State of the Art Review [Invited Paper]

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# Personality at Work

Joanna Ritz[1], Stephen A. Woods[2], Bart Wille[3], Sang Eun Woo[4], Annika Nübold[5],

Nadin Beckmann[6] , Reeshad Sam Dalal[7] , Zvonimir Galic[8], Brenton Wiernik[9],

Robert P. Tett[10], Jennifer Pickett[11], Neil Christiansen[12]

[1] *University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands.* [2] *Surrey Business School, University of Surrey, Guildford, United Kingdom.* [3] *Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium.* [4] *Department of Psychological Sciences, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA.* [5] *Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, Maastricht University, Maastricht, Netherlands.* [6] *School of Education, Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom.* [7] *Department of Psychology, George Mason University, Fairfax, United Kingdom.* [8] *Department of Psychology, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia.* [9] *University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA.* [10] *The University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK, USA.* [11] *Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium.* [12] *Central Michigan University, Mt Pleasant, MI, USA.*

## Abstract

Studies of personality at work have made significant contributions to theory and applied practice in work and organizational settings. This review article proposes that there are also reciprocal influences between core personality science and research on personality in work and organizations, each drawing on insights from the other. Following this tradition, the objective of this article is to review key foundations of research in a way that informs and critically reflects on state-of-the-art evidence in four main themes: (1) conceptualization and structure of personality at work, (2) personality assessment in work settings, (3) personality processes and dynamics at work, and (4) impact of situations on personaliy at work. Critically reflections on key implications, and directions for future research are presented, anticipating how the field may adapt to the changing nature of work and society.

# Keywords

### Relevance Statement

The objective of this review is to set out key tenets and foundations of research in the area of personality at work in a way that informs and critically reflects on its development, and continued contributions to core personality science. Combining input from twelve researchers in the field, the article proposes that the development of research in personality science and in the area of personality in work and organizational settings is interdependent, each drawing reciprocally on insights from the other. We aim to review key findings in well-established literatures around the conceptualisation of personality and its role in assessment at work. However, our review also presents contemporary developments examining personality dynamics and the role of situations that are advancing understanding in the literature. This positioning leads us to set out future research questions and directions, which we believe are relevant for scholars shaping and contributing to this area in the coming years, reflecting changes to work and its place in society.

### Key Insights

- Core personality science and research into personality in work settings influence each other reciprocally through their development.
- Personality has been found to be important for understanding a wide array of organizational behaviors and outcomes.
- Recent developments examining personality dynamics and situations at work are challenging and advancing research findings.
- Studies of personality at work should continue to bridge different disciplines of research, responding to changes to work and its place in society.

Personality research has made substantial contributions to literatures examining work and organizations, providing key insights into theories in work and organizational psychology and organizational behavior. The impact of studies of personality at work is also evident in practice, with personality theory, and assessments (especially psychometric assessments of traits), applied in management to support functions such as hiring, team building, succession planning, leadership, training, work design, organizational development and promotion of employee wellbeing. The scope of this impact is consistent with an intuitive sense that understanding people at work, without considering personality, would be limited.

However, the influence of personality science on research in personality at work is not *one-way*. Studies of personality at work have had a reciprocal influence, we propose, on the development of research on core personality psychology (for example,

trait psychology received much support in the 1990s from meta-analyses conducted in work and organizational psychology). The evolution of personality psychology and research on personality at work are therefore closely linked and interdependent, each drawing on insights created by the other. It is in this tradition that we approach this state-of-the-art review on personality at work. Our objective is to review key tenets and foundations of research in a way that informs and critically reflects on the current evidence base in the field. However, we also look at how new perspectives, for example in respect of personality processes and dynamics, are being advanced in research in work and organizations.

Our review is organized into four main themes: (1) conceptualization and structure of personality at work, (2) personality assessment in work settings, (3) personality processes and dynamics at work, and (4) impact of situations on personality at work. In each part, we summarize the state of the science, identify important gaps and inconsistencies drawing on research and practical perspectives. We conclude by critically reflecting on key implications, and directions for future research, anticipating how the field may adapt to the changing nature of work and its place in society.

