

SOCIAL PERCEPTION – NOTES

Meaning of Social Perception

- Social perception refers to the process of forming impressions and making judgments about others.
- It includes how we interpret behavior, facial expressions, tone, intentions, and social cues.
- It helps us understand:
 - What others are like
 - Why they behave the way they do
 - How we should interact with them

Components of Social Perception

a. Non-verbal Communication

- Includes facial expressions, eye contact, body language, gestures, posture, touch, and tone of voice.
- Helps in understanding emotions and intentions.
- Ekman's universal emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, surprise.

b. Impression Formation

- Process of combining information to form an overall judgment.
- Influenced by:
 - ❖ Physical appearance (halo effect)
 - ❖ First impressions (primacy effect)
 - ❖ Social scripts/stereotypes
 - ❖ Implicit personality theories (assumptions about trait clusters)

c. Attribution

Attribution = explaining the causes of behavior.

Types

Internal (dispositional) → trait/ability

External (situational) → environment/context

1. Heider's Attribution Theory

People act as "naive scientists" trying to understand causes.

2. Kelley's Covariation Model

Judgments based on:-

- ❖ Consensus (others behave the same way?)
- ❖ Consistency (same behavior over time?)
- ❖ Distinctiveness (behavior unique to one situation?)

3. Weiner's Attribution Theory (Achievement)

Locus (internal/external)
Stability (stable/unstable)
Controllability

4. Errors in Social Perception

a. Fundamental Attribution Error

Tendency to overestimate internal causes and underestimate situational causes.
Strong in individualistic cultures.

b. Actor–Observer Bias

For ourselves → blame the situation.
For others → blame personality.

c. Self-Serving Bias

Success = internal causes
Failure = external causes
Protects self-esteem.

d. Halo Effect

One positive trait → assume overall positive qualities.

e. Stereotyping

Judging someone based on group membership.
Can be positive or negative.

f. Confirmation Bias

Tendency to notice information that supports our beliefs.

g. Primacy & Recency Effects

First impressions weigh more (primacy).
Recent information influences judgment (recency).

Person Perception

How we perceive individuals in social contexts.

Influenced by:

- ❖ Attractiveness
- ❖ Similarity
- ❖ Cultural norms
- ❖ Roles (e.g., teacher, police)

Implicit Personality Theories

Beliefs about which traits go together.

Example: someone quiet is assumed to be shy and introverted.

Social Categorization

- Mental process of classifying people into groups.
- Helps reduce cognitive load but leads to:
 - ❖ In-group bias
 - ❖ Out-group homogeneity effect (“they’re all the same”)

Impression Management

Efforts people make to control how others see them.

Tactics:

- Self-promotion (highlighting strengths)
- Ingratiation (praising others)
- Intimidation
- Supplication (showing need for help)
- Exemplification (showing morality)

Applications of Social Perception

Workplace selection & performance evaluation

Counseling & clinical settings

Intergroup relations

Conflict resolution

Marketing and consumer behavior

SHORT NOTES (For Exams)

1. Halo Effect

A single positive attribute leads to a favorable overall impression.

2. Non-verbal cues

Facial expressions, gestures, body language — important for decoding emotion.

3. Stereotypes

Cognitive generalizations about groups → can lead to prejudice.

4. Attribution Theory

Explains how people determine causes of behavior (internal/external).

5. Primacy Effect

First impressions dominate later judgments.