

## ATTITUDE: IS IT GOOD TO BE POSITIVE?

Nooryuhanis Binti Hashim

Universiti Teknologi MARA  
Jalan Sura Hujung,  
23000 Dungun, Terengganu

e-mail: [noory4919@tganu.uitm.edu.my](mailto:noory4919@tganu.uitm.edu.my)

### Abstract

People are always concern with their attitude and others'. Is it important to be very critical in choosing which attitude should one possess? The answer is yes. Attitude is formed from various factors, therefore, one can have his own judgement on which is best to be practised and this is how positive and negative attitude exist. It is learnt that experiences, beliefs and also feelings contribute much to the formation of these attitudes. Developing positive attitude elevates more meaningful achievement in one's life, it is believed that it promotes in creating positive environment which leads one to competently socialize in a society and then results in job satisfaction, especially to the working people. This paper suggests ten strategies that can be practiced in developing positive attitude and at the same time banishing the negative one. Embracing the positive attitude leads to betterment in one's life as it alleviates the stress that one has. Much research agreed that being positive exerts others to lead a better life, internally and externally. Thus, it is important for one to acknowledge the good and bad attitudes.

**Keyword:** *positive attitude, job satisfaction, positive environment, socially competent, stress.*

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered why there are words of best friend, friend and not-so-close friend and also foe? Do you know what distinguishes these words? It is because people have different perceptions and like towards others. Why do people have different perceptions? Why do people act differently to things or person that they favor and less favor? All the answers lie in the people themselves. The core is, the way we treat us and other treat us are depending on our attitude. We are the one who responsible towards our attitude; it is a crucial factor to our personality, as it is the most influential factor that determines who we are.

Winston Churchill once said that 'Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference'. As a saying by W. Clement Stone, "There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative". From these quotes it is posited that attitude is a pertinent disposition that ones must have however, many do not realize that this small thing can make big difference.

This disposition can be shown through actions, as it divulges one's real positions towards others. However, these are influenced by emotions, feelings and perceptions that one holds towards others. Koteswari (2006) identified that attitude is acquired through adjustments of actions towards other human beings. With this, one deliberately expresses it through gestures and sometimes, they have it verbally, which can be considered as mean even though it is unintentionally done.

Learning process involves three components; knowledge, skills and attitude. Nevertheless, only two are being focused more as another one, attitude usually is left out. This is because there is no specific lesson and evaluation on attitude. In school, attitudes are taught informally or it can be called as hidden lesson as students learn from teachers and peers' behaviors and actions.

Kwon and Vogt (2010) highlighted in their research that attitudes are formed based on three domains; cognitive, affective and behavioral. As cited from Kwon and Vogt, Azjen and Fishbein (1980) defined that the accumulation of one's beliefs throughout his or her life time composed one's attitudes. This strengthens that attitude is formed based on one's way of thinking on certain matters which then creates the belief about it. This belief then generates the outcome of action which can be positive and negative.

From affective domain perspective, by experiencing positive and negative situations, it gives emotional experiences on one. This later on affects one's emotion which then leads to the creation of attitude. With various experiences of emotion, an individual will project his or her feeling to others and sometimes this feeling may be interpreted by others as positive and negative attitude.

According to Wallace and Masters (2006) attitude can be easily construed as one's general feeling on others. Wallace and Masters added feelings involve emotion, and it is a critical factor in determining attitude. Emotion drives one to react, and there are two types of emotions as claimed by Sutton & Wheatley (2003); positive emotions comprised concepts such as love, caring, affection, satisfaction, pride, joy and pleasure, in other hand, negative emotions included frustration, anger, tiredness, stress, anxiety and helplessness.

Another component that contributes to the formation attitude is behavioral component. With prior experiences and actions from past behavior, it somehow affects one's attitudes (Kwon & Vogt, 2010). A study by DeDobbelaere, Leaf and Ziegler (1998) proved that one of factors that contribute to the emergence of inappropriate student behaviors is a failure in teaching school students with moral and social skills. Hence, it is important to impose good experience as this may improve one's learning, as human beings are best learning through observation as according to Operant Conditioning by B.F. Skinner (Santrock, 2008).

