

2009

# Identifying Publication Outlets in Occupational Health Psychology: An Opinion Survey


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### Recommended Citation

Karanika-Murray, M., Schonfeld, I. S., & Schmitt, L. (2009). Identifying publication outlets in occupational health psychology: An opinion survey. *Newsletter of the Society for Occupational Health Psychology*, 7, 13-16. Retrieved from <http://sohp.psy.uconn.edu/SOHPNewsletterV7October2009.pdf>

## Identifying Publication Outlets in Occupational Health Psychology: An Opinion Survey

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The dissemination of research is a core part of the research process. The proliferation of academic journals can make it difficult for researchers to identify relevant titles, reduce the accessibility of research, or make it difficult to match the message to the audience. Some of the essential criteria that researchers use to decide where to publish their work include the relevance and prestige of a particular journal. As such, a number of rankings of academic journals exist that serve as indicators of journal quality, and in turn, of publication quality.

Researchers commonly use ISI Thomson's journal impact data ([http://thomsonreuters.com/products\\_services/science/science\\_products/scholarly\\_research\\_analysis/research\\_evaluation/journal\\_citation\\_reports](http://thomsonreuters.com/products_services/science/science_products/scholarly_research_analysis/research_evaluation/journal_citation_reports)), which ranks all journals in the social sciences on the basis of their impact, Anne-Wil Harzing's list of business journal rankings (<http://www.harzing.com/jql.htm>), the UK Association of Business Schools *Journal Quality Guide* (<http://www.the-abs.org.uk/?id=257>), and the Australian and New Zealand business schools' *Business Journal Rankings* (<http://www.griffith.edu.au/library/support-for-research/reporting-analysis/journal-rankings>).

The main criticism of using such databases in the service of research in occupational health psychology is that the volume of research in the relatively new discipline of OHP is small compared to the volume in other areas of psychology. As a result, the impact of journals specific to OHP tends to be smaller than the impact of journals serving larger disciplines within psychology. Consequently, OHP scholars' specialization and expertise will tend to be unfairly reflected in overall evaluations related to their publications.

The over-reliance on journal prestige can be misleading or counter-productive when rankings developed for the social sciences in general or other disciplines are used to evaluate published OHP research. Researchers have developed alternative ways to evaluate publication impact, for example, *Publish or Perish* (<http://www.harzing.com/pop.htm>) and *Hirsch's h-index* (Hirsch, 2005). These methods evaluate the impact of a particular publication on the field, *once it has been published*. Prior to publication, however, there remains a need to identify the publication outlets mostly used by scholars in OHP in order to minimize delays and maximize publication relevance.

This current study examines the publication outlets considered by occupational health psychologists, as perceived by OHP scholars themselves. It looks at overall contribution to the discipline in order to identify the core OHP journals, and attempts to describe them in terms of theoretical rigor, methodological rigor, and relevance to practice. It also seeks to categorize the titles into core OHP research journals, allied-discipline journals that publish OHP research, and practitioner journals.

### Methods

A survey was developed to assess a range of OHP-relevant journals from the perspective of self-described OHP researchers and practitioners. We included as many English-language titles as are available in the area, and selected from a range of existing journal listings in order to develop a repository of titles used by OHP scholars. We also conducted a manual scan of titles referenced in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology and Work & Stress*. At the same time, it was necessary to keep the survey as short as possible. A total of 62 titles were included in the final survey (see Appendix 1, <http://sohp-online.org/V72009Appendix1.pdf>).

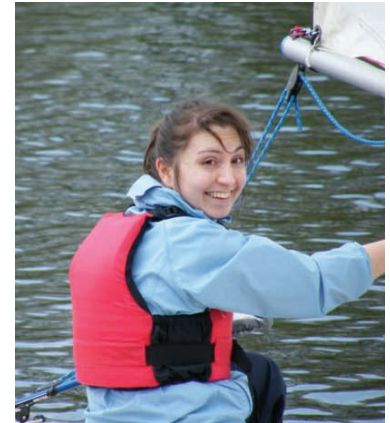
Part 1 of the survey asked respondents to rate the titles on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) as outlets for OHP publications in terms of (i) the journal's overall contribution to OHP, (ii) theoretical rigor, (iii) methodological rigor, and (iv) relevance to practice. Part 2 asked respondents to place the journals into three categories: OHP-research journal, allied-discipline journal that publishes OHP research, and practitioner journal. Respondents were asked to rate only the journals with which they were familiar.

