

YEAR	TRIPOS	PAPER NO. & TITLE	NAME OF AUTHOR
2014	Engineering Tripos Part IIA	3E6 Organisational Behaviour	Dr Jochen Menges

1. (a) What is the fundamental attribution error? [20%]

Students should explain the fundamental attribution error. Particularly good answers may provide examples and/or expand on attribution theory.

The fundamental attribution error is the pervasive schema about human behaviour that people do what they do because of the kind of people they are, not because of the situation they are in. It derives from attribution theory which proposes that when trying to decide what causes people's behaviour, people can make one of two attributions: an internal, dispositional attribution or an external, situational attribution. Although either type of attribution is always possible, Heider (1958) noted that people tend to see the causes of a person's behaviour as residing in that person (internal explanation).

(b) What are heuristics? Select and describe four common heuristics. [40%]

Students should provide a brief definition and descriptions of four heuristics. Particularly good answers may provide examples for each heuristic.

Heuristics are mental shortcuts people use to make judgments quickly and efficiently.

Here are four common heuristics:

- Availability heuristic: People tend to base a judgment on the ease with which they can bring something to mind.
- Anchoring and adjustment heuristic: People tend to use a number or value as a starting point and then adjust insufficiently from this anchor.
- Halo effect: People tend to draw a general impression based on a single characteristic.
- Stereotyping: People tend to judge others on the basis of the perception of the group to which they belong

(c) Why do heuristics matter in organisations? [40%]

Students should critically discuss how heuristics shape the behaviours, decisions and interactions of people in organizations.

Specific areas of organizational life in which heuristics matter are, for example, employment interviews, performance evaluations, and negotiations.

2. (a) What is personality? What are the factors determining an individual's personality? [20%]

Students should provide a brief definition of personality and explain how heredity and the environment determine an individual's personality.

A definition of personality is, for example: the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts to, and interacts with, others.

The factors determining an individual's personality are primarily genetic, but also environmental. Aging has limited effects on personality.

- (b) Compare and contrast the two dominant personality frameworks: the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Big Five Personality Model. [40%]

Students should describe each framework, identify overlap in terms of personality dimensions, and work out differences in terms of application (MBTI mostly for practice, Big Five mostly for research). Particularly good answers may provide a discussion of measurement similarities and differences between the two frameworks.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is the most widely used personality-assessment instrument in the world. Individuals are classified as:

- Extroverted or Introverted (E/I)
- Sensing or Intuitive (S/N)
- Thinking or Feeling (T/F)
- Judging or Perceiving (J/P)

Classifications combined into 16 personality types (i.e. INTJ or ESTJ). MBTI useful to increase self-awareness, but unrelated to job performance.

The Five Factor Model (Big Five) provides the predominant typology for empirical research. The five traits are:

- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness
- Emotional Stability
- Openness to Experience

There is good evidence that each of the five traits has associations with important aspects of organizational life, such as leadership and performance.

- (c) Why does personality matter in organisations? [40%]

Students should discuss in some detail the associations between personality traits and organizationally relevant outcomes. For example, conscientiousness matters for job

performance; extraversion tends to enhance job satisfaction. Particularly good answers may provide references to relevant work (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991) and/or a discussion of how attraction-selection-attrition cycles (Schneider, 1987) lead to relative homogeneity of personalities in organizations.

3. (a) What is leadership? What are the differences between leaders and managers? [20%]

Students should provide a brief definition of leadership and explain the differences between leaders and managers.

A definition of leadership is, for example: Leadership is the ability to influence people toward the achievement of a vision or a set of goals.

Leaders tend to create, originate, develop, inspire trust, think long-term, ask what and why, watch the horizon, challenge the status quo, and “do the right things”.

Managers, in contrast, tend to implement, copy, maintain, control, think short-term, ask how and when, watch the bottom line, accept the status quo, and “do things right”.

- (b) Select and describe a leadership theory in detail. [40%]

Students can choose between trait theories, contingency theories, leader-member exchange theory, new-genre theories (e.g., transformational, charismatic leadership) or any other well-established and researched theory. Students should describe the theory in some detail. Particularly good answers may cite relevant work and refer to empirical findings relating to the theory.

- (c) Critically discuss leadership as a determinant of organisational success. [40%]

Students should discuss how leadership is important in organizations for motivation and coordination, but that organizational success is also dependent on many other factors over which leaders have limited control. Students should refer to work on the romance of leadership (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). Particularly good answers may provide examples.

**END OF PAPER**