

Role of an organizational psychologist in improving and accelerating work engagement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find the role of an organizational psychologist at the forefront of workplaces, to encourage the mutual wellbeing of individuals and organizations. This is a conceptual paper that builds upon a thorough review of existing conventional management theories to identify key cracks in knowledge about the importance of organizational psychologists to deal with a diverse range of social and behavioral issues within organizations considering common psychological safety at work. We start by conducting a content analysis of a few articles in the field that discuss the ‘why’ for organizational psychologists under work climate and continue with the strategies that can help organizations in reducing work-related stressors and improving social working conditions, and training. Findings of the study show that collective wellbeing relies equally on organizational support teams (HR) and organizational psychologists through collective mindfulness. Many studies are conducted in different countries with different perspectives of the organization and HR, where the role and importance of the organizational psychologist or psychologist in the organizations were highlighted, yet the concept is still blurry in Pakistan, and thus, this study is a novel contribution in a geographical context.

Keywords: *Psychology, Organizational psychologist, Employee wellbeing, Corporate wellness, Organizational development.*

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1. Introduction

Organizational Psychologist (OP), also referred to as Work Psychologist in the profession of Psychology are individuals considered work expert professionals who have a responsibility to support difficult events, behaviors, and decision-making at the organizational, societal, and community levels to make sure that employees otherwise called workers are earning their employee rights and benefits rather than being impaired by their overly demanded work commitments and toxic work cultures (Garg, al., 2023). Flow and fulfillment are the two key core elements that are connected to employee wellbeing and overall organizational success. Organizational climate change is essential in organizational success as when the work climate turns positive, the success automatically seeps into every aspect of a firm’s productivity, thus

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understanding how people think, feel, and behave in a work environment is crucial for collective collaborative work culture (Veloso-Besio et al., 2019).

Many case studies acknowledge the fact that the role of organizational psychologists has thrived over the years of their mindful scientific approaches that enhanced the collective capability of employees and employers towards higher reliability and comparatively better performance. Since the discovery of organizational psychologists, in the field of psychology, the focus of organizations shifted towards more mindful management approaches and organizational practices to unlock different behaviors that are associated with diversified work cultures, and individual and team performances leading to healthy working environments where people build business and business is built by people (Reneclle et al., 2020). For years, the concept of psychology has remained confined to clinical psychology or something that is related to dealing with various kinds of mental illnesses, and yet little attention was given to the fact that psychology overall is mainly about understanding different human emotions and the ways to curb with difficult human emotions be it at a personal or professional level. Thus, the concept is conceived right from the beginning when an individual begins a career just to prepare him/herself for the workplace in the future, a place where a human spends more than half of his age before retirement and the fact that this has an effect cannot be ignored or discussed separately without having to understand how people behave especially at work premises and what are the factors that contribute to their work performance and most importantly how they feel about it and what are the after-effects (Truxillo et al., 2015).

However, the lack of awareness of this field of psychology that focuses on 'work psychology' has caused this domain to stay out of the picture for quite a long time. Whereas, the entire focus remained on the roles that are played by human resource management personnel and thus the function that do not know how to apply scientific management strategies towards complex human behavioral issues at work (Solat et al., 2020). The fact that 'interactional psychology' has a distinctive role to play, the entire importance is yet to be discovered. And because modern work-life issues require modern scientific techniques, the role of human resources needs an extension in vision, and so is the goal of this conceptual paper. It is crucial to understand that the psychology of work revolves around people and the people make the place contributing to a collective workplace wellness. When we talk about wellness, the idea is to create an environment free of a negative vicious circle where employees who tend to benefit more are regarded with the highest level of civility, whereas, those with low benefits are prone to severe workplace incivility (Dora & Azim, 2019).

The sole purpose of this conceptual paper is to raise awareness regarding the role an organizational psychologist has to make in the health of the workplace, especially in Pakistani culture, and why it is important to expand the role of Human Resource Management with some scientific management tools where difficult situations require

difficult and differed management gears. Throughout this paper, the terms like scientific management tools and corporate wellness will be found shedding some light on the overall concept to encapsulate the extensive, multidimensional intricacy of these relations and own that there is an utter need to shift the focus from traditional HR practices to modern human scientific management practice. The concept of creating a workplace that is built on 'interactive psychology' is aimed at explaining the wellness of employees through healthy interactions between employees and organizations (Dik et al., 2019).

