

Chapter 2 - Perception

Introduction:

Perception is an intellectual process of transforming sensory stimuli to meaningful information. It is the process of interpreting something that we see or hear in our mind and use it later to judge and give a verdict on a situation, person, group etc. Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment.

It can be divided into six types –

- **Of sound** – the ability to receive sound by identifying vibrations.
- **Of speech** – the competence of interpreting and understanding the sounds of language heard.
- **Touch** – Identifying objects through patterns of its surface by touching it.
- **Taste** – the ability to receive flavor of substances by tasting it through sensory organs known as taste buds.
- **Other senses** – they approve perception through body, like balance, acceleration, pain, time, sensation felt in throat and lungs etc.
- **Of the social world** – It permits people to understand other individuals and groups of their social world.

Meaning & Definition:

Perception is the process of receiving information about and making sense of the world around us.

According to S.P. Robbins:

“Perception can be defined as a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environments”

According to Joseph Reitz:

“Perception includes all those processes by which an individual receives information about his environment—seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling.”

Characteristics of Perception:

- Intellectual process
- Basic Cognitive process
- Subjective process
- Perception & sensation
- Influence on behavior

Importance of Perception in OB:

We need to understand what the role of perception in an organization is. It is very important in establishing different role of perceptions like –

- Understanding the tasks to be performed.
- Understanding associated importance of tasks allotted.
- Understanding preferred behavior to complete respective tasks.
- Clarifying role perceptions.

For example, every member in a group has to be clear regarding the role allotted to them. Programmer writes the code, tester checks it, etc.

Perceptual Process:

The study of these perpetual processes shows that their functioning is affected by three classes of variables—the objects or events being perceived, the environment in which perception occurs and the individual doing the perceiving.

Perceptual process is the different stages of perception we go through. The different stages are –

- Receiving
- Selecting
- Organizing
- Interpreting

Receiving

Receiving is the first and most important stage in the process of perception. It is the initial stage in which a person collects all information and receives the information through the sense organs.

Selecting

Selecting is the second stage in the process. Here a person doesn't receive the data randomly but selectively. A person selects some information out of all in accordance with his interest or needs. The selection of data is dominated by various external and internal factors.

- **External factors** – The factors that influence the perception of an individual externally are intensity, size, contrast, movement, repetition, familiarity, and novelty.
- **Internal factors** – The factors that influence the perception of an individual internally are psychological requirements, learning, background, experience, self-acceptance, and interest.

Organizing

Keeping things in order or say in a synchronized way is organizing. In order to make sense of the data received, it is important to organize them.

We can organize the data by –

- Grouping them on the basis of their similarity, proximity, closure, continuity.
- Establishing a figure ground is the basic process in perception. Here by figure we mean what is kept as main focus and by ground we mean background stimuli, which are not given attention.
- Perceptual constancy that is the tendency to stabilize perception so that contextual changes don't affect them.

Interpreting

Finally, we have the process of interpreting which means forming an idea about a particular object depending upon the need or interest. Interpretation means that the information we have sensed and organized is finally given a meaning by turning it into something that can be categorized. It includes stereotyping, halo effect etc.

Factors influencing Perception:

Perception is the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets information to create a meaningful picture. Perception depends not only on the physical stimuli but also on the stimuli's relation to the surrounding field and on conditions within the individual. Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory perceives in order to give meaning to their environment. However, what one perceives can be substantially different from objective reality. It is the process through which the information from the outside environment is selected, received, organized and interpreted to make it meaningful.

This input of meaningful information results in decisions and actions. A number of factors operate to shape and sometimes distort perception. These factors can reside in the perceiver in the object or target being perceived, or in the context of the situation in which the perception is made.

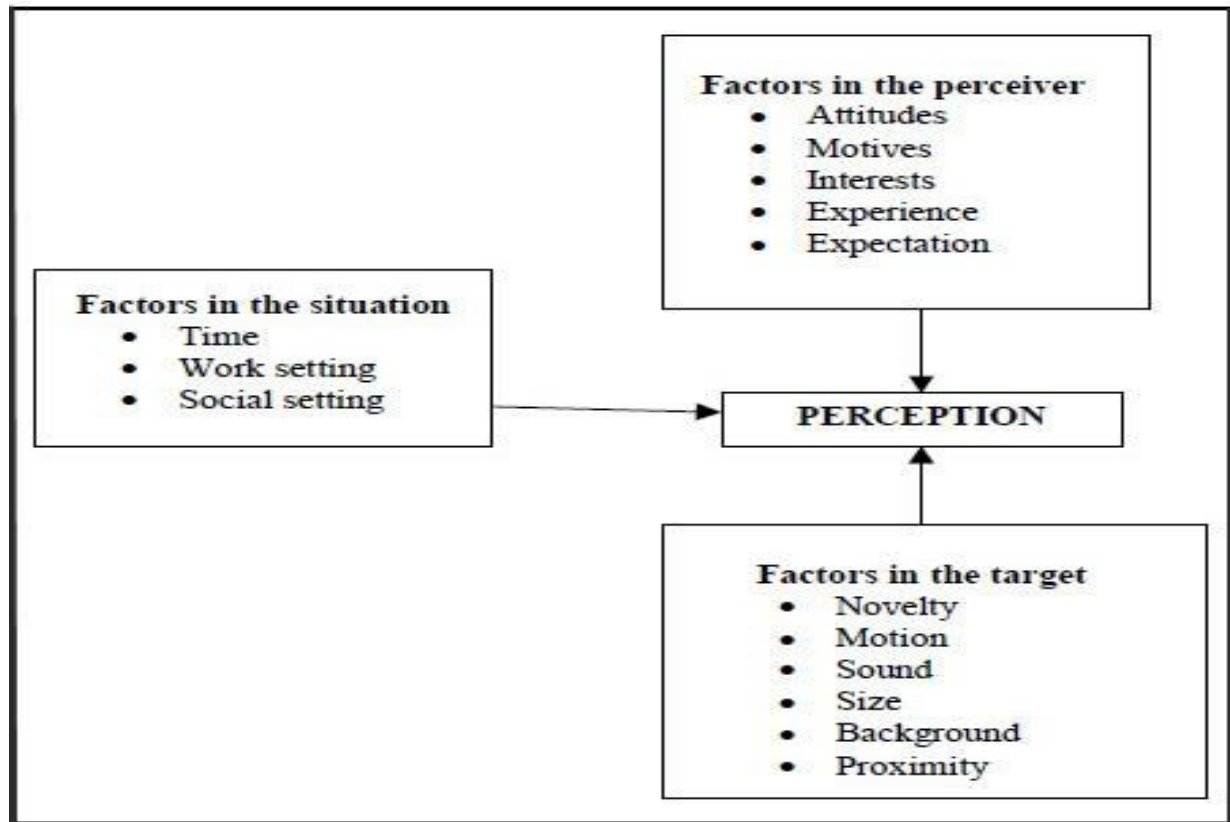
When an individual looks at a target and attempts to interpret what he or she sees, that interpretation is heavily influenced by the personal characteristics of the individual perceiver.

