



WORK PSYCHOLOGY

Understanding Human Behaviour in the Workplace

7th Edition

John Arnold
Iain Coyne
Ray Randall
Fiona Patterson



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John Arnold
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With

Carolyn Axtell
Bernard Burnes
Samuel Farley
Tom Kinirons
Ilke Inceoglu
Joanne Lyubovnikova
Rebecca Pieniazek
Emma-Louise Rowe
Joanne Silvester
Bart Wille
Madeleine Wyatt



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PEARSON EDUCATION LIMITED

KAO Two
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Harlow CM17 9SR
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1279 623623
Web: www.pearson.com/uk

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PREFACE

Work psychology is about people's behaviour, thoughts and emotions related to their work. It can be used to improve our understanding and management of people (including ourselves) at work. By work, we mean what people do to earn a living. However, much of the content of this book can also be applied to study, voluntary work and even leisure activities.

All too often, work organisations have sophisticated systems for assessing the costs and benefits of everything except their management of people. It is often said by senior managers that 'our greatest asset is our people', but sometimes the people do not feel that they are being treated as if they were valuable assets. People are complicated, and their views of themselves and their worlds differ: you will see a great many references to individual differences throughout this book. People do not necessarily do what others would like them to do. One reaction to all this is for managers to focus on things that don't talk back, such as profit and loss accounts or organisational strategy. Another is to adopt a highly controlling 'do as I say' approach to dealing with people at work. Either way, the thinking behind how people in the workplace function, and how they might be managed, tends to be rather careless or simplistic. Work psychologists seek to counter that tendency by studying carefully people's behaviour, thoughts and feelings regarding work. As well as developing knowledge and understanding for its own sake, this also leads to insights about motivation, leadership, training and development, selection and many other people-related aspects of management. Work psychologists are also concerned about the ethical use of psychological theories and techniques, and their impact on the well-being and effectiveness of individuals, groups and organisations.

This book is designed to appeal to readers in many different countries, especially in Europe and Australasia. Judging by the feedback and sales figures for previous editions, we seem to have generally been successful in appealing to a range of people in a range of places. We have tried to make the book suitable both for people encountering the subject for the first time and for those who already have some familiarity with it. Specifically, and in no particular order, we intend that this book should be useful for:

- undergraduate students in psychology, taking one or more modules with names such as work psychology, work and organisational psychology, business psychology, organisational psychology, occupational psychology and industrial–organisational psychology;
- undergraduate students in business and management taking one or more modules that might have titles such as organisational behaviour, managing people or human resource management;
- postgraduate (MSc, MBA, MA) and post-experience students in psychology or business/management taking one or more modules with any or all of the titles listed above;

- students taking professional qualifications, particularly (in the United Kingdom) those of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD);
- students on undergraduate or postgraduate courses in other vocational subjects such as engineering, whose curriculum includes some elements to do with managing people at work.

We aim to give clear and straightforward – but not simplistic – accounts of many key areas of contemporary work psychology. More specifically, we try to achieve several objectives in order to make this book as useful as possible to its readers.

First, we seek to blend theory and practice. Without good theory, practice is blind. Without good practice, theory is not being properly used. We therefore describe key theories and evaluate them where appropriate. We examine how the concepts described can be applied. To help readers apply the content of this text, we provide case studies and exercises. These can be used as classroom exercises, or as assignments for individual students. Some guidance and suggestions about how to use these are included on the website for this book at go.pearson.com/uk/he/resources.

Second, we try to present material at a level the reader should find intellectually stimulating, but not too difficult. It is all too easy to use a slick, glossy presentation at the expense of good content. There is always the temptation to resort to over-simple ‘recipes for success’ that insult the reader’s intelligence. On the other hand, it is equally easy to lose the reader in unnecessarily complex debates. We hope that we avoid both these fates (and that you will let us know if we do not!).

Third, we try to help the reader to gain maximum benefit from the book by providing several more aids to learning. Each chapter begins with clearly stated learning outcomes and concludes with suggested assignments that reflect these outcomes. Multiple choice questions (and answers) are given on the companion website to this volume. At the end of each chapter we provide suggestions for further reading. Throughout the text we specify key learning points that express succinctly the main message of the preceding sections of text. We include diagrams as well as text, in recognition that pictures can often express complex ideas in an economical and memorable way. We highlight key controversies and debates because it is not uncommon for research findings to point in different, apparently contradictory, directions. To help the reader, we weigh up the arguments. Because no topic in work psychology sits in isolation from others, we also point towards some of the most natural connections between different parts of the book. At the end of the book there is a comprehensive glossary explaining in a concise way the meaning of lots of key words and phrases. There is also a very long list of references, to enable interested readers to find more material if they wish.

Fourth, we have chosen topics that we judge to be the most useful to potential readers of this book. Some usually appear in organisational behaviour texts, whereas others are generally found in books of a more specifically psychological orientation. We believe we have found a helpful balance between these two overlapping but different worlds, so that there should be plenty of relevant material both for people who want to be psychologists and those who do not. The topics we cover in chapters or parts of chapters include individual differences, employee selection, assessing work performance, attitudes at work, training and development, teamwork, work motivation, stress and well-being at work, leadership, careers, organisational change and culture, dispersed working, the nature of work psychology as a discipline and profession and how to design, conduct and understand research studies in work psychology.

Fifth, we provide up-to-date coverage of our material. There are currently exciting advances in many areas of work psychology, and we try to reflect these. At the same time, where the old stuff is best and still relevant, we include it. There is nothing to be gained by discussing recent work purely because it is recent, especially if that comes at the expense of better quality and more useful material.