# Conceptualization and Structure of Personality at Work

## Conceptualization of Personality

The study of personality at work from a conceptual perspective is consistent with Funder's (2001) often-cited summary of the focus of personality research more widely: "to account for individuals' characteristic patten of thought, emotion and behavior together with the mechanisms—hidden or not—behind those patterns" (Funder, 2001, p. 198). In organizational settings, research is oriented towards examining personality with the objective of understanding outcomes and psychological processes relevant to work.

Much research adopts a trait perspective on personality, drawing on taxonomies of traits to help explain criterion effects in work settings. Traits are also the foundation of psychometric instruments that are used in organizational practice to measure personality. However, the development of research on personality in work settings also serves to illustrate conceptual tensions in personality science more broadly. For example, processes of learning and cognitive-affective responses to situations frame conceptual foundations about the mechanisms that give rise to patterns of behavior thought and emotion. This in turn prompts reconceptualisation of traits as coherently linked to situations. More recently, perspectives on personality development and dynamics might be seen to challenge assumptions of stability and consistency in classical trait perspectives. These examples show that organizational research does not adopt a single conceptualisation of personality. Indeed, as research progresses, so underlying conceptual assumptions

develop and change alongside, and in this respect studies of personality at work provide insights that may be assimilated into more general personality research. In our review, we begin by focusing on traits as the dominant perspective in the field, but also highlight in later sections how conceptualisation of personality has developed.

## Higher-Order Structure: The Big Five Model

Research on personality traits in the context of work and organizational psychology has rested on the foundations of taxonomic research into personality structure (e.g., Goldberg, 1990). The emergence and gathered consensus around the Big Five structure from the lexical approach to personality structure research (Goldberg, 1990) and Five-Factor Model (FFM; McCrae & Costa, 2008) of personality traits enabled renewed interest and examination of the criterion effects of traits via seminal meta-analyses and a growing research literature since, in turn providing greater understanding of the role of personality traits in work and organizational settings (Woods et al., 2013). The utility of alternative taxonomic models in organizational assessment has typically been judged based on incremental prediction of criteria. For example, the additional sixth factor of honesty-humility in the HEXACO model has been shown to be especially relevant for criteria such as workplace delinquency and integrity (Lee et al., 2019).

Criticism of the FFM (and alternative factor models such as the HEXACO) identify a range of issues relevant to the study of personality in work settings, grounded in limitations of the factor-analytic approaches upon which they are based (e.g., Block, 1995). There also remain different perspectives about what is important in the FFM traits when they are measured or interpreted (e.g., the disctinction, relationship and comparative importance of internal identity and external reputation; Hogan & Sherman, 2020). However, in organizational psychology, these conceptual questions are weighed against the practical utility of such models in applied psychological practice.

## Facet-Level Personality Structure

Beyond the dominant higher-order personality taxonomic models, there is a variety of perspectives on how to define personality structure at narrower levels of abstraction (i.e., personality facets), examined in organizational research. The importance of understanding lower-level personality structure is underlined by the observation that *facets* (i.e., narrow 'aspects' of traits) have been found to predict work criteria incrementally above higher order factors. Conscientiousness, for example, comprises facets of dependability and achievement striving. Studies often adopt a hierarchical approach to address fundamental questions about how to organize personality factorial space. For example, the 30-facet structure of the NEO PI-R is a widely applied model in criterion validity studies in work and organizational psychology, although this likely reflects their widespread application in measurement of traits rather than any particular conceptual strength of

the model (Woods & Anderson, 2016). There are a multitude of alternative facet models, linked to personality assessment inventories (e.g., the 16PF model, the Occupational Personality Questionnaire 32-facet model, the HPI HICS model). The widespread use of these inventories in applied practice in organizations represents a substantial means by which research is put to use in organizations. However, by examining these and other personality inventories used in work and organizational settings, Woods and Anderson (2016) showed that there remains a substantial proportion of personality factorial space that is typically *unmeasured* in assessments. This raises the possibility of uncovering new criterion effects expanding the range of facets captured in trait inventories.

