Chapter 5: Individual Behaviour – Personality, Perception, and Attitudes

Introduction

Understanding individual behaviour is crucial for managing people effectively within organizations. Every employee is unique in terms of how they perceive, react, and interact in workplace settings. Three core psychological constructs that deeply influence behaviour at work are **personality**, **perception**, and **attitudes**. This chapter explores how these factors shape human behaviour, decision-making, and performance in organizations, and how managers can harness this understanding to build better teams and culture.

5.1 Personality

5.1.1 Definition of Personality

Personality refers to the **enduring characteristics and traits** that define an individual's behaviour across situations. It is what makes each person distinct in their thoughts, emotions, and actions.

> **Gordon Allport** defined personality as "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behaviour and thought."

5.1.2 Determinants of Personality

Personality is shaped by a combination of:

- **Heredity** – Genetic factors like temperament, intelligence, physical features.
- **Environment** – Family, culture, social groups, and early life experiences.
- **Situational Factors** – Specific contexts may bring out different aspects of personality.

5.1.3 Major Personality Traits Relevant to OB

- **The Big Five Model**:

    a. **Openness to Experience** – Creativity, curiosity.
    b. **Conscientiousness** – Reliability, responsibility.
    c. **Extraversion** – Sociability, assertiveness.
    d. **Agreeableness** – Cooperation, trust.
    e. **Neuroticism (Emotional Stability)** – Calmness vs. anxiety.

- **Other OB-Relevant Traits**:

- **Locus of Control** – Internal vs. external belief in control over events.
- **Self-Esteem** – Degree of self-worth.
- **Risk-Taking** – Willingness to take decisions under uncertainty.
- **Machiavellianism** – Manipulative behaviour for personal gain.
- **Type A/B Personality** – Competitive and time-urgent vs. relaxed.

5.1.4 Personality and Job Fit

- **Person-Job Fit Theory** (Holland's Theory): Six personality types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional) and matching job environments influence job satisfaction and performance.

5.2 Perception

5.2.1 Meaning of Perception

Perception is the **process of interpreting sensory inputs** to understand the environment. In OB, perception influences how employees view tasks, leaders, colleagues, and the organization.

> "Perception is not what is actually there; it is what we interpret from what is there."

5.2.2 Perceptual Process

1. **Receiving Stimuli** – Through senses.
2. **Selective Attention** – Filtering based on interest, experience, etc.
3. **Interpretation** – Attaching meaning.
4. **Response** – Behavioural reaction.

5.2.3 Factors Influencing Perception

- **Perceiver-related** – Attitudes, motives, experience, expectations.
- **Target-related** – Novelty, motion, size, background.
- **Situation-related** – Time, work setting, social environment.

5.2.4 Perceptual Errors

- **Halo Effect** – One trait affects overall judgment.
- **Stereotyping** – Group-based generalization.
- **Selective Perception** – Filtering based on interest.
- **Projection** – Attributing one's own traits to others.
- **Contrast Effect** – Evaluation based on comparison.

5.2.5 Implications in the Workplace

- Misperception leads to **conflict**, **low morale**, and **poor appraisals**.
- Managers should **train for perceptual awareness** and reduce bias.

5.3 Attitudes

5.3.1 Definition of Attitudes

Attitude is a **learned predisposition** to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation.

5.3.2 Components of Attitude (ABC Model)

1. **Affective** – Emotional response (e.g., "I dislike micromanagement.")
2. **Behavioural** – Intention to act (e.g., "I will avoid such jobs.")
3. **Cognitive** – Beliefs (e.g., "Micromanaging reduces efficiency.")

5.3.3 Types of Work-Related Attitudes

- **Job Satisfaction** – Positive feeling about the job.
- **Organizational Commitment** – Emotional attachment to the organization.
- **Job Involvement** – Degree of psychological identification with the job.
- **Employee Engagement** – Dedication and absorption in one's work.

5.3.4 Attitude Formation and Change

- **Sources**:

  - Direct experience
  - Social learning (peers, leaders)
  - Organizational culture

- **Attitude Change**:

  - Via persuasive communication
  - Role of cognitive dissonance: inconsistency between beliefs and actions leads to attitude change

5.3.5 Importance of Attitudes in OB

- Predicts **work behaviour** (e.g., absenteeism, turnover).
- Influences **team dynamics** and **employee motivation**.
- Important in **performance appraisal**, **change management**, and **conflict resolution**.

5.4 Integration: Personality, Perception, and Attitudes in OB

Concept	Influences on OB
Personality	Affects how employees behave and interact.
Perception	Shapes how reality is interpreted and responded to.
Attitudes	Influence motivation, engagement, and satisfaction.

- These three are **interconnected**. A person's **personality traits** influence their **perception** of workplace events, which in turn affect their **attitudes** and responses.
- For example, a **conscientious** employee (personality) may **perceive** a strict deadline as a challenge and feel **positively committed** (attitude), whereas a less motivated one might see it as pressure and develop negative sentiments.

Conclusion

Understanding individual behaviour through the lenses of **personality**, **perception**, and **attitudes** helps managers **predict**, **influence**, and **manage** employee behaviour effectively. These psychological constructs are not just theoretical—they directly impact performance, team cohesion, and organizational success. An organization that aligns employee personality with roles, minimizes perceptual biases, and fosters positive attitudes builds a strong, adaptable workforce ready for long-term growth.