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## Positive organisational psychology 2.0: Embracing the technological revolution

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### ABSTRACT

Positive Organisational Psychology (POP) has experienced significant growth in the past two decades, contributing to our understanding of work-related well-being and performance. However, the discipline is now on the cusp of a new wave of research and innovation that may reshape its discourse. This paper introduces the concept of 'Positive Organisational Psychology 2.0' (POP 2.0) as an evidence-based, data-driven field that utilizes technological advancements and human-centred design to understand and enhance positive characteristics of individuals, organisations, and society for optimal psychological functioning, wellbeing, and performance. The paper begins with an overview of POP's emergence, highlighting its key characteristics and exploring the factors behind its rapid growth and declining relevance. We then conceptualize POP 2.0, outline its defining features, and advocate for a broader scope, expanded focal audience, enhanced methodologies, and transformative role shifts for practitioners. We conclude by outlining opportunities, challenges and perspectives for the next wave of innovative research.

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Positive organisational psychology; Positive organisational behaviour; Positive organisational scholarship; future perspectives

### Introduction

With 20 years of focused scholarship, positive organizational psychology (POP) is now moving into its next development phase as a scientific discipline, providing a unique opportunity to consider how the field may grow and evolve. This paper aims to explore the development, challenges and threats to POP, focusing on its transition to the next wave of innovation and research, which we call 'Positive Organizational Psychology 2.0' (POP 2.0). We begin by providing an overview of the emergence of POP and its underlying approaches, highlighting its characteristics and exploring the reasons for its rapid growth and practical decline. We also acknowledge the decline in relevance despite the increase in research output. We delve into the threats facing POP, including the rapidly changing nature of work, problems with the profession and issues with the discipline itself. The introduction concludes by emphasising the need for a revolution in POP and sets the stage for discussing the nature, characteristics and purpose of POP 2.0. We conclude the paper by focusing on the challenges, opportunities and future directions of POP 2.0.

### Positive organisational psychology: An overview of its origins

POP is a scientific field investigating the positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organisations and their members (Luthans & Youssef, 2020). Specifically, it focused on investigating positive states, traits, behaviours and experiences of the working population and organisations as a means to improve the effectiveness and quality of organisational life (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). Unlike the traditional view that positive and negative constructs are opposite ends of a single continuum, POP considers them distinct factors with unique antecedents, processes, dimensions, and outcomes (Luthans & Youssef, 2020). Positive constructs are investigated independently, through a unique theoretical lens, rather than concluding what's known about negative constructs (e.g. adversities being seen as opportunities to grow: Cameron & Dutton, 2003; Luthans & Youssef, 2020). POP thus focuses on understanding extraordinary outcomes and exceptional results rather than drawing conclusions solely from ordinary successes (Luthans & Youssef, 2020). This distinct focus resulted in the development of two parallel yet overlapping streams of

research: Positive Organisational Scholarship (POS; Cameron & Dutton, 2003) and Positive Organisational Behaviour (POB; Luthans, 2002).

*Positive organisational scholarship* was defined as ‘a movement in organizational science that focuses on the dynamics leading to exceptional individual and organisational performance such as developing human strength, producing resilience and restoration and fostering vitality’ (Cameron & Caza, 2004, p. 731). POS was considered an umbrella term for the study of ‘that which is positive, flourishing and life-giving in organisations’ and included a wide array of positive states, -traits, -behaviours and processes leading to wellbeing and quality of work life (Cameron & Dutton, 2003, p. 731). In essence, this approach focuses on understanding the drivers of positive behaviours in the workplace, where the focus is primarily on the positive aspects of organisational contexts (Donaldson et al., 2022). This approach investigated these positive phenomena by using the organisational level as the unit of analysis. Here, individual wellbeing and organisational flourishing is positioned as an end in itself rather than investigating the benefits or outcomes of such (Luthans & Youssef, 2020).

In contrast, *positive organizational behaviour* adopted the individual as the unit of analysis and focused on studying ‘positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed and managed for performance improvement’ (Luthans, 2002, p. 59). Here, the focus is specifically on investigating individuals’ strengths and positive capacities and their impact on individual and organisational-level outcomes (Donaldson et al., 2022). According to Luthans (2002), this perspective views strengths and positive capacities as state-like factors that can be measured, managed, and developed to improve performance.

