

International Opportunities in Psychology: A SWOT Analysis

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SWOT Analysis

- S = Strengths
- W = Weaknesses
- O = Opportunities
- T = Threats

Method used to comprehensively assess an organization, business, etc. Used to examine both internal and external environment as part of **strategic planning** (helps assess match b/t resources & environment).

Can be embedded in multiple categories (simultaneous + & -).

Applying SWOT to Career Planning

- While the SWOT technique has been developed for strategic planning within organizations, we would like to propose that it is also useful in individual career planning when deciding to enter into a new arena.
- We would also like to propose that the SWOT technique is also quite helpful in assessing the opportunities and threats involved in venturing into the field of international psychology.
- In applying the SWOT analysis, we recommend that each individual evaluate the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats in pursuing international opportunities specific to your own unique situation.

Strengths of Internationalizing

- Increased research validity
- International colleagues
- Increase cultural perspectives of Ψ & self (reduce ethnocentrism & myopia)
- Wider perspective of your area
- Wider journal readership possible
- Colleagues often receive benefits for publishing in U.S. journals; eager
- Exciting & Fresh (hot topic)
- Perhaps attend international conferences

Weaknesses

- Difficult to make professional connections
- Slow Process (publish/perish; Communication w/ & expectations of colleagues)
- Difficult to collect data (methodologically limited; instrument completion concerns; limited resources; difficult to send/receive information)
- Language issues (e.g., CE meaning [Ψ org. have legal recognition], translation, definition of subfield; their training)
- International journals often not well-respected in U.S. departments (ethnocentrism); many have higher impact ratings than U.S. journals
- Editorial Boards often not respected; dept. Colleagues may not understand purpose & have to educate; not a lot of dept. collaboration.

Weaknesses (2)

- Higher expectations regarding speed to complete study (colleague may have 1-3 projects ongoing, & perhaps more applied or longitudinal); Work to Live vs. Live to Work
- Definitions of constructs differ
- Must understand limitations of language journals
- If high intolerance for ambiguity or not open, forget it
- Expensive
- No substantive funding

Opportunities

- Most areas of psychology have little significant international breadth (new ground)
- “Hot topic” (next area of growth)
- Numerous organizations (e.g., IAAP, ICP, and increased recognition of internationalizing in U.S. organizations)
- Stretch yourself **professionally** and **personally**
- Depends if your department and university/organization supports international engagement (Take advantage if they do).

Threats

- Pursuing international opportunities can be costly in both financial and professional terms
- Engaging in international opportunities early on in one's career can hurt career advancement in terms of sunk costs, time, energy.
- Ethnocentrism of colleagues/dept/ university (tenure/promotion review) that may cause them to value international engagement less
- Trade off in national versus international involvement due to limited resources and time (need to decide in which arena you wish to have an impact).

Summary

- May not be beneficial to pursue international opportunities early on in one's career.
- However, can begin making contacts and attending international meetings occasionally.
- Involvement in international associations & congresses can increase gradually as one advances in one's career.
- Pursuing international opportunities in psychology should be decided as part of one's strategic career plans and goals after weighing all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, & threats.