

A MISURA D'UOMO

SEZIONE DI
PSICOLOGIA DEL LAVORO

6

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A MISURA D'UOMO

SEZIONE DI PSICOLOGIA DEL LAVORO

Omnia in mensura et numero et pondere

Le esigenze dell'uomo contemporaneo sono così evolute e amplificate da richiedere alle moderne scienze e tecnologie soluzioni sempre più avanzate. La *mass customization* s'impone nella nostra epoca consentendo all'uomo di personalizzare un prodotto industriale adattandolo a sé. L'uso flessibile del CAM (*Computer Aided Manufacturing*) gli consente infatti di soddisfare il proprio desiderio di distinguersi dagli altri consumatori. È il ritorno all'oggetto su misura, in cui, tuttavia, la tradizione artigiana del capolavoro deve dialogare con la produzione industriale in serie, attuando la cultura postindustriale e oltrepassando la postmodernità. Così, l'unico e il molteplice, l'originale e lo standard, il singolare e il plurale superano la bipolarità nella *coincidentia oppositorum*: artigianato-industria, arte-design. La misura ritorna dunque la cifra delle relazioni spaziali con gli oggetti e con gli uomini, il criterio per conoscere e progettare, lo strumento per conseguire la qualità della vita e il benessere personale e sociale. Il merito di questa rivalutazione del "su misura" spetta certamente a discipline come il design e l'ergonomia, che incentrandosi sull'uomo lo riaccreditano "misura di tutte le cose", fattore primario nel rapporto con gli oggetti, le macchine e l'ambiente, dando nuovo valore alle concezioni di Vitruvio, Leonardo e Le Corbusier.

La collana presenterà risultati di studi, ricerche e sperimentazioni antropometriche, prossemiche, ergonomiche e della psicologia sociale, facendo riferimento all'ambiente in tutte le sue declinazioni, in particolare quello di lavoro, maggiormente condizionante per l'uomo. Una collana con la finalità di divulgare la cultura del benessere, ammiccando al *bellessere*. Una cultura che consenta di migliorare le proprie condizioni di vita passando da uno stato in cui possa affermare «Sto bene qui, ora» a quello in cui possa aggiungere «Mi piace star bene qui, ora». Una cultura che promuova l'educazione emotiva a fianco di quella razionale, per un umanesimo integrale di maritainiana memoria.

Il *bellessere* è una realtà aumentata, il passare da una situazione di carenza a una di abbondanza, come sostiene Enzo Spaltro. È vivere in pienezza, in quella condizione favorevole che sant'Agostino descrive icasticamente con l'aforisma: «La misura dell'amore è amare senza misura», a distinguere il contingente dal trascendente.

La collana è strutturata in due sezioni, una dedicata all'antropometria e all'ergonomia, l'altra alla psicologia del lavoro, in un *unicum* sottile e immateriale sempre presente, rappresentato dall'idea di progetto.

Laura Dryjanska

Organizational Psychology



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Introduction

The aim of this book is to introduce the discipline of organizational psychology to college students in a clear, concise and practical way. The vast majority of textbooks in English in organizational psychology available on the market are deeply rooted in the North American context, using examples from everyday life that may not always be fully appreciated by students from other continents. I have tried to avoid such illustrations in this book, in order to make it fully understandable and hopefully also applicable into their cultural milieu. Considering the language itself that I use in the book, it should be suitable for non-native speakers whose level of English can be assessed as intermediate and advanced. I did not opt for lengthy descriptions, but rather tried to stimulate students to think of examples and applications of new concepts by themselves. Since reading a long text in a foreign language can be much more tiresome, this book does not present numerous definitions of the same concept, prioritizing clarity of expression. A student already makes an effort to understand the text in English, probably translating it into her or his native tongue, and then on the top it is necessary for them to grasp the meaning of the new concepts. In order to make this process easier, I chose to use some narrative descriptions interwoven with direct questions to the students. Hopefully, this textbook stimulates the class to discuss real life situations and problems that are most frequently faced at workplaces in their countries. Of course, it is also a window to take a look at how the organizational psychology originated,

