

# Review Paper: Implicit and Explicit Attitude in Psychology

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**Abstract.** This essay explores how attitudes, both explicit and implicit, influence behaviour in people, highlighting the unique qualities and implications of each. Implicit attitudes function at an unconscious level and frequently influence behaviour without the subject being aware of it, whereas explicit attitudes are conscious ideas that people may readily articulate. These implicit biases can persist even when explicit attitudes shift, making them a key focus in research on social behavior, prejudice, and decision-making. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) has been a central tool for measuring these biases, although its reliability has been debated. Research indicates that people's actions can be subtly influenced by implicit attitudes, such as gender or racial biases, which can be in opposition to their stated beliefs. According to the article, treatments including exposure to counter-stereotypical instances and implicit bias training can help lessen these unconscious prejudices. In order to have a better understanding of how implicit bias attitudes form and change, future research should focus on exploring cultural variances and improving the measurement's reliability.

**Keywords:** Implicit attitude, explicit attitude, Implicit Association Test, Go/No-Go Association Task.

## 1. Introduction

Attitudes, the evaluations people hold about objects, people, or concepts, are central to individuals' understanding of human behavior. Within psychology, attitudes are often categorized into two types: implicit and explicit. Explicit attitudes are those people consciously endorse and can easily report, while implicit attitudes operate on an unconscious level and can influence individuals' behavior without awareness. This distinction is crucial as it helps us understand why people might say one thing but do another [1, 2].

Understanding implicit and explicit attitudes is very important because they impact a wide range of real-world issues, from racial prejudice and stereotypes to decision-making and social behavior [3]. Historically, research has shown that implicit attitudes can persist even when explicit attitudes change [3], making that implicit attitudes key area of study for psychologists. This has become increasingly important in today's world, where addressing social biases and promoting inclusivity are central concerns. Initially, research focused on explicit attitudes, but the development of measures like the Implicit Association Test (IAT) shifted the focus towards implicit attitudes. These tests have opened up new track for understanding the complex relationship between the attitudes individuals consciously express and those that unconsciously influence individuals' behavior [4]. This review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current understanding of implicit and explicit attitudes, their measurement, and their implications. By examining recent studies and methodologies, we can better understand how these attitudes shape behavior and inform interventions to reduce biases [5].

Implicit and explicit attitudes are basically different ways individuals evaluate things like objects, people, or ideas. Explicit attitudes are those that individuals consciously think about and can easily talk about. For example, if someone say "I do not like broccoli," that is an explicit attitude. Implicit attitudes, on the other hand, are more automatic and operate unconsciously. Individuals might not even realize they have them, but they can still influence individuals' behavior [2]. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is one of the main tools used to measure these hidden biases by looking at how quickly individuals make associations between concepts [2]. Implicit attitudes are usually categorized based on what they are about, like implicit racial biases or implicit gender biases [6]. These biases tend to be automatic and more resistant to change. Explicit attitudes, however, can

change more easily because they are influenced by things like new information or social pressure. So, while someone might say they are not racist (explicit attitude), they might still have an implicit bias that influences how they behave without them even knowing [1]. This split between the two kinds of attitudes is why people can act in ways that seem contradictory to what they say.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Rationale**

#### **2.1.1 Influencing factors**

Lots of different things can shape implicit and explicit attitudes. These include personal experiences, cultural norms, and even media exposure. For instance, if someone is constantly exposed to negative stereotypes about a group, they might develop implicit biases against that group, even if they do not consciously agree with those stereotypes [5]. Implicit attitudes are usually more stable over time, but research has shown they can be changed through certain types of interventions, like being exposed to counter-stereotypical examples over and over again [7]. Explicit attitudes are more flexible since they can change as individuals' beliefs and the social norms around us change [3]. Research subjects in studies of implicit and explicit attitudes are typically diverse, including a range of ages, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. For example, large-scale studies like those conducted by Project Implicit have involved millions of participants from different demographics to capture a broad spectrum of implicit biases [6]. This diversity is crucial because it helps researchers understand how implicit and explicit attitudes vary across different groups and ensure that the findings are not biased toward a particular demographic. For example, Project Implicit looked at millions of participants and found that implicit racial biases were still a big problem, even when people say they do not have explicit biases. A lot of White participants still show strong unconscious associations between Black people and negative stereotypes, even though they may explicitly say they do not hold these views [3]. There is also a lot of research on gender biases, where both men and women tend to associate men with leadership and women with caregiving roles without even realizing it [7]. And when it comes to sexual minorities, studies have shown that people can still hold negative implicit attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals, even if they openly support equal rights [2]

### **2.2. Measurement and Result**

#### **2.2.1 Measurement and methodology**

The primary method for measuring implicit attitudes is the Implicit Association Test (IAT), which assesses the strength of automatic associations between concepts by measuring reaction times [2]. Other methods include the Go/No-Go Association Task (GNAT) and the Single Category IAT (SC-IAT). These tools are designed to uncover biases that individuals may not be consciously aware of. Explicit attitudes, on the other hand, are usually measured using self-report surveys, where participants are asked to express their thoughts and feelings directly, often through Likert scale items [4]. The difference in these methods highlights the contrast between conscious, reflective responses and automatic, unconscious biases.

