

I/O Psychology Key Concepts

Job Analysis & Recruitment

Concept	Simple Definition	Example	Keyword
Job Analysis	Mapping out what a job entails and the human traits (KSAOs) needed to perform it.	Sitting down with a factory worker to document every step of their day before hiring someone new.	<i>Baseline tool, identifies KSAOs, dictates selection tests.</i>
HR Planning	A strategic blueprint that uses data to calculate current and future worker numbers to prevent shortages or surpluses.	A bank tracking seasonal retirement rates to calculate exactly how many new employees to hire next quarter.	<i>Supply and demand forecasting, mathematical strategy.</i>
Recruitment	The process of building a massive, diverse pool of potential applicants for a job opening.	Posting an open job vacancy advertisement on LinkedIn and hosting a booth at a local university career fair.	<i>Sourcing, applicant pool generation.</i>
Selection	The specific process of vetting, testing, and picking the single best-fit candidate from the applicant pool.	Putting 10 candidates through tests and interviews, then choosing the best one to receive a job offer.	<i>Choosing the individual best suited, funneling down.</i>
Internal Recruitment	Filling open positions using your existing employee roster.	Posting a job notice on the corporate intranet allowing current cashiers to apply to become supervisors.	<i>Job posting, job bidding.</i>

Concept	Simple Definition	Example	Keyword
Assessment Center	A hands-on selection technique where candidates perform simulations of actual job tasks while being graded.	Giving a candidate a mock customer complaint email and grading how they write a reply under stress.	<i>Situational exercises, physical task simulations.</i>
Negligent Hiring	A legal liability incurred when a company skips background checks and hires a dangerous person who hurts someone.	Hiring a security guard without checking records, who then actively assaults a customer on day three.	<i>Failed background screening, pre-employment liability.</i>
Negligent Retention	Keeping a worker employed <i>after</i> they have proven to be dangerous or unstable on the job.	Retaining an employee who has repeatedly threatened coworkers, rather than immediately terminating them.	<i>Keeping a known threat, post-employment liability.</i>

Workplace Motivation Theories

Concept / Theory	Definition	Example	Keyword
Herzberg: Hygiene Factors	Items dealing with the <i>job context</i> (environment) that only stop you from being angry, but don't inspire effort.	Getting a competitive base salary, corporate medical insurance, and a comfortable, air-conditioned office.	<i>Prevents dissatisfaction, creates a baseline of Neutral.</i>
Herzberg: Motivators	Items dealing with the <i>job content</i> (the work itself) that actively drive you to give 110% effort.	Being given full creative control over a project, getting a big promotion, or receiving public recognition.	<i>Creates active satisfaction, inspires productivity.</i>
ERG Theory: Frustration-Regression	If you get blocked from satisfying a higher-level need, you slide down to focus heavily on a simpler, lower-level need.	An employee denied a career promotion (Growth) gives up on climbing and focuses entirely on making office friends (Relatedness).	<i>Flexible needs elevator, sliding backward when blocked.</i>
ERG: Existence Needs	The most basic floor of survival and workplace physical baseline comfort.	Having enough money to comfortably pay rent, eat food, and work in a physically safe environment.	<i>Maslow's physiological and safety combo.</i>
ERG: Relatedness Needs	The social floor focused on team belonging and interpersonal connection.	Having an incredibly nice manager, supportive teammates, and low office drama.	<i>Social belonging, peer interactions.</i>

Concept / Theory	Definition	Example	Keyword
ERG: Growth Needs	The highest floor focused on achievement, self-actualization, and capability.	Learning to code via free company courses, solving complex business puzzles, and stepping into leadership roles.	<i>Personal development, reaching full potential.</i>
Discrepancy Theory	Your job satisfaction is decided entirely by the gap between what you were promised and what you actually experience.	Being promised a fun, strategic marketing job by HR, but spending all your time entering data into a spreadsheet.	<i>Expectation vs. Reality gap, broken psychological contract.</i>
McClelland: Need for Power	A deep internal drive focused on leading, commanding, and controlling situations.	A manager who loves taking charge during corporate crises, setting direction, and dictating team assignments.	<i>Influencing other people, seeking authority/status.</i>
McClelland: Need for Achievement	A deep internal drive focused on personal excellence and mastering hard puzzles.	A software developer who loves tackling complex, challenging code blocks just to prove they can do it perfectly.	<i>Overcoming obstacles, successful output, self-standard.</i>
McClelland: Need for Affiliation	A deep internal drive focused on harmony, relationships, and being accepted.	An employee who prioritizes collaborative group projects and goes out of their way to ensure no one feels left out.	<i>Working with other people, avoiding social conflict.</i>

