

A PROFILE OF THE INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGIST IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This article sketches a profile of the industrial psychologist in South Africa based on a sample of 255 registered industrial psychologists, representing a response rate of 49,52 percent. The results indicate that while most respondents are employed in the private sector, other institutions such as the state/semi-state, universities, technikons and research organisations are also fairly well represented. Regarding the specific work which they do, industrial psychologists in this country are primarily involved with the "traditional" areas of training and development, career development, organisation planning and development, performance appraisal, and recruitment and selection.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie artikel skets 'n profiel van die bedryfsielkundige in Suid-Afrika gebaseer op 'n steekproef van 255 geregi- streerde bedryfsielkundiges wat 'n responskoers van 49,52 persent verteenwoordig. Alhoewel die meeste respon- dente in die private sektor werk, dui die resultate aan dat instellings soos die staat/semi-staat, universiteite, teknikons en navorsingsinstansies ook taamlik goed verteenwoordig is. Wat betref die spesifieke werk wat bedryfsielkun- diges in hierdie land doen, is hulle primêr by die "tradisionele" areas van opleiding en ontwikkeling, loopbaanont- wikkeling, organisasiebeplanning en -ontwikkeling, prestasiebeoordeling, en werwing en keuring betrokke.

Whilst conducting research into the role of industrial psycholo- gy in industrial relations initiated during 1990, the writer sur- veyed the opinions of registered industrial psychologists in this regard. In addition to obtaining valuable data about the relationship between the above two fields of study, interest- ing and useful biographical and job-related information per- taining to industrial psychologists in South Africa was acquired. Consequently, the purpose of this article is to present the latter group of facts to readers in the form of a "profile" of the industrial psychologist in this country. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the presented information in detail or to draw conclusions.

Questionnaires were mailed to all 519 psychologists registered in the category "industrial psychology" with the South Afri- can Medical and Dental Council. On 20 August 1990, a follow- up letter was mailed to remind potential respondents about the questionnaire and again urged them to participate. A total of 257 completed questionnaires was received, represent- ing a response rate of 49,52 percent. Only two of these questionnaires could not be used for further analyses.

BIOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Figures 1 to 6 describe the various biographical features of the 255 respondents whose questionnaires were used. (Due to the rounding off of individual percentages to two decimal points, total cumulative percentages might not add up to exactly 100,00 in all cases. The resultant error is never larger than 0,02 percent.)

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents by qualification

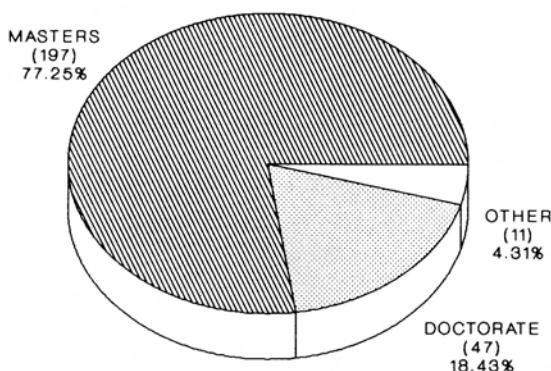


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents by employment classification

