Personality Theory and Its Influence on the Perceptions of Managers towards Employees

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Abstract: There is no universally accepted personality theory although many are on offer. Theories have been dominated by Freud's psychoanalytic ideas, followed by various contributors who concentrate mainly on approaches to personality types and traits. This paper discusses famous examples of personality traits.
Keywords: Personality, influence, perceptions, managers, employees

FREUD

According to Freud (2008), many factors of personality and behaviour do not conform to rational expectations since they originate from unconscious motivation. Thus inexplicable feelings such as aversions, revulsions, petty fears and obsessions are caused by the consequences of experiences at an early age. These are assimilated into the unconscious mind and influence emotions and behaviour.

Freud believed in the conflict view of behaviour or personality, which is created by three interrelated but often conflicting psychoanalytical concepts: the id, the ego and the superego. The ego concept is especially important since it relates to transactional analysis (chapter 10) which is useful and easy to understand.

The id concept

The id is a crude, primitive, instinctual drive in the unconscious mind, which seeks pleasure or gratification and avoids pain; therefore, it is non-directional and lacks control. This core personality is aggressive and creates impulses that are destructive and domineering. Such pleasure seeking includes sexual drive and the demand for food, warmth and comfort. But as individuals develop and mature, most learn to control the id. Even then it remains a strong drive and is a basis of thinking and behaving.

The ego concept

The ego conscious, logic-seeking drive which conforms to the external environment and interprets reality for the id, thus keeping it in check. The ego co-ordinates its perceptions and attempts to cope with its surrounds. However, the two obviously conflict since the id seeks pleasure whereas the ego denies or postpones until a more convenient time. To resolve this conflict, the ego seeks support from the superego.

The superego concept

The superego is developed in the unconscious mind by absorbing a society's morals and cultural values, and it becomes a conscience which provides the ego with norms that indicate right or wrong intentions. Development depends upon input from parents, teachers and other contacts; the individual is unaware of the superego; conflict between the ego and superego may occur; and the superego helps the ego to fight the id. According to Freud, the unconscious mind is a strong determining factor on behaviour that may defy rational explanation. Furthermore, even the individual concerned may be puzzled by it.

Jung

According to Jung [1], everyone has many personality traits but they are used differently. A person who shows some strong traits is likely to possess certain others. This means there are trait clusters that form types of personality capable of being classified. These are grouped into four pairs (see below). Any person will show both aspects of each pair to a certain degree although one will dominate.

- Introvert-extrovert: This typology tends to be a continuum rather than discretely separate types. The introvert works alone, is diligent, independently minded and prefers to concentrate alone. The extrovert likes to work with others, is socially minded, freethinking and a good communicator.
- Intuitor-sensor: The intuitor is a creative problem solver, likes complexity and new concepts but they become bored if confronted with detail. The sensor is rather narrow in approach, avoids complexity, is practical, careful, patient and pays attention to detail.
- Felling-thinking: The feeling individual empathises easily, prefers people rather than objects and excels in persuading and compromising. But they appear to be disorganised, uncritical, illogical and overemotional. The thinking individual is objective, analytical and logical, so there is a tendency to be insensitive and to misunderstand values.
- Perceiver-judge: The perceiver is flexible, appreciates all sides of a problem or difficulty, seeks information but they may give up easily. The judger perseveres, is decisive and orderly but they may be impulsive and not admit errors.

Cattell

A further approach is the well-known trait theory proposed by Cattell [2] in The Scientific Analysis of Personality. He distinguished between surface and source traits. Surface traits are on the surface of personality; examples are social-seclusive, wise-foolish, honest-dishonest and affectionate-cold. Source traits are deep-rotted; examples are good nature-suspicious attitudes, dominance-submissiveness, cheerfulness-depression and maturity-immaturity.

Human characteristics

Many peculiarities in people fail to match and form a set pattern. Changes are noticed in some whereas others remain apparently unchanged. Some people act like sheep whereas others are intensely strong-willed and independent.

On the other hand, the human race seems to be very good at killing each other, standing by while others starve, behaving indifferently towards torture and discomfort of others, and lusting for power. On the other hand, it seems to be moving gradually forward towards higher ideals, a more responsible approach and more consideration for humankind.

Other noticeable features are many likes and dislikes, a wide range of hobbies and ideas, inability to think clearly, faith in the unknown, inability to recognise happiness until later when it is gone, and strong support for whatever they help to create.

The Distribution of Human Differences

If anyone physical characteristic of people is measured and plotted on a graph, provide the sample is sufficient, a symmetrical bell-shaped curve will result.

A similar distribution also exists in the hidden and more basic characteristics of people, such as desires, ability and disposition. These characteristics are exceptionally difficult to measure and considerable training and experience are needed before reasonable assessment is possible. For example, when meeting a stranger most people tend to form first impressions. These are invariably incorrect and adjusted later as they receive more information on the individual. Keeping an open mind and continually observing the person is necessary of a true evaluation is to be achieved. As opportunities occur for people to demonstrate their particular skills and natural abilities, their supervisor should make sure these opportunities do occur.

