Predicting Feelings and Behaviors at Work: Attitudes

Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter you should be able to explain:

1. Major job attitudes organizational psychologists care about and why they are considered important.
2. The role attitudes have at work.
3. How job attitudes predict other job attitudes and behaviors at work.
4. How organizations use different approaches to assess attitudes in the workplace.

Mini-Quiz: Attitudes

As an introduction to this chapter, please take the following mini-quiz (answers are in the back of the book). As you read the questions and consider the answers before diving into the chapter, you’ll challenge yourself before you master the content, a process that helps facilitate learning for long-term retention. Some questions may have more than one correct answer. Don’t worry if you cannot answer all questions correctly on your first try. By the time you read through the chapter and spend some of your own time thinking about these concepts, you should be able to determine the best answers. Try the quiz again after you finish reading the chapter.
1. Which of the following diagram best represents attitudes?
   a. A
   b. B
   c. C

2. Attitudes can be formed by:
   a. Looking around and seeing what’s acceptable to other people
   b. Thinking about what our friends would do and think
   c. Looking back on our own behavior and thinking about why we might have done what we did
   d. Our own past experiences

3. True or false: We care about attitudes because they lead to important work-related behaviors.
   a. True! This is the main reason we want to know about work attitudes.
   b. False—attitudes do not lead to behavior.
   c. True, but we also care about attitudes because they are important in and of themselves.
   d. True—we can perfectly predict performance if we know employee attitudes.

4. ______________ is the most widely and commonly studied job attitude and the one most often assessed in organizations.

5. If you are a manager and you want to change your employees’ attitudes about their jobs, you are going to be more successful if you:
   a. For something that the employees care about, you use strong arguments and logical reasoning to explain why their jobs are so important
   b. Highlight how the employees’ attitudes are inconsistent with how they want to act on the job (e.g., employees feel fatigued and dissatisfied, yet want to be highly energetic and productive sales persons)
   c. Conduct an employee satisfaction survey
   d. Unfortunately, the attitudes are unlikely to change no matter what you do
Overview

Organizations frequently want to know employees’ attitudes at work—such as, how satisfied are you? Are you committed to the organization—will you stay or are you thinking of quitting soon? An organization’s leaders care about employees’ job attitudes because they believe that job attitudes predict behavior at work, and for the most part, they are correct. Because of this belief, you’ll see surveys like the mini-example below (Table 4.1):

Take the following short survey and use the response scale below to indicate your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort to help my organization succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel like I belong here at my organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In my present job, I believe there are opportunities to get ahead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel I am paid fairly for the amount of work I do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel happy in my job.</td>
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These items above are examples of typical questions you may be asked to indicate your attitude toward your organization and your job. One or more of the questions asks you how you feel about the job or the organization. Another asks you to judge the level of effort you want to exert on behalf of the organization. Job attitudes are about the organization, supervisor, and work itself. So a logical question you might have is whether job attitudes are just simple opinions about work?

What Exactly Are Attitudes?

Attitudes are summary evaluations of a psychological object, such as a person, people, place, or event. These evaluations are based on beliefs, feelings, and/or past behavior, either ours’ or others’. Attitudes derive from internal states that are not directly observable, but can be inferred or determined from observable behavior such as facial expressions or body language (e.g., smiling; see Figure 4.1). The attitude represents an internal state, which is inferred from the unfavorable response displayed toward another person or group. In this example, the psychological object being evaluated is the other person or group. Attitudes can be good or bad, harmful or beneficial, pleasant or unpleasant, and likeable or dislikeable about an object, event, or place (Fishbein, 1963). Accordingly, attitudes may be considered opinions.
Some researchers have argued that job attitudes are not only situationally determined (caused within and by a specific situation, such as experiencing a rude person), but are also dispositionally determined (caused within the person), which means that we may have a predisposition toward specific attitudes or direction of attitude (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Staw & Ross, 1985). For example, some people, no matter what the job, seem to get very absorbed in their work and their job involvement level is relatively stable over time regardless of the job (Lodahl & Kejnar, 1965). Their consistent level of involvement at work, regardless of the job, suggests they are predisposed or inclined to be involved at work because of their personality.

Given the seeming complexity of attitudes, researchers have attempted to delineate what goes into attitudes; that is, they seem to have emotional components, thinking or cognitive components, but then also behaviors have been associated with attitudes. In an effort to more clearly state what exactly makes up an attitude, researchers proposed the tripartite view.

**Tripartite View of Attitudes**

A long-held, but no longer dominant view of attitudes is that they are a combination of affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Figure 4.2) responses to a psychological object. After much debate over the years, consensus has turned toward considering behavior as an outcome of attitudes rather than a component (Figure 4.3). That said, there is still lingering debate in some circles as to whether behavior isn’t still some part of the core of an attitude, which is why both perspectives are provided here.
Affect refers to emotion—we feel positively or negatively toward an object. For example, how you feel about a particular coworker determines your attitude about your coworker and potentially influences your attitude about all coworkers. Maybe you have had a particularly hard time working with that coworker. Maybe that coworker’s consistent rude and disrespectful treatment toward you causes you to feel hurt after every interaction. Your negative feelings about working with this coworker most likely manifest as a negative attitude about the coworker.

A behavioral response is an action—an observable behavior. Suppose you are enjoying a lively discussion with a group of coworkers when another person, someone who is not your friend but a friend of one your coworkers, walks up to the group and starts joining in the conversation. If you immediately turn and walk away from the group, even though you were in the midst of saying something, your action provides a behavioral demonstration of your attitude. In this example, is the demonstrated attitude about the newcomer or about being interrupted? If you first looked at the newcomer in disgust and then walked away, we might conclude that your attitude was specifically about the newcomer, though it still could be about being interrupted. Your attitudes can be inferred from your behavior, but unless the behavior is very clearly targeted at a particular object (in this case the newcomer) we’re hard pressed to figure out what specifically your attitude is toward.

Cognition means thinking or judgment. You may classify an object as positive or negative based on its properties. For example, suppose your work has a policy that says for every extra hour you work, you can earn extra pay, but only as long as your boss asks you to work overtime. You would probably judge the policy as favorable. In contrast, another example may be that there is an agreement at work, almost like a policy, that says if people have to leave work early to pick up their children at day care, they are excused—it’s okay for them to leave and those who remain either complete the leftover work or reschedule to accommodate the coworker who left. But what if you don’t have children? The policy only applies to some people and not others, and is based only on whether you have children, not based on anything work related. Most likely, you’d judge this agreement as unfavorable.

Although this tripartite view of attitudes is appealing because of its simplicity and apparent comprehensiveness, as mentioned previously it is no longer the dominant perspective on attitudes (Figure 4.3). A reason why the tripartite perspective fell out of favor is that the three dimensions were not as highly correlated as would be expected given that all three dimensions were supposedly equally essential to making up an attitude. It seems that the behavioral actions once considered a part of an attitude are truly best thought of as following from the emotional and cognitive dimensions of the attitude. Behaviors are, therefore, considered outcomes of attitudes (Tesser & Shaffer, 1990).

Breaking attitudes down into an affect and cognitive component might make sense, but for many they can still be confusing because the way we talk about attitudes in everyday language implies they are behaviors or objects.

How We Talk about Attitudes

Accordingly, learning about attitudes as they are discussed and studied in organizational sciences can be a bit challenging. It sometimes seems as we refer to
attitudes as behaviors, actions, or objects, and our lay understanding of attitude interferes with our ability to understand them scientifically. For example, in everyday speech we might say things like “don’t give me an attitude, here, I’m just sharing what happened,” “he had a generally good attitude,” or “they have a negative attitude about the new proposal.” Attitude in everyday speech is often used as if it is a temperament; like a characteristic of our personality, style, or approach. However, that is not how attitude is used or referred to in the scientific study of attitudes. You won’t see a scientific paper discuss job involvement, fairness, or support as “the attitude of job involvement” or “the attitude of support.” Instead, you’ll see “Employees reporting high job involvement…” or “People care a lot about fairness in the workplace…perceptions of fairness were rated high.” Similarly, “supervisors who provided organizational support reported having employees who were high performers.” Yet, as you’ll read in the next sections, job involvement, fairness, and support are all job attitudes—they are evaluations of people, places, events, or objects at work.

Learning about attitudes is not just an academic exercise—when we understand what goes into forming an attitude, we gain insight into how to potentially influence them or change them, a key goal of business leaders in organizations.

**How Are Attitudes Formed?**

Attitudes do not exist until an individual experiences the person, people, place, or event, and then responds (Allport, 1935; Katz & Stotland, 1959; Krech & Crutchfield, 1948). For example, what is your attitude toward working in a factory? If you haven’t yet worked in a factory, you may not have an attitude about that type of work. Or suppose you conjure up an image that looks something like Figure 4.4, where you envision yourself standing at a loud machine inside a windowless warehouse. Maybe you’ve seen an image like that in a movie.

But what if factory work looks more like Figure 4.5, where everything is automated, your role is to monitor a computer, and the room is clean and quiet?

Your attitude may initially form based on information from others, but might not truly solidify or take full shape (either strongly positive or negative) until you actually experience the object—in this case, the factory.

To explain how our attitudes are formed, we turn to several theories including self-perception theory and social information processing.
theory. These theories also provide initial starting points for predicting and changing attitudes, which extends their value beyond understanding to application.