developed and has been applied in North America and Europe. In most jobs, people encounter policies and organizational cultures that often come from or have been influenced by these two continents. I do not wish to speak about the globalization, but rather interconnected diversity. My desire is to see new generations of future employees and employers throughout the world who do not necessarily learn and eventually internalize global organizational behaviors, but who have a deep understanding of such behaviors and according to the context and the need can fit in fairly easily and consciously, aware of their roots. In fact, not always the solutions and explanations presented in this textbook are the best ones and certainly not the unique ones. I hope that the students will be able to realize that and think of alternatives most suitable in the reality that surrounds them. Certainly, I cannot present such numerous possibilities from a variety of contexts, and therefore I trust that prompted by my questions and the guidance of their lecturer, the students themselves will be active in this process.

Apart from the desired active participation of the students, this textbook has a classical structure and content, as in the majority of organizational psychology books. After all, it is a window that allows the students to look at the discipline and its most important developments. The textbook consists of five parts, each one highlighting different aspects, from a slightly different perspective.

The first part offers a bird's-eye view, starting with a focus on organizational psychology itself. The students should learn to define it, to be aware of different labels that are used to describe psychology in the workplace, and to give a brief description of its history. Then in the second chapter special attention is given to the theory of organization, explaining the changing historical and worldview contexts in Europe and in North America. It is probably the most difficult chapter, but in line with the spirit of a deep understanding of the underlying circumstances that gave birth to ideas, concepts and theories, it is crucial that the students take time to master this material. No discipline stands on its own, and this chapter links organiza-

tional psychology with sociology, psychology, history, philosophy and other branches of knowledge which will be given due consideration. Thus, the second chapter shall stimulate students to recall what they have learned in other courses, bringing to mind that everything is interrelated, not only cultures, but also various fields of knowledge, even if usually studied separately. The theory of organization is presented based on the division of the theory of organization into different schools of thought by Mary Jo Hatch. The focus of the third and last chapter that belongs to the first part of the book, the meaning of work, logically follows the theory of organization. The students shall look at the meaning of work in North America and Europe, how it has changed and what it is at the moment. A special consideration will be given to the religious and historical motivations, as well as cultural values in these settings. Probably many students come from more collective than individualistic cultures, and therefore this chapter takes into account such cultural differences, highlighting how the thinkers from such settings consider the meaning of work. Moreover, I have also dedicated some space to the questions of what happens when a person has no job and what are the consequences of unemployment in the light of organizational psychology.

As already mentioned, organizational psychology benefits from findings of various fields of knowledge. I paid special attention to the contribution of social psychology in the second part of the book, since in most classifications it contains organizational psychology, which is sometimes called and introduced as social psychology applied to business. Therefore, in order for the students to have a deeper understanding of the context, this part starts with the current perspectives in social psychology. For the students to be aware of different ways how this field of knowledge can be approached today, I will briefly present such diverse perspectives as social cognition, social neuroscience, behavioral genetics, evolutionary psychology, cultural perspectives and social constructivism. Although not the main concern of this textbook, some space is also given to the research design and methodology applied to organizational psychology. It is not

expected for the students to perform such research themselves, but they should have an idea of how social scientists verify their theories and in particular how to read simplified charts that report scientific findings. Looking at some example explained in detail in this chapter, will help the students in understanding other studies presented in the remaining part of the book. Then, the following chapter focuses on social influence and communication. Starting from some considerations on human nature, the social influence is considered in the form of obedience (recalling Milgram's experiment), compliance and conformity, taking into account majority and minority influences. Communication, conceived as a form of persuasion, plays a vital role in any organization. I discuss the process of communication, as well as cultural differences in communication in different contexts, including the character and implications for organization of virtual communication. Finally, a due consideration is also given to groups in the workplace. I explain how groups are formed and what is the meaning of norms and roles in a group. In this chapter, the students can learn about the performance of a group, as well as different processes that occur between groups, such as cooperation and conflict.

