



A CASE STUDY - IMPACT OF NEGATIVE ATTITUDE & PREJUDICE AT WORKPLACE

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Abstract

What the faculty say (lecture), the students may forget. What the Faculty show (PPT) the students may or may not remember. But what the students do (discussing, analyzing, applying knowledge, reasoning and drawing conclusions) they will not only understand but also remember and reflect when they come across similar situations. It is because, the retention of learning is best when the students are involved. Cases Studies is one of the best ways to make the Sessions a Student Centered Learning.

Case studies can be used to help the students realize the complexities of real situations, as they present realistic, complex, and contextually rich situations and often involve a dilemma, conflict, or problem that requires students to practice applying knowledge and thinking skills to a real situation.

The subject case study is on Impact of Negative Attitude & Prejudice at Workplace and the reaction for such Behavior. I have sincerely attempted to present how we can portray potential questions for discussions, identify the problem, point out the causes of the problem and list possible learning points from the case.

I have also presented Faculty Notes covering issues viz. Attitude, Components of Attitude, Formation of Attitude, ways of Changing Attitude, Congruent Change, Incongruent Change, Stereotyping and Halo Effect. And the key objective is to demonstrate how one can make the best out of the Case Study in the sessions.

Keywords: *Case Study, Problem, Attitude, Prejudice, Learning Points, Faculty Notes.*

1. The Case

Foremen Anil never liked men of a particular stock. Years ago he had worked under one who was unfair and very hard taskmaster. Anil always resented the way he had been treated and felt that all people of that origin were unfair and could not be trusted.

Anil has 20 years' service with the company. Because of his excellent record, he was promoted six months ago to head a larger department. He knew the methods in his new department, but he did not know many of the employees. He was upset to find that one of the best rated workers, Balu, was of that particular parentage. Anil was sure that the man had been overrated and was not that good. He decided to watch him closely and find out the truth.

Balu soon became aware of Anil's close supervision. He resented being singled out by the foreman, who checked up on every detail of his work and behavior. At first, Balu tried to pass it off, but his irritation came out when he answered some of Anil's prying questions. One word led to another, and over a period of time an obvious feud developed. One day Anil passed Balu's work place and caught him apparently breaking a minor rule. Anil promptly accused him and called him a dirty slander. Balu knocked Anil down.

2. Objective of the Study

1. The primary objective of the Case study is to frame questions for discussions,
2. And discuss possible learning points from the Case.
3. The secondary objective is to summarize the Faculty Notes to be used in the Teaching / Training Session.
4. Also to identify the problem in the Case and Cause of the problem.

3. Scope of the Study

1. The scope of the of the study examines Anil's Attitude in dealing with his employees in particular Balu
2. It attempts to know the causes and reasons for Anil developing such an Attitude
3. The reaction from the employees in particular Balu, for such attitude and prejudice from Anil

4. Limitations of the Study

1. The limitation of the study is that, the case does not give much clue of which category of men Anil never liked.
2. And, the case does not give much clue of how Balu's behavior is.



3. The study encompasses Anil's previous Boss, the way he was treated by him and his attitude towards particular section of people.

5. Potential Questions for Discussions

The following statements apply to the case. Study each one carefully.

If you agree with the statement, indicate 'T'. If you do not agree, indicate 'F'. If you are in doubt, indicate as '?'

1. Since Anil disliked a particular section of people, he should be allowed to fire or transfer them out of his department.
2. Balu was completely justified in hitting Anil.
3. Anil's prejudice against the section of people disqualifies him as a foreman.
4. Anil's boss should educate him to develop positive attitude towards the section.
5. Anil's judgement in this case is so poor that he probably has other prejudices, and he should be demoted.
6. Balu should be transferred to another department.
7. Anil's treatment of Balu lowered the morale of the entire department.
8. Anil should have tried other means to get to know better about Balu as an individual.
9. Many people have prejudices like Anil and can't even know they have them or remember how they got them.
10. Since Balu was guilty of breaking only a minor rule for the first time, the foreman should have overlooked it entirely.