Team Dynamics & Personality

Concept	Definition	Example	Keyword
Conscientiousness	The Big Five trait tracking discipline, organization, and a strong personal work ethic.	An employee who always double-checks spreadsheets for errors, arrives early, and finishes tasks ahead of schedule.	<i>Strongest universal predictor of performance and OCB.</i>
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)	Going above and beyond your official job description to voluntarily support your team or company.	Staying late to help a struggling coworker finish their project deck, even though it isn't your job.	<i>Extra-role tasks, good corporate citizen behavior.</i>
Tuckman: Forming Stage	The initial orientation phase where goals and initial tasks are laid out by leadership.	A newly assembled team meets for coffee to read the project charter, review the mission statement, and layout the startup plan.	<i>Polite, guarded, clarifying mission and startup goals.</i>
Tuckman: Storming Stage	The turbulent phase where real personalities emerge, causing friction and arguments.	Team members clashing over who should lead the presentation and arguing fiercely about which marketing direction to choose.	<i>Conflicts, disagreements, low levels of trust.</i>
Tuckman: Norming Stage	The organization phase where the team builds trust, sets working habits, and	The team calmly setting up a shared calendar, dividing roles evenly, and locking down	<i>Setting rules/procedures, cohesion, mutual acceptance.</i>

Concept	Definition	Example	Keyword
	agrees on operations.	standard operating procedures.	
Groupthink	A dangerous trap where a team silences their own doubts to agree with a dominant leader and maintain artificial peace.	A team agreeing to a flashy but weak ad layout because the boss loves it, despite everyone secretly knowing it will fail.	<i>Self-censorship, prioritizing harmony over critical logic.</i>
Social Loafing	Slacking off and putting in less physical effort because you are hidden inside a large crowd.	A student coasting through a group project and letting their four partners do all the writing, knowing they will still get an A.	<i>Reduction of individual effort in a collective setting.</i>
Social Inhibition	Performing significantly worse on a complex or unfamiliar task because people are actively watching you.	A trainee locking up and typing incredibly slowly because three senior managers are standing directly behind their chair.	<i>Performance drops on complex tasks under an audience.</i>
Process Losses	The extra time, resource, and energy costs incurred just to manage and keep a team synchronized.	Spending three hours in a meeting scheduling future meetings instead of actually building the product.	<i>Building/sustaining the team instead of accomplishing tasks.</i>

Concept	Definition	Example	Keyword
Social Impact Theory	The presence of people disrupts small, cozy, stable groups way more than large, massive crowds.	Adding one random newcomer to a tight-knit 3-person team completely disrupts their established workflow and communication patterns.	<i>Diminishing marginal impact of numbers, disrupts small teams.</i>

Organizational Design, Structure, & Conflict

Concept / Style	Definition	Example	Keyword
Job Design: Rotation	Systematically moving a worker across completely different desks or departments over time.	Working 3 months as a frontline bank teller, then moving to loan processing for 3 months, then moving to customer service.	<i>Cross-training, shifting between different jobs.</i>
Job Design: Enlargement	Adding more tasks of the exact same difficulty level to a job description (Horizontal expansion).	A data entry clerk being told they must now type 100 logs per day instead of 50 logs.	<i>More routine tasks, workload increases, no extra power.</i>
Job Design: Enrichment	Adding higher-level vertical responsibilities like planning, execution control, and performance evaluation.	A marketing assistant being given total freedom to design a major client campaign, set the budget, and judge its success.	<i>Vertical expansion, higher autonomy, setting goals.</i>

Concept / Style	Definition	Example	Keyword
Reciprocal Interdependence	A back-and-forth task lifecycle where work loops continuously between different teams.	Production builds a car part $\rightarrow$ Quality Control inspects it and sends feedback $\rightarrow$ Production fixes it based on that feedback.	<i>Back-and-forth workflow, outputs affect original inputs.</i>
Sequential Interdependence	An asymmetric linear workflow where work moves strictly in a one-way line.	An assembly line where Worker A welds a door, then passes it to Worker B to paint it, with zero back-and-forth looping.	<i>One-way street, sequential assembly line.</i>
Descriptive Norms	Social rules dictating what people <i>actually do</i> in real life (the observable behavioral baseline).	Everyone in the office choosing to wear casual blue jeans on Fridays, even though there is no official clothing rule.	<i>Observed typical behavior patterns of a crowd.</i>
Swift Trust	An initially high baseline of trust adopted automatically by temporary, fast-paced project groups to survive.	An emergency crisis response team trusting each other's technical capabilities instantly on minute one of a disaster.	<i>Initially high trust toward new coworkers in fresh teams.</i>
Matrix Structure	An organizational layout that intentionally superimposes two bosses over a single	An engineer reporting to the Head of Engineering for training, and an active Project	<i>Two reporting lines, violates unity of command.</i>

