Open Educational Resources Publications   Bentley Library

OER Textbook Review for Organizational Behavior - (1) Organizational Behavior, Libretexts - (2) Organizational Behavior, Openstax

Amanda C. Sargent Ph.D.
Bentley University

Organizational Behavior

$ Business

LibreTexts
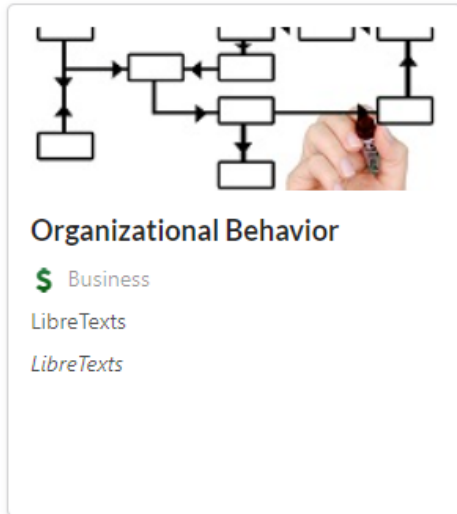
LibreTexts

Resource: Organizational Behavior – published by LibreTexts

Reviewer: Amanda Sargent, Assistant Professor, Management, Bentley University

Date of Review: 08/31/2024

URL: [Organizational Behavior - Libretexts](#)

Summary of Text

An open-source text covering a wide range of organizational behavior (and other related) topics. Chapter topics include:

1. Front Matter
2. Organizational Behavior
3. Managing Demographic and Cultural Diversity
4. Understanding People at Work: Individual Differences and Perception
5. Individual Attitudes and Behaviors
6. Theories of Motivation
7. Designing a Motivating Work Environment
8. Managing Stress and Emotions
9. Communication
10. Managing Groups and Teams
11. Conflict and Negotiations
12. Making Decisions
13. Leading People Within Organizations

Comprehensiveness and Content Accuracy

The content coverage for this text is in alignment with the coverage of most mainstream Organizational Behavior (OB) textbooks, but perhaps not nearly as in-depth or as recently updated. There is a grounding in the science of OB and an intro to research in the first chapter, which suggests an attempt to ensure the text material is evidence-based. Sources cited for each section appear to be of good quality and are often adapted from popular top-tier journal articles or books from well-known and well-respected I/O or OB scholars. Some sections can be quite brief, and while students will likely appreciate this, it does mean instructors may need to supplement their syllabi with additional materials for certain topics to ensure full coverage of material. Further, most of the content appears to be based on information published in 2008 or before, so there is a sizable gap in content coverage for recent theory and research advancement, as well as external environment influences on how we understand OB (e.g., the pandemic, social movements, remote work, AI revolution, etc.). Students may find the textbook less credible and irrelevant due to the age of references/citations and lack of reference to modern organizations or cultural references. However, the basics of OB have not really changed much in the past 20 years and this text covers all the absolutely necessary content needed to teach a first-year beginner OB class, or to serve as a quick reference for concepts in higher level classes in tandem with other sources.

Style: Clarity, Consistency, and Grammar/Technical Issues

The writing style is very accessible in this text and uses concise, clear language to explain concepts. The layout of pages is well-organized with good differentiation between text headings, key words, and main text. There are the occasional typos and broken links in the text, but these are fairly infrequent and do not detract much from the experience of reading the text. Users can choose to download the full text in PDF form if they prefer to read the text that way as compared to the web-based experience.

Occasionally, the exercises in the text reference terms that students may not be familiar with, but these terms are not defined. For example, in the second chapter, a case exercise asks students to identify an organization's "competitive advantage," which many new business students may not be familiar with. Instructors may want to review text prior to assigning it and make sure any terms that are unfamiliar to

students are defined in other ways outside of the text (e.g., via another reading material, vocabulary sheet, or verbal explanation).

