

Tutorial Letter 201/1/2018

Psychological Adjustment in the Work Context

IOP2604

Semester 1

Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This tutorial letter contains important information about your module.

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Dear Student

This is the final tutorial letter of Semester 1 for students of IOP2604. We hope that you have enjoyed the module and found the assignments challenging but interesting. Assignments 01, 02 and the self-assessments on myUnisa will assist you in your exam preparation. We tried to make some of the assignment questions work related and work integrated to enable those of you, who are not working, to experience certain work-related issues and gain exposure to a working environment.

The assessment criteria have been listed in tutorial letter 101. Please review these criteria and revise any material related to criteria that you are not yet comfortable with.

The purpose of this tutorial letter is to

- provide feedback on Assignment 01
- provide feedback on Assignment 02
- provide some guidance for the examination

1 FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENT 01 (First semester)

NOTE: Please read the announcement on myUnisa regarding plagiarism! If you copied the prescribed study material verbatim or paraphrased it without proper citation and referencing, you will not receive marks for that portion of the question as it is plagiarised. Copying each other's work is not allowed, as these are individual assessments.

Question 1 (Read learning unit 1 and 2).

Reflect on the meaning of work by answering the following questions:

- a) Explain how retrenchment might influence the four basic needs according to the consistency-theoretical model of Grawe (2007). (8)

ANSWER:

References:

- Learning unit 1: Venter, J. (2016). *The neuroscience of well-being*. Psychological adjustment in the work context course notes. Pretoria: Unisa.
- Learning unit 1: Study guide.

Students receive one mark each for correctly identifying the four basic needs of the consistency-theoretical model of Grawe (2007). Students receive another 1 mark for each explanation of how retrenchment could influence each of the four basic needs. The explanations provided below are examples. This question requires application and insight and therefore students' answers may vary, but must make sense within the academic literature provided.

Grawe (2007) discusses the following four basic needs:

- Control and orientation
- Attachment or sense of belonging or connectedness.
- Pleasure maximisation vs pain avoidance
- Self-esteem enhancement vs self-esteem avoidance

In learning unit 1 we learn that work can be a source of emotional support, it provides financial resources to take care of the family's needs such as living costs, education and other opportunities. It can provide a sense of self-efficacy and affect self-worth, contributes to social identity and provide structure and meaning to life.

Unemployment, such as retrenchment violates each of the basic needs of Grawe's (2007) model. When a person is retrenched their sense of control and orientation is compromised. They may worry about how they will take care of their family and pay the bills. Employment meant that the world worked in a certain way. Being retrenched very suddenly disrupts a person's world can lead to a loss of control. Retrenchment forces a person to make sense of a new reality and many people might struggle to find orientation in the face of such sudden change.

For some people, retrenchment may allow them to find a new sense of orientation, as they suddenly need to seek alternative employment or even self-employment. They may view retrenchment as an opportunity to change careers.

Retrenchment can harm a person's sense of belonging. The effect of retrenchment on sense of belonging will depend on the quality of the person's social support structures. Some people may experience isolation

when they are retrenched, as they no longer have the day-to-day interaction with their colleagues. As their financial resources dwindle, they may avoid social occasions with friends, as they may not have the means to travel to such occasions or to host friends at their home. Other people may experience the kindness of friends and community members if they are supported when retrenched, and it may strengthen their sense of connectedness as they reach out for support and receive it.

When people are retrenched, they experience loss. Many people, especially if they repeatedly fail to obtain other employment, may become passive in their search for employment in an attempt to avoid the disappointment they have already experienced in their unsuccessful attempts to find employment. Some may turn to alcohol and drug abuse as a means to avoid the stress of unemployment when they fail to cope constructively with the loss of control and orientation that follows unemployment. People who feel that they have options even in the face of retrenchment, or see it as an opportunity to build a new career may not engage in pain avoidance strategies, but may engage in strategies driven by pleasure maximisation such as building skills and experience in a field that they are passionate about.

