

Humanitarian Work Psychology¹²

In recent years, a new movement has emerged within I/O psychology, transposing the established principles of the field onto areas of more pressing humanitarian need, including the humanitarian treatment of all workers in all work settings. Humanitarian work psychology (HWP) stretches the parameters of the discipline to focus on regions, communities and groups of workers that have not traditionally been its focus.

Much of the work that has been done in the area of HWP utilizes widely accepted theories from the organizational sciences, and the unique application of these theories in lower-income settings, cross-culturally, or to reduce poverty. Some examples of previous research include:

- The intrinsic motivation of healthcare workers in Ethiopia can impact the choice of engaging in nonprofit or prosocial work rather than seeking for-profit employment (Serra, Serneels, & Barr, 2010)
- The way that common organizational science variables - such as job satisfaction, work engagement, and job fit - operate within the context of expatriate work to reduce poverty (Manson & Carr, 2011)
- The value of entrepreneurial pursuits of citizens residing in lower-income countries (Frese, Brantjes, & Hoorn, 2002)
- The plight of women and children in both urban and rural poverty (Schein, 2003)
- The negative outcomes of workplace discrimination (e.g. Ruggs, Law, Cox, Roehling, Weiner, Hebl, & Barron, 2012)
- A shift in focus toward corporate social responsibility initiatives (e.g. Aguinis & Glavas, 2012)
- Humanitarian work psychologists who also aid individuals and organizations through pro-bono consulting and volunteer service (e.g. Rizzuto, 2008)

Humanitarian work psychology is also affecting the way that larger social movements are conducted and accomplished. For instance, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (www.un.org) have been used as a benchmark for ways that the organizational sciences can engage with poverty reduction within the larger narrative at play. In 2015, the United Nations will propose a new set of goals, the Sustainable Development Goals, and an exciting inclusion in these proposed goals is the explicit mention of a drive toward decent work. This overt reference highlights the importance of a responsible approach to employment and workplace decisions, is ideally suited for humanitarian work psychologists to address, and speaks to the greater influence that organizational psychology can have on the world.

Humanitarian work psychologists can be found in a variety of situations and locations. These professionals may be I/O psychologists working in typical I/O roles within local and international non-profit organizations, engaging in issues like selection, training, or leadership. Other humanitarian work psychologists may be employed in academic settings, and incorporate humanitarian topics in their coursework and research. Still other humanitarian work psychologists engage in hands-on aid and development work as part of their personal pursuits, by volunteering on nonprofit boards, traveling to developing nations as part of their personal ventures, or providing I/O consultation to humanitarian aid and development organizations.

Humanitarian work psychology is a growing component of I/O psychology, and is an important consideration in the movement toward a more prosocial approach to psychology in general. By addressing the needs of

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² Humanitarian Work Psychology. (2018, August 28). Retrieved from <https://www.siop.org/Events-Education/Educators/Incorporating-I-O>

humanitarian aid and development organizations from a psychological perspective, as well as the needs of marginalized workers and those experiencing the effects of financial disparity, humanitarian work psychologists are actively working towards a more prosocial approach to the organizational sciences.

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