1. *Since Anil disliked a particular section of people, he should be allowed to fire or transfer them out of his department. (F)*
2. *Balu was completely justified in hitting Anil. (F)*
3. *Anil's prejudice against the section of people disqualifies him as a foreman (?).*
4. *Anil's boss should educate him to develop positive attitude towards the section. (T)*
5. *Anil's judgement in this case is so poor that he probably has other prejudices, and he should be demoted. (?)*
6. *Balu should be transferred to another department. (T)*
7. *Anil's treatment of Balu lowered the morale of the entire department. (?)*
8. *Anil should have tried other means to get to know better about Balu as an individual. (T)*
9. *Many people have prejudices like Anil and can't even know they have them or remember how they got them. (T)*
10. *Since Balu was guilty of breaking only a minor rule for the first time, the foreman should have overlooked it entirely. (T)*

1. How did Anil acquire his attitudes?
2. Is it possible to change the attitude of Anil? Justify?
3. What are the implications to the morale and motivation of a group and the company as a whole if a person like Anil with strong biases were to occupy a responsible position?
4. Suggest ways that would help Anil to develop Positive Attitude?

6. Identification of Problem

The first reading of the Case may sound like a tussle between Anil (Foremen, Department Head) and Balu (worker), but if one pays rapt attention to the case, it conveys us that, “ **Anil's has Negative Attitude and prejudice and never likes men of particular stock (stereotyping)**”.

To substantiate the identification of problem i.e, *Anil's has Negative Attitude and prejudice and never likes men of particular stock (stereotyping)*”. Let me enumerate few of the sentences from the case, which will speak for its own, they are as follows:

1. *Foremen Anil never liked men of a particular stock (Anil had a Negative Attitude towards certain stock of People)*
2. *Anil felt that all people of that origin were unfair and could not be trusted. (Anil had a prejudice [stereotyping] towards certain type of People)*
3. *He [Anil] was upset to find that one of the best rated workers, Balu, (negative minded people will be upset for such things)*
4. *Anil was sure that the man [Balu] had been overrated and was not that good. (Anil is not happy, as Bau is Rated well, further he is of the opinion that, he is not good)*
5. *He [Anil] decided to watch him [Balu] closely and find out the truth. (Anil has preoccupied notion and is all set for fault finding [Halo Effect].*
6. *He [Balu] resented being singled out by the foreman [Anil],... and his prying questions. (Anil is spying on Balu for each and every thing and interfering even in minute things to prove his point)*
7. *Anil caught him [Balu] breaking a minor rule and promptly accused him [Balu] and called him a dirty slander. (it was a minor fault , but the reaction by Anil was very inappropriate).*



7. Cause of the Problem

The cause for the problem i.e. “Anil’s has Negative Attitude and prejudice and never likes men of particular stock (stereotyping)”. Are for the following possible reasons:

1. He worked under a Boss who was very hard taskmaster i.e. previous boss exercised Autocratic Leadership Style.
2. His previous Boss was unfair towards him.
3. He resented the way he was treated by his earlier boss
4. He developed prejudice against certain section of people
5. As he is in the same Company from 20 Long years his Attitude on the above became strong,
6. His sudden elevation to head a large Department
7. He was elevated by way of Internal Promotions to head a large Department, not for his Managerial skills but for his excellent personal record
8. He did not know many of the Employees of that Department. i.e most were strangers to him.
9. Since He wanted to find Balu wrong, he supervised closely, checking minute details and started asking him irritating questions.

8. Possible Learning Points

Learning points in this instant case can help one to shape their Attitude and thinking, and not to have any preconceived notion or prejudice about anyone or anything, besides as a Department Head one should not have ‘Halo Effect’ ‘Stereotyping’ on their Staff based on their past experiences.

1. Previous bad experiences are one of the main reasons for developing negative Attitude towards certain stimuli.
2. Unfair and very hard taskmaster (Autocratic Leaders) as bosses also causes one to develop a negative Attitude.
3. Negative Attitude are developed when one is disliked the way they are treated by others, especially their bosses.
4. Promotee’s should be elevated to higher position not only on the past records but also on their Managerial Ability and other Relative Skills.
5. Sudden elevation from a Foremen level to head a large Department may cause Industrial Relations problems.
6. Mere being Technically sound, will not qualify a person to be successful in smooth functioning of a large Department.
7. Checking on every minute detail of a person by the boss will result in his developing Negative Attitude.
8. Too much interference (questioning) on once Job will make a person go irate.
9. If a Department Head has to criticize his staff, he should do it privately, or call them to his chamber.
10. As a Leader / Manager one should have proper justification / authentic proof / genuine mistake in hand before accusing their staff or the staff may revolt back.

