

MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Organizational behaviour research draws on a variety of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and anthropology, but it primarily examines workers in actual organizational settings, as opposed to experimental or quasi-experimental settings. Organizational behaviour researchers are primarily interested in determining the presence of employee motivation, job alienation, organizational commitment, or other work-related variables in order to understand how these variables explain employee work behaviours and how they are affected by other variables such as working conditions, company policies, human resource programmes, or pay plans.

Individuals regularly behave in various ways at work, and these behaviours are described in various ways: Someone putting in a lot of effort might be described as "motivated"; someone who approaches his or her job resignedly, putting in only the bare minimum of effort might be described as "alienated"; and an employee who stays late to help a customer might be described as "committed". There are alternative explanations for the observed behaviours in each case.

Possible explanations include the employee putting forth a lot of effort being aware of a possible layoff, the person putting forth the bare minimum being ill or preoccupied with family issues, and the person staying late hoping to secure a job with the customer. Employee perceptions are reflected in many of the variables of interest in organizational behaviour. Indeed, many researchers believe that organizational members' perceptions are the reality of work environments. Perceptions and other similar phenomena that differ between people are not directly observable as attributes, but are non-observable aspects, or latent variables.

Non-observable variables are considered latent because they are thought to be the underlying causes of observable behaviours and actions. Individual latent variables include intelligence, creativity, job satisfaction, and motivation, job alienation, and organizational commitment, to name a few. Not all latent variables studied in organizational behaviour are personal. Some latent variables apply to organizations and groups. These include variables that reflect aggregate group characteristics like intragroup communication, group cohesion, and group goal orientation. Furthermore, organizations can be classified as centralized, flexible, or actively learning, with the latter representing latent variables.

Although some organizational behaviour theories include directly observable manifest variables, such as worker age, gender, and race, or the age and location of a work facility, many OB theories are concerned with relationships among latent variables. Job satisfaction, for example, has been extensively researched throughout the history of organizational behaviour. Researchers are frequently interested in determining which variables are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. In general, an employee's perceptions of the nature of his or her work have a significant impact on job satisfaction. All of these perceptions are latent variables. Some researchers have estimated these aspects of a worker's job using trained observers' estimations.

The agreement between observer estimates and worker self-evaluations of perceptions is frequently low, and the observations have a weaker relationship with job satisfaction. Thus, measurement in organizational behaviour frequently deals with determining how to obtain specific beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of individuals that accurately represent, or

operationalize, a latent variable. To sum an individual's scores on tests of verbal, numerical, and spatial abilities is one way to measure a latent variable, intelligence. The assumption is that intelligence, the latent variable, underpins a person's ability in these three areas. Thus, if a person has a high score in all three areas, it is assumed that person is intelligent.

A central issue in organizational behaviour measurement is determining which specific perceptions should be gathered to form adequate measures of latent variables such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Managers are very interested in what policies, jobs, or pay plans will help promote such states in workers because they are valued. In turn, researchers want to ensure that the variables they use to represent satisfaction and commitment are, in fact, good predictors of the unknown variables.

Because latent variables such as satisfaction can be based on various aspects of a job or an organization, an indicator of job satisfaction must include all of these aspects-as many as are required. As a result, job satisfaction indicators and other latent variables important in organizational behaviour are based on multiple items representing statements or questions addressing measurable aspects of the concept being measured.

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