## Beyond Broad Factorial Personality Trait Models

Meta-analytic evidence of the criterion validity of personality traits of the FFM with job performance utilised the organizing properties of the five factors to enable integration of research findings (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991). However, many work-related criteria and organizational behaviors do not easily conceptually align with the FFM, prompting organizational researchers to look at alternative constructs of personality. Although not within the core scope of the present review, notable research literatures have examined relevant work and organizational outcomes associated with the Dark Triad of machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (LeBreton et al., 2018), core self-evaluations (a concept that integrates self-efficacy, self-esteem and locus of control, with Neuroticism from the FFM; Judge & Bono, 2001), psychological capital (Luthans & Youssef, 2004), and proactivity (Seibert et al., 2001). An extensive literature in vocational psychology has typically conceptualised personality-related variables in terms of their representation of vocational interests, exemplified in the Holland RIASEC (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional; Holland, 1973) taxonomy.

Although not exhaustive, these examples serve to illustrate how personality is conceptualised in organizational research on the basis of applied needs and consequent research questions about how to explain or predict important work-related criteria. Moreover, by specifying the nature of relations of these wider constructs with criteria, research in work setting helps to locate them in more general understanding of personality and its effects across the lifespan. This emphasis drives continual development of understanding of personality concepts in work settings, and in future is likely to reflect changes in the ways that criteria are emphasized in organizational practice.

# Personality Assessment in the Workplace

## Methods of Personality Assessment in Organizations

Personality assessments are widely used in work contexts for purposes including employee selection (e.g., via self-reports, interviews), team-building, training and develop-

ment, and career counseling and coaching. As earlier highlighted, assessments used in organizational settings are structured around models of traits identified by psychologists as salient for work settings (see Woods & Anderson, 2016 for examples of such inventories). Personality inventories used in organizational settings often cover the Big Five personality domains, yet do so differently, for example, from the ways traits are assessed in research (e.g., measures of Big Five and HEXACO dimensions). Instruments designed to identify personality types are also commonly used despite less empirical support regarding their psychometric properties.

To align personality assessment results more directly with performance outcomes, some assessments are configured to combine scores from different scales into work-related compounds or composites (Ones & Viswesvaran, 2001; Woods & Anderson, 2016). Such compound scales might for example represent job competencies, or potential for certain occupation types (e.g., Sales or Service Potential in the *Hogan Personality Inventory*).

A concern among practitioners using personality assessments in organizations is the potential for response faking, which may serve to distort trait scores in a socially desirable direction and adversely affect personnel decisions, particularly in selection settings (Tett & Simonet, 2021). A common approach to addressing the issue of faking is the use of ipsative or forced-choice response formats that limit the potential of respondents to fake-good across all inventory items (Salgado & Tauriz, 2014). Such instruments demonstrate validity with job performance (Salgado & Tauriz, 2014), but experimental research indicates that the mitigation of faking is not straightforward, and may not lead to improvements in validity beyond Likert-type/normative assessment of traits (Huber et al., 2021).

Further, explicit (direct) personality methods can be distinguished from implicit (indirect) approaches (James & LeBreton, 2012). Implicit personality assessment is an alternative to the dominant models that feature in research in personality at work, which generally measure traits with personality questionnaires. The explicit component is the part of personality of which the person is aware, consists primarily of self-ascribed characteristics that are available for introspection/self-reports, and predicts immediate decisions and specific behaviors. Implicit personality refers to the mental structures and processes that influence individual behavioral adjustments to the environment, which are not accessible through introspection (e.g., implicit motives and defense mechanisms). Research suggests that implicit personality assessment methods such as conditional reasoning tests can be used to meaningfully predict (thus select and/or train for) important workplace outcomes such as counterproductive work behaviors, behavioral integrity, and aggressive behavior toward others at work (LeBreton et al., 2020). Such initial predictive validity evidence offers a promising direction for future research efforts on further validating and ultimately applying implicit personality measures for selection and training

purposes in various occupational settings (e.g., military and/or law enforcement personnel: LeBreton et al., 2020).

A final relevant variation of assessments in the workplace involves contextualization or addition of frame of reference to personality inventory items. Research suggests that, in contrast to general/non-contextualized (i.e., situation-free or cross-situation) personality items, items contextualized to the workplace (e.g., by asking to participants to rate items considering how they see themselves *at work*) are more strongly associated with workplace outcomes like job performance (Shaffer & Postlethwaite, 2012).

