

Psychologists' perspectives of their training and pathways to registration

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Abstract

Training and registration of psychologists in Australia has undergone significant change in the last two decades. In particular, the manner in which psychologists obtain an Area of Practice Endorsement, and how this is differentially recognised by governmental bodies has been controversial. Despite ongoing consultation regarding improvements to training, registration and the Area of Practice Endorsement system, there is a paucity of empirical research about psychologists attitudes towards these changes and the ways in which psychologists in Australia are recognised. The current study utilises a mixed methods methodology to quantitatively and qualitatively examine Australian psychologists perceptions of training, Area of Practice Endorsements, and the Medicare Better Access to Mental Health Scheme. One sentence summarizing the main result (with the words “**here we show**” or their equivalent). Two or three sentences explaining what the **main result** adds to previous knowledge. One or two sentences to put the results into a more **general context**. Two or three sentences to provide a **broad perspective**, readily comprehensible to a scientist in any discipline.

Keywords: area of practice endorsement, aoep, mixed methods, Australian psychologists

Word count: X

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Methods

Participants

There were 340 participants in the quantitative component of this research. There were 290 females, 48 males and 2 participants who did not provide their gender or did not identify with a binary gender. There were 278 participants with General Registration, 1 Non-Practicing Registration and 60 with Provisional Registration. There were 77 participants that identified that they were Psychology Board of Australia approved supervisors. Other descriptive statistics are provided for age (Table 1)), Area of Practice Endorsement (Table 2)), training pathway (Table 3)), years of experience (Table 4)), work setting (Table 5)), and client age (Table 6)).

There were 107 participants that provided their contact details for participation in the qualitative component of this research. While attempting to balance the inclusion of a variety of psychologists with different training, approved Area of Practice Endorsement and professional experiences, 29 participants were contacted for participation with 15 participants responding and ultimately participating.

Material

A list of questions used in the online questionnaire (including variable name and question), and an example of the interview schedule are both available in the Appendix.

Procedure

For the purpose of our study, we invited participants to complete a series of questions about the Better Access Scheme, perspectives about training to be a psychologist in Australia, and attitudes towards Area of Practice Endorsement in Australia. At the end of

this questionnaire, participants were offered the opportunity to provide their contact details to researchers so that they could be contacted to participate in an interview. There was no way to match a participants responses on the questionnaire to their interview data.

Participants that provided their contact details for inclusion in the qualitative component of this research were contacted via email to confirm their inclusion. Once confirmed participants selected a time of their convenience and the interviews were conducted by one of the three authors via Zoom. Interviews took approximately 20 to 60 minutes. Stuff about probing questions...

Data analysis

We used R (Version 4.0.3; R Core Team, 2020) and the R-packages *dplyr* (Version 1.0.2; Wickham et al., 2020), *ggplot2* (Version 3.3.2; Wickham, 2016), *knitr* (Version 1.30; Xie, 2015), *lattice* (Version 0.20.41; Sarkar, 2008), *nFactors* (Version 2.4.1; Raiche & Magis, 2020), *papaja* (Version 0.1.0.9997; Aust & Barth, 2020), *psych* (Version 2.0.12; Revelle, 2020), *stringr* (Version 1.4.0; Wickham, 2019), *tidyr* (Version 1.1.2; Wickham, 2020), and *tinylab* (Version 0.1.0; Barth, 2020) for all our analyses. Readers can access the R code used to generate this manuscript at GitHub.

Results

Results for the this study are broken down into three categories of perspectives on (1) Training, (2) AoPE and (3) the Better Access Scheme. As the quantitative study included 59 questions, with nine demographic categories, a total of 9*59 independent analyses would be required to compare all differences. Rather than blindly analysing differences in response patterns (which would likely result in a high chance of Type I and Type II errors), statistical analyses will focus on those trends identified in previous literature, those items in which high variability is evident (often supported by high standard deviations) or there

is a clear pattern of response (often supported by extreme skew or kurtosis values)

Readers can access visualisations of the response patterns on the Shiny App developed for this research project.

