SKP3501 TOPIC 4
SOCIAL ATTRIBUTION

BY:
DR. AZLINA MOHD KHIR

Department of Social & Development Sciences
Faculty of Human Ecology, UPM
LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Explain the concept of social attribution
2. Describe how to understand reasons for behavior
3. Explain causal attribution
4. Explain bias in attribution process
5. Explain how to develop impression towards others
INTRODUCTION

• Man wants to know who are other people that he just met/known.
• Man wants to make evaluation about other people, in terms of their belief, attitude, values, motivation etc.
• Man wants to develop an impression / perception towards other people.
• By knowing who are other people, help him to prepare kinds of action (such as to predict who are other people and control their behavior).
• Man’s action towards other depend on his perception toward the other people.
• Example: Judge in decide a verdict; a man in giving help in an accident...etc. .
DON'T MAKE THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR ON ME!
WHAT IS SOCIAL ATTRIBUTION?

• SA is **how we attempt to understand and explain reasons of the people’s behavior.**

• Why? By doing this we are able to know who the other people are?

• Man want to know what are the consistent traits (attributes) of other people, by analyzing reason/factor of their behavior.

• Man’s behavior influence by his trait.

• By understanding reasons of behavior we able to understand who they are.

• Social perception towards others is influenced by our knowledge about them which we acquired through social attribution.
Do you know who am I?
What is this man’s perception towards the lady?
Observe yourself

An event is subject to individual interpretation
Determines Human Behavior

Cognitive Factors
(also called "Personal Factors")
- Knowledge
- Expectations
- Attitudes

Environmental Factors
- Social Norms
- Access in Community
- Influence on Others
  (ability to change own environment)

Behavioral Factors
- Skills
- Practice
- Self-efficacy
UNDERSTANDING REASONS FOR BEHAVIOR

• By understanding reasons of individual behavior, we can make a conclusion about him/her.

• How we do it?
  1. An analysis on action which reflect disposition.
  2. Social attribution based on behavior which reflects many information.
  3. Social attribution based on atypical / unusual (out of the ordinary) characteristics.
Analysis on action which reflect disposition

• By observing physical characteristics sometimes is not meaningful in explaining who the other people are.
• According to Jones and Davis, we attempts to analyze by moving backward – from effect of behavior to conclusion (trait) of who the person are.
• See the Figure.
• However, only behavior which is motivated by internal situation (the individual himself) and not external situation (situational factor) is able to explain who the people is.
Rajah 5.1 Proses Membuat Kesimpulan Tentang Diri Aktor oleh Pemerhati

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atribusi pemerhati mengenai pembawaan atau tret aktor</th>
<th>Atribusi pemerhati mengenai matlamat dan tanggungjawab aktor</th>
<th>Maklumat terdahulu</th>
<th>Gerak balas dan kesan (Apa yang pemerhati lihat)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tidak cermat;</td>
<td>Hasrat (Untuk membaling kanak-kanak atau membuang epal)</td>
<td>Keupayaan (aktor mempunyai tangan yang tegap); Pengalaman ke atas kesan (Kanak-kanak tiada di situ sebelumnya)</td>
<td>Tindakan memberi kesan: kanak-kanak terkena balingan; orang ramai memarahi aktor; kanak-kanak menangis; epal berkecai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agresif;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tidak menyukai kanak-kanak;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Menentang;</td>
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<td>Antisosial;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Membuang epal.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Sumber: Tedeschi et al. (1985: 101)*
Jones & Davis Correspondent Inference Theory

• Jones and Davis (1965) thought that people pay particular attention to intentional behavior (as opposed to accidental or unthinking behavior).

• Jones and Davis’ theory helps us understand the process of making an internal attribution. They say that we tend to do this when we see a correspondence between motive and behavior. For example, when we see a correspondence between someone behaving in a friendly way and being a friendly person.

• Dispositional (i.e., internal) attributions provide us with information from which we can make predictions about a person’s future behavior. The correspondent inference theory describes the conditions under which we make dispositional attributes to the behavior we perceive as intentional.

