CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to have the correct idea of the term attitude, it is very essential to look into the meaning and definitions given by different psychologists and educometrician. The clear concept would definitely help the investigator to collect and coin statements depicting various degrees of attitudes from positive to negative. Therefore an attempt is made to summarize the theoretical views in this chapter.

2.1 MEANING AND CONCEPT OF ATTITUDE

A variety of definitions have been developed in an attempt to conceptualize the attitude 'idea', in both theoretical and operational terms. Three general orientations seem to have emerged from these definitions.

1. Attitudes as emotional stereotypes.
2. Attitudes as products of intellectualization or cognition.
3. Attitudes as behaviour determinants a pioneer definition.

A pioneer definition was given by Thurstone when he described attitudes as generalized reactions for or against specific psychological objects.
Edwards' definition of attitudes also reveals an affective basis in the following quotation.

"An attitude is the degree of positive or negative affect associated with some psychological objects". 1

Nunnally supports the affective basis for attitude structure when he recognizes attitude as "predispositions to react negatively or positively in some degree toward an object, institution or class of persons". 2

Bemmers lends further support to the affective approach of defining attitudes in this expert.

"An attitude may be defined as an emotional tendency, organised through experience, to react positively or negatively toward psychological object or feelings for or against something". 3

His conceptualization seems to separate the feeling component of attitude from the cognitive mental operations.

In examining the 'feeling' component Remmers links attitudes to such pleasant and unpleasant emotions as love, fear, hate, and their variations or complications. The phrase 'for or against' and 'positively or negatively' identify the directionality of attitudes as such attitudes can be described as approach-avoidance tendencies in response to general and specific stimuli included in directionality are the following viewpoints:

- favourable and unfavourable
- agreeable and disagreeable
- like and dislike

In the term 'something' Remmers suggests that attitudes are more than mental images or verbalized idea within the individual. Cantril's definition appears to support an affective and cognitive basis for attitude formation when he states:

"An attitude is the tendency for a person to react positively or negatively to the situation". Accordingly, attitudes could be said as the mobilization of the will of a person.  

Krech and Crutchfield's definition of attitudes centres more inclusively about mental processes.

"An attitude can be defined as an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of individual's world".5

Attitudes defined from an affective and behavioural context are also found in statements given by Guilford and Freeman.

Guilford states that an attitude is a personal disposition common to individuals, but possessed to a different degree which impels them to react to objects, situations, or propositions in ways that can be called favourable or unfavourable.6

Freeman lends credence to Guilford's ideas while emphasizing the enduring quality of attitudes.

"An attitude is a dispositional readiness to respond to certain situations, persons, or objects in a consistent


manner which has been learned, and has become one's typical mode of response". 7

Allport closely allies attitudes to a variable which predisposes behaviour in this definition.

"An attitude is a mental and neutral state of readiness organised through experience exerting directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". 8

Cattell views attitudes as "Potential behaviour"

"An attitude is a vector, definable by direction as well as magnitude and further by point of application and stimulus situation". 9

Russell's definition - additional biological element

"a developmental state or organismic valence, created by psycho-biological process as exerting a motivational influence upon individual's responsive behaviour in

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9. R.B. Cattell, "The Ergic Theory of Attitude and Sentiment measurement"; Educational Psychological measurement, pp. 221-222.
situation directly or indirectly related to it.\textsuperscript{10}

Rammers and Gage characterize attitudes according to six fundamental functions:

1. Favorableness: the degree to which an individual is for or against an attitude object.

2. Intensity: the strength of the feeling for or against the attitude object.

3. The readiness with which an attitude can be aroused.

4. Generally, the consistency with which an attitude permeates the internal psychological system and is applied to a wide range of attitude objects.

5. Public and private attitudes, those attitudes which are socially accepted and easily discussed compared to those attitudes which are less acceptable because of their controversial or personal nature.

6. Common and individual attitude, those attitudes in which there is a broad acceptance by many people compared to attitudes primarily confined to one's own individually, interests, and personal tastes.\textsuperscript{11}


The study of the various definitions leads to say that they are all defined keeping in view the affective domain it has nothing to do with cognitive domain. It is by and large feeling aspect and hence could be expressed in terms of positive or negative direction.