9. Faculty Notes

9.1 Attitude

Attitudes are learned Predispositions towards aspects of our environment, which are reflected how one feels about something, that may be positively or negatively directed towards certain people, service, Institutions.

In other words an attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for something. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event— this is often referred to as the attitude object. People can also be conflicted or ambivalent towards an object, meaning that they simultaneously possess both positive and negative attitudes toward the same object in question.

9.2 Components of Attitude

Attitude influences an individual's choice of action, and responses. There are four major components of attitude:

1. Affective: emotions or feelings.
2. Cognitive: belief or opinions held consciously.
3. Co native: inclination for action.
4. Evaluative: positive or negative response to stimuli.

In the present case Anil’s has a feeling that Balu is overrated and he is not that good (Affective), and has a belief that Balu belongs to that particular stock of people whom he never liked (Cognitive) as such, he decided to watch him closely and started asking him prying questions (co native), and when Anil caught Balu breaking a minor rule, he accused him and called him a dirty slander (Evaluation).



9.3 Formation of Attitudes

It is true that, Individuals acquire attitudes from several sources, but the point to be stressed here is that the ‘attitudes are acquired, and not inherited’ i.e. not born with us, the thoughts, feeling and tendencies to behave are acquired or learned gradually. Let us examine in detail what are the factors that influence in the formation of attitudes in an organization.

1. Direct Experience with the Object

Attitudes can develop from a personally rewarding or punishing experience with an object. Employees form attitude about individuals on their previous experiences. In the instant case, Foremen Anil never liked men of a particular stock as years ago he had worked under one who was unfair and very hard taskmaster.

2. Classical Conditioning and Attitudes

Under classical conditioning learning, the attitude formed is either positive or negative, which is associated with one or more desired or undesired object or stimuli. In the instant case, Foremen Anil years ago he had worked under one who was unfair and very hard taskmaster.

3. Operant Conditioning and Attitude Acquisition

It is based on the “Law of Effect” and involves voluntary responses. Behaviors (including verbal behaviors and maybe even thoughts) tend to be repeated if they are reinforced (i.e., followed by a positive experience). Conversely, behaviors tend to be stopped when they are punished (i.e., followed by an unpleasant experience).

4. Vicarious Learning

In which a person learns something through the observance of others, can also account for attitude development – particularly when the individual has no direct experience with the object about which the attitude is held. It is also developed through the observance of peers and colleagues.

5. Family and Peer Groups

If family members and Peer Group have a positive / negative attitude towards an object and the individual admires them, he is likely to adopt a similar attitude even without being told about the object, and even without having direct experience. Attitude towards certain people, religion, tolerance or prejudice etc.

6. Neighbourhood

The neighbourhood we live in has a certain structure in terms of its having cultural facilities, religious groupings, and possibly ethnic differences. Further, it has people who are neighbours. The neighbours-adults or children-tolerate, condone, or deny certain attitudes and behaviour and as a result we are either northerners or Southerners.

7. Economic Status and Occupations

Our economic and occupational positions also contribute to attitude formation. They determine, in part, our attitudes towards staff and bosses and our belief that certain people are e “good” or “bad.” Our socio-economic background influences our present and future attitudes.

8. Mass Communications

All varieties of mass communications-television, Internet, newspapers, and magazines- feed their audiences large quantities of information. In turn, the audience selects the specific form of mass communication that best reflects its attitudes on various subjects. The material we select helps us either to substantiate our opinions or to establish new ones.

9. Psychological Factors

An Employee is made up of his kind of personality type, perception, ideas, beliefs, and values which plays a crucial role in determining an Employee’s attitude towards his colleagues, Boss and the organization.

10. Climate/ Environment

Each Organization differs from another in terms of culture, practices, policies and procedures, language, norms, etc which also influences in the formation of attitude.

Unlike personality, attitudes are expected to change as a function of experience. In the instant case, Anil’s attitude was formed and acquired mainly from, Direct Experience i.e. previous experiences, Classical conditioning learning, peer Groups,



Economic Status and Occupations, Psychological factors & Climate / Environment. However, the case does not provide us information with regard to his background viz. childhood, family, neighborhood, education days, previous employment details, interest in communication etc, as such; it is not sure whether Anil also acquired his Attitude from other sources mentioned above.