**Self-Perception Theory**

Self-perception theory (Bem, 1967) suggests that our attitudes are formed by considering our own behavior (almost as if you are a third-party or outside observer). We decide what attitudes must have existed to have caused our specific behavior or action. In other words, what attitude must have existed to produce our behavior? People can consider their behavior after-the-fact and determine what their attitudes must have been to create the behavior they displayed, almost as if looking at themselves in a mirror of the past (Figure 4.6).

An implication of self-perception theory, supported with research evidence (Bem & McConnell, 1970), is that people may espouse one attitude before a particular behavior has occurred, but then espouse another attitude after the behavior occurred. They use their behavior to determine their true attitude. For example, I might say I like detailed work involving numbers. But if I put off every project that requires me to spend hours in the details, or try delegating it to someone else, I might infer from my own behavior that I really do not like detailed work involving numbers. After all, if I did, I wouldn’t keep trying to get out of doing the work or putting it off.

In addition to people using their own behavior as an indicator of their attitude, they also turn to the contextual environment and their peers to determine what attitudes to form. That is, people also form their attitudes from their interactions with those around them.
Chapter 4: Predicting Feelings and Behaviors at Work: Attitudes from Zinta Byrne’s Organizational Psychology and Behavior: An Integrated Approach to Understanding the Workplace

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Social Information Processing Theory

People also form their attitudes from their interactions with those around them. Social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) says that people use the environmental cues around them and their social interactions with others (e.g., what others say, think, or do) to determine their own attitudes. Cues from the environment include: a supervisor disciplining a coworker, what coworkers say, and other information available within the work environment. For example, the supervisor’s actions provide information about acceptable and unacceptable behavior, as well as providing information about the supervisor herself (e.g., she holds people accountable). Direct statements from coworkers, such as “things are so unfair around here” are also cues that influence attitudes. Maybe you haven’t thought much about the fairness of the workplace until your closest friend and coworker starts complaining about how unfair it is. Calling attention to concerns in the workplace, such as policies or changes, makes the concerns more salient thereby influencing job attitudes. For example, managers attempting to be open about the company’s performance may point out that the organization’s stock keeps dropping. These statements make the loss in value more obvious to employees, who may otherwise have not been paying attention to the value of the company stock. As a consequence, employees may develop a negative attitude about the value of the company.

How Do Managers Use These Explanations of Attitudes in the Workplace?

Managers can use explanations of attitudes in the workplace to determine when employee attitudes are formed about various aspects of work, and use those explanations to understand what might be driving employees’ responses. For example, knowing that employees form their attitudes by using the information in their contextual environment (social information processing theory), managers should tap into the shared perceptions of subordinates (via anonymous survey, casual conversation) or shared perceptions of multiple workgroups regarding the work environment. Instead of assuming that some employees purposefully take on a negative attitude, using social information processing theory to recognize that employees take cues from the environment might explain where the attitude came from. This information can result in better decisions and actions on the part of the manager.

Self-perception theory can be used during efforts to change workplace practices and norms. Knowing that people may form an attitude consistent with ongoing behavior, managers can assign their employees tasks that require specific actions that hopefully lead to the desired attitude. Take note, however, that changing attitudes or trying to implant them can backfire.

Changing attitudes tends to be only one of the key concerns of organizational leaders. Another is predicting employees’ attitudes because they are assumed to ultimately predict employee behavior.

Why Do We Care about Attitudes at Work?

Organizations want to know how employees’ attitudes are formed because they believe those attitudes predict employees’ behavior. For example, most
organizational leaders believe that satisfied employees are high-performing employees. Thus, organizations most often measure attitudes, specifically job satisfaction, as part of annual opinion surveys. They use the resulting scores to tell them whether they need to take actions to improve the attitudes they measured. The organization’s ultimate goal is to increase employee performance. Leaders believe they can accomplish the goal by keeping employees’ job attitudes, like satisfaction, high. Their beliefs are not far from reality, though not all attitudes influence performance to the direct degree that most organizations think. We review attitudes and their influence in organizations in the next sections.

Which Job Attitudes Do Organizations Care about?

Employees have many attitudes toward their jobs, but a few, in particular, tend to be the focus of attention in organizations. Job attitudes most studied within organizations include job involvement, fairness, organizational support, trust, job satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intentions (i.e., intentions to quit).

There is no particular way to categorize or structure attitudes (like that provided in Chapter 3 for theories of motivation). To make sense of the attitudes, you can structure them by which tend to be considered predictors versus which tend to be considered outcomes. Note, however, that although we can categorize these attitudes as predictors versus outcomes for the sake of learning them, they are all attitudes, which means they are not exclusively predictors or outcomes.

Organizations consider the following attitudes predictors: job involvement, support, trust, and fairness. Organizations seek ways to increase outcome attitudes or behaviors by manipulating these predictors. These predictors are wonderful in and of themselves, thus regardless of what else they might lead to or affect, having job involvement, support, trust, and attitudes of fairness are all great for both employee and organization. Organizations consider the following attitudes outcomes: job satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intentions.

To help cement your understanding of each job attitude, a short paragraph expressing how the attitude is seen at work, what can be done to foster it, and what attitudes or behaviors it promotes is provided after the consequences (outcomes) and antecedents (predictors) of each attitude.

Predictors

Remember from earlier courses you might have in research methods, predictors are constructs use to determine when another variable will occur—they come before the variable of interest. Accordingly, they forecast or foretell what will happen next. The following variables are frequently used as predictors in research on workplace behavior and attitudes.

Job Involvement

Job involvement refers to the centrality of work in one’s life and to how important work is to one’s self-identity and self-image (Lawler & Hall, 1970; Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). Sample items assessing job involvement are shown in Table 4.2.
Consequences or Outcomes of Job Involvement

Consequences or outcomes of job involvement include other job attitudes such as satisfaction and commitment (also see Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), work–life conflict, and job stress. Job involvement is not highly correlated with job performance or effort at work.

Antecedents or Predictors of Job Involvement

Results from meta-analyses (e.g., Brown, 1996) show that predictors of job involvement include job characteristics (e.g., skill variety, feedback, task significance, job challenge, task complexity), and supervisory variables such as support (e.g., flexible schedule when needed, resources to help on a big project). Ways organizations can increase job involvement include boosting both individual and organizational efforts with career planning (e.g., Orpen & Pool, 1995). Demographic variables (e.g., education, age, sex) are largely unrelated to job involvement.

Job Involvement in the Workplace

An employee who reports high levels of the attitude job involvement is more likely to report high levels of the attitudes commitment and job satisfaction, and low levels of work conflict or job stress. Thus, managers will want to foster high job involvement in their employees as it makes them satisfied at work and less stressed. Ways to foster job involvement include redesigning employees’ jobs so they use a variety of job skills and by providing support in the form of necessary job resources and flexibility in the job schedule.

Fairness

Fairness at work, also called organizational justice, refers to at least three to four different types of perceptions.

Distributive justice refers to employees’ perceptions of the fairness of decisions (Deutsch, 1975). To determine if a decision outcome is fair, employees compare what they received versus what others like them received for similar work. Thus, the evaluation of whether the result of a decision is fair is based on a comparison to others—what did they do to get what they got, and how does that compare to what you did to get what you got.

Procedural fairness is the perception of how fair the process (assuming there is one) is that was used to make the decision (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Employees consider a number of aspects of the process to determine its fairness. These include whether the process (a) preserves unbiased decision making, (b) is...
applied consistently across people and time, (c) ensures accurate information is used, (d) allows for corrections for inaccurate decisions, (e) conforms to ethical standards, and (f) provides a mechanism to incorporate and account for the views of all parties affected by the decision (Leventhal, 1980).

Interactional justice is about the fairness of treatment during the implementation of the decision (Bies & Moag, 1986). It refers to whether employees feel treated with dignity and respect when being told about the decision, why the decision was made the way it was, and what the decision means for them. Interactional justice has also been divided into a two-part construct: interpersonal Justice, which refers to how much people feel they are treated with politeness, respect, and dignity; and informational justice, which refers to the adequacy of explanations given for decisions and why the outcomes were distributed as they were (Greenberg, 1993).

Organizational justice has also been viewed as a multifoci model (Byrne, 1999; Byrne & Cropanzano, 2000), where instead of focusing on the type of justice, the emphasis is on the entity or person responsible for justice. Accordingly, justice is either from the organization or from the supervisor, resulting in multiple foci of justice. A variation of this delineation of justice has also been referred to as an agent-system view (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Regardless, the three types delineated above (distributive, procedural, interactional) remain the most prominent in the literature. What this research points out is that people care a lot about fairness in the workplace.

They are concerned whether they are paid fairly, treated respectfully, and given the same opportunities as others like them. Employees reflect on whether the organization cares about their welfare, whether they can meet their needs for control and belonging, and whether the organization is ethical in how it handles business (Colquitt, Greenberg, Zapata-Phelan, 2005).

Sample items for assessing the different types of justice are shown in Table 4.3.

