

CHAPTER 2 – PERSONALITY AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES**CHAPTER OBJECTIVES**

Most students taking a course in organizational behavior have already taken at least one basic course in human behavior, such as introductory psychology or sociology. This chapter along with Chapters 3 and 4 can therefore serve as a refresher of selected behavioral topics. At the same time, these chapters attempt to focus on areas that have particular relevance to the field of organizational behavior.

This Chapter focuses on individual differences – primarily the notion of personality. The objective is to provide several common classifications of personality with a focus on those that are particularly relevant in organizational settings. Many of these classifications and related theories are referred to in subsequent Chapters of the text.

The role of personality in organizational settings is also considered. The personality orientations towards work of the organizationalist, professional and indifferent highlight the role personality can have on individual motivation and performance in their work lives.

To complete the model of performance introduced in Chapter 1, different types of individual ability are introduced and discussed.

KEY POINTS

This chapter focuses on three major topics: (1) the nature of personality, (2) personality's role in organizational life, and (3) the role of ability and types of ability that influence individual performance. For each topic, it is first important for the student to learn basic concept definitions.

This Chapter introduces the basics of personality as a key factor that influences the behaviors of interest to managers and leaders.

In addition to encouraging improved diagnosis and action, this chapter along with Chapter 3 (Attitudes) and Chapter 4 (Perception, Judgment and Attribution) should lay a foundation for the entire course with a focus on the individual. That is, individual behavior concepts should be kept alive and applied throughout the text and assignments to come. There will be numerous instances where these concepts and models can and should be reintroduced as the student advances through the course.

Finally, it should be made clear to the student that many more behavioral concepts and models are yet to come in subsequent chapters. Neither the focus nor the content of individual behavior topics ends with this chapter.

This Chapter also includes a discussion of the different types of ability that are critical components of performance. Cognitive ability, emotional intelligence, perceptual ability, and psychomotor skills are each addressed. It should be stressed that ability is both a factor that can be influenced by selection factors as well as through an organization's training programs.

TOPICAL OUTLINE

Introductory case, Dale Felton.

Personality

How and When Personality Operates

The Bases of Personality

Approaches to Understanding Personality

- The “Big Five” Personality Dimensions
- Positive and Negative Affectivity – Being in a Good of Bad Mood
- Machiavellianism
- Locus of Control
- Myers-Briggs Personality Dimensions

Personality in Organizational Settings

- Organizationalist
- Professional
- Indifferent

The Mature Personality in Organizations

Ability

Cognitive ability

Emotional Intelligence

Perceptual Ability

Psychomotor Ability

Summary

KEY CONCEPTS

Ability
Agreeableness
Attraction-selection-attrition cycle
Bases of Personality
Cognitive ability
Conscientiousness
Emotional intelligence
Emotional stability
Extroversion / Introversion
Indifferent orientation
Locus of control
Machiavellianism
Myers-Briggs dimensions
Nature-nurture argument
Negative affectivity
Neuroticism
Openness to experience
Organizationalist orientation
Perception
Perceptual ability
Personality
Positive affectivity
Professional orientation
Psychomotor ability
Socialization
Strong situations
Weak situations

EXERCISES

A. ANALYZING PERSONALITY AT WORK

Various class discussions can be built around questions regarding personality. For example, students can be asked as individuals or as groups to describe their experiences working with different types of personalities:

- bureaucratic, authoritarian, or Machiavellian personalities.
- organizationalists, professionals, and indifferents
- abrasive personalities

Students may also be asked to identify personality characteristics that might be more suitable for:

- different organization structures such as organic versus mechanistic structures.
- different types of jobs such as salespersons, air traffic controllers, police officers, librarians, accountants or managers.

B. Assessing Positive Affectivity and Negativity

The exercise on the next two pages allows the students to assess and discuss positive and negative affectivity.

Exercise: Assessing Positive Affectivity and Negativity

This list of words describes different feelings and emotions.