Therefore, there is a need to come up with a model based on theoretical grounds to raise awareness among organizations to expand the role of HR and consider hiring an Organizational Psychologist with an intention to explicate healthy interactions at workplaces and offer a path that leads towards healthy workplace culture, thereby promoting more organizational citizenship behaviors. This paper also aims to contribute to both theoretical and practical aspects of 'organizational psychology'. The taboo that management has little to do with psychology, this paper aims to debunk the core relationship of human psychology at work with management practices. To simplify the terms used in this paper, we define human resource behavior as the attitude of employees at the workplace and their satisfaction and commitment towards the organization for collective benefits, organizational behavior refers to the methods that employees use as a mode of communication between different teams and groups within the organization along with their ability to deal with complex issues at work (Aguinis et al., 2021).

While we insist on the importance of having an organizational psychologist in workplaces, we must also understand the relationship between the functions of HR and how they are connected to an organizational psychologist. The individuals who study *selection* in the field of OI psychology tend to focus on psychological testing and measurement, whereas, those who study *training* are more experts in cognitive and motivational processes that can aid in employee training, motivation, and engagement (Truxillo et al., 2021).

1. Literature Review

Understanding the history or roots of Organizational Psychology is important in order to extract the very role of Organizational/work psychologists in managing human resources. Nevertheless, Researchers have time and again studied the well-being of employees and its relationship with overall corporate wellness. Yet the research on having an organizational psychologist in managing human resources has been discussed least in the Pakistani context. However, the concept of having organizational psychologists at workplaces was conceived in the early 20th century (Powers, 2019).

The very existence of I/O Psychology came into being before and after World War I, where few famous researchers like Hugo Munsterberg with a research era between (1863-1916), James Mckeen Cattell from (1860-1944), Robert Yerkes from (1876-1956), and Lillian Gilbreth who was titled as the first to hold the PhD in I/O Psychology developed the concept of Employee Relations from (1878-1972). These were the scholars who worked hard to build the conceptual model for applying scientific management practices in organizations to understand complex human behaviors for the overall wellbeing of employees and organizations in wholesome (Derksen, 2020). Out of all these eras, where the importance and role of OP were frequently highlighted, the revolutionary period was considered the one where the concept of 'Employee Relations' came to work life and the movement started to study and learn more about the effects on performance by workers, labors, and employees when their feelings, behaviors, and attitudes are given special and individual attention (Gerard, 2022). The history of O/I psychology entails the era of Civil Rights that happened to be radical, started in 1964 and is still in practice where the fairness of hiring practices started to be considered crucial as prior to that the firms used to appoint workers based on their liking and disliking which resulted in conflicts within a different ethnic group of workers. This is where the action point by Civil Rights Law was introduced to ensure the hiring is based on proper selection procedures to the extent where they are defensible in courts. This was the awakening time in the entire history of O/I psychology and Human Resource Management as the first time separate Labor Laws were introduced and enforced considering the rights of workers and employees (Dipboye, 2018).

Despite the several theories and scholars from history emphasizing the importance of employee wellness, organizational productivity, and employee well-being rarely converge with the concept of psychology as it is considered that organizational psychologists are only supposed to come into the picture when management invites them to mostly work for people at higher organizational levels at the cost of leaving the workers at different especially at lower levels unhappy and exhausted (Shinn & Perkins, 2000). Early in 2021, a theory titled 'Industrial, Work, and Organizational Psychology IWOP' by (Kozusznik & Glazer, 2021) was introduced with some core key points that further enhanced the role of OI psychologists in managing human resources via a twofold objective that relates employee well-being with effective performance and it gave a clear dimension to those in managing human resources that OI psychologist are the experts trained to support difficult decisions at organizational, group and societal level in order to assure workers/employees are properly benefited according to Labor Laws. Ever since technology emerged rapidly, change management became a difficult task for HR personnel to help employees accept the change and eventually adapt to the changes but of course not at the cost of their mental well-being, because when people are at their optimal functioning state, they tend to deliver better results (Cuadrado et al., 2021). Ever since the millennium year started in 2000, the technology took over drastically and some high-tech profound changes were seen in the malfunctions of HR within organizations, and all the paperwork related to job announcements, hiring, and even interviews started happening online / virtually. These