After discussing the theoretical aspect, it would be in the fitness of things to inquire into different methods of measuring attitude. The inquiry would help to decide the method to be adopted for measuring the attitudes under question.

2.2 MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDES

The interest of American social-psychologists in fact-collecting, and statistical methods has resulted in a rapid advance in the empiridal study of attitudes, with the result that attitudes to-day are measured more successfully than they are defined.

In recent years there has been decline of interest in the measurement of intelligence and an increase of interest in the measurement of attitudes. It seems as though militant testing, having won victories on one field of battle, has sought a new world to conquer.

There are different methods in vogue for measuring attitudes.
They are Thurstone method and Likert method. Although various techniques for the measurement of social attitudes have been suggested, the two most frequently used methods are probably the "method of equal appearing intervals" developed by Thurstone and Chave and the method of summated ratings developed by Likert.

2.3 DIFFERENT METHODS FOR MEASURING ATTITUDES

Thurstone Method

Thurstone and his co-workers (Thurstone 1929 and 1931, Thurstone and Chave 1919) have developed certain widely used method of attitude scale construction. They have published number of specific scales for the measurement of attitudes and opinions toward war, the church, capital punishment, evolution, the Negro, birth control, censorship, the Chinese, and many other social objects.

Other investigators have utilized the Thurstone method producing scales concerned with a very wide range of objects. Theoretically, such scales could be developed to measure attitudes towards any social object or issue, and this seems to have provided social psychologists with an almost inexhaustible field of applied research.

This type of scale requires asking thirty or more judges to sort into eleven categories a large number of
statements expressing opinions concerning an attitude objects. At one extreme is the most favourable attitude, at the other the least favourable, the neutral position is at the centre. The judges are to perceive these categories as separated by equal steps on a continuum of favourability. Hence the method is called equal-appearing intervals technique. The median scale value assigned by judges to each of the statements in the collection is then determined only unambiguous and relevant statements as determined by analysis of the sorting are retained. From these are the chosen the statements that represent approximately equal steps along the entire continuum of favourability. Then the statements are administered to the group.

The chief problem with these Thurstone-type of scales is the tremendous amount of time required to construct them.

Thurstone's original contribution, new methods for the scaling of stimuli have been developed, and Thurstone himself remained an important contributor to these methods and to their application to psychological problems. These methods are now generally known as psychological scaling methods.
Likert type Method

This is very easy to construct in comparison to the Thurstone type scale. The method also calls for a collection of various statements of opinion which are then edited in accordance with informal criteria similar to those used in the method of equal appearing intervals. After eliminating the statements that do not meet the prescribed standards, the remaining statements are edited and presented to a group of subjects who are asked to respond to each one in terms of their own agreement or disagreement with the statement. Usually 1 to 5 scale of response is used.

Subjects check whether they strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree, with each statement. A score is given for each item depending upon the response made. The five possible responses may be weighted 1-2-3-4-5 or 5-4-3-2-1. Either 1 or 5 is consistently favourable or unfavourable, although the continuum is reverse in about half the statements. A criterion of internal consistency is used for selecting the item to be included in the final form. Scales constructed by the method of contain about 20 to 25 items.

The Likert approach is somewhat more pragmatic than the Thurstone. The latter scopes to develop a
rational scale whereas the former selects items in terms of how well.

2.4 SELECTION OF THE METHOD

Every method of measuring attitudes from which has some pros and cons. The attitude which is shown to a particular topic under social, economic, or environmental conditions is subject to change with change in any of the factors influencing the particular condition.

Students of the social psychology are not in complete agreement as to the practicability of measuring attitude. Some take the position that verbalised responses in real sense do not reveal attitude. Bain contends that people tend to respond in conventional ways even though they do not have to sign their names, that most thinking is rationalization or stereotyped reaction, that questions are interpreted differently, and that word often refute action and vice-versa. The fact that a high correlation frequently exists between successive answers to the same question does not establish the reliability of the method.