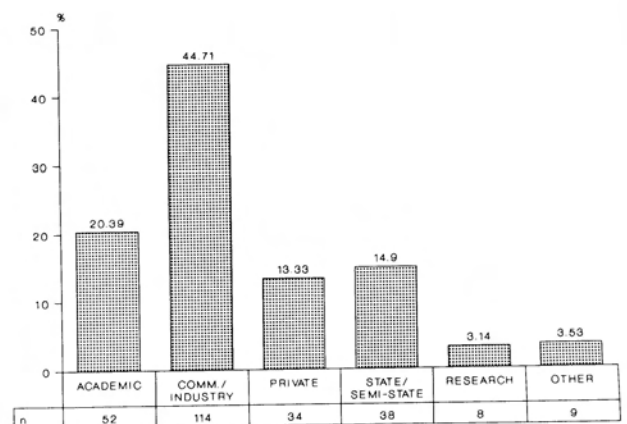


Figure 3: Percentage of commerce and industry respondents by industry

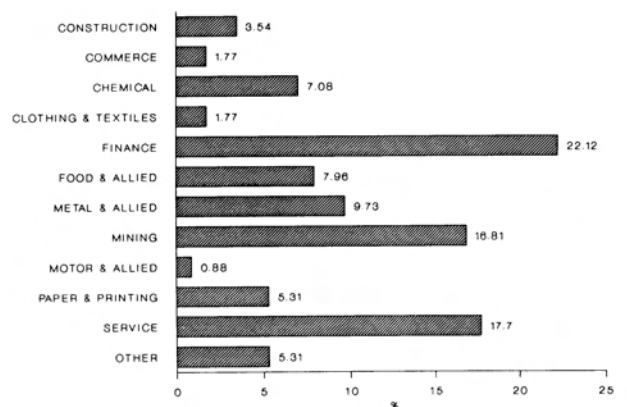


Figure 4: Percentage of academic respondents by employment rank

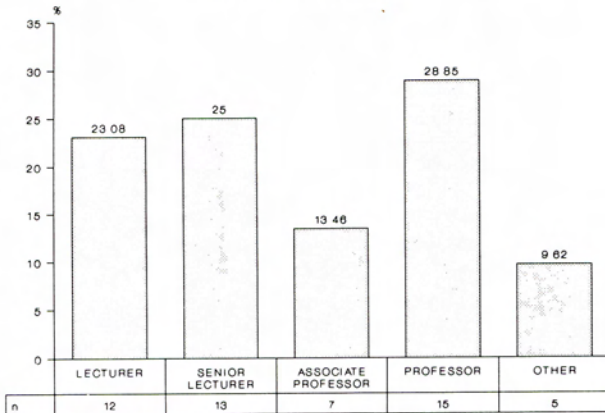


Figure 5: Percentage of academic respondents undertaking private consultation work

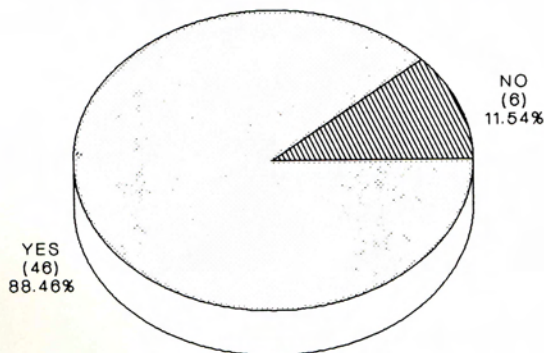
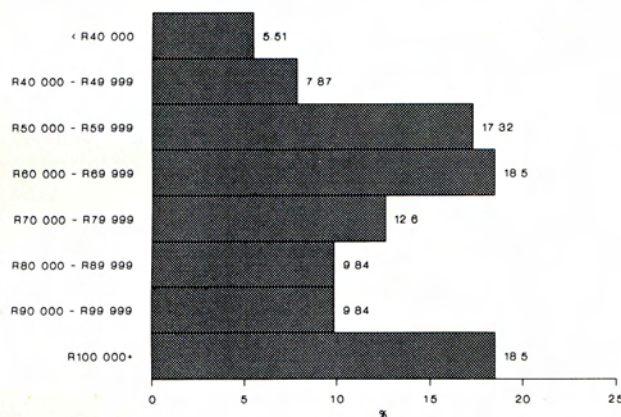


Figure 6: Percentage of respondents by income category



It is interesting to note that 18,43 percent of the respondents have a doctorate and that most respondents (44,71 percent) work in commerce and industry. Also, most of those respondents working in commerce and industry are employed specifically by financial institutions (22,12 percent) with the least being employed by the motor and allied industries (0,88 percent). In the academic world (20,39 percent of respondents), most are associate professors or professors (42,31 percent). As expected, a very large proportion of the academic respondents also undertake private consultation work (88,46 percent). Particularly interesting is the percentage of respondents by income category (Figure 6). In this respect, "income" means **gross** annual income and excludes fringe benefits such as housing subsidies, car allowances, entertainment allowances, etc. Most respondents earn in the categories of "R60 000 - R69 999" or "R100 000 plus" (18,5 percent each), followed by the category "R50 000 - R59 999" (17,32 percent), but some respondents even earn less than R40 000 (5,51 percent).

JOB DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORIES

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent 34 different job descriptive categories currently constituted a part of their total function. These categories were obtained from (1) a similar survey conducted by Mackinney and Dunnette (1964) in the United States of America, and (2) contents of industrial psychology courses at South African universities. Opportunity to include other job descriptive categories not named in the questionnaire was also provided.

Table 1 illustrates, by means of a percentage distribution, the extent to which each of the 34 different job descriptive categories or job functions constitute a part of the present total function of respondents. The job functions in Table 1 have been arranged in rank order beginning with those indicated by **most** respondents to constitute either a moderate or a large part of their jobs and ending with those indicated by the **least** respondents to constitute either a moderate or a large part of their jobs.

