

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA  
 FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES  
 MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IN HUMAN RESOURCE  
 MANAGEMENT  
 FINAL EXAMINATION 2022/2023 - SEMESTER I  
 OSP9334/ MSP9334/ MCP2134 - ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR



DURATION: 03 HOURS

DATE: 19<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023

TIME: FROM 1.30 P.M. TO 4.30 P.M.

No. of Questions: 05

No. of Pages: 04

**Instructions:** ANSWER FOUR (04) QUESTIONS INCLUDING QUESTION NO. 01, WHICH IS COMPULSORY.  
 ALL ANSWERS SHOULD BE WRITTEN NEATLY AND FOCUSED.

1. Read the following case study and answer the questions given at the end.

### OLIVIA FRANCIS

Jim Markham did not know what to do. The more he tried to analyze the problem, the murkier it became. Normally, Jim felt confident in counseling his students-both past and present-but this time it was different. Olivia Francis had been one of the best students he had ever taught in the MBA program. She was bright and curious, one of those rare students whose thirst for knowledge was uppermost in her reasons for being in the program.

She had never disclosed much about her family or her past to him, but he knew from her student file and information sheet, and from bits and pieces of conversations with her, that she had come from a poor, somewhat impoverished neighborhood in St. Louis and had earned her way through college on academic scholarship and part-time jobs. Upon graduation from the MBA program she left the Midwest, taking a job with a prestigious consulting firm in Los Angeles, and at the time he had felt sure she would travel far in her career. Perhaps that is why her phone call earlier that morning troubled him so.

Awaiting him on his arrival at the office was a message on his answering machine from Olivia. He returned her call and wound up talking to her for an hour. The salient portions of their conversation began to run through his mind again. What had struck him the most initially was the range and the depth of her emotions. He had never spoken to anyone in his life who had so much rage seething within them. After she had vented the rage, like air slowly being discharged from a balloon, she became almost apathetic, and her resignation to her situation almost frightened him-her only way out, as far as she could see it, was to find another job. Jim could not recall ever being in a situation where he felt he had absolutely no control over what happened to him, where his input was meaningless to the resolution of a problem he faced.

Olivia had stated that her first performance appraisal had been below average, and two weeks ago, her second appraisal was only average. She felt that she had worked hard on her part of the team's projects and believed her work was first rate. The only reason for the appraisals, as far as she could see, was that she was black. She was the only black on the team-in the whole office for that matter. Jim believed her when she said that her work was excellent, for her work had always been excellent as a graduate student and as a research assistant. He had

attempted to get her to analyze the situation further, but it was like pulling teeth; she seemed emotionally worn out and just wanted out.

"Surely they gave you more feedback about your performance than that it was below average?" he remembered saying. All she would say is that they mentioned something about her attitude, not being a team player, that her work was technically exemplary, but that she was part of a team and that working with others was as critical as the nature of the work she did by herself. Olivia felt that this was a smokescreen for the fact that she had been dumped on the office by a corporate recruiter with an EEO quota to fill, and that they were trying to get rid of her by using subjective criteria that she couldn't really defend herself against. The frustration came back to Jim as he remembered probing her for more information.

*"What was the tone of your manager in the feed-back session?"*

*"Condescending, false sincerity; there was a lot of talk on his part of 'my potential.' It was humiliating, actually."*

*"How do the other people in your team act toward you? Are they friendly, aloof, or what?"*

*"Oh, they're friendly on the surface-especially the project leader-but that's about as far as it goes."*

*"Is the project manager the person who gave you this feedback?"*

*"No, she is under the group manager. He is a long-time company guy. But obviously she gives him her evaluation and impressions of me, so I'm sure that they both pretty much see issues regarding me eye-to-eye." "Tell me more about the group manager."*

*"Mr. Bresnan? I don't know much about him to tell you the truth. He oversees five project teams, and each project manager reports to him. He comes in and gives a pep talk from time to time to us. Other than that, I've never had occasion to really interact with him. He's always cracking jokes, putting people at ease. Kind of a 'Theory Y' type-at least on the surface."*

*"Do you ever go to lunch as a group?"*

*"Yes, they go to lunch a lot and they invite me along, but all they talk about are things I don't find very interesting-they're kind of a shallow bunch." "What do you mean, shallow?"*

*"They could care less about real issues-their discussions range from restaurants to social events around town to recent movies they've seen."*