Sixth, we attempt to use material from many different parts of the world, and to point out cross-national and cross-cultural differences where these seem particularly important. Much of the best research and practice in work psychology originate from North America, but it is possible to go too far and assume that nowhere else has contributed anything. No doubt we have our own blinkers, but we try to include perspectives from places other than North America, especially the UK and other European countries. Nevertheless, the USA and Canada provide much valuable material. We make use of good research and theory originating from as many countries as possible.

Developments from the sixth edition

Readers familiar with the sixth edition of this text, published in 2016, may find it helpful if we describe the changes we have made. These are more evident in some parts of the book than others. Readers familiar with previous editions will readily recognise this book as a direct descendant of the others but will also notice quite a few differences. As the book has grown over the years, so has the workload involved during its revision. We say this every time, but it has taken us longer than we (and our families) would have liked.

The changes from the sixth edition reflect the fact that quite a lot has happened in work psychology over the last few years. Reviewers commissioned by the publisher (plus users' comments made direct to us) helped us to see where rethinks were required.

The main change you will notice is that we have moved towards an editor-contributor model, increasing the number of authors in the volume. This has allowed us to include diverse perspectives on topic areas and to solicit knowledge from experts in each of the topic areas. As with previous editions, Ray Randall worked on the attitudes at work (5) and work-related stress chapters (8), John Arnold provided a discussion of careers and career management (11), Bernard Burnes handled the organisational change chapter (13) and Caroline Axtell the dispersed work chapter (14). This time around Fiona Patterson was joined by Tom Kinirons on the individual differences chapter (2) and by Emma-Louise Rowe for the chapter on personnel selection. Similarly, Joanne Silvester has co-authored the performance at work (4) and training (7) chapters with Madeleine Wyatt. New contributors to the book are: Iain Coyne on an initial orientation to work psychology (1); Samuel Farley and Rebecca Pieniasek on work motivation (6); Joanne Lyubovnikova on groups and teams (9); and Ilke Inceoglu and Bart Wille on Leadership (10). All contributors are excellent researchers and practitioners with an international reputation in their field and with extensive experience of intervention in organisations. This allows them to describe how theory can be put into practice. We are proud of this edition, but as with all preceding editions, your opinion is the one that really matters!

We have reduced the length of the book through a process of concise writing, combining chapters and removing chapters. Specifically, feedback received from reviewers has resulted in Chapters 1 and 2 from the sixth edition being combined into one, more focused, chapter covering what it takes to be a work psychologist. We have moved away from trying to write comprehensive chapters on philosophical underpinnings of research, research methods and statistical analysis – especially given the excellent texts already out there on these subjects – focusing more on the key knowledge and skills needed within work psychology. We welcome your feedback on our new approach.

Additionally, new features include the provision of an opening and closing case study which provides an introduction to and a summary of each chapter. Also, multiple choice questions are now available on the companion website to this volume. Given their growing influence on the world of work, we also directed chapter authors to embed within their discussions information on diversity, technology and internationalisation. These contributions vary in size and scope and manifest as case studies, key debates or discussions within the text. Hopefully, when reading the chapters, you can understand the impact each of these current influences has within a topic area.

Feedback from readers of previous editions clearly indicated that they appreciated the clarity of style and the combination of theoretical and practical considerations. They also very much valued the substantial list of references, many quite recent. Naturally, we have tried to preserve these features. The style remains the same and the reference list has been revised and updated. We are grateful for the feedback we have received and wherever possible we have reflected it in this edition.

We have chosen to keep the learning features from the sixth edition that we hope will continue to prove useful. The 'Research methods in focus' feature is designed to give readers a deep and detailed insight into how work psychologists go about their business (whether it be research or practice). Hopefully, it helps to demystify research methods by showing how these 'come to life' when applied to investigate or solve important issues. Reading about research methods and statistics can be daunting and difficult so we hope that this feature makes the activity more accessible and enjoyable. When read in conjunction with Chapter 1, the Research Methods in Focus feature is designed to help readers to develop a solid knowledge base that can be used to interpret, use and critique any other research they encounter.

Psychologists often disagree about theories, the meaning of research findings, what constitutes good data and too many other things to list in this preface without doubling the length of the book. This can be confusing. Who are we to believe? Is the weight of evidence in favour of one side or the other? We use the 'Key debate' feature to help these debates stand out from the rest of the text. Without appointing ourselves as judge and jury, we use this feature to present the arguments as we see them and to comment on the amount and quality of evidence available. We can't always solve the controversy, but we try to describe why it exists and how it might one day be resolved. We feel these issues have important implications for practice: too often promises are made about interventions before uncertainties about the underlying research have been adequately resolved.

As work psychologists progress in their careers, they often become more specialised, focusing on particular topics, organisational problems or research methods. There's nothing wrong with this and it certainly helps us to avoid overloading ourselves or attempting to practise in areas we know too little about. That said, we feel it is very important to understand and appreciate the linkages and connections between different topics in our field. A simple question demonstrates the point. Is it worth training someone to do a job if a good selection process would identify somebody who is already adequately skilled? The answer to this question is not a simple one (excuse us for sitting on the fence, just this once) but it does involve considering the research on both selection and training. To keep the book neatly organised and easy to navigate we keep these topics separate. We simply couldn't do justice to them unless a chapter is devoted to each. The Point of Integration feature is designed to give the reader a quick insight into how these connections work – both in terms of research and theory. We also use them to show how people from different fields of expertise can be brought together to develop effective interventions.