• Davis used the term correspondent inference to refer to an occasion when an observer infers that a person’s behavior matches or corresponds with their personality. It is an alternative term to dispositional attribution.
So what leads us to make a correspondent inference? Jones and Davis say we draw on five sources of information:

- **Choice**: If a behavior is freely chosen it is believed to be due to internal (dispositional) factors.
- **Accidental vs. Intentional Behavior**: Behavior that is intentional is likely to be attributed to the person’s personality, and behavior which is accidental is likely to be attributed to situation / external causes.
- **Social Desirability**: Behaviors low in sociable desirability (non conforming) lead us to make (internal) dispositional inferences more than socially undesirable behaviors. For example, if you observe a person getting on a bus and sitting on the floor instead of one of the seats. This behavior has low social desirability (non conforming) and is likely to correspond with the personality of the individual.
- **Hedonistic Relevance**: If the other person’s behavior appears to be directly intended to benefit or harm us.
- **Personalism**: If the other person’s behavior appears to be intended to have an impact on us, we assume that it is “personal”, and not just a by-product of the situation we are both in.
Social attribution based on behavior which has more information

• Many individual behavior sometimes unable to explain who the person is.
• However, there is a behavior that offers many information about a person.
• Example: a woman married with a man who is rich, handsome, good personality, and attractive – who is she? Compare to a woman who married a man who is not handsome, bad personality, unattractive, but RICH – who is she?
• The reason for get married can be used to explain who the woman is.
Social attribution based on atypical characteristics.

• Normal behavior / typical / usual is difficult to explain who the people are.
• But atypical / abnormal / unusual behavior given more information about who the people is.
• Culturally unaccepted behavior is important and reflecting who the person is.
Harold Kelly’s theory on internal factor: internal factor of a behaviour is useful in explaining who is the individual compare to external factor.

Internal factor/ cause /reason: factor that come from the individual. Example: the intention, wants – can be used to explain who the individual is.

External factor – factors that come from outside the individual (situational). Example: order from other, environment – less useful to explain who the person is.

Attribution of cause: to explain the individual we have to first determine the factor of behavior, internal cause or external cause.
Kelley’s (1967) covariation model is the best-known attribution theory. He developed a logical model for judging whether a particular action should be attributed to some characteristic (internal) of the person or the environment (external).

The term covariation simply means that a person has information from multiple observations, at different times and situations, and can perceive the covariation of an observed effect and its causes.

He argues that in trying to discover the causes of behavior people act like scientists. More specifically they take into account three kinds of evidence.

– Consensus
– Distinctiveness
– Consistency
• **Consensus:** the extent to which other people behave in the same way in a similar situation.
  
  E.g., Alison smokes a cigarette when she goes out for a meal with her friend. If her friend smokes, her behavior is high in consensus. If only Alison smokes, it is low.

• **Distinctiveness:** the extent to which the person behaves in the same way in similar situations.
  
  If Alison only smokes when she is out with friends, her behavior is high in distinctiveness. If she smokes at any time or place, distinctiveness is low.

• **Consistency:** the extent to which the person behaves like this every time the situation occurs.
  
  If Alison only smokes when she is out with friends, consistency is high. If she only smokes on one special occasion, consistency is low.
How do other people behave? (Consensus)
- High: Most people behave like this
- Low: Not many people behave like this

Does X usually behave like this? (Consistency)
- High: X nearly always behaves like this
- Low: X seldom behaves like this

Is X's behaviour in this situation different from X's behaviour in other situations? (Distinctiveness)
- High: X does not behave like this in most other situations
- Low: X does behave like this in most other situations

COVARIATION
Let’s look at an example to help understand his particular attribution theory. Our subject is called Tom. His behavior is laughter. Tom is laughing at a comedian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Consensus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If everybody in the audience is laughing, the consensus is high. If only Tom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is laughing consensus is low.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Distinctiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If Tom only laughs at this comedian, the distinctiveness is high. If Tom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laughs at everything, then distinctiveness is low.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If Tom always laughs at this comedian the consistency is high. If Tom rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laughs at this comedian, then consistency is low.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Now, if everybody laughs at this comedian, if they don’t laugh at the comedian who follows, if this comedian always raises a laugh, then we would make an external attribution, i.e., we assume that Tom is laughing because the comedian is very funny.

