Organizational Behaviour
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Lecture - 12
Perceptions and Attributions (Contd.)

Good morning and welcome to the continuing session of perceptions and attribution. Here, we will try to understand the application of perceptions in organizations in that… and the most important perception how we apply it to organization, the process of perception and principles of perception. How do we utilize it in organization is mainly for understanding other people. And, that falls under the domain of person perception. So, in this particular discussion we are going to cover various aspects of person perception.

Person perception is categorized, that is, the discussion is categorized under three main headings: First is social perceptions, second is impression management and in third we are going to discuss one of the very important , which called attributions and attribution theories. And next we will again discuss some of the errors which in person perception and how person perception gets utilized in some situations in organization. That is the total objective of this discussion today.

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SOCIAL PERCEPTION:

It consist of those processes by which we interpret other people, how we categorize them and how we form impressions of them. The social aspects of perception play a very important role in OB.

3 basic categories of influence on the way we perceive other people:

(1) the characteristics of the person being perceived.

(2) the characteristics of the particular situation.

(3) the characteristics of the perceiver.

There are numerous complex factors which enter into social perception like: Attributions, Stereotyping, Halo effect

And, we will start with social perception. Social consists of those processes in organizations by which we interpret people and then how we categorize them, and we try to form certain impressions of them. The social aspects of perception; it really plays a very important role in organization in person perception.

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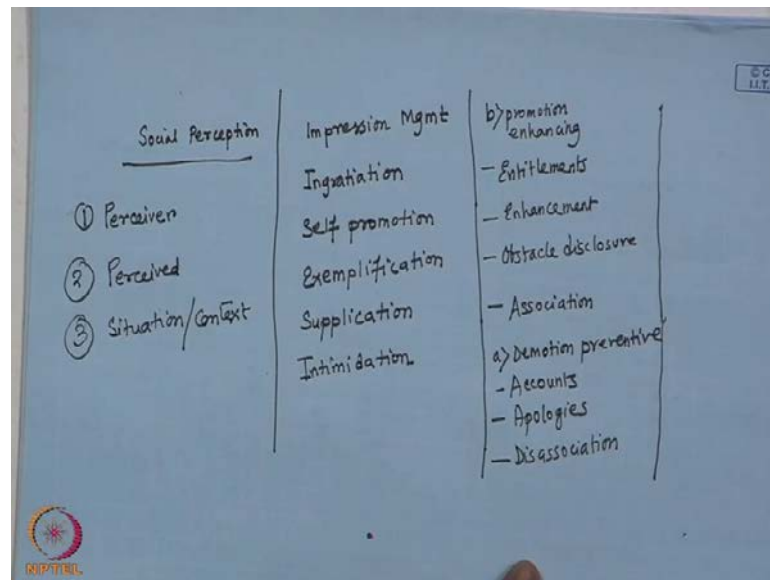
So, when we are talking of social perception, actually there are three actors in the situation. If you can understand means like… Firstly, there you have the person making the perception; means the perceiver. And, secondly we have the perceived person and thirdly we also have the situation or the context. And, they could be like various characteristics which are specific to each of these people like the perceiver, the perceived, both and the situation context.

So, in the last discussion if you remember like we have discussed about the different principles of organization, different principles of interpretation and like how interpretation occurs, and what are the factors playing roles. And, we have categorized those into factors very specific to the objects being perceived or factors specific to the people making the perception.

And, we have put it under two headings of internal factors and external factors; like the novelty in the situation, the uniqueness in the situation, the brightness of the things being perceived and like the size, then the height. All these things were some of the things, characteristics which are very specific to the object or person being perceived. Like, if

somebody is very attractive in nature or somebody is wearing a very bright dress or it is very soberly dressed; somebody is very tall, somebody is very fat and all these things let me attract your attention or somebody has a very pleasant personality; So, (()) or an extrovert way of behaving or really a very introvert. So, whatever is that person; any characteristics of that person, which distinguishes that person from the rest of the people present around is going to attract the attention.

So, this again is determined by the figure and ground effect. Or, if the person is similar to other situation, other people present around or similar to other people or is interacting with the particular group of people, then we try to form a perception about that person about his social connections and all these things. All these are based; again if you remember under principles of organization, they guessed all principles of organization of figure in ground, contrast proximity, similarity, continuity; all these things. And, these are some of characteristics of the perceiver; the perceived person.

Similarly, the perceiver who is also a human being, he has similar personality pattern, interest, your motivational level, and all these things will help him to pay attention to certain factors in certain person and ignore certain facts about that person; So, which will help his selection process. The characteristics within a person also influence his selection of a stimulis like the queues given by the perceived person. And, you select some and ignore others based on his own personal preferences; motivation, needs, aspirations, personality pattern, whatever. And, try to interpret it based on his knowledge, education, the storehouse of knowledge, schemata, and all these things. So, these are characteristics of perceiver and the perceived person which influence the social perception.

