



PSYCHOLOGY IN PRACTICE

ECPS4024

Week Five

Occupational Psychology

Occupational Psychology is...

- An area of *applied psychology*, and involves the application and development of ideas, theories and techniques drawn from different areas of basic psychology to a specific arena – **i.e., people and their work**
- Concerned with human behaviour in work and organisational settings



Role of Occupational Psychologists

- Psychological assessment at work
- Learning, training and development
- Leadership, engagement and motivation
- Well-being and work
- Work design, organisation change and development

Topics such as ***diversity, gender, fairness and culture*** also relevant, and contained within the knowledge areas above.

British Psychological Society(BPS):

Occupational psychology is concerned with the performance of people at work and with how individuals, small groups and organisations behave and function. Its aim is to increase the effectiveness of the organisation and improve the job satisfaction of individuals.



Becoming an Occupational Psychologist



The
British
Psychological
Society



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

Questions posed by Occupational psychologists

What is the best way to recruit and select appropriate candidates?

How can we predict performance at work?

How can people be motivated to work to their highest level?

What are the implications of work-related stress?

- What effect does advancing technology have on employees and organisations?



Occupational Psychology

- The effect the individual can have on the job
 - Selection and training
 - Leadership/Decision-making/Group-work
- The effect the job can have on the individual
 - Motivation
 - Mental and Physical health/Stress
- The individual and the job in synchrony
 - Automation
 - Ergonomics/Human Factors

History of Occupational Psychology

- **Industrial Revolution**

- Focus on productivity/efficiency
- How could people/workers performance be improved
- Not overly ‘psychological’

History of Occupational Psychology

- **World War I**

- Raised the profile of Psychology as a whole
- Selection and testing of recruits
- Tests devised for aptitude/criteria
- Crucial decisions on basis of 'Psychology'

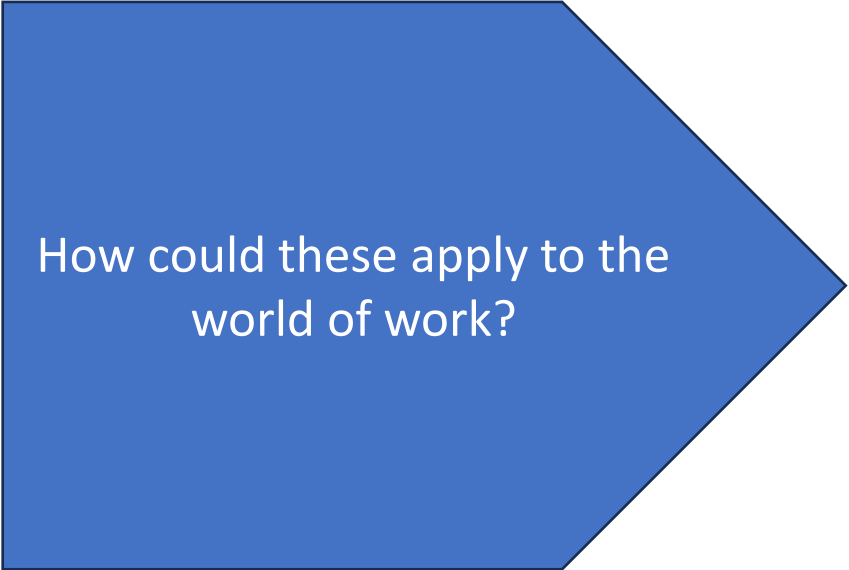
History of Occupational Psychology

- **World War II**

- Selection and testing more advanced
- Classification testing for roles in Military
- Army General Classification Test
- 12 million soldiers categorised during war
- Civilian selection also became important

History of Occupational Psychology

- Post war study of 'Industrial Psychology'
- Psychology expanding in general:
 - Experimental Psychology
 - Social Psychology
 - Cognitive Psychology



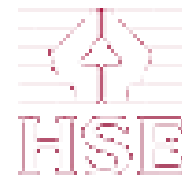
How could these apply to the world of work?

Occupational Psychology Today ??

Occupational Psychology Today

Modern issues:

- No such thing as “a job for life”
- Rights of individuals
 - Equality of opportunity (recruitment & selection)
- Accountability of organisation to individual
 - Government legislation (HSE)
- Technology/Automation



Compare back to Industrial revolution

What are the challenges of Occupational Psychology today?