## Validity of Personality Assessments: Critical Issues

There is a wide evidence base of the criterion effects of personality traits in work settings. Dedicated reviews of these criterion effects comprehensively illustrate the breadth of such research (see e.g., Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2006). Evidence of observed criterion effects reflect applications of the the main conceptualisations and methodologies of personality and its assessment outlined thus far. Although seminal meta-analyses (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991) established the generalized validity of the Big Five (notably Conscientousness) with job performance across jobs, criterion effects in practice are a function of the conceptual association of individual traits with specific outcome criteria. This complexity is a foundation of critical unresolved issues in the literature on criterion validity.

### Traits and Organizational Outcomes: Considering Bandwidth-Fidelity

Much examination has been given to if and how the conceptual breadth and symmetry of antecedents and outcomes influences antecedent-outcome relationships. This is especially important in the context of organizational assessment, where criterion-related validities vary across contexts depending on the ways in which traits are conceptualized.

There is mostly agreement that criterion-related validity is maximized when the bandwidth of the antecedent corresponds to that of the outcome: a broad outcome is predicted better by a broad antecedent and a narrow outcome by a narrow antecedent. An alternative perspective holds that it is preferable to use a "construct-oriented approach" that identifies a taxonomy of narrower outcomes (e.g., performance criteria), a taxonomy of narrower personality antecedents, and a nomological network that links the two taxonomies (Woo et al., 2015).

### Prediction of Work and Organizational Outcome Criteria

Personality, most prominently the trait of Conscientousness, has been commonly linked to four broad domains of employee behavior that, together, form overall job performance: task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, adaptive performance and counterproductive work behavior (see Sackett & Walmsley, 2014). Personality traits have also been found to operate at team-level in predicting work-outcomes, for example mean

elevation of traits, and variance with teams are found to predict team effectiveness (Barrick et al., 1998). Meta-analyses have demonstrated the role of personality traits such as Extraversion and Conscientiousness in leader emergence and effectiveness (Judge, Bono, et al., 2002), transformational leadership behavior (Judge & Bono, 2000) and for determining the quality of relationships beween leaders and subordinates (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

However, several important questions remain poorly studied and understood: examples include the specific motivational mechanisms through which personality influences behavioral outcomes (e.g., self-set goals, expectancy of success, and striving for status and accomplishment; Barrick et al., 2013), and whether personality-behavior relationships are linear or curvilinear (e.g., Le et al., 2011).

Personality traits are also associated with cognitive-affective outcomes, and in particular, much organizational research has focused on the effect of personality on job satisfaction (Dalal & Credé, 2013). The dispositional view of job satisfaction proposes that certain people simply tend to be satisfied and other people dissatisfied with their jobs (irrespective of the situational conditions prevailing in those jobs). Judge, Heller, and Mount's (2002) meta-analysis concluded that Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness were consistently associated with job satisfaction. Moreover, Judge et al. concluded that patterns of relationships with personality were generally similar for job and life satisfaction. A more recent meta-analysis (Steel et al., 2019) yielded similar findings and concluded that the findings are consistent either with a situational strength explanation (i.e., organizations create strong situations, thereby attenuating personality's relationships with job satisfaction relative to those with life satisfaction) or with a top-down explanation (i.e., personality influences life satisfaction, which trickles down to influence specific domains such as job satisfaction).

## Digital Technology and Personality Assessment

Most recently, technology-enabled personality measurement practices are becoming increasingly popular in recruitment and selection settings but need to be investigated for validity and bias (Song et al., 2020). On one level, digital presentation of personality assessments enable rapid adaptation to different organizational and assessment settings, and allow assessment to be hosted on sophisticated online platforms that score and report results to practitioner users. However digital technology also enables psychologists to depart altogether from conventional assessment formats. Test vendors are actively marketing numerous products that enable automated collection and analysis of behavioral data to capture individuals' personality for employee selection purposes, but the research literature has only just begun to assess these measurement approaches (e.g., Hickman et al., 2021). For example, Hickman and colleagues (2021) have found initial validity evidence for personality assessment via automated video interviews—i.e., verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal behaviors can be extracted from selection interview videos

and automatically scored to infer the interviewees' personality. This, however, poses certain ethical considerations such as fairness and measurement bias concerns.

