

EGT2
ENGINEERING TRIPOS PART IIA

Friday 9 May 2025 14.00 to 15.40

Module 3E6

ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

Answer *two* out of three questions.

All questions carry the same number of marks.

The **approximate** percentage of marks allocated to each part of a question is indicated in the right margin.

Write your candidate number **not** your name on the cover sheet.

STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS

Single-sided script paper

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS TO BE SUPPLIED FOR THIS EXAM

None

10 minutes reading time is allowed for this paper at the start of the exam.

You may not start to read the questions printed on the subsequent pages of this question paper until instructed to do so.

You may not remove any stationery from the Examination Room.

Instructions for this exam: Answer each question by applying one or more theories covered in this module. When referencing a theory, provide a comprehensive explanation of its fundamental principles. Furthermore, base your answers on the content covered across multiple lectures in 3E6. These instructions apply to all three questions in this exam.

1 Remote working refers to a flexible work arrangement in which employees perform their duties from a location outside the traditional office environment. Organizations and societies often debate its impact on employee performance. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of remote working.

[100%]

Crib:

1. Advantages [50%]
 - a. Remote working enhances employees' sense of autonomy. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), organizational practices that satisfy employees' need for autonomy can boost intrinsic motivation, potentially leading to improved performance
2. Disadvantages [50%]
 - a. Content-based theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and McClelland's Needs Theory, emphasize the importance of social needs. Working remotely may limit opportunities for social interaction, potentially hindering motivation and performance
 - b. Socialization is based on the observations of others' behaviors and statements (i.e., artifacts). Lacking opportunities for such observations significantly hamper people's socialization and understanding of organizational cultures. And reduced opportunities for socialization and cultural integration can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications. This lack of shared understanding may decrease team cohesion and overall performance.

2 All individuals hold stereotypes and avoiding them entirely is not feasible. Discuss the reasons why stereotypes exist as well as their advantages and disadvantages.

[100%]

Crib:

1. Why Stereotypes Exist: [20%]
 - a. Stereotypes arise due to bounded rationality—our limited cognitive capacity to process the vast amount of information in our environment. They help simplify and organize complex social information.
2. Pros of Stereotypes: [40%]
 - a. Explain the basic tenet of bounded rationality.
 - b. Facilitate information processing: Stereotypes act as cognitive shortcuts, allowing individuals to quickly form impressions or allocate mental resources to other tasks.
 - c. Energy conservation: By relying on stereotypes, people avoid the mental strain of analyzing every new situation from scratch. Without these mental templates, processing incoming information could overwhelm cognitive capacities.
3. Cons of Stereotypes: [40%]
 - a. Potential inaccuracy: Stereotypes may not accurately reflect reality and are often based on oversimplifications. Even if they were valid in the past, societal evolution may render them outdated.
 - b. Misleading judgments: Relying on stereotypes can lead to biased or incorrect conclusions, as they may not account for individual differences or contextual nuances.
 - c. Reinforcement of biases: Stereotypes can perpetuate systemic inequalities and hinder fair treatment by influencing decisions based on group generalizations rather than individual merits.

3 Personality influences human behaviour, as does culture. However, conceptually, these two effects can appear to conflict. Discuss the differences between personality effects and cultural effects on behaviour, explain why these effects might seem contradictory, and explore how they can coexist.

[100%]

Crib:

1. Differences between Personality and Cultural Influences: [20%]
 - a. Personality:
 - i. Refers to individual-level traits that are stable over time and across social situations/contexts. Thus, personality effects mean that humans' stable characteristics shape their behaviors regardless of situations/contexts.
 - b. Culture:
 - i. Refers to shared values, norms, and practices of a group or society that influence behavior. Thus, cultural effects mean that situations/contexts shape human behaviors regardless of their innate/stable characteristics.
2. Why the Two Effects Could Be Conceptually Contradictory: [50%]
 - a. Personality reflects individual uniqueness and consistent behavior across contexts (e.g., cultures), while culture emphasizes shared norms and context-specific behavior.
 - b. Personality traits are considered stable, but cultural norms may demand flexibility and adaptation to social expectations.
3. How the Two Effects Can Coexist: [30%]
 - a. Trait Activation Theory (TAT):
 - i. Personality traits are expressed when relevant situational cues (including cultural norms) "activate" them.
 - ii. Culture serves as a situational factor that can moderate how personality traits are expressed.
 - b. Situational Strength Theory
 - i. The expression of personality traits is suppressed in the strong cultural situations, while it is activated in the weak cultural situations.
 - c. Note: Students do not need to mention both theories. Students can also describe SST under the name of TAT because the two theories are not entirely separable.

END OF PAPER