Interface/Organization/Modularity

Chapters are easy to navigate with subsections linked on the landing page for each chapter, and there are clickable arrows to advance or go back through pages when reading the text. The layout of the text is easy to read, and visuals are both simple while serving specific functions to illustrate concepts from the written text. There are also tabs on the left-hand side to enhance the user experience including a "readability" tab where the user can change the color gradients of the screen, change text size, change margin size, or quickly go to dark mode. This is a special feature I have not seen in other online texts which readers will likely appreciate. There is also a "Tools" tab that allows users to download citations in a variety of styles (e.g., APA, MLA), bookmark pages, get page attributions, get page sources, and more. Users can also navigate to other chapters and sections using the "Contents" tab, making navigation very easy. Sometimes the pop-up box functionality is spotty (i.e., the "x" to close out a box doesn't work), but overall, the tabs are useful and add accessibility and customizability to using the interface.

Each chapter has optional interactive activities, "Your OB Toolbox" sections which are meant to help readers build practical skills related to OB, end of chapter exercises, cases, a summary of takeaways, and a references section. Users can also provide feedback at the end of sections by clicking on happy or sad face icons to indicate if they thought the page was helpful. There are also retrieval dates at the end of each section so that instructors can evaluate how old the information contained in a chapter is.

Relevance

As noted above, this text has the foundational knowledge necessary to teach a first OB course to college students, but the references used are all prior to 2008. As such, while the content contained in the text is strong, the older references (which are high quality and many seminal works) may make students feel less confident in the material and less likely to trust the text.

From a cultural competence and DEI perspective, this text does a nice job of covering the basics of diversity and using strong research and references to support its assertions. Indeed, there is an entire chapter on diversity and cultural competence which contains good quality information from credible sources. However, equity and inclusion concepts are largely absent, some of the legislative references

appear to be outdated (e.g., section on Affirmative Action). In addition, the last two decades are missing from this text, where so much DEI-related change has occurred in the business world and everywhere else. Further, some of the conclusions, such as assertions that diversity training programs are a great best practice, have been reversed or qualified by stronger and more advanced research in the past two decades, so some information in the text is less accurate than it could be (though not exactly wrong). There is also a "The Role of Ethics and National Culture" section for every chapter which brings in some DEI perspective to every topic.

Conclusion

Overall, this textbook covers all the necessary topics for an introduction to OB class. It would best be used to teach basic OB concepts in lower-level courses or serve as a reference for more advanced courses in tandem with supplemental information. I do not recommend relying solely on this text for an OB course given the absence of information after 2008. As a free option to teach main concepts and theories, however, it can be a useful resource.
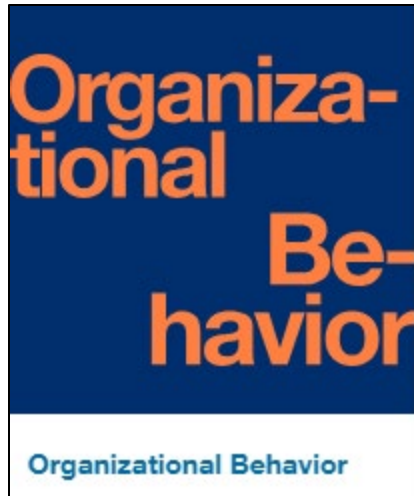
Resource: Organizational Behavior – published by Openstax

Reviewer: Amanda Sargent, Assistant Professor, Management, Bentley University

Date of Review: 08/31/2024

URL: Organizational Behavior - Openstax

Summary of Text

An open-source text covering a wide range of organizational behavior (and other related) topics. Chapter topics include:

1. Intro to Management and OB
2. Individual and Cultural Differences
3. Perception and Job Attitudes
4. Learning and Reinforcement
5. Diversity in Organizations
6. Perception and Managerial Decision Making
7. Work Motivation for Performance
8. Performance Appraisal and Rewards
9. Group and Intergroup Relations
10. Understanding and Managing Work Teams
11. Communication
12. Leadership
13. Organizational Power and Politics
14. Conflict and Negotiations