These approaches developed simultaneously and drew and built on the developments of the other (Luthans & Youssef, 2020). Despite the different foci, both approaches share characteristics for understanding positive organisational psychology phenomena. According to Donaldson and Ko (2010) and Salanova et al. (2016), these approaches advocate that POP has six main characteristics. First, it aims to study subjective positive experiences. Second, the focus is on understanding positive states, traits and behaviours. Third, the focus is on investigating the elements underpinning the optimal functioning of individuals, groups and organisations. Fourth, the aim is to present means to measure and manage psycho-social wellbeing. Fifth, as the unit of analysis, the aim is to eventually build healthy and thriving organisations. Finally, POP is an applied science focused on accurately measuring positive

psychological phenomena, clearly interpreting results, developing strategies to enhance positive functioning and creating evidence-based intervention strategies to help facilitate individual wellbeing and organisational flourishing (Donaldson et al., 2022). This development-orientated approach to understanding organisational phenomena led to an exponential interest in both academia and practice.

## Rapid rise of positive organisational psychology

POP has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sub-disciplines within positive psychology (Martín-Del-Río et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Over the past 116 years, more than 7,181 papers focusing on positive organisational psychological factors have been published, accumulating over 174,000 citations (Martín-Del-Río et al., 2021). According to Martín-Del-Río et al. (2021), POP research has evolved over three main stages. Firstly, an incubation stage from 1904 to 1994, which yielded 396 sporadic publications garnering 18,925 citations over 90 years. Secondly, an initiation phase spanning from 1995 to 2007 characterised by a progressive increase in publications ( $N = 932$ ) and citations ( $N = 66,635$ ). Finally, a stage of exponential growth emerged from 2008 to the present, driven by a focused and proactive positive approach to studying positive phenomena in organisational contexts (publications = 6,716; citations = 88,598). Further, publications ranged from areas related to sociology, social work, science and technology, nursing, psychology and psychiatry to communication sciences, engineering, government, law, and even biomedical sciences (Martín-Del-Río et al., 2021). These trends highlight the multidisciplinary applicability of POP, as its theories, methods and approaches extend beyond traditional psychology domains. This interdisciplinary interest fosters further collaboration and knowledge exchange, enhancing POP’s impact, visibility and credibility. Taken together, this rapid growth signifies the increased popularity of POP within the broader nomological network of psychology.

The rise in popularity of POP can be attributed to several factors. First, the effective marketing and promotion of POP concepts by influential founders and scholars, particularly in the US, have enhanced its credibility and visibility (Carr, 2022; Seligman, 2012). Second, early large-scale funding initiatives have supported high-impact research projects in POP and facilitated international collaborations among researchers (Seligman, 2012). Thirdly, the rise of neo-liberal ideology in Western societies, which emphasises happiness, individualism, and self-improvement, aligns with the core principles of POP. As organisations recognize the

importance of positive organisational practices, the demand for POP research, tools, and techniques has surged, leading to more applied research and interest from the public (Burr & Dick, 2021; van Zyl et al., 2023). Fourthly, the applied nature of POP, with its focus on developing strengths, positive states, and positive work environments to increase performance, has gained popularity within practice (Donaldson et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2021). Multinational consulting firms (like Gallup & Psych.AI) endorsing and integrating POP practices into their interventions have further contributed to its widespread adoption within various industries (Donaldson et al., 2022). This validation by industry leaders and the promise of tangible end-results have exposed the benefits of POP to a broader audience, leading to increased acceptance and implementation. Fifth, the popularity of work engagement and the strengths-based approach has further propelled the interest in POP due to their tangible benefits for organisations (Wang et al., 2023). Sixth, the classification of Work and Organisational Psychology, as the mother discipline of including POP, as a STEM field has enhanced its credibility and institutional support (US Government, 2019). This classification supports the validity of POP's methodologies, theories, and approaches, attracting more funding and facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration. Finally, the interdisciplinary nature of POP has fostered collaboration and knowledge exchange among scholars from various disciplines, allowing for the dissemination of positive psychology research findings across multiple fields and resulting in increased citations (Carr, 2022).

