Jane is rarely generous or is generous only at specific times, perhaps around the holidays, she shows low consistency. High consistency is attributed to the person (Jane is a generous person), while low consistency is attributed to the circumstance (the holidays make people generous).

Making attributions using consensus, distinctiveness, and consistency

According to Hewstone and Jaspars (1987), we are able to determine whether a person would likely make a personal (internal), stimulus (external) or circumstantial attribution by assessing the levels of consensus, distinctiveness, and consistency in a given situation:

Low Consensus, Low Distinctiveness, High Consistency = Personal Attribution
High Consensus, High Distinctiveness, High Consistency = Stimulus Attribution

High Consensus, Low Distinctiveness, Low Consistency = Circumstance Attribution

In reference to **McArthur's study (1972)**, let us consider the following example: "John laughs at the comedian" This outcome could be caused by something in the person (John), the stimulus (the comedian) the circumstances (the comedy club on that night), or some combination of these factors.

If John is the only person laughing at the comedian (low consensus), he laughs at the comedian at other comedy clubs (high consistency), and he laughs at other comedians (low distinctiveness), then the effect is seen as caused by something in the person (John).

If everyone is laughing at the comedian (high consensus), John laughs at the comedian at other comedy clubs (high consistency), and he does not laugh at other comedians (high distinctiveness), then the effect is seen as caused by something in the stimulus (the comedian).

If everyone is laughing at the comedian (high consensus), John doesn't laugh at the comedian at other comedy clubs (low consistency), and he laughs at other comedians at the club (low distinctiveness) then the effect is seen as caused by something in the circumstance (the comedy club on that night).

Causal schema

A causal schema refers to the way a person thinks about plausible causes in relation to a given effect. It provides him or her with the means of making causal attributions when the information provided is limited. The three causal schemata recognized by Kelley (1973) are:

1. Multiple Sufficient Causes
2. Multiple Necessary Causes
3. Causal Schema for Compensatory Causes

Multiple Sufficient Causes: He or she may believe that either cause A or cause B suffices to produce a given effect (Kelley et al., 1980). For example, if an athlete fails a drug test (effect), we reason that he or she may be attempting to cheat (cause A) or may have been tricked into taking a banned substance (cause B). Either cause sufficiently attributes to the effect (McLeod, 2010).

Multiple Necessary Causes: Both A and B are necessary to produce a given effect (Kelley et al., 1980). For example, if an athlete wins a marathon (effect), we reason that he or she must be very fit (cause A), and highly motivated (cause B) (McLeod, 2010).

Causal Schema for Compensatory Causes: The effect occurs if either A or B is maximally present, or if both A and B are moderately present. For example, success (effect) depends on high ability (cause A) or low task difficulty (cause B). Success will occur if either cause is highly present or if both are moderately present (Kelley 1973).

Limitations of Kelly's Covariation model aka ANOVA model

The critique of the model mainly concerns the lack of distinction between intentional and unintentional behavior, and between reason and cause explanations (Malle, 1999).
Intentional behavior occurs when there is a desire for an outcome, together with a belief that a certain behavior will lead to the desired outcome. These beliefs and desires are mental states acting as reasons behind an intention to act. When behavior is unintentional, the behavior is not explained by reasons, but rather by cause explanations not related to mental states of desire and belief. Malle (1999) found that whether behavior is intentional or unintentional predicts the type of explanation, and that the type of explanation presented predicts the judgement of intentionality.
Malle (1999) also pointed at the differential effect of being an actor versus observer, the effect of the self-serving bias and the distinction between subjective and rational reasoning as important factors acting on attributions of behavior. This is not accounted for by the covariation model. Malle offers a new theoretical framework to give a broader and more comprehensive understanding of attributions of behavior.Consensus

Four rules of logic in making attributions:

- Covariation - if a behavior or object is always present when another behavior or object is present, they covary (like correlation).
- Extremity - the more extreme the effect of a behavior, the more likely we are to make internal attributions.
- Discounting - the more you know about environmental conditions surrounding a behavior, the less likely you are to make internal attributions.
- Augmentation - the strength of a facilitative force will be perceived as greater if an event occur in the presence of an inhibitory force

3. Weiner's Model of Achievement Attributions

Weiner's attribution theory is mainly about achievement. According to him, the most important factors affecting attributions are ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. Attributions are classified along three causal dimensions:

1. locus of control (two poles: internal vs. external)
2. stability (do causes change over time or not?)
3. controllability (causes one can control such as skills vs. causes one cannot control such as luck, others' actions, etc.)

When one succeeds, one attributes successes internally ("my own skill"). When a rival succeeds, one tends to credit external (e.g. luck). When one-self fails or makes mistakes, we will more likely use external attribution, attributing causes to situational factors rather than blaming ourselves. When others fail or make mistakes, internal attribution is often used, saying it is due to their internal personality factors.

- Attribution is a three stage process:
(1) behavior is observed,
(2) behavior is determined to be deliberate i.e. intentional
(3) behavior is attributed to internal or external causes.

- Achievement can be attributed to (1) effort, (2) ability, (3) level of task difficulty, or (4) luck.
- Causal dimensions of behavior are (1) locus of control, (2) stability, and (3) controllability.

An individual's causal attributions of achievement behaviors affect subsequent achievement behaviors and motivation; future achievement expectancies; persistence at similar tasks; pride or shame felt following success or failure.

FOUR ATTRIBUTIONAL FACTORS: Effort, Task Difficulty, Luck, Ability - depending where you place the attribution in the matrix will determine expectations of future performance, shame, pride, etc.

Dweck - induce kids with a repeat failure history to make effort rather than ability attributions.