In addition, technological advances in personality measurement are particularly useful in capturing dynamics and processes of personality at work through repeated measurement. This is an important emergent area we review in the next section. However, collecting intentional (vs. incidental) measurement data (Oswald, 2020) is taxing on employees and requires access to a laptop or smartphone, thereby excluding certain types of workers and/or demographic subgroups that have neither the spare time nor the necessary equipment. On the other hand, relying on incidental measurement data (i.e., measurement data gathered in a largely data-driven manner without an *a priori* construct in mind) poses its own challenge with regard to construct validation from a scientific (psychometric) perspective, which needs to be carefully considered.

## The Interplay of Personality Science and Organizational Research

The preceding review of the foundations and state-of-the-art of research literatures on the conceptualization and assessment of personality at work highlight examples of the mutual, and often interdependent progress of, what might be thought of as *pure* personality science, and applied research in organizational psychology (Woods et al., 2013). Such examples illustrate how historically, personality researchers and organizational psychologists have greatly benefited from advancements in each other's research domains, reciprocally enriching their respective contributions to psychological science. These relationships are notably evident in contemporary domains of research that we turn to in the next parts of this review, which focus on personality processes and dynamics, as well as the role of situations in understanding personality at work.

# Processes and Dynamics of Personality at Work

## An Integrated State-trait Perspective on Personality

Much of the research on personality at work adopts a static approach in which personality (traits or facets) are related to work-related phenomena (e.g., performance, engagement) measured at either the same or at a later point in time. This approach can be overly simplistic because it ignores potential temporal mechanisms underlying how personality manifests at work. Conversely, organizations have become aware of the importance of temporal dynamics in a broad range of work-related phenomena. To give one example, the typical annual 'engagement survey' is increasingly being replaced by repeated (and shorter) 'pulse assessments', which are better able to capture moment-to-moment fluctuations across time, for instance in response to specific events (e.g., mandatory homeworking or conversely, requirement to return to office working afterwards). Supporting this trend, technological evolutions (e.g., sensor technology)

and analytical developments (e.g., big data) are rapidly expanding the scope of these process-oriented approaches.

In a similar vein, by considering personality dynamics, researchers have brought the aspect of time into the study of personality at work. This represents a fundamental and timely addition to this literature because it provides a process-oriented account to applied personality research which goes beyond description or prediction and enables explanation (Sosnowska et al., 2021). Considering personality dynamics in the context of work requires an integrative approach to personality, meaning assimilating structure and processes, and combining stability and change (Beckmann & Wood, 2020). This approach has five core propositions: (1) within-person variability in personality responses at work exists, is of substantive size, and is to some extent systematic (e.g., Beckmann et al., 2010; Sosnowska et al., 2019); (2) individuals differ in the amount of variability they experience during work and in the extent this variability is contingent on perceived demand characteristics of the work situation (e.g., Huang & Ryan, 2011), (3) variability exists in states and traits both short- and long-term (Beckmann et al., 2021; Wille et al., 2014), (4) variability functions as an individual difference (Dalal et al., 2015), and (5) variability is consequential (Beckmann et al., 2020). In this section, we take a closer look at how this integrative approach has been used to study personality dynamics at work and, from there, identify some crucial points for consideration.

## Taking Personality States to the Work-context: Task-contingent Expressions of Personality

Studying personality states in the work context is important for several reasons. One is that it allows looking into daily experiences and exploring short-term relations of personality and behavior at work. Another is that it enables researchers and practitioners to examine the level of variability people experience in their cognitive-affective states and behavioral responses on a day-to-day basis in the work situations they encounter. Indeed, studying states reveals that our experiential self is nothing but fluctuating. Therefore, integrating the dynamic interplay of personality traits and states provides a rich and nuanced perspective on workplace functioning.

Variability in personality states at work can be conceptualized and modelled in various ways. One prominent approach is to denote state variability as a situation-contingent phenomenon. This is because state variability is often thought to be caused by changes in the work situations people are exposed to (see part 3 of this paper for more details on the impact of situations on personality); although other causes are possible too. In essence, situation contingencies at work describe individual differences in the responsiveness to changes in work-related demands (rather than individual differences in the amount or range of state variability per se, Beckmann & Wood, 2020). This description also highlights the relevance of situation contingencies in contemporary work settings: With work role responsibilities becoming less delineated and instead more blurred and volatile,

workers are increasingly expected to cope adequately with often rapidly fluctuating demands. Studying these situation contingencies may help to better understand the adaptability and flexibility of workers using a personality lens.