From positive feedback provided by reviewers we have kept the large number of exercises and case studies. The vast majority of case studies have been updated to highlight the relevance that psychology has when dealing with contemporary issues in the workplace. We have kept several of the exercises that are familiar to instructors, but many are updated to ensure their relevance to, and resonance with, our intended readership. Where we feel the case studies from earlier editions still have a strong relevance these have been retained.

We have retained the Stop to Consider feature. These are designed to encourage students to pause to reflect on their learning. Their content is designed to foster critical thinking and cement learning. We hope these prove useful for students who wish to go beyond an understanding of content to attempt further analysis of the issues described.

Chapter 1 we feel is particularly useful for those new to the study of psychology. It is also designed to illustrate how the basic assumptions made by psychologists, and the approaches they follow as a result, find their way into work psychology. This chapter is now considerably shorter than before. The feedback we received indicated that the content on workplace trends should be integrated into the relevant parts of the book. We still provide a brief introduction to important cross-cutting themes including culture and diversity, but these are now dealt with more comprehensively by considering them throughout the book. Contemporary issues are integrated into the content of each chapter (including in the Exercises and Case studies) in order to provide clearer illustrations of how research and theory can be applied.

In the sixth edition we referred to our discussions about removing the detailed material on research methods in the previous Chapter 2. Although we decided against it last time, here we have listened once again to reviewers and have made a change. Chapters 1 and 2 from the sixth edition have now been combined by Iain Coyne into one chapter focused on helping the reader understand Work Psychology from a conceptual, applied, ethical and methodological perspective. As a result we have removed a lot of material on research methods and statistics – given we are not attempting to be a research methods book – and condensed the material into the key knowledge we feel individuals need to know when embarking on their research and/or practice in work psychology. The chapter provides an overview of the discipline of work psychology (e.g. where does it lie within psychology as a whole), moving on to explaining the key skills a work psychologist needs to be successful in her/his role. We envisage this chapter to be one which orients the reader to many of the ways data are collected, analysed and used in our discipline and offers a foundation on which the other, topic-focused, chapters build on. Chapter 1 is a 'quick reference' guide to help readers make sense of the source material within other chapters and as an aid for interpreting research they encounter in the future.

Fiona Patterson and Tom Kinirons build on the chapter in the sixth edition, updating the content on individual differences. They continue to discuss research and practice in general mental ability, personality, emotional intelligence, creativity and innovation. They have included newer research on environmental factors on intelligence in children, added in Ackerman's (1996) PPIK theory of intelligence, provided a Key Debate section reviewing measuring emotional intelligence and added recent research looking at the role of intrinsic work motivation, psychological empowerment and locus of control. The personality section has seen a large update of material with recent research on personality and OCBs, personality across the lifespan, 'dark-side' and 'bright side' personality and social media and personality included.

Chapter 3 by Fiona Patterson and Emma-Louise Rowe has broadly similar coverage to previous editions, but has been extensively updated in parts to reflect the fact that with increasing use of technology, selection is a rapidly developing area of research and practice. New and important advances such as the promise offered by situational judgements tests and the more widespread use of online testing get increased coverage to reflect their growing importance. Particularly, these authors have included debates and case studies on the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in selection and the impact this is likely to have on future recruitment practices, especially regarding diversity and fairness issues.

Chapter 4, by Jo Silvester and Madeleine Wyatt, on assessing performance at work, considers this key topic in work psychology in the light of trends in organisations and technology. There are several new case studies and "stop to consider" exercises. The traditional consideration of how to rate performance is still there, but the tone of the chapter has shifted towards practical applications of what is known about performance assessment. There is more attention to the dangers of counter-productive work behaviour, the role of performance assessment not just in rewarding performance but developing it, and how performance assessment is a political issue in organisations, always subject to being manipulated by different parties for their own ends. Coverage of the now widely used techniques of multi-source assessment (sometimes called 360-degree assessment) is updated, and instead of asking only whether it 'works,' Madeleine and Jo ask the more fundamental underlying question of what is it for.

Chapter 5 on attitudes at work now contains minimal coverage of basic social psychology and is designed to complement content in other parts of the text. It still provides a brief general discussion of the nature and measurement of attitudes but now focuses heavily on two specific work-related attitudes: job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Because attitudes are connected to many topics covered in other parts of the text (such as motivation, work design and organisational change) the focus is now on the psychological mechanisms that influence individual differences in attitudes, and that shape the development of attitudes over time. The section on the psychological contract has been adjusted to include more recent work on this topic. The sections on underemployment and unemployment have been moved to Chapter 8 to reflect the connections between these topics and well-being. The section on employee turnover has been developed to give a more thorough and detailed account of this complex and important topic.

The work motivation chapter (Chapter 6) by Samuel Farley and Rebecca Pieniasek re-structures, abbreviates and updates the chapter on motivation and job design in the sixth edition. Adopting a classification of motivation theories into content, context and process, Samuel and Rebecca articulate the key features of these theories, and compare and contrast them. By classifying job design as a contextual approach to motivation, they integrate this topic more fully than before with the other chapter material. There is more coverage than before of self-determination theory (SDT), which reflects the increasing prominence of this theory. They consider the role of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), which is not so often applied to work motivation. TPB also provides a good lead-in to goal-setting theory. There are new cases and exercises based on recent organisational and individual events.

The previous Design at work chapter by Don Harris has been removed from the seventh edition, but the sixth edition version of this chapter will remain available on the companion website to this volume.

