

Psychology At Workplaces: An Introduction to Industrial-Organizational Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Industrial-Organizational psychology (I/O psychology) is a relatively new branch of psychology that has only begun to emerge in recent years in India. Despite the accelerated growth of businesses, we find that the field of I-O psychology is still in its infancy. There is a need to understand the development of I-O psychology ascertaining the importance of psychological intervention at workplaces. The purpose of this review is to examine the current status of I-O psychology, the seriousness and urgency for psychological intervention at workplaces. Lastly, the possible directions for future developments in I-O psychology will be examined.

Keywords: *Psychology, Workplaces, Industrial-Organizational Psychology*

Early Development of I-O Psychology

According to the APA, the specialty of industrial-organizational psychology is characterized by the scientific study of human behaviour in organizations and the work place. The specialty focuses on deriving principles of individual, group and organizational behaviour and applying this knowledge to the solution of problems at work. The primary interest of I-O psychologists is to focus on the behaviour of employees in the workplace. They apply psychological principles and research methods to improve the overall work environment, including performance, communication, professional satisfaction and safety. I-O psychology as a field of study is extremely young and still evolving in India.

In order to understand the functioning of a field it is important to dive into its history and development and the beginning of any field can be extremely difficult to date. However, the field of organisational and industrial psychology was founded in the early 20th century. James Cattell (1860-1944) at Columbia, Hugo Munsterberg (1863-1916) at Harvard, Walter Dill Scott (1869-1955) at North-western, Robert Yerkes (1876-1956) and Walter Bingham (1880-1952) at Dartmouth, and Lillian Gilbreth (1878-1972) at Purdue were just a few of the influential early psychologists who investigated topics that are now categorised as industrial psychology.

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Psychologists were very involved in the war effort during World War I, helping to create procedures for selecting officer personnel and creating group examinations for army recruits.

The Journal of Applied Psychology first published in 1917, and this book contains several references to publications that have appeared in it, demonstrating the significance of this journal in the development of the subject. Colleges started offering applied psychology courses about the same time, and as the discipline has grown, the trend has been to provide courses in specialised areas including industrial psychology, personnel psychology, vocational psychology, and advertising psychology.

Without a doubt, the Second World War contributed significantly to the development of psychology in business. Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance, another American magazine, began publishing in 1966. The purpose of this journal is to publish articles devoted to the development of theory in applied psychology.

Recently, awareness of many other areas of psychology, such as educational psychology and organisational psychology, has grown in India. Currently, positions for psychologists are available in hospitals and the military forces for patient psychotherapy and psychological assessment for selection and recruiting of infantrymen.

Since the public sector dominated the economy and lacked the drive to be successful and effective, organisational psychology was initially delayed in India. The early history of organisational psychology was recounted by Sinha (1972), and suffice it to state that, like other branches of psychology, organisational psychology joined the bandwagon of "mindless" imitation of the West.

The 1950s and 1960s saw a rapid industrialization, which increased the importance of understanding workplace psychology, worker, production, and organisational efficiency, as well as labour-management interactions. At this time, factors like job attitudes, work incentives, absenteeism, and job satisfaction were studied (Ganguli, 1961). The Ahmedabad Textile Industry Research Association (ATIRA), founded in 1950, was one of the key hubs for psychological research.

The establishment of two Indian Institutes of Management in Ahmedabad and Calcutta in the early 1960s marked the beginning of formal management education in the nation. These institutes offered distinct programmes of study in organisational behaviour and behavioural sciences, which sparked the development of organisational psychology.

Industrial/organizational psychology in India seems to continue to evolve in keeping with the broad socioeconomic situation in the country and also staying in touch with global trends.

Current Status of I-O Psychology

Current status of the branch of psychology that applies psychological theories and principles to organizations include various trends like personnel selection, training and development, job evaluation and workplace accidents.

Personnel selection

This trend involves I-O Psychologists helping in finding, screening, hiring and eventually onboarding qualified candidates. They work over the subject of job requirements in detail to fulfill hiring needs for a company and maintain a steady flow of employees.

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They deal with various factors affecting recruitment like budget, skill assessment, technology, and identifying gaps. Different techniques and personality assessments are used to make the right decision. I-O psychologists use their knowledge of psychological testing to carry out efficient recruitment process with the help of various recruitment techniques like web and print recruitment techniques.

Training and development

Training is the systematic acquisition of skills, rules, concepts and attitudes that result in improved performance. It compensates for the inability of recruitment to select desired candidates.

I-O psychologists conduct training needs assessments and then plan out training programs to fill any existing training gaps. They help in identifying accurately the levels of present situation and the desired situation using target surveys, observation, workshops etc. and help tackle these obstacles using training models that involve different methods like on-site training, off-site training or leadership programs.