Consequences or Outcomes of Fairness

The results of two meta-analyses (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001) show that all three forms of fairness are positively correlated with satisfaction, job performance, organizational support, citizenship behaviors (i.e., going above and beyond the job expectations), organizational commitment, and trust in the organization, supervisor, and coworkers. All three types of fairness are negatively correlated with withdrawal behaviors, turnover intentions, counterproductive work behavior, and negative emotions (e.g., disgust) at work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4.3</th>
<th>Sample Items Used to Assess Fairness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distributive justice</strong></td>
<td>To what extent are you fairly rewarded considering the responsibilities you have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent are you fairly rewarded for the amount of effort you put forth?</td>
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(Continued)
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Table 4.3 Sample Items Used to Assess Fairness (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedural justice</strong></td>
<td>To what extent does your outcome reflect what you contributed to the organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent have you been able to express your views and feelings during decision-making procedures?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent has the company developed procedures been designed to generate standards so that decisions can be made with consistency?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent has the company developed procedures that collect accurate information needed for making decisions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal justice</strong></td>
<td>To what extent has your boss treated you politely?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent have you been treated with dignity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informational justice</strong></td>
<td>To what extent has your boss been candid in his/her communications with you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent has your boss explained the procedures thoroughly?</td>
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Fairness is also positively related to organizational practices such as, giving employees voice (i.e., input, feedback), communication, and affirmative action (i.e., rectify imbalances related to race, gender, or ethnicity). Procedural and interactional fairness, in particular, have been shown to reduce negative perceptions of organizational politics (intentional acts to promote self-interest at the expense of others) by creating trust in leaders and enforcing nonbias decision-making (Byrne, 2005).

**Antecedents or Predictors of Fairness**

Leaders who have mutually respectful relationships with their subordinates tend to provide them with an opportunity for voice or expression (Bhal & Gulati, 2004; Daly & Geyer, 1994), which creates trust, a prerequisite for the development of an attitude of fairness (Lewicki, Wiethoff, & Tomlinson, 2005). Employees who have close relationships with their supervisors and groups at work develop an identity with them, as well as feelings of self-worth that lead to fairness attitudes (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Thus, strong, positive relations at work support the development of positive attitudes of fairness at work.

**Fairness in the Workplace**

Employees who hold attitudes of fairness about their work assignments, the procedures used to make those assignments,
and how they are treated by their supervisors report high commitment to their organizations, trust others, and work to positively support the organization. In contrast, employees who evaluate their work as unfair are likely to sabotage the work, act out with negative emotions, and generally disrupt working relations. They do not trust the organization. Ways that managers can increase fairness attitudes is by being transparent in their decision-making, sharing how the decision was made and explaining why, and by asking their employees for their opinions and taking action on suggestions. Over-structuring policies is not necessarily the best approach; instead applying fairness given the specific circumstances and treating employees as individuals will be perceived as more fair than just applying a single rigid policy to everyone (Cropanzano & Byrne, 2001). Making sure employees are rewarded commensurate with their efforts and accomplishments will also foster a positive attitude of fairness.

**Theories Specific to Fairness**

A variety of theories have been used to explain why employees’ attitudes about fairness relate to their performance or intentions to stay (i.e., negative relationship with turnover intentions), most of which come from other fields such as social psychology and some of which are explained in the next section. However, there are at least two or more well-known theories of fairness that help us predict how we think employees will respond: equity theory, group value model, and fairness heuristic theory.

**Equity Theory**  
Recall from Chapter 3 that equity theory says people compute in their heads a ratio of what they receive for their efforts to how much effort they contributed. If their contribution outweighs or is more than what they receive in exchange, an evaluation of inequity occurs and they react with anger. If the outcome/input ratio is in their favor, they get more out than they put in, they will feel guilty. However, the theory includes one more important evaluation. At its heart, social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) forms the foundation of equity theory (Adams, 1965). Social comparison theory says that we compare ourselves to others to evaluate and understand our opinions and abilities given a certain situation. Like needing a mirror to see whether we look okay, we use our comparisons with others to adjust and judge the validity of our opinions and the quality of our abilities. Equity theory uses this natural drive for comparison to suggest that people compare their outputs/inputs ratio to that of another person. If someone else is getting more than you but you contributed more, you will judge the situation as inequitable, feel angry about it, and try to alleviate the negative feelings by restoring equity—or restoring a balance. Similarly, if you get more than others did but you contributed less, you will feel guilty and try to work harder to make up the difference, or in some cases buy them benefits such as their lunch, coffee, or cover them for an extra day off. In practice, however, researchers found that people rarely feel guilty when overcompensated.
Group Value Model—Relational Model—Fairness Heuristic Theory  The group value model, renamed the relational model, and later again reformulated as the group engagement model (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Blader, 2002; Tyler & Lind, 1992) proposed that people care about their status in groups and their collaboration with others and as a result care about fairness because it conveys information about their position or relationship within the group. Fairness heuristic theory (Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, & de Vera Park, 1993) builds on these relational models and says that fairness perceptions form a heuristic or rule of thumb for whether to accept decisions made by authority figures. People rely on their perception of the fairness of the decision to determine if the authority is legitimate and the decision should be accepted.

Organizational Support
Organizational support refers to employees’ perceptions and beliefs that their organization cares about their personal well-being and values their contribution (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). An example of items assessing organizational support are shown in Table 4.4.

Consequences or Outcomes of Organizational Support
Consequences or outcomes of organizational support include commitment, job satisfaction, job involvement, job performance, and retention (low turnover intentions; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009).

Antecedents or Predictors of Organizational Support
Meta-analytic studies show that organizational support is positively predicted by fairness (e.g., Byrne, Pitts, Wilson, & Steiner, 2012) and favorable job conditions, such as job security and low job stress (e.g., Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Correlations between fairness and perceptions of organizational support tend to be moderately high (e.g., \( r = .59 \) to \( r = .68 \), Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), especially when compared to the relationship between other constructs and support, indicating that employees who perceive fairness may also tend to perceive support and vice versa, and increasing fairness may be one a good approach to also increasing perceptions of organizational support.

**TABLE 4.4  Sample Items Used to Assess Organizational Support**

| My organization cares about my opinions. |
| My organization really cares about my well-being. |
| Help is available from my organization when I have a problem. |
| My organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part. |

Organizational Support in the Workplace

Employees with positive evaluations of the attitude organizational support report feeling cared for by the organization and commit themselves to the organization, feel satisfied at work, get involved in their jobs, and perform at high levels. Ways to foster an attitude of organizational support include asking employees if they need help, structuring the work environment and schedule to support the employees’ needs, and making sure that decisions are made fairly and are communicated.

Theories Specific to Organizational Support

Organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) suggests that people attribute human-like characteristics to the organization and in doing so develop a relationship with the organization much like people develop friendships. That is, underlying organizational support theory is the concept that people naturally reciprocate favorable treatment (e.g., someone gives you a gift and you automatically want to give one in return) and desire favorable treatment in return. Thus, when the organization appears to show concern for them and value them through actions that convey consideration, employees reciprocate with commitment and performance. Hence, an application of organizational support theory is to teach supervisors, managers, and leaders within the organization to convey concern and appreciation for employees. In doing so, managers and leaders can foster employees’ beliefs that the organization itself values them and promotes a desire in the employees to perform and demonstrate high job involvement.

Trust

Trust has been conceptualized in a number of ways: as an individual difference construct (i.e., a propensity to trust; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Rotter, 1980), an attitude (Giffin, 1967), a feature of institutions (i.e., an organization engenders trust; Bradach & Eccles, 1989), or a feature of interactions (i.e., trust lies in the relationship between individuals; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Trust is also generally defined as a psychological state in which an individual is willing to be vulnerable to the organization or a person with the expectation that the vulnerability will lead to positive intentions on the part of the organization or other person (Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). Stated another way, trust is the willingness to be vulnerable to another because the other person has shown him or herself to be predictable and ethical, and to have good intentions. Trust has been correlated with organizational performance and employee job attitudes (Dirs & Ferrin, 2001; Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Hwee Hoon, 2000), such as job satisfaction and commitment (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Rubin, 2010).

Trusting someone is different from being confident in her, or in being able to predict what she will say or do (Mayer et al., 1995). Trust forms a critical foundation for long-term mutually beneficial relationships (Deutsch, 1958). Quite a few researchers agree with conceptualizing trust as a psychological state (Kramer,
1999); however, others continue assessing trust as something other than a state (i.e., feature of institution or person).

Furthermore, trust is studied in a variety of forms, such as a cognitive-based trust (expecting reliability and dependability of another’s actions) and an affect-based trust (the emotional tie or bond between a person and entity or other person; McAllister, 1995). An example of a survey item that might be used to assess cognitive-based trust is “I can rely on this person not to make my job more difficult by careless work” (McAllister, 1995, p.37). Compare that to an item used for assessing affect-based trust: “We have a sharing relationship. We can both freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes” (McAllister, 1995, p.37). According to McAllister (1995) cognitive-based trust leads to affect-based trust. Trust can also be toward specific foci such as the organization, supervisor, and coworkers (Mayer et al., 1995; Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997).

Trust in one’s supervisor provides a key indicator of the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and a core component of a leader’s ability to be effective (Zand, 1972). Trust is also essential among coworkers or teammates, as it provides the necessary bridge between employees needing to collaborate and rely on each other for completing a task or developing a new idea (McAllister, 1995; Zand, 1972). As a result of trust, team performance is much higher than when trust is lacking (Larson & LaFasto, 1989).

An example of the types of questionnaire items assessing trust are included in Table 4.5.

Much of the trust literature fails to specify the exact kind of trust assessed, making the interpretation and summation of results challenging. In the next two sections, when the type of trust is known, it is acknowledged.