- 1. Interested
- 2. Distressed
- 3. Excited
- 4. Upset
- 5. Strong
- 6. Guilty
- 7. Scared
- 8. Hostile
- 9. Enthusiastic
- 10. Proud
- 11. Irritable
- 12. Alert
- 13. Ashamed
- 14. Inspired
- 15. Nervous
- 16. Determined
- 17. Attentive
- 18. Jittery
- 19. Active
- 20. Afraid

In the space provided to the left of each one, indicate to what extent you generally feel this way, that is, how you feel on average using this scale:

- 1 = VERY SLIGHTLY OR NOT AT ALL
- 2 = A LITTLE
- 3 = MODERATELY
- 4 = QUITE A BIT
- 5 = VERY MUCH

Now, copy the values you have marked for each word in the spaces below, and total the columns A and B.

Column A

- 1. _____
- 3. _____
- 5. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____
- 12. _____
- 14. _____
- 16. _____
- 17. _____
- 19. _____

Total A _____

Column B

- 2. _____
- 4. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 11. _____
- 13. _____
- 15. _____
- 18. _____
- 20. _____

Total B _____

Your score on Positive Affectivity is the Column A total and you score on Negative Affectivity is the Column B total. Which is higher, your positive affectivity score or your Affectivity score?

How accurate do you think the discussion of the text about Positive Affectivity and Negative Affectivity?

Ask some of your classmates what their scores are, then read the discussion of Positive Negative Affectivity. Do their scores reflect their behavior?

Source: Copyright 1984 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

CHAPTER 2 STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss strong and weak situations and their influence on the presence of personality

Students should be able to provide several different contexts that are either a strong or weak situation. Classrooms themselves can be strong contexts if the class is relatively large and the professor maintains tight control of the class. One way to initiate this discussion is to have the students consider how much they know about the personalities of their classmates based on their contact with them within the class. They are likely to know more about the individual characteristics of students if it is a loosely structure classroom environment or one where much of the work has been done in small, informal groups..

2. Consider the Myers-Briggs approach to personality and classify yourself into one of the four cells. (Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, Introversion-Extroversion, Perceptive-Judgment). See if another person who knows you agrees with how you perceive your style. What are the implications of your assessment for the types of situations and job where you will be more successful?

This is another self-examination exercise in which the students can characterize their problem-solving propensities and assess the implications of falling into a particular quadrant. There are also implications for self development; that is, a sensing type may search for ways to become more intuitive. Having someone else make a characterization often reveals that people have self perceptions that differ from how others see them. Such differences need not be threatening. Rather, they can lead to a broadened self image. This question can be used as a good class exercise to foster understanding of the model.

3. Have you ever worked in an organization where managers behaved in the way Argyris's theory of the mature personality would suggest? What impact did it have on you?

Argyris' theory points toward an incongruence between the mature personality and certain managerial practices. The person with a mature personality is active, independent, has a complex behavior repertoire and deepened interests, a longer time perspective, self-awareness and control, and prefers peer and superordinate roles.

Given these characteristics, the students should identify managerial practices they have experienced which frustrate these characteristics, and particularly how they responded to each frustrating practice. Implications for management practice can now be explored, such as delegation and decentralization, performance appraisal, autonomy and self-evaluation, peer evaluation, time clocks, and any others that seem relevant.

DIVERSITY, ETHICAL AND GLOBAL ISSUES

A Question of Ethics: The Machiavellian Professor

Everyone in the History department at State University was excited to learn that Horice Toth, the Department Chair, had completed negotiations to hire Donald Touchman away from Revere University, a prestigious private university in the northwest. Touchman was a great teacher and an excellent researcher. Everyone thought, certainly, that having Touchman at State University would increase the research productivity of the department, improve its reputation for teaching in the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), and give a boost to its national reputation. The bonus, the History faculty thought, was that during the interview phase of the hiring, they found that he was very clever, witty, charming, bright, and funny. Almost without exception, the History faculty thought that he would be a welcome addition to the very amicable culture of the department.

After he arrived, they were not disappointed. In addition to his writing and teaching, he had a way of making them feel very good about themselves and State University. For example, he talked of how State University was a better place to work than Revere:

You can't believe how unprofessional they are at Revere, and how arrogant, too. You know Professor Harvey who is there? Well when he came, he negotiated over the color of his file cabinets. How petty can you get? They are all like that. Here, though, the situation is much more congenial.