Attitudes

An attitude is an abstract concept that has no generally accepted definition. Certainly it is a form of settled behaviour, a means of indicating opinion, a settled mode of thinking, and an important influence on purchasing decisions and motivation. Attitudes, opinions and values are often coupled together; opinions are known as relatively shallow ideas, whereas values tend to justify cultural standards of living. The main characteristics of attitudes that are generally acceptable are:

- They are learned and relatively stable, and they are slow to change.
- They imply feelings, beliefs, values, evaluation and a tendency to behave in a particular way.
- They affect habits, self-confidence, perception, and reaction to the internal and external environment.

Four Elements of an Attitude

- A behavioural tendency to act in a certain way towards an object or person. This intention to act (or conative element) means a particular action will probably happen (no will not happen) if an opportunity occurs.
- Beliefs and disbeliefs involve trust or confidence in received information being true. This knowledge (or cognitive element) includes experience which provides some meaning to the (chaotic) state of the surrounding environment.
- Values are standards used to compare objects or people. Values are often classified as good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, and desirable or undesirable. They may be held by the individual or by society.
- Feelings are the affective element which may be positive or negative, and they are essentially emotional.

Attitude and Behaviour

Unfortunately, attitudes are not directly observable; therefore measurement of their strengths is difficult and tends to rely on asking individuals about their feelings towards a topic. But their behaviour us observable and from this emerged a concept (or assumption) that 'attitude tends to lead to behaviour'. In other words, behaviour follows naturally from holding a particular attitude. In reality many other pressures also affect behaviour, especially when group activity is considered. Therefore, bearing in mind that attitudes vary in strength and may be modified. Benn [3] proposed the concept that 'behaviour tends to lead to attitude'. This idea has led to many motivation theories. However, considering group activity an interactive relationship exists between attitude and behaviour.

Beliefs and Values

Managers tend to blame attitude when employees refuse to conform to their requirements, but attitude has many hidden components and there are many other pressures, which need consideration. Indeed, managers are often criticised for ignoring beliefs and values of individuals and groups.

The problem is that employees (at all levels in the organisation) have many different beliefs and values which cause exceptional difficulties when trying to design an environment that leads to high satisfaction and performance. Inevitably there is a gap between

people's expectations and the real work situation. In recent years this divide has been aggravated by unemployment, demands for a higher quality of life, racial discrimination problems and green issues.

Prejudice

Prejudice is an attitude which involves prejudgement and is held before direct experience. A prejudice may be negative, hostile, positive, unfair, inflexible, inaccurate, simplistic and not completely rational. Prejudices may be held about situations, machines, people or groups. They are a natural process of categorising, generalising and overgeneralising to form attitudes which may be discriminating and related to stereotyping, and which form an integral part of intergroup behaviour. A typical example is sheriff's survey of intergroup activity.

Various techniques have been tried to reduce prejudices, but some aspects are impossible to remove such as unequal status, unemployment problems and complete fulfilment of psychological and social needs. Typical techniques which help are persuasion through advertising, legislation, attempts to improve mutual independence, and enforcing contact with the object or person involved.

Attitudes of Normal People

A normal person's attitudes are formed by arriving at personal balanced opinions. Under suitable conditions, these opinions are open to adjustments through the acceptance of logical reasoning and provision of sufficient information to justify the change.

Although people may behave in different ways which tend to suit their own particular needs or best interests, they are all acting normally. Each person has his or her own method of dealing with problems depending upon emotions, reasoning and past environment. Moreover, an apparently abnormal or extreme reaction may be caused by further factors unknown to the supervisor.

Resistance to change

Any new scheme or change will instinctively be examined from the selfish point of view and, if it pleases, acceptance usually follows. An element of doubt will create the tendency to reject the idea or to demand more information or assurance.

Security is very important to some people. If their security seems to be threatened in some way, a form of guarantee is necessary before the change visualised becomes acceptable. Any proposed alteration affecting pay, safety, working conditions or methods needs clarifying in the employee's mind to remove resistance. Perfectly healthy people will resist change as it suits them. Living requires continual adjustments, although it is often a slow and laborious task. The fortunate ones adjust quickly, but to others the problem is insurmountable and they need special treatment before their minds can accept a change. An example is where a person suffers bereavement and cannot face up to the drastic change in family life it entails.

The supervisor should accept that people do change their habits, outlook and attitudes, and have the capacity to improve. He or she should be able to recognise the ill-adjusted employee from a variety of indications, including nervousness, difficulty n concentrating, ailments, misunderstandings, unusual behaviour and poor general attitude towards work and people.

People think, believe, understand and perceive differently since they mainly were moulded by their previous environment and inherited nature. Therefore, temperament (or nature) is complex and causes many misunderstandings; although with training, social aspects may be controlled and modified. An appreciation of this vast topic enables supervisors to be more discerning.

Basic Temperaments

Research by Kiersey [4] concluded that there are four basic temperaments. Comprehensive information on each one is provided in his textbook Please Understand Me. Interesting applications of his findings are in selection procedures, self-assessment and assessing subordinates to utilise fully their capabilities. Only a brief reference is possible here, along with envisaged supervisory tendencies.

Patricia Hedges is currently operating a research project based on Kiersey's [4] work. This project is designed to identify the temperaments of Mensa members to see whether they reflect the patterns of the general community

CONCLUSIONS

This paper tries to demonstrate that what happens in early stages of life governs attitudes to some extent, traits, character and general outlook. Some people possess so-called high intelligence but seem to lack sound common sense. Substantial knowledge and experience of mental features are essential before a supervisor can accurately note behaviour and analyse findings.

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