

Applied Psychology

Lecture 4: Psychology at Work

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Aims:

- Introduce the discipline of Occupational Psychology
- Evaluate different methods of recruitment and selection
- Describe employed life as an employment life cycle, with focus on critical stages
 - This lecture will focus on induction; specifically, recruitment and selection
- Introduce aspects of preparation and training for different roles as part of the employed life cycle

What is Occupational Psychology?



What is Occupational Psychology?

Area of applied psychology relating to people at work

Concerned with human behaviour in work and organisational settings

BPS – *Applying the science of psychology to people at work*

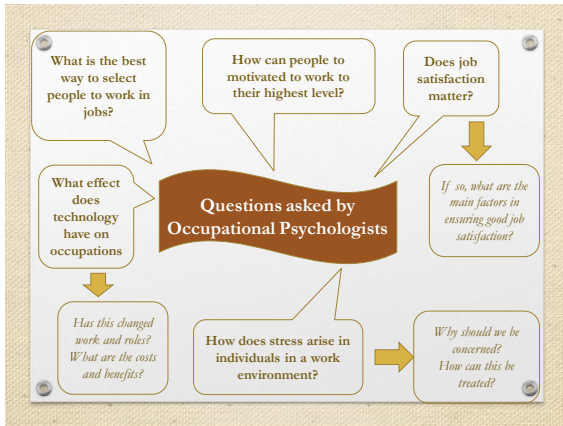
Increasing exploration of the links between work and non-work (Borough & O'Driscoll, 2010)

Overview

- Occupational psychology takes concepts, theories and techniques from many sub-disciplines and APPLIES these to the workplace
 - Social, cognitive, developmental, etc
- This discipline will be covered in far more detail next year in your Occupational Psychology module – this is a very brief introduction to the world of occ psych!

Brief History Lesson...

- Occupational psychology was mainly about the study of individual differences
- Emphasis on investigating and explaining attributes that relate to performance at work, such as abilities, skills, traits and personality of a person
 - E.g., productivity, creativity and performance

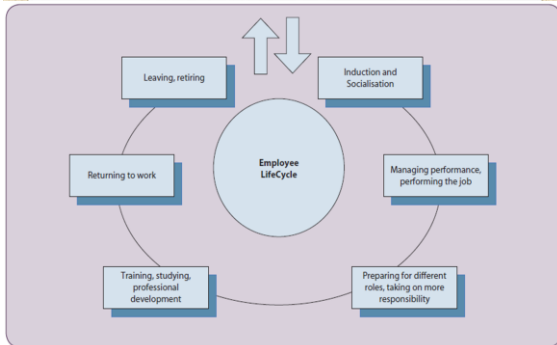




The Employee Life Cycle

- Employed life is complex; the only constant is **change**
- Existing research offers guidance on how to deal with the complexity of this in some areas (e.g., selection) but not all...
- The perspective of 'employee life cycle' can be used to handle complexities – this is a popular concept on how individuals go through different stages **within one organisation**

The Employee Life Cycle



Entering the Life Cycle and Induction

- Different factors affect peoples decision to apply for, and accept, a job
 - E.g., career choices, lifestyle choices
- The aim of the organisation is to recruit the **best person for the job**, but also to understand candidates' reactions or perspectives

Entering the Life Cycle and Induction

- There are **two different perspectives** to understand assessment and selection:

Predictivist:

Matching the right person to the **job**

Constructivist:

Matching the right person to the **team**

Perspective 1: Predictivist

- A job is a stable entity that can be explained, made explicit and quantified
- The aim is to match the right people to particular jobs
- But HOW do we do this...?

Perspective 1: Predictivist

- How?... Organisations can look to predict which selection results are linked to positive performance in the workplace
- Psychometric principles are important!
 - Reliability, validity, standardisation, freedom from bias.

Perspective 1: Predictivist

1. META-ANALYSIS

- Statistical technique to allow generalisation from a set of studies to a population of interest
- Big advance in Occupational Psychology
- Used for research on selection methods: predictive validity

Perspective 1: Predictivist

2. ABILITY AND PERSONALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

- Academics and practitioners embrace the use of ability and attainment measures – valid predictors of performance (e.g., Silvester & Dykes, 2008)
- Use of personality measures is more controversial, but meta-analysis (Barrick & Mount, 1998) shows that the 5-factor personality model predicts workplace training and performance

Recruitment and Selection

- Recruitment: Attempt to attract good people to apply for the job
 - Universities, job fairs, conferences, etc
- Selection: The process of identifying from the pool of recruited applicants those to whom a job will be offered



100 recruited
20 applicants
8 interviews
2 offers
1 hire

Why Does Selection Matter?