He also spent a great deal of time with individual faculty members, talking with them about their work and how he saw the future of the History department. Everyone came away from these conversations with very positive feelings about Touchman. For example, he told Jane Fieber, a young Latin-American specialist, "Jane, I just read your last paper in the journal and it was absolutely first rate. It certainly explained the economic problems in Peru much better than I've ever seen. We need more like you." Then he went on, without any motivation from her. "What I'm worried about for the Department is that John's work is not what it used to be. It certainly isn't at the same quality level as yours. Has he turned off? Is he really making any contribution to us at all?" When Touchman left Jane's office, she had a sense of elation and pride. Her work was being highly praised by a good scholar and, more importantly, he seemed to rate it better than the work of John Appley, one of the senior history professors who had a national reputation for his work on Brazil.

By the end of the year, the Department of History contained a group of happy professors, happy because Touchman was apparently such a great addition. However, 18 months later, some strange things began to happen. Adrienne Diest, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, called Horace to her office and told him that she wanted the Department of History to do a self-study to find out where the problem areas were, but especially to know which faculty members were not

carrying their own load. Horace was puzzled. Nothing like this had happened before in CLA and, besides, he wasn't aware of any difficulties. "Why?" Horace wanted to know.

The Dean responded, "I'm beginning to get some uneasy vibrations from key people in your group that there are problems that need attention. And I also think that it is just a good idea."

When Horace brought the idea up at a departmental meeting, he was surprised to find that the faculty also thought the Dean had a good idea. Many of them, who last year were quite happy with the Department and its position in the CLA, indicated that indeed there were some things that needed examining now. Horace began to have some self-doubt, wondering "Is this a nice way of saying, 'Horace, you're not doing a good job as Chair. Maybe you should think about resigning.'"

Horace pressed on, beginning the self-study by interviewing each faculty member. What dawned on him as these interviews progressed was that each of them was content with his or her own, but—and this was the revelation—not very happy about the work of the others. Even more interesting was that the negative evaluations that each has of the others were exactly the sort that Touchman had outlined to him when they had their conversation.

This raised a red flag in Horace's mind, so he decided to probe more deeply to test an intuition that he was starting to develop by having another talk with two professors, both close friends and whom he trusted implicitly. His intuition was correct: the separate conversations were almost identical. The first thing that each one told him was that they agreed exactly with Touchman about the strengths and weaknesses of various faculty members. But, and here was the clinching point, John, the Brazil specialist recounted how weak Harold's work on Peru was and Harold told him how deficient John's work on Brazil had become. These were Touchman's evaluations, for sure, but Horace did not agree with them. He thought both John and Harold were still doing good work.

"Could it be," he asked himself, "that the source of all of this negativity is Touchman?" So he met again with Harold and probed more, "How well do you get along with Touchman? Do you agree with his views?" Harold's answer was enlightening. "Yes," he said, "Donald and I have talked at length about the Department. He thinks my work on Peru is very good and holds great promise. He isn't so positive about the others, though, and thinks we need to do something to ratchet up the quality in the department." Horace then arranged to have lunch with John. "How well do you get along with Don Touchman? Do you and he share similar views about the Department?" Horace predicted John's answer. "I've talked a lot with Don," John said, "since he arrived at State University. He likes my work on Brazil, but has serious doubts about some other senior faculty. For example, he thinks that Harold is on the downslope of his career. His work on Peru is getting sloppy. I haven't looked at it for some time, but I trust Don's judgment on this." Horace talked with other professors and, quickly, his intuition was confirmed. Con Touchman was the person who had created the sense of animosity and uneasiness in the History department.

When he was sure that he was right, Horace went to the Dean to find out if Touchman was behind the self-study. At first, she was reluctant to explain the reasons, but finally admitted that, indeed, Touchman was the instigator of the study. Horace explained to her what he had concluded from the investigation to date. The Dean would, she told the Chair, talk to Touchman about it and form her own opinion.

A week later, the Chair received a phone call from the Dean. She said, "I've spoken with Touchman. He thinks that your accusations are unfair and they are based on the fact that there is a lot of professional jealousy in your group. The others are envious of him because he is such a great teacher and a good researcher. You will have to manage the situation and get things straightened out down there in your group."