Also, a very unique role is played by the situation in which the person is perceived or the perceiver perceives the perceived person. So, the context gives a new meaning to the whole process of perception. So, when two people a and b meet in situation x and which is quite different from when a and b meets in situation y, if the nature of the situation x and y are varying with respect to time and other characteristics, then the way of interaction may vary, the way of seeing that person may vary.

So, situational factors; also whether it is formal situation, whether it is an informal situation, whether it is like other people are present, when these two people are present or not, like whether you have perceived individually or you have perceived as a part of a

group; all these things matter in person perception and the category of social perception. So characteristics of the perceiver, characteristics of the perceived person and characteristics of the situation; these three are blend together to influence each other and give meaning to the whole process of a perception.

And, there are numerous important factors and which of three of the most important factors are of course like attributions, which will discuss in details; like where we try to give meaning and impose certain characteristics which either belongs to the person or to the external situation. And, we try to interpret that situation in that way whether it is a situational effect or it is a personal effect. We will discuss it at the later part of this lecture.

Next is of course stereo type and third is halo effect. So, in stereo type what happens? Like, if I am meeting a new person for the first time without having much of his background information, but I have a schemata of store house of knowledge about certain groups of person or a certain religious groups or a certain professionals. And, from a previous knowledge, pre-conceived knowledge, we have some idea framed like this person; these group of people who are belonging to this professions generally behave in this way, generally they grace in that way, generally they talk in this way; this is the way of communication.

If we have those things pre conceived idea ready in your mind, then when I meet a new person about whom I do not have a very much background information, except one or two, like this particular person is belonging to this particular profession or to some ethnical, religious groups or particular to some country and then, what we do? Without knowing much detail about the individual perceive, then this background knowledge which is called the schemata, we try to map this person with that background knowledge. And, if we have very strong emotions or attitudes developed to that some professions or religious or ethnic groups and all this factors, what we try to do? We try to interact with this new person, based on those particular schemata that we have; that particular store house of knowledge that we have. Expecting that with the basic premise that, generally people of this category behave in this way.

Therefore, we respond to this group of people in this way because this person, this new person that we are meeting resembles some of the characteristics of the profession or the

group that I am having the schemata about. Then this person will… because of these group generally behave in this way and we interact it that way to that group, so we can also start our interaction or expect the same type of behavior from this new person. So, this stereo type is, generally looking, it is helpful for us to start our discussions with someone whom you are meeting for the first time; it is till then it is fine.

But, if we are trying to be judgmental about a , we are trying to tell something positive or negative about a person and form certain attitudes about a person; based only on the stereo type of that particular group, which this person may belong to and taking like this; ok, this person is similar to this fellow people, then that is one not a very desirable situation because we have to consider the individuality of that person. That person may belong to certain profession or groups and may share some of their ideas. But, may be unique in his own world view or ways of interacting or communication, which is very unique to that person and not a part of the, like very common to the group in general that you are talking about.

So, trying to impose your one's thought process based on the general knowledge that we have and trying to like, it is again depends on the process of closure because there is a gap of information about the new person that you are meeting and we try to give closure to this based on the stereo type that you are having about this person and try to close that loop and feel mentally comfortable. And, we will reduce our anxiety of not knowing this new person; is not something which is very desirable sometimes; because we may stereotype, sometimes may lead to forms like negative opinion about the very new person without trying to know that person as an individual.

So, when we are trying to interact with the new person, so it is better like along with the general idea that we have about that particular group of people or the profession, or whatever, we must be trying to explore the uniqueness in the new individual and we are interacting with. And, try to interact from that individual perspective because each individual has some unique characteristics and they differ from person to person in spite of sharing certain common ideas or properties or characteristics with which is very common to group.

Next comes, like when you are talking of halo effect. In halo effect, what happens is we are trying to overestimate or project, perceive single characteristics on which is like

influencing and decision making regarding that person as a total individual. Like, if I am good at task A, it does not mean that I am good at task B, C, D, E also. Or, like if I am good in one of the roles that, of the different roles that we play in our life, does not mean that we are good in the other roles also. But, what happens? Because I am good at one role or good at one task or good in one of the attributes like, I am very attractive in nature or present or it sometimes over shadows the other negatives or other drawbacks that we may be having and we try to judge a person based on the light.

Halo means the circle of light that we have around. And, that over shadows the negatives and we are not, we overlook those things based on the halo effect form; because of we, as a perceiver giving more importance to one of the factor, one of the present willing the perceived person. So, this halo effect may sometimes effects the decisions making in the organization, while we are in the selection process or while we are trying to map the right person to the right kind of job. Because if we are to map a person to the right kind of job, we have to map the…, we have to see whether a person possesses the competency required for the particular type of the job and the particular type of role.

