EDITORIAL

25 Years of the EAOHP: Tracking Trends and Developments[1]

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[1] The views expressed in this Editorial are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the stance of *Work & Stress* or their board members.

Founded in 1999, the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology (EAOHP) has grown into a central organisation for researchers and practitioners seeking to understand and improve worker health, safety, and wellbeing. Over the past 25 years, the Academy has promoted scientific research in occupational health psychology (OHP), fostered interdisciplinary collaboration among OHP scholars, shaped European research agendas on work and health, and increasingly influenced occupational health policy and practice.

To mark its 20th anniversary in 2020, the Academy published a forward-looking editorial outlining anticipated developments and challenges in the field (Iavicoli et al., 2020). It identified four key themes expected to shape the future of occupational health psychology (OHP): (1) *demographic changes in the labour market,* including the ageing workforce, increased female participation, and the vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers; (2) the *emergence of new working arrangements and technologies,* such as gig and platform work, remote and hybrid working models, and automation-driven job displacement; (3) the *need for more robust regulatory frameworks, and the development, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based interventions;* and (4) *alignment of OHP with the United Nations sustainable development goals,* particularly those related to decent work, mental health, equity, and sustainability.

Since then, the world of work has undergone a period of rapid and unpredictable change, with an increase in the rates of poor mental health (WHO, 2022) and large proportions of the adult workforce worldwide in the informal work sector (IMF, 2025). The COVID-19 pandemic catalysed widespread shifts in work organisation, management, and expectations (Bailey & Breslin, 2021). Meanwhile, technological acceleration, political instability, and the climate crisis have intensified longstanding concerns around job security, inclusion, and wellbeing (Bui et al., 2024; Schulte et al., 2020). In this context, the 2022 and 2024 EAOHP conferences provide a valuable opportunity to reflect on how the field has

responded to the challenges identified in 2020 - and whether and how it has adapted to newly emerging realities.

This editorial offers a brief thematic synthesis of the past five years of development in OHP, informed primarily by these two conferences. We identify three major areas of attention and consider how policy, practice, and research intersect across each theme. The editorial concludes by outlining five priority areas for the discipline moving forward, building on insights from both empirical findings and theoretical debates.

Five years on: Themes that shaped the field

The themes identified in the 2020 editorial (Iavicoli et al., 2020) provide a useful benchmark for assessing progress in the field. The three key areas explored below (changing working life, shifting workforce demographics and interventions to support wellbeing) correspond closely with the anticipated developments in that editorial.

Notably, the prediction regarding the transformation of work through technology and remote arrangements has been not only realised but accelerated, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The emphasis on psychosocial risk regulation and policy engagement has also matured significantly. However, the call to align OHP more fully with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly around environmental sustainability, has not been met with the same level of uptake. Likewise, while attention to diversity and inclusion has grown, the field still lacks consistent application of intersectional approaches. These observations suggest that while progress has been made, gaps remain - particularly with conceptual integration and implementation into practice and governance.

Changing working life: Digitalisation, robotisation, algorithmic control and insecurity. The transformation of working life through digitalisation and automation was anticipated in the 2020 editorial, but the pace and scale of change have exceeded

expectations. The 2022 EAOHP conference included numerous presentations on pandemic-induced shifts, including widespread remote and hybrid working, boundary blurring between home and work, and technostress (Teoh et al., 2022). Researchers explored how these shifts affected psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, and productivity, particularly in sectors with limited digital infrastructure or support.

By 2024, the discourse had evolved to critically examine the rise of algorithmic management and precarious work in the gig economy (Frost et al., 2024). Tahira Probst's keynote introduced the Future of Work trends termed STARA (Smart Technologies, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Algorithms), with the need to acknowledge both the potential benefits (e.g., robotics reducing exposure to hazardous work and new roles) and risks such as job displacement, intensification, surveillance, and precarity. Symposiums in this year by Van Fossen and also Bazzoli illustrated how gig workers navigate unstable income, lack of social protections, and automated performance monitoring. While a cross-country study highlighted distinctions between "global occupational insecurity" (i.e., fears that entire job sectors may vanish) and "content occupational insecurity", where specific roles or tasks may change. This psychological toll of automation-related uncertainty, combined with weak protections in atypical employment, underscores the need for OHP to engage more fully with employment law, technology ethics, and macroeconomic trends.

