

Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment.

All perception involves signals in the nervous system, which in turn result from physical or chemical stimulation of the sense organs.

It is not the passive receipt of these signals but is shaped by learning, memory, expectation, and attention.

Perception depends on complex functions of the nervous system but subjectively seems mostly effortless because this processing happens outside of conscious awareness.

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

According to B. V. H. Gilmer, “Perception is the process of becoming aware of situations, of adding meaningful associations to sensations.”

Uday Pareek said perception can be defined as “the process of receiving, selecting, organizing, interpreting, checking, and reacting to sensory stimuli or data.”

Perception includes the 5 senses; touch, sight, taste smell and sound. It also includes what is known as perception, a set of senses involving the ability to detect changes in body positions and movements.

FACTORS AFFECTING PERCEPTION/PERCEPTUAL DISTORTION/PERCEPTUAL ERROR:

There are three factors related to the perception. Those are-factors related the perceiver, factors relate to the perceived, Factors related to the situation.

FACTORS RELATED THE PERCEIVER

i)**Projection**: The perceiver tries to project his personality attributes in others is known as projection. For e.g. if the perceiver is talkative, then he treats the perceived to be a talkative though this may not be true.

ii)**Mental Makeup**: Sometimes the perceiver has pre set notion in his mind about certain objects, events and people. The moment he has to deal or act upon those events, he already knows how to act or react as he has made his mental set up to deal with such situations.

iii) **Stereotyping**: It is a tendency to judge people based on the perception of the group to which he belongs. We tend to attribute favorable or unfavorable characteristics to the individual based on upon widely held generalization about the group. For instance, we perceive that Japanese in general are hard working, quality conscious and industrious, and based on that we generalize that all Japanese are like that, but in reality it may not be so. There are some Japanese who may not possess the above mentioned characteristics.

iv) **Halo Effect**: It is tendency to draw a general overall impression about an individual based on single striking characteristics. For instance, if a person speaks English fluently, we tend to assume that that person is very knowledgeable, intelligent, smart, clever etc. hard working, smart etc.

v) **First Impression** :The perceiver forms an impression about the perceived when he meets him for the first time. First impression is normally difficult to change, as is said-First impression is the last impression.

vi) **Recency Effect**: Recency effect is the effect that the recent event has on the perceiver. During performance appraisal, the employees are rated on the basis of their latest performance. The earlier performance is ignored. This is not the satisfactory method so it leads to error in perceptual error.

FACTORS RELATED TO THE PERCEIVED

- i) **Status of the perceived**: Generally status overpowers the actual characteristic. When perception is made about a person who has high status in terms of position or wealth, he is generally perceived to be high on ranking than a person with low status.
- ii) **Closeness with the perceived**: If a person is close to another person in relationship, the perceived will be ranked high because of this relationship even though, in a particular situation, he may have behaved negatively.

FACTORS RELATED TO THE SITUATION:

Situation plays an important role in forming perception about a person. A person sitting in a five star hotel is perceived differently than a person sitting in a small hotel.

PERCEPTUAL PROCESS:

Stage I: Receiving stimuli : The perception process starts with receiving stimuli. It depicts the environmental stimuli being received by the five sense organs.

Stage II: Selection of the Stimuli: In this stage, selection of some stimuli happens for

further processing while the rest are screened out. This is governed by both factors external to the individual, such as the size, intensity, repetition, contrast and internal to the individual, such as the self concept, belief, expectation, response disposition of the perceiver.

Stage III: Organisation of stimuli : The selected stimuli is organized in the perceiver's mind to give it a meaningful term. The perceiver is influenced by figure and ground and perceptual grouping .

Figure and Ground:

What a person observes is dependent on how a central figure is being separated from its background. This implies that the perceived object or person or event stands out distinct from its background and occupies the cognitive space of the individual. In a dance programme, the spectators' tend to perceive the dance performance against the back ground music, backdrop setup etc. The perceiver thus tends to organize only the information which stands out in the environment which seems to be significant to the individual.

Perceptual Grouping: It means grouping stimuli into an organized pattern. It happens on the basis of proximity, similarity and closure.