So, if I am… like person a, due to certain characteristics present which is like general personality pattern or he his good at one task and then we form a positive idea about that person; ok, this person is very good. So, it always does not mean like that the person will be suitable for the particular present role that we are thinking about.

So, we have to be very specific about the way to judge the person from; like, based on what is good at the present time with respect to the present situation; the task at hand which is in discussion and not like, get decisions effective by the halo effect that or the very high idea that we are having about that particular person whom we are trying to discuss about based on some other characteristics which may or may not be directly related to the competency, which is required for solving the particular job; which is of discussion at the present point of time.

So, we have to remove that halo effect and then see whether the attributes of the person, the characteristics of the person are matching with the requirements of the specific job or whether he is suitable enough for in the present situation. So, these three are important parts of discussion, like while we are talking about social perception.

Next, we come to the discussion on which is impression management; also called "self-presentation". Impression management is the process by which people attempt to manage or control perceptions others form of them. So, this is the characteristics of the people to present them in such a way to impress others in a socially desirable way.

So, if you read between the lines that are written over here, so first is when you talk of, it is a self-presentation technique. So, it will depend on the characteristics of the person. Also when we are talking of self-presentation technique means, like we have to question like who is prone to this self-presentation. Does everybody is prone to self-presentation or we have people who will be more in self-presentation and people who are in less in self-presentation. And, here where we come to the question of…or here where comes the importance of the self-monitors. So, people who are higher self-monitors what they will do is, they will always try to present themselves in a desirable social way and try to appear to fulfill all the demands from the external situations and try to appear in a positive light to others. and they are very good at responding to situation and demands. And, try to monitor their behaviour pattern, personality pattern in such a way to suit the needs of the particular situation or appear to suit the needs of the particular situation.

But, people who are less in the degree of self-monitors, they will like to present themselves in the way as they actually are, and not modify themselves to; in such a way to appear to being desirable or fit on those situational demands. So, people who are high

self-monitors will go for more self-presentation in which people manage to appear in the positive light. And, they try to manipulate the way; their way of presenting themselves. We will manipulate the way, the others form certain ideas about this particular person and they will try to appear in a positive light as per the judgment about that person is considered. So, that is called impression management; how we try to manage the impression, the ideas at others formed about us. And, there are five techniques of, tactics of impression management.

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These five techniques are: number a, ingratiation; where, they seek to be viewed positively by flattering others or offering to do favors to them. They seek to be viewed positively by flattering others or offering to do favors to them. Next is self-promotion; they doubt their abilities and competence. Third is, exemplification; they seek to be viewed as dedicated by going above and beyond the call of duty. Forth is, supplication; where, they seek to be viewed as needing help because of limitations. And, fifth one is intimidation; they seek to be viewed as powerful and threatening.

So, these five techniques if we can understand, is going to help people to manage impression in different situations. And the two most important situations where impression management techniques are utilized in organization is during the interviews and of course during the time of performance appraisals.

So, what happens? Like it is been… research has found like most of the interviewers make certain selections due to the impressions they have got about that particular person and the important like impression management techniques adopted by the interviewee. And, in many cases the actual person perceive or the capabilities of the person to (()) which the mix of the best fit with the requirements of the job gets ignored.

And as a result, some desirable candidates with the better qualities which best fit with the necessary requirements of the job, do not get a chance. And, people who have better impression, who can manage the impressions well, get selected in the interview process. And the impression management technique which is been used mostly by the candidates in interview situation is that of, which is called self-promotion. They try to sell themselves or they try to appear in a positive light as for the competency is in for through different techniques of self-promotion.

And, another important thing (( )), another important area where impression management technique is used in organization is, of course during the time of promotions. And, here the technique of, the tactic of impression management which is most important is that of ingratiation; where, we try to impress others by flattering or doing certain favors to the person, who are in the position to make judgment about our promotions. And, this is called ingratiation.

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Impression Management Strategies:

a) **Promotion enhancing Strategy:** try to seek maximum responsibility for a positive outcome or to look better than they really are.

1. **Entitlements:** Employees feel that they have not been given credit for the positive outcome.

2. **Enhancements:** Here employees may have received the credit, but they point out that they really did more and had a bigger impact than originally thought.

3. **Obstacle disclosures:** Here employees identify either personal (health or family) or organization (lack of resources or cooperation) obstacles they had to overcome to accomplish an outcome. - i.e. try to create an impression that they obtained the positive outcome despite the big obstacles and so they deserve a lot of credit.