Workforce demographics and inclusion. The evolving composition of the workforce has introduced new opportunities and challenges for OHP. While the 2020 editorial highlighted ageing and feminisation trends, recent research has placed greater emphasis on migration, intersectionality, and the systemic barriers faced by underrepresented groups.

At the 2022 conference, researchers explored disparities in job quality across European countries, revealing how contract types, sectoral norms, and national policy environments influence workers' experiences of stress and support. Several studies this year

(highlighted the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on low-income, precariously employed, and migrant workers, who were often excluded from occupational health protections or lacked the flexibility to work remotely. In addition, early discussions around intersectionality began to emerge, particularly in relation to how gender and migration status intersect with employment insecurity. The link to wider political factors was also made in Hans de Witte's keynote, which explained how job insecurity can influence socio-political attitudes, including support from far-right populist movements. Therefore, to gain a comprehensive understanding of precarity and its impact on people's life, concepts such as job insecurity and unemployment should be part of precarious work as highlighted in several presentations.

The 2024 conference foregrounded the experiences of migrant and marginalised workers, calling attention to psychosocial risks linked to discrimination, cultural exclusion, and language barriers. These risks are compounded for individuals with intersecting minoritised identities yet remain underexplored in OHP research. Despite growing awareness, intersectionality remains underutilised with demographic variables often examined in isolation.

Interventions to support wellbeing: Implementation, ethics, and impact. Both the 2022 and 2024 conferences revealed a growing focus on the complexity of delivering sustainable wellbeing interventions in organisational settings. Presentations at the 2022 conference highlighted examples of participatory mental health programmes and the use of Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) to support organisational readiness for change (Teoh et al., 2022). These sessions underscored that interventions were most effective when integrated with organisational values, leadership support, and contextual tailoring.

The 2024 conference deepened this discussion by exploring why many interventions fail to generate lasting impact (Frost et al., 2024). Several case studies showed that wellbeing

initiatives often lack sufficient alignment with organisational culture or are implemented without clear mechanisms for follow-through. In particular, the HERO (Healthy and Resilient Organisations) model presented by Marisa Salanova in her keynote demonstrated a systems-based approach to embedding wellbeing at all levels—from leadership and design to everyday practice. Several sessions highlighted concerns about over-relying on individual-focused solutions such as mindfulness or resilience training which risk displacing structural reform by placing the burden on employees to adapt. Further symposiums around participatory interventions emphasised the need for an integrated approach considering both safety and health, and organisations' responsibility to redesign work environments to diminish employee wellbeing impairments, and provide employee autonomy to balance job characteristics with personal needs. This echoed a broader call for a shift toward more holistic and ethically grounded approaches to intervention design and evaluation, rooted in both scientific evidence and participatory engagement.

Digital interventions—especially those adapted for hybrid or remote teams—were another area of innovation in 2024. However, questions around inclusivity, digital fatigue, and equity in access were prominent, suggesting that while technology offers new tools, it does not remove the need for thoughtful implementation and evaluation.

Lastly, macro-level interventions in terms of policy and regulation received more attention. Both conferences featured sessions on national and international responses to psychosocial risks, including EU directives and frameworks on telework and the platform workers, the global implementation of ISO 45003, Finland's national mental health strategy, and Latin American initiatives such as Mexico's NOM-035. The need for large organisations to disclose information in line with the European Sustainability Reporting Standards reflect their broader societal impact and was a topic of interest among practitioners at the practice forum of the 2024 Conference. Despite these advances, challenges persist in enforcement and

compliance - especially within multinational corporations operating across countries with varying regulatory standards.

Looking forward: Future directions

Evolution in OHP research indicates that the following five key areas demand sustained attention:

1. *Technological change and working life.* With some estimates that only a third of work will be performed by human labour due to the impact of AI and robotics (WEF, 2025), OHP must engage proactively with the ethical, organisational, and psychological implications of algorithmic management. This includes assessing how AI systems and robotisation affect autonomy, decision-making, workload, and accountability, but also how AI may detect psychosocial risks in real time through the assessment of working conditions data. The expected growth of data analysts and engineering roles involved in managing this process raises the possibility of human factors being neglected, while errors within AI systems and algorithmic management necessitate new supervisory roles for humans and in developing redundancy systems. Collaboration with computer scientists, ethicists, and labour rights advocates will be essential to shaping responsible AI use (Elliott et al., 2021).