Jo Silvester and Madeleine Wyatt's chapter on training and development (Chapter 7) retains the extensive coverage of the various elements of the training cycle and theories of learning from previous editions. There is however extensive updating with many references to recent studies and reviews of aspects of the literature on training and development. Digital methods of training, and training of staff to respect and

utilise diversity receive more attention. There are several new case studies and exercises including one based on the dramatic 2018 rescue of the boys' football team from a flooded cave in Thailand. The applications of social learning theory are more explicitly considered, which leads into a discussion of self-regulated learning. Recent attempts to analyse the training cycle are compared with Kirkpatrick's traditional one, reflecting the way in which this well-established topic area is moving with the times.

Following on from the changes in the sixth edition, Chapter 8 on stress and well-being includes more coverage of the benefits of well-designed and managed work. Naturally, the theories that explain the effects of 'bad work' are still included but some receive a little less prominence as more sophisticated and useful theories emerge. More in-depth coverage is given to strong theories and models that help us to describe, explain and predict the impact of work on individual well-being (such as Conservation of Resources). As a result there is less – but we hope still enough – coverage of extensive 'lists' of causes and consequences of stress. As more evidence emerges, we continue to focus on the design delivery and evaluation of a variety of interventions: these issues are complex and provide significant challenges and opportunities for practitioners and researchers. The topics of underemployment and unemployment now feature in this chapter.

Implementing teamwork is generally seen as being a good idea with potential benefits for the organisation and for the employee. Chapter 9 by Joanne Lyubovnikova now includes an extended critical evaluation of the potential benefits and risks of implementing and managing teams in contemporary work settings. There is a more in-depth discussion of the psychological mechanisms that underpin the effects of teamworking. To reflect the composition of teams in many organisations, an increased emphasis has been placed on the discussion of the effects on team functioning of culture, diversity and individual differences. The critical analysis of the experimental research that informs much of the applied work has been broadened, but there is now much more analysis of the practical implications of the findings that have emerged from this influential research. The input-mediator-output-input model takes more prominence in the chapter and provides a framework for a detailed discussion of how the effects of teamwork unfold over time. In particular, the discussion of mediators is developed in much more detail than in previous editions. Finally, the differences between effective and ineffective teams (e.g. pseudo teams) now frame much of the content.

Bart Wille's and Ilke Inceoglu's leadership chapter (Chapter 10) retains the overall structure of the equivalent chapter in the sixth edition. However, there are significant changes and updates. The discussion of some of the older topics like contingency theories has been shortened to reflect their declining influence. A number of new studies have been used to flag up emerging issues. These include a closer look at the different contexts in which leadership takes place and the consequences of contextual variables for the conduct and consequences of leadership; a more empirically grounded analysis of the ways in which transformational leadership might produce positive outcomes, and the role of digital technologies and big data in the activities and ethics of leadership.

John Arnold's revisions in Chapter 11 (Careers and career management) have led to a somewhat slimmed down account of a topic area that sits at the intersections between many others. A lot of the older material has been summarised more succinctly or omitted. Many research articles published since the sixth edition of this book are incorporated into the narrative, leading to substantial updating of what is known and theorised about core areas of career. There is increased coverage of theorisation of the effects of organisational career interventions, the different perspectives or orientations people bring to their career, new ways of classifying types of occupation, and international job assignments. New case studies and exercises highlight the growing roles of social media and artificial intelligence in career management. There is also more explicit consideration of whether career is an elite concept, and how the work lives of people who do not consider themselves to have careers can be analysed.

Bernard Burnes' chapter on change (Chapter 12) retains its structure from the sixth edition. It has been very well-received in the past as an authoritative review of the field. Several updates reflect the contemporary challenges that workers and organisational decision-makers face when responding to rapid changes in technology. It also considers in more detail the links between diversity in the workforce and various approaches to organisational change and important new thinking around the topics of change and culture. In several parts of the chapter the updated material provides new insights about how existing theories and

models can be put to better use. The chapter also identifies where new approaches might be needed to deal with the situations and pressures being faced by modern work organisations. Several promising emerging theories are identified, discussed and evaluated.

Carolyn Axtell's chapter on the psychology of dispersed working (Chapter 13) is once again the final chapter because it integrates many of the issues discussed throughout the text. It is a good demonstration of the relevance and utility of psychological theory in contemporary work settings. The chapter shows that if we are to make the best use of new ways of working, research from various different areas of work psychology need to be applied. This topic also has its own research agenda and presents new challenges for work psychologists. These have produced innovative and exciting approaches to research and intervention.

As before, we welcome feedback and dialogue about this book. Please direct it to Iain Coyne, School of Business and Economics, Sir Richard Morris Building, Loughborough University, Leicestershire, Leicester, LE11 3TU, UK (ij.coyne@lboro.ac.uk). Thank you for reading this preface, and please now carry on into the rest of the book!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Editors

John Arnold is Professor of Organisational Behaviour, School of Business and Economics, Loughborough University, UK.

Iain Coyne is Senior Lecturer in Organisational Psychology, School of Business and Economics, Loughborough University, UK.

Ray Randall is Senior University Teacher in Work Psychology, Institute of Work Psychology, Sheffield University Management School, UK.

Fiona Patterson is Founder Director of the Work Psychology Group, Visiting Researcher, University of Cambridge and Visiting Professor, City University, London, UK and the University of Nottingham, UK.

Chapter authors

Carolyn Axtell is Senior Lecturer, Institute of Work Psychology, Sheffield University Management School, UK.

