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Theories of Attitude

Theory of Classical Conditioning

Classical conditioning enables framing an attitude when an external & impartial impetus arouses an emotional reaction, i.e., **learning through association**. Pavlov and his experiments conducted with dogs made classical conditioning famous: where just before serving food to the dogs, a bell was rung. Food caused dogs to produce saliva. As a consequence, every time a bell was rung, dogs started to produce saliva even without the presence of food.

Another example is the use of classical conditioning by advertisers to affect public attitudes towards a specific product. In a television advertisement, we might find a young, beautiful actress having an amazing time on a tropical beach while relishing a particular brand of soft drink. This beautiful and tempting imagery leads people to form a positive association with this specific brand of soft drink

Theory of Instrumental Learning

It is a process of acquiring knowledge that happens through encouragement and punishments for any particular set of behavior. Behaviors or attitudes that result in positive outcomes are often strengthened compared to behaviors and

attitudes that result in adverse outcomes. Instrumental learning can be utilized in influencing the way attitudes develop.

For example, take the case of a young man who has taken to smoking quite recently. Every time he lights a cigarette, people protest, rebuke him and request him to move his ass away from their territory. This negative reaction from people around him, in the end, results in framing a negative opinion about smoking in him, and he ends up making his mind to relinquish the habit.

Theory of Observational learning

Individuals quite often learn attitudes by noticing the individuals around them. When a person admires somebody who significantly exudes a specific attitude, the chances for that person to develop the same beliefs becomes high.

For example, take the case of children who spend a significant amount of time witnessing their parents' attitudes and generally start to exhibit similar behavioral traits (surprising, not precisely). There is every possibility that someone who has been brought up witnessing domestic violence in his home might accept the phenomenon as a societal norm.

These theories help us appreciate the fact that our attitude is often influenced by something learned through associations, expected outcomes, and observations.

Attitudes serve three primary needs

1. Object appraisal
2. Social adjustment
3. Externalization

Attitudes perform four main functions for any person

1. The utilitarian function
2. The ego-defensive function
3. The value expressive (or ego-expressive) function
4. The knowledge function

In case you want to have a better & detailed understanding of these three primary needs and four main functions of Attitude, you can get them in this [book](#) (page no: 24-27).