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is the main tool used to measure implicit attitudes. For example, in studies on racial bias, participants have been asked to quickly categorize Black and White faces with positive or negative words, and it turns out that many people showed a preference for White faces, even if they did not say so explicitly [3]. Another example is gender bias, where people associated men with science and women with arts, despite claiming to support gender equality [4]. Other tools like the Go/No-Go Association Task (GNAT) are also used. For instance, it has been used to see how people link men with leadership roles more than women, even if they do not consciously think that way [7]. For explicit attitudes, researchers usually use self-report surveys, like asking people to rate their attitudes on a Likert scale. But what is interesting is that the explicit answers do not always match the implicit ones. For example, people might say they do not have any racial bias,

but the IAT shows they actually do [3]. This shows how explicit attitudes can be shaped by social expectations, while implicit ones are more automatic.

### 2.2.2 Data analysis method

Data from these studies are analyzed using various statistical methods. Correlation analysis is commonly used to examine the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes. For instance, researchers might explore how strongly implicit biases correlate with explicit biases on the same topic [8]. Regression models are also employed to predict behaviors based on implicit and explicit attitudes. More advanced techniques like multilevel modeling can analyze differences across demographic groups or over time [8].

### 2.2.3 Result

Research often demonstrates that implicit and explicit attitudes do not always align. For instance, studies on racial attitudes have shown that while explicit biases tend to decrease over time due to social pressure and awareness, implicit biases remain more stable and resistant to change [3]. Similarly, studies on gender roles have revealed that people might explicitly endorse gender equality but still hold implicit biases associating men with leadership roles and women with caregiving [7]. Further research has also explored implicit biases toward sexual minorities, showing that people who openly support LGBTQ+ rights may still harbor negative implicit attitudes [2]. These findings suggest that implicit attitudes are deeply rooted in cultural and societal norms, making them harder to change through conscious efforts alone. Exploring the factors that affect implicit attitudes, such as exposure to counter-stereotypical examples or diverse environments, can help us better understand how these biases form and how they might be reduced.

The general conclusion from research is that implicit attitudes can have a significant impact on behavior, even when explicit attitudes suggest otherwise. This is supported by studies showing that implicit biases can predict behaviors better than explicit biases in certain contexts, such as hiring decisions or social interactions [3]. These findings align with the dual-process theories in psychology, which suggest that both automatic and controlled processes influence behavior. Compared to earlier research that focused mainly on explicit attitudes, recent studies emphasize the importance of considering both implicit and explicit attitudes to get a complete picture of social biases and behavior [7].

## 3. Discussion

### 3.1. Limitation of Current Research

One significant limitation in the research is the reliability of the IAT. While it is a popular tool, some researchers argue that its test-retest reliability is not always consistent, which raises concerns about the stability of the implicit attitudes it measures [8]. One big limitation of the IAT is its reliability. While it is widely used, some studies show that its results are not always consistent over time, raising questions about how stable the attitudes it measures really are [8]. Also, because the test can be complicated and time-consuming, the sample sizes in IAT studies tend to be small, which means the results might not represent the broader population well. Another issue is that the IAT might measure cultural familiarity instead of actual biases. Future research should focus on creating better tools to measure implicit attitudes more reliably [5].

### 3.2. Discussion and Suggestion

Explicit attitudes, the ones individuals consciously express, can change relatively easily based on new information or social pressures. On the other hand, implicit attitudes are more deep-rooted and harder to change because they operate on an unconscious level [3]. These attitudes often reflect long-standing societal biases that people might not even be aware of. For instance, even if someone explicitly believes in racial equality, they might still have implicit biases that affect their behavior in

subtle ways. This is why implicit attitudes can be a more reliable predictor of certain behaviors, especially in contexts where people act spontaneously without much conscious thought [3]. Given these findings, one practical suggestion is to incorporate regular training sessions that focus on implicit bias in educational and professional settings. These sessions could use tools like the Implicit

Association Test (IAT) to help people become aware of their unconscious biases. Once people are aware of their biases, they can take steps to counteract them. Schools and companies could implement programs that encourage interaction with diverse groups, which can help breakdown stereotypes and reduce biases over time. This kind of approach is important because just telling people not to be biased is not enough; they need to experience situations that challenge their unconscious beliefs.

There are several areas where future research could be beneficial. First, there is a need to develop more reliable and valid methods for measuring implicit attitudes. While the IAT is widely used, it has limitations, and finding alternative ways to measure these attitudes would strengthen the credibility of the research [2]. Also, more research is needed to understand how implicit attitudes form and change over time. Longitudinal studies that track implicit attitudes in the same individuals over several years could provide insights into how stable these attitudes are and what factors contribute to changes. Additionally, it would be valuable to explore implicit attitudes in different cultural contexts. Much of the current research focuses on Western populations, so looking at how these attitudes manifest in other cultures could offer a more complete understanding of implicit biases globally [5].

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has explored the role of implicit and explicit attitudes in shaping human behavior. We've seen that while explicit attitudes are more conscious and can be easily reported, implicit attitudes operate at a deeper, unconscious level and can have a powerful influence on behavior. This understanding is crucial because it helps explain why people might act in ways that contradict their expressed beliefs. Addressing both types of attitudes is important for reducing biases and promoting inclusivity. By implementing practical interventions and continuing to refine the research methods, people can better understand and mitigate the impact of these hidden biases. This research is significant not just for academic understanding, but also for creating a more fair and just society where people are judged by their actions and not by unconscious biases.

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