

CHAPTER 2

FOUNDATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR

"Intelligence is but one characteristic that people bring with them when they join an organization. In this chapter, we look at how biographical characteristics (such as gender and age) and ability (which includes intelligence) affect employee performance and satisfaction. Then we show how people learn behaviors and what management can do to shape those behaviors" (p. 33).

BIOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Personal characteristics – such as age, gender, and marital status – that are objective and easily obtained from personnel records.

AGE

"The relationship between age and job performance is likely to be an issue of increasing importance during the next decade. Why? There are at least three reasons. First, there is a widespread belief that job performance declines with increasing age. Regardless of whether it's true or not, a lot of people believe it and act on it. Second is the reality that the workforce is aging... The third reason is recent U.S. legislation that, for all intents and purposes, outlaws mandatory retirement. Most U.S. workers today no longer have to retire at the age of 70" (p. 34).

"The older you get, the less likely you are to quit your job. That conclusion is based on studies of the age-turnover relationship" (p. 34).

"In general, older employees have lower rates of avoidable absence than do younger employees. However, they have higher rates of unavoidable absence, probably due to the poorer health associated with aging and the longer recovery period that older workers need when injured" (p. 34).

"How does age affect productivity? There is a widespread belief that productivity declines with age. It is often assumed that an individual's skills – particularly speed, agility, strength, and coordination – decay over time and that prolonged job boredom and lack of intellectual stimulation all contribute to reduced productivity. The evidence, however, contradicts that belief and those assumptions" (p. 34).

decay = verfallen

"Our final concern is the relationship between age and job satisfaction. On this issue, the evidence is mixed. Most studies indicate a positive association between age and satisfaction, at least up to age 60" (p. 35).

GENDER

"Few issues initiate more debates, misconceptions, and unsupported opinions than whether women perform as well on jobs as men do... The evidence suggests that the best place to begin is with the recognition that there are few, if any, important differences between men and women that will affect their job performance. There are, for instance, no consistent male-female differences in problem-solving ability, analytical skills, competitive drive, motivation, sociability, or learning ability... Given the significant changes that have taken place in the last 25 years in terms of increasing female participation rates in the workforce and rethinking what constitutes male and female roles, you should operate on the assumption that there is no significant difference in job productivity between men and women. Similarly, there is no evidence indicating that an employee's gender affects job satisfaction" (p. 35).

"But what about absence and turnover rates? Are women less stable employees than men? First, on the question of turnover, the evidence is mixed. Some studies have found that women have higher turnover rates; others have found no difference... The research on absence, however, is a different story. The evidence consistently indicates that women have higher rates of absenteeism than men do. The most logical explanation for this finding is that the research was conducted in North America, and North American culture has historically placed home and family responsibilities on the woman" (p. 35).

MARITAL STATUS

"... research consistently indicates that married employees have fewer absences, undergo less turnover, and are more satisfied with their jobs than are their unmarried co-workers. Marriage imposes increased responsibilities that may make a steady job more valuable and important. But the question of causation is not clear. It may very well be that conscientious and satisfied employees are more likely to be married" (p. 36).

marital = ehelich

conscientious = gewissenhaft

TENURE

"If we define seniority as time on a particular job, we can say that the most recent evidence demonstrates a positive relationship between seniority and job productivity. So tenure, expressed as work experience, appears to be a good predictor of employee productivity" (p. 36).

tenure = Dienstalter, Besitzanspruch

"The research relating tenure to absence is quite straightforward. Studies consistently demonstrate seniority to be negatively related to absenteeism" (p. 36).

"Tenure has consistently been found to be negatively related to turnover and has been suggested as one of the single best predictors of turnover" (p. 36).

"The evidence indicates that tenure and satisfaction are positively related. In fact, when age and tenure are treated separately, tenure appears to be a more consistent and stable predictor of job satisfaction than is chronological age" (p. 36).

ABILITY

Ability: An individual's capacity to perform the various tasks in a job.

"Regardless of how motivated you are, it is unlikely that you can act as well as Meryl Streep, run as fast as Michael Johnson, write horror stories as well as Stephen King, or sing as well as Whitney Houston" (p. 36).

INTELLECTUAL ABILITIES

"... are those needed to perform mental activities... The seven most frequently cited dimensions making up intellectual abilities are number aptitude, verbal comprehension, perceptual speed, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, spatial visualization, and memory" (p. 37).

spatial = räumlich

"Of course, a high IQ is not a prerequisite for all jobs. In fact, for many jobs – in which employee behavior is highly routine and there are little or no opportunities to exercise discretion – a high IQ may be unrelated to performance" (p. 37).