Self-esteem enhancement vs self-esteem protection is a product of how the other needs are met or violated. If someone who are retrenched struggle to find a sense of control and orientation, if they lack social support for example, it could have devastating effects on their self-esteem. In order to protect the self-esteem that is left, people may engage in pain avoidance strategies such as isolating themselves even more from social interaction to avoid judgement, which harms self-esteem even more. If someone has a higher resilience and can see retrenchment as an opportunity to engage in something new, or they feel that they have options, they might choose to engage in activities that enhances self-esteem, such as obtaining a job they are not as experienced in and learning new skills.

Note of explanation: Remember that in neuroscience pleasure maximisation does not refer to indulgence in pleasure such as over-eating or drug use. In applied neuroscience models, such as Grawe's model, pleasure maximisation refers to behaviours motivated by approaching goals in a healthy manner, which involves communication between the neocortex and the limbic structures. In pain avoidance, behaviours are often destructive and the limbic structures are not communicating well with the neocortical regions. When goals are approached in a healthy manner and there is good communication between the neocortical regions such as the prefrontal cortex and the limbic regions, dopamine is released through different neural pathways than what we find when people are engaging in pain avoidance strategies. Dopamine cycles released during approach behaviours are also longer, than the cycles of dopamine released during pain avoidance behaviours. Short cycle dopamine release is associated with addiction, which is why people get comfortable in their distress or get stuck in patterns of avoidance.

b) Discuss how outside forces could influence the meaning of work. (8)

ANSWER:

References:

- Learning unit 1: Study Guide
- Learning unit 2: Rothman, I & Cooper, L. (2015). *Work and organizational psychology*. New York: Routledge, chapter 13, p. 228.

A maximum of two marks are allocated for a discussion on how each of the outside forces can influence the meaning of work. If the student only defined the outside forces, but not explain how they can influence the meaning of work, only 1 mark per outside force will be allocated. No marks will be allocated for simply listing the outside forces.

According to Rothman and Cooper (2015) outside forces are:

- Rate of social and technological change;
- The family;
- Race, sex, social class and community;
- Environmental factors such as economic and political factors;

How might these outside factors influence the meaning of work?

The discussions below are some examples. As this question requires the student to apply their mind, students' answers will vary, but must still make sense on the context of the academic material provided.

- Rate of social and technological change: The rate of social and technological change brings with it new value systems. As employees are exposed to value systems other than their own, the influence of such value systems could change the meaning that work holds for them. One's idea that work is simply a means to provide for your family may change if you work for a company that values corporate social responsibility. As employees are exposed to new technologies that allows them flexible working hours, they may start to see work as integrated in their lives instead of separate from the other aspects of their lives. Other employees may find the rate of technological change very stressful and work may take on a negative meaning for them.
 - The family: If an employee's family situation changes the meaning that work holds will change along with it. For example, a person who lost their spouse may now rely more heavily on work to sustain the family. The meaning of work may become more associated with the ability to survive than before. A woman who starts a family may see the meaning of work differently in the face of her new role as mother. Her career goals may change as a result of the new meaning that work holds or the way that she structures work may change as the meaning of work in her life changes.
 - Race, sex, social class and community environment influences the meaning of work in different ways. If someone from a particular walk of life is marginalised or discriminated against, they are likely to experience work differently from those that are not subject to discrimination. They are also likely to attach different meaning to work, than those who are not discriminated against. Someone who comes from a community where there are few resources, poverty and lack of services may view work as an opportunity to better their lives and may later as they progress contribute may come to see work as an opportunity to uplift their community.
 - Environmental factors such as economic and political factors: Political and economic uncertainty may create fears around job security. During such times, people may see work as a scarce resource that should be protected. If this is the meaning that people attach to work, they might work excessive hours out of fear of losing their jobs.
- c) Explain how African spirituality, the African concept of nature/world and the African concept of the human being would influence the meaning of work. (6)

ANSWER:**References:**

- Learning unit 1: Study guide
- Learning unit 1: Nwoye, A. (2015). What is African psychology the psychology of? *Theory and Psychology*, 25(1), 109 – 112.