Although these factors contributed to the exponential growth in publications and citations in POP, the rise itself doesn't necessarily indicate something 'positive' (Wang et al., 2023). Although there has been significant growth in the number of academic publications, there is evidence that the relevance and impact of POP have been dwindling. When considering Martín-Del-Río et al. (2021) findings, it is evident that most publications that generated a high rate of interest in the scientific community were published between 2001 and 2011. Critics argued that the field had developed relatively few 'revolutionary ideas' since the first decade of the discipline's existence and that all new knowledge being produced is tautological, superficial and draws conclusions already embedded in traditional wisdom or common sense (Fernández-Ríos & Vilariño, 2016; Van Zyl & Rothmann, 2022a; van Zyl et al., 2023). POP has only managed to produce ephemeral frontier knowledge during the last decade which does not function as a means to further develop knowledge in the field (Martín-Del-Río et al., 2021). Further, when controlling for the year of

publication and the number of manuscripts published, there is evidence of a rapid decline in citations during the last 10 years. Martín-Del-Río et al. (2021, p. 17) explain such by stating that 'the exponential increase in [publications during] the third period was not matched by an increase in the number of citations received, but rather the contrary. Between 2012 and 2020, this number has been declining dramatically, going from 34.26 citations per work in 2012 to 1.19 in 2020'. This decline is the result of specific threats posed to POP.

## Threats to positive organisational psychology

Although POP has gained significant attention and recognition in recent years, progress seems to be stagnating (Martín-Del-Río et al., 2021). This may be due to a failure to adapt to current challenges and threats. These threats can be summarised into three factors: (a) the rapidly changing nature of work, (b) problems with the profession and (c) problems within the discipline. Each of these factors presents specific challenges that must be addressed to ensure the future relevance of POP as a discipline.

### The rapidly changing nature of work

The rapidly changing nature of work poses significant challenges to POP. First, the *decentralisation of work and work systems* which are driven by remote work and the gig economy, challenges the traditional organisational structures and dynamics that POP has habitually investigated. This significantly altered context, fundamentally changes how employees view and engage with work as well as changes the way organisational dynamics develop (Bakker et al., 2023). Traditional assumptions, models and frameworks may not capture nor explain how this new way of working affects individual wellbeing and organisational flourishing (Demerouti & Bakker, 2022).

Second, the *increasing use of data-driven approaches to assessments and development initiatives* within organisations poses challenges for POP. While data-driven approaches can provide valuable insights, are cost-effective and scalable, there is a risk of reducing complex human phenomena to measurable metrics or 'mere numbers' (Jack et al., 2018). Data drive assessment and development practices may not be able to fully capture the subjective experiences, positive states/traits/behaviours, and personal narratives of individuals just yet (Jack et al., 2018). Another challenge pertains to the ethical implications of data-drive approaches such as real-time active assessments of positive states. Organisations are increasingly adopting passive measures for assessing aspects such as work engagement

(e.g. monitoring email and workflows) which raises concerns about privacy and confidentiality and creates the potential for biased decision-making (Bhave et al., 2020). Using artificial intelligence and machine learning in these approaches may introduce further bias, perpetuating existing inequalities and facilitating further discrimination (Gkinko & Elbanna, 2023). Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological advancements makes it challenging for researchers and practitioners to keep up with the evolving landscape of these data-driven approaches (Budhwar et al., 2022). POP researchers and practitioners require ongoing learning to keep abreast of the latest tools, techniques, and platforms.

Third, the *automation of human processes* presents further challenges for POP. With rapid development within the Artificial Intelligence space, an ever-increasing number of tasks previously performed by humans are being automated (Budhwar et al., 2022). Although automation can enhance efficiency, it also raises concerns regarding wellbeing of employees and disrupts the dynamics of organisational functioning. Current models within POP fail to provide explanations and frameworks for investigating and addressing such. Further, assessment, development, and behavioural modelling functions at the core of a POP's skillset are also being automated and researchers and practitioners are slow to adapt.