Job evaluation

I-O Psychologists are required to carry out job evaluations at firms which is a systematic way of determining or measuring the worth of a job in relation to others. Fairly evaluated work helps employees do their jobs better, maintain fairness and identify employee needs.

Evaluation is a vital personnel function and important for every organization that takes place in context of performance appraisals. These appraisals are periodic reviews of an employee's performance and contribution to the organization they facilitate communication and encourage interaction within an organization. They are designed and executed by HR and Organizational Psychology specialists.

Workplace accidents

Workplace accidents are unplanned events at workplaces that result in personal injury or property damage. They include occupational diseases, hazards and faulty machinery incidents which can lead to minor repercussions as well as potentially fatal consequences. I-O psychologists engage in the policy and decision making of certain rules, requirements and conditions of work that the employers and employees can agree to abide by during their service to the organization ensuring a condition that does not pose any unreasonable hazard or risk to any person at workplace.

They are concerned with how safety is managed, consisting of shared attitudes, beliefs and values among employees. They ensure a safe work environment which is more than just preventing injuries or diseases, it is also about making employee well-being a priority. A safe and positive working environment encourages respect for everyone and promises enhanced efficiency and productivity from the employees.

I-O psychology has now become an important facet of psychology in India. This field of study has turned a new leaf today as it has become a subject of practical application without any constraints. Even though the field of I-O psychology is developing in India and promises to be a critical component of workplaces and organizations in the future, as of today, there is a great need for a more integrative approach of psychology, we are nowhere near meeting our goals. There are still so many obstacles and impediments barring the growth of I-O psychology research. These obstacles are primarily a result from a lack of awareness and understanding,

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myths and most importantly, a lack of formalized academic courses that offer I-O psychology as a subject leading to a deficiency of adequate number of trained professionals in this area of study.

Most professionals in this field start with a bachelor's degree in psychology or human resources, as very few schools offer undergraduate psychology degrees with a focus on I/O psychology. After earning their degree, candidates then earn a master's degree in industrial-organizational psychology. A master's degree is enough to start a career, but many people in the field pursue a doctorate or MBA.

Importance of I-O psychology and how it benefits organizations.

To address issues in the workplace and in business as well as to enhance employee experiences, industrial-organizational psychology uses psychological sciences, principles, and research methodologies. I/O psychology, which focuses on human behaviours and requirements in the workplace, provides answers to many employee worries. This area of study provides unique viewpoints and specialised insights to assist businesses in getting the most from their workforce.

Employers can promote productivity at work, improve employee well-being, and increase efficiency with the assistance of experienced consultants or I/O psychologists. The American Psychological Association emphasises that the work of an industrial-organizational psychologist has a wide range of applications. Industrial-organizational psychologists frequently pinpoint workplace areas that require additional organisational growth or training programmes. They can:

- optimize the quality of the day-to-day work environment
- evaluate the effectiveness of training programs
- make suggestions for changes

Because most managers lack a thorough understanding of psychology or human behaviour, I-O psychology is crucial. They frequently lack the skills necessary to handle problems at work. On the other hand, industrial-organizational psychologists have completed years of rigorous training. Since managers are more familiar with the everyday activities at work, they are frequently too close to a particular situation to come up with a plan of action to address it. An industrial-organizational psychologist, however, can use both their education and a fresh viewpoint to address workplace problems. Industrial psychology specialists can spot a problem and create a plan to handle it at work because of their considerable expertise in human behaviour and problem-solving at the workplace. For example, a manager may find that their employees all seem to be disinterested in work and very unfocused. They may not be able to figure out what's causing the issue. In this case, a psychologist would be able to evaluate the workplace as a whole and speak with individual employees. Based on those findings, the psychologist could develop a plan to help increase job satisfaction and motivation.

Additionally, an outside viewpoint might be helpful for the majority of workplace issues. A consultant might be a better fit for you than an internal employee, depending on the size of the business and the work that has to be done. In-house psychologists are a better option if your company is large or international, you want to create ongoing training programmes, or you need to conduct extensive research on workplace culture across many locations. I/O consultants are a better option if your company is smaller, you only want to study a single area or department, or you only need a limited amount of information.

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It's not always easy to tell the difference between organisational psychology and industrial psychology. Consequently, the two disciplines are frequently referred to as I/O psychology, or industrial/organizational psychology. I/O psychologists are employed by corporations, advisory firms, governmental agencies, and colleges and institutions. Fair pay scales are primarily based on the levels of education and skill required for a job, as well as any risks it may present, and are determined with the assistance of organisational and industrial psychologists. Industrial accident psychologists also look into what causes them and how to prevent them.