**Consequences or Outcomes of Trust**

Trust in management, the supervisor, and coworkers are all positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Cook & Wall, 1980), though trust in supervisor and in coworkers are not as strongly related to organizational commitment as is trust in management (Yoon & Hanjun, 2011). Trust in the organization is positively correlated with organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, whereas trust in supervisor is related to task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002). Trust is also positively associated with organizational effectiveness (Kegan, 1971). Trust in organizations is negatively correlated with turnover intentions; thus, employees with low trust in the organization are likely to quit. Trusting the leaders of the organization is associated with employees (a) demonstrating citizenship behaviors, (b) wanting

**Table 4.5** Sample Items Used for Assessing Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I had my way, I wouldn't let [organization, person] have any influence over issues that are important to me (Reverse scored).</td>
<td>Courtesy Zinta Byrne; Source: Mayer &amp; Davis, 1999.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be willing to let [organization, person] have complete control over my future in this company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be comfortable giving [organization, person] a task or problem which was critical to me, even if I could not monitor their actions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to stay and be committed to the organization, (c) feeling satisfied at work, and (d) feeling they can commit to the decisions leaders make (Byrne, Pitts, Chiaburu, & Steiner, 2011; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

**Antecedents or Predictors of Trust**

Predictors of trust in management and trust in supervisors include goal clarity and work autonomy (Yoon & Hanjun, 2011). Fairness in organizations has also been shown to predict trust in the organization and in the supervisor (Aryee et al., 2002; Byrne et al., 2012; Connell, Ferres, & Travaglione, 2003). However, when fairness was compared to leadership and perceptions of organizational support in predicting trust in managers, support was the strongest predictor of the three (Connell et al., 2003). Thus, leaders can foster trust from their employees by implementing fair procedures, providing support, and involving employees in the decision making process (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

**Distrust and Destroying Trust**

Distrust is a recurring problem in organizations (Sitkin & Roth, 1993), and unfortunately because of the nature of distrust, people aren’t necessarily willing to report that they don’t trust their organization or boss (they distrust their anonymity on the survey!). We do have some idea of distrust at work, however. A 2014 survey called the *Work and Well-being Survey* conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA) reported that 24% of those sampled ($N = 1562$; United States only) do not trust their employer and 32% felt their employer was not always honest and truthful (APA, 2014).

So what exactly is distrust? Distrust refers to feeling that another person does not have the best intentions and may actually have negative or harmful intentions (Govier, 1994). Electronic monitoring, such as when people act like customers but are actually secretly monitoring performance, being forced to keep log books to prove stated actions (e.g., laws in the United States require truck drivers to log their hours on the road), and other surveillance actions tend to foster and promote a climate of distrust among employees (Kramer, 1999). Many of these systems were initially intended to create or improve overall trust; however, the unintended message sent to employees is that they cannot be trusted.

Trust is easier to destroy than it is to develop and promote (Barber, 1983); hence, efforts to promote trust, such as electronic keystroke monitoring designed to balance workload, must be carefully evaluated for their unintended consequences; in this case, conveying a lack of trust. Events or actions that destroy or damage trust tend to be salient and memorable, which means they are more likely to have a stronger effect on the recipient than trust building actions that are often more subtle (Slovic, 1993). Individuals in subordinate roles also tend to be more sensitive to whether their supervisors’ actions are trustworthy or not because of their dependence and vulnerability due to lower status (Kramer, 1996). Thus, actions that the supervisor may not think would hurt trust actually end up damaging established trust levels.

The findings from Kramer’s (1996) study suggest that supervisors must be cognizant of the potential effect of their own behavior and reassure subordinates through transparency and direct conversation that their decisions are made with
positive intentions. Of course, this communication won’t work if the supervisor’s actions do not match his or her words. In a follow-up of their 2014 *Work and Well-being Survey* results, the APA noted their study revealed three key predictors of trust: employees’ level of involvement with the organization, recognition from the organization, and how well the organization communicates (Gavett, 2014). It stands to reason that improvements in these three areas may be associated with improvements in trust, though the APA survey was not an experiment assessing causation, but rather a survey assessing correlation.

**Trust in the Workplace** Employees with a positive attitude of trust (high trust) are more likely to commit to the organization and report high job satisfaction, whereas employees with a negative attitude of trust (low trust) are likely to quit. Ways to increase positive trust include providing autonomy and goal clarity, and support employees’ needs for flexible work schedules or help from coworkers. To avoid developing the attitude of distrust in employees, managers can reiterate their intentions when making decisions, communicate frequently, and ask employees to share their concerns to create opportunities for rectifying misunderstandings.

**Outcomes** Outcomes are considered to follow after other variables—they are the consequences or results of the attitudes and behaviors that happen before them. Thus, the following attitudes are typically studied as outcomes or consequences in the study of the workplace.

**Job Satisfaction** Job satisfaction refers to a positive evaluation of one’s job tasks, pay, coworkers, and overall appraisal of one’s job (Locke, 1976). Job satisfaction is probably the most widely researched topic in organizational psychology (Judge, Parker, Colbert, Heller, & Ilies, 2002) because of the many attitudes and behaviors tied to job satisfaction, and the organizations’ interest in and assumptions about how central satisfaction is to employees’ performance. Research has shown that job satisfaction is similarly perceived across countries, making it a universal work attitude (Judge et al., 2002).

Initially, job satisfaction was studied as a general overall satisfaction with work, comfort with the work environment, and a lack of boredom on the job (Locke, 1976). The Hawthorne studies discussed in Chapter 1 began as studies of the work environment but showed that workers have attitudes about their work, and satisfaction with the work was one of the first attitudes identified along with several others related to management (Locke, 1976).

Job satisfaction has additionally been divided into multiple dimensions including pay, work, promotions, recognition and rewards, benefits, work environment or conditions, company or organization, management or supervision, and coworkers. Even though specific types of satisfaction matter, overall job satisfaction still plays an important role in understanding employees’ attitudes at work, and therefore, general job satisfaction scales are still used to assess employees’ overall job satisfaction (Spector, 1985).
An example of the types of items used to measure job satisfaction are included in Table 4.6. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire is a proprietary measure; however, the website provides a sample document, which includes several sample items from their scale.

### Consequences or Outcomes of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is negatively related to people’s intentions to quit. It is also negatively related to job stress, such as lack of clarity about what is expected in that specific job or inconsistent demands from your boss. Job satisfaction is positively related to organizational commitment, job performance, and citizenship behaviors (Brown & Peterson, 1993; Judge et al., 2002).

### Antecedents or Predictors of Job Satisfaction

Job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) discussed in Chapter 3 suggests that jobs have intrinsically motivating characteristics such as autonomy, task identity, and skill variety that lead to higher levels of job satisfaction when present. Research has shown that these characteristics do positively and moderately relate to job satisfaction (correlations range between .24 and .34; Loher, Noe, Moeller, & Fitzgerald, 1985). Therefore, organizational leaders believe they have the ability to affect job satisfaction by changing characteristics of the job through efforts like job redesign.

### Job Satisfaction in the Workplace

Employees who display an attitude of satisfaction with their jobs are likely to become committed to the organization and demonstrate high job performance, and less likely to quit the organization. Managers wanting to increase employee job satisfaction may focus their energy on redesigning jobs to provide opportunities for employees to use a variety of skills, and to help them see how their work fits into the bigger organizational picture.

### Theories Specific to Job Satisfaction

Quite a few different theories have been used to explain what leads to job satisfaction and relationships between job satisfaction and other constructs. For example, the job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) suggests that aspects of the work environment trigger key psychological states, which develop the attitude of job satisfaction.

Researchers have determined that people do not necessarily have the same level of satisfaction with each dimension of work (e.g., pay, supervisor, coworkers, environment). For example, you can be satisfied with your coworkers, but not with

### TABLE 4.6 Sample Items Used to Assess Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being able to keep busy all the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chance to tell people what to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The working conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with this aspect of your job…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
your pay or company benefits (Judge, Piccolo, Podsakoff, Shaw, & Rich, 2010). Additionally, some aspects of the job or work environment are more valuable to you than others and the value differs by person (Locke, 1976). For example, who you work with might be very valuable to you because you care about your connection with others at work, whereas recognition is not as important or valuable because you don’t like being the center of attention. Locke (1976) referred to this varying value across job dimensions as range of affect theory. Level of satisfaction is a function of how valuable that aspect of work is to the employee.

Some theorists base their propositions on a discrepancy model of job satisfaction, proposing that job satisfaction is the result of evaluating the discrepancy between what one wants or expects versus what one has. For example, you’d compare your current job to what you have now or what you think the ideal job should include (e.g., Ilgen, 1971; Porter, 1961).

Still others argue that satisfaction develops from having your needs met (e.g., Maslow, 1948, Hierarchy of Needs; see Chapter 3). Similarly, Herzberg’s Two-Factor or Motivator-Hygiene Theory (Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) suggested that employees could be equally satisfied and dissatisfied with work depending on whether they felt they had adequate resources and benefits at work. Remember that the motivator factors included aspects of work that were considered sources of satisfaction such as achievement, recognition, or status. Hygiene factors included contextual work factors such as working conditions, relations with others, and pay, and were considered a source of dissatisfaction when not present or adequate. Thus, the theory posited that satisfaction was the positive evaluation of having your needs met. Even though Maslow’s Hierarchy and Herzberg’s Motivator-Hygiene theory have been used as theories of motivation, they are about what motivates you to get what you need to become satisfied.