changes were not only limited to recruitment and selection but were also taken further to other functions that are performed by HR including training and development which also replaced in-person training sessions to employees taking sessions online from trainers sitting in different parts of the world (Oswald et al., 2020). Considering the speedy changes in how HR used to function back then, and how it is now functioning shifts the attention towards multiple corporate behaviors, and these behavioral changes are now a challenge for HR personnel to handle as they are more psychologically based and less related to routine conflict seen under work climate. Therefore, it is now becoming the need to apply scientific tools and methods to take hold of such behaviors that have emerged with emerging globalization where employees are now expected to interact with multinational companies working at different time zones and with this need in hand, it is crucial to train employees to acquire skills that are required to cope with cross-cultural interactions. Having said that, the organizations need a clear understanding that the same employees who used to work traditionally, without training, can never perform as per the given situational need, and in case if everything is left to employees to handle, the consequences have adverse effects on team, organizations and overall productivity (Obrad & Gherheş, 2018).

In order to divulge the importance of placing an organizational psychologist in the country like Pakistan, it is crucial to first look at their existence from a geographical context and understand why this field has grown and changed the way organizations deal with workforces.

Japan: the history holds a strong presence of organizational psychologists in Japan with a hundred-year period starting from the 1860s to date witnessing the steady growth of the Japanese techno Industry. It is worth saying that Japan has invaded roots in today's tech world and since then they have gone through immense changes in terms of how they deal with the labor force (Chilson, 2019). The development of applied psychology started in the early 1900s century, when organizations started to recruit Organizational psychologists in industries with larger labor forces particularly in 1920 when Japan was influenced by social, economic, and psychological forces alike to those found in Europe and America (Tanaka-Matsumi & Otsui, 2004). This was the time when many organizational psychologists in Japan were hired by industries to conduct job analyses to create low-pressure environments on mental activity, this era roared in 1920 and is still in action performing even the basic HR functions under its supervision.

Germany: The boom in the history of Germany for Organizational psychologists initiated in the early 19th and 20th century. The conceptualization took place during different political periods in German history, during the span of 1814/1815, and is in action to the present day. The immense need to engage an organizational psychologist in management functions, especially in workforce industries arose in 1990 from United Germany after the unprecedented sociocultural changes that developed from modest beginnings in technology and the diverse range of foreigners becoming part of common German culture (Edwards, 2013). The German work culture started to bloom when

organizational psychologists started to apply scientific tools within diverse institutions and encouraged a differentiated professional structure (Sprung, 2001).

Australia: While the term organizational psychologist is widely used in the UK, Germany, America, and Europe, Australia, and New Zealand named the professionals as Work Psychologist under the Federation of Work that took place as ‘Alliance for Organizational Psychology a federation where work, organizational, and industrial psychologists globally merge together to contribute in all areas of work including employee, organizational and governance perspective (Macqueen & Machin, 2022). The concept of Organizational psychology in Australia was first conceived in the year 1927 in Sydney, however, it took a boom in recent decades there was substantial growth seen in Australia, initiated from Melbourne and Sydney where management companies started providing work/organizational psychologists to firms under HR to act as a catalyst in providing applied psychology in the field like recruitment and selection, assessment, training human resources and career planning, while also addressing psychological issues at work for a better working atmosphere (Taft, 1982; Rashid, et al., 2024).

Austria: The very existence of Organizational Psychology in Austria was first founded its ground in the year 1953 under ‘The Austrian Professional Association of Psychologists’ and now it has more than 1800 members globally, whereas in 1990 organizational psychologists were accepted as a formal profession in Austria (Rollett, 1999). At present, there are 2468 applied psychologists working in Austria in different national and multinational companies providing services under the domain of human resources to improve the wellbeing of employees and using scientific tools to understand the effects of work on mental health especially at a time when existing interest is on how rising demands from employers have affected the organizational efficiency (Hüffmeier & Zacher, 2021).