Bernard Burnes is Professor of Organisational Change, Stirling Management School, UK.

Samuel Farley is Lecturer in Organizational Psychology, Leeds University Business School, UK.

Ilke Inceoglu is Professor of Organisational Behaviour and HR Management, University of Exeter Business School, UK.

Joanne Lyubovnikova is Senior Lecturer in Organisational Behaviour, University of Liverpool Management School, UK.

Rebecca Pieniasek is Lecturer in Organisational Psychology and Organisational Behaviour, Leeds University Business School, UK.

Emma-Louise Rowe is a Consultant Psychologist at Work Psychology Group, Derby, UK.

Joanne Silvester is Professor of Human Resource Management and Organisational Behaviour in the School of Business and Economics, Loughborough University, UK.

Tom Kinirons is a Consultant Psychologist at Work Psychology Group, Derby, UK.

Bart Wille is Assistant Professor in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Department of Personnel Management, Work and Organizational Psychology, Ghent University, Belgium.

Madeleine Wyatt is Senior Lecturer in Human Resources, Kent Business School, UK.

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CHAPTER 1

The discipline of work psychology An initial orientation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1** describe the discipline of work psychology by being able to:
 - examine the relationship between basic and applied psychology;
 - understand the notion of pragmatic science;
 - specify the key skills of those practising work psychology.
- 2** understand research and practice in work psychology by being able to:
 - identify the main sources of information about work psychology research and practice;
 - distinguish between opposing philosophies in the conduct of psychological research;
 - describe the key features, advantages and disadvantages of different research designs used by work psychologists;
 - specify the various methods of data collection used in research by work psychologists;
 - detail the difference between quantitative and qualitative data;
 - identify the main methods used for analysing both qualitative and quantitative data;
 - identify why diversity, technology and internationalisation are important cross-cutting themes in work psychology.



Opening case study

Assessing problems in recruitment and retention of nurses in a hospital unit

You have been called in by the Clinical Lead of a unit operating within a hospital to help examine and assess why they struggle to recruit and retain nurses. The unit operates across three sites – each which deal with the same condition, although offer different services (e.g. provision for patients visiting just for treatment or wards for those with serious medical conditions). There is a high turnover rate of nursing staff and, although the unit regularly advertises for replacement posts, these tend to go unfilled. When filled, most new nursing staff leave within the first year. Additionally, trainee nurses tend not to select this unit as part of their practical experience, further restricting the nurse provision in the unit.

- What skills would you need to undertake this project?
- Who, in the hospital, would you need to consult with?
- How would you go about collecting information to help on this project?
- What ethical issues may arise?
- How would you design the research, and collect and analyse good data?

These questions will be considered in the current chapter. For now, just think about the questions and the scenario. We will return to the case at the end of the chapter and offer an approach to undertaking a project such as this.

Introduction

In this chapter we aim to help the reader gain a broad understanding of the nature of work psychology and the context within which it operates before tackling more specific topics later in the book. We start with a brief description of the discipline of **psychology** as a whole and discuss the links between what we call basic and applied psychology, with work psychology positioned as one branch of applied psychology. We frame work psychology using the notions of pragmatic science and evidence-based management and give an account of the different labels sometimes given to work psychology and the topics it covers. We then move to discussing the skills of a work psychologist with specific emphasis on ethical and critical evaluations skills. Next, we consider the need for work psychologists to understand and enact research skills to be able to function effectively. We focus this around several specific features: the best sources of good knowledge about work psychology (apart from this book of course!); philosophical positions taken by work psychologists; methods used in research; design of research; and analysis of research data. In the latter part of this chapter we look briefly at important cross-cutting themes in work psychology: diversity, culture and technology and the potential impact these issues will have on the research and practice of a work psychologist. These three aspects feature throughout all the chapters in the book.

Basic psychology and work psychology

Psychology has been defined in various ways. Perhaps the simplest yet most informative definition is that provided long ago by Miller (1966): ‘the science of mental life’. Mental life refers to three phenomena: behaviours, thoughts and emotions. Most psychologists these days would agree that psychology involves all three.

Table 1.1

Basic areas of psychology and how they apply to the working context

Subdiscipline	Basic	Application to work	Reference
Biological	Biological bases of behaviour, neuropsychology, evolutionary psychology	The impact of simulated night shift work on insulin sensitivity and risk of Type 2 Diabetes	Bescos et al. (2018)
Cognitive	Thought processes such as attention, memory, learning, perception and language	The role of cued recall in recalling non-routine complex cognitive skills	Frank and Kluge (2018)
Developmental	The ways in which people grow and change psychologically throughout life	Improve the working lives of the over 50s in the UK	Altman (2015)
Individual differences	How people differ from each other psychologically and how those differences can be measured	The relationship between personality traits and exposure to bullying at work	Nielsen et al. (2017)
Social	How our behaviours, thoughts and emotions affect, and are affected by, other people	Virtual teams and the impact of virtuality on team communication	Marlow et al. (2017)

The discipline of psychology can be divided into several subdisciplines, each with its own distinctive focus. Collectively they can be termed *basic psychology*. There are several ways of splitting psychology. Table 1.1 illustrates five ways in which basic psychology can be divided. The table provides examples of applied work research that can be framed within each subdiscipline (see the Reference in column 4).

Key learning point

The five areas of basic psychology all contribute ideas and techniques to work psychology.

