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OCCUPATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY: BUILDING A FRAMEWORK GUIDING THE APPLICATION OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE INTO FIELD INTERVENTION PRACTICES

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Abstract

Applied occupational psychologists support organizations in evaluating and enhancing psychological health in the workplace. Often, these interventions claim scientific legitimacy by using tools based on fundamental research, particularly questionnaires. However, our experience highlights significant methodological weaknesses in these interventions, sometimes questioning their scientific validity. Scientific claims are occasionally used as authority arguments to support an intervention's legitimacy, without reference to a consensus framework linking research to practice. This raises key questions: Can a field intervention truly be scientifically valid or legitimate? How much of scientific knowledge can be applied in practice, and what precautions are needed? Is an empirical approach inherently less legitimate than a scientific one in improving work conditions? This workshop will facilitate an epistemological dialogue between researchers and practitioners to develop insights and recommendations on: Ethical considerations when using research-based tools; criteria for determining an intervention's scientific rigor; and the legitimacy of field interventions beyond scientific anchoring. The workshop is designed to bring together researchers and practitioners in occupational psychology, with a maximum of 50 participants and will use a collaborative method, based on analyzing shared experiences and debating key points. Outcomes will include a guide on ethical and best practices for robust interventions and the complementary roles of scientific tools and empirical approaches.

Keywords: *Occupational psychology, scientific legitimacy, epistemological dialogue, research-to-practice, deontological guidelines.*

1. Introduction

In occupational psychology, integrating scientific knowledge into field interventions is often seen as a marker of legitimacy, but this reliance raises important epistemological and methodological concerns. While many interventions use tools derived from research, such as psychometric assessments, they sometimes overlook limitations in their application. Furthermore, these scientific claims often lack frameworks that link research findings to practical workplace solutions, leading to an overuse of scientific authority without aligning with evidence-based principles. Moreover, some interventions falsely claim to be scientifically grounded, when their legitimacy should rest on different criteria. This underlines the need to critically examine what constitutes an evidence-based intervention beyond merely applying scientific tools.

This article introduces a workshop that aims to address these issues by distinguishing "evidence-based" from "scientific" approaches, exploring broader aspects of evidence-based methodologies. Through dialogue between researchers and practitioners, the workshop will clarify how scientific inputs can inform interventions and propose frameworks for legitimizing non-scientific components. Drawing on key insights from literature, such as Thayer et al. (2011), Caetano and Santos (2017), and Briner and Rousseau (2011), the workshop acknowledges the importance of balancing scientific rigor with practical relevance, considering both organizational context and practitioner expertise. The literature also highlights barriers to implementing evidence-based practices, such as publication bias (Banks & McDaniel, 2011) and limited access to academic research (Rogelberg et al., 2022), emphasizing the need for an inclusive approach that integrates both scientific and non-scientific elements.

2. Methodology and objectives

The workshop employs a collaborative methodology that combines structured discussions, case study analyses, and the development of actionable recommendations. Participants will begin by analyzing current challenges and barriers to implementing evidence-based practices, such as:

- **Disconnect Between Research and Practice:** The lack of accessible, practitioner-oriented research.
- **Overemphasis on Scientific Rigor:** Neglecting the relevance of empirical and experiential knowledge.
- **Ethical and Practical Dilemmas:** Balancing organizational goals with employee well-being.
- The objectives of the workshop are threefold:
- **Develop Ethical Guidelines:** Establish principles for the responsible use of scientific tools and data.
- **Define Scientific Rigor:** Create criteria to evaluate the scientific validity of interventions.
- **Explore Legitimacy Beyond Science:** Propose frameworks for legitimizing non-scientific aspects of interventions, such as ethical reasoning and experiential knowledge.

3. Framework of the workshop

The workshop is structured around two core axes, each with a working group of researchers and practitioners. This collaborative approach aims to leverage participants' diverse expertise for a multidimensional analysis of evidence-based interventions.

3.1. Group 1: Scientific inputs in field interventions

This group will explore how scientific knowledge can inform field interventions, including:

- **Models and Frameworks**: The role of theoretical models in shaping intervention strategies.
- **Analytical Tools**: The use of scientifically validated tools, like psychometric questionnaires, for assessing workplace conditions.
- **Best Practices**: Guidelines derived from research for decision-making.

The group will also address the challenges of applying scientific findings to dynamic workplace environments and discuss criteria for assessing the reliability of transposing scientific constructs into interventions, balancing scientific integrity with practical adaptation.

3.2. Group 2: Non-scientific components of evidence-based interventions

The second group will focus on the non-scientific aspects of interventions, such as:

- **Ethical Guidelines**: Establishing principles when scientific evidence is lacking.
- **Experiential Knowledge**: Using practitioners' experience to complement scientific insights.
- **Organizational Contexts**: Adapting interventions to workplace dynamics.

This group will propose frameworks for legitimizing these non-scientific components, ensuring they align with evidence-based practice through ethical reasoning and professional expertise.

4. Expected outcomes

The anticipated outcomes of the workshop include:

- **A Guide to Ethical and Evidence-Based Practices**: A comprehensive document outlining best practices for integrating scientific and non-scientific elements into workplace interventions.
- **Recommendations for Researchers and Practitioners**: Actionable insights to improve collaboration and knowledge transfer between the two groups.
- **Frameworks for Evaluating Intervention Legitimacy**: Criteria and methodologies for assessing the validity and effectiveness of interventions, regardless of their scientific basis.

Additionally, the workshop will explore avenues for sustaining dialogue between researchers and practitioners around key elements emerging from the workshop, in order to continue feeding an essential corpus that supports the research-practice continuum.

These outcomes will contribute to the ongoing development of occupational psychology as a discipline promoting more robust and ethical approaches to workplace interventions.

5. Conclusion

This workshop represents an opportunity to precise what makes an evidence-based practice in occupational psychology. By addressing the epistemological and methodological challenges of integrating scientific knowledge into field interventions, it seeks to promote a holistic and inclusive understanding of what it means to be "evidence-based."

Through collaboration between researchers and practitioners, the workshop aims to generate practical solutions to longstanding challenges, fostering a culture of innovation and accountability in workplace interventions. Ultimately, the insights and recommendations emerging from this workshop will serve as a valuable resource for advancing the field of occupational psychology.

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