A maximum of two marks are allocated for each explanation of how the following concepts would influence the meaning of work:

- *African spirituality;*
- *African concept of nature/world;*
- *African concept of the human being.*

African spirituality:

African spirituality is the belief that God is involved in every aspects of human beings' lives and that everything that happen, happens by the will of God. This also means that when faced with situations that seem to be beyond the control of the person, one submits oneself to God's will and accepts the outcome.

This value might influence the meaning that work holds for the person in that the employee may see work as a service done unto God and for God. Therefore the person's perception of God's will, directs the way the person works and the tasks the person is willing to engage in and unwilling to engage in. Further, this concept of African spirituality also means that God is the provider of life and the resources that sustain life.

African concept of nature/world:

The concept of nature or world states that we live in a world that consists of the physical or material things, abstract things (metaphysical such as hopes and beliefs) and the spiritual realm. This means that human beings are in relationship with the physical aspects of the world, the abstract things in the world and the spiritual forces present in the world. Related to this is the belief that it is important not to offend the invisible forces in the world.

The concept is part of African spirituality and will influence the meaning of work in similar ways. From this viewpoint work becomes an important expression of the relationship with physical resources, hope and above all the spiritual forces at work in the world. Professional success and material wealth may also become an important measurement of how satisfied or unsatisfied the spiritual forces is with a person. These complex and dynamic relationships with the material, the meta-physical and the spiritual forces at work must also be interpreted in the context of all the other African concepts. If a person therefore obtains wealth at the expense of the community or other human beings, it might be believed that the wealth will not last as he/she violated the concept of the human being.

The concept of the human being:

The concept of the human being refers to the idea that human beings are not just biological, but that a human being also consist of others around him/her (the social), has an emotional component, is spiritual and metaphysical (hopes and dreams). The community therefore defines the person as its people also in turn defines the community. There is no independence, but a deep understanding of interdependence: "You are, therefore I am."

The concept of the human being has a significant influence on the meaning of work. Work does not belong to person alone, nor does the rewards of work belong to the person or shareholders of the organisation alone. From the concept of the human being, work and the organisation is inextricably part of the community and the community part of it. From this vantage point the wealth, resources and challenges of the organisation belongs to the community and the wealth, resources and challenges of the community belongs to the organisation. This is one of the reasons why the inequality between rich and poor is so unacceptable in Africa. At the same time, this concept should be interpreted in the context of all the other African concepts, and from an integrative African perspective, every member of the community is expected to contribute in a positive manner to the whole.

It is therefore not acceptable if a member of the community sleeps and drinks all day, expecting money for example, while others are contributing. This member of the community will then be violating many of the African concepts and will offend the spiritual forces.

- d) David is 26. He was retrenched 12 months ago and is struggling to find work. He was recently diagnosed with major depressive disorder (MDD). His mother and brother both suffer from MDD. David's childhood was difficult. He lost his father when he was five and the family struggled financially after the passing away of his father.

Identify the necessary cause, sufficient cause and contributory cause to David's mental illness. (3)

ANSWER:

References:

Learning unit 2: Study guide

- Necessary cause (it means that this must be present for the disease to express). In David's case the necessary cause is a genetic predisposition to major depressive disorder (his mother also has the disease).
- Sufficient cause (it is something that when it is present will definitely bring about the disorder, but the disorder can occur in other ways as well, even if this cause is not present: In David's case the sufficient cause is the retrenchment 12 months ago and his inability to find employment again.
- Contributory cause (these are things that create the right conditions for the disease to be triggered by a later event): In David's case the contributory cause is the childhood trauma regarding the loss of his father and the subsequent financial difficulties afterwards.

[25]

Question 2 (Read learning unit 3 and 4).

Define vocational choice uncertainty and explain how it may affect general work function or dysfunction. Refer to the general criteria for work (dys)function in your answer.

[15]

ANSWER:

Reference:

- Learning unit 3: Study guide – Criteria for general work (dys)function
- Learning unit 4: Tonelli, L., & Venter, J. (2016). *Career development and well-being*. Psychological adjustment in the work context course notes. Pretoria: Unisa.

