

Individual differences  
and environmental  
factors influence  
human behavior  
psychol...



Q. (a) How do individual differences and environmental factors influence human behavior in an organization? (With examples)

Ans. Individual differences mean the ways in which people differ from each other. Individuals have different abilities, personalities, learning experiences and attitudes. It is not surprising that they perceive work in different ways. Differences between individuals can be a source of developing creativity or the root of conflict and frustration. The needs of the individual should match with the needs of the organization so that the goals can be met and satisfaction can be achieved. It is important to emphasize individual differences and valuing diversity is a key driver in search for equality at work. With different backgrounds, ethnicity, gender and socialization, no one can expect all individuals to view an event in the same way.

The behavior of individuals / humans is the foundation of organizational performance. Understanding individual behavior is crucial for the effective management. Managers need to understand individual differences because they have an impact on the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of each member of an organization. Individual differ on the basis of personality, ethnic origin, physique, gender, early family experiences, social and cultural factors, attitudes, motivation, intelligence and abilities and perception.

PERSONALITY: Personality is the pattern of relatively enduring ways that a person feels, thinks and behaves. Personality is an important factor in accounting for why employees act the way they do in organizations and why they have favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward their jobs and organizations. Personality has been shown to influence career choice, job

satisfaction, stress, leadership and some aspects of job performance. It is always easy and understandable when a personality is described in terms of traits. A trait is a specific component of personality that describes the particular tendencies a person has to feel, think, and act in certain ways, such as in a shy or outgoing, critical or accepting, compulsive or easy going manner.

The Big Five model of personality places five general personality places five general personality traits at the top of the trait hierarchy: extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience.

The figure below explains the hierarchical organization of personality:

The below boxes show the Big Five dimensions of Personality:

Extraversion

Neuroticism

Agreeableness

Conscientiousness

Openness to experience

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Positive emotions such as warmth, etc.

Anxiety , self - consciousness

Vulnerability.

Trust, tender mindedness, straight forwardness

Competence, order, self discipline

Fantasy, actions, ideas.

The above boxes show the specific traits related to the Big Five.

### **Other organizationally relevant personality traits that differ individuals from each other are:**

Several other specific personality traits that are relevant to understanding and managing behavior in organizations are:

**LOCUS OF CONTROL:** People differ in how much control they have over situations they are in and over what happens to them. The locus of control trait captures this difference among individuals.

**External locus of control:** describes people who believe that fate, luck or outside forces are responsible for what happens to them.

**Internal locus of control:** describes people who believe that ability, effort, or their own actions determine what happens to them.

**SELF- MONITORING:** The extent to which people try to control the way they present themselves to others.

**SELF- ESTEEM:** The extent to which people have pride in themselves and their capabilities.

**TYPE A and TYPE B personalities:**

TYPE A: A person who has an intense desire to achieve, is extremely competitive and has a strong sense of urgency.

TYPE B: A person who tends to be easy going and relaxed.

NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT, AFFILIATION and POWER: The desire to perform challenging tasks well and to meet one's own high standards is the need for achievement. The desire to establish and maintain good relations with others is the need for affiliation. Need for power is the desire to exert emotional and behavioral control or influence over others.

Managers need to actually study the personality of the employee and give him tasks accordingly because if this is not done then the employee's personality could be a hindrance in the completion of the task. A perfect example for this is that: Robert Greene for example is an executive in an advertising agency who is responsible for coming up with advertising campaigns and presenting them to the agency client's. He performs well when working on his own or with his team to develop advertising campaigns, but interpersonal situations, such as when he presents his campaigns to clients, he performs poorly. A manager who understands this interaction can capitalize on the personality strengths and a manager who cannot do this may lose his clients because of Greene's inability.

ATTITUDES AND VALUES: Attitudes are relatively stable clusters of feelings, beliefs, and behavioral dispositions or intentions towards some specific objects. For example, attitude towards women in management, in general, isn't as good a predictor of whether someone will work well for a female manager as are specific attitudes towards a particular manager. Another <https://assignbuster.com/individual-differences-and-environmental-factors-influence-human-behavior-psychology-essay/>

example can be that if an individual has negative attitude, feelings, opinions and behavioral dispositions towards his boss so he may not behave negatively with the boss but may not perform well in the job. The two key work attitudes are - job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It is very essential for managers to keep in mind the common sense notion that job satisfaction leads directly to effective job performance. A happy worker is a productive worker!

