

3.6: Summary of Learning Outcomes

3.1 The Perceptual Process

1. How do differences in perception affect employee behavior and performance?

One of the key determinants of people's behavior in organizations is how they see and interpret situations and people around them. It is vital for anyone (manager or subordinate) who desires to be more effective to understand the critical aspects of context, object, and perceiver that influence perceptions and interpretations and the relationship between these and subsequent attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. This understanding will not only facilitate the ability to correctly understand and anticipate behaviors, but it will also enhance the ability to change or influence that behavior. Perception is the process by which individuals screen, select, organize, and interpret stimuli in order to give them meaning. Perceptual selectivity is the process by which individuals select certain stimuli for attention instead of others. Selective attention is influenced by both external factors (e.g., physical or dynamic properties of the object) and personal factors (e.g., response salience). Social perception is the process by which we perceive other people. It is influenced by the characteristics of the person perceived, the perceiver, and the situation.

3.2 Barriers to Accurate Social Perception

2. How can managers and organizations minimize the negative impact of stereotypes and other barriers to accurate social perception in interpersonal relations?

Stereotyping is a tendency to assign attributes to people solely on the basis of their class or category. Selective perception is a process by which we systematically screen or discredit information we don't wish to hear and instead focus on more salient information. Perceptual defense is a tendency to distort or ignore information that is either personally threatening or culturally unacceptable.

3.3 Attributions: Interpreting the Causes of Behavior

3. How do people attribute credit and blame for organizational events?

Attribution theory concerns the process by which individuals attempt to make sense of the cause-effect relationships in their life space. Events are seen as being either internally caused (that is, by the individual) or externally caused (that is, by other factors in the environment). In making causal attributions, people tend to focus on three factors: consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness. The fundamental attribution error is a tendency to underestimate the effects of external or situational causes of behavior and overestimate the effects of personal causes.

The self-serving bias is a tendency for people to attribute success on a project to themselves while attributing failure to others.

3.4 Attitudes and Behavior

4. How can a work environment characterized by positive work attitudes be created and maintained?

An attitude can be defined as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable way to objects or persons in one's environment. There are two theories concerning the manner in which attitudes are formed. The first, called the dispositional approach, asserts that attitudes are fairly stable tendencies to respond to events in certain ways, much like personality traits. Thus, some people may be happy on almost any job regardless of the nature of the job. The second, called the situational approach, asserts that attitudes result largely from the particular situation in which the individual finds himself. Thus, some jobs may lead to more favorable attitudes than others. The social-information-processing approach to attitudes is a situational model that suggests that attitudes are strongly influenced by the opinions and assessments of coworkers. Cognitive consistency is a tendency to think and act in a predictable manner. Cognitive dissonance occurs when our actions and our attitudes are in conflict. This dissonance will motivate us to attempt to return to a state of cognitive consistency, where attitudes and behaviors are congruent.

3.5 Work-Related Attitudes

5. How can managers and organizations develop a committed workforce?

Job involvement refers to the extent to which an individual is interested in his or her assigned tasks. Organizational commitment refers to the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience.

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