15. External and Internal Organizational Environments and Corporate Culture

16. Organizational Structure and Change

17. Human Resource Management

18. Stress and Wellbeing

19. Entrepreneurship

Comprehensiveness and Content Accuracy

Content coverage is somewhat haphazard in this Organizational Behavior (OB) textbook. The general content areas one would expect in an OB text are present, such as job attitudes, motivation, groups and teams, decision-making, leadership, power and politics, etc. There is also content that typically is covered in other courses, such as entrepreneurship and human resource management. While there is a great deal of content covered in each chapter, only some of the content seems appropriate for a foundational text while some feels superfluous or overly obscure. For example, in an individual differences unit, we do not typically discuss "physical abilities" in a selection context with students in undergraduate business courses; that content may be used in I/O selection courses at the graduate level, but seems a bit out of place in an individual differences chapter for undergraduates (especially when disability accommodation is not addressed). Further, some content that should be in the text is noticeably absent. For example, in the personality chapter, there is no discussion of the Big 5, the most well-researched and accurate personality assessment the field has. Instead, we have concepts like "dogmatism" discussed, which is not a foundational personality construct. The personality unit is one example of many in this text where both extra content and scant content coverage of key concepts are paired. Taken together, the lack of coverage of some foundational content and over-coverage of more obscure content makes this textbook an interesting reference, but perhaps not the best to use as a foundational text to create an OB knowledge base.

Further, while conceptual content appears to be generally accurate on the face of things, there is a notable lack of citation or footnotes when grand generalizations are made, or research findings are discussed. Without citation, it is impossible to confirm statements for accuracy, so instructors should be aware of this as checking the assertions may become cumbersome. Sometimes terms are used that reflect real concepts but are not the most commonly used term (e.g., "mental abilities" rather than "cognitive ability"), which is not necessarily an egregious error, but may pose some challenges when it comes to using other forms of evidence to supplement the text as most credible research will use the common terms.

Given the wide breadth of information, but substantive holes in coverage, instructors might be better served picking and choosing specific excerpts from the text to use as course materials rather than relying on this text as the primary reference material.

Style: Clarity, Consistency, and Grammar/Technical Issues

The writing style is primarily conversational in this text and not overly effusive or flowery. That being said, at times the language appears inconsistent in tone or not quite as clearly stated as it could be. The display of text can be a bit thick, and paragraphs are not indented, which may feel overwhelming for some readers. There are some typos and grammatical errors throughout, which may lead some readers to feel the text lacks credibility in addition to inhibiting learning. Further, the text does, at times, appear to assume readers have some fluency with business jargon (e.g., terms and phrases like "global economy", "[market] competition", etc.) presented early on without defining these terms, which not all learners, especially those early in their post-secondary journey, may be familiar with and thus obstruct their understanding.

Interface/Organization/Modularity

Navigation is easy using hyperlinks embedded in the text. Users can jump to any chapter they are interested in accessing by clicking on the chapter title in the Table of Contents. There are additional resources available for instructors, including a test bank, instructor manual, and PowerPoint lecture slides; these must be accessed by instructors creating and verifying their account.

Learning outcomes are presented at the front of every chapter, and modules within each chapter are numbered for easy reference. Inside each module, activities like "Concept Checks" can be found which ask questions aimed at assessing the learner's progress toward the stated learning outcomes. Key terms are notated with bold text, but it is important to note that these terms are not always defined as much as referenced in-text, leaving learners unclear as to what some key terms mean. However, key terms are defined in a glossary at the end of every chapter, so learners may flip to the glossary if any term is unfamiliar. There are several other pieces of content at the end of the chapter including a summary of learning outcomes which could serve as a good study guide for the content in chapter (or potentially a way to not have to read the full text assigned), an exercise (e.g., a "Critical Thinking Case" or "Skills Application") based on chapter content, and chapter review questions for the learner to assess their understanding. Some sources are included at the very end of the chapter as well, but again, sources are

not always referenced well in text and without a consistent format, so it may not be clear which source is associated with which statement in the chapter.

Visuals are included in most chapters in the form of charts and diagrams. These are fairly rudimentary and not generally very visually pleasing. They do represent the described content accurately, however, much the way a PowerPoint SmartArt feature might.

Relevance

As noted above, in terms of content, there are both pros and cons to this text. Namely, there is some good information, some questionable information, and some missing information. Thus, while the text is relevant in terms of topics, it is also insufficient to serve as the sole text for an OB course.