The third part of the book moves on to examine the perspective of employers and how they benefit from the findings of organizational psychology. Historically, the first efforts of our discipline concentrated on giving useful advice to employers, helping the organization to become more efficient, which continues to be a seminal activity of organizational psychologists. Employers are understood broadly, as both individuals and groups who run organizations, as well as, for example, the state that is in charge of public or governmental organizations, such as schools, hospitals or embassies. In general, all such employers recognize the importance of having the right people working for them. The first chapter in this part of the book thus focuses on personnel selection. Once the most appropriate person has been identified and hired, he or she works for the organization. But how well are they doing their job? This is the concern of the second chapter in this part, aimed at presenting the contribu-

tion of organizational psychology in assessing the worker's performance. I give attention to different ways of performance appraisal, including traditional methods, as well as a short discussion on the perception of fairness. The last chapter in this part concentrates on economic decision making, applying organizational psychology to the stock market and considering some of the fundamental economic concepts in the light of our discipline. I present some relevant findings of experimental psychology in this context, as well as the theory of social representations, both introduced in the previous part of the book. This shall help the students realize what is the value of the theory applied to the context of business in general and the workplace in particular.

In the same spirit, the fourth part of the book applies social psychology in general and organizational psychology in particular to the situations in the workplace from the point of view of the employees. Regardless of his or her position, an individual at work has different reasons to do what is expected of them. In the first chapter in this part of the book I examine the concept of motivation and its numerous implications. Starting from some considerations about remuneration, I move on to presenting the three approaches to motivation in organizational psychology: needs-motives-values, cognitive choice and self-regulation. Finally, I also discuss some practical implications of the study of motivation at the workplace. The topic of leadership, present in any organizational psychology textbook, could not have been overlooked here. The chapter dedicated to leaders first defines who is a leader in an organization and what are his or her main functions, moving on to consider different models of leadership. A due consideration is given to the cultural setting and the desirability of a position of a leader from culture to culture. Leaders, as well as motivations of workers play an important role in determining whether one feels good in an organization. The last chapter in this part of the book aims at examining the concept and components of organizational wellbeing. Fourteen different dimensions of wellbeing in the workplace are discussed and illustrated with examples from real life situations, based on an Italian questionnaire of Francesco Avallone. What happens

when there is an absence of wellbeing in an organization? The workers may suffer from mobbing, stress, strain, or even burn-out, which are all an important concern of organizational psychologists. The end of this part of the book, dedicated to the point of view of employees, deals with these negative issues that may exist in an organization.

Finally, in the fifth part of the book, an organization is considered as more than a sum of its parts. Emphasizing the context, I go into detail in order to explain the concept of organizational culture and the differences between organizational climate and culture. The hope is that students understand the three levels of culture in the workplace and the implications of each level. Once they can define culture, discussing its various aspects, the next chapter offers them some key considerations on facing changes. In order to survive, most organizations have to change from time to time. Or are they in a constant process of change? These questions are addressed from the perspective of a transformational change model developed by Edgar Schein. Thanks to applying such a model, the organization can actually benefit from change. From the perspective of students, future or current workers, after a careful analysis of this chapter and its application to their context, they should be better equipped to face change in an organization, to reduce their anxiety provoked by the change and to take advantage of the most appropriate learning mechanisms. Last but not least, I focus on ethics, while discussing how organizations take responsibility for making this world a better place. Using again my metaphor of this textbook as a window that allows students from different cultural contexts to realize how organization is conceived in North America and Europe, the aim of this final chapter is to examine the core values of these societies and how they influence ethics in the workplace. Organizations at different levels can perform actions judged as morally right or wrong. What are the core driving values behind establishment of various foundations? Is it possible to talk about something like the altruism of an organization?

The above description of all chapters of this book contains many questions and, as already mentioned, more often than not

there is no unique right answer. My sincere hope is that this textbook will allow the students not only to know what are the most common and acceptable answers that North American and European organizational psychology offers, but also to realize why. Throughout the pages to come, I am often trying to prompt the students to “think different”, taking advantage of their cultural baggage. I would like to invite and encourage young scholars and students of organizational psychology out there to share with the wider global community your own perspectival world view and expertise by contributing to the existing literature on organizational psychology.