Week 2 — Introduction to Individual Differences

Prominent Theories of Human Behaviour

1. Sigmund Freud's **psychoanalytical theory**
- Basic assumption is that people behave because of their inner psyche, which consists of **3 interacting parts**: the Id, the Ego and the Superego
  - **Id**: Completely **unconscious**, **impulsive** part the represents our primal desire that seeks for immediate gratification
  - **Ego**: **Rational self** that allows us to **exert self control.** Usually most reflected in our actions
  - **Superego**: **Philosophical** and **spiritual ideas** that lead the question for perfection. Cultural influenced what **we should and shouldn't do**. Punishes us with guilt when we do the wrong thing.
- If there is conflict between the 3, it leads to conflict
- **Limitations**: **Unscientific** and many assumptions are untestable. **Unobservable** — Internal Process that are open to highly subjective and unscientific interpretation

2. **Behaviourism** and B.F. Skinner's **reinforcement theory**
- Key determinations of behaviour are:
  - **Stimulus:** Triggers a behavioural response
  - **Response**: An action or behaviour caused by the stimulus
  - **Reward/Punishment**: Positive reinforcement to encourage **repetition** of desired response/ **Denial** of reward to distinguish an undesirable response
- Many aspects of behaviour are inconsistent with the behaviourist assumption
- **Different people might have different responses** after receiving positive or negative feedback, e.g. exerting more effort, altering one goals, giving up or asking others
- **Limitations**: Behaviourism is **unable to explain the range** of human behaviours possible. Our **behaviours are influenced not just by environmental triggers** but mental events such as thoughts, intentions and feelings also influence our behaviour.

3. Albert Bandura's **social cognitive theory**
- According to this theory, a person's behaviour is influenced by both: **environment**, and their; **personal characteristics** such as personality, values, goals, etc.
- **Tradic Reciprocal Determinism (TRD)**
  - Tradic — there are 3 factors (**person, environment, and behaviours**)
  - Reciprocal — two way **mutual influence** between each pair
  - Determinism — each factor influences or determines the other
- This mode provides **useful** framework for understanding **complex interactions**, between **personal, psychological and environmental factors** that culminate in human behaviour

Individual Difference Factors (People vary in levels in these aspects)
4. **Cognitive Ability** (CA) — capacity to learn, reason, problem solve, plan, think abstractly and comprehend complex ideas
- Different types of hierarchal cognitive ability. General Cognitive Ability (Top) —> Verbal Reasoning, Abstract Reasoning, Numerical Reasoning, etc. (Below)
- This model of intelligence is useful as it shows **how some types of people are good at some type of tasks** and not other type of tasks
- Cognitive Ability was the **single strongest indication of performance** in a broad range of jobs
- Knowing a person is very smart tells us nothing about how friendly, team oriented, socially engaging, someone is
- **Myth**: CA only matters in complex jobs — false. Found no significant differences between high complexity and low complexity jobs
- **Myth**: All you need is certain amount of CA where having more does not help. Performance accelerates as CA reaches higher levels.
5. **Personality**
- Person's **unique** and **relatively stable set of characteristics** or patterns of behaviour, thoughts and emotions. Three basic underpinning personality theories:

1. Personality traits, characteristics, and dispositions are relatively **stable and enduring**
2. They are **major determinants** of one's behaviour
3. Likely to **influence behaviours** across a wide variety of situations (e.g. introverted person will be withdrawn and not be assertive in a range of different situations)

- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which classifies people as 1 of 16 types
- **Weak situations** (less forma less social restraints), **has a wider variety of acceptable behaviour**. Less situational constraints, thus someone's personality is more likely to be exhibited
- Although the MBTI is widely used, there is **little evidence supporting its reliability and validity**. Therefore, most researchers prefer to use a trait-based model of personality, with the dominant model of personality commonly referred to as the "Big Five".
  - **Conscientiousness** — Degree to which a person is organised, reliable, think before acting, focused
  - **Emotional Stability** — How someone deals with stress, rarely becomes angry, rarely discouraged and handles crisis well
  - **Extraversion** — Degree to which individual likes to be around other people, likes excitement, generally cheerful
  - **Agreeableness** — Easy going and tolerant. Willing to like other people. Sensitive to the feelings of others
  - **Openness to Experience** — Thinks creatively, vivid imagination, values and respects self and others, and likes art
- **Limitations:**
1. Model is entirely **descriptive instead of explanatory,** doesn't explain why people are the way they are
2. Questions about if there is the right number of factors. HEXACO is gaining popularity, where they think honesty-humility is also another important trait

Personality at Work
- Influences work performance, organisational choice, career choice, career satisfaction, e.g. lower on emotional stability tend to be in lower complexity jobs
- Tend to select jobs consistent with their personality
- Tells us how we typically behave, **but doesn't define who we are or what we are capable of**
- **If we know what our preferences are, we can actively play to our strengths or find strategies that help us deal with situations we are less comfortable in**

3. **Emotional Intelligence** (EI)
- Ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions
- 3 main assumptions:
1. Emotions play an **important role** in life and work
2. People vary in their **ability to perceive, understand, use and manage emotions**
3. These differences **affect individual adaptation** in a range of context, including the workplace

- Our emotions are fundamentally important in our career success — successful in managing one's own and other people's emotions
- Crucial for organisational success in leading and having influence in contemporary success — strong awareness of own emotions and can name them. They can **accurately detect emotions** in others and use this to **manage interactions** with others
- **Mixed models**: EI as a diverse construct, which includes aspects of personality and ability (has validity)
- **Ability based models**: EI has an ability in its own right. Focuses on the idea that we vary in our aptitude for processing emotion based information
- General consensus that 4 levels which build on each other.