9.4 Ways of Changing Attitude

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference. ~Winston Churchill.” Yes, it is possible. The same influences that lead to attitude formation can also create attitude change.

It is again emphasized that, the attitude is acquired and not inherited, i.e. not born with us and will not stay with us till we die. An Individual attitude can be changed through persuasion, Attitude change may be classified into the following:

Congruent Change

Congruent change in attitude involves a movement in the same direction but with reduced intensity of feeling. For example, negative attitude of Anil towards Balu will persist, but the degree of dislike is reduced.

Incongruent Change

Incongruent change involves change of direction itself from positive (or negative) attitude towards a person to negative (or positive) attitude towards the same person. This change is observable in behavioural terms such as, Anil change in negative attitude towards Balu to positive attitude.

Following are few important ways of changing attitude:

1. Providing Information (New)

New information will help change attitudes. Negative attitude are mainly formed owing to lack of or insufficient information. Anil has a negative Attitude, probably because of insufficient information about Balu. Once he comes to know, how good in reality Balu is, Anil may change his attitude and might turn developing positive attitude.

2. Use of Fear

Fear can change attitude. However, the change depends on the degree of fear. Anil has to be enlightened about the negative consequences of such attitude from Balu, his other Staff, his Department, his Boss, and Management and as individual himself, etc.

3. Influence of Friends or Peers

Change of attitude can come about through persuasion of friends or peers. Credibility of the others specially peers, is important to effect change. Peers with high creditability shall exercise significant influence on change. The same is not true with peers who have low credibility.

4. The Co-opting Approach

Co-opting is another way of changing attitude where an individual is involved in improving things which he dislikes. This means the Boss of Anil should assign / entrust Anil to involve in exploring the good things in Balu and to improve him further.

5. Resolving Discrepancies

Whenever people face a dilemma or conflicting Attitude, it is good if they approach a mentor or involve a person who has knowledge about the same, if someone helps Anil in pointing out the positive points in favour of Balu, Anil might resolve his attitude.

6. Behavioral Training Programme

Behavioral Training enhances the skills, capabilities and knowledge of individual for managing people. Training on Attitude moulds the thinking of individuals and leads to good interpersonal relations, as such, Management should subject Anil to undergo such trainings for having harmonious relationship with the staff of the Department.

7. Job Rotation/ Transfers

Transfers or Job rotation as the case may be, can play a crucial role in changing the attitude of the both in the organization. Management can transfer or Job rotate Anil or Balu based on the gravity of misconduct.



8. Counseling

This is psychological therapy, where the counseling is done by the HR or Department Head or by both as the case may be, where the reason for negative attitude is analyzed and solution or remedy is drawn with the mutual understanding of both Anil and Balu.

9.5 Stereotyping

Stereotyping is a preconceived notion especially about a person or group based on some salient features like, age, gender, region, religion, country etc.

In the instant case, Foremen Anil never liked men of a particular stock and He felt that all people of that origin (Balu like people) were unfair and could not be trusted.

9.6 Halo Effect

The halo effect is a cognitive bias in which an observer's overall impression of a person, observer's feelings and thoughts about that entity's character. In short it refers to the tendency of attributing all good things to the one who is liked & vice versa.

In the instant case, Anil had a Negative Halo Effect on Balu, as such Anil developed a tendency of looking for all bad in Balu all the time.

10. Conclusion & Recommendation

According to Professor Paul Lawrence, case Study is “the vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom to be worked over by the class and the instructor. A good case keeps the class discussion grounded upon some of the stubborn facts that must be faced in real life situations.”

Students mind is not a vessel to be filled, rather a fire to be kindled. Case Studies indeed kindle the students / Sessions and they “bridge the gap between theory and practice and between the academy and the workplace” They also give students practice identifying the parameters of a problem, recognizing and articulating positions, evaluating courses of action, and arguing different points of view as they are useful for testing theoretical models by using them in real world situations.

As educators we must recognize the need to update our teaching methods to reflect the growing emphasis on the student-focused classroom by using Case Studies in the Sessions.

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