Commitment

Commitment to the organization refers to an emotional attachment or identification with the organization and its values. Employees who are committed to their organizations report feeling like they belong at the organization. They feel attached and obligated to stay, and are involved in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Commitment has further been described as a strong belief in the organization’s goals and values, a willingness to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership within the organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

Cross-cultural research evidence based on meta-analysis (i.e., a study that uses statistical analyses to quantitatively summarize previous research findings in a given area) suggests that commitment is a similar construct across different countries (Meyer, Stanley, Jackson, McInnis, Maltin, & Sheppard, 2012). Though the average commitment ratings may be similar, there is variability, which suggests organizations operating in multiple countries may find slightly different employee commitment levels across their country surveys. Because meta-analysis shows commitment is the same construct from country to country, when differences in ratings occur (higher in one country versus another), they are actual differences and cannot be explained away as simply different interpretations of the construct.

Employees can be committed in one of three ways: affective, normative, and continuance commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990 see Table 4.7 for sample items).
The three types of commitment are related to each other, though not so strongly that they could be considered the same construct (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

**Affective commitment** refers to an employee’s emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This form of commitment represents how employees feel about their organization and whether those feelings give rise to a sense of belonging.

**Normative commitment** refers to how much an employee feels obligated to stay with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employees may feel obligated for a number of reasons, including values that suggest once you are employed with an organization you should stay for a certain amount of time, or you have friends and family at work and don’t want to leave them.

**Continuance commitment** refers to employees staying with the organization because they feel the cost of leaving is too high relative to the cost of staying. This form of commitment has also been called calculative commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) because of the assessment of the relative costs of staying versus leaving. In times of high unemployment, alternative work opportunities may not exist; consequently, employees may believe the cost of leaving is too high because they are unlikely to find another job or may not beat out the competition for whatever jobs do exist. It may also be the case that employees do not want to leave their current employer because of the many bonuses and benefit packages the organization currently offers, benefits the employees would have to give up if they went elsewhere.

Though researchers study these three forms of commitment (i.e., affective, normative, and continuance; Jaros, 1997), organizations and practitioners most often simply refer to commitment without specifying which type. In general, most understand or assume that they are referring to affective commitment. In addition to the three types of commitment, researchers have found employees form their attitude of affective commitment about and directed toward a specific target: the organization, supervisor, coworker, occupation, or other targets within the organization (Becker, 1992). These targets matter most when trying to determine what types of organizational change or improvement projects to implement. For example, if employees in a single unit or division report reasonably high organizational commitment, but low supervisory commitment, the organization would do well to address specific issues at the supervisor’s level as opposed to organizational policies or structure.

### Table 4.7 Sample Items Used for Assessing Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment Type</th>
<th>Sample Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Commitment</td>
<td>I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Commitment</td>
<td>I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance Commitment</td>
<td>If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, I might consider working elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative Commitment</td>
<td>I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consequences or Outcomes of Commitment

Organizational leaders believe that employees’ organizational commitment determines who stays and who leaves the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). They are not wrong—committed employees do report low turnover intentions and they tend to perform citizenship behaviors (Meyer et al., 2002). Outcomes of affective and normative commitment include turnover, job performance, citizenship behavior, and stress. These constructs are more highly correlated with affective and normative commitment than with continuous commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). Occupational and union commitments also positively related to affective commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Occupational commitment refers to commitment to one’s occupation, like nurse, teacher, or engineer. Union commitment refers to commitment to one’s union (i.e., an organized group of workers lobbying for better pay and work conditions), like the American Civil Liberties Union, the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, United Service Workers Union, European Trade Union, Cyprus Workers’ Confederation, or the Korean Railway Workers Union, just to name a few.

Antecedents or Predictors of Commitment

Work experience constructs considered predictors of commitment, like organizational support, leadership, role ambiguity, role conflict, and fairness are all correlated with the different forms of commitment, in particular affective and normative (Meyer et al., 2002). Of these predictors, fairness and organizational support show the highest correlations with affective and normative commitment. Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli (2001) demonstrated that perceived organizational support predicts affective commitment. Unlike these other two forms of commitment, continuance commitment does not show high correlations with any constructs assessed in various meta-analytic studies (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1996). Thus, researchers find it easier to predict levels of the attitudes affective and normative commitment than continuance commitment.

Neither Outcome nor Predictor of Commitment

There are some variables that are considered neither an outcome nor a predictor of commitment. For example, demographics such as gender and education are not highly related to any of the forms of commitment; thus, they are not considered outcomes or predictors of commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). Satisfaction and commitment are considered reciprocally related, which means evidence does not exist to support one causing the other (Currivan, 1999).

Commitment in the Workplace

Employees who display an attitude of commitment at work are likely to demonstrate high job performance, and less likely to want to quit their jobs or report feeling stressed at work. Managers wishing to increase commitment in their employees can offer support through showing concern, providing extra job resources, and making sure employees understand job expectations to reduce role ambiguity.
Turnover Intentions

Turnover intentions refer to intentions or motivations to quit the job or organization. They are considered a form of withdrawal behavior (Porter & Steers, 1973). Withdrawal behaviors, or actions to pull oneself out of the organization psychologically, physically, or both, include absenteeism, psychological withdrawal, turnover intentions, early departure from work or lateness, and actual turnover (Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007).

Turnover can be very costly for businesses, averaging billions of U.S. dollars per year (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). Some of those financial costs are irreplaceable—when people with valuable knowledge, skills, and ability leave the organization, replacing the knowledge gap can take years. Hiring new people incurs a cost, as does training them. Additionally, costs add up as productivity losses accumulate between the time the turnover occurs and the time the new hire becomes productive (O’Connell & Mei-Chuan, 2007).

Furthermore, when employees quit, those who remain pick up the workload until a replacement is hired and trained, and the burden on them is a form of cost as well. Specifically, as the workload increases, so do the stress and errors on the job (Jex, 1998; O’Connell & Mei-Chuan, 2007). As the stress increases for the remaining employees, their job satisfaction drops, their productivity drops, and their intentions to quit increase (Podsakoff et al., 2007). The loss of employees may not be a fast road to losing the entire employee group as this ladder of connections may suggest, but for an organization already squeezed for staff or who has already overloaded and stressed employees, the cascading effect of one employee leaving does occur and should not be ignored.

Dysfunctional turnover occurs when an employee wants to quit, but the organization would rather keep him or her (Dalton, Krackhardt, & Porter, 1981). There are cases, however, where everyone is relieved when some employee in particular leaves—possibly the employee who never did his or her share of the work. Functional or optimal turnover occurs when an employee wants to leave and the organization is all too happy to let him or her go (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984; Dalton, Todor, & Krackhardt, 1982). Functional turnover is not without costs (e.g., costs of having to replace people, extra workload on those who are still there); however, the gains typically outweigh the costs.

Voluntary turnover refers to choosing to quit as opposed to being asked or forced to quit such as during a layoff, which is called involuntary turnover. Assessing involuntary turnover is easy—the organization has decided for that person that he or she is quitting. In contrast, determining if employees have the attitude of voluntary turnover intentions is not as simple as just asking people if they want to quit, though that is usually at least one of the questions asked to assess turnover intentions. An example of the types of items used to assess turnover intentions are shown in Table 4.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4.8</th>
<th>Sample Items Used for Assessing Turnover Intentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you think about quitting this organization?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to search for a position with another employer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to leave the organization in the next year?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consequences or Outcomes of Turnover Intentions

Turnover intentions are strongly related to actual turnover behavior (Tett & Meyer, 1993), and shown to be immediate precursors to actual turnover (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978). Thus people who have intentions to leave, tend to act on those intentions. Intentions to quit do not always result in actual turnover (Podsakoff et al., 2007; Tett & Meyer, 1993). There are many reasons for wanting to quit but not actually quitting, including concerns such as lack of job alternatives, leaving family and friends, reduction in benefits or health-care options, or fear of moving and starting over.

Antecedents or Predictors of Turnover Intentions

Both job satisfaction and organizational commitment are negatively related to and lead to turnover intentions, with commitment being more strongly related to turnover than job satisfaction (Podsakoff et al., 2007). Thus, as job satisfaction and commitment drop, intentions to quit go up. Similarly, both job satisfaction and organizational commitment are negatively related to withdrawal behaviors (excluding turnover and turnover intentions), though the strengths of the relationships are much weaker than those between satisfaction and commitment with turnover intentions (e.g., comparing \( r = -0.51 \) between commitment and turnover intentions with \( r = -0.04 \) between satisfaction and turnover intentions). As compared to pay, supervisory, and coworker satisfaction, work satisfaction has the highest relationship with turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000).

Organizational justice predicts turnover intentions; the more fair the workplace, the less likely employees are to consider leaving (e.g., Byrne, 2005; Colquitt et al., 2001).

Job redesign efforts such as job enrichment and job rotation (Chapter 3) can reduce dysfunctional turnover (McEvoy & Cascio, 1985), as can reducing turnover through better selection practices, realistic job previews (i.e., getting a realistic as opposed to glorified idea of the job entails before taking it), and improving person–organization fit (O’Connell & Mei-Chuan, 2007; Premack & Wanous, 1985). Efforts to increase job satisfaction and commitment can also reduce dysfunctional turnover (Podsakoff et al., 2007). However, the same findings are not applicable for increasing functional turnover (Williams, 1999).

Functional turnover can be encouraged by rewarding good performers and ensuring that bad performers are not rewarded (called rewards contingency: rewards dependent on some criteria—in this case, performance; see Williams, 1999), because poor performers who are not rewarded tend to leave (Williams & Livingstone, 1994). Williams (1999) found that the more pay was tied to performance, such as being on 100% commission, the more likely it was that poor performers would leave and the organization would rejoice in their voluntary departure (functional turnover). Those who were good performers paid on 100% commission did well because they were rewarded for their performance, and thus had no desire to quit. On the flip side, high performers who are not sufficiently rewarded tend to leave.