   The widespread use of monitoring tools brings with it stress and pressure from constant surveillance (OECD, 2025b). There are also specific groups vulnerable to bias embedded within AI systems (e.g., ethnic minorities) or at risk of being excluded from AI-related professions due to underrepresentation where the biggest growth is anticipated (e.g. women in IT technology) (OECD, 2025a). Digitalisation, robotisation and AI will continue to affect all work and non-work periods. Hence, OHP should address hazards and needs along the whole working-life continuum,

including job precarity, upskilling and reskilling.

2. *Intersectional and inclusive research*. There is a pressing need to move beyond demographic checklists and engage with intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological framework. Future studies should consider how gender, race, migration status, disability, and class intersect to shape workplace experiences and outcomes. To support inclusive research, it is important to be aware of challenges that arise from the broader societal, economic, and political context and test whether current theoretical frameworks apply across different contexts or whether revision is needed to capture the complexity of different work contexts and the wider social determinants of health (Benach et al., 2014). This not only requires greater representation amongst participants in research studies, but also more diverse perspectives and backgrounds amongst researchers and funders. Importantly, marginalised and precariously employed workers often lack the organisational power and security to voice concerns about their working conditions. Many actively suppress these concerns due to fear of retaliation, reputational damage, or job loss. These dynamics underscore the need for approaches that enable safe expression of concerns and the inclusion of often-overlooked perspectives in OHP research and intervention design. With many countries in the EU and beyond adopting more populist policies, including stricter policies against migrants, that disempower inclusive workplaces, the need to represent and speak for all workers is imperative.

3. *Improved interventions for impact*. To ensure interventions produce lasting change, OHP researchers must invest in implementation science. This includes co-designing interventions with stakeholders, identifying facilitators and barriers, and using methods to assess real-world impact including longitudinal designs, realist evaluation, and participatory designs. Crucially, there needs to be an awareness and willingness to

move beyond piecemeal and individual-focused interventions, and take a more proactive approach to identify, manage, challenge and mitigate against the root causes that underpin the challenges workers face.

4. *Ecological Challenges and Sustainable Work*. OHP has so far not focused sufficiently on ecological challenges such as climate-related occupational risks despite being mentioned in the 2020 editorial. Yet climate anxiety, extreme weather, and shifts in industrial practices all affect worker wellbeing. The EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021–2027 placed ecological challenges at the centre of occupational health concerns, emphasising the need to anticipate and manage changes arising from green, digital, and demographic transitions. Researchers should explore how climate change intersects with job quality, occupational safety, and future workforce planning. For example, studies have explored job quality in the context of climate change and sustainable commuting (Parent-Thiron et al., 2024), and the implications of the transition from brown to green jobs for worker representation (Zwysen, 2024). Additionally, conflict-affected populations and workers are exposed to a multitude of risks that affect their physical and mental wellbeing. More research is needed to examine these groups and support the design of appropriate interventions.

Finally, sustainable work refers to achieving living and working conditions that support people in engaging and remaining in work throughout an extended working life (Eurofound, 2021). Post pandemic, renewed interest in mental health and greater recognition of work-life balance as key to decent work have emerged. A life-course perspective should be adopted to promote sustainable work, removing barriers to participation, and providing appropriate support taking into account individual circumstances.

5. *Bridging research, policy and practice*. OHP must continue to expand its role in

shaping and evaluating policy. Many positive initiatives have taken place in the regulation and policy arena over the past years. Notably, 17 out of the 27 European Union Member States have now introduced regulation on work-related psychosocial risks and mental health at work. EAOHP has provided input in several high-level events and is coordinating with other OHP organisations worldwide to underline the need for clearer legislation and policies. More studies are needed to evaluate the implementation and enforcement of regulation and policies. This includes working with regulators, trade unions, employers, and international governance organisations, such as the International Labour Organization, to ensure that psychosocial risk management frameworks are both evidence-based and enforceable.

Conclusion

The 2022 and 2024 EAOHP conferences highlight a discipline that is increasingly mature, policy-engaged, and reflective. From tackling digital precarity and wellbeing intervention fatigue to engaging with diversity and regulatory complexity, OHP has risen to many of the challenges foreseen in 2020. However new frontiers—including AI governance, climate adaptation, and inclusive intervention design—require a more ambitious, interdisciplinary approach.

As the EAOHP grows beyond its 25th anniversary, it remains uniquely positioned to lead these conversations and forge connections between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. The future of work will be shaped not just by technological or economic shifts, but by the values and frameworks we bring to bear on them. OHP must continue to evolve as a science and a practice, dedicated to equity, dignity, and wellbeing for all workers.

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