Work psychology is defined in terms of its context of application (see Figure 1.1), and an area of applied psychology. As you will see throughout this book, work psychologists use concepts, theories and techniques derived from all areas of basic psychology. Table 1.1 illustrated some examples of research applying ideas from psychology to the working context. These areas are not mutually exclusive: studying people at work from several different perspectives is often necessary in order to understand fully the issue being examined. For example, Gomez and Taylor (2018) explore the role of **National culture** (therefore using an individual difference approach) and in-group/out-group status (social) in strategies used to resolve group conflict. Results indicated a Mexican sample of MBA students showed more of a preference for confronting conflict using social influence and negotiating than a US sample – thereby illustrating the impact of culture on conflict resolution approaches.

Exercise 1.1

Think of a work-related topic or problem that interests you. It may be something that you have come across in your studies or heard about in the media. Consider which of the basic areas of psychology you might draw on if you were going to research this area. Remember, you are likely to draw on more than one. Consider how each would help you to better understand the issue.

As shown in Figure 1.1, areas of applied psychology use ideas and information from basic psychology. Conversely, they can also contribute ideas and information to the development of basic psychology. Sometimes theory from basic psychology can directly contribute to the solution of real-world problems. The need for solutions to difficult and complex real-world problems can also stimulate developments in basic psychology. Applied psychology (rather than basic psychology) offers theories and techniques directly applicable to practical problems and real-life situations. In fact, it might be argued applied psychologists are interested in solving problems, while basic psychologists are motivated to develop knowledge for its own sake. Thus, there may be a danger that the areas of applied psychology will fail to reflect advances in basic psychology: some more theoretically inclined psychologists fail to take sufficient account of work in applied psychology, or of current real-world issues.

The approach that many work psychologists aim for is what Anderson et al. (2001) refer to as **pragmatic science**. This type of work addresses problems of practical importance and does so using rigorous methodology. In pragmatic science, good research and practice are almost indistinguishable. We have tried to ensure that, where possible, the vast majority of the material cited in this text falls into this category. It refers to research that is done well, that has been subject to review and critique, and stood up to tests of its quality. At the same time, the research is useful and relevant: it helps organisations. Linley (2006: 3) summarises the benefits of this approach:

Good research questions have the potential to bridge the **academic-practitioner** divide very effectively, because they catalyse the interests, needs and aspirations of both parties through delivering findings that are not only academically sound and valued, but that also offer practical application and advancement.

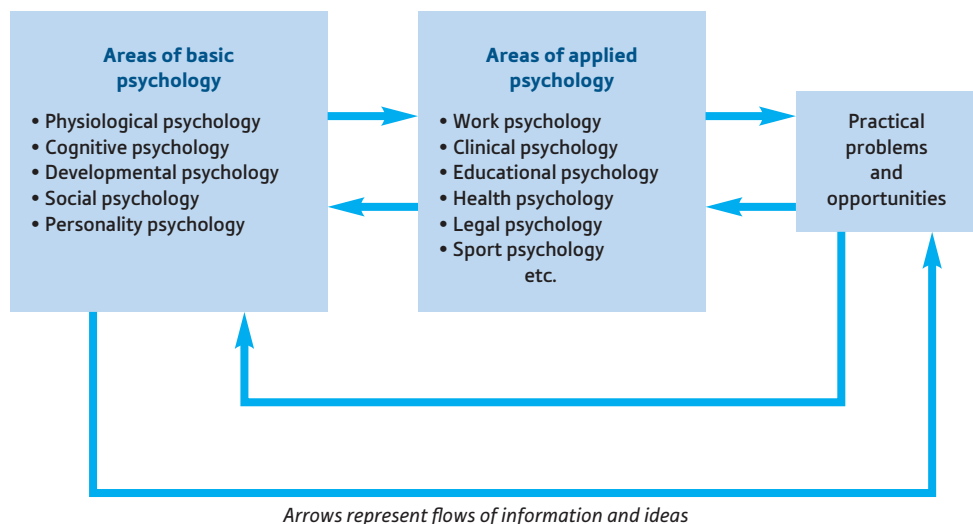


Figure 1.1

The relationship between areas of psychology

Key learning point

Pragmatic science gives us the best of both worlds: good research that has clear practical relevance.

More recently the term **evidence-based management (EBMgt)** has been used to describe better how theory and practice can be connected. Briner et al. (2009) argue that effective decisions in organisations need to combine:

- Evaluated good quality evidence. Research findings that have been subjected to critical review by independent experts, for example through **systematic review** and **meta-analysis** of findings from numerous studies, can provide a solid evidence base for decisions. The use of results from single studies to inform practice in new settings would be especially risky.
- The experience and judgements of practitioners who have some reliable insight, often developed through experience and reflection, into the issue being addressed.
- Input from those likely to be affected by the decision (stakeholders), including what is important to them and what they prefer.
- Information drawn from the organisational context, for example data held by the organisation about the issue being tackled, information about the pressures and opportunities facing the organisation and so on.

The term scientist-practitioner is often used to describe people who integrate research and practice to good effect. Lowman (2012) indicates that these are people who work with important issues and measure important outcomes of their interventions. They are also good at sharing their knowledge. This sounds relatively straightforward, but as Lowman points out, ‘the needs of clients do not necessarily derive from what research has chosen to study nor does the path of science always focus on practical applications’ (2012: 153). No matter how knowledgeable or qualified the psychologist appears to be, they will need to work with a range of stakeholder groups if their advice is to have the best chance of success.

Key learning point

The terms evidence-based management and scientist-practitioner emphasise the need for psychologists to make good use of quality research and to connect with the various end-users of their work and other knowledgeable professionals.