Demographic variables such as education, marital status, race, and age are weakly negatively correlated with turnover. Women and men tend to quit at comparable rates (Griffeth et al., 2000).
Turnover in the Workplace Employees who display an attitude of intending to quit tend to experience low job satisfaction and commitment, and are less likely to stay once a good opportunity to leave presents itself. Ways to reduce intentions to quit include increasing employees’ job satisfaction. Because there are a variety of reasons why people develop turnover intentions, a good first step is to find out what is going on with each employee—for example, assess their job satisfaction and ask about concerns or challenges at home and at work to determine if there are outside factors driving employees to consider quitting.

Theories Specific to Turnover
Several researchers have taken different approaches to answering the question of what causes people to want to quit, resulting in a few models of turnover reviewed in this next section.

Mobley’s (1977) Turnover Model One approach to understanding turnover decisions incorporates job dissatisfaction, thinking of quitting, evaluating options, and then deciding whether to leave (see Figure 4.7; Mobley, 1977).

In Mobley’s (1977) model of turnover, each step represents a decision point where an employee determines whether to take the next step. People do not necessarily go through each step or deliberate for much time on each step. The starting point serves as an important contribution of this model—if the job is dissatisfying, you begin to think about quitting. With new technology and social media such as Google, LinkedIn, and Monster.com making it easier to find a job, it is possible that the steps of Mobley’s model may require some reordering. Specifically, it may be that as part of evaluating their current job, employees search the Internet for alternatives and based on what they find, develop attitudes of dissatisfaction and intentions to quit.

Other models of turnover, however, do not follow such a linear step-wise progression as Mobley’s, such as Jackofsky’s (1984) reviewed next.
Jackofsky’s (1984) Turnover Model  Jackofsky’s (1984) model of turnover proposes that people take the first step toward considering leaving through experiencing dissatisfaction or because it is easy to change jobs (either within the organization or to another organization; Figure 4.8). Thus, the starting point is not necessarily dissatisfaction and the remaining steps also vary. Ease of leaving may be an outcome of being recruited by another organization, or finding alternative employment may be very easy. People may consider their satisfaction level with the current job only after they have been recruited or made aware of other alternatives. Possibly only then do they decide to take the next step toward actively considering leaving the organization. Ease of leaving also requires consideration of one’s age, job complexity or level, and characteristics of the current labor market. A key component of Jackofsky’s (1984) model is the inclusion of job performance as an indirect trigger to feelings of job satisfaction. Specifically, researchers have shown that when performance is the basis for rewards, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction are linked to performance. For example, high performers who are paid accordingly tend to be satisfied, whereas high performers who do not feel adequately paid for their level of performance tend to be dissatisfied and seek alternative opportunities. Additionally, high performers may find it easier to leave than low performers because high performers are desirable to other organizations, making alternative jobs easier to find. Thus, higher levels of job performance are associated with higher number of unsolicited job offers or efforts at recruitment. In general, Jackofsky proposes that both low and high performers are likely to leave, but what causes them to leave may differ. Job satisfaction moderates the relationship between performance and turnover such that as highly and acceptable performing employees’ satisfaction increases, they are less likely to quit than are the lowest performers.

Another nonlinear, nonstep oriented model of turnover is Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) unfolding model, which suggests that people may be encouraged to considering leaving the organization as an outcome of one of four decision-triggers.

Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) Unfolding Model of Turnover  Another well-known model to predicting turnover is Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) unfolding model of turnover (Figure 4.9).

The Unfolding Model of Turnover suggests that people take one of four paths toward deciding whether to quit or stay with the organization. A “shock” is introduced and causes an employee to reflect on his or her job. A shock is a “distinguishable event that jars employees toward deliberate judgments about their jobs . . . and must be interpreted and integrated into the person’s system of beliefs” (Lee & Mitchell, 1994, p. 60). Shocks are not necessarily negative. They can include pregnancy, missed promotion, buying a new house, or any event that causes an individual to think about his or her job position. Once a shock is introduced, an employee may (or may not) consider leaving the job as one potential option. If leaving is considered an option, the employee may being to look for alternative jobs. Figure 4.10 depicts the four decision paths an employee may go through. The different decision paths require different amounts of deliberation (may be easy to decide or more difficult).
Summary of Attitudes

With so many attitudes, you might be struggling to make sense out how they all fit together or possibly even whether they fit together. The next section provides a summary of the attitudes discussed in the above sections, as well as a graphic for how they all fit together.

The previous sections provide a review of quite a few different job attitudes. Table 4.9 provides a handy summary of the attitudes reviewed and their definitions.

All the attitudes shown in Table 4.9 tend to show up as crucial for the productive functioning of an organization. Employees’ levels of these attitudes can determine the success of leaders’ efforts to make organizational changes. They play a role in whether employees decide to invest their full selves at work or if employees, instead, just work for pay and put their passionate efforts elsewhere. Attitudes, such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions, are essential in a consistent and productive workforce—high levels of turnover can be destructive to the intellectual wealth of an organization and those with the knowledge leaving the organization may be detrimental. Lastly, employees’ perceptions of the level of support they receive to do their jobs are related to several of the other attitudes. Accordingly, employees’ attitudes play a big role in the success of the organization because they serve an important function in the work lives of employees.
### Chapter 4: Predicting Feelings and Behaviors at Work: Attitudes

#### Table 4.9 Quick Definitions of Job Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Brief Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job involvement</td>
<td>The centrality of work in one's life and to how important work is to one's self identity and self-image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness or justice</td>
<td><strong>Distributive justice</strong>: Fairness of decisions; compared to others, was the decision appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Procedural justice</strong>: Fairness of processes used to make decisions; does the process ensure unbiased decisions, apply consistently to everyone, allow for appeals to correct mistakes, rely on accurate information, conform to ethical standards, and ensure all people affected are considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Interactional justice</strong>: Fairness of treatment during procedure implementation; treated with dignity and respect (interpersonal justice), given adequate explanations (informational justice).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational support</td>
<td>Employees' perceptions and beliefs that their organization cares about their personal well-being and values their contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Willingness to be vulnerable to another because the other person has shown him or herself to be predictable, ethical, and with good intentions. (Conceptualized in a number of forms, such as affect- and cognitive-based, feature of institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>Positive evaluation of one's job tasks, pay, coworkers, and overall appraisal of one's job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Emotional attachment or identification with the organization and its values, such that you feel you belong, and feel attached to the organization and its people. (Conceptualized in a number of forms, such as affective or normative commitment).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover intentions</td>
<td>Considered a form of withdrawal, they are intentions or motivations to quit the job or organization. (Can have dysfunctional and functional turnover).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### How Attitudes Fit Together

Figure 4.10 illustrates the general relationships between the various attitudes described in the previous section, with the addition of a few variables often considered as predictors or outcomes but that are not themselves considered attitudes. For example, job characteristics are not considered attitudes, but appear in the Figure because employees develop attitudes about work (e.g., job satisfaction) as a consequence of job characteristics.

The illustration in Figure 4.10 depicts the basic direction in which the relationships have been studied or proposed, but should not to be interpreted as a causal model of the relationships between all the variables. Rather than memorize the Figure, possibly the most helpful way to make sense of all the attitudes is to recognize that things that support our work and us, tend to lead to how we feel about work.

You can conclude from Figure 4.10 that the study of attitudes can be complicated because of the many relationships between the attitudes themselves. You
may ask, “if they are all related, why bother studying them separately?” Though attitudes have many relationships with other attitudes and behaviors, they are distinctly unique and contribute to a rich understanding of how people feel and think about their work and workplace, and what behaviors consequently follow thereafter. Thus, although the overall Figure looks like a bowl of spaghetti noodles with square meatballs, like spaghetti, each thread is an individual noodle that contributes to the entire yummy meal.

**What Theories Explain Job or Work Attitudes?**

Aside from the specific theories mentioned for specific attitudes (e.g., range of affect theory for job satisfaction), some theories can be used with any work attitude to explain how it is formed, changed, or relates to other attitudes or behaviors.

**Social Information Processing Theory and Self-Perception Theory**

Social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) suggests that people adapt their evaluations of the workplace to their social context, using
information from their own past and from the current situation. Thus, employees develop or shift their attitude based on the available information at that time. For example, one source of information is your own action—are you enjoying work or not, are you staying at work or thinking about leaving? Self-perception theory (Bem, 1967) suggests that information about your own actions from the past informs your attitudes in the present. Another source of information is other people in the work environment. What are others saying about their satisfaction or commitment or trust? Each employee considers what he or she hears about the work environment and incorporates that information into their own feelings and thoughts. Thus, what you hear your friends and coworkers saying about their satisfaction affects your own thoughts and feelings about your level of satisfaction.

**Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is another theoretical framework used with several different work attitudes. The theory says that people form relationships with an entity (organization) or person, through a series of obligations and reciprocal fulfillments of the obligations that over time build trust between the partners. For example, the organization provides a salary, benefits, and support, and expects that employees in exchange will attend work regularly, perform, and commit to helping the organization achieve its goals. The employees may work extra if a project must be rushed, commit to only working for that organization, and strive for innovation and productivity to accelerate the organization’s goals toward an even greater mission. The employee expects the organization to reciprocate with promotional opportunities, bonus pay and raises, and to offer job security. This cycle of exchanges forms a bond—a social exchange relationship where what is exchanged is not always financial or tangible. For example, a social commodity might be status, recognition, or feelings of belongingness on the part of the organization, and commitment and citizenship behavior on the part of the employee. Thus, organizations can create obligations by offering fairness and organizational support, which work just as effectively as pay. Applied to job attitudes, social exchange theory suggests that employees exchange positive job attitudes (like commitment or trust) for support, resources, fairness, and benefits.