- Personnel psychology is one of the most prominent topic areas in work and occupational psychology, and research findings have had a major impact on recruitment practice.
- Most of the world works as a capitalist society (like it or not!)
 - Businesses survive or go bust based on their performance

Why Does Selection Matter?

- If the best applicant is twice as good as the worst, you want the best!
 - But how do you know who that is?
- This is what the selection process attempts to do
 - Examine the data to find the 'ideal' person for the job
 - And then see if potential employees meet that ideal (or choose the person who comes closest to it)
- Employment legislation and guidelines require valid and fair selection procedures

The 'Selection Headache'

- Selection is difficult!
 - Predicting future performance over a period of years, and even decades, from limited information
 - Time and cost constraints
 - Ethics
 - Legislation
 - Impress management

The 'Selection Headache'

- Occupational Psychologists are scientist-practitioners and aim to apply scientific principles to this procedure.
- Predicting which of several job candidates is likely to perform the job most effectively is a forecasting problem...
- But the guiding principle is: past performance is the best predictor of future performance

Time to take a break...



Types of Selection Methods

What are some of the types of methods used for selection?

MIND

MEASURE

Psychometric Tests

“a standardised sample of behaviour which can be described by a numerical scale or category system”

QUANTITATIVE!

Individual Differences

- Most branches of psychology are interested in human behaviour under different conditions, and Occupational Psychology is no different
- The assumption made is that all people are pretty much the same
- BUT! This assumption is wrong...
 - Some children develop faster than others
 - Some adults are less conscientious than others
 - Some people are more intelligent than others

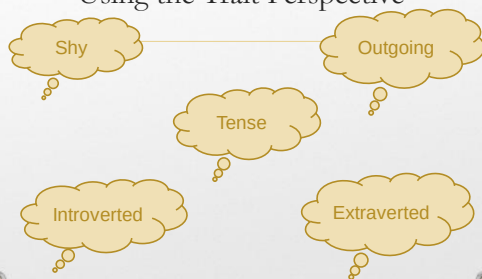
Psychometric Testing

- Psychometrics is the branch of psychology concerned with the scientific measurement of individual differences
- Accurate measurement of individual differences is important because theories can be tested *if and only if* the constructs involved can be measured

Using the Trait Perspective

- **Goals of trait theorists:**
- Describe the basic classes of behaviour that define personality
- Devise ways of measuring individual differences in personality traits
- Use these measures to understand and predict behaviour

Using the Trait Perspective



Personality and Job Performance

Is personality a useful construct for understanding performance at work??

Can we identify any weaknesses in the trait perspective??

Personality and Job Performance

Is personality a useful construct for understanding performance at work??

Task performance

Leadership

Team working skills

Resilience to stress

Personality and Job Performance

State or Trait??

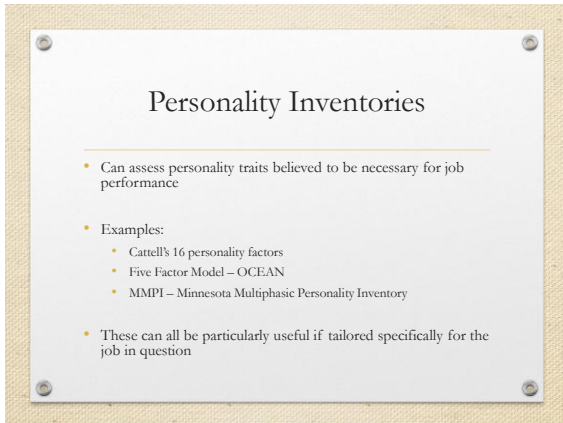
e.g., anxiety

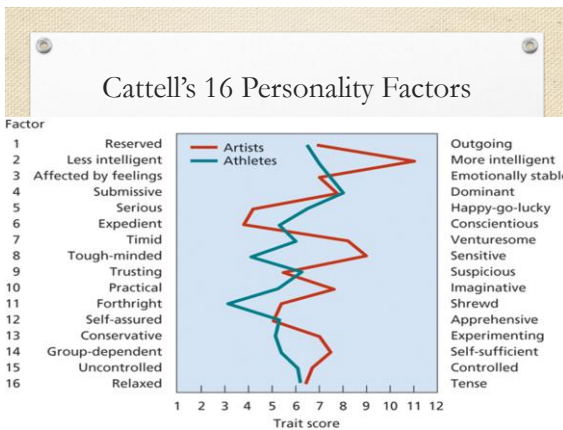
Trait anxiety = personality characteristic

State anxiety = response to the anticipation of threat

Can we identify any weaknesses in the trait perspective??