We should note that the effective application of theory and research is rarely straightforward. There are many tensions that can draw researchers and practitioners away from a pragmatic science model, including policy priorities, organisational context, values and demographics.

What is work psychology?

Work psychology has at least two distinct roots within applied psychology. One resides in a pair of traditions that have often been termed ‘fitting the person to the job’ (FPJ) and ‘fitting the job to the person’ (FJP). The FPJ tradition manifests itself in employee selection, training and vocational guidance (e.g. see Chapters 3, 7 and 11). These endeavours have in common an

attempt to achieve an effective match between job and person by concentrating on the latter. The FJP tradition focuses instead on the job, and the design of tasks, equipment and working conditions that suit a person's physical and psychological characteristics (e.g. see Chapter 6). You will see the influence of both approaches throughout this text.

The FPJ and FJP traditions essentially concern the relationship between individuals and their work. The other root of work psychology can be loosely labelled *human relations* (HR). It is concerned with the complex interplay between individuals, groups, organisations and work. It therefore emphasises social factors at work much more than FPJ and FJP (e.g. see Chapter 9).

Key learning point

There are two important traditions in work psychology. The concern of how jobs can be fitted to people (FJP) and how people can be fitted to jobs (FPJ); and the human relations approach emphasising individuals' experiences and interpretations at work.

One source of confusion you may experience is that the discipline of work psychology has a lot of different names. The label often used in the USA is *industrial/organizational psychology* (or *I/O psychology* for short). In the UK, it is often called *occupational psychology*, but this term is uncommon in most other countries. In the UK the title of *Occupational Psychologist* is protected in law, meaning that only appropriately qualified persons can use the title. Throughout Europe, increasing use is made of *the psychology of work and organisations* and *work and organisational psychology* to describe the area. Just to confuse things further, some specific parts of the field are given labels such as *vocational psychology*, *managerial psychology*, *business psychology* and *personnel psychology*. Meanwhile, there are also some bigger areas of study (e.g. *human resource management and organisational behaviour*) to which psychology contributes greatly.

Our advice for the confused reader is: don't panic! The differences between these labels do mean something to some people who work in the field but should not unduly worry most of us. In the main, the same content areas are covered regardless of the label used. We use the term *work psychology* because of its simplicity, and because to us it encompasses the individual and organisational levels of analysis.

With the confusion of labelling behind us, we can now be more specific in the areas (or knowledge domains) in which work psychologists apply psychological ideas to work and organisations. Figure 1.2 illustrates the five areas of work psychology as defined by the Standards for the Accreditation of Masters and Doctoral Programmes in Occupational Psychology published by the **British Psychological Society** (BPS, 2017). You will see that all these areas are covered within this volume, some (e.g. psychological assessment at work) with specific chapters and others (e.g. leadership, engagement and motivation) crossing several chapters. Table 1.2 depicts the chapters in this text which relate directly to the BPS' knowledge domains. Interestingly, Chapter 13 is an example of a topic which bridges more than one of the knowledge domains. In practice, most issues work psychologists research or practice in cross multiple knowledge domains. While they may be initially framed within one domain (e.g. development of a new selection system) the design process will invariably mean considering other domains (e.g. the need to revise training programmes given the quality of people now being selected into the organisation; the differing motivational needs of these new people; design of work to ensure the new skills are being used effectively).

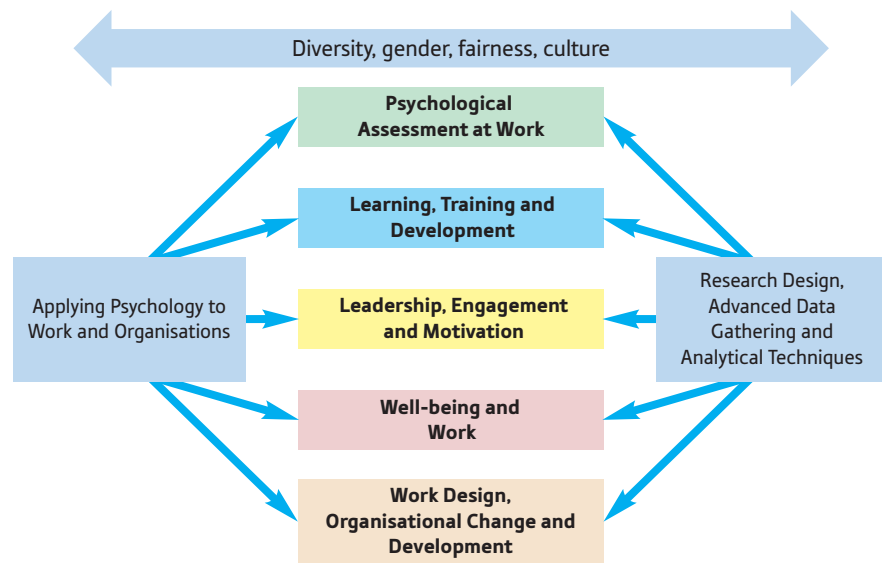


Figure 1.2 The five domains of work psychology

Table 1.2

BPS knowledge domains in work psychology and relevant chapters in this volume

Knowledge domain	Chapter(s) in this volume
Psychological assessment at work	Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are important when considering the relevant literature in this knowledge domain
Learning, training and development	Chapter 7 is focused directly on training and development. Chapter 11 on careers is also relevant in training and development
Leadership, engagement and motivation	Chapter 10 focuses directly on leadership and Chapter 6 on motivation. Chapter 5 on attitudes and Chapter 9 on teams are also relevant for understanding employee engagement and motivation
Well-being at work	Chapter 8 is focused specifically on well-being at work
Work design, organisational change and development	Chapter 12 examines the key issues in organisational change

In addition to the content areas, the common and important themes of **diversity**, gender, fairness and **culture** need to be addressed in each content area. The BPS describes two other areas that integrate with all domains. First, students and practitioners in occupational psychology need good knowledge of research design, data gathering and analysis. Second, it is expected that qualified work psychologists will understand a range of specific techniques they are likely to use in their practice. This involves the development of generic skills such as **questionnaire** design, **interviewing**, report writing, presentation skills and data analysis methods.