**Affective Events Theory**

Affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) suggests that our emotional reactions to work events influence our attitudes. Our first reaction to work events is immediate and emotional. As time passes between the initial event and our first reaction, we think about what happened and develop a cognitive interpretation or appraisal of the event. Affective events theory emphasizes the role of emotions in conjunction with cognition and social cues in forming job attitudes. The important contribution of this theory to understanding attitudes is its emphasis on emotions. Outward display of emotions are typically discouraged in many work environments (though varies by job); big displays of anger, upset, or fear are discouraged and only controlled levels of humor are tolerated. However, people do experience emotions whether they display them or not, which means according to affective events theory, they are forming and changing their attitudes as they experience the workplace. By recognizing that events trigger emotional responses
that influence attitudes, organizational leaders can create situations that promote specific feelings in an effort to foster or guide specific attitudes. For example, organizations that promote and encourage fun at work may be inadvertently raising levels of job satisfaction.

**How Do Managers Use These Theories in the Workplace?**

Managers may use theories to understand the current situation and then to take action to change the state of affairs. Social information processing theory, self-perception theory, social exchange theory, and affective events theory might all be used to explain why employees adopt certain job attitudes. Job attitudes, such as commitment or perceptions of fairness, ultimately determine behavior. For instance, employees who perceive the workplace as unfair will respond by either rectifying the unfairness or leaving. Accordingly, managers can use the principles of social exchange theory to recognize that when employees are given something, like support, they feel obligated to give back. Therefore, providing fairness, support, and good leadership should be related to positive attitudes and behaviors from employees.

Knowing via social information processing theory that employees turn to others around them to determine what attitude is appropriate, managers can attempt to understand employees’ attitudes by gauging the attitudes of the group or organizational unit as a whole.

Lastly, managers can use affective events theory to recognize that big change events at work will create emotional turmoil for employees—work events create emotional responses that influence attitudes. Change frequently creates ambiguity, frustration, and sometimes fear. Be ready for these emotional responses and take proactive actions, such as meeting with employees and putting support mechanisms in place before acting on preplanned change events.

Ultimately, however, the goal of many leaders is to change attitudes—not just understand them. Although understanding is helpful and provides perspective, leaders want to move attitudes in a positive direction with the hopes that positive work outcomes result.

**How Can Attitudes Be Changed?**

Attitudes can be relatively stable, but they can be changed. For example, job satisfaction has been considered a relatively stable attitude when measured over several jobs (Locke, 1976). However, there are some theories that suggest attitudes can be changed, including the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) and cognitive dissonance.

**Elaboration Likelihood Model**

ELM is a dual-process (two-path) model that explains how we change attitudes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). The model assumes that we want to hold an attitude that we believe is right or desirable. We take one path, the central route, when we have the time and ability to think carefully on the situation and information given to decide whether to change our attitude so that we can hold the “desirable”
Chapter 4: Predicting Feelings and Behaviors at Work: Attitudes

attitude (see Figure 4.11). We take this path when we are motivated to process the information given to us.

We take the other path, the peripheral route, when we do not have the time or ability to think carefully and must quickly decide whether to change our attitude or not (Figure 4.11). Thus, we take the peripheral route when we lack the motivation to elaborate on the information. The disadvantage of the peripheral route is that if attitude change occurs, it is temporary and susceptible to counterattacks or efforts to change the attitude in another direction. The central route tends to produce more stable and long-lasting attitude change that is resistant to efforts to change it back or in another direction.

Hence, the central and peripheral routes of processing can be used to change attitudes, depending on the characteristics of the audience and the goal. Knowing the characteristics of the receiver of the message is essential for deciding which path to take.

A good example of ELM in practice is television advertisements for medical products. People watch television to relax; not to think carefully about what they are hearing or seeing.Advertisements pushing medical products use actors dressed as doctors (white lab coat), with a fake name badge of Dr. Whomever, and share high-level benefits for the product, typically emphasizing the emotional benefits of taking the product: “why suffer from blinding headaches; take ‘headache-away’ three times a day…” Similarly, medical products are advertised and, in the United States, the manufacturers are required to share their many side effects during the commercial. Counting on your lack of motivation to focus on the content of the advertisement, they list off 20 or more side effects, sandwiching possible death in the middle of lesser side effects, all the while showing you loving couples laughing, families playing, pets, and babies, to distract you from...
listening to the long list of painful and debilitating side effects. At the end of the commercial, all you remember is how pleasant the people were and how this product seems to make them feel better. The problem with these advertisements is that they take the peripheral route to persuasion, which results in only a temporary attitude change susceptible to counterattacks.

Although this example is a good one from everyday life and hopefully helps to clarify how ELM works, our goal in this book is to understand how to use these theories in the workplace. Therefore, the next example shows how we can use ELM in the workplace.

Using ELM in the Workplace

An example of ELM in the workplace is when the organizational leaders want to implement a large change that will affect everyone’s jobs. Often these changes are not up for discussion; employees do not get to vote whether the change will occur. Many people do not like change. In such situations, the well-informed charismatic Chief Executive Officer holds group meetings with employees to explain the change and attempt to get employees to change their negative feelings about change into a positive attitude of acceptance. The CEO is usually dressed in a sophisticated suit and surrounded by a well-dressed Vice President and several other executives, all dressed in their sophisticated suits. Slide shows of pictures of a glorious future are shown on large screens behind the line-up of executives, catchy music is playing, lights are flashing and shining like a disco dance floor, and the messages are simple and punctuated: “The New Us is the New You!” In between the slides and slogans, the CEO and team share several details such as you being reassigned to a new team, a few will be let go due to the restructuring, and people will need to work a little extra to make the new change work. However, at the end of the meeting, as you walk back to your desk singing that catchy little tune they played, all you remember were the lights, the flashy slogans, feeling good about what you heard. The future really does look bright!

Previously in the chapter, we reviewed how we form our attitudes using self-perception theory. On a similar track as self-perception theory using our own thoughts about our actions, cognitive dissonance is a theory concerning thoughts and actions that can be used for changing attitudes.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance refers to an inconsistency between our thoughts and statements with our actions, which creates feelings of tension and anxiety (Festinger, 1962). People are motivated to present a consistent image. They want their behavior to match what they say and they want to behave or speak consistently with how they have done so in the past. When people behave in a way that is inconsistent with what they say (e.g., enacting corrupt policies while espousing how fair they are), it creates an internal anxiety—a dissonance. Festinger (1962) proposed that cognitive dissonance is powerful enough to cause people to either change their behavior or change their thinking (attitude) to get to a state of consistency or homeostasis.

An example of how dissonance can be used to create attitude change is shown in an intervention designed to increase the use of safety seatbelts in automobiles.
Geller, Hickman, and Pettinger (2004) attempted to link seatbelt use on airplanes with the use of seatbelts in cars. Over a 17-year study, 1258 flight attendants were given a card that politely asked them to read an important safety message at the end of the flight (see Figure 4.12). The card was presented on 528 flights, and read on 223 of those flights. Only three of the attendants refused to accept the card.

Although the authors of the study did not measure the number of passengers who subsequently buckled up in their cars once on the ground, they did receive a personal letter from at least one passenger who put on the seat belt in the subsequent taxi ride and was saved by the belt after the taxi hydroplaned and crashed. Geller et al. concluded that by linking the message of seatbelt behavior in an auto with a related behavior the recipient had already performed (i.e., the passenger on a plane), an inconsistent or hypocritical condition would be created if the same passenger then got in a car and failed to use the auto safety belt.

Again, this example provides a nice understanding of dissonance in a societal context, but what about the workplace? The next example provides an opportunity to see how cognitive dissonance might be applied in the workplace.

Using Dissonance in the Workplace

A frequently occurring example of cognitive dissonance in the workplace is with newly promoted managers. Before promotion, they commiserated with their coworkers about the policies for workload and breaks that seemed harsh to employees. They ranted and raved about how if they were in management, they would never implement policies like these and as soon as they had a chance, they would eliminate these “brutal” policies. Yet, shortly after promotion, these new managers realize that even though they personally still disagree with those policies, as managers they have to keep them in place to meet budget and get their teams to achieve the expected performance levels. Their actions are now inconsistent with their previous statements and true feelings, creating cognitive dissonance. To relieve the dissonance, these new managers typically change their thoughts about the policies because they cannot change the policies. Typically, they’ll begin rationalizing to their employees why the policies aren’t so bad after all, causing the employees to look on in disappointment.

One way managers can use dissonance is to recruit key employees, those who are typically considered the most influential in a group, and involve them in creating new policy. By being an active player in setting what might be a controversial policy, the employees develop actions—creating and supporting a new policy—that result in a cognitive dissonance. They can’t complain about policy; after all, they
were part of creating it. Instead, they will rationalize with their peers why the policy is actually good for them in an effort to relieve their own dissonance. This strategy is not manipulative—the employees’ involvement ultimately creates a better policy.

As noted previously, we care about attitudes at work because we assume they predict our behavior. This assumption is not without support: a classic theory in social psychology, the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) explains that our attitudes do predict our behavior, though the prediction is not great for broad behaviors.