"That isn't what is going on," the Chair said. "I think Touchman is very political and I am worried about what his style will do to the Department and to the College."

"Don't be so damned envious," replied the Dean. "He's a good scholar and I'm glad to have him. Don't force me to choose between him and you because you won't like my decision."

"My God," Horace thought to himself, "Touchman's done it with her too. If that's the case, it doesn't make any sense to risk my job over this. I'll just have to be careful. I wonder when Touchman will start on the Dean."

It didn't take long. Within six months there were rumors around the College and the University that the Dean might be leaving, that she was being pushed out by the central administration because there was a lot of grumbling and uneasiness among the faculty that was due to the fact that she was spending much more time with her husband and family, who were located in another university about 200 miles from State University. The Chair knew that Touchman was going after bigger fish now.

Global Focus:
An example of different socialization experiences on business practices

One reason for differences in behavior across different nationalities, as you will discover more fully when you read Chapter 7, is that a nation's culture may dictate different societal norms. This can lead to conflict for managers in organizations operating internationally because fundamental differences in behavior offer a difficult situation. Managers must appreciate differences in personality traits and preferences that are unique to specific national, but different cultures within the same firm. This 'culture-clash' gives rise to a variation in personality and behavior patterns within the organization and forces management into a difficult position. One example of such differences has to do with bribery and payoffs. While not nonexistent in U.S. firms, these practices are regarded by most American firms because of government regulation and societal changes, as inappropriate, both professionally and personally.

This creates problems for U.S. firms with divisions in countries where these are accepted practices. One example is the Maquiladora industry in Mexico. Maquiladoras are assembly, manufacturing, or processing facilities located along the border zone between Mexico and the United States that exist chiefly due to the lower labor costs available in Mexico for U.S. firms and less government regulation.

Managers from the United States in these plants face the conflict of both imposing norms and beliefs which they developed within the United States or allowing employee behavior which may not be productive for the organization as a whole. The point is that the personal decisions and behavior patterns of the Maquiladora employees are directly related to their environment and determining that the 'right' standard of behavior is the one determined by American standards seems unrealistic.

Source: Adapted from Butler and Teagarden (1993)

CASE: LAUREL BEDDING COMPANY**Case:
Laurel Bedding Company**

The Laurel Bedding Company is in the business of producing a well-known brand of mattresses. Because mattresses are bulky and are costly to ship, the manufacturing is franchised out to various local bedding companies around the nation who produce for local department stores. The Laurel Bedding Company employed some thirty-two assemblers carrying out the various specific operations required in the making of a mattress. The springs inside the mattress were purchased from another company. The mattress core of springs or foam had to be covered with cloth. Different assemblers performed different parts of this operation as the mattress was pushed along the assembly line on rollers. Each assembler had a specific task to perform. For each task there was a performance standard established and a basic incentive was paid for reaching or surpassing the performance standard established by means of time study.

In the spring of 1999, Professor Judy Taylor asked the Laurel Bedding Company if she could conduct a study of the performance of the assemblers. She wanted to administer a number of psychological instruments to the workers and see if variations in their scores were predictive of the actual performance of the workers. One of her instruments measures locus of control—the degree to which individuals feel that their life is controlled by themselves or by events outside of themselves. The former are considered to be "internals" and the latter "externals," depending on the location of the perceived life control. Professor Taylor assumed that most of the workers would probably be "externals," given the fact they were production workers. Much to her surprise, almost all of the assemblers scored quite high as "internals." She wondered why this was so.

What is your judgment of her findings?

Case Discussion: Laurel Bedding Company

Professor Taylor's finding that almost all of the assemblers scored quite high on internal locus of control may be due to several factors. The workers work rather independently of each other even though they assemble the same product. They control their own performance levels and financial incentives independent of co-workers. This self-control doesn't seem to be creating any problems because the case reports no signs of tension or frustration. Over time such a work situation might have caused externals to quit or be assigned to other jobs. It is also possible that the workers may have participated in the choice and design of the pay plan, and helped to choose one consistent with their internal locus orientation.