Every businessperson is aware of the long-term financial loss caused by dysfunctional organisational dynamics, low employee morale, and high turnover rates. Employing an industrial-organizational psychologist may result in improved staff concentration and productivity. And because they will probably be happier, they will probably stay with the company.

Challenges in I-O psychology

Before proceeding to the future potential of industrial psychology it might be best to mention certain major problems which the profession has been facing in its growth and development. The following points emphasize upon the challenges faced by the field of I-O Psychology.

- One of the difficulties of any profession is that its language and technique sometimes become so involved that the outsider is really left out. If industrial psychology is to gain an important place in industry, psychologists must learn to talk and write in a fashion that is clearly understandable to others who are equally interested in the mutual problems and who sometimes have an even greater stake in a solution. Not only must the industrial psychologist learn to communicate adequately with the non-psychologist, but even the problem of communication within the field itself is becoming a problem.
- Not being able to find a master's level education job is definitely one of the cons of being an Industrial and Organizational Psychologist. Although a Ph.D. is not required in the field of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, you may not be able to find many jobs with a master's degree. Especially, if you plan on working in the clinical setting, a Ph.D. in I/O psychology will be required.
- I-O psychologists when coming into the workplace to assess the employees and workflow to solve problems, dedicate a tremendous amount of time in researching and designing strategies to improve the workplace. Every place and every person they encounter is different, and interactions will be different. Figuring out these puzzle pieces could take a tremendous amount of time, this can become overwhelming and frustrating which is again one of the negatives of this profession.
- An Industrial and Organizational Psychologist may be charged with designing, administering, and evaluating tools in order to identify candidates that would make good employees for a particular job and if proven wrong, this could undermine their expertise and may make people question other decisions they have made.

Prospects of I-O psychology

Industrial psychologists may assist human resources departments in a range of settings, including factories and Fortune 500 businesses, when it comes to work environments. Industrial Psychology is one of the fastest growing branches of Psychology today. It is involved in nearly every aspect of business and industry. The world of work is drastically

drifting and changing every day. These changes hold a large share in the future of Industrial Psychology. Some of these upcoming future trends are:

- **Flat hierarchy:** Organizations are evolving and becoming flatter with fewer levels in the hierarchy. This organizational model known has little or no levels of intermediate management in between the executives and the front-line staff. They are being broken up into smaller subunits with greater emphasis on working as a team where every employee has a say. Industrial Psychologists are needed to make this hierarchy change smoother and comfortable for both, the employees and the organization.
- **Organizational downsizing:** Cutting down on workforce is an important strategy being recognized currently to help organizations not only reduce labour costs but also increase efficiency and competitiveness among workers. The role of HR department becomes crucial here to implement this strategy which increases the scope of Industrial Psychology in the future.
- **Talent management:** The term Talent Management is being widely used in the world of business now as it reflects the emphasis on the value of the worker and need to select and develop the right worker's talent. It is the process of bringing on the right personnel and assisting them in reaching their full potential while keeping organizational goals in mind. Enhancement of talent can be done with the help of training and developmental programs created by Industrial Psychologists as they deeply understand the concept of organizational development and performance.
- **Globalisation:** The increased involvement of immigrants and people of color is leading to greater workplace diversity. Outsourcing and collaborating with global firms also leads to expanded globalization. Such diversity presents both, strengths and challenges to an organization which can be balanced and put to benefit using the help of Industrial Psychologists.
- **Technological advancements:** Jobs are becoming complex and demanding workers to process more and more information. The enhancement of employees resulting in increased productivity and performance can be achieved smoothly with the help of Industrial Psychologists.
- **Job redesigning:** Industrial Psychologists can assist organizations in redesigning jobs for greater efficiency. The main objective of conducting job redesigning is to place the right person at the right job and get the maximum output while increasing their level of satisfaction. Thus, more flexible structures can be created where workers are encouraged to deal with stressors in a healthy manner and being motivated to work increasing the overall wellbeing of employees.

In 2014, the Bureau of Labour Statistics called Industrial Psychology the fastest-growing occupation in the United States. Between 2019 and 2029, it's estimated that employment in the field will grow by 2.5. Industrial Psychologists are having a bigger impact on shaping policies and practices regarding workplaces and workers which should be acknowledged. Jobs in the field will expand faster than average as more companies grasp the significance of industrial psychology in the workplace. This is especially accurate for the economy's private sector.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, one can say that I-O psychology plays a key role in enhancing employee performance at workplaces while dealing with the different mental qualities and human behaviours of employees in relation to organizational norms and industrial aspects of any

workplace. The field helps employees to stay focused and continue to sustain their best performance in an organization benefitting both the employees and the organization.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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