Finally, *artificial intelligence, social robots and virtual workspaces* are increasingly being integrated into organisational settings that transform how work is performed and social interactions occur. For instance, the utilisation of artificial intelligence (AI) has been employed to deliver mental health services, exemplified by the existence of Woebot, a chatbot designed to provide mental health support, and Tess, a conversational agent aimed at coaching individuals to cultivate resilience through text message exchanges simulating conversations with a friend or coach (Oosthuizen, 2022). Although these AI interventions have gained popularity, it is crucial to recognise the significance of effective communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork in the context of remote work. Oosthuizen (2022) highlights the importance of comprehending how these skills can be nurtured while working from home. Moreover, the application of AI extends beyond mental health services, as evidenced by the influence of ChatGPT in transforming various domains such as education, journalism, research, and communication on social media. This showcases the transformative impact of AI on work processes and communication practices.

### **Problems within the profession**

The threats to POP are not just contained to contextual factors such as the changing nature of work,

but also relate to problems deeply embedded within the profession. Several factors within the profession stifle the development of the field and hinder the potential of POP to make meaningful contributions to organisations.

First, there seems to be a *global decline in students registering for work and organisational psychology degrees* (Sanderson et al., 2022; Van Zyl et al., 2016).<sup>1</sup> This decline may be attributed to various factors, including limited awareness of the field among young students, misconceptions about career prospects, the demanding nature of the process to become a registered psychologist, or the perception that other disciplines may offer more lucrative or promising employment opportunities in the future (Sanderson et al., 2022). Furthermore, there is a lack of dedicated undergraduate and postgraduate academic programs specifically focused POP. While existing master's programs in this domain tend to have a broader emphasis on general positive psychology, only a few modules or courses concentrate on the application of positive psychology within the workplace. The diminishing interest in these programs and the limited focus on POP pose a potential barrier to the development of future scholars and practitioners, thus limiting the available talent pool and potential research contributions to the field.

Second, there is *increased competition from adjacent fields* which encroach on the scope of practice of positive organisational psychologists (e.g. Human Resource Management, Professional Coaching, Marketing & Consumer Behaviour: Van Zyl et al., 2016). These fields often share similar research interests and objectives related to employee wellbeing, creating challenges in establishing a unique identity for POP (Donaldson & Dollwet, 2013). It may be difficult to differentiate positive organisational psychologists' contributions to assessing and developing wellbeing from those of neighbouring disciplines (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). This competition can lead to fragmentation within the discipline and limits the recognition of POP's unique value proposition.

Third, the profession has been criticised for being *slow to change and adapt to new developments*, emerging trends, and innovative methodologies (Lomas et al., 2020; van Zyl et al., 2023). Practitioners may be slow to adapt to new developments due to traditional academic structures, resistance to change within the broader profession, or a lack of incentives to embrace new approaches/methods/trends (Lomas et al., 2020). The failure to keep pace with developments hinders the ability of POP practitioners to provide timely and relevant insights and effective interventions.



Fourth, there is *limited collaboration between scientists and practitioners*, thus limiting the translation of academic knowledge into practical applications. This gap is compounded by the rapid pace at which interventions are implemented in POP, often outpacing the availability of scientific evidence that should inform such practices. In their efforts to address organisational needs and deliver interventions, practitioners may adopt practices based on anecdotal evidence or popular trends due to the scarcity of rigorous research and empirical support for certain interventions (Van Zyl & Rothmann, 2022a). This gap between practice and science undermines the credibility of POP as a rigorous and evidence-based discipline. It is crucial to encourage a strong integration of science and practice, where practice is informed by rigorous research and research is informed by real-world organisational challenges. The collaboration between practitioners and researchers faces additional obstacles. Many academic journals only publish complex studies, making it difficult for practitioners to comprehend and apply the findings in their organisations (Efendic & Van Zyl, 2019). Conversely, publishing positive psychological intervention studies conducted in real-world organisational contexts proves even more challenging due to the stringent requirement of randomised controlled designs with large sample sizes, which journals often demand. Despite the relevance of these positive psychological intervention studies for practitioners, there is a scarcity of publications in this area. Notably, at the recent European Association of Work and Organisational Psychology conference in Poland, there was a conspicuous absence of intervention studies, with the focus primarily centred on intricate longitudinal multilevel studies exploring familiar and repetitive topics such as stress, burnout, and engagement. This lack of emphasis on interventions further hinders the dissemination of practical knowledge to practitioners in the field of POP.