A crucial consideration is whether and how people's responses to changes in task demands influence learning processes and performance outcomes. Task-contingent Conscientiousness, for instance, describes individual differences in the extent to which conscientious states at work are a function of encountered task demands. To date, a high level in task-contingent Conscientiousness has been shown to facilitate adaptive performance (Minbashian et al., 2010), transfer of learning and performance (Huang & Ryan, 2011), and job performance (Wood et al., 2019). However, not all contingent responding is necessarily adaptive at work. For example, task-contingent Neuroticism—that is, experiencing increases in neurotic states in response to increased task demands—is not necessarily conducive to performance at work (Wood et al., 2019). Furthermore, research has also started to explore the potential consequences of personality variability in relation to people's affect and energy levels (e.g., Kuijpers et al., 2022); that is, to elucidate the potential affective consequences of displaying changes in personality manifestations in response to shifting situational demands at work. To give an example, research shows that behaving extraverted is generally beneficial, regardless of a person's level of trait Extraversion. However, using a dynamic, temporal approach reveals a more complex picture: extraverted behaviors are linked to higher levels of vitality in the short-term; yet, if these behaviors are counterdispositional, they also deplete energy levels later (Pickett et al., 2020). The study of such personality dynamics at work enables researchers and practitioners to identify response patterns in individual employees, and to use such person-level information of psychological functioning for developmental purposes. This represents a whole new way of thinking about and applying personality research in the work context.

## From Fluctuating States to Developing Traits

Finally, variability in personality can also be approached from a long-term perspective whereby the focus lies on change in traits over several years rather than on fluctuations in states over minutes or hours (Woods et al., 2013). The study of personality trait development in relation to work is a good example of two research disciplines joining forces: Personality science making a case for trait development throughout adulthood, and organizational science providing the necessary insights into the (multi-layered and multi-faceted) nature of work (Woods et al., 2019). Studying the impact of work on personality reflects broader contemporary discussions about the interconnectedness of work role and other life role identities. From a more applied perspective, knowledge about trait development at work may have implications for talent management programs looking into establishing a long-term working relationship with employees who continue to develop and mature after they have been assessed and onboarded.

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With research accumulating on how work influences Big Five personality trait development (Woods et al., 2019), a crucial question becomes how work contributes to the development of a broader scope of personality characteristics. For instance, Wille et al. (2019) examined the development of narcissistic personality and specifically the effect of upward career mobility. As another example, Nye et al. (2021) extended this approach by studying how vocational interests can gradually shift over the course of a career in relation to specific work activities. A relevant point to consider and further examine here is how these more pervasive changes in traits can be linked to the more short-term state-level fluctuations described earlier. Beyond expanding the type of personality constructs considered in this field, another critical direction for future research considers the usefulness and feasibility of targeted trait change interventions in the work context. In this regard, this line of research could develop into proper empirical tests of contemporary learning and development interventions aimed to alter employees' soft skills (e.g., assertiveness), an endeavor which can essentially be understood as a contextualized form of targeted trait change (e.g., focused on one particular facet of Extraversion).

# The Impact of Situations on Personality at Work

## Situations as Moderators of Personality Expressions at Work

Work and organizational psychologists have long acknowledged situational factors in targeting person-workplace fit via job analysis, personnel selection, training, leadership, and other activities (Tett et al., 2021). Trait Activation Theory (TAT; Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000) emphasizes *situational trait-relevance* as a key moderator of personality-performance relationships. A situation is relevant to a trait to the degree it offers opportunity for its expression. A social gathering, for example, is relevant to Extraversion and a call for help is relevant to Agreeableness. TAT defines personality traits as latent propensities that are triggered by two main types of workplace cues. Responding to trait-relevant *work demands* yields positive job performance (e.g., demands for dominance as cues for Extraversion), whereas responding to *distracters* undermines performance (e.g., casual social gatherings as distractions for Extraversion). TAT further identifies three levels of situation-trait interactions: *task* (e.g., primary duties), *social* (e.g., team settings), and *organizational* (e.g., culture, climate). A recent review of the TAT literature (Tett et al., 2021) reveals TAT has been successfully applied to diverse personality traits, states, and KSAs (i.e., knowledge, skills, and abilities), involving all six functional situational features (most often demands) operating at all three levels.