Nevertheless, the above are the few countries discussed to provide a geographical context for the global presence of organizational psychologists to create a sense of what scientific tools they provide to industries and how they analyze and answer questions that are directly or indirectly related to an employee’s wellbeing, and effectiveness. It is worth quoting that renowned organizations like **NASA, FBI**, and multinationals like **Amazon, Google, Starbucks, Nestlé** and even the smaller companies and public sectors like Military forces recruit organizational/industrial psychologists to propose unique principles that lead to effective employee selection, training, and development and wellness programs to keep them engaged and committed (Truxillo et al., 2021). According to (Purina, 2021), Nestlé Purina- an American subsidiary of Nestlé Global based in St. Louis, Missouri, recently 2021 announced a new onsite counselor as per their Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that provides confidential support to promote mental health by an organizational psychologist named Dr. Delores who provides the employee at Nestlé Purina, counseling services, wellness training, incident debriefings, and community resources with tech techniques to help reduce life-stressors among employees. Another branch of Nestlé Waters based in North America has an organizational psychologist named Dr. Vanessa Lammers who works in HR Analytics

in the development and pre-hire assessment of employees with additional support to HR for strategic workforce planning, and data modeling projects for the Global Nestlé Waters business with around 70 thousand plus employees (Nestlé Waters , 2018).

2. Research Methods

This is a conceptual paper that builds upon a thorough review of existing conventional management theories to identify key cracks in knowledge about the importance of organizational psychologists to deal with a diverse range of social and behavioral issues within organizations considering common psychological safety at work. We start by conducting a content analysis of a few articles in the field that discuss the ‘why’ for organizational psychologists under work climate and continue with the strategies that can help organizations in reducing work-related stressors and improving social working conditions, and training.

3. Discussion

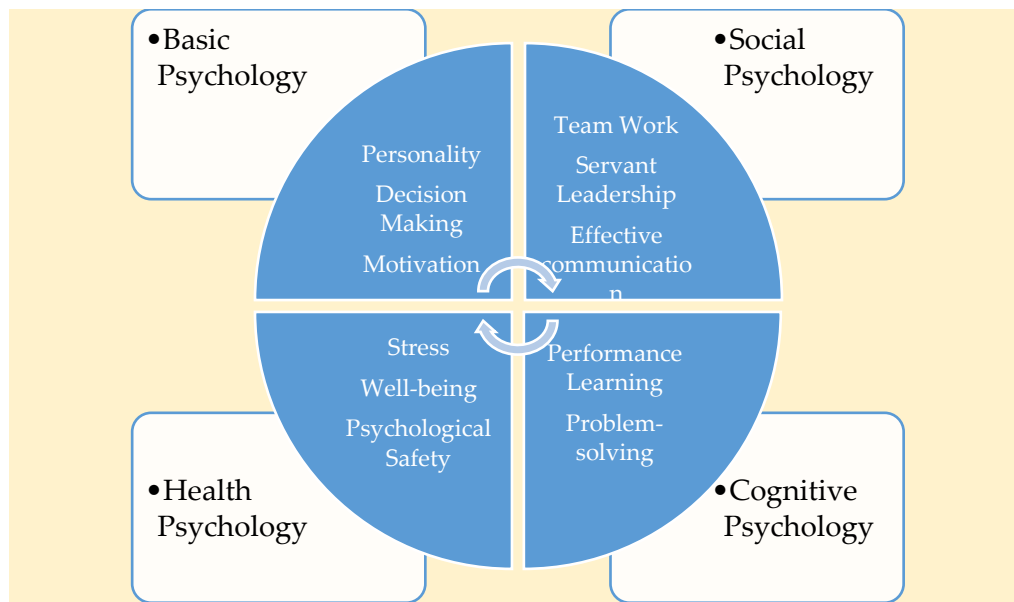


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

As mentioned in the conceptual model figure 1, this paper presents the case that an Organizational psychologist calls for managerial styles and leadership approaches that recognize and respect the importance of relationships in organizational contexts for the well-being of workers. They particularly focus on the study of human behavior in the workplace. As you can expect, the study of human behavior in the