Nevertheless, only two components are proven to be significant in moulding one's attitude; cognitive and affective (Kwon & Vogt, 2010). However, according to Saari and Judge (2004), attitude formation is beset from various influences such as dispositional, cultural and work situation influences. Due to these, it is undeniable that combination of three factors are pertinent in developing one's attitude, but, the most influenced domains are cognitive; it affects one's beliefs and also affective; it affects one's emotions and feelings towards a particular object.

## 2.0 THE VIRTUES IN DEVELOPING POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Many disregard the importance of practising positive attitude because they are not aware with its influence in one's life. Previous research indicated that by embracing positive attitude, it helps to improve oneself and others (Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008; Huff & Yeoh, n.d; Lynn, 2005). It is believed that the aura from positive attitude exerts one and also others in terms of creating positive environment, socializing, alleviating stress and then elevating the job satisfaction.

As cited from (Argyle, 1981), Harré and Secord (1972) argued that much human social behaviour is based on conscious planning; the intended behaviour and the situation itself. This shows that human beings are capable in establishing a conducive, warm and free-conflict environment. Nonetheless, conflict is inevitable especially at workplace. Wallace and Masters (2006) defined conflict as a state of disagreement or argument between people that have different ideas and this leads to an undesirable environment which then affects the relationship among colleagues as well as friends.

Despite of facing conflict at workplace, one can still have a positive working environment. Embedding positive attitude can foster a better working environment. According to Rajeswari (2009) in her article, one of the benefits that one could get is 'Life smiles at you'. It means that one will establish an optimist feeling – a state of mind in which one always hopes or expects that something good will happen (Lynn, 2005). Optimism deliberately declines the sceptical and judgemental attitude towards others. It inclines one to become more motivated (Rajeswari) to accomplish given work as it gives self-satisfaction which then makes one feels good.

An optimist regards a burden of work or challenging work as an opportunity for him to move ahead. Beyond capability work provides individual with a great chance to test his own strengths and identify his weaknesses. Malm (2009) argued that most educators avoid any disagreement and challenging conflict or problem as they seen these as negative not as an opportunity, and thus impedes their improvement. Nevertheless, this situation trains one's mind to become more critical and creative in thinking. The better one knows himself, the brighter future he will lead. In addition, with numerous experiences, one will acquire the skill needed in dealing with various matters greatly.

Being optimist will broaden up one's skill in relieving stress. Stress is a tense emotional state that happens to individuals who are anxious and worried with something bad that might happen. Everyone has experienced stress, however, each person has different means in dealing with stress. There are two types of stress; eustress which one is able to cope with and another one is distress which one does not able to cope with. It is an advantage to individuals that can manage the stress, as supported by Koteswari (2006), being able to beat stress will assure one to surmount any difficulty calmly. Hence, alleviating the stress will then nurture a positive environment which provides more friendships.

The less stress one has, the more friends he will have. Seok-Hwi Song and Olshfski (2008) found that good friendship at workplace determines good working performance. This study has been done on workers from two different countries; Korea and United States. The result showed that working friendships have a positive impact on employees' work attitudes. Furthermore, the better relationship between the workers and the supervisors is, the better outcome the company or organization will have.

This is because, the strength and quality of the friendship relationship mostly affect the working attitude. It is also supported by Cooper (1981) in his book that, managers should encourage greater autonomy and participation among the workers so that they can build up a good social, psychological and organizational environment in the workplace.

In addition, group collaboration is not easily done if one could not establish strong relationships and lack of skills in dealing and handling conflicts. Thus, it is pertinent for one to develop self-awareness and self-control. Lynn (2005) agrees that besides intellectual intelligence, one should also polish up his emotional intelligence. This is because emotional intelligence affects one's character. Therefore, has an optimum level of emotional intelligence will ensure one to be positive then further to the extent of creating desirable environment that brings betterment in one's life.

Building a good rapport with others is not easy as said. Even though one might find himself is good in socializing but one might oversight in being sensitive towards others' feelings. Hence, it is important to acknowledge that to be a socially competent person, one should integrate all three components; thinking (cognitive), feeling (affective) and action (behavioral).