The survey was distributed online. An invitation to participate and frequent reminders were sent via the EA-OHP, SOHP, and Academy of Management Organizational Behavior Division mailing lists as well as through the SOHP and EA-OHP newsletters. The survey remained active for 6 months. In total, 102 responses were returned, of which 65 (63%) were useable (the remainder were deleted due to non-completion). Respondents' tenure in their current organizations ranged from 1 to 31 years, with a mean of 7.05 ( $SD = 6.63$ ). Their involvement in OHP research, education, or practice ranged from 1 to 39 years, with a mean of 9.02 ( $SD = 9.02$ ).

### Results

Because respondents could only rate journals with which they were familiar, there was a considerable percentage of missing data (between 21.54% and 98.45%). Respondents' geographical distribution was balanced: 45.1% listed European affiliations, while 41.2% listed a U.S. affiliation, with a small number (5.9%) listing other locations such as Canada, Mexico, Australia, and Africa (the remaining respondents listed no identifying information).

(Continued on page 14)



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## Identifying Publication Outlets in OHP (cont'd)

(Continued from page 13)

When examining overall contribution to OHP, it was important to take into account not only respondents' ratings of a particular title, but also the number of respondents who had rated that title (a measure of familiarity or the journal's reach). To achieve this, we devised a weighting scheme based on the standardized mean rating ( $M$ ) and standardized number of respondents who scored a particular title ( $N$ ),  $M + M \times N$  (called the combined measure or  $CM$ ). We also applied a cut-off of a minimum of 10 respondents rating each title, which resulted in 36 journals included in the analyses (shown with an asterisk in Appendix 1; see the previous page for the web site URL). To assess the strength of the relationship between familiarity and ratings, we correlated  $M$  with  $N$  and found  $r = .34$  ( $p < .05$ ), which supports the case for weighting the scores by the number of people who rated a particular journal. (Readers can also view raw scores in Appendix 2, available at <http://sohp-online.org/V72009Appendix2.pdf>.) Table 1 presents the 20 journals with the highest scores for overall contribution to OHP based on this combined measure, along with number of respondents, means,  $SD$ , sums of all ratings, and  $SE$ .

**Table 1.** The 20 most highly rated titles on overall contribution to OHP, based on the  $CM$  score, and their rankings on theoretical and methodological rigor and relevance to practice (based on the  $M$ ).

	Overall contribution (OC) to OHP						Rankings			
	$N$	$M$	$SD$	Sum	$SE$	$CM$	OC (CM)	TR (M)	MR (M)	RP (M)
<i>J of Occupational Health Psychology</i>	51	4.7	0.6	241	0.1	6.0	1	3=	5=	2
<i>Work &amp; Stress</i>	49	4.6	0.6	226	0.1	5.5	2	6=	5=	3
<i>J of Applied Psychology</i>	52	3.6	0.8	189	0.2	3.3	3	1	1	9=
<i>European J of Work &amp; Organizational Psychology</i>	38	3.9	1.0	147	0.1	2.8	4	11=	10=	4=
<i>J of Occupational &amp; Organizational Psychology</i>	37	3.8	0.8	140	0.2	2.6	5	3=	3=	6=
<i>Scandinavian J of Work, Environment &amp; Health</i>	23	4.0	0.6	92	0.2	2.0	6	5	3=	9=
<i>J of Organizational Behavior</i>	37	3.5	1.0	130	0.2	1.9	7=	6=	5=	11=
<i>J of Vocational Behavior</i>	35	3.6	0.8	125	0.1	1.9	7=	9=	8=	15=
<i>International J of Stress Management</i>	23	3.9	0.9	89	0.2	1.7	9	18	18=	11=
<i>Accident Analysis &amp; Prevention</i>	20	3.8	1.0	76	0.3	1.4	10	19=	18=	1
<i>J of Safety Research</i>	12	4.1	0.7	49	0.1	1.3	11	15=	14=	4=
<i>J of Occupational &amp; Environmental Medicine</i>	22	3.6	0.7	78	0.1	1.0	12	19=	18=	17=
<i>Occupational &amp; Environmental Medicine</i>	14	3.7	0.7	52	0.3	0.8	13	15=	12=	19=
<i>Applied Psychology: An International Review</i>	33	3.1	0.8	102	0.2	0.7	14	13=	14=	15=
<i>Stress &amp; Health</i>	12	3.7	1.1	44	0.2	0.5	15=	8	14=	11=
<i>Academy of Management J</i>	45	2.7	1.1	122	0.2	0.5	15=	2	2	14
<i>International J of Occupational &amp; Environmental Health</i>	14	3.6	1.0	50	0.2	0.5	15=	9=	8=	6=
<i>American J of Public Health</i>	15	3.5	0.8	52	0.2	0.4	18	15=	12=	6=
<i>Human Relations</i>	28	3.0	0.7	85	0.1	0.3	19=	13=	17	19=
<i>Health Psychology</i>	19	3.3	0.9	62	0.1	0.3	19=	11=	10=	17=