- Ageing work population
- Increase in workloads
- Remote / dispersed working
- Knowledge work
- Downsizing and outsourcing
- Reduced availability of manual work
- Changes to working practices



Research in Occupational Psychology

- Evidence-based theory and practice
- Research skills and awareness
- Why?



Occupational Psychologists need to be able to:

- Make objective assessments of a problem
- Make decisions about most effective assessment tool or workplace intervention
- Use objective and measurable methods to evaluate success of an intervention

E.g. Personnel Selection

The 'Selection Headache'

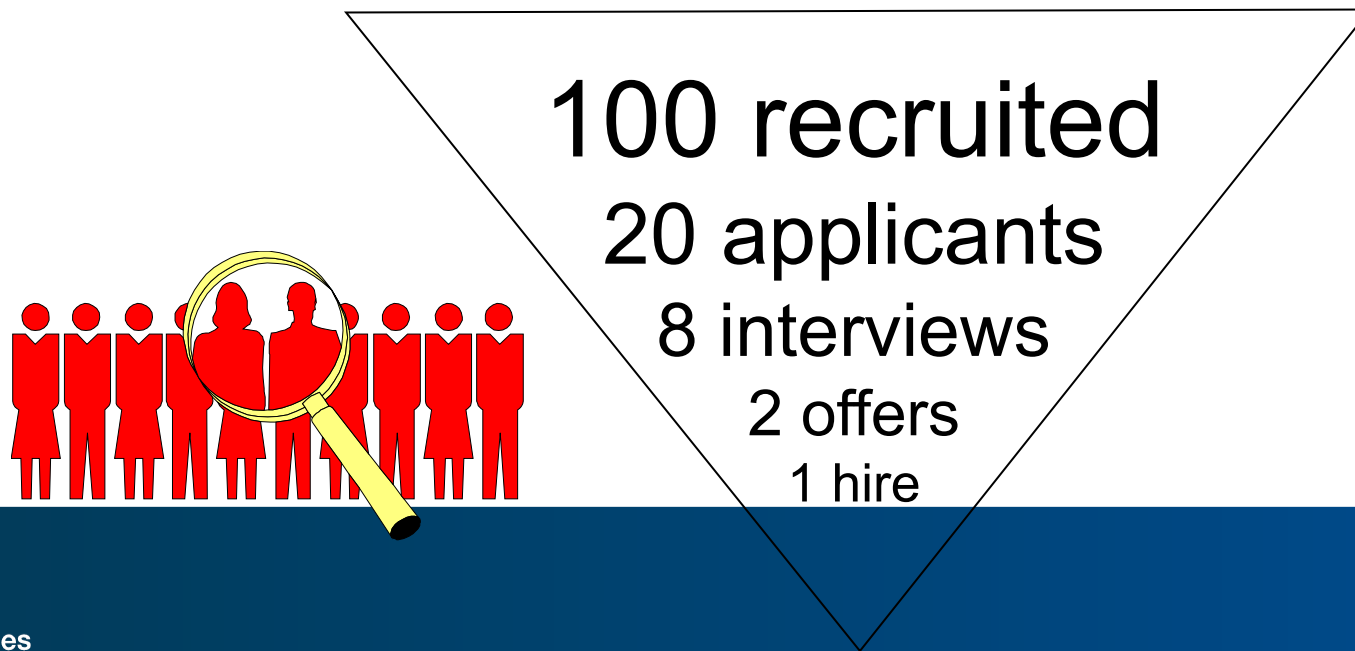
- Occupational Psychologists aim to apply scientific principles to this procedure
- Predict which of several candidates is likely to perform the job most effectively is a forecasting problem...
- But the guiding principle is:

Past performance is the best predictor of future performance



Recruitment

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



How do organisations decide who to employ?

- To make a selection scientifically we need a plan!
 1. Criterion -- definition of good performance
 2. Predictor -- anything that relates to the criterion
- Whilst there may be lots of predictors, we need predictors that will be
 1. Useful
 2. Cost-efficient

Types of selection procedure

- Interviews (structured V unstructured)
- Biodata
- Graphology
- Personality Inventories
- Cognitive ability tests
- Integrity test
- Assessment centres

Activity 1: Graduate Recruitment Exercise (30mins)

- Design a recruitment process...
- Create:
 - Job advert
 - Interview questions
 - Assessment exercise

Activity 2: Assessment Centre Simulation (40mins)

- Team challenge
- Interview role-play
- Candidate Evaluation

Activity 2: Assessment Centre Simulation)

- Team challenge
- Interview role-play
- Candidate Evaluation

Reflection on fairness and bias....