**Theory of Planned Behavior**

A widely accepted and well-studied model of attitudes and attitude change is the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; see Figure 4.13). The theory of planned behavior offers another explanation for why someone might be willing to behave in a certain way or change his or her behaviors (like smoking) as a result of his or her attitudes. The theory reinforces our reasons for caring about attitudes at work: because we think they lead to important behaviors, and we think we can change those behaviors.

The theory says that a person’s behavior is determined by his or her intentions (motivation) to perform the behavior. The stronger the intention/motivation to perform the behavior, the more likely it will occur. Intention is the willingness to try or to put effort toward something.

The best predictors of individuals’ intentions are their:

1. Attitudes toward the specific behavior
2. Subjective norms
3. Perceived behavioral control

For the theory to work, you must first have a specific attitude toward a particular behavior. For example, an attitude about being on time for work every day. The attitude can be either favorable or unfavorable. Second, you must have a belief about how the people you care about will view the given behavior—“what will those I care about think if I am on time for work every day?”

This second component, subjective norms, refers to the social pressure you perceive exists for you to perform the behavior. Third, you have to believe that you can decide whether to perform the behavior or not perform the behavior. For example, if you do not believe you have the opportunity or the resources (e.g., time, money, skills, ability) to perform the behavior, then taking the actions—doing the behavior—is not within your behavioral control. Accordingly, the theory works well for specific behaviors, like completing a term paper.

Sometimes seeing how a theory applies to an everyday class situation makes it easier to understand. Let’s apply the theory of planned behavior to students’ working on a term paper (Figure 4.14).
Thus, in this example (a) students who like the term paper assignment, (b) believe that their friends will think them smart if they work on the paper, and (c) believe they are capable of writing the paper and have all the information they need to do so, will (d) develop intentions to work on the term paper, which ultimately (e) lead to them actually working on the paper.

Substantial research evidence supports the theory of planned behavior. Furthermore, social attitudes, such as favorability toward or against a particular religion, conservation, or stereotypes display only weak relationships with specific behaviors. In contrast, job attitudes display reliably strong relationships with relevant job behaviors. Researchers suggest that job attitudes are more accessible or salient than social attitudes because we constantly experience our jobs. How we feel about the experience of work is brought to our attention regularly. Furthermore, for many people, their job is personal; it’s an identity (Hulin & Judge, 2003). Thus, we have a greater ability to connect our general attitude about our job to our specific job behaviors.

So the theory of planned behavior provides an opportunity to connect employees’ job attitudes with their specific behaviors, but organizations want to predict and change a lot of employees’ attitudes at one time, and not just specific ones associated with targeted behaviors. The organization wants to change broad behaviors, like performance. Designing change efforts based on ELM, cognitive dissonance, or the theory of planned behavior for an entire organization is simply not possible, nor would such efforts result in the desired outcome. So how does an organization get at a large percentage, if not all, of its employees?

How Do Organizations Assess Employee Attitudes?

Human resource managers, organizational development managers, or external consultants hired by organizations use surveys and sometimes focus groups to assess job attitudes.

Surveys: The Most Popular Method

Surveys are the most popular method for assessing job attitudes because they have several advantages including: fast to execute and complete, can be given to thousands of people worldwide at the same time, provide quantitative data for fast analysis, and can be given repeatedly for comparison (compare scores across units or organizations) or trending (seeing trends or patterns of relationships over time).

Disadvantages of surveys include that you get what you ask for—that is, people can only answer the question that is asked of them. Therefore, if the questions on the survey are unclear or not applicable and there is no ability to choose a response like “not applicable” or “don’t understand,” or to explain oneself on the survey, the response may not actually reflect what a person thinks and you have no idea that’s the case because there is no place for the person to say that the question was unclear. Additionally, some people do not trust surveys and so respond with mostly neutral answers or they skip most of the questions. There is no way to know by looking at the raw data whether the answers that are provided are legitimate or represent someone not answering honestly. Why would
people respond dishonestly rather than just not complete the survey? Because some organizations reward employees for responding to the survey—there may be an organizational goal for the percentage of employees responding to a survey. Thus, there is no incentive to respond meaningfully, only to simply respond. A lie scale, which is a scale specifically added to surveys to try to catch these types of random responses, are usually not added to surveys (unless a researcher or academician is conducting the survey) and are not in and of themselves a fool proof way to catch responses that look legitimate but actually are not.

Other methodological issues remain with collecting data from employees on a single survey at a single collection point such as common method bias. Common method bias refers to variability in the data resulting solely from measurement bias due to the method of measurement and not due to true differences in responses, but then using those scores to interpret correlations between them (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Common method variance or bias is the most frequently occurring problem because organizational surveys are nearly always collected at a single point in time and in one sitting, and the constructs measured on that single survey are always correlated with one another. If this method problem exists, why do organizations not address the problem? Because the people giving the survey may not have been trained in psychological measurement and thus do not know about common method bias, and there may be too many logistical challenges with trying to implement strategies to avoid common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003, provide a number of strategies). Strategies include procedural approaches (e.g., getting responses on predictor and outcome variables from different sources like subordinates and supervisors, breaking up the survey in half and waiting a few weeks between halves) and statistical approaches (see Podsakoff et al., 2003 for details).

Another disadvantage with organizational surveys is not asking enough items to adequately assess the construct (e.g., a single item asking about supervisory relations probably will not capture the full scope of the relationship). There are several other methodological problems with a single survey implementation that are too expansive to cover here (see a good textbook on psychological measurement, such as Cohen, Swerdlik, and Sturman’s, 2013, *Psychological Testing and Assessment: An Introduction to Tests and Measurements*).

Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? For many organizations, the answer is “yes.” The human resource leaders or organizational development leaders want a snapshot of employees’ attitudes and they want it fast, and most are not aware of the methodological biases that contaminate their results. The alternatives to single point surveys are, for the most part, impractical for large organizations. For example, interviewing employees, focus groups, experiments, or observations are logistically impractical for large organizations.

What should an organization do then if the alternatives are impractical, but using surveys is problematic? The answer is complex, but there are strategies organizations can take to contribute to resolving the problem. For example, the individuals giving the surveys should be trained in psychological measurement and experts in survey methodology. They can use a number of strategies and apply creative solutions in collaboration with the organization to accurately assess employees’ attitudes. If the results are important and will guide key decisions that translate into costly solutions, spending the time and money on a well-developed survey created and executed by an expert is worth the investment.
Surveys provide another important advantage, however. Organizations like to see how they compare with other similar firms, and survey companies can provide this benchmarking data by conducting large surveys across many organizations.

**Benchmarks or Normative Data**

Many large consulting firms offer **benchmarks** for comparison, which means they have used the same survey with hundreds of other organizations and can provide comparisons between your organization’s results and all these other organizations combined (Figure 4.15). Benchmarking specifically refers to the process of comparing results from business to business.

Organizations generally see tremendous value in benchmarking because they can compare how they are doing relative to their peers. This is very similar to wanting to know what the average score on the latest exam and how many people got an “A.” Knowing this, you can determine where your score is relative to others to get an idea of how you’re doing.

There are, however, several disadvantages to benchmarking when conducted by outside firms using a method of combining organizations’ data, and providing a general mean score as the comparison point. Most of the disadvantages fall into measurement concerns and the statistical significance of the comparisons. For example, what does it mean to compare a score of 4.5–4.6? Is there actually any real difference between these two numbers on a 1–5 scale? Most likely not. Additionally, as an organization compares its scores to the benchmark, is there any information on what other potential factors might have existed to influence the scores of the other organizations included in the benchmark? Most likely not, since many benchmarking firms do not collect contextual information when gathering survey scores. So it’s possible that there might be one very large organization included in the benchmark that is skewing the scores and you won’t know it.

Benchmarking is seductive—most organizations want to know how they compare to others like them and they consider a difference in scores between 4.5 and 4.6 to be meaningful. They want to be able to say whether they are competitive in the market, just as you want to say whether you’re top in your class. According to Festinger (1954), we all engage in social comparison, comparing ourselves to others, and benchmarking is a form of social comparison but on the organization level. Thus, although there are several methodological concerns with benchmarking, organizations will use them to judge where they stand in the marketplace relative to their peers and the competition. Rather than ignore benchmarks, organizations can use them as rough guides to get an idea of where they stand relative to others, and then use more rigorous methods to explore why and where differences should or should not exist.
Chapter Summary

Organizations care about your attitudes at work because they seem to be related to and predict many valuable job behaviors such as performance and engagement. Attitudes such as job satisfaction, commitment, job involvement, turnover intentions, trust, and fairness have been the focus of much research attention and for good reasons. Together these attitudes essentially make up your feelings and cognitions at work. A number of theories have been proposed to explain how your attitudes form about your work and how those attitudes are related to each other and to behaviors you demonstrate relevant to the organization’s goals. Lastly, it turns out that attitudes can be assessed and changed, though some are more difficult to change than others (e.g., commitment vs. satisfaction), and some are influenced by a number of different factors that are unrelated to what happens at work and not necessarily predictable (e.g., turnover intentions).

The implications for job or work attitudes for organizations and the leaders within are that employees form attitudes at work, enter into work with attitudes already formed, and change their attitudes about work as a result of their interactions with others and with the organization itself. Because of the power of attitudes to influence how people behave at work, organizations and their leaders pay attention to them, as should you.

Figure 4.16 provides a visual summary of the key concepts from chapter 4.
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