workplace is a substantial endeavor since the majority of occupations are extremely complex, requiring a wide variety of mental and physical abilities. Work organizations are frequently vast and intricate entities composed of hundreds or thousands of individuals who must collaborate and coordinate their efforts to generate a product, service, or piece of data. Workers are increasingly dispersed across the nation and the globe, coordinating their job operations using internet networks and other communication technology. Some I/O psychologists examine the fundamental people tasks inside firms, such as worker recruitment and selection, employee training and development, and job performance measurement. Other I/O psychologists investigate the psychological mechanisms behind work behavior, including worker motivation, job satisfaction, and stress. Other I/O psychologists are concerned in group dynamics in the workplace, such as the relationships between bosses and subordinates and how groups of employees collaborate to complete a task. Lastly, some psychologists and other social scientists investigate the bigger picture, including the structure of work organizations and how physical, social, and psychological settings influence employee behavior (Gelfand et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, organizational psychology is now one of the most rapidly expanding subfields in psychology. I/O psychologists are at the vanguard of those specialists supplying the enormous need for information leading to a deeper understanding of the worker, the workplace, and work behavior. As we will see, they are involved in practically every facet of business and industry, and the range of topics they study and the duties they undertake is enormous. Although the efforts of I/O psychologists have served to enhance workplace behavior, other changes in the working environment and the wider world have affected the field of I/O psychology. Perhaps this conceptual paper will mirror four significant developments in the world of work that are essential to I/O psychology today and in the future.

4.1 First essential: changing nature of work

Employment and organizations are evolving and transforming at a rapid rate. Organizations are becoming leaner, with fewer levels of hierarchy and a bigger focus on work teams within smaller subunits. With the help of telecommuting, innovative communication technologies, and sophisticated networking, individuals may collaborate with team members who are

geographically distributed from nearly any place (Autor, 2019; Gilal, et al., 2024). This will have profound impacts on how work is performed, and I/O psychologists will contribute significantly in assisting workers to adjust to technological and structural changes. In addition, I/O psychologists will help management in redesigning jobs for greater efficiency, in creating new and more flexible organizational structures and work teams, and in promoting employees in becoming more engaged, motivated, and able to cope with the stresses related to changes (Balzer et al., 2019). Due to technological improvements, many professions are becoming increasingly complicated and demanding, needing people to comprehend more information and make more decisions (Xu et al., 2018). Moreover, corporations throughout the globe are downsizing their workforces. This drive toward "leaner" workforces has negative effects on workers, who are asked to perform more work and can lead to a sense of job insecurity. Some changes in work, such as telecommuting, increased worker mobility, and organizational downsizing, have led to lower levels of worker loyalty and commitment, according to research (Bughin et al., 2018).

As we shall see, I/O psychologists may assist firms with increasing staff engagement and decreasing employee turnover. Contracting with an external entity to do functions that were previously performed or might be performed within the company is another trend (Ciarocco & Strohmetz, 2018). Outsourcing is applied to boost output and can lower the personnel-related overhead costs associated with performing the operations in-house. I/O psychologists are concerned with helping to comprehend the impacts of the increased use of outsourcing on variables such as the approach in which tasks are performed, group processes, organizational structure and design, employee commitment, and motivation, among several others (Lefkowitz, 2019).

4.2 Second essential: expanding focus on human resources

According to (O'Connor, 1999) the Mayo and human relations movement indicated long ago that the world of transformation will see a lot more emphasis on the management and preservation of an organization's people resources. Organizations are more concerned with and sensitive to the requirements of their employees. At the same time, organizations are learning that innovative and competent employees are the keys to success. The term "talent management" is constantly used in workplaces; it is essential because it highlights the emphasis on worker value and the necessity to choose, nurture, and develop workers' potential (Bruce, 2006). In the future, this will become much more prominent,