On the other hand, Katz and Allport believe "the kind of information sought is such that a frank answer

will not embarrass the subject, if questions are so worded that the meaning is clear and if the results are interpreted to certain topics of questions may lack candor, the attitude questionnaire may be considered a legitimate device in research.  

Perhaps the clearest statement as to possibility of measuring attitude has been presented by Thurstone and Chave. They recognise at the outset, the complexity of an attitude and the fact that it cannot be completely described by any single numerical index "But this discrepancy between the index and 'truth' is universal".  

Although a subject may be hiding the truth and practising deliberate deceptions, it is nevertheless desirable to know what people claim to believe about certain questions. It is pointed out by both Katz and Allport and by Thurstone and Chave that we should not assume that an overt act is conclusive proof that we have discovered a person's true attitude. The overt act of the politician in the presence of his constituency, the sanctionious religionist praying before the alter

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or the salesman in the presence of a prospective customer are probably no more accurate revelations of attitude than responses to a questionnaire.

"All that we can do with an attitude scale is to measure the attitude actually expressed with the full realization that the subject may be consciously hiding his true attitude or that social pressure of the situation has made him really believe what he expresses. This is a matter of interpretation. It is probably worthwhile to measure an attitude expressed by opinions. It is another problem to interpret in each case the extent to which the subjects have expressed what they really believe. All that we can do is to minimize, as far as possible, the conditions that prevent our subjects from telling the truth, or else to adjust our interpretations accordingly.

In brief, the possibility of measuring attitude depends upon the ability of the investigator to present a situation which will in no sense embarrass the subject, to place before him questions about which he may be expected to have an opinion and which are stated in such language as may be clearly understood."¹⁵

Allport's study of 375 Dartmouth students shows that about one half of the students who were found to be political radicals by the test failed to vote for the radical presidential candidate.

On the other hand, Allport found that students who have overtly identified themselves with pacifist activities score near the pacifist end of the scale, while R.O.T.C. officers score near the opposite end.

Neumann applied his attitude test on international relations to a number of army officers, members of declared pacifists, and other groups known to be pronounced in their international attitudes. The results were highly consistent.

In view of the fact that it is a matter of common observation, that one's agreement or disagreement with opinions of a controversial nature affect his behaviour; there seems to be no reason why this behaviour should

17. Ibid.
18. Neumann, George Bradford. "A study of International Attitude of high school students" Teachers College contributions to Education, No. 239. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1926, p. VI p. 120.
suddenly become non-significant when it is made the subject of careful inquiry.\textsuperscript{19}

A number of investigations show that scores on attitude scales are found to be fairly indicative of person's attitudes towards a particular topic provided the following conditions are satisfied.

1. Questions are not embarrassing to the subjects.
2. Questions are not ambiguous.
3. The subjects are put to such question about which they may be expected to have an opinion.

After studying the methods and studying different views on practicability of measuring attitudes the investigator amongst the various methods of constructing and standardizing the attitude scale preferred most widely used. Thurstone and Chave method of equal appearing interval because of the following advantages.

It is widely used method for obtaining scale values for a large number of statements and it is being used very commonly for last twenty five years. The uses of

judges to determine the points on the attitude continuum is the outstanding feature. It gives the scale positions a rational and absolute meaning especially, if judges are in good agreement, the scores tell us directly about positions of the attitude of the respondents. This method also assumes that intensity of the judgements is independent of the judge's own attitudes this eschews the basis of judges. Final verbal discrimination of the intensity of the feelings is not required for the subjects. Even the less educated subjects can perfectly be at ease with this technique as their task is only to indicate their agreement and not its degree. The neutral point is an outstanding feature of this method that joins the two continua making them continuous. It provides for an actual visualization of the position of the respondent along the scale. This method is derived from psychological techniques and it seeks to arrange people on a continuous scale having equal appearing units.

To sum up it could be said that the study of the various definitions of attitudes, study of the different methods has provided the investigator with the data with which the items for reading attitudes could be prepared and used for present study.