4. **Association:** The employees make sure to be seen with the right people at the right times, thus creating an impression that the employee is well-connected and associated with successful projects.
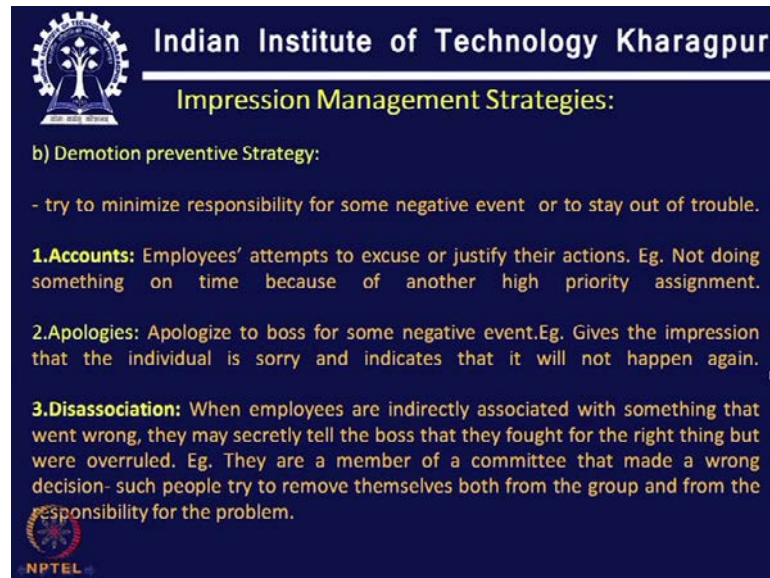
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So, we will try to discuss over here, some of the impression management techniques; as used strategies and we have tried to classify it over to headings like promotion enhancing strategy and demotion reduction strategy. In promotion enhancing strategy, what happens? We try to seek maximum responsibility for a positive outcome or we try to look in a better than we really are. And in this, the four different classifications are of course, like entitlements; people feel like they have not been given credit for the positive outcome.

Next is enhancement; here, the employees try to point out that they really did more thing and had a bigger impact than they originally thought, and they have not received their due credit. In obstacle disclosures what people do is, they try to identify either personal like health or family issues or organizational issues like lack of resources and co-operation, which were obstacles in their way of achieving certain things, certain outcome. And, they try to put the impression that they got that big result, that positive outcome, despite the big obstacles that was there in their way of achieving in that positive outcome. And, they should be deserving a lot of credit for it or for doing the thing, achieving the positive outcome, in spite of the presence of being obstacles.

Number four is association; where the employees seen whether they make sure that they belong to the right group of people at the right point of time. They try to engage or they try to mention their names as parts of very well-known group or in well connected with someone, very big personality, so that you also get it like, you form the impression like this; this person is well connected and have been in parts of successful projects or he is like well-connected with the well-known person. So, he is also of that same nature and that same type.

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When you are talking of demotion preventive strategy, so what we try to do is we try to minimize the responsibility for some negative effect or to stay out of trouble. So, first is accounts; where employees attempt to excuse or justify their actions; because like some examples, they were not able to do something in time because there was another thing of high very priority assignment there.

Next is, apologies; apologize to boss for some negative events and then gives the impression that the individual is really sorry about it and indicates that it will not going to happen again. Then, the dissatisfaction; where, if something goes wrong with which the person is indirectly associated, then dissatisfaction is, sorry, disassociation is where they will try to disassociate their name from that happening by telling; from the negative outcome they will disassociate their name by telling, "okay we fought for the right thing, But we were not heard, our decisions were overruled. So, actually I am not the person to who can be clean for any wrong happenings because I tried my best to speak about the right thing, but because other more powerful people were there or people with different intentions were there, I did not get the positive outcome. And, in that way I give the impression of disassociating my name from the negative outcome and the owners of responsibility for that negative outcome". So, these three are demotion preventing strategy.

So, there could be other techniques like flattery, just as an ingratiation technique, which we take during the promotion phases. And, we always say "yes" to the person who is in the decision making power. So that, he does or his ego is boosted, the other person's ego is boosted because I get a very good subordinate or good follower, who always appears to say "yes" and never challenges, whatever I tell that person to do. Boost the ego of that person by making the judgment, who is in the position to reward me with certain things. And, these are called ingratiation techniques, which are taken during some of the interviews to appear in a positive light and get like either the job or the promotion etcetera.

