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DIPARTIMENTO DI FORMAZIONE,
LINGUE, INTERCULTURA,
LETTERATURE E PSICOLOGIA



Division 1

Associazione
Italiana
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Two-Days International Conference

*Psychology of Selection and Assessment: Calling, Meaning, Purpose, and Sustainable Development.
Perspectives and Imperatives for Decent, Dignified, Worthy, Healthy Work and Life*
Second Edition

“IAAP Special Project Decent Work for All”

Florence, November 4 and 6, 2024



Uniwersytet
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UNITWIN NETWORK
Life designing interventions
(counseling, guidance, education)
for decent work and
sustainable development



Key Conclusions by

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Maureen Kenny (Boston College, USA),

Annamaria Di Fabio (University of Florence, Italy)

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Work as a human activity and associated phenomena is currently experiencing important changes and transformations, in many different facets:

- 1. In the context in which it occurs:** Technological change and more, specifically digitalization, globalization of markets and business competition, climate and ecology, changes in the labor markets, in terms of volume and features of different sectors (e.g.: the volume of jobs in the primary sector, industry, construction, services, ...)
- 2. In the workers:** Demography (aging of the population, women's increasing presence in workforce...), migrations (increasing cultural diversity in companies---), diversity within companies (in terms of functional capabilities, qualifications and education level, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, values, etc.)
- 3. In terms of the work system and work activities:** Important changes in jobs and tasks (e.g.: transformation of occupations job destruction and new jobs emerging; task changes requiring new skills and competencies, more need for cooperation between humans and non-human agents such as robots, cobots and IA systems at work. New ways of work organization and management (e.g. re-engineering of business processes, lean production, agile organizations, just-in-time production, etc.)
- 4. In terms of work arrangements and working conditions:** Multiple types of work flexibility in terms of time and schedules, place, mode (e.g., hybrid and remote work), emergent risks for health and safety, ...), incorporation of AI algorithms, and the growing disappearance of "the job" as a fixed bundle of tasks.
- 5. In terms of industrial relations:** Types of employment contracts, platform work promoting either autonomous and free-lance work or flexible employment contracts, gig economy, changes in the role of the unions, etc.



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All these transformations are producing changes in employment, and a trend towards the **increased dualization of the labor market** has been noted in many countries. On the one side, an important volume of jobs is precarious, informal, unsafe, poorly paid and compensated, and putting at risk physical and mental health. On the other side, there are rich and complex jobs requiring professional qualifications and competencies with good compensation and wages, good social security and mainly included in primary labor markets. These jobs are not free from stress and health and safety risks, especially the psychosocial emergent ones. In this landscape of polarization, the in-between jobs with good quality, stability, security, and safety are reduced, and several authors have noted that the ‘precarization’ (Blustein et al., 2024) of those jobs in the midst of numerous threats to social, economic and environmental stability may have an impact in decreasing the middle class in our societies and increasing lower social classes, which may lead to social unrest, and higher demands of social subsidies (Allan et al., 2021; Carr et al., 2024).

All these phenomena raise new challenges for designing and implementing work environments, work systems, and jobs that may be sustainable, decent, dignified, and ensure health and safety. Moreover, on the other side, good quality jobs need to balance productivity and high performance with the need for work-personal and social life conciliation, the opportunities for flourishing and working in purposeful jobs that align with the worker’s purpose in life, and create a meaningful and worthy work in a human environment.



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All these transformations require the attention of researchers and practitioners in Work and Organizational Psychology to contribute to sustainable and developmental work and also the context in which it takes place. Research is especially needed to improve and help to change and adapt many aspects of professional practice (Peiró & Martínez-Tur, 2022), paying special attention to the main services and functions in which our discipline pays an important contribution to the effectiveness and humanization of companies and workplaces. Selection and assessment, as well as career support and guidance, are areas in which research to promote innovative practices that may contribute to sustainability are clearly needed.

The contributions to this Conference clearly show how the vast changes in the workplace have stimulated cutting-edge research among scholars across Italy and beyond. The varied research contributions reported in this conference address the structure and context of the workplace in a changing society with a focus on:



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1. Clarifying the mission of the work organization to attract workers and promote their sense of meaning and purpose for sustainable career development
2. Assessing the use of economic and other incentives to reward workers, complementing attention to work meaning and purpose and reducing those work burdens that are not aligned with worker strengths and undermine their sense of meaning and purpose and career sustainability
3. Fostering inclusion and maximizing job entry and retention for persons with intellectual disabilities, migrant workers, and older workers
4. Considering the impact of technology and artificial intelligence in the modern workplace and how to integrate and design technological environments that center human well-being and multiple perspectives on human interaction.
5. Presenting an advanced perspective linked to sustainable development as the fourth paradigm for careers in the 21st century (Hartung & Di Fabio, 2024): sustainable careers include decent, dignified, worthy, healthy work and lives, also embracing an inclusive perspective of respect for the nature as a whole (animals, plants, and the planet) incorporating future generations and future life on the Earth.



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These research themes, along with others presented in this conference, call for changes in the tools and practices of work and organizational psychology. For example:

1. There is a need to carefully consider the criteria for worker selection and work assessment that are aligned with the mission of the organization and that promote worker success, purpose and career sustainability over time. Thus, the criteria for the effectiveness of professional practice need to extend beyond performance and productivity and must include features of decent work and those promoting dignity at work. Workers' well-being and sustainable careers in this advanced perspective also need to be considered.
2. There is also a need to design new tools and strategies in the workplace that simultaneously advance the mission/goals of the organization, the well-being of workers, and the sustainability of careers and the environment. With a focus on preparing the next generation to embrace work with a sense of purpose and concern for equity, inclusion, sustainability and well-being, we need to promote a broad vision of decent education (Kenny et al., 2023) as a precursor to decent work.
3. The diversity of workers in the labor market requires more attention to the new professional models, strategies, and tools for assessment and intervention to encompass the need for effective professional services aiming to promote inclusion and equity in the organizations.



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As Wayne Cascio (1995) pointed out, all these changes challenge the researchers and professionals to pay attention that most of the well-developed and validated technological armamentarium our profession has developed across many decades may not be any more of use, given the changes of the nature of work, its context, conditions, and arrangements.

In this situation, cooperation between researchers and practitioners is more needed than ever as new and innovative models, tools, and strategies are required for meaningful and effective assessment and intervention in professional practice.

The Two-days international conference on “Psychology of Selection and Assessment: Calling, Meaning, Purpose, and Sustainable Development. Perspectives and Imperatives for Decent, Dignified, Worthy, Healthy Work and Life” (Second Edition) has been an excellent opportunity to share rich and important innovative development both in research and professional practice, promoting the exchange of information, dialogue, and cooperation among researchers and practitioners and also the transdisciplinary dialogue that is crucial to this endeavor.



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This event belongs to the International Conferences series for the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) Special Project "Promoting Decent Work for All".

Sincere thanks to the Associations that traditionally support the event:

- IAAP Division 1 Work and Organizational Psychology
- UNESCO Chair “Lifelong guidance and Counseling” (University of Wroclaw, Poland) and UNITWIN International Network “Life designing interventions lifelong for decent work and sustainable development”
- Italian Association of Psychology (AIP - Associazione Italiana di Psicologia).

The third edition of the event is planned for November 2025.



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