Bremner and Topping (1998) believe that social competence is about possessing and using the ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behavior to achieve social tasks and outcome. However, this integration is applied according to the demand or environment (Shim & Ryan, 2005) and it requires a robust emotional state of the individuals as wrong combination will offend others. Schoon (2009) stated that social competence depends on the development of social awareness and this strengthens the importance of embracing positive attitude.

Socializing means building a relationship or relationships. It is understood that relationship is a connection between two persons which benefits reciprocally to both parties. Beebe, Beebe and Redmond (2008) further explained that people are more attracted to establish relationship with those whose strengths complement others' weaknesses. Moreover, personal qualities such as credible, competence and intelligence will evoke attraction. This attraction will sustain a longer relationship which determine a stable environment for personal growth.

A lively community opens doors for the loners to learn about self and others. Scheiffer et al (2003), in from Rosen, Glennie, Dalton, Lennon and Bozick (2010), commented that emotional problems can be the result of antisocial behavior which alienates friends and peers and then spirals the social competence. In this case, emotional problems means feelings which involves the attitude, therefore, being prosocial lest emotional problems from incurring.

Aside from creating positive environment and building up social skills as well as social competence, positive attitude also hypes job satisfaction. In a frantic world, everyone is dedicated to the work, as the better job one has the better acceptance from others. But, is it important to please others than oneself? With the pile of works and various colleagues' behaviors, how can one survive in an unpleasant workplace?

Holding in positive attitude helps one eliminating the negative thoughts and simultaneously soaring the positive. As said by Kwon and Vogt (2010), attitude has a significant correlation with emotions which is developed through beliefs as well as thoughts and also experience. In their study, Bălan and Țițu (2009)

found that people perceived work as a personal accomplishment. Therefore, it is inferred that, with a great satisfaction towards work will yield a great satisfaction in oneself which is then build up the inner strength and enhance the self-esteem.

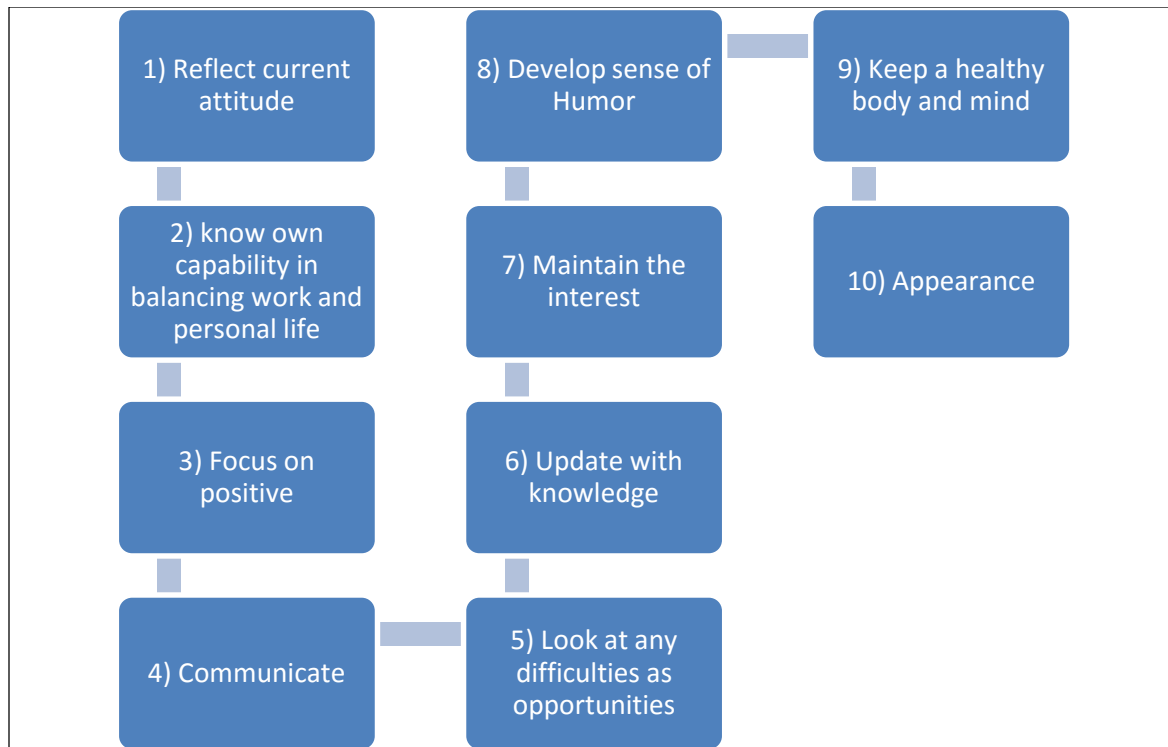
Self-esteem can be developed if the work itself, fosters the growth of workers' personality. Based on Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), as cited from Mazlan Abdullah and Noran Fauziah Yaakub (1992), motivation and hygiene factors are important in determining job satisfaction. Motivation factor is defined as intrinsic factor, while hygiene factor is also called as extrinsic factor. From the study, the researchers agreed that both factors are significant; however motivation factor is a greater influence as compared to the hygiene factor. Hence, it is proven that personal growth and achievement - attitude and self esteem, affect the job satisfaction.