An additional key moderator of trait effects in the workplace is *situational strength*, defined by Meyer et al. (2009) as "implicit or explicit cues provided by external entities regarding the desirability of potential behaviors" (p. 122). Research has focused on the strength of the psychological situation at different levels of analysis of not just the job

(e.g., e.g. job-, organization-, and occupational-levels; Dalal et al., 2020). Strong situations lead everyone to react the same way regardless of their traits. Thus, traits are linked to outcomes only to the degree a situation is weak. Meyer et al. (2009) articulate four facets of situational strength in work settings: *clarity* of work requirements, *consistency* of work cues across sources, *constraints* on workers' autonomy, and *consequences* of behavior. Their review of the literature shows, as expected, trait-outcome relationships are weaker in stronger situations, with effects fairly uniform across the four facets. In a direct comparison of situational trait-relevance (i.e., TAT) and situational strength as moderators of trait effects, Judge and Zapata (2015) found trait relevance to be the stronger moderator but that both are important in understanding the role of personality at work.

## Situations as Triggers of Personality Expressions at Work

In addition to their role as moderators of trait effects, situations have more recently been studied as triggers (i.e., predictors) of personality states at work (Huang & Ryan, 2011; Judge et al., 2014). Employees' state Neuroticism and Agreeableness, for example, are influenced by daily job demands, interpersonal conflict, and client interactions (Debusscher et al., 2016; Huang & Ryan, 2011; Judge et al., 2014) and task difficulty and urgency trigger momentary Conscientiousness (Minbashian et al., 2018).

A comprehensive framework that integrates such effects under shared principles had been lacking to date. This is also because models of predictors (or triggers) of personality expressions in personality psychology remain largely descriptive and not tailored specifically to occupational settings meaning that they cannot simply be applied wholesale in the work context. For example, on the one hand, generic process models of personality (e.g., Cognitive Affective Personality System, Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Whole Trait Theory, Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015) describe how motivational, affective, and perceptual processes combine in a dynamic sequence to predict behavior in light of situational factors but describe personality dynamics on a relatively abstract level (i.e., do not provide information on contents of situational factors). On the other hand, situation taxonomies (e.g., CAPTION, Parrigon et al., 2017; DIAMONDS, Rauthmann et al., 2014) which aim to reduce the manifold of situational features to a more manageable set of psychologically meaningful dimensions, typically identified in terms of specific demands and affordances, has not yet mapped the psychological situational characteristics onto job demands and organizational factors. Just as the FFM and HEXACO taxonomies have advanced the study of personality, extant situational content taxonomies for the work context may provide further coherence and clarity to this rapidly advancing research area.

## Future Challenges Regarding the Impact of Situations on Personality at Work

Providing further coherence and clarity through work specific process models and situation taxonomies seems particularly relevant as the world of work is rapidly changing and, thus, work-related *demands* and *distractors* on all three levels (task, social, organizational) are changing as well. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has normalized remote work and 'hybrid' ways of working. Working from home is surely a different situation than working in the office and comes with more online meetings, less face-to-face interactions with colleagues, more or less interruptions (depending on the family situation and amenities), and challenges regarding boundary management strategies and recovery processes. It is yet unclear whether personality expressions during work at the office follow the same pattern when working from home. For example, do team meetings in a virtual environment contain the same trait relevant cues for state Extraversion or Agreeableness as team meetings in the office? Does work-family interference influence personality states like Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability in the same fashion when working at the office versus remotely?

Moreover, the future of work holds additional grand challenges beyond (post-) pandemic topics, such as climate change, aging workforces, growing labor market disparities, and the need to create inclusive workplaces. On the one hand, those challenges include a host of situational factors potentially influencing personality expressions at work (e.g., age composition of teams, perceptions of unfairness). On the other hand they invite the question of how to intentionally influence personality expressions at work through interventions (see e.g., Nübold & Hülsheger, 2021), as they may lead to beneficial trait changes on the long run that may help dealing with these grand challenges to at least some extent. For example, interventions could promote state Openness and Agreeableness, which may support the creation of an inclusive work climate or they could moderate the effect of naturally occurring situations at work (e.g., organizational injustice) that may trigger state Neuroticism, thus, acting as a buffer in this process.

