

Balance Theory

Authored by
mohammad looti

November 19, 2022

RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2022). *Balance Theory*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=39305>

Balance Theory is a motivational theory of attitude change proposed by Fritz Heider, which conceptualizes the consistency motive as a drive toward psychological balance. Heider proposed that "sentiment" or liking relationships are balanced if the affect valence in a system multiplies out to a positive result.

For example: a Person (P) who likes an Other (O) person will be balanced by the same valence attitude on behalf of the other. Symbolically, $P (+) > O$ and $P < (+) O$ results in psychological balance.

This can be extended to objects (X) as well, thus introducing triadic relationships. If a person P likes object X but dislikes other person O, what does P feel upon learning that O created X? This is symbolized as such:

$P (+) > X$

$P (-) > O$

$O (+) > X$

Multiplying the signs shows that the person will perceive imbalance (a negative multiplicative product) in this relationship, and will be motivated to correct the imbalance somehow. The Person can either:

Decide that O isn't so bad after all,

Decide that X isn't as great as originally thought, or

Conclude that O couldn't really have made X.

Any of these will result in psychological balance, thus resolving the dilemma and satisfying the drive. (Person P could also avoid object X and other person O entirely, lessening the stress created by psychological imbalance.)

Balance Theory is also useful in examining how celebrity endorsement affects consumers' attitudes toward products. If a person likes a celebrity and perceives (due to the endorsement) that said celebrity likes a product, said person will tend to liking the product more, in order to achieve psychological balance.

However, if the person already had a dislike for the product being endorsed by the celebrity, she may like the celebrity less in addition to liking the product more, again to achieve psychological balance.

To predict the outcome of a situation using Heider's Balance Theory, one must weigh the effects of all the potential results, and the one requiring the least amount of effort will be the likely outcome.