Fifth, the *competence of practitioners* in applying POP principles and practices is a critical factor influencing the development of the discipline. To effectively implement positive organisational interventions, practitioners must deeply understand the theory, research, and intervention methodologies underlying POP. They need to demonstrate expertise in assessing organisational needs, designing tailored fit-for-purpose interventions, and evaluating the outcomes of such. A lack of competence among practitioners can lead to ineffective interventions, misinterpretation of findings, and potentially harmful practices that undermine the credibility and impact of positive organisational psychology.

Finally, *practitioners tend to follow and embrace popular psychology trends* known to over-promise and under-deliver. This poses a significant challenge to the development of POP as both popular psychology writers and practitioners tend to sensationalise findings, exaggerate results, or cherry-pick parts of academic narratives to support absurd claims (van Zyl et al., 2023). In popular media and self-help literature, POP principles are mostly simplified, over-sensationalized, and distorted, creating unrealistic expectations regarding interventions' effectiveness (van Zyl et al., 2023). This can create a gap between the promises made by popularised versions of POP authors and the actual outcomes that can be achieved in organisational contexts. When interventions fail to meet the over-promised expectations, it can increase scepticism and damage the credibility of POP as a legitimate field of study and practice domain (Van Zyl & Rothmann, 2022a). It is crucial to maintain scientific rigour, responsible dissemination of findings, and clear communication of the limitations and nuances of positive psychology interventions to ensure that the discipline remains grounded in evidence-based practices and maintains its integrity.

### ***Problems with the discipline***

Practitioners and the profession are not the only culprits threatening POP. There are several factors to consider within the foundation of the discipline itself, which distracts from its impact and relevance. A recent systematic literature review by van Zyl et al. (2023) on the general criticisms and critiques of positive psychology highlighted several key challenges directly applicable to POP as its sub-discipline. According to van Zyl et al. (2023), critics stated that positive psychology, and by proxy POP, has the following issues:

- (1) *Theoretical and Conceptual Limitations*: Critics argue that positive organisational psychology lacks a comprehensive metatheoretical framework to guide its scientific philosophy. They contend that the field fails to provide clear ideas and principles for conceptualising and investigating positive phenomena within organisational contexts. Most POP theories and approaches are drawn from other domains like social- or general work and organisational psychology.
- (2) *Measurement and Methodological Concerns*: Critics assert that positive organisational psychology exhibits issues with operationalising and measuring its constructs. They argue that the field relies on flawed research methods, overemphasises

positivist- and empirical approaches, and lacks robust methodologies to investigate organisational phenomena effectively.

- (3) *Empirical Evidence and Replicability*: Some critics question the empirical basis of positive organisational psychology. They argue that the field makes unsubstantiated claims about its benefits, exaggerates the implications of research findings, and faces challenges regarding the replicability and generalizability of important results.
- (4) *Contextual Considerations*: Critics highlight that positive organisational psychology, often influenced by a Western-centric perspective, emphasises individual agency and personal choices as determinants of optimal functioning and well-being within organisations. They argue that this perspective overlooks the influence of broader organisational contexts and may neglect important socio-cultural factors.
- (5) *Perceived Capitalistic Influence*: Some critics suggest that positive organisational psychology can be driven by capitalist motives, aiming to commodify positivity and promote individualistic and consumeristic values within organisational settings. They raise concerns about the potential commercialisation of positive practices and experiences, which may undermine the genuine wellbeing and flourishing of individuals and organisations.

These threats and challenges within the discipline are further exacerbated by several factors hindering POP's progress and relevance. The competence of researchers in POP plays a crucial role in addressing the field's challenges. Insufficient knowledge, a lack of skills, and poor expertise among researchers may perpetuate theoretical issues and methodological problems that hinder the advancement and rigour of the discipline (c.f. Efendic & Van Zyl, 2019). Further, the time it takes to implement scientific advancements in POP within practice can hinder the discipline's impact and relevance. On average, it takes 17 years for research findings to be integrated into practice, thus delaying the development and application of evidence-based approaches, and limiting the potential benefits for individuals and organisations (Bauer et al., 2015; Rubin, 2023). Similarly, the rapidly changing nature of work outpaces the relevance of research and, rendering studies (especially those which are qualitative in design) into these phenomena particularly arduous due to their inherent time-consuming nature. The rapid advancement of technology also plays a role. While technology can provide new avenues for data collection and analysis, researchers must adapt their methodologies and keep pace with evolving technological tools

(van Zyl et al., 2023). Failure to do so may hinder the discipline's ability to study and address organisational phenomena in the digital era effectively.