### **3.0 THE STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING POSITIVE ATTITUDE**

Attitude is the result of one's beliefs and accumulation of past experiences. Everyday is a new day for everyone, and because of this, Krosnick and Smith (1994) remarked that attitudes always shift as people will encounter different problem every day in their life. Therefore, it would be a problem for one to modify the attitudes. In their paper, Krosnick and Smith found out that it is easier to promote acceptable attitude to the younger and older as compared to the middle age.

As cited from Han, Ostrosky and Diamond (2006), Triandis (1971) identified that most people attitudes; positive and negative, are moulded by their upbringing, as they interact with family members and friends. This strengthens Krosnick & Smith's claim that younger people's attitude are easily adjusted. For older people, it can be inferred that as they are growing matured, they are able to sort out which is best and which is not. In contrast, the middle age people, they are still in searching of their own identity and personality, as their ego level is high, thus it would be quite difficult to have them embracing the desire and acceptable attitude (Krosnick & Smith, 1994).

No one is perfect, and everyone has his ups and downs. It is never easy to be positive all the time, however, one can learn on how to upgrade one and maintain it. Many online articles suggest ways to develop positive attitude, and from the reading, it is finalized that there are ten ways can be applied in developing positive attitude.



**Figure 1** These steps are adapted from Career Success

**Source: (Fruehling & Roberta, 2011).**

Reflecting current attitude is the first step that one should do as it is vital for one to understand his current emotional state. In addition, the better one knows oneself, the better improvement will have. As for second step, this is suitable for working people, where they need to have a clear mind so that they do not mix up personal and work problems. There are some cases where, people are not able to perform to the optimum level as they are distracted with personal problems. Emotion is crucial as the tendency for people to experience emotional hijacking is high (Lynn, 2005), and even people with good records can be influenced with their unstable emotions and then lead to the unwelcomed behavior. Thus, people are advised to manage and juggle their work and personal life wisely.

The third step is, focusing on positive. As to be positive, one should polish up the positive aspects that he has, and then nurture the aspects so that it can be assimilated in life. The fourth step is, through communication. Sacuzzo and Ingram (1993) said that when communication proceeds smoothly, it allows the relationship to grow and become strong. If it is halted, problems become magnified and it may jeopardise the parties involved. Weber (2008) stressed out that stay away from negative conversations with colleagues as it impedes the development of positive attitude.

The fifth step is, look at any difficulties as opportunities. Looking at the bright side will help one to become more motivated as to accomplish the task given. Practicing one-upmanship also will drive one to do beyond his capability and this will enhance the chances of being positive. The sixth step is, update with knowledge. This can be done by going to trainings or seminars where it exposes one to the new things and this also can alleviate the stress. Malm (2009) suggested that to overcome uncertainty which

leads to frustration and negative attitude, working collaboratively and reflectively with colleagues may help in reducing stress and exchanging ideas.

The seventh step is, maintaining the interest. It is important to sustain the interest as this helps one to keep in track with the goals and objectives. The eighth step is, developing sense of humor. Being surrounded with people who are energetic and enjoy their life will generate a better life in oneself. The ninth step is, maintaining a healthy body and mind. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, human beings have to fulfil the basic needs before they can go further. Therefore it is important to meet the basic needs such as healthy body and mind as these will determine the success of acquiring positive attitude.