**TABLE 1
EXTENT OF JOB FUNCTIONS AS PART OF
TOTAL FUNCTION**

JOB FUNCTION	EXTENT				TOTAL
	No part at all	To a little extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	
	%	%	%	%	%
Consulting with management	4,56	10,79	22,41	62,24	100,00
Training/personnel development	8,40	18,91	25,63	47,06	100,00
Career development	13,33	26,25	30,00	30,42	100,00
Organisation planning & development	16,25	25,42	25,83	32,50	100,00
Performance appraisal	17,80	26,69	31,78	23,73	100,00
Recruitment & selection	17,80	29,66	25,00	27,54	100,00
Test interpretation	25,10	25,52	23,01	26,36	100,00
Personnel counselling	19,25	31,38	25,10	24,27	100,00
Productivity improvement	28,39	24,15	26,69	20,76	100,00
Manpower planning	26,05	28,57	22,69	22,69	100,00
Attitude research & management	25,75	31,33	21,46	21,46	100,00
Research on personnel policies & practices	31,91	26,38	17,45	24,26	100,00
Equal opportunity/affirmative action	37,18	23,93	18,80	20,09	100,00
Industrial relations	40,85	20,43	11,49	27,23	100,00
Vocational guidance	27,97	34,75	20,76	16,53	100,00
Test administration	37,24	27,20	17,99	17,57	100,00
Job analysis	30,77	33,76	20,51	14,96	100,00
Job evaluation	33,90	33,47	16,10	16,53	100,00
Customer care/service	47,01	20,51	14,96	17,52	100,00
Community relations	44,83	22,84	17,24	15,09	100,00
Personnel administration	47,23	21,70	16,17	14,89	100,00
Job enrichment	34,38	34,48	19,40	11,64	100,00
Health & welfare	50,85	20,94	17,52	10,68	100,00
Criterion development	43,29	28,57	17,75	10,39	100,00
Salary administration	53,19	20,43	13,19	13,19	100,00
Employee participation schemes	57,02	16,67	14,91	11,40	100,00
Labour turnover admin. & analysis	51,72	25,43	12,07	10,78	100,00
Job design	46,55	31,03	13,36	9,05	100,00
Test development & construction	59,66	19,74	13,73	6,87	100,00
Absenteeism admin. & analysis	59,48	20,26	12,93	7,33	100,00
Test validation	57,45	24,68	9,36	8,51	100,00
Marketing & consumer research	72,46	11,86	8,47	7,20	100,00
Safety	65,24	20,17	11,16	3,43	100,00
Ergonomics/environmental issues	65,11	23,83	7,66	3,40	100,00

The only job functions which for more than 50 percent of respondents constitutes either a *moderate* or a *large* part of their jobs were the following:

- Consulting with management (84,65 percent)
- Training/personnel development (72,69 percent)
- Career development (60,42 percent)
- Organisation planning and development (58,33 percent)
- Performance appraisal (55,51 percent)
- Recruitment and selection (52,54 percent)

This implies naturally that all the other job functions (28 out of 34) were indicated by more than 50 percent of respondents to constitute either a *small* part of their jobs or *no* part of their jobs at all.

Of the respondents, 62,24 percent indicated that "*consulting with management*" constituted a *large* part of their jobs. This was the only job function which was indicated by more than 50 percent of respondents to constitute a *large* part of their jobs. It was also the job function which the least number of respondents indicated did not comprise any part of their jobs (4,56 percent).

The job functions which more than 50 percent of respondents indicated did *not* constitute part of their jobs at all were the following:

- Marketing and consumer research (72,46 percent)
- Safety (65,24 percent)
- Ergonomics/environmental issues (65,11 percent)
- Test development and construction (59,66 percent)
- Absenteeism administration and analysis (59,48 percent)
- Test validation (57,45 percent)
- Employee participation schemes (57,02 percent)
- Salary administration (53,19 percent)
- Labour turnover administration and analysis (51,72 percent)
- Health and welfare (50,85 percent)

Although every attempt was made to incorporate all possible job functions in the questionnaire, 66 respondents (25,88 percent) indicated that they were also involved to varying degrees in other functions. These included areas as diverse as culture analyses, catering, AIDS issues, media research, advertising, computer system development, international comparisons and community development.

SUMMARY

This article sketched a profile of the industrial psychologist in South Africa based on research initiated during 1990. It was found that just more than half (58 percent) of the respondents (all registered industrial psychologists) are employed in the private sector (commerce/industry and self-employed), while approximately one fifth have a doctorate. Of the 255 respondents, 52 are academics, the vast majority (88,46 percent) of which undertake private consultation work.

As far as job functions are concerned, it appears that industrial psychologists are particularly involved with the "traditional" fields of training and development, career development, organisational planning and development, performance appraisal, and recruitment and selection. Consulting with management is an important function of the job, while aspects such as marketing and consumer research, safety, and ergonomics do not constitute much part of the work of an industrial psychologist.

REFERENCES

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- Tustin, C.M. (1991). *The role of industrial psychology in industrial relations: a South African perspective*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.