particularly in high-tech companies, the technological boom of the past few decades has led to a tight job market for really capable professionals. This means that companies will have to compete hard to attract and retain the best employees (Claus, 2019). Increased emphasis must be placed on areas such as employee recruitment and selection procedures. To recruit and keep the finest employees, companies will need to offer more enticing benefit plans, including "family-friendly" policies such as employer-sponsored daycare and lengthy family breaks (Lee et al., 2019). In order for older employees to continue contributing to the workforce, they will require frequent upgrading given the constant advances in technology and the ever-expanding body of knowledge essential to do their tasks. In addition, organizations face an aging workforce and a decline in the number of young people joining the labor force (Dernberger & Pepin, 2020). All of this suggests the need for a larger emphasis on people concerns, such as recruiting, screening, and testing new employees, as well as on employee training, development, and pay packages, which are all I/O psychologists' domains of expertise. Therefore, an organizational psychologist urges organizations to view the worker as a "complete person" rather than merely a "working being." An organizational psychologist places the focus attention on individual development, exploring processes such as how people get interested in their task, how they manage stress and adapt to change, the influence of emotions in the workplace, and the "overlap" between employees' home and work routines, acknowledging that problems at home can emerge throughout the work and vice versa (Grandey & Sayre, 2019).

4.3 Third essential: increasing diversity and globalization of the workforce

For the last several eons, there has been a fast and constant shift toward a more global economy. Global businesses and industries are the main lobe of the global marketplace (Sopow, 2020). Before, companies were only concerned with domestic markets and competition, but now they must also evaluate the global picture. As an increasing number of employers go global, there is a massive market for personnel to be trained for working in or with organizations in other countries (Segal, 2019). Future leaders and managers must have international awareness, knowledge, and respect for other cultures, and the ability to connect with people from diverse origins (Teagarden, 2007).

According to Cuadradoa et al. (2021), organizational psychologists aid organizations in addressing the challenges that rising diversity will present. Demographic and cultural differences can inhibit the performance of working groups when they're not carefully managed (Gupta, n.d.), potentially causing

conflict situations, hindering team cooperation, and impeding performance (despite the benefits of diversity). Hence, the key to successfully dealing with diversity is to look beyond the surface issues that split people and refocus on the deeper benefits that diversity brings. Furthermore, the massive number of organizations going global, with the rising amount of women entering the workforce have all led to even more diversity in the workplace. In the future, this heterogeneity will only rise. Women and ethnic minorities, who have hitherto been the subject of workplace discrimination, now make up a majority of the global workforce, and similar patterns may be witnessed worldwide. Besides, as individuals become more internationally mobile, the cultural diversity of workplaces will also grow (Welch et al., 2018, Gilal, et al., 2023).

4.4 Fourth essential: increasing relevance of organizational psychology in HR policy and practice

Although organizational psychology has had a strong influence on how HR selects, trains, develops, and motivates employees, there is tremendous potential for work psychology to play an even bigger role in helping to improve work performance and create better, more fulfilling, and "healthier" workplace conditions. It has been suggested that organizational psychology will have a significant impact on the workplace in the future and that I/O psychology research must be directly applicable to human resource practices. Blustein et al. (2019) proposed that Organizational psychologists should address a multitude of workplace and social issues and questions in the future with a human resource management perspective. These include: Selecting and training more ethical and socially responsible organizational leaders; Improving the lot of workers through fair compensation, flexible work policies (including work-family concerns), reducing workplace discrimination, maximizing the utilization of workforce diversity and globalization, enhancing performance via efficient personnel management and development, and enabling organizations (and their people) to embrace positive change and become more progressive.

4. Conclusions

This paper, conceptual in nature, develops a problem-focused approach and proposes a model that depicts how an organizational psychologist can prove to be a source of sustained competitive advantage as they tend to focus on both the research and practice of organizational psychology at work. The scientific knowledge of organizational psychologists is deepening in the understanding and comprehension of work behavior, while they practically apply scientific

tools to enhance the psychological well-being of workers. Organizational psychologists blend their research with that of other social sciences because they are not only the specialists that examine work behavior, rather they also conceptualize employee wellbeing and posit that the behavior of persons is a result of a set of personal characteristics and a set of environmental characteristics that occur in an interaction.

The study has the following limitations. First, the authors only conducted theoretical research and developed a conceptual model on the linkage between organizational psychology and human resource management but did not offer an empirical test. Second, the study is conducted for implication with a context of developing countries which might not be applied to developed countries.

Future studies can incorporate empirical research to test the propositions offered in this paper. Notably, there is a need to demonstrate that organizational psychology can impact differently irrespective of changes in the era associated with globalization and digitalization. Additionally, future studies can differentiate between organizational psychology and its direct and indirect influence on existing human resource practices in more detail.

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