**VALUES:** Values are stable enduring beliefs about what is worthwhile, that influence thoughts and behavior. Example: Infosys technologies Ltd. is respected globally as a company that places utmost importance on creating relationships based on trust with all its important stakeholders, employees, investors, clients, and society.

**MOTIVATION:** Motivating employees is a complex process. The scarcity of resources in organizations acts as a constraint that hinders managers from motivating their employees. Companies that perform well are able to retain high performance employees because they have found ways to keep everyone motivated. A less motivated or de-motivated employee may quit the organization soon where as a highly motivated and encouraged employee may stick to the organization for a long time. Managers must know the right process of motivation. One of the effective processes are :

Maslow's need hierarchy theory:

Abraham H. Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs holds valid even today.

Maslow identified five levels of needs as the source of different motivating

behaviors. According to the theory once the lower level need is satisfied, a person can activate the next higher order need.

Self- Actualization needs: Realize full potential.

Esteem needs: To be recognized by others (status)

Love or belongingness needs: Desire for nurturing, acceptance, respect, etc.

Safety needs: To be free from harm or danger, to have a secure life.

Physical needs: Relief from thirst, hunger and physical drives.

PERCEPTION: The significance of individual differences is particularly apparent when focusing on the process of perception. Perception is the process by which individuals select, organize, and interpret the input from their senses (vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste) to give meaning and order to the world around them. Through perceptions, people try to make sense of their environment and the objects, events, and other people in it.

Perception has three components:

Perceiver: He is the person trying to interpret some observation that he or she has just made, or the input from his or her senses.

Target of perception: This is whatever the perceiver is trying to make sense of. The target can be another person, a group of people, an event, a situation, an idea, a noise, or anything else the perceiver focuses on. In organizational behavior, we are often concerned with the person perception, or another person as the target of perception.

Situation: This is the context in which perception takes place- a committee meeting the hallway, in front of the office coffee machine, and so on.

The needs of an individual will affect their perceptions. For example, a manager deeply engrossed in preparing an urgent report may screen out ringing telephones, the sound of computers, people talking and furniture being moved in the next office, but will respond readily to the smell of coffee brewing. The most desirable and urgent needs will almost certainly affect an individual perceptual process. Learning from the previous experiences has a critical effect throughout all the stages of perceptual process.

### **. . Factors affecting an individual's perceptual set are:**

Personality Learning Intelligence Ability Training

Interests Goals Expectations Past experiences Motivation

Example: One of the most common stereotypes is based on women. For instance, the prospect of women marrying and having children leads people to question their permanency as employees, and results in organizations viewing their management as high risk, with a low return on investment in their training.

People's perceptions can be changed by educating them on a certain topic, broadening their thinking, confronting them in case of any misunderstanding and through many other ways.

Real life example of changing a particular perception:



Judy Owen fought for her right to wear trousers to work. She won her battle against the Professional Golfers' Association.

Ability: This is defined as " what a person is capable of doing". Ability has important implications for understanding and managing organizational behavior. It determines the level of performance an employee can achieve and because the effectiveness of an organization as a whole depends on the performance levels of all individual employees. Two basic types of abilities affect performance: cognitive or physical ability.

Cognitive ability: This predicts performance on the job, as long as the ability in question is relied on in performing the job. For example, numerical ability is unlikely to predict how well a writer or comedian will perform on the job.

There are total eight types of cognitive abilities:

General Intelligence

Spatial ability

Verbal ability

Reasoning ability

Ability to remember

Ability to see relationships

Perceptual ability

Numerical

ability

Deductive ability

Physical ability: People differ not only in cognitive ability but also in physical ability. There are two types of physical abilities such as motor and physical skills. A motor skill is the ability to physically manipulate objects in an environment. A physical skill is a person's fitness and strength.

If an employee is not able enough to complete a task and his colleague is able to do so then this may create a feeling of envy or conflict between them. Therefore managers must know the capacity of his employees when he allots them tasks.

Emotional intelligence: A new kind of ability.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage one's own feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of other people. It helps promote effective functioning and well being among employees. People differ in terms of the extent to which they know how they, themselves are feeling, why they are feeling that way, and their ability to manage those feelings. Similarly, they differ in their ability to understand what other people are feeling and why and their ability to influence or manage the feelings of others. Emotional intelligence describes these differences. As recent study conducted by Kenneth Law and colleagues found that emotional intelligence predicted levels of job performance in employees.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:**

Environmental factors have a huge impact on the human behavior in the organizations.