

Content Title: Attitudes

Key points

- Triadic model of attitudes
- Formation of attitudes
- Changing attitudes

- **Definition** – ‘an enduring evaluation, positive or negative, of people, objects and ideas’. Aronsdon et al (1994)
- **Triadic model** – it is generally agreed that there are **THREE** aspects to our attitudes:
 - **COGNITIVE** – concerns our beliefs
 - **AFFECTIVE** – concerns our feelings
 - **BEHAVIOURAL** – concerns our actions
- We **measure attitudes** mainly through asking people questions or asking them to respond to statements that describe beliefs, feelings or behaviours associated with the topic we are interested in. This is done in three main ways: **Likert Scales, Semantic Differential Scales and Thurstone Scales.**
- **Attitude formation** – according to Triandis, we learn our attitudes either from direct experience or from other people (social learning) e.g. a pleasant experience in PE is likely to promote a positive attitude.
- **Attitude change** – attitudes can be changed by altering any of the 3 components of attitude. Methods of changing attitudes are:
 - **COGNITIVE DISSONANCE** – this is the unpleasant sensation we experience when an attitude we hold comes into conflict with a current situation or intention. To deal with this dissonance we tend to rationalise to reduce the feelings of discomfort e.g. missing training won't matter as the session is only a fitness session and I'm one of the fittest in the team.
 - **PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION THEORY** – there are four elements to this theory:
 - (1) **The persuader** - needs to have high status
 - (2) **The message** - needs to be presented in an appropriate way
 - (3) **The recipients** - needs to want to make changes
 - (4) **The situation** - better if other persuaders are present

Attitudes are mainly formed through:

- Past Experiences
- Coaches/Teachers/Parents/Friends/Peers
- Media Prejudice

Changing Attitudes

Examples of changing an individual's attitude include:

- Updating knowledge or providing a person with new information can change the **cognitive component** e.g. a coach provides evidence that a new weight training regime produces larger gains than the traditional methods the sportsperson currently uses.
- Providing a person with new and positive experiences can modify the **affective component** e.g. moving a sprinter up into a more talented training group.
- If a skill is simplified or if some form of guidance is used to make execution easier, the **behavioural component** of attitude can be changed e.g. a teacher spends time building the confidence of a gymnast by going through the stages of a handspring.

Top Tips:

Always use sporting examples to reinforce any point made, even if the question doesn't specifically ask for it. Also, it is important to remember that social and situational factors influence actual behaviour very strongly and that attitudes do not always predict behaviour.



Exam Style Questions

1. Individual differences are important learning variables.
Explain how the three elements of attitude would influence your progress in performing an activity of your choice. [3]

Answers