Personal characteristics that affect perception include a person's attitudes, personality, motives, interests, past experiences, and expectations.

There are some factors that influence the target such as- novelty, motion, sounds, size, background, proximity, similarity, etc.

Characteristics of the target being observed can affect what is perceived. Because targets are not looked at in isolation, the relationship of a target to its background also influences perception, as does our tendency to group close things and similar things together.

There are also some situational factors like the time of perceiving others, work settings, social settings, etc. which influence the perception process.



Social and Person Perception:

In social psychology, the term "**person perception**" refers to the different mental processes that we use to form impressions of other people. This includes not just how we form these impressions, but the different conclusions we make about other people based on our impressions.

We try to understand other person's current feelings, moods and emotions – How they are feeling right now, often provided by nonverbal cues involving facial expressions, eye contact, and body posture and movements i.e. "**Social Perception**".

Application of Perception in Organizational Behaviour:

The organizational world has begun to realize the importance of perception so that managers are trained to understand human perception as much as possible. The understanding of perception is the key to understand and control behavior. The major areas where the special attention is required in regard to perceptual accuracy and management and behavioral application of perception of utmost importance, are followings:

1. Employment Interview

A major input to find who is hired and who is rejected in any organization is the employment interview. It's fair to say that few people are hired without an interview. But the evidence indicates that interviewers make perceptual judgments that are often inaccurate. In addition, agreement among interviewers is often poor, that is different interviewers see different things in the same candidate and thus arrives at different conclusions about the applicant. Interviewers generally draw early impressions that become very quickly entrenched. If negative information is exposed early in the interview, it tends to be more heavily weighted than if that same information comes out later. Studies indicate that most interviewers' decisions change very little after the first four or five minutes of their interview. As a result, information elicited early in the interview carries greater weight than does information later eluted "Good applicant" is probably characterized more by the absence of unfavorable characteristics than by the presence of favorable characteristics.

2. Selection of Employees

It is one of the areas, where managers need to be very careful. Normally, employees are selected on the basis of selection tests, interviews and reviews of the applicant's background. There are various cases, where information is vague and managers are subject to many of the perceptual problems where they make the selection decisions. Managers sometimes get swayed away by Halo effect and stereo-typing. There can be times when manager's emotional state is not fit for justifying his role as a selective authority. He might make a mountain out of molehill when not in a good mood.

3. Performance Appraisal

Every organization has some system of performance appraisal. It is generally done by superiors and sometimes by people at different levels as in 360 degree performance appraisal. Many a time, it has been found that superiors or others get carried by Halo effect or their personal biases. They have liking or favor for some people and dislike for others. These factors act as hindrance to objective performances appraisal. And sometimes these factors weight so much in favor of or against some employees that the real purpose of performance appraisal gets defeated.

4. Delegation of Authority

In organizational set up delegating authority to do various task is the way of life. But, a manager decision whether to delegate or whom to delegate is many time affected by his perception of employees. Various perceptual errors make him delegate someone who is not the best available choice in the organizations for that job. And this phenomenon has a very discouraging effect on the person who has been overlooked and his perception regarding delegating authority changes towards unreality.

5. Interpersonal Working Relationship

Organizations are intended to bring about integrated behavior. Therefore, managers in the organization need to know whether or not members share similar or at least compatible perceptions. If they do not, the problems of the organization becomes greater and requires efforts to make perceptions more compatible. Mis-perceptions usually lead to strained relations and may even result in open conflict among people.

6. Employee Effort

In many organizations, the level of an employee's effort is given high importance just as teacher frequently consider how hard you try in a course as well as you perform in examinations. So often do managers. An assessment of an individual's effort is a subjective judgment susceptible to perceptual distortions and bias.

7. Employee Loyalty

Another important judgment that managers make about employees is whether or not they are loyal to the organization. Despite the general decline in employees, especially those in the managerial ranks, openly disparage the firm. Furthermore, in some organization, if the word gets around that an employee is looking at other employment opportunities outside the firm, that employee may be labeled as disloyal and he may be cut off from all future advancement opportunities. The issue is not whether organizations are right in demanding loyalty. The issue is that many do, and that assessment of an employee's loyalty by one decision maker may be seen as excessive conformity by another. An employee who questions a top management decision may be seen as disloyal by some, yet caring and concerned by others.