- On the other hand, if Tom is the only person who laughs at this comedian, if Tom laughs at all comedians, if Tom always laughs at the comedian then we would make an internal attribution, i.e., we assume that Tom is laughing because he is the kind of person who laughs a lot.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
<th>Distinctiveness</th>
<th>Most Common Attribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Low—No other students fall asleep in my class</td>
<td>High—He has fallen asleep in previous classes of mine</td>
<td>Low—He falls asleep in other professors’ classes</td>
<td>Internal: The student is lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High—Many students fall asleep in my class</td>
<td>High—He has fallen asleep in previous classes of mine</td>
<td>High—He doesn’t fall asleep in other professors’ classes</td>
<td>Entity: I’m a boring professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Low—No other students fall asleep in my class</td>
<td>Low—He has not fallen asleep in previous classes of mine</td>
<td>High—He doesn’t fall asleep in other professors’ classes</td>
<td>Circumstance: The student didn’t sleep well last night</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance of determining cause / reason of behavior

• Importance to determine cause of behavior: internal or external.
  1. To influence the perception of others.
  2. To influence other action towards us.
  3. To change from negative action to positive action towards other people.
  4. In helping / punishing, sympathy etc depend on the our attribution (internal or external cause) towards others.
Criticism towards Kelly’s Theory

  1. Although it seems that the cause of a behavior is external, however in reality it is caused by internal factor.
  2. Consensus concept is misleading, where it refers to frequency of behavior. BUT frequency of behavior is relative.
  3. Lalljee suggests that we must have many hypotheses in explaining the cause of human behavior.
BIAS IN ATTRIBUTION PROCESS

• In doing attribution, man sometimes involves his interest, not objective (bias).

• Lee Ross (1977): *Fundamental attribution error* describe the finding that people are predisposed towards attributing another person's behavior to individual characteristics and attitudes, even when it is relatively clear that the person's behavior was a result of situational demands.

• When we doing well, we say that it is because of internal factor; when we fail, we say that it is due to external factor; vice versa.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The 19 social biases</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forer effect / Barnum effect</strong></td>
<td><strong>System justification effect / Status Quo Bias</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tendency to give high accuracy ratings in descriptions of their personality that supposedly are tailored specifically for them, but are in fact vague and general enough to apply to a wide range of people. For example, homosexuals</td>
<td>The tendency to defend and accept the status quo. Coloring social, economic, and political arrangements tend to be preferred, and alternatives disregarded sometimes even at the expense of individual and collective interest. (See also status quo bias.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ingroup bias</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dunning-Kruger / Superiority Bias</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tendency for people to give preferential treatment to others they perceive to be members of their own groups</td>
<td>Overestimating one's intellectual qualities, and underestimating undesirable qualities, relative to other people. Also known as Superiority bias (also known as “Lake Wobegon effect”, “better-than-average effect”, “superiority bias”, or Dunning-Kruger effect).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-fulfilling prophecy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Illusion of asymmetric insight</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tendency to engage in behaviors that elicit results which will (or will not) confirm existing attitudes</td>
<td>People perceive their knowledge of their peers to exceed their peers' knowledge of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Halo effect</strong></td>
<td><strong>Herd instinct</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tendency for a person's positive or negative traits to “spill over” from one area of their personality to another in other perceptions of them (see also physical attractiveness stereotypes)</td>
<td>Common tendency to adopt the opinions and follow the behavior of the majority to feel safer and to avoid conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ultimate attribution error</strong></td>
<td><strong>Illusion of transparency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar to the fundamental attribution error, in this error a person is likely to make an internal attribution to an entire group instead of the individual within the group</td>
<td>People overestimate others' ability to know them, and they also overestimate their ability to know others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>False consensus effect</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fundamental attribution error / Actor-observer bias</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tendency for people to overestimate the degree to which others agree with them</td>
<td>The tendency for people to over-estimate personality-based explanations for behavior observed in others while under-estimating the role and power of situational influences in the same behavior (see also actor-observer bias, group attribution error, positivity effect, and negativity effect).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-serving bias / Behavioral confirmation effect</strong></td>
<td><strong>Projection bias</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tendency to claim more responsibility for successes than failures. Also manifest itself as a tendency for people to evaluate ambiguous information in a way beneficial to their interests (see also group-serving bias)</td>
<td>The tendency to unconsciously assume that others share the same or similar thoughts, beliefs, values, or positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notational bias</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outgroup homogeneity bias</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A type of cultural bias in which the notational conventions of recording data biases the appearance of that data lower (or away from) the system upon which the notational scheme is based</td>
<td>Individuals see members of their own group as being relatively more valued than members of other groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Egocentric bias</strong></td>
<td><strong>Trait ascription bias</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occurs when people claim more responsibility for themselves for the results of a joint action than an outside observer would.</td>
<td>The tendency for people to view themselves as relatively valuable in terms of personality, behavior and mood while viewing others as much more predictable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Just-world phenomenon</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tendency for people to believe that the world is just and therefore people &quot;get what they deserve.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Different attribution between actor and observer

- According to Jones and Nisbet
  1. Explaining other people behavior:
     - Negative behavior is caused by internal factor.
     - Positive behavior is caused by external factor.
  2. Explaining our own behavior:
     - Negative behavior is caused by external factor.
     - Positive behavior is caused by internal factor.