## Personality at Work: Critical Reflections and Future Directions

The state-of-the-art of research in personality at work provides wide evidence of the relevance and impact of personality science on understanding how people behave, think and feel in the workplace, and on the advancement of theory in organizational research. A consistent feature of the research literature in this field is continual development and change, steered by the purpose of integrating advancements in personality science with applied questions of work and organization. Such research is arguably a key bridge between psychology and other social sciences (e.g., management and organizational

behavior), reflected in the variety of journals and professional contexts in which research into personality and work features. Accordingly, future research directions, we propose, will simultaneously be driven by challenges of work in the context of broader society, combined with both theoretical and methodical advances in core personality science. We propose four such examples of directions to explore in future research, consistent with the main themes of our review.

First, in respect of the conceptualisation and assessment of personality, there are questions to resolve around how personality traits should be best modeled and measured to reflect the changing nature of work, including for example how outcome criteria such as performance and well-being are emphasized and valued in organizations. Many such work factors interact with wider changes in society. For example, in future the role of work and organizations in tackling challenges of building more sustainable, inclusive and responsible societies is likely to become increasingly important. In turn, this may refocus how critical personality traits for work effectiveness are conceptualized and measured in work settings, and examined against different forms of outcome criteria. At a more fundamental level, our review has raised examples of how the conceptualization of personality has developed in the field (e.g., in the case of personality dynamics). This underlines the importance of grounding future research in conceptual perspectives in ways that enable integration of studies, and which avoid fragmentation of research lines.

The second direction pertains to the development of innovations in personality assessment methodology, applying new concepts and models of personality (e.g., dynamic state-trait conceptualisations; contextual models of traits) and new technology available to researchers. An example is the interaction between implicit and explicit measures, and the discrepancy between them, in explaining employee behavior. Technology-enabled assessments may also be better suited for capturing contextualized or dynamic representations of personality, advancing beyond conventional psychometrics. Similarly, more research on non-conventional personality assessment (e.g., using wearable sensor technology, digital and artificial intelligence applications) is needed to further explore its validity in workplace settings.

Third, the mechanisms underpinning dynamics and processes of personality at work remain unclear. Yet, the rapid pace of change and adaptation in future workplaces will demand better modelling of the dynamics of both work demands and personality (states and traits). Systematic examination of antecedents and consequences of personality change, along with potential nomological links between various state variability concepts and measures at work can shed light on how personality manifests and functions at work. Relatedly, more research is needed to systematically address how different 'layers' of work (e.g., task-, occupation-, team-, organization-level) interact with one another and influence personality changes (both short- and long-term). In addition, research empirically testing the mediating role of states in the causal link between work characteristics and trait development is currently lacking.

Fourthly, there is a need for systematic inquiry based on broad situational phenomena, e.g., situational trait-relevance, situational strength, and situational specificity, relevant to both predictors and criteria, as well as the role of situational complexity and motivational valence (i.e., the desirability of rewards and other extrinsic outcomes of expressed traits and states. In a similar manner, personality-oriented work analysis offers an interesting avenue to explore, by targeting identification of job-specific traits and facets operating at multiple levels (task, social, organizational) in terms of demands, distracters, and constraints.

By pursuing these lines of future research in an integrated way, continuing to bridge advances in work and organizations on one hand, and personality science on the other, the field of research in personality at work can maintain its place in providing critical contributions and insights into understanding behavior at work and the impact of organizations on people and wider society. Moreover, these directions point to growing and strengthening interdependence of research in different disciplines, requiring cross-disciplinary collaboration including from psychology, organizational behavior, management, computer sciences, social and behavioral economics.

**Competing Interests:** Reeshad Dalal is a member of the editorial board of the journal.

**Author Contributions:** *Joanna Ritz*—Idea, conceptualization | Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Stephen A. Woods*—Idea, conceptualization | Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Bart Wille*—Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Sang Eun Woo*—Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Annika Nübold*—Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Nadin Beckmann*—Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Reeshad Sam Dalal*—Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Zvonimir Galic*—Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Brenton Wiernik*—Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Robert P. Tett*—Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Jennifer Pickett*—Writing | Feedback, revisions. *Neil Christiansen*—Writing | Feedback, revisions.

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