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Next, we come to the discussion of attribution theory. Attribution theory is where we come to know is, how people may interpret the reasons or causes for their behavior. Why something is happening in this way and to whom the cause can be attributed? So, this is coming under the domain of attribution theory.
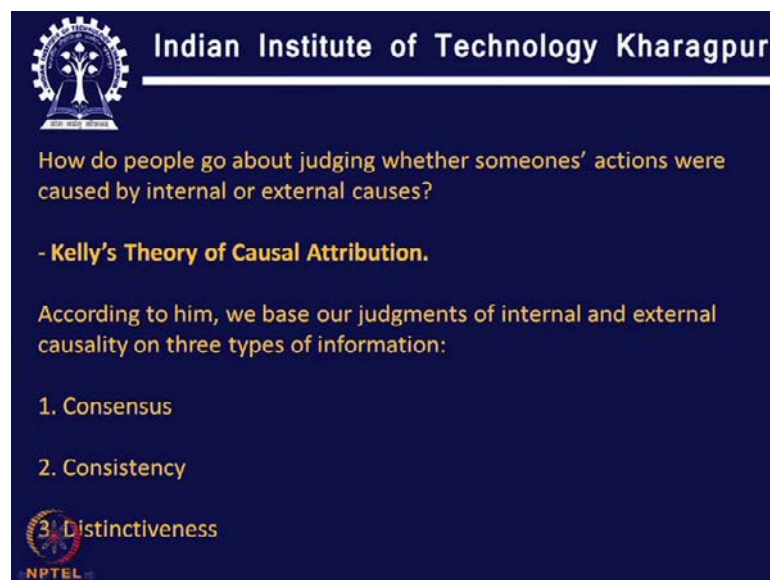
So, it is a process of perceptual interpretation, where the people will try to assess the causes of certain event and then attribute the responsibility or the outcome for that event. And third is, evaluate the personal qualities of the person involved in that event.

So, there are three parts to it. First, I will try to understand the causes of event. Next, I will try to assess the responsibility of each particular, for the outcome, like who is

responsible the person per day or situations and there we evaluate the personal quality of the person involved in that event.

So, what we try to say, whether certain behavior is internally caused or it is externally caused. When we will tell that it is internally caused, then what happens? So, the behaviors in it, the behaviors or thoughts to be the reasons of which is happening, did to, causes residing within the individual or it is under the control of that particular individual. When we are talking of external cause means, these external causes are causes which are external to the individual, and over which the person generally does not have any control. So, there could be two categories; internally caused behavior and externally caused behavior.

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Now, this Kelly's theory of attribution tells like there are three, again important pointers to determine whether the behavior is internally caused or externally caused. And, these three pointers are called like; one is called the consensus, second is consistency and third is distinctiveness; consensus, consistency, distinctiveness.

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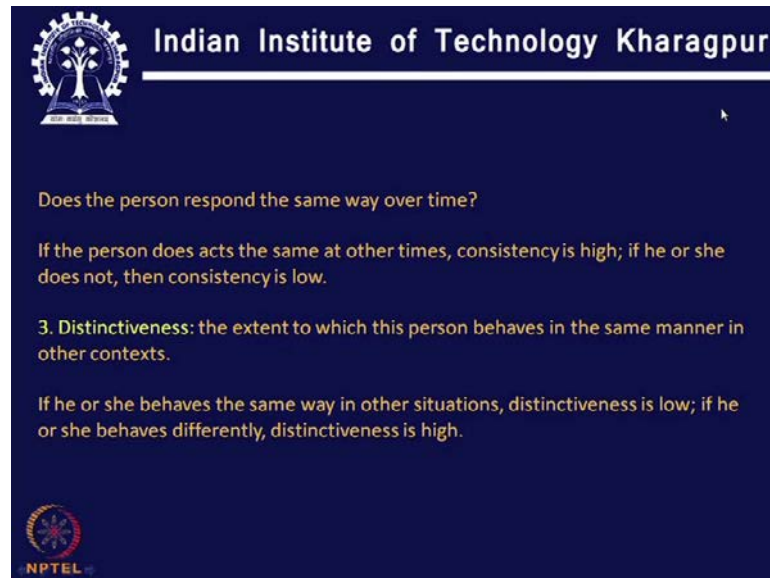
When you are talking of consensus means, we try to judge a person; we try to see whether other persons are behaving in the same way as the person we are judging. So in attribution, what we are trying to attribute is certain qualities and responsibilities of certain things done to a particular person. And, we are forming a judgment about some particular person. So, when we are talking of consensus, it means we are trying to find out other's things remaining same, whether other people present around this person or other people generally will behave in the same way, in the same manner as this particular person about whom we are making the judgment is behaving. So, that is called consensus.

If other people, like who is also faces the similar situation; if other people, who had faced the similar situation, behaves in the similar way, we can say like there is a consensus. And, if others do behave similarly, then we tell consensus is high; but, if other people do not behave similarly, then we tell consensus is low. Consistency; consistency is which the person we are judging acts this same way at other times; the extent to which people, the person we are judging acts in the same way at other times also, so, the same person, whether his behavior is consistent over a particular period of time or not, and which is not very specific to today's situations. So, the crucial factor for decision over here is time.