Lepper and Green (1973) : child's performance can be enhanced by inducing him to make internal attributions for success (look at high self-esteem people - usually see themselves as responsible for their successes and blame failures on external factors)

ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLES

Optimistic - negative events are explained in terms of external, unstable and specific causes ; and positive events to internal, stable, global causes.

Pessimistic - negative events explained in terms of internal, stable, and global terms (I'm a bad person); positive events in terms of external, unstable, and specific causes

Individual differences in attributional style may lead to depression; health factors (immune system and stress - 99 veterans of W.W.II responses on a questionnaire about their wartime experiences (1946); explanatory style predicted health after age 45; more health problems with those who had a more pessimistic explanatory style. Baseball players with a pessimistic style died earlier than optimistic players.

Seligman - learned helplessness and attribution

Q. Discuss the contribution of Fritz Heider in Attribution Psychology.

In his 1920s dissertation, Heider addressed the problem of phenomenology: why do perceivers attribute the properties such as color to perceived objects, when those properties are mental constructs? Heider's answer that perceivers attribute that which they "directly" sense – vibrations in the air for instance – to an object they construe as causing those sense data. "Perceivers faced with sensory data thus see the perceptual object as 'out there', because they attribute the sensory data to their underlying causes in the world"

Heider extended this idea to attributions about people: "motives, intentions, sentiments ... the core processes which manifest themselves in overt behavior". In his book **The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations (1958)**, Fritz Heider tried to explore the nature of interpersonal relationship, and espoused the concept of what he called **"common sense"** or **"naïve psychology"**. In his theory, he believed that people observe, analyze, and explain behaviors with explanations. Although people have different kinds of explanations for the events of human behaviors, Heider found it is very useful to group explanation into two categories; Internal (personal) and external (situational) attributions.

Q. Distinguish between internal and external attribution with examples.

External attribution aka **situational attribution**
refers to interpreting someone's behavior as being caused by the situation that the individual is in. For example, if someone's car tyre is punctured he may attribute that to a hole in the road; by making attributions to the poor condition of the highway, he can make sense of the event without any discomfort that it may in reality have been the result of his bad driving.

Internal attribution aka **dispositional attribution**
when the causes of the events are assigned to internal traits or characteristics of individuals such as such as ability, personality, mood, efforts, attitudes, or disposition.

Situational causes are those brought about by something in the environment. For instance, someone who knocks over a jug of milk and then cleans it up probably does the cleaning not because he or she is necessarily a neat person but because the situation requires it. In contrast, a person who spends hours shining the kitchen floor probably does so because he or she is a neat person. Hence, the behavior has a dispositional cause —that is, it is prompted by the person's disposition (his or her internal traits or personality characteristics).

Q. Enumerate and explain some of the attribution biases/errors commonly seen in people.

Halo Effect : a phenomenon in which an initial understanding that a person has positive traits is used to infer other uniformly positive characteristics and vice versa. For ex : a teacher evaluating the answer sheet of a student with a bad handwriting might assume that he or she is not a very good student and lacks appropriate subject knowledge. The 'impression' could be opposite while evaluating a copy with answers written in visually beautiful handwriting.

Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE) : tendency to overvalue dispositional or personality-based explanations for behavior while under-valuing situational explanations. e.g., if a person is overweight, a person's first assumption might be that they have a problem with overeating or are lazy and not that they might have a medical reason for being heavier set.

Fundamental attribution error: the actor tends to attribute his/her behaviors to the situation while the observer tends to attribute the actor's behavior to his/her disposition.

Q. Why is FAE so common ?

This is because when a behavior occurs, attention is most often focused on the person performing the behavior. Thus, the individual is more salient than the environment and dispositional attributions are made more often than situational attributions to explain the behavior of others.

Self Serving Bias (SSB) : It is a type of FAE in which, when evaluating one's own behavior, the situational factors are often exaggerated when there is a negative outcome while dispositional factors are exaggerated when there is a positive

outcome. In other words, SSB is a tendency in which cognitive or perceptual processes are distorted by the need to maintain and enhance self-esteem, or the tendency to perceive oneself in an overly favorable manner. e.g. students who attribute earning a good grade on an exam to their own intelligence and preparation but attribute earning a poor grade to the teacher's poor teaching ability or unfair test questions exhibit the self-serving bias.

Q. How fundamental is the FAE ?

People from <u>individualist cultures</u> are more inclined to make fundamental-attribution error and self serving bias than people from <u>collectivist cultures</u>. Individualist cultures tend to attribute a person's behavior to his internal factors whereas collectivist cultures tend to attribute a person's behavior to his external factors. e.g. adults in **India** were more likely to use situational attributions than dispositional ones in explaining events. These findings are the opposite of those for the United States, and they contradict the assumption of FAE being a universal phenomenon **(Miller, 1984, Lien et al., 2006)**.

Q. What are the possible reasons for differences in the degree of prevalence of FAE in eastern and western cultures ?

1. One reason for the difference may lie in the <u>norms and values</u> of Eastern society,which emphasize <u>social responsibility</u> and <u>societal obligations</u> to a greater extent than Western societies.

2. In addition, the <u>language</u> spoken in a culture may lead to different sorts of attributions. For instance, a tardy person using English may say, "I am late"; this suggests a personal, dispositional cause ("I am a tardy person"). In contrast, speakers of Spanish who are late say, "The clock caused me to be late." Clearly, the statement in Spanish implies that the cause is situational **(Alon & Brett, 2007)**.

Assumed-similarity bias : Most people believe that their friends and acquaintances are fairly similar to themselves. But this feeling goes beyond just people we know to a general tendency to think of people as being similar to oneself even when meeting them for the first time. Given the range of people in the world, this assumption often reduces the accuracy of our judgments.