

Motivations to Link Industrial and Organizational Psychology Science to the Public: Insights and Implications Based on Expectancy Theory

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Abstract

The gap between industrial and organizational psychology science and the public has been noted in the literature. The motivation issue caused by a lack of reward structure for public outreach activities is considered as one of the factors resulting in the barrier between academics and practitioners. Based on expectancy theory, the present study provided a list of practical recommendations regarding how to improve scholars' motivation to reach out and communicate their works to the public.

Keywords: Industrial and Organizational Psychology; Motivation; Expectancy Theory; Public Outreach.

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1 Introduction

Rogelberg, King, and Alonso (2022) suggested that there appears to be a chasm between industrial and organizational psychology (I-O psychology) science and the public, and they proposed a set of approaches that I-O scholars may follow to bring I-O psychology science to the public. They also analyzed a list of reasons regarding why I-O science does not reach the public. In this paper we further analyze why scholars might not communicate their work to the public, and we also propose solutions to this problem. Specifically, we use expectancy theory to elucidate the motivational processes experienced by scholars when they make decisions about whether to take the time and effort necessary to bring their research on I-O psychology to the public. Based on the framework of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, we provide a list of recommendations for scholars, administrators, and policy makers to consider in order to unlock and enhance scholars' interest in bringing I-O psychology science to the public.

2 Expectancy Theory

A lack of reward structure for public outreach activities may be one of the reasons causing limited communications between academics and practitioners (Rogelberg et al., 2022). The paucity of reward structures may exert a detrimental effect on individuals' motivations and hinder their

efforts to engage in public outreach activities. Scholars should be properly rewarded for their public outreach efforts and these efforts and contributions should be considered as a part of their metric of success. Otherwise, scholars may always remain demotivated to perform works to benefit practitioners and the chasm between science and practice may continuously remain (or be even widened) in the absence of proper rewards. To unravel the complexity underlying this motivation issue, we utilized the expectancy theory as a guiding framework to systematically navigate future efforts regarding how to motivate scholars to be active in public outreach.

Expectancy theory, especially Valence – Instrumentality – Expectancy model (VIE model), has long been considered as a major theory of work motivation (Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996; Vroom, 1964). Expectancy refers to the probability that one's efforts or actions will result in performance or achievement of objectives (Renko, Kroeck, & Bullough, 2012; Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996). An example of this belief under the context of the present research is "If I work diligently, I can bring I-O psychology science to the public". Instrumentality refers to one's expectation regarding how closely the level of performance is linked to outcomes (e.g., rewards) (Fudge & Schlacter, 1999; Renko et al., 2012). An example of this expectation is "If I do public outreach works, the rewards will be provided". Valence refers to the degree to which individuals value certain rewards, meaning that individuals will be motivated to perform when the rewards being received as a result of their performance are considered as attractive, desirable, and/or important (Fudge & Schlacter, 1999; Renko et al., 2012; Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996). An example of this belief is "how important are the rewards to me?" In the following sections, we used the theoretical framework of VIE to propose a list of methods or recommendations regarding how to motivate I-O psychologists to actively get involved in communicating I-O psychology science to the public.

2.1 Expectancy (E → P)

Training will improve individuals' skills, thus enhancing their perception of association between efforts and performance (i.e., a stronger E → P expectancy) (Fudge & Schlacter, 1999). We suggest that training courses or modules may be incorporated in I-O psychology graduate programs so that graduate students can learn necessary skills and knowledge in order to understand how to bring I-O psychology science to the public. For example, faculty members routinely teach doctoral students how to write papers to target an academic audience. Perhaps they may also consider including special topics in their doctoral seminars concerning how to write evidence-based, practice-oriented papers to benefit practitioners. In addition to traditional in-house trainings, doctoral students may also be sent to other institutions to get week-long or month-long intensive training in order to acquire skills and knowledge about how to engage in public outreach activities. In a similar vein, administrators in doctoral programs may consider inviting external participating faculty members from other institutions to train their doctoral students in how to do public outreach.

We also recommend major conferences in I-O psychology, such as Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP), to consider adding additional session types (or expanding the scope of existing sessions) and using them as venues to organize and initiate some training programs for graduate students and/or early career scholars regarding the best practices to bridge the gap between I-O science and the public. Aside from running some programs during the SIOP annual conference, I-O psychologists may consider volunteering to create some recorded lectures, upload them to the SIOP website, and share these training resources. I-O psychologists may also consider offering courses in leading online course platforms, such as Coursera, to educate graduate students and early career scholars regarding how to write papers to benefit the practitioner audience and catch their attention.

2.2 Instrumentality ($P \rightarrow O$) and Valence (V)

To enhance the expectation of instrumentality and valence, both a close link between performance and rewards and the importance of rewards need to be ensured. This would call for school administrators to consider rewarding scholars to make practice-oriented contributions. For example, policy makers and administrators may consider adding the contributions of public outreach activities as a part of the metric for tenure and promotion. This means that faculty members would get credits for tenure and promotion whenever they published practice-oriented articles or books in respectable outlets, delivered invited talks and/or got interviewed at major media outlets or at famous for profit or non-profit organizations, and performed works to foster their schools' industry connections, etc.

Some faculty members will get pay raises if they published works in a list of exceptional academic journals. School administrators may consider including public outreach activities as an important criterion for merit-based pay raises. Reduced teaching loads are also routinely provided to the faculty members who published exceptional academic works in top tier journals. To encourage more public outreach activities, this similar policy may be applied to the faculty members who published influential practice-oriented papers.

The rewards should be considered for not only existing employees but also prospective job seekers. For example, a common criterion to hire prospective faculty members from the job market is to require job seekers to demonstrate evidence of scholarly achievements in reputable academic journals. We encourage universities and hiring committees to consider public outreach works and contributions as a part of the hiring requirements. We avow that this change in rules of the game will encourage graduate students and early career scholars to proactively learn more knowledge and skills and perform more public outreach activities to improve their competitiveness on the job market.

We also encourage conferences to consider incorporating major awards to recognize scholars' contributions and works toward public outreach activities. For example, SIOP has done exemplary works to set up awards to recognize professional and practice-oriented contributions. We recommend that other conferences may also consider using this model to recognize scholars who made outstanding contributions to public outreach. Similarly, some academic journals may consider adding additional sections or tracks to invite practice-oriented submissions and to also set up awards to recognize scholars who published excellent practice-oriented papers.

3 Conclusions

How to connect I-O psychology science to the public is a challenge to I-O psychologists. Rogelberg et al. (2022) cited a few reasons for the barriers to public outreach, such as lack of skills and knowledge and insufficient reward structures. Building on expectancy theory, this paper serves as an extension to Rogelberg et al. (2022) and we proposed a list of recommendations and suggestions concerning how to effectively address these barriers. Specifically, we addressed how to properly motivate scholars to take the time and effort necessary to reach out to the public. We encourage policy makers and administrators to heed the recommendations in this paper in order to spur more public outreach activities.

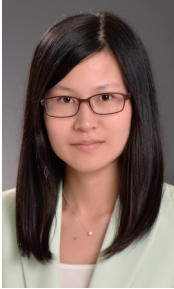
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