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Does the person respond the same way over time? So, if that person does similarly over acts the same at other times also, then consistency is high; but, if he or she does not, then consistency is low. Third is, distinctiveness; Distinctiveness is the extent to which this particular person behaves in the same way in other situations and other context also. Or, this is a very unique situation in which that person has behaved. So, here the focus is on the situation; so, the extent to which this person behaves in the same way in others context.

If he or she behaves in the same way in other situations, we tell distinctiveness is low; but if he or she behaves differently, then distinctiveness is high. So, we have like three defining characteristics. One is of course consensus, second is consistency and third is distinctiveness. And, we can tell both; there were two parts with high and low; high and low; high and low of both, of all these three; consensus, consistency and distinctiveness.

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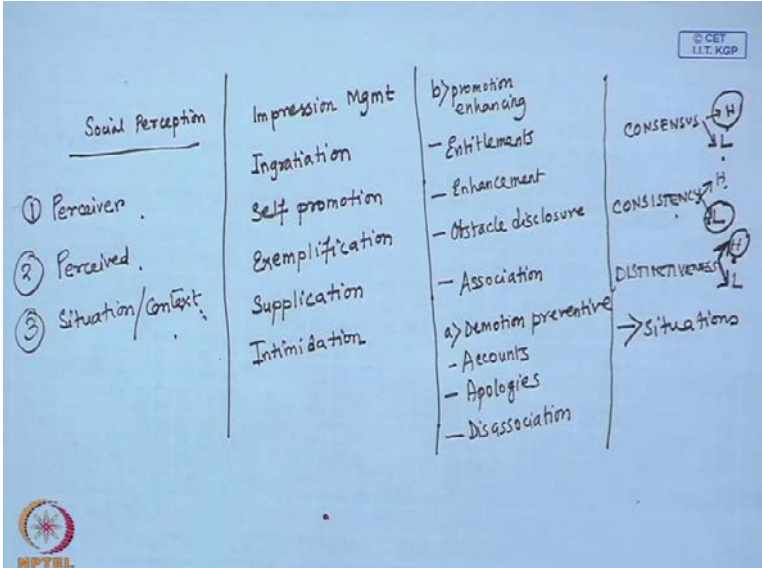
Now is, how do we attribute the causality. And, we see the causality is that in which, whether we tell it is, whether it is a situational attribute or it belongs to the person. So, if we say like; if we go in this way like consensus high and low, then we have consistency high and low and we have distinctiveness high and low. Then if the consensus is high, if consistency is low and the distinctiveness is high; if consensus is high, consistency is low and the distinctiveness is high, we attribute the certain causes to situations. But if consensus is low, consistency is high and distinctiveness is low, we tell it belongs to individual dispositional attributes.

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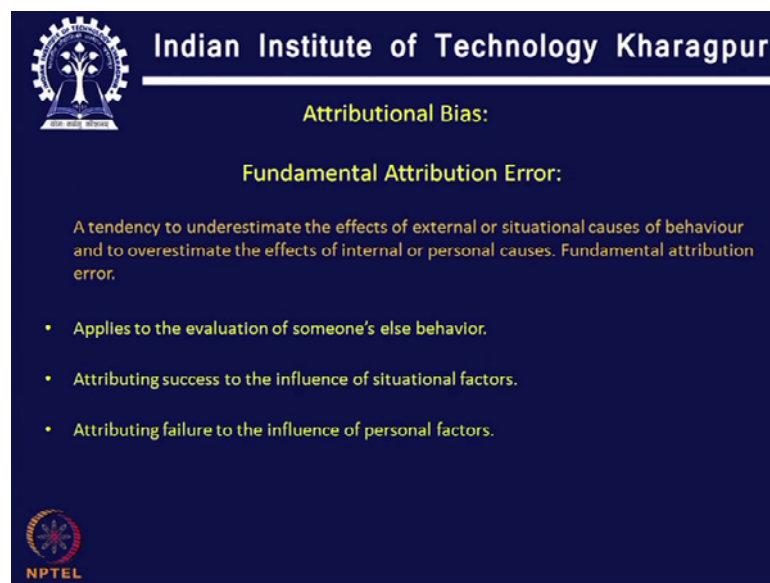
So if you can see, suppose a person is coming late to office on certain day and it gets reported that the person is coming late for ten to fifteen minutes and some actions needed to be taken about that person. So, instead of jumping into the conclusion and attributing it telling like, "okay, it is his problem and something is happening with him or her and that is why this person is coming late", and make individual attribution. It is not again that desirable way to arrive. And, some disciplinary action needs to be taken. It is not the proper way of seeing that person. So, what we have to do is we need do some background check. And, do as people from… obey practitioners, we need to do some background check and try to find out the real reason and then try to attribute the characteristics, either to situational factors or to individual factors.