- Why
  1. Perceptual focus hypothesis.
  2. Actor has more information about his self compare to observer.
  3. Observer normally is interested in having information which can be used to predict other’s behavior in the future.
Reason of Self-serving Bias

• Self-serving bias: bias that benefit ourselves.
• Why man attributing failure to external factor, while success to internal factor.
  1. The need to maintain and strengthen/enhance our self-esteem (defense mechanism).
  2. Perception of a person on how himself is perceive by others – impression management (to be seen good by others).
• What is egocentric bias? state that the group success is because of his responsibility; however, if the group fail, it is because of others.
DEVELOPING IMPRESSION TOWARDS OTHERS

• We want to know who the new persons whom we just met/now are (in terms of their traits).
• For this purpose we normally use external / physical cues such as the dress, appearance etc.
• By using method of cause and effect, we develop an impression towards others.
• How?
  1. Cognitive Calculation
  2. Average Consideration Model
  3. Implicit personality theory
  4. Halo effect
  5. Logical error
  6. Stereotype
Cognitive calculation

- First: To combine little information to become bigger information. The influence towards perception depend on which information has more negative and positive value.
- Second: to get a average of all information. Thus, the impression towards a person depend on:
  1. All information about a person (given consideration based on its relative importance).
  2. The tendency to evaluate information in positive or negative ways.
Average consideration model

• Every information about others have different power of influence. (weak and strong influence)
• What are factors that influence the strength / power of the information?
  1. Focus given to the reliable sources.
  2. The first / early information (first impression)
  3. More focus given to negative traits.
  4. Influenced by context where the behavior takes place.
  5. Dispositions of the observer; personal traits.
• Impression towards others can be placed on a continuum from negative to positive.
• Thus, impression towards other is not take for granted, but it is through an averaging process.
Implicit personality theory

• When we already know who the person is, we have the tendency to conclude that his traits are parallel to each other.
• Example: If we found that a person is friendly, we have the tendency to conclude that he is also a good, loving etc person.
• Implicit means that we attempts to make a generalization without try to prove it.
Halo effect

- Positive appraisal/evaluation towards a person will submerge negative evaluation towards him, vice versa.
- “love is blind”. The feeling of love towards a person will submerge negative traits of the person.
- Negative/positive evaluation influence the overall evaluation towards a person.
- Halo effect has a strong influence on our overall impression.
- This one of kind of bias, and dangerous the positive first impression will submerge other negative impressions.
- It could explain why we pay positive attentions to our friends, love, and family.
The halo effect

Generals add fire to Clegg on Trident

Labour at odds over reform deal
Logical error

• Man sometimes in a logical way attempt to relate one trait to another trait, even though in reality the two traits is not related.
• We attempt to say/think that a person who is aggressive is also bad and hate other people etc.
• This is called as logical error: even though there is no relation, but we think logically there is a relationship.
Stereotype

• To make an impression towards other person by using stereotype given to the group of the person.
• Stereotype: general belief given to a particular group: example: Malay is lazy; Chinese is greedy economically; Black is aggressive.
• Deductive reasoning
• Impression towards other is based on stereotype given by the society to the particular group.
• Three theories explaining stereotype:
  – Psychodynamic approach
  – Social learning approach
  – Cognitive approach
NOT A BLACK STEREOTYPE

STILL LIVES IN GOVERNMENT HOUSING
THE PERFECT BRIT
SHOULD BE...

HUMBLE...
...AS THE ROYAL FAMILY

WELCOMING...
...AS THE WEATHER.

POLITE...
...AS A PUNK.

A GREAT COOK...
...LIKE THE ENGLISH.

RELAXED...
...AS A GUARDSMAN.

RELAXED...
...AS A GUARDSMAN.

RELAXED...
...AS A GUARDSMAN.

RELAXED...
...AS A GUARDSMAN.

SOBER...
...AS A JUDGE.

GENEROUS...
...AS A SCOT.

INTELLIGIBLE...
...AS THE? WELSH.

INTELLIGIBLE...
...AS THE? WELSH.
CONCLUSION

• Man is interested in knowing who the other person is, particular the person who we have just met.
• Man uses various methods in knowing the other people.
• Our know about other people is importance fo us to manage them.
• However, sometimes we are bias in explaining who the other people are.