Dimension of Intellectual Ability

Dimension	Description	Job Example
Number aptitude	Ability to do speedy and accurate arithmetic	Accountant: Computing the sales tax on a set of items
Verbal comprehension	Ability to understand what is read or heard and the relationship of words to each other	Plant manager: Following corporate policies
Perceptual speed	Ability to identify visual similarities and differences quickly and accurately	Fire investigator: Identifying clues to support a charge of arson
Inductive reasoning	Ability to identify a logical sequence in a problem and then solve the problem	Market researcher: Forecasting demand for a product in the next time period
Deductive reasoning	Ability to use logic and assess the implications of an argument	Supervisor: Choosing between two different suggestions offered by employees
Spatial visualization	Ability to imagine how an object would look if its position in space were changed	Interior decorator: Redecorating an office
Memory	Ability to retain and recall past experiences	Salesperson: Remembering the names of customers

arson = Brandstiftung

PHYSICAL ABILITIES

"To the same degree that intellectual abilities play a larger role in complex jobs with demanding information-processing requirements, specific *physical abilities* gain importance for successfully doing less skilled and more standardized jobs" (p. 38).

THE ABILITY-JOB FIT

"Directing attention at only the employee's abilities or only the ability requirements of the job ignores the fact that employee performance depends on the interaction of the two" (p. 39).

Nine Basic Physical Abilities

Strength Factors	
1. Dynamic strength 2. Trunk strength 3. Static strength 4. Explosive strength	Ability to exert muscular force repeatedly or continuously over time Ability to exert muscular strength using the trunk (particularly abdominal) muscles trunk = Körper Ability to exert force against external objects Ability to expend a maximum of energy in one or a series of explosive acts
Flexibility Factors	
5. Extent flexibility 6. Dynamic flexibility	Ability to move the trunk and back muscles as far as possible Ability to make rapid, repeated flexing movements
Other Factors	
7. Body coordination 8. Balance 9. Stamina	Ability to coordinate the simultaneous actions of different parts of the body Ability to maintain equilibrium despite forces pulling off balance Ability to continue maximum effort requiring prolonged effort over time

LEARNING

Any relatively permanent change in behavior that occurs as a result of experience.

"All complex behavior is learned. If we want to explain and predict behavior, we need to understand how people learn" (p. 39).

THEORIES OF LEARNING

"How do we learn? Three theories have been offered to explain the process by which we acquire patterns of behavior. These are classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and social learning" (p. 40).

Classical Conditioning: A type of conditioning in which an individual responds to some stimulus that would not ordinarily produce such a response.

"Classical conditioning is passive. Something happens and we react in a specific way. It is elicited in response to a specific, identifiable event. As such, it can explain simple reflexive behaviors. But most behavior – particularly the complex behavior of individuals in organizations – is emitted rather than elicited. It is voluntary rather than reflexive" (p. 41).

emit = „aussenden“

elicit = „herausholen“

Operant Conditioning: A type of conditioning in which desired voluntary behavior leads to a reward or prevents a punishment.

"Operant conditioning argues that behavior is a function of its consequences. People learn to have to get something they want or to avoid something they don't want" (p. 42).

"Behavior is assumed to be determined from without – that is, learned – rather than from within – reflexive or unlearned. Skinner argued that creating pleasing consequences to follow specific forms of behavior would increase the frequency of that behavior. People will most likely engage in desired behaviors if they are positively reinforced for doing so. Rewards are most effective if they immediately follow the desired response. In addition, behavior that is not rewarded or is punished, is less likely to be repeated" (p. 42).

Social-Learning Theory: People can learn through observation and direct experience.

"... much of what we have learned comes from watching models – parents, teachers, peers, motion picture and television performers, bosses, and so forth" (p. 42).

"Although social-learning theory is an extension of operant conditioning – that is, it assumes that behavior is a function of consequences – it also acknowledges the existence of observational learning and the importance of perception in learning. People respond to how they perceive and define consequences, not to the objective consequences themselves" (p. 42).

SHAPING: A MANAGERIAL TOOL

Shaping Behavior: Systematically reinforcing each successive step that moves an individual closer to the desired response.

"There are four ways in which to shape behavior: through positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment, and extinction" (p. 43).

"Following a response with something pleasant is called *positive reinforcement*... Following a response by the termination or withdrawal of something unpleasant is called *negative reinforcement*... *Punishment* is causing an unpleasant condition in an attempt to eliminate an undesirable behavior... Eliminating any reinforcement that is maintaining a behavior is called *extinction*. When the behavior is not reinforced, it tends to gradually be extinguished" (p. 43/44).

"Reinforcement, whether it is positive or negative, has an impressive record as a shaping tool. Our interest, therefore, is in reinforcement rather than in punishment or extinction" (p. 44).

Schedules of Reinforcement

- Intermittent Reinforcement:* A desired behavior is reinforced often enough to make the behavior worth repeating but not every time it is demonstrated.
- Fixed-Interval Schedule:* Rewards are spaced at uniform time intervals.
- Variable-Interval Schedule:* Rewards are distributed in time so that reinforcements are unpredictable.
- Fixed-Ratio Schedule:* Rewards are initiated after a fixed or constant number of responses.
- Variable-Ratio Schedule:* The reward varies relative to the behavior of the individual.