The skills of a work psychologist

We are aware that some of you reading this book are commencing your studies in work psychology, whereas others are simply studying a work psychology module as part of other non-psychology academic courses. It may therefore seem that a section on the skills needed by a work psychologist might be of more relevance to the former than the latter. However, while information on becoming a **Chartered Psychologist** or Registered Occupational Psychologist is mostly relevant to those of you with a psychology background, arguably the skills inherent with work psychology are useful for everyone in education and practice. In educational contexts, having the appropriate knowledge and skills will help you understand better the literature you are researching for essays, dissertations or projects. In practice, some of you may become leaders in your future careers, researchers in other disciplines or work in related areas (e.g. human resources). Understanding the skillset of a work psychologist will become a valuable asset for you in the future.

Clearly, given the discussion so far, understanding the five knowledge domains are key to becoming an effective work psychologist. However, by examining the US-based O*Net website (<https://www.onetonline.org/>) and searching Industrial-Organizational Psychologists it is evident that domain knowledge is only one part of the skillset of a work psychologist. Attributes include experience in a range of technology software, active listening, decision-making, oral and written comprehension, mathematical ability and critical thinking. To make this more concrete, let us detail how some of these attributes are important for studying, researching and practicing work psychology (Table 1.3).

The rest of this chapter will focus on three highly important skills inherent within a work psychologist's role. The following two short sections will consider **ethics** and critical analysis, whereas research skills will be examined in the second part of this chapter.

Ethical conduct is crucial to operating as a work psychologist. As an example, in the UK all practising psychologists are bound by a Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2018). This code requires practising psychologists to be guided by four principles:

- 1 *Respect*: 'Psychologists value the dignity and worth of all persons, with sensitivity to the dynamics of perceived authority or influence over persons and peoples and with particular regard to people's rights'.

Table 1.3

Selected work psychologist skills and examples of why they are important

Active listening	If interviewing an employee as a form of data collection, a competent work psychologist should attend fully to what the employee is saying, ask appropriate questions and reflect on points being made
Mathematical ability	In order to understand data in company reports, in research papers, in national surveys etc., a good level of mathematical ability is needed
Oral expression	Being able to convey complex and technical ideas in psychology to non-psychology audiences is an essential skill for a work psychologist. Mostly, clients will not be cognisant of the theories, methods of analysis techniques
Statistical software	When collecting data, having knowledge of statistical analysis software packages helps the work psychologist interpret the data
Problem solving	When presented with an organisational problem by a client, being able to review information and evaluate options helps the work psychologist to develop actions plans and solutions

- 2 *Competence*: ‘Psychologists value the continuing development and maintenance of high standards of competence in their professional work, and the importance of preserving their ability to function optimally within the recognised limits of their knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience.’
- 3 *Responsibility*: ‘Psychologists value their responsibilities to persons and peoples, to the general public, and to the profession and **science** of Psychology, including the avoidance of harm and the prevention of misuse or abuse of their contribution to society.’
- 4 *Integrity*: ‘Psychologists value honesty, probity, accuracy, clarity and fairness in their interactions with all persons and peoples and seek to promote integrity in all facets of their scientific and professional endeavours.’

(From BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct, 2018: 5–7)

In practical terms, this means that psychologists are required to consider, among other things, the following:

- *Consent*: **Participants** in the research should normally be made aware beforehand of all aspects of it that might reasonably be expected to influence their willingness to participate.
- *Deception*: Deception of those who participate in the research should be avoided wherever possible. If deception is necessary for the effective conduct of the research, it should not be the cause of significant distress when participants are debriefed afterwards.
- *Debriefing*: After participation, the participants should be given any information and other support necessary to complete their understanding of the research, and to avoid any sense of unease their participation might have engendered.
- *Withdrawal from the investigation*: The psychologist should tell participants of their right to withdraw from the research (usually participants are not required to give their reasons for withdrawing).
- *Confidentiality*: Subject to the requirements of legislation, information obtained about a participant is confidential unless agreed otherwise in advance.
- *Protection of participants*: As much as is reasonably practicable, the investigator must protect participants from physical and mental harm during the investigation.

Key learning point

Work psychologists are required to demonstrate their academic and practical competence, and to adhere to ethical principles. This is partly to protect the rights and well-being of people who pay for their services and/or participate in their research.

Psychologists need to be skilled in the analysis, synthesis and understanding of information (textual or numerical). This critical analysis requires the individual to go beyond just collating and describing information they have accessed. It involves evaluating the quality of the information received; identifying patterns and relationships in the information; challenging assumptions/ideas offered using other information; posing questions; identifying gaps in the information; and expressing an informed opinion. Critical analysis is regularly a part of the assessment criteria in academic modules and evidencing this skill is often the difference between an excellent and a good mark in an assignment. Frequently we get asked