Now, if a person is coming late is reported to be late by ten to fifteen minutes on a particular day, then how do we carry out this exercise of attributing the cause either to external situations or to internal situations. Then, what we have to do is first find out the route through which that person is travelling. Like, route from his home to office. And then, try to find out like whether others are coming through that particular route or not. Now, when you get others coming through that particular route or not, then you try to find out the others who are coming through that particular route, whether they are also late on that particular day or not. Next, you try to find out whether this person is late only today or he has been late through some other previous days also. Next, we try to find out like whether this person is, whether there have been some situational happenings and what are their self-done in that particular situation. So, if you find like people, others who are coming through that same way from near about locations or has to pass through the same road while coming to office, if they are also late on that particular day when this person about who are making the judgment is late, then we tell consensus is high.

And, if there is certain situational factors like certain strike or certain things appearing which is, situation which is very distinctive from other normal day situations. And, if you find like this person is late only for today, but in other days he is on time, then we can attribute this cause to the situational factors and tell, "Okay, the person is not late"; because he is prone to it, it is internal to that person to come late to office. He is general late comer, but this can be attributed to the specific situations happening and that may be at that particular day. But, if we find like the others are generally not late and there is no specific happening, situational happenings on that particular day and this person comes

to office late quite often, like frequency is very high, then you can attribute it to the personal cause. And tell, "it is his way of, it is his part of his characteristics or her characteristics to come late, but it is, and it is the cause lies internal to the individual. Could be something, which is very specific personality pattern of that individual or his interest is not matching or he may have some family problems or other problems, which is very unique to that person's own reasons and cannot be told like it belongs to other situational factors beyond his own self and other things. So, in that case you tell it to be internally caused.
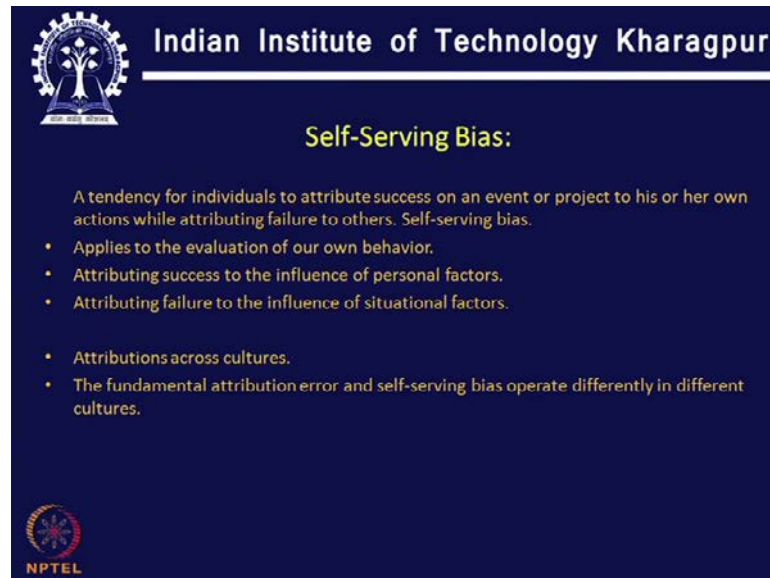
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The attribution errors which are present; which are called fundamental attribution errors; so, what happens? It is a tendency of people to underestimate the effects of external or situational causes of behavior and to overestimate the effects of internal or personal causes. And, fundamental attribution error applies to the evaluation of someone else's behavior. And, what we do? If someone else is successful, we attribute their success to the influence of external effect. But if they are failure, we tell it is due to the influence of the person's own personal characteristics.

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But, the opposite things happen when we are talking of a self-serving bias. So, when we are deciding our own self or try to do, we attribute success to our own self and we attribute failures to situational factors. And, these can happen in different ways in different cultures.

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So, some of the organizational implications of perceptual and attributional biases; it occurs of course as we discussed earlier in employment situations. So, in interviews people make judgments, which is more sometimes very inaccurate. So, like people try to

form a very quick impression about others and they take the whole interview forward based on that first impression.