Moreover, the text includes many case studies which focus on modern management and business problems using widely known organizations that students will likely be familiar with (e.g., Apple, Google, Netflix, etc.). Some tables and charts describe data and trends that are now irrelevant or obsolete, however. For example, a table exists predicting turnover trends in 2020, reflecting some content has not been updated since before the pandemic. Indeed, most tables and figures refer to dates in the late 2010s or earlier. This is problematic in terms of the text being outdated, but it is even more of an issue given how the pandemic and other societal and economic shifts occurring in 2020 and beyond have influenced the world of work. Further, the text takes a very hierarchical approach to describing and understanding organizations with corporations as the foundational organization type of interest. In the modern world of work, hierarchies and corporations are still highly prevalent, but other organizational forms and structures (e.g., flat organizations, small businesses, and start-ups, learn and agile orgs, etc.) are on the rise and are not really addressed or acknowledged in the text.

From a cultural competence and DEI perspective, there are some places in the text where language is subtly exclusive, such as statements referring to a "corporate president" and then describing that person as "him," reflecting implicit assumptions that people in high-powered business positions must be men. The text also appears to be less current in terms of the preferred language used to describe gender, using terms for binary sex categories (male and female) when the text should refer to gender (e.g., man, woman, nonbinary, etc.) and referring to people in gendered terms such as describing workers as "craftsmen" (i.e., assuming everyone in that work is a man). Similarly, current language regarding

minoritized racial groups in the U.S. has come away from use of the term "minority" as a descriptor as groups traditionally viewed as "minorities" due to their lower representation in the population have been growing and thus may not necessarily represent numerical minorities anymore as much as the identity group has been minoritized (e.g., disadvantaged or excluded due to negative associations with that group). Terminology to describe racial and ethnic groups is not up to date, for example, references to "black" workers (should be capital B) and American Indians (should be Native or Indigenous Americans). Further, the text appears to privilege an American perspective, sometimes using examples that make "foreign" competitors appear like wrongdoers or unethical where Americans are always in the right. While there is a section in the first chapter devoted to cultural differences, the content is sparse—leaving out some of the more commonly referenced cultural theories (e.g., Hofstede) and essentially only acknowledges that differences exist, not why they matter or how they may be valuable. As such, this text is not as current, inclusive, nor culturally aware/competent as it could be or as many other OB texts on the market are.

There is an entire chapter devoted to "Diversity" in this textbook. This is not the norm in all OB textbooks, so it is nice to see acknowledgement of DEI (albeit couched as "diversity" only) is an important OB topic. However, the definitions of DEI terminology are a bit off at times and there is a notable absence of discussion of disabled individuals (just a note of the ADA), and there is no real discussion of concepts of equity or inclusion. Further, some of the legal information is out of date (e.g., updates to Title VII which include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected aspects of "sex"). The chapter is a nice effort and does have some good content in terms of starting conversations regarding how diversity can be both an asset and a challenge in organizations. However, the chapter is not current in terms of language or content, and the organization is a bit difficult to follow. Some of the content included in this chapter also seems out of place, such as discussion of Attribution and Social Cognitive theories, which are not usually considered DEI theories but cognitive psychology theories. It almost seems like a literature review of how different extant theories might explain or contribute to our knowledge of how people deal with or understand the diverse identities of others, which again, doesn't seem to belong in an OB textbook.

Conclusion

I would not recommend this open-source text as a first-choice material for an OB class textbook. The information is very outdated, and what exists is inconsistent and not as easy to read/understand as other

open-source texts (such as the OB text from LibreTexts). If instructors choose to use this resource, I recommend carefully curating excerpts (not full chapters) and using those to augment another primary source for the desired topic.

***

Amanda C. Sargent, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of management at Bentley University. She earned her doctorate in organizational science and a Master's degree in industrial/organizational psychology from UNC – Charlotte. Dr. Sargent's research is focused on three primary areas: diversity, equity, and inclusion; leadership; and the work-family interface. Specifically, she investigates how leader behavior and organizational policies, processes, and practices can influence employees' work-related experiences and equality of work/career outcomes. Her work can be found in publications such as Human Resource Management Review, Human Performance, Gender & Society, and Sociology Compass.