

EGT2
ENGINEERING TRIPOS PART IIA

Monday 5 May 2024 09.30 to 11.10

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: First, whenever you draw on a theory, ensure to explain its basic tenets comprehensively. Second, base your answers on the content learned across multiple lectures in 3E6. This instruction is applicable to all three questions presented in this exam paper.

1 Within organisations, individuals who actively generate creative ideas are frequently labelled as troublemakers. In fact, some researchers have discovered that people occasionally perceive creative individuals as unethical. Discuss the reasons behind this phenomenon.

[100%]

[Answer] Creativity is defined as the generation of novel and useful ideas. To be creative, the generated ideas should deviate from people's comfort zone and prevailing beliefs. This means that creative ideas often challenge the current system that the majority supports and propose a novel alternative that others may not be accustomed to.

Socialization theory argues that as a result of socialization, people tend to become similar to each other and support the status quo. The main mechanism underlying socialization is our innate conformity to the majority's perspective, as demonstrated in Asch's famous experiment. When someone proposes to deviate from the status quo, others within the same organization often view it as wrong behavior and may respond with various forms of punishment, such as direct negative feedback or social exclusion.

In other words, according to socialization theory, the majority of employees act as guardians of the current system and label deviations from it as unethical. This is why creative individuals are sometimes penalized by their peers within organizations.

2 Pro-organisational unethical behaviour is defined as “actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organisation or its members and violate core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct” (Umphress & Bingham, 2011, p. 622). In organisations, employees sometimes knowingly engage in activities that benefit their organisations at the expense of societal well-being. Discuss why employees engage in such behaviour despite being aware of its harmful effects on society.

[100%]

(Answer) Organizational success doesn't always align with societal well-being. Frequently, organizations disregard societal values, norms, and regulations in order to achieve their objectives with fewer resources. Nevertheless, employees within these organizations often prioritize organizational success over societal benefits. As we have learned from lectures on Culture, Group Dynamics, and Motivation, employees do this for two primary reasons.

First, employees may experience pressure to conform to organizational norms that deviate from societal norms. Asch's experiment demonstrated that individuals often

adhere to incorrect norms even when they know they are wrong. Socialization theory also indicates that employees find it challenging to deviate from widely accepted norms shared by the majority of organizational members. Straying from these norms can lead to severe consequences, such as social exclusion or even involuntary turnover.

Second, employees are compensated by their organizations based on assessments of their performance and compliance with organizational rules and norms. At times, employees attempt to achieve their performance goals by breaching societal rules because their evaluations and salaries depend on demonstrating performance. For instance, as discussed in the Motivation lecture, monetary incentives are among the most potent motivators for encouraging employees to exhibit goal-aligned behaviors. However, the strong effects of these incentives can sometimes lead to unexpected outcomes, such as unethical or self-serving behaviors (as seen in the Hanoi example). In other words, to achieve performance goals that are meant to benefit their organizations, employees may resort to means that are detrimental to society at large, such as increasing sales by violating national laws.

3 In the recruitment process, organisations make every effort to understand job applicants by evaluating various personal and job-relevant characteristics, such as GPA, demographics, the reputation of their alma mater, on-site tests to assess their aptitudes for the posted jobs, personal values, career goals, past career records, and/or personality traits. Ideally, in an optimal recruitment process, the employees hired should always perform well. However, managers often come to realize that they have selected employees who are not suitable for the jobs. Discuss the reasons behind this phenomenon.

[100%]

(Answer) Limited information: To assess a job applicant, recruiters ideally need all the job-relevant information regarding the applicant. However, the availability of such information is limited. For example, the personality faking literature has shown that job applicants intentionally distort their personality information in a way it looks better than it really is. Furthermore, gathering personal, but job-relevant, information (e.g., personal values, career goals) is heavily dependent upon applicants' self-reports, which is susceptible to intentional manipulation, distortion, and its availability.

Recruiter's cognitive limitations: Bounded rationality theory argues that human cognition is limited – i.e., humans can retain and process very limited amount of information, which is one of the main reasons why they make satisfactory decisions. Even if we assume that recruiters have all the relevant information regarding job applicants' information, they are unable to digest the set of information due to their limited cognitive capacity. For this reason, they are making decisions based on cognitive shortcuts such as stereotypes.

END OF PAPER