The last step is appearance. Attitude and appearance are related, therefore, choosing a well dress will instantly change the mood. In addition, people's judgement is interrelated to one's appearance. Due to this, if one is regarded badly, it may be because of the appearance that influences the mood.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Overall, attitudes are pertinent in gaining others' perceptions and trust. It is undeniable that by embracing positive attitude, it brings greater impact especially to the personal growth. This is vital as human beings will always encounter new challenges everyday. These challenges will nurture them as they need to move forward bravely and confidently.

To lead a better life, especially in career and social relationship, possessing positive attitude will assist in choosing what is best and what is not. It is also believed that being positive will alleviate the stress, which is considered as a stumbling block in becoming a successful person. Stress does not only impede the personal growth as it also slows the progression of an organisation as well as a society.

#### **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

With this brief information, everyone should acknowledge that by possessing and practising positive attitude, it helps to establish a well-rounded person as well as society. In next few years, the challenging will become tougher and it is a must for one to get ready with any problems that may encounter. Because of this, preparation should be done by the individuals and community so that they will not be physically and mentally exhausted in the future battle.

As for individuals, they should always reflect their attitudes and it is vital for them to always feel empathy with others. They must be sensitive about others and to have this, they should always mingle around and learn from their and others' experiences. It is important to have self-awareness and self-control as these will help in having better understanding with own body and mind.

As for organisation as well as society, to yield the very best of their subordinates or members, it is recommended to organise courses, trainings or classes. This is because, with a great and numerous exposures, it will open their eyes and minds in discovering their best and utilise it to the optimum extent. Deriving optimum capability enables one to be very competitive and parallel with government's goal,

human capital can be produced as everyone will always learn and the life long learning will be in everyone's heart.

It may look impossible but with a great cooperation and collaboration from all, everything can be done. Hence, everyone should bear the responsibility and play their roles as everyone is the key in determining the success of one and also the country.

## References

- Argyle, M. (1981). Social Behaviour. In C. L. Cooper, *Psychology and Management: A Text for Managers and Trade Unionists* (p. 131). Great Britain : Wheatons of Exeter.
- Avey, J. B., Wernsing, T. S., & Luthans, F. (2008). Can Positive Employees Help Positive Organizational Change? Impact of Psychological Capital and Emotions on Relevant Attitudes and Behaviors. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 44(1), 48-70. Retrieved from <http://jab.sagepub.com/content/44/1/48.refs.html>
- Bălan, G., & Țițu, M. A. (2009). Studies About The Influence Of The Attitude Towards Change Work In A Modern Organizations. Proceedings of the International MultiConference of Engineers and Computers Scientists 2009 Vol II IMECS 2009, March 18-20,2009, Hong Kong.
- Beebe, S. A., Beebe, S. J., & Redmond, M. V. (2008). *Interpersonal Communication: Relating to others* .5<sup>th</sup> Ed. United States of America: Pearson Education.
- Bremner, W G and Topping, K J. (1998). *Promoting Social Competence: Practice & Resources Guide*. Ed: Scottish Office Education and Industry Department. Retrieved from [www.svtc.org.uk/cgi/foxweb.exe/viewpage@sccc/promote/social?page\\_id=search](http://www.svtc.org.uk/cgi/foxweb.exe/viewpage@sccc/promote/social?page_id=search)
- Cooper, C. L. (1981). *Psychology and Management: A Text for Managers and Trade Unionists*. Great Britain: Wheatons of Exeter.
- DeDobbeleere, J., Leaf, K., & Ziegler, U. (1998). *Improving Behavior through Social Skills Instruction*. Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and IRI/Skylight Field-based Masters Program.
- Fruehling, R. T., & Roberta, M. R. (2011). *Career Success: The Attitude Advantage*, 2nd Edition. Retrieved from [http://www.g-w.com/PDF/SampChap/60525\\_3459\\_CH14.pdf](http://www.g-w.com/PDF/SampChap/60525_3459_CH14.pdf)
- Han, J., Ostrosky, M.M., & Diamond, K. E. (2006). Children's Attitudes Towards Peers With Disabilities: Supporting Positive Attitude Development. *Young Exceptional Children*, 10(2), 2-11. Retrieved from <http://yec.sagepub.com/content/10/1/2>
- Huff, J., & Yeoh, T. (n.d). *The Effect of Attitude Strength on the Stability of Job Satisfaction*. Submission to the 51st Annual Conference of the Midwest Academy of Management. Retrieved from [http://www.midwestacademy.org/Proceedings/2008/papers/Huff&Yeoh\\_33.pdf](http://www.midwestacademy.org/Proceedings/2008/papers/Huff&Yeoh_33.pdf)
- Koteswari, V. B. (2006). *Beat Stress with Positive Attitude*. Presented paper at Global Organization Development Summit (GODS) (September 18-21, 2006). Retrieved from <http://www.odsummitindia.org/content/html/BestPractises/BalaKoteswari.pdf>
- Krosnick, J. A., & Smith, W. R. (1994). Attitude Strength. *Encyclopedia of Human Behaviour*, 1, 279-289. Retrieved from <http://communication.stanford.edu/faculty/krosnick/docs/Attitude%20strength.pdf>
- Kwon, J., & Vogt, C. A. (2010). Identifying the Role of Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Component in Understanding Residents' Attitudes toward Place Marketing. *Journal of Travel Research* , 49(4),423-435.



