

Abstract

Conflicting research exists regarding the professional identity of Industrial/ Organisational (I/O) psychology. Whilst some literature posits that the field of I/O psychology is a key profession to ensuring organisational development, other publications argue that the core principles of the profession need to be re-evaluated. Hence, this study aimed to explore the subjective opinions of I/O psychologists' on the identity of their profession to gain a deeper understanding of the current state of I/O psychology.

Through purposive sampling, qualified and HPCSA registered I/O psychologists participated in this Q methodology study. Participants were tasked with arranging a concourse of statements into a matrix grid according to their opinions. The self-composed concourse of statements set out in this research study hinged on five main identity themes namely: visibility, differentiation, competitive image, benefits or relevance and lastly, capitalism/ ethics within the South African context. In doing so, the current research study gained a deeper understanding of how I/O psychologists' perceive the identity of their profession. With the use of the PQ method program, the data received was interpreted through by-person factor analysis.

The results of this research study indicated that participants believed the identity of I/O psychology is influenced and impacted upon by the importance of an I/O psychologist, misunderstandings of the profession, individuality within I/O psychology and the value-add of the field.

It is recommended that future research analyses the subjective opinions of I/O psychologists' on the identity of their profession from a more industry specific context as this may have an influence on results. The variations that participants may have in academic qualifications and working experience should also be investigated as a factor of influence in future studies.

Focus groups are also recommended for purposes of studying a broader sample, especially for research that has time constraints.

Keywords: industrial psychology, organisational psychology, identity, profession