*"Does the project manager go to these lunches?"*

*"Yes, she comes and even plans parties after work too. Her husband is in the entertainment industry, a movie producer. Nothing big, documentaries and that type of thing, but they put on airs, if you know what I mean. She is really gregarious and always wants to be of help to people, but she strikes me as putting on a front, a mask-obviously she isn't really sincere in wanting to help everyone 'be the best that they can be'; that's one of her little slogans by the way; after all, look what happened to me." "Why do you think they're prejudiced against you?"*

*"Well, the poor appraisals for one thing-those are completely unfounded. They do other less obvious things too. Twice I've overheard some of them from behind cubicles relaxing and telling racist jokes about 'wetbacks.'"*

*"Is it just a few of them that do this? I can't believe all of them are racist."*

"I don't know; I don't enter the cubicle and say, 'Hi guys, tell some more jokes!' But it isn't just one or two of them. Look, I obviously don't fit in, do I? It's lily-white in the office, and I'm not."

"What do they do that's work related that bothers you?"

"Well, when project deadlines get closer, their anxiety level increases. They run around the office, yell at secretaries ... it's like a volcano building up power to explode. They worry and agonize over the presentation to the client and have two or three trial 'presentation runs' that everyone is required to go to. It's all so stupid."

"Why is that?" "The clients always like what we produce, and with a few relatively small adjustments, our work is acceptable to the clients. So, it's like all that wasted energy was needless. We could accomplish so much more if they would just settle down and trust their abilities." "How do you act when they are like this?" "I do my work. I respond to them rationally. I turn my part of the project in on time, and it is good work, Professor Markham. I guess I try to be the stabilizing force in the team by not acting like they do-I guess

I just don't find the work pressures to be all that stressful." "Why not?"

"Oh, I don't know really. Well, maybe I do a little bit. I don't know if you know this or not, but my mother was a single parent with four kids. I was the oldest. She worked and I looked after the kids when I came home from school. She worked two jobs to provide for us, so I would be in charge of the smaller kids sometimes upwards of 9 o'clock at night. Doing your homework while taking care of a sick kid with the others listening to the television-that's stressful! These people at work-they don't know what stress is. Most of them are single, or if they are married, they don't have any kids. They all seem very self-centered, like the universe revolves around them and their careers."

"What kind of behavior at work seems to get rewarded?"

"I guess doing good work doesn't. What seems to get rewarded is being white, being more or less competent, and being interested in insipid topics. Professor Markham, don't you know of any firms that are more enlightened I can send my résumé to? I'm looking for a firm that will reward me for the work I do and not for who I am or am not." Jim leaned back in his chair pondering what to do next. He had promised Olivia that he would call her back in a day or two with some advice. He sensed that he didn't quite understand her problem, that there was more to it than what appeared on the surface. But he just felt like he didn't have good enough data to analyze it properly. He decided to go for a walk around the neighborhood to clear his mind. As he opened the front door and gazed down his street, he suddenly realized for the first time that his neighborhood was lily-white.

**Source:** Cohen, A.R., Fink, S.L., Gadon, H., and Willits, R.D., (2001). *Effective Behaviour in Organizations; Cases, Concepts, and Student Experiences*. McGraw Hill Companies Inc., New York.

### Questions:

- I Analyze the work-life conflicts that Olivia encountered in this case study using appropriate theories and concepts of organizational behavior. (20 Marks).
- II. How does Jim Markham assist Olivia in overcoming her problems? Justify your answer. (20 Marks).

2. As Sri Lanka is currently experiencing a big catastrophe, organizations and individuals are profoundly affected by these exceptional times. Specify at least five different organizational behavioral challenges and provide appropriate solutions for overcoming these hurdles. (20 Marks)

3. "Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in to give meaning to their environment. However, what we perceive can be substantially different from objective reality. People's behavior is based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself".

Discuss the validity of this statement emphasizing the factors effecting and importance of understanding of it. Use practical examples to elaborate your answer. (20 Marks)

4. "You are a member of a hiking party. After reaching base camp on the first day, you decide to take a quick sunset hike by yourself. After a few exhilarating miles, you decide to return to camp. On your way back, you realize you are lost. You have shouted for help, to no avail. It is now dark and getting cold."

I. What do you mean by 'group cohesiveness'? (06 Marks)

II. Discuss whether group cohesiveness is more effective than individual efforts in order to achieve organizational performance. (14 Marks)

5. "In the contemporary business world, business organizations have to face many more changes than expected." What is the difference between planned and unplanned 'organizational change'? Which is easier, and why? Explain using practical examples. (20 Marks)

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