Break

Stress and Wellbeing at Work



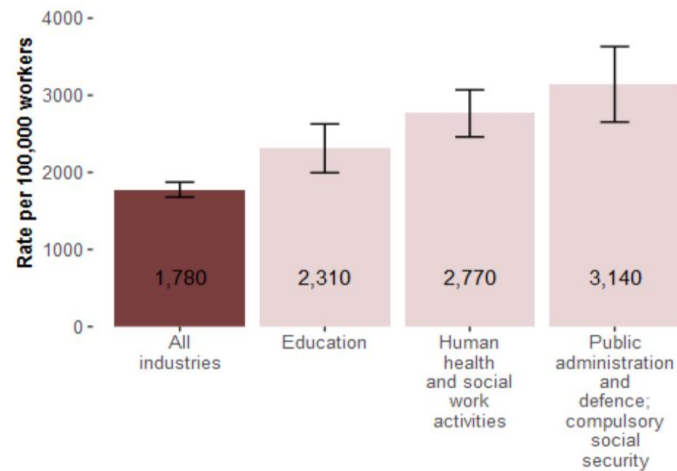
What is Stress?

HSE defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'.

Employers have a legal duty to protect workers from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it.

Scale of the UK problem: Occupational Stress

Figure 2: Prevalence rate for work-related stress, depression or anxiety in Great Britain, by broad industry category, per 100,000 people employed in the last 12 months, averaged over the period 2018/19-2020/21



Source: LFS, estimated annual average 2018/19-2020/21
95% confidence intervals are shown on the chart

In 2020/21 work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 50% of all work-related ill health

Stress, depression or anxiety is most prevalent in:

- Education
- Human health and social work activities

Statistically higher rates of stress, depression or anxiety in

- Health professionals
- Teaching and other educational professionals

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf>

All jobs have the capacity to be stressful!

-
- Research has identified 5 major categories of work stress (Cooper et al, 1988)
 - Factors intrinsic to the job
 - Role in organisation
 - Relationships at work
 - Career development and achievement
 - Organisational structure and climate
 - More recently a focus also on the home / work interface