Concept / Style	Definition	Example	Keyword
	employee.	Manager for their daily campaign.	
Mechanistic Structure	A highly rigid, centralized, machine-like organization built strictly for predictable environments.	A traditional government licensing office where every single exception must follow a written standard operating manual.	<i>Low task variability, high task analyzability, strict rules.</i>
TKI Style: Forcing	An aggressive, highly assertive conflict style used to push through choices using sheer authority.	A captain shouting orders during a sudden building fire to clear the exits immediately without discussing options.	<i>Emergency use, urgent need to make a decision.</i>
Triangling	A passive-aggressive tactic where an employee pulls in a third party to fight a battle on their behalf to avoid confrontation.	Complaining to a coworker about a teammate's laziness, hoping that coworker will go tell the teammate to fix it.	<i>Avoiding direct confrontation, using a messenger.</i>
Arbitration	Bringing in a neutral third party who acts like a judge and renders a final, legally binding decision <i>for</i> you.	A judge listening to a labor union and management argue, then legally dictating what next year's salary raise will be.	<i>Third person makes the decision, legally binding outcome.</i>
Mediation	Bringing in a neutral third party who facilitates conversation so the disputing peers can	An HR rep sitting down two fighting employees to help them talk through their differences and	<i>Third person does not decide, relies on mediator competence.</i>

Concept / Style	Definition	Example	Keyword
	find their <i>own</i> solution.	write a peace agreement.	

Management History & Systems Evolution

Concept / Era	Definition	Example	Keyword
Scientific Management	Taylor's school of thought that analyzed human movements scientifically to turn workers into efficient machine parts.	Timing a worker with a stopwatch to find the absolute mathematically fastest angle to shovel coal into a furnace.	<i>Frederick Taylor, machine view of workers, "One best way".</i>
Administrative Theory	Fayol's 14 principles mapping out the fundamental high-level strategic functions of corporate managers.	A corporate director balancing authority levels, setting fair pay, and prioritizing company goals over personal agendas.	<i>Henri Fayol, functions of management, fair remuneration.</i>
Fayol: Controlling Function	The management job of monitoring work to verify it perfectly tracks the original strategic roadmap.	A project manager reading weekly status dashboards to verify that developers are building software on time and within budget.	<i>Monitoring team to ensure instructions and plans are done.</i>
Bureaucracy	Weber's rational blueprint for designing stable institutions using merit, clear ranks, and strict rules.	A university setting clear written grading criteria, structured chains of command, and hiring professors solely via exams.	<i>Max Weber, hierarchy of authority, formal rules, merit selection.</i>

Concept / Era	Definition	Example	Keyword
Open Systems Theory	Viewing an organization as a living organism that continuously interacts with the external environment to survive.	A tech company importing capital and user feedback, processing it internally, and exporting a fresh smartphone software app.	<i>Importation of energy, throughput transformation, output export.</i>

Sacred Cow Hunt Cheat Sheet

Category	Term / Concept	Core Definition (Key Phrase)	Quick Exam Context / Example
The Targets	Sacred Cow Hunt	Auditing and eliminating outdated habits.	Destroying inefficient traditions to streamline work.
	Paper Cows	Redundant or unnecessary paperwork.	Filling out three separate identical forms.
	Meeting Cows	Excessive, unproductive scheduled meetings.	Routine weekly meetings that lack real purpose.
	Speed Cows	Unrealistic or unnecessary rushed deadlines.	Ordering an immediate rush on non-urgent projects.
The Actors	Change Agent	Facilitator who loves and pushes transformation.	Internal or external consultant driving restructuring.
	Change Analyst	Data-driven professional who mandates changes.	Modifying rules only when data proves benefit.
The Stages	1. Denial	Refusing to believe change is happening.	"This new policy won't last long."
	2. Defense	Protecting old habits and arguing back.	"Our old system worked perfectly fine."
	3. Discarding	Letting go of the old workflow.	Realizing the old system is completely gone.

Category	Term / Concept	Core Definition (Key Phrase)	Quick Exam Context / Example
	4. Adaptation	Testing and learning the new tools.	Attending training sessions for new software.
	5. Internalization	Full integration into normal routine.	The new method becomes daily habit.