Further, the discrepancy between the production and demand for research in POP poses additional challenges. Veldsman (2019) and others indicated that the discipline is *growing in its irrelevance* as its unable to respond to current business challenges in a timely manner and shows a *failure to adapt to threats*. Conducting research solely to produce knowledge without addressing the practical needs of organisations or relevant gaps in understanding may lead to a disconnect between research and real-world organisational challenges (Bal et al., 2019). This growing irrelevance may undermine the discipline's impact and limit its ability to address pressing organisational issues when it's needed most (Veldsman, 2019). Similarly, the lack of revolutionary ideas or ground-breaking advancements in POP impedes progress. Without fresh perspectives and innovative approaches, the field may struggle to provide novel insights and solutions to complex organisational problems, leading to a perception of stagnation, limited growth, and irrelevance. Finally, the lack of active collaboration among academia, practitioners, organisations, and governments exasperates the challenges inherent to the discipline. Limited collaboration and knowledge sharing not only hinder the exchange of ideas and the translation of science into practice, but also creates a perpetual distance between the perceptive value each domain can bring to the other.

When considering the multitude of threats and challenges facing the POP profession and discipline, it becomes evident that significant changes are needed to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. The culmination of these threats and challenges underscores the field's slow reaction to proactively adapt to the evolving landscape of contemporary challenges and the ever-changing needs of organisations. Consequently, the future of POP hangs in the balance, teetering on the precipice between a potential revolution or an impending downfall. However, as positive psychologists, we are driven by the belief in the power of transformative change and envision the contours of POP's imminent revolution and its transformative potential.

## Positive organisational psychology 2.0

### Conceptualising positive organisational psychology 2.0

With its exponential growth over the past two decades and the threats/challenges posed against the discipline,

it is clear that POP is on the horizon of a new wave of research, innovation and ideas which may fundamentally alter its discourse (Donaldson et al., 2022). We expect to see a new wave of research focusing on topics like social and organisational network analysis of positive leadership and relational energy in the workplace, more advances in artificial intelligence-driven positive organisational interventions, human-robot collaboration, passive neurological assessments of positive states/traits and behaviours at work and the like. This new wave of research will be characterised by rapid innovation, mass adoption of artificial intelligence systems, machine learning, social media analytics, big data analyses, and the like, culminating in what we call 'Positive Organisational Psychology 2.0' (POP 2.0).

POP 2.0 is defined as an evidence-based, data-driven field of scientific inquiry that embraces technological developments, -design principles and -innovations to understand and improve the positive individual-, organisational- and societal characteristics required for optimal psychological functioning, wellbeing, and performance. Through the rapid adoption and development of technological innovations and human-centred design, POP 2.0 aims to create positive physical-, virtual/digital- and meta environments which support individual wellbeing, team collaboration, positive leadership, positive relationships, organisational effectiveness and sustainability, and societal thriving. It develops and adopts culturally sensitive approaches embedded within local traditions and values, capitalising on the unique strengths of diversity. It employs advanced data-driven approaches, such as supervised, unsupervised, and reinforced machine learning, big-data analytics, and natural language processing, to investigate and develop the elements required for optimal 'positive organisation'. Through active and continuous collaboration and stakeholder involvement, POP 2.0 provides valuable solutions to real-world organisational problems, promotes collaboration, and ensures research and interventions' relevance and applicability in real-world organisational contexts.

### ***The purpose of positive organisational psychology 2.0***

Building upon this conceptual foundation, the purpose of POP 2.0 is to expand its scope, extend its target audience, enhance its research methodologies, and transform the role of practitioners while fostering collaboration.