  Self Awareness —> Self Management —> Social Awareness —> Relationship Management
- **Self Awareness**: Ability to accurately **see and be aware of own emotions**. Understand what makes you tick. Your strengths and weaknesses. What you feel and why you feel and what makes you feel

- **Self Management**: Ability to **manage your impulses**. Ability to generate, use and feel emotions you need to communicate and be in charge of what you say and do.
- **Social Awareness**: Ability to **perceive and understand the emotions** of others and see from their point of view
- **Relationship management**: Ability to **manage other people's emotions** and to use your awareness of your emotion and others to **manage interactions successfully**. Regulating your own emotions and being aware of other's emotions

- Why does EI matter? There is strong evidence that it matters. Predicts academic performance associated with 10-12% increase in grades at university. Low EI also associated with bullying, drug problems
  - High EI with quality interactions with friends, customer satisfaction and commitment to an organisation
    1. EI is important because it can be **important in the career you choose**
    2. EI is important for **leadership**. EI is more malleable than personality and intelligence, and it is something that you can improve over time

READINGS
(Smith, Hill, Wallace, Recendes, & Judge, 2018) *Upsides to Dark and Downsides to Bright Personality: A Multidomain Review and Future Research Agenda*
Overview
- Personality traits have often been classified as being either bright or dark. Bright traits have often been regarded as desirable and dark traits have been regarded as detrimental
- However, dark traits may be advantageous and bright traits may be disadvantageous
  - e.g. Extreme levels of bright traits, such as being too conscientious may lead to damaging outcomes, that they cannot adapt to certain situations
  - e.g. Dark traits like narcissism can lead to higher levels of adaptive behaviours

Organisational Behaviour
- **Dark traits typically positively** associate with **undesirable workplace outcomes**, abusive supervision, unethical behaviour and job stress, and **negatively associate** with **employee attitude and performance**
  - **Despite** those who are high in Machiavellianism (**Machs**) which is a dark trait as they have **self-interest and are hyper focused on achievement of power**, Machs may **actually benefit their organisation** as they appear to exhibit higher levels of challenging Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (**voluntary commitment** within an organisation or company that is **not part of his or her contractual tasks**)
  - Narcissists may be more adept at working in changing or chaotic environments and when interacting with an audience
- **Bright traits** may be a hindrance to employee performance as **high in openness to experience may** be **less committed to their organisations**
  - Those high in agreeableness may have increased level of stress due to inability to cope with interpersonal conflict

Leadership Emergence and Effectiveness
- Individuals with dark personality traits are particularly inclined to advance into leadership positions as they are over-confident, having greater propensity to self-promote and take risks, which allows them to stand out
- However emerging as a leader does not necessarily equate to being an effective one
- **Leadership effectiveness** relates to the **sub facets of narcissism**
  - Effective leaders exhibited positive aspects of narcissism (egotism, self esteem)
  - Less effective exhibited negative aspects of narcissism (manipulation, impression management)
- Presidents who were rated as narcissistic or Machiavellian were viewed as charismatic and as better performers
- **Bright Traits**: Extraversion are common predictors of leader emergence and effectiveness but are less advantageous for leaders in certain situations or at extreme levels

- Someone with **high diligence and dutifulness** can be **ineffective** as they **restrict the autonomy** of followers through their **micromanagement**
- Some leaders who are high in emotional stability can also be seen as lacking attachment or concern with their followers

Human Resources
- Applicant with **dark personalities** have advantages in the selection process because they may **use deception to make themselves appear better than others**
- **Narcissists** are **positively rated** in both interviewing situations and assessment centres
- Although researchers champion **personality assessment** as effective tools for personal selection, these assessments have **largely measured bright traits**

Strategic Management
- Personality of important decision makers, such as the CEO or top management teams affect organisational outcomes
- Dark traits: Executive hubris, overconfidence and narcissism **can be bad for organisations** and stakeholders as they may be **overconfidence** in implementing strategies, bold in **engaging risky actions** reflecting their self-perceived superiority and **engage in fewer socially responsible activities**
  - However this can also be good for organisations as risk is sometimes necessary
- Bright traits: Humility and charisma can be bad for organisations as **charismatic** CEOs may only utilise it to **take advantage of or manipulate others for self gain**
  - Being too nice can also backfire since Google CEO was viewed as "too nice" to win the war with Apple

Entrepreneurship
- Dark traits: Overconfidence was positively related to Entrepreneurial Orientation. They have **higher levels of self-belief** which may draw them to new ventures operating in novel contexts and may **view entrepreneurship as a path to satisfy their need for attention and admiration**
- Bright traits: Not always beneficial for entrepreneurs as high optimism and self-efficacy can cause entrepreneurs to set unattainable goals

Dark and Bright Personality Within Groups and Teams
- Dark traits: Too many narcissists within a group can lead to decreased creativity and result in intergroup hostility
- Bright traits: Certain forms of conflict are necessary, but agreeableness which is a bright trait, is commonly tied to lower levels of conflict, but may result in forced agreement