

How has attribution theory been studied in the past?
How might it be studied in the future?

Human beings can explain anything. No matter the cause, we have a strong need to understand and explain everything. This is one of the most amazing features of human beings which is the ability to explain anything. This is the old and traditional way of explaining what attribution theory is all about. For instance, we can see parents telling their children what is the reason of why things come to be. There comes a point where there are proper explanations given to every kid's question (Curt, 1994).

Whatever the cause may be, there always remain a strong need to comprehend and make clear what is going on in our world. This attribution theory is the need for people to explain. This opens up interesting influence and possibilities.

Due to people feeling the need to explain, it goes beyond the information received. Attribution theory is a theory about how people would give details in order to be able to clarify things. As such, explanation is a synonym for attribution. There are two types of explanations about why things happen. They are external attribution and internal attribution.

External attribution places blame to an outside agent or force. An external attribution is that which assigns causality to something that is external. An external attribution would claim that some outside thing motivates the event. We see the classic example in the bible in the book of Genesis when Adam would respond to God saying "the woman made me do it" referring to eating the apple.

By contrast, an internal attribution allots causality to factors which are present within the person. An internal attribution claims that the person was directly responsible for the event. It puts all blames on himself or herself. An example of this is the phrase “It is my entire fault that we lost and I failed those who look up to me”.

The purpose behind making attribution is to have cognitive control over ones environment by understanding and explaining the causes behind behavioral and environmental occurrences. Making attributions gives order and predictability to our lives. When we make attributions we are able to analyze the situation and answer the question “why?” Attribution theory looks at how people make sense of their world.

The best way that attribution theory was taught in the past was giving a lot of illustrations. Some examples of the attribution theory in a real life situation can be said of the following; firstly, an example of an external attribution for losing a basketball game could be because the referees made bad calls, the coach did not know what he was doing, or everyone did not do their part in order to win the game. One might also say the gym floor was too slick or it was too hot or cold in the gym, or the fans were too loud or not loud enough. On the other hand, internal attributions for losing the game might be it is my entire fault, I did not make the last shot, or I did not play good defense because the person I was guarding scored too many points.

Moreover, some external attributions for winning the basketball game could be the whole team played together, all the referees calls went our way, or we just had a very good coach that knew what he was doing. One might also say that the other team did not have their best players or their coach did not know what he was doing. Some internal attributions would be I won the

game for us, if I would not have hit them foul shots we would not have won, or if I were not here we could not have beat that team. Some external attributions would be because we practiced so hard for this game, we just got lucky, we all played together as a team and did our part to contribute to the win. This is the old way of explaining what attribution theory is done the classical way making use of real world events.

As we have seen, when people make an internal attribution for their dealings, it comes into view that they also alter their beliefs and attitudes about themselves. Hence, they become "that kind" of person and the desired behavior follows naturally. The solution for change is an internal attribution.

This demonstrates the problems that can happen when people use external things in influencing behaviors. The fundamental nature is the consideration of the reward or punishment that prevents people from making an internal attribution that brings the desired behavior under their control (Stainton- Rogers, 1991). Communities may not oversimplify from the reward and obtain the internally motivated habit in producing the desired behavior. As an alternative, they will expect some external agent to cause the reason for their actions.

External attributions offer another aspect that is taught in the traditional way. They can challenge an existing habit. That is, people who carry out a behavior since "that's the kind of people they are" which refers to internal attribution. People can lose the habit only if they change the pattern of attribution.

The attribution theory is effectual especially in the way it has been taught in the past. External forces are seen as successful if the receivers believe that they "earned" the external

factor especially for an internal reason. As such, the rewards work well when the receiver thinks that the achievement flows from an internal origin. On the other hand, a perceived punishment will work well when the person thinks that one is guilty of doing something wrong especially when one acknowledges that the wrong doing is a result of one's action. The old school teaches the strongest lesson of attribution theory as seen in its simplicity. The two steps to effective use of attribution is that it is applied in a situation where people are thinking about why things are happening vis-à-vis the explanation which follows from an internal attribution. In the real sense, attribution theory shows us that people can create new beliefs or attitudes which depend upon the explanations they make. If they make external attributions, then they are unlikely to change their attitudes about littering; but, if they make an internal attribution, then it is likely that they will come to view themselves as a different kind of person.

Traditionally, psychology has viewed attribution theory in the quantitative methods as its usual means of enquiry. However, attribution or the way of explaining things can also be understood in a different light pertaining to studying it in the near future. This will involve the emergence of a new paradigm for psychology. It establishes new ways of theorizing about people's action and thinking which will now point to a different research questions about its subject.

As a result, the paradigm introduces a range of new methods for empirical inquiry. It brings to a new level the new forms of analysis of the information that are obtained. For sure, the future will bring not only an attribution theory that is done in an experimental procedure but being able to define human behavior and measure it against varying conditions in a new perspective. It should be considered that setting aside hypothetico-deductive methods does not

mean that the traditional way of teaching the attribution theory has lost its meaning. Rather, it means asking different research questions. Instead of trying to point out the find external attributions on how social processes operate, the new paradigm of learning attribution theory is the examination of the very thing that gives rise to the representational systems by which the internal attributions are constituted. The new paradigm of attribution theory allows us to ask different kinds of research questions that offer new methodological approaches in addressing these questions (Stainton- Rogers, 2007).

There are a variety of ways in which this new paradigm of possibly teaching attribution theory can be applied which differs from the traditional approach. Such new approach will bring a better understanding of what attribution theory is all about and further strengthen the basis of what the traditional ways has been taught. It offers us an exciting and functional way to interpret people since it allows us to ask different kinds of research questions and hopefully open a varied array of new methods which can be much more effective in studying the different aspects of human action and experience that are important in our lives. Hopefully, this new mindset can be useful to address the different category of realistic issues and problems in improving the quality of people's lives (Stainton- Rogers, 2007).

References

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