Proximity: People tend to perceive things, which are nearer to each other, as together as group rather than separately. If four or five members are standing together, we tend to assume that they are belonging to same group rather than as separately. As a result of physical proximity, we often put together objects or events or people as one group even though they are unrelated. Employees in a particular section are seen as group.

Similarity: Persons, objects or events that are similar to each other also tend to be grouped together. This organizing mechanism helps us to deal with information in an efficient way rather than getting bogged down and confused with too many details. For examples, if we happen to see a group of foreign nationals at an International seminar, Indians are grouped as one group, British as another, Americans as yet another based on the similarity of nationalities.

Closure: In many situation, the information what we intend to get may be in bits and pieces and not fully complete in all respects. However, we tend to fill up the gaps in the missing parts and making it as meaningful whole. Such mental process of filling up the missing element is called as closure. For example, while giving promotions to

the staff members, the managers will try to get full information to make an effective decision, in absence of getting complete information, managers try to make meaningful assumptions and based on that suitable decision will be made.

Stage IV: Interpretation: Assigning meaning to data is called interpretation. Once the inputs are organized in human mind, the perceiver interpretes the inputs and draws conclusion from it. But interpretation is subjective as different people interpret the same information in different ways.

Stage V: Behavior Response or Action: In this stage the response of the perceiver takes on both covert and overt characteristics. Covert response will be reflected in the attitudes, motives, and feelings of the perceiver and overt responses will be reflected in the actions of the individual.

Imp. Questions

1. PERCEPTION AND ITS APPLICATION IN ORGANISATIONS

People in organisations are always assessing others. Managers must appraise their subordinate's performance, evaluate how co-workers are working. When a new person joins a department he or she is immediately assessed by the other persons. These have important effect on the organisation.

Employment Interview: Interviewers make perceptual judgments that are often inaccurate. Different interviewers see different things in the same candidate and arrive at different conclusions about the applicant. Employment interview is an important input into the hiring decision, and perceptual factors influence who is hired and vis-à-vis the Quality of an organisations labour force.

Performance Appraisals: An employee's performance appraisal is very much dependent on the perceptual process. An employee's future is closely tied to his or her appraisal - promotions, increments and continuation of employment are among the common outcomes. The performance appraisal represents an assessment of an employee's work. While this may be objective, most jobs are evaluated in subjective terms. Subjective measures are judgmental. The evaluator forms a general impression of an employee's work, to the degree that managers use subjective measures in appraising employee's the evaluator perceives to be 'good or bad' employee characteristics/behaviours will significantly influence the appraisal outcome.

Assessing Level of Effort: In many organisations, the level of an employee's effort is given high importance. Assessment of an individual's effort is a subjective judgment susceptible to perceptual distortions and bias.

Assessing Loyalty: Another important judgment that managers decide about employees is whether they are loyal to the organisation.

2. Implications of Perception on Performance and Satisfaction

Productivity: What individuals perceive from their work situation will influence their productivity. More than the situation itself than whether a job is actually interesting or challenging is not relevant. How a manager successfully plans and organises the work of his subordinates and actually helps them in structuring their work is far less important than how his subordinates perceive his efforts. Therefore, to be able to influence productivity, it is necessary to assess how workers perceive their jobs.

Absenteeism and Turnover: Absence and Turnover are some of the reactions to the individuals perception. Managers must understand how each individual interprets his job. and where there is a significant difference between what is seen and what exists and try to eliminate the distortions.

Failure to deal with the differences when individuals perceive the job in negative terms will result in increased absenteeism and turnover.

Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction is a highly subjective, and feeling of the benefits that derive from the job. Clearly this variable is critically linked to perception. If job satisfaction is to be improved, the worker's perception of the job characteristics, supervision and the organisation as a whole must be positive.

Understanding the process of perception is important because (1) It is unlikely that any person's definition of reality will be identical to an objective assessment of reality. (2) It is unlikely that two different person's definition of reality will be exactly the same. (3) Individual perceptions directly influences the behaviour exhibited in a given situation.