Students can briefly define vocational work uncertainty for a maximum of two marks.

Referring to each of the 13 criteria of work (dys)function, students should explain how vocational choice uncertainty could influence general work (dys)function. No marks will be allocated for simply writing down the criteria for work dysfunction. No marks will be given for referring to general criteria for psychological adjustment or maladjustment.

Defining vocational choice uncertainty: (Max 2 marks)

Vocational choice uncertainty refers to the “inability to make choices or to perform developmental tasks at specific points in their career development [that] may lead to stress and emotional problems”. (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011 as cited in Venter, 2016; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016 as cited in Venter, 2016, p. 7).

How may vocational choice uncertainty affect general work (dys)function? (Max 15 marks)

The text below are some examples of how vocational choice uncertainty may affect general work dysfunction. Each student's answer will however be evaluated individually, taking into consideration the coherence of the answer in light of the theory.

- **Attitudes towards and observations of one's own personality (self):** While vocational uncertainty is an outcome of negative self-image or a lack of understanding of one's identity, it may also maintain the cycle of negative perception of self as vocational choice uncertainty may lead to mismatched career choices, which in turn could lead to further stress, intra- as well as interpersonal conflict.
- **Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with personal growth:** Vocational choice uncertainty may frustrate a person's development and self-actualisation as the person may find it difficult to stay engaged while experiencing a sense of incongruence.
- **Feelings of mastery and efficiency:** Vocational choice uncertainty may lead to a low sense of mastery and efficiency, especially if the individual do not enough time to learn and master the skills required by the tasks they are required to carry out.
- **Integration:** Vocational choice uncertainty may hinder a person's ability to individuals' ability to realistically assimilate and handle influences from the environment and the spheres in which they act.
- **Autonomy:** Due to behavioural traits such as dependence associated with vocational choice uncertainty, a person's sense of autonomy may be compromised.
- **Observation of reality:** Due to the incongruence and internal conflict experienced by persons with vocational choice uncertainty, they may struggle to accurately assess the external environment, in relation to internal psychological needs.
- **Interpersonal and social efficiency:** Vocational choice uncertainty is associated with intra- and interpersonal conflict, which may include adjustment problems and higher level of stress. These factors may contribute to difficulty with interpersonal and social efficiency.
- **General welfare:** Vocational choice uncertainty results from many factors that negatively affect general welfare such as increased stress, adjustment problems, lack of information to name only a few.
- **Affective conditions:** In severe cases vocational choice uncertainty could leave a person feeling little sense of control and orientation over their life, affect their self-esteem and contribute to chronic stress, which may develop into more serious affective conditions, such as depression and anxiety disorders.
- **Physiological conditions:** As vocational choice uncertainty is associated with higher levels of stress, it is possible that it may have a negative physiological impact on the person.
- **Specific pathological conditions:** It is important to remember that work dysfunctions do not necessarily include pathological conditions. However, pathological conditions may cause work dysfunctions such as vocational choice uncertainty. Ongoing work dysfunctions, such as vocational choice uncertainty, may also develop into pathological conditions if the person has a history of trauma or is genetically predisposed to a pathological condition.

- **Adjustment and adaptability:** The ability to meet the demands of the environment in terms of personal capabilities is likely to be compromised when a person struggles with vocational choice uncertainty.
- **Specific criteria:** A person struggling with vocational choice uncertainty may have difficulty in meeting organisational requirements such as performance criteria.

Question 3 (Read learning unit 5).

Discuss the differences between employee assistance programmes and health promotion programmes.

[10]

ANSWER:

Reference: Learning unit 5: Study guide

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	Health Promotion Programme (HPP)
Focused on tertiary prevention.	Focused on primary prevention.
Activities include treating or curing existing conditions.	Activities include health education and screening.
Objective is to assist troubled employees to recuperate and maintain employment.	Objective is to develop and maintain positive health behaviours / lifestyles.
Activities are very sensitive to confidentiality such as counselling or psychological services.	Activities may be less concerned with confidentiality such as fun runs, providing healthy food options in the cafeteria.
Activities less concerned about profit and cost effectiveness, especially if services are provided in-house.	Activities are more concerned about profit such as gym membership.