HSE: six areas of work that need to be managed properly

- demands
- control
- support
- relationships
- role
- change

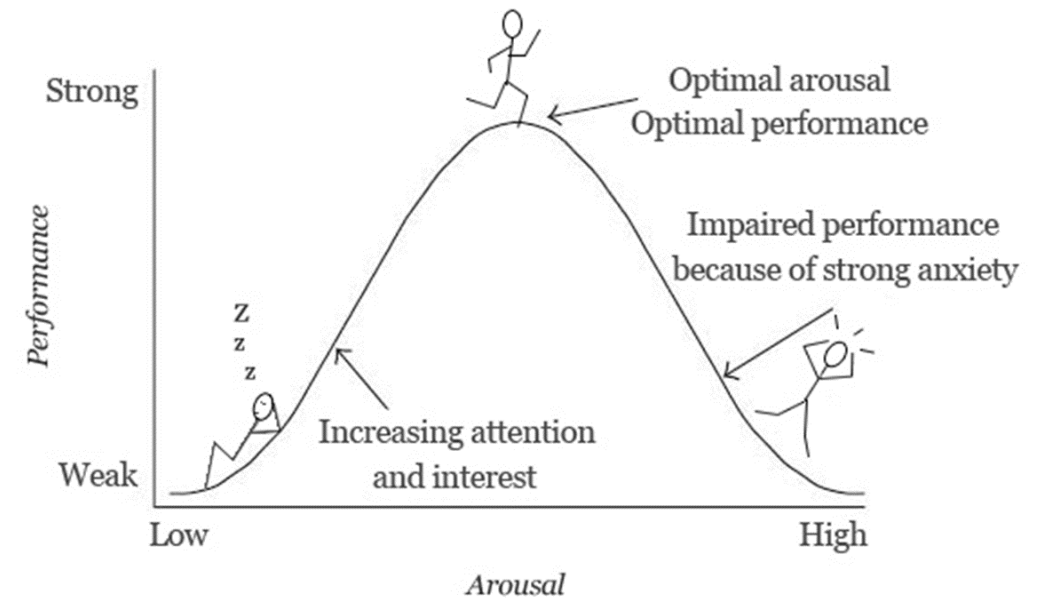
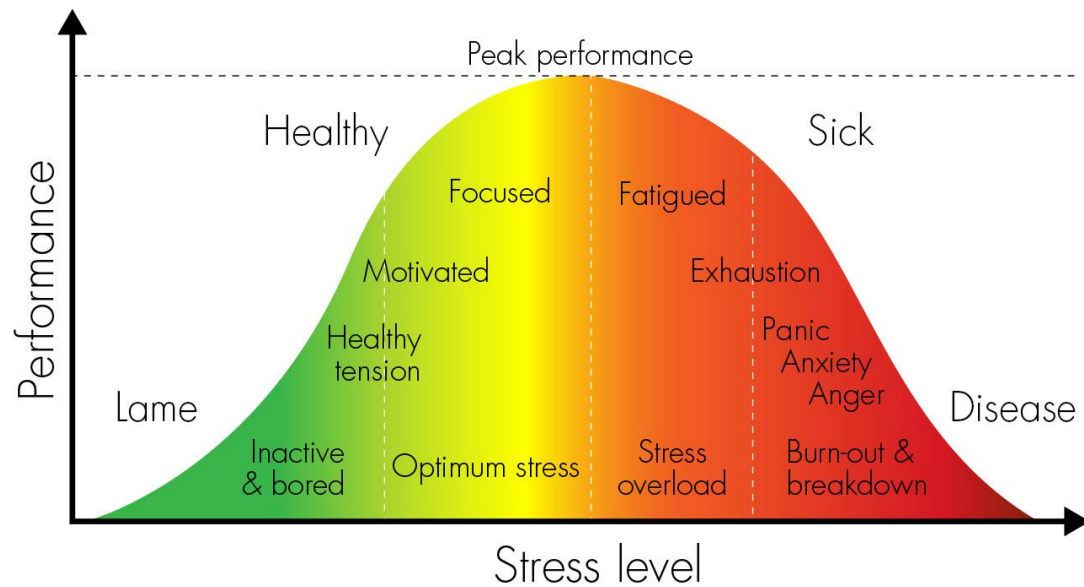


Sources of work stress

HSE: Six main areas of work that can affect stress levels.

- [Demands](#) – workload, work patterns and the work environment
- [Control](#) – how much say the person has in the way they do their work
- [Support](#) – encouragement, resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
- [Relationships](#) - promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- [Role](#) – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles
- [Change](#) – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm>



Cost of stress

- Personal cost
 - Minor ailments – e.g. Headache
 - Serious illness – e.g. coronary heart disease
 - Social problems – e.g. alcohol or drug abuse
 - Family problems – families suffer when one member is under stress
- Cost to society
 - National health service
- Company cost
 - Job satisfaction, job performance, absenteeism
 - UK Health and Safety Executive
 - 13,000,000 working days lost / year
 - £12 Billion cost

Cost of stress

Signs of stress in Teams

arguments

higher staff turnover

more reports of stress

more sickness absence

decreased performance

more complaints and grievances



Table 12.1

Physical and behavioural symptoms of stress

Physical symptoms of stress	Behavioural symptoms of stress	Ailments with stress aetiology
Lack of appetite Craving for food when under pressure Frequent indigestion or heartburn Constipation or diarrhoea Insomnia Constant tiredness Tendency to sweat for no good reason Nervous twitches Nail-biting Headaches Cramps and muscle spasms Nausea Breathlessness without exertion Fainting spells Frequent crying or desire to cry Impotency or frigidity Inability to sit still without fidgeting High blood pressure	Constant irritability with people Feeling unable to cope Lack of interest in life Constant or recurrent fear of disease A feeling of being a failure A feeling of being bad or of self-hatred Difficulty in making decisions A feeling of ugliness Loss of interest in other people Awareness of suppressed anger Inability to show true feelings A feeling of being the target of other people's animosity Loss of sense of humour Feeling of neglect Dread of the future A feeling of having failed as a person or parent A feeling of having no one to confide in Difficulty in concentrating The inability to finish one task before rushing on to the next An intense fear of open or enclosed spaces, or of being alone	Hypertension: high blood pressure Coronary thrombosis: heart attack Migraine Hayfever and allergies Asthma Pruritus: intense itching Peptic ulcers Constipation Colitis Rheumatoid arthritis Menstrual difficulties Nervous dyspepsia: flatulence and indigestion Hyperthyroidism: overactive thyroid gland Diabetes melitus Skin disorders Tuberculosis Depression