The Five Factor Model (Costa & McCrae, 1992)

O penness to experience
C onscientiousness
E xtraversion
A greeableness
N euroticism

*Are some of these
personality factors
more desirable
than others?*

The Big Five

	Low scorers	High scorers
Openness to experience	Down-to-earth; Uncreative; Conventional; Uncurious	Imaginative; Creative; Original; Curious
Conscientiousness	Negligent; Lazy; Disorganised; Late	Conscientious; Hard-working; Organised; Punctual
Extraversion	Loner; Quiet; Passive; Reserved	Joiner; Talkative; Active; Affectionate
Agreeableness	Suspicious; Critical; Ruthless; Irritable	Trusting; Lenient; Soft-hearted; Good-natured
Neuroticism	Calm; Even-tempered; Comfortable; Unemotional	Worried; Temperamental; Self-conscious; Emotional

Personality Scales

- Big Five Inventory Personality measure (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991).
 - 44 items
 - 8-9 items per personality factor
 - Administration and scoring information freely available

Personality Scales

- The revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R, Costa & McCrae, 1992)
 - 240 items
 - Measures the Big Five plus facet scores for six subscales within each of the five domains
 - Designed for a wide range of purposes (e.g., clinical, research and occupational uses)
 - Can only be purchased, administered and scored by an individual with occupational test user qualification



Which one of these scales would be better to assess the best individual for a corporate managers position?

WHY?

The Five Factor Model in Practice – Research Findings

- Barrick, Mount and Judge (2001):
 - Conscientiousness (in particular) and neuroticism are the best personality predictors of job performance across all occupations
 - Extraversion and agreeableness are important in jobs requiring a high degree of interpersonal work
 - Less consistent evidence for Openness to experience
- Salgado et al. (2003):
 - Conscientiousness is a valid predictor of performance across most jobs and organisational settings

Critically evaluating the Big Five

- Some personality dimensions tend to be more stable over the lifespan than others
- Introversion-Extraversion, self-esteem, emotionality, and activity level remain relatively stable
- Neuroticism, openness and extraversion tend to decline with age
- Agreeableness and conscientiousness tend to increase with age

Pros and Cons to using personality measures

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Can reveal more information about applicants abilities and interests ✓ Can identify interpersonal traits that may be needed for certain jobs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 'Faking' to present themselves in a social acceptable manner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Are self reports accurate and unbiased? ✗ Training and experience may have a greater impact on job performance than personality |
|---|--|

TASK! Individual differences across Occupations

What personality traits would you assume the following occupations require?



Lawyer



Lecturer



Pilot

Lawyer



According to research:

1. The typical lawyer is inclined towards **introversion** and is likely to prefer working by him/herself
2. The introverted tendency may be exaggerated among highly successful lawyers
3. Lawyers score highly on **neuroticism**; tendency to become tense and overly critical

Foster et al., 2010; Richard, 1993; 2002

Lecturer



Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2008):

1. Students prefer lecturers who are emotionally stable (low neuroticism) and high in conscientiousness
2. Students prefer lecturers who are similar to themselves in all personality traits EXCEPT neuroticism, and particularly for openness and conscientiousness

Generally, students want lecturers who are stable, conscientious, extraverted, agreeable and open

Pilot



Jessup (1971);

- Success rates highest in stable introverts
- But; failure rates higher in neurotic introverts than neurotic extraverts

Lambrith et al. (2003);

- Conscientiousness considered most important dimension and predictor of performance for pilots

Cognitive Ability Tests (Intelligence)



Cognitive Ability Tests (Intelligence)

- **Cognitive ability** – Intelligence
 - Multi- or single- dimension?
- **Single dimension:** g score – general intelligence
 - Successful in predicting performance on many jobs
- **Multiple dimension:** different aspects of intelligence unrelated to one another
 - Math scores may predict programming skills better than language scores do

e.g., of prediction

- What cognitive abilities would best predict success as a lawyer?
- What about an air traffic controller?

Pros and Cons of using cognitive ability tests

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Highly reliable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Validity also rises with increasing complexity of the job ✓ Combinations of CA tests have higher validities than individual tests alone ✓ Can be administered in group settings ✓ Low cost | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Differences in scores for minority groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Non-minorities typically score one SD above minorities ✗ Gender differences may need to be considered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ e.g., scores on maths ✗ Candidates reactions to them can be negative |
|--|--|

Any Questions...?