Note.  $N$  = number of respondents who scored that particular journal;  $M$  = mean ratings on a 1-5 scale, with standard deviations ( $SD$ ); Sum = sum of scores of all ratings;  $SE$  = standard error;  $CM$  = combined measure; TR = theoretical rigor; MR = methodological rigor; RP = relevance to practice. Rankings on OC were based on the  $CM$ ; rankings on TR, MR, and RP were based on  $M$ . *Stress & Health* was scored by 9 respondents on TR, MR, and RP, but was included here because it was scored by >10 respondents on OC.

We then examined these 20 titles in terms of theoretical rigor, methodological rigor, and relevance to practice as rated by the respondents, and ranked them on the basis of their mean ratings (see Table 1). Appendix 2 (which can be viewed at <http://sohp-online.org/V72009Appendix2.pdf>) shows the raw data for theoretical and methodological rigor, and relevance to practice (number of respondents who rated each title, mean ratings,  $SD$ , sums of all scores, and  $SE$ ). These rankings do not represent the highest mean ratings on these measures out of all the titles considered, but only the rankings for the 20 titles highest in overall contribution to OHP.

We also asked respondents to place the journals with which they were familiar into three groups. Table 2 reports the percentages of respondents who categorized the journals into OHP research journals, allied discipline journals that publish OHP research, and practitioner journals. Perhaps due to the length of the survey, the percentage of missing data for this part of the survey was high and thus we decided to use overall contribution to OHP (as in Part 1), rather than the OHP research journal category (as in Part 2), as an indicator of the 'core' OHP journals. Finally, we asked respondents to list any additional journals that did not appear in the survey. Twenty-seven titles were suggested (available from the authors).

(Continued on page 15)



## Identifying Publication Outlets in OHP (cont'd)

(Continued from page 14)

Table 2. Categorization of journals into OHP research journals, allied discipline journals that publish OHP research, and practitioner journals. (Only those sorted by at least 10% of the respondents are shown, as reported in parentheses.)

OHP research journals	Allied discipline journals that publish OHP research	
<i>J of Occupational Health Psychology</i> (43%)	<i>J of Applied Psychology</i> (35%)	<i>Health Psychology</i> (17%)
<i>Work &amp; Stress</i> (41%)	<i>Academy of Management J</i> (34%)	<i>J of Business Psychology</i> (16%)
<i>Scandinavian J of Work, Environment &amp; Health</i> (20%)	<i>Academy of Management Review</i> (33%)	<i>American J of Public Health</i> (15%)
<i>European J of Work &amp; Organizational Psychol.</i> (19%)	<i>Personnel Psychology</i> (28%)	<i>European J of Work &amp; Org. Psychology</i> (15%)
<i>International J of Stress Management</i> (17%)	<i>Applied Psychology: An International Review</i> (26%)	<i>Human Factors</i> (15%)
<i>Stress &amp; Health</i> (16%)	<i>J of Organizational Behavior</i> (25%)	<i>J of Occupational Psychology</i> (15%)
<i>Int. J of Occupational &amp; Environmental Health</i> (14%)	<i>J of Vocational Behavior</i> (25%)	<i>Human Performance</i> (14%)
<i>J of Occupational &amp; Organizational Psychology</i> (13%)	<i>Human Relations</i> (25%)	<i>Leadership Quarterly</i> (14%)
<i>J of Applied Psychology</i> (12%)	<i>Psychological Bulletin</i> (25%)	<i>Research in Organizational Behavior</i> (13%)
<i>J of Safety Research</i> (12%)	<i>Org. Behavior &amp; Human Decision Processes</i> (25%)	<i>J of Occupational &amp; Environ. Medicine</i> (12%)
<i>J of Occupational &amp; Environmental Medicine</i> (11%)	<i>J of Management</i> (23%)	<i>Psychological Methods</i> (12%)
<i>Occupational &amp; Environmental Medicine</i> (10%)	<i>J of Occupational &amp; Org. Psychology</i> (23%)	<i>Scandinavian J of Work, Environ. &amp; Health</i> (12%)
	<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i> (21%)	<i>American J of Epidemiology</i> (11%)
	<i>American Psychologist</i> (20%)	<i>Human Resource Management</i> (11%)
<b>Practitioner journals</b>	<i>Organizational Research Methods</i> (19%)	<i>Occupational &amp; Environmental Medicine</i> (11%)
<i>American Psychologist</i> (11%)	<i>J of Personality &amp; Social Psychology</i> (18%)	