Arnold et al., page 443

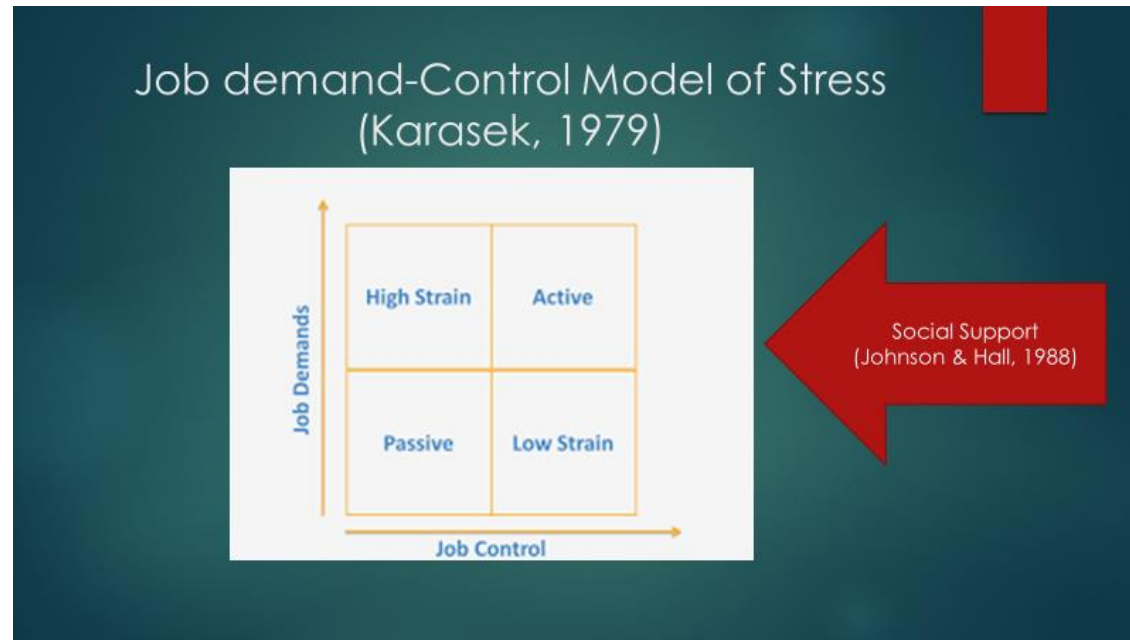
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Identifying sources of stress

- Spend five minutes identifying common sources of stress in your current working environment.... Make a note of these and be prepared to share them with the group
- Also reflect on any additional sources of stress you may feel (these do not need to be shared!)



Social Support at Work



Organisational structure and climate

Culture of the organisation: the values, assumptions and norms shared by the organisation

Mismatch between individual and organisational values

Unfair organisational climate: perceived fairness and justice

Employee involvement/participation

Management of change



Managing stress at work



Managing stress at work

- demands
 - control
 - support
 - relationships
 - role
 - change
- Of these, which are the most amenable to change by the organisation?
 - By YOU?

Managing stress at work



Primary level interventions -
focused around prevention



Secondary level interventions –
focused around early intervention
and coping



Tertiary level interventions -
treatment, counselling, job redesign
etc

Social Support at Work

-
- Peer support
 - Wellbeing initiatives
 - Compassion



Team Culture

- Hybrid Working
- Student demands
- Compassion Fatigue
- Technology
- Boundaries
- Multiple roles

Talking Toolkits

- Engage in appropriate conversations about stress and wellbeing at work
- Recognise individual differences

[Talking Toolkit: Preventing work-related stress \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/talking-toolkit/)

Talking Toolkit

Preventing work-related stress



Talking Toolkits

Go through the following questions with your employee or team

Does your workload feel achievable? Think about which tasks take up the most time and how your organisation copes at busy times.

Do you feel the deadlines you are given are realistic? Do you often have conflicting deadlines?

Have you had the right training to carry out the core functions of your job?

What improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about? Think about you, your line manager, your organisation.