If initially a negative impression is formed, it gets carried forward and you get weighted on that negative impression formed. So, different panel members view or single person in different light based on their maybe own backgrounds, own interests, own motivations, own personality patterns and sometimes, somebody tells it is a positive opinion; some bodies negative opinion and then you have come at a relativity agent and come to certain decisional points. But, what happens? Agreement about the interview among the interviewer is very less sometimes. And so, different people come at different conclusions about the same applicant.
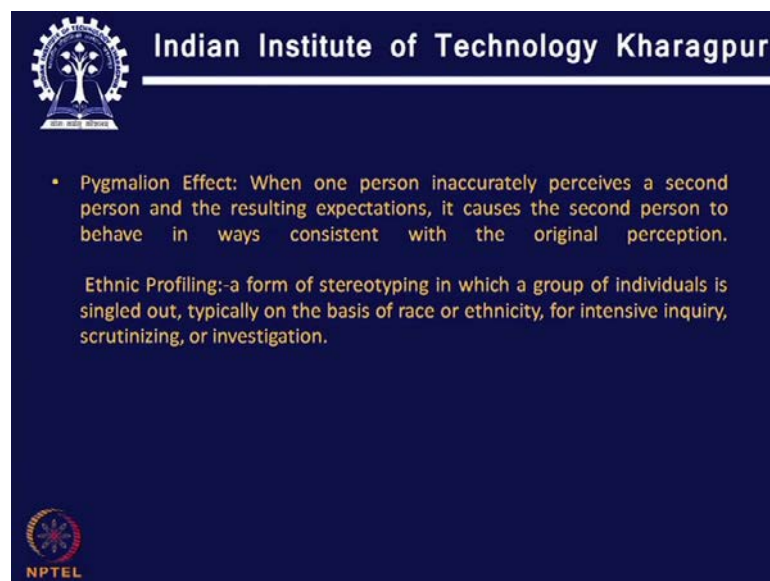
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In problem solving and decision making, so while it comes to taking some decisions, a committee will blame other groups about some problems occurring, which is called the self-serving bias. So, then mangers generally have tendency to reflect problems which tries to show their own competence and they will try to identify problems in which they can show their own competence and not to choose other functional areas; because they are not in their areas of their expertise.

So, and in self-fulfilling prophecy, so what happens? If a manager is expecting big things from his people and so it is like what happens, they are not going to let him down. So, but if he is expecting low, very minimum from his people they will try to meet those low

expectations. And in sometimes, it what happens? The expectations become reality. And, in that way you can really say, "This is the way of motivating people". It should set sometimes high standard for your team members and you try to motivate them, you try to make them believe like they can achieve those standards, they will really perform well, and that is called a self-fulfilling prophecy; because the manager has set a high standard means that person believes in the person's capacity to do that work.

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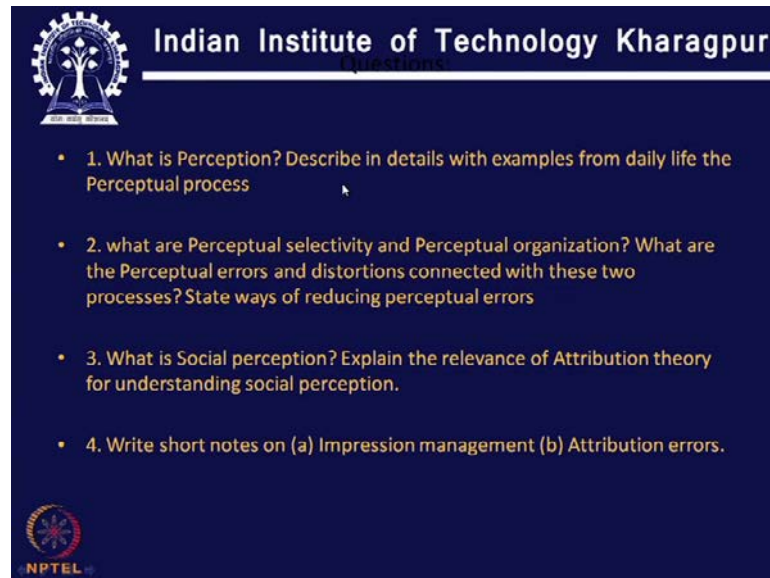

And, this may lead to like some errors like Pygmalion effect. Sometimes, when one person in accurately perceives a second person and the resulting expectation it causes the second person behaves in ways consistent with the original perceptions. So, these are the effect and stereo ethnic profiling is of course a stereotyping effect about the ethnicity that we are concerned about the ethnic group, and sometimes lead to in accurate decisions making without intensive inquiry about the particular person that we are making a decision.

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Coming to questions like continuing in the earlier chapter is like, what is perception, Describe in details with examples from daily life the perceptual process; What are perceptual selectivity and perceptual organization, What are the perceptual errors and distortions connected with these two processes, state ways of reducing perceptual errors; What is social perception, relevance of attribution theory for understanding social perception, short notes on impression management, attribution error.

If you are like utilizing the general principles of perception, organization, interpretation and very careful about putting this causes on telling, okay, it is due to this, the cause is very internal to the person or very external to the person as you have seen in the attribution theory. And, you are very careful about the impression management techniques. Somebody is utilizing or you are even utilizing to manipulate, change the judgments like other form about you, like you are forming about other people, may be all these acts as tools for you to be much better, much equate for perceiving people in social situations and in organizations. And, it improves your capacity for person perception and making correct decisions in some situations, where you have to decide about how to interact with people and how to get along with the people to solve up problems in hand and organizational issues, and for better performance, for other person as an individual as a group and in totality, the organizations performance.

Thank you.