### Discussion

The survey results indicate that the three most highly rated journals in terms of their overall contribution to OHP were the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *Work & Stress*, and the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. The *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, the *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, the *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, the *International Journal of Stress Management*, and *Accident Analysis & Prevention* were also among the top ten for their overall contribution to OHP, and most were also classed as OHP research journals.

In terms of theoretical and methodological rigor for those 'core' OHP journals, the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and the *Academy of Management Journal* were placed first, followed by a cluster of titles more specific to OHP and work psychology (e.g., the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *Work & Stress*, the *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, the *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, the *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, and the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*).

With respect to relevance to practice, the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *Work & Stress*, the *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, and the *Journal of Safety Research* were most highly ranked by the respondents.

When trying to identify the best outlets for our work, it is important to balance journal quality with the journal's degree of focus on OHP. As one of the respondents succinctly commented, "[t]he critical challenge in this kind of survey is separating the 'core' OHP journals from the 'good' journals." The titles that were regarded as having much to contribute to OHP are not always the ones that are most highly ranked in terms of theoretical or methodological rigor, or relevance to practice. As anticipated, the main outlets for OHP research were confirmed as the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* and *Work & Stress*; both were ranked highly in terms of reputation and quality.

More broadly, OHP publication outlets seem to consist of a group of titles that are more generic but do not specialize in OHP, as well as journals that are specific to OHP. The former consists of journals related to work psychology (e.g., the *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*), some reputable journals in psychology and the social sciences (i.e., the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, the *Academy of Management Journal*), and some specific to medicine, occupational health, and safety (e.g., *Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, the *Journal of Safety Research*). This stands as an acknowledgement that OHP lies in the interface of a number of broader disciplines such as applied psychology, health psychology, occupational psychology, occupational health, public health, and management.

The survey did not seek to assess journal quality - objective ways to achieve that already exist and are commonly used. Rather, it sought to identify the journals used by OHP scholars and relied on their views and familiarity with these titles (also reflected in the similarity of the ratings). The results of this opinion survey can be used to inform scholars' publishing strategies, but would not be appropriate for assessing the quality of the journals surveyed.

(Continued on page 16)



## Identifying Publication Outlets in OHP (cont'd)

(Continued from page 15)

Inevitably, this small study suffers from a number of limitations. Most importantly, we should bear in mind that no significance tests were performed on the data. We do not know (i) whether the differences in ratings are significant and (ii) whether the results represent the views of the larger population of OHP researchers or just of the few who completed the survey. For example, in considering that the US-based *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* was ranked above the UK-based *Work & Stress*, we may be inclined to take small differences in the ratings at face value; this, however, would detract from the potential contribution of the survey. Further limitations include the small and self-selected sample, respondents' selectivity and unfamiliarity with the journals surveyed, and the fact that only English-language journals were considered. Future investigations can seek to make the assessment more rigorous when distinguishing between the core OHP journals, and examining the significance of differences between rankings, and thus boosting the reliability of the findings. It is important to note that had the journals been ranked on the basis of means or sums rather than weighted by the number of respondents who ranked a particular title, the results would have been slightly different. We decided to use the combined measure as a way to balance the available information. Not all OHP researchers may agree on the importance of taking into account respondents' familiarity with the journals - alternatives may exist and we welcome suggestions.

To our knowledge, this small opinion survey was the first attempt to identify the publication outlets used by OHP scholars, both those specific to OHP as well as those that publish OHP research. We hope that the results of this study will be of value to OHP researchers and practitioners alike, and invite colleagues to share their views through the *Newsletter*.

We would like to thank Robert Sinclair and Toon Taris for their constructive and invaluable comments on this survey.

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