



OCCUPATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY STAFF OF ACS DISTANCE EDUCATION

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PREFACE

A big part of managing any organisation successfully is to manage the people who work in that organisation. The way in which people function will depend just as much on personalities, attitudes and relationships, as it does upon not only the abilities that each individual has.

The psychology of a person in a work situation is often quite different to what it might be outside of the workplace.

In their private life; a person's thinking and actions may be influenced by the bonds of friendship or kinship; and there can often be a sense of security in relationships that is certainly different, and probably stronger; than the relationships that exist in a workplace.

For example: A parent or sibling relationship will always exist, whether the individuals conflict or not; but conflict between an employee and employer may result in the relationship being dissolved. Teenagers and young adults may speak their mind more directly to a parent than an employer; because they are more "secure" in their relationship within their family; than what they are about their relationship in the workplace.

This book explores the psychology of people in a workplace; with the aim of giving a better understanding of how people think at work. It is designed as a reference for managers, employers, supervisors, employees, and students of psychology or human resources management.

John Mason

Principal, ACS Distance Education

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Occupational psychology is also known as organisational psychology and industrial psychology. As a field, occupational psychology is concerned with all areas of work whether industry, large organisations, small businesses, institutions, or even the self-employed. In this book, we shall examine what occupational psychology involves - its chief concerns, methods, and underlying theories. We will also review how the principles of occupational psychology can be applied to recruitment and selection of staff, and how businesses and individuals can get the most out of employees and make work a more enjoyable experience all round.



WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY?

The term 'occupational psychology' is interchangeable with organisational psychology and industrial psychology, although the latter term has waned in popularity because it is not as

inclusive as the former two. Sometimes industrial and organisational psychology is collectively referred to as I-O psychology. In recent years, the term 'business psychology' has also emerged. Nevertheless, all these terms refer to a field of psychology which is focussed on work behaviour and mean the same thing.

Occupational psychology is concerned with more than just industry or organisations. It is concerned with all types of work environments, employees and employers. The main goal of occupational psychology is to improve performance of organisations and to enhance the job satisfaction of employees. Some of the key areas of interest for occupational psychologists are:

- Recruitment of personnel
- Improving working conditions
- Increasing productivity
- Developing effective decision making abilities
- Methods of coping with stress at work

Occupational psychologists may be employed directly by larger organisations as fulltime employees. In other cases they may act as external consultants who are brought into businesses or other workplaces to undertake contractual work.

In their role within an organisation, occupational psychologists may find themselves working alongside other professionals such as business operators, managers, supervisors, business coaches, HR specialists, careers counsellors, or other psychologists. Many of these individuals from other related professions have some knowledge, skills, or training in areas of practice associated with occupational psychology.

WHO IS IT USEFUL FOR?

Knowledge of the fundamentals of occupational psychology may help improve the awareness and skills of people working in related fields and may be beneficial to anyone in a business operations or managerial role. It can serve to guide recruitment and training of staff and to establish productive work teams, suitable team leaders, satisfactory work environments, and to help employees fulfil their potential.

Some aspects of occupational psychology can even be extended to help the lay person to understand how best to recruit contractors for private work, such as builders or gardeners. Other aspects may relate to freelance contractors employed by agencies or by businesses directly. Occupational psychology is therefore relevant to a broad range of individuals, perhaps more so than some people would initially think.

