What is Attitude?

Nature of Attitude
Attitudes

Definition & Nature of Attitudes

- In social psychology, the term **attitude** is defined as predispositions involving beliefs, feelings and dispositions to act toward some object.

- The object may be any thing – a person, a group, an object, or even an abstract idea.
Attitudes

- An attitude has 3 main components which are known as the A,B,C of attitudes:
  - Affect (Feeling)
  - Behaviour (Action)
  - Cognition (Awareness)
Attitudes

- Thus, attitudes refer to the way one thinks, feels and acts toward objects in any social situation. It is a relatively stable disposition of human beings to think, feel and act in a particular manner.
Attitudes

- In more simple terms, attitudes are evaluations of attitude objects. Attitudes are expressions of how much we like or dislike various things.

- Evaluations are expressed by terms such as *liking*-disliking, *pro*-anti, favourable-unfavourable, and positive-negative.
Attitudes

- Although most of our attitudes can be located on a bipolar scale, such as, positive-negative, in some case, we may have both positive and negative attitude toward the same object.

- Therefore, our attitudes toward objects, events or persons could be also ambivalent.
Attitudes are different from beliefs or opinions. **Beliefs** are cognitions, or thoughts, about the characteristics of objects.

On the other hand, a given attitude is often a summary of the evaluations made of different aspects of the attitude object.
Attitudes

- Attitudes are relatively stable. They tend to persist over time and across situations. However, it does not mean that attitudes do not change. They do change in the light of new experiences and information.
Attitudes

- Though the attitude-behaviour relationship is not a straightforward one as it is moderated by several external variables, attitudes are generally thought to guide behaviour.
Attitudes

- Attitudes provide basis for defining social groups. Attitudes are central in maintaining a group. Members of a group often share similar attitudes and this is what binds them together.
Attitudes

- It would be more appropriate to say that attitudes guide our thinking and behaviour. They influence several aspects of our social behaviour.
Attitudes

- The **positive attitudes** towards others brings us closer to them. On the other hand, negative attitudes create interpersonal distance and lead to less friendly interaction with others.
Our attitudes are based on information. We can’t have an attitude toward an object about which we don’t have any information.

Because we can never know all the information available on any particular attitude object, our attitudes are always open to revision.
Attitudes

Our lives are filled with opportunities for **attitude change**. That is why, we are constantly bombarded with advertisements intended to increase our favourableness toward various products.
Attitudes

Nature of Attitudes (Summary)

- Attitudes are evaluative statements.
- Attitudes could be toward an object, event, person or an idea.
- Attitudes are thought to guide thinking and behaviour.
- Attitudes are relatively stable, however, they are open to change in the light of new knowledge and information.