- Lynn, A. B. (2005). *The EQ Difference: A Powerful Plan for Putting Emotional Intelligence to Work*. United States of America: AMACOM.
- Malm, B. (2009). Towards a new professionalism: enhancing personal and professional development in teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 35(1),77-91.
- Mazlan Abdullah & Noran Fauziah Yaakub.(1992). Faktor Motivator dan Hygiene dalam Kepuasan Kerja Pengetua Sekolah Menengah. Retrieved from [http://psasir.upm.edu.my/8873/1/FPP\\_1992\\_3\\_A.pdf](http://psasir.upm.edu.my/8873/1/FPP_1992_3_A.pdf)
- Rajeswari,R. (2009). POSITIVE ATTITUDE : Benefits of developing a positive attitude. Retrieved from <http://www.saching.com/Article/POSITIVE-ATTITUDE---Benefits-of-developing-a-positive-attitude/3344>
- Rosen, J. A., Glennie, E. J., Dalton B. W.,Lennon, J. M., and Bozick, R. N. (2010).*Noncognitive Skills in the Classroom:New Perspectives on Educational Research*.RTI Press publication No. BK-0004-1009.Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI International. Retrieved [February 25, 2011] from<http://www.rti.org/rtipress>.
- Saari, L. M., & Judge, T. A. (2004). Employee attitudes and job satisfaction. *Human Resource Management*, 2004, 43(4), 395–407. Retrieved from <http://www.utm.edu/staff/mikem/documents/jobsatisfaction.pdf>
- Santrock, J.W. (2008). *Educational Psychology* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. New York: Mc-Graw Hill.
- Saccuzzo, D. P., & Ingram, R.E. (1993). *Growths through Choice: The Psychology of Personal Adjustment*. United States of America: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Schoon, I. (2009).Measuring Social Competencies. Working Paper Series of the Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD) Number 58. Retrieved from [http://www.ratswd.de/download/RatSWD\\_WP\\_2009/RatSWD\\_WP\\_58.pdf](http://www.ratswd.de/download/RatSWD_WP_2009/RatSWD_WP_58.pdf)
- Seok-Hwi Song & Olshfski, D. (2008). Friends at Work : A Comparative Study of Work Attitudes in Seoul City Government and New Jersey State Government. *Administration & Society*, 40 (2), 147-169.
- Shim, S., & Ryan, A. (2005). Changes in self-efficacy, challenge avoidance, and intrinsic value in response to grades: The role of achievement goals. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 73(4), 333–350.
- Sutton, R., & Wheatley, K. (2003). Teachers' emotions and teaching: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational Psychology Review* , 15, 327–358.
- Wallace, H. R., & Masters, L. A. (2006). *Personal Development for Life and Work*. United States: South Western.
- Weber, M. R. (2008). Fighting the Consequences of Negativity. *The Education Digest*, 23-26. Retrieved from [www.eddigest.com](http://www.eddigest.com)