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ATTENTION

Attention is a selective mental process in which the person by adopting certain bodily posture is set to bring certain stimuli into focus of consciousness. It is a term given to perceptual process that select certain inputs for inclusion in our conscious experience or awareness at any given time.

SUSTAINED ATTENTION

Sustained attention is concerned with the concentration of stimuli. It has the ability to maintain attention on an object for longer duration of time. It is also known as “vigilance”. For e.g. air traffic controllers and radar readers are good example of sustained attention as they have to constantly watch and monitor signals on screen.

Determinants of sustained attention

1. Sensory factor

Its performance is superior when it has to identify auditory stimuli than when the stimuli are visual.

2. Clarity of stimuli

Intense and long lasting stimuli facilitate sustained attention and result in better performance.

3. Temporal uncertainty

When stimuli appear at regular intervals of time they are attended better than when they appear at irregular intervals.

4. Spatial uncertainty

Stimuli that appears at a fixed place are readily attended, whereas those that appear at random locations are difficult to attain.

THEORIES OF SUSTAINED ATTENTION

Activation or Arousal Theory

This theory proposes that to correctly carry out a task of vigilance, there must be a certain continuity of stimuli. For e.g. security guard, it will be easier for the guard to stay focused if they move around and make rounds than if

they spend the entire day sitting in the same spot.

Expectancy theory

This theory tells us that a vigilant person who sustain attention will be able to sustain it longer if they actually expect something to happen. If the expectation is low, it's harder to stay focused.

Habituation theory

This theory says that if you get used to something, you will lose your interest and attention in it. In other words you will lose focus as a consequence of regular repetition of irrelevant signals.

Signal Detection theory

This theory suggests that there is no absolute threshold for sensation. Rather, detection of stimuli depends on their physical energy and on internal factors such as the relative costs and benefits associated with detecting their presence. According to the theory, there are a number of determinants of how a detecting

system will detect a signal, and where its threshold level will be.

	Respond "ABSENT"	RespOnd "PRESENT"
STIMULUS PRESENT	MISS	HIT
STIMULUS ABSENT	CORRECT REJECTION	FALSE ALARM