TOTAL: [50]

2 FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENT 02 (First semester)

Assignment 02 is an online assignment accessible on myUnisa. The assignment answers/feedback are available on myUnisa from 20 April 2018 and can be accessed by clicking on your assignment 02.

3 PREPARATION FOR THE EXAMINATION

3.1 Study material for the examination

It is important to take note of the following:

The prescribed study material is:

- All content in the study guide
- All of the sources under the e-reserves

3.2 Possible themes for questions

Please **DO NOT** use previous exam papers prior to 2017 to prepare for the exams. The content of this module was redesigned for 2017 onwards. Also, note that the 2018 exam paper has less than 30% overlap with the 2017 exam paper, meaning that we do not repeat the same questions, although some themes may overlap. The scope of exam, containing the themes for the exam will be published separately under additional resources on myUnisa on 20 April 2018.

Revisit the discussion forums, assignments and self-assessment questions as these align with the scope of the exam and will assist you in preparing for the exam.

Take note of the meaning of various “question words” or question instructions such as discuss, compare, etc. A list of these words and their meaning can be found in Tutorial Letter IOPALLA/301/3/2017 (you can download it from myUnisa).

3.3 Examination format, marking and year mark

Please note that only those of you who have submitted Assignment 01 or Assignment 02 will be allowed to write the examination. You will be allocated a year mark out of 20%, based on your assignment marks (compulsory Assignments 01 and 02). Each assignment therefore counts 10% to your year mark.

For example, if you obtain 30% in Assignment 01 and 70% in Assignment 02, you will get a year mark of 3 (10% of 30) plus 7 (10% of 70) respectively, which will give you an average year mark of 10. Your year mark will be added to your examination mark (in a relationship of 20:80) to yield a final mark.

The duration of the examination is two (2) hours, and the paper is marked out of 80. A mark of 50% will allow you to pass and a mark of 75% grants a distinction. The year mark will be integrated with the examination mark to provide a final examination mark.

Section A counts 50 marks. You must answer two (2) questions for 25 marks each from a choice of 4 questions. Each question counts 25 marks and each question is broken down into smaller subsections with mark allocations as was done in your assignment 1.

Section B counts 30 marks and is multiple choice. You must answer **ALL** questions in section B. It is vital that you work through ALL the self-assessment questions as part of your exam preparation. The questions for section B will be pen and paper based (not electronically), but will follow the same format as the self-assessment questions.

As mentioned before, the examination questions are set in a manner similar to the assignment and self-assessment questions. Some of the questions may be more theoretical, but you may also be required to apply your knowledge, for example, to provide scenarios or make practical applications such as identifying symptoms of psychological disorders from given information. Thus, the questions will assess your knowledge as well as your insight and application thereof.

We will concentrate on how well you know the content, your understanding thereof and whether you can apply the knowledge while we are marking the examination papers. We prefer systematic answers where numbered headings and subheadings structure your paragraphs. However, in the examination, you do not need to reference or spell correctly. Please write in English, as this is an English only module.

A very important consideration is that we should be able to read and understand what you have written. Please write legibly!! If we cannot read your handwriting, we cannot give marks.

It is our experience that if students answer their questions purposefully, a 25-mark answer can be sufficiently presented on three to four pages, while a 10-mark answer can be given on one to two pages. However, many factors determine the length of an answer, such as handwriting and students' knowledge of the study material.

Finally, READ questions carefully. We find that students start reading a question and assume the question refers to a certain section of the study material and do not read the rest of the question. The result is that their discussions do not answer the question asked. Please follow the instructions of the question.

4 CONTACT WITH LECTURERS

We trust that the feedback on the assignments, additional resources and themes provided in the scope of exam will assist you in your exam preparation.

Please feel free to contact us with specific questions related to your studies.

We wish you well for the examinations and your future studies.

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