Perspectives of Training

Descriptive statistics for the items relating to perspectives about psychology training are contained in Table 7). Across all participants, the most significant variability related to whether participants were considering undertaking an Area of Practice Endorsement bridging program ($m = 3.01$, $SD = 1.53$). There was a strong agreement across participants that existing training prepares psychologists appropriately for ethical challenges ($m = 3.52$, $SD = 1.25$), but there was more variability concerning preparation for legal matters ($m = 3.98$, $SD = 1.06$).

Perspectives of AoPE

Perspectives of the Better Access Scheme

Discussion

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Table 1

Participants by Age

Age	n	Percentage
18 - 24	5	1.47
25 - 34	121	35.59
35 - 44	105	30.88
45 - 54	65	19.12
55 - 64	37	10.88
65 - 74	7	2.06

Table 2

Participants by AoPE

Area of Practice Endorsement	n	Percentage
Clinical	25	7.35
Clinical,Health	1	0.29
Clinical,Organisational	1	0.29
Community	1	0.29
Counselling	9	2.65
Ed&Dev	24	7.06
Ed&Dev,Counselling	1	0.29
Forensic	1	0.29
Health	5	1.47
None	249	73.24
Organisational	4	1.18
S&E	4	1.18
NA	15	4.41

Table 3

Participants by Training Pathway

Training Pathway	n	Percentage
4+2	143	42.06
5+1	35	10.29
DPsych	4	1.18
MPsych	124	36.47
MPsych/PhD	11	3.24
Ongoing	22	6.47
NA	1	0.29

Table 4

Participants by Years of Experience

Years of Experience	n	Percentage
0-7	141	41.47
10-15	40	11.76
15-20	34	10.00
20+	41	12.06
8-10	34	10.00
Provisional	50	14.71

Table 5

Participants by Work Setting

Work Setting	n	Percentage
Education (K-12)	51	12.06
Education (Tertiary)	22	5.20
Government	82	19.39
Non-profit	53	12.53
Private	211	49.88
NA	4	0.95

Table 6

Participants by Client Age

Client Age	n	Percentage
0-3	58	5.12
12-18	240	21.20
18-25	259	22.88
25-65	252	22.26
4-11	165	14.58
65+	156	13.78
NA	2	0.18

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Training Questions

Choosing a particular registration pathway was an easy decision for me
It was easy to find a course relating to my area of practice interest
Given the chance, I would have opted for another registration pathway
I am considering undertaking an Area of Practice Endorsement bridging program course
The length of my training has adequately prepared me for efficient practice
I was provided with enough practical experience during my training
I was provided with enough clinical supervision during my training
My training equipped me with adequate knowledge of the discipline
My training equipped me with adequate knowledge about ethical conduct
My training equipped me with adequate knowledge about legal matters
My training equipped me with adequate knowledge about professional matters
My training adequately prepared me to conduct psychological assessments
My training adequately prepared me to understand psychological assessment and measurement
My training adequately prepared me to implement intervention strategies
Because of my training I am confident conducting research
Because of my training I am confident working with people from diverse groups and cultures
My training prepared me to confidently work with clients of all ages
My training helped refine my communication skills
I am satisfied with the extent my training pathway prepared me for practice
The 4+2 internship is a satisfactory professional training pathway to becoming a psychologist
The 4+2 internship is a preferred professional training pathway to becoming a registered psychologist
The 5+1 internship is a satisfactory professional training pathway to becoming a registered psychologist
The 5+1 internship is a preferred professional training pathway to becoming a registered psychologist
Higher Degree programs are a satisfactory professional training pathway to becoming a registered psychologist
Higher Degree programs are a preferred professional training pathway to becoming a registered psychologist
There is substantial overlap between the competencies gained during training and the competencies required for practice
The 4+2 internship is a satisfactory professional training pathway to becoming a psychologist