*Broadening the Scope:* POP 2.0 aims to broaden the scope of its field inquiry and interventions through various means. This includes designing disruptive data-driven technologies, developing holistic and ecological

approaches to understanding positive organisational phenomena, developing, and evaluating virtual, digital, and meta workplaces, creating cross-cultural and indigenous perspectives on positive organisational phenomena, and the study of human-robot relations/collaboration. It embraces inter-disciplinary relevance, seeking connections with other fields and exploring the intersection of POP with positive computing, robotics, and digital companions. The specific focus areas may include sustainability, positive organising, climate change, green jobs, and positive ethics.

*Expanding Focal Audience:* POP 2.0 seeks to expand its reach and impact by targeting new and diverse audiences. This includes engaging with- and understanding positive communities and societies, marginalised groups (e.g. the LGBTQ+ community), artificial human companions (e.g. Chatbot Managers), decentralised working forces (e.g. gig workers, domestic workers and freelancers), digital inhabitants (e.g. those who only live and work in metaverse environments), and individuals in virtual, digital, and meta work environments. It emphasises relevance and collaboration with other disciplines to foster interdisciplinary perspectives on positive phenomena and address the unique needs of these audiences.

*Enhancing Methods:* POP 2.0 focuses on enhancing its research methods and intervention approaches. This includes adopting more robust research methodologies such as qualitative, mixed-method, and (quasi-) experimental designs. It also involves embracing data-driven approaches, utilizing machine learning and natural language processing techniques, and incorporating implicit, passive, and continuous assessment methods. Furthermore, POP 2.0 recognises the importance of employing multidisciplinary perspectives to solve complex organisational problems effectively.

*Changing the Roles of Practitioners and Collaboration:* POP 2.0 envisions a transformation in the roles of psychologists and emphasises the development of future-oriented competencies. Recognising the declining interest in the 'psychology of the individual', POP 2.0 acknowledges the need for cheap, scalable, multilevel solutions tailored to individual needs within organisations. This necessitates shifting practitioners' roles from facilitators to developers, focusing on becoming data-driven technologists and analysts. Increased digital and data competence becomes crucial, making POP practitioners essentially data scientists. Additionally, the role of POP practitioners' transitions from consultants to companions, emphasising the establishment of collaborative relationships with individuals and organisations to support their positive transformation and growth.



### ***Characteristics of positive organisational psychology 2.0***

POP 2.0 encompasses 11 distinct characteristics that position it as a progressive and multifaceted approach to understanding and fostering optimal functioning within organisational contexts. It focuses on:

- (1) *A Holistic View of Positive Organizing:* POP 2.0 adopts a comprehensive perspective that recognises the interplay between the micro (the individual), the meso- (the team, leadership), and macro (societal, policy) factors influencing organisational systems. It considers the dynamic, multilevel interactions between individuals, teams, leaders, organisational structures, and broader societal influences as a function of positive organising.
- (2) *Interdisciplinary Relevance:* POP 2.0 emphasises the importance of cross-pollinating ideas and insights from various disciplines. Specifically, it advocates for and actively applies its theories, methods, and approaches to adjacent domains. Further, it aims to draw on insights from fields such as information and communication sciences, sociology, anthropology, economics, and neuroscience to enrich its own understanding of positive organisational phenomena.
- (3) *Sophisticated Data-Driven Models, Approaches, and Measures:* POP 2.0 relies on advanced data-driven methodologies to deepen the understanding and prediction of optimal individual and organisational functioning. It employs sophisticated statistical modelling techniques, machine learning algorithms, and comprehensive measurement tools to analyse complex organisational data and identify patterns that contribute to positive outcomes.
- (4) *Rapid Adoption and Development of Human-Centred Technological Innovations:* POP 2.0 embraces and actively seeks out the latest technological innovations that could be deployed to facilitate optimal functioning in organisations. It leverages emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality, to create innovative interventions, enhance collaboration between stakeholders, and improve wellbeing in both the physical and virtual/digital environments. Further, it not only aims to adopt these innovations, but actively aims to develop new technological solutions to measure, predict and develop the positive states, traits and behaviours associated with optimal organisational functioning. While these technological advancements are integral to POP 2.0, it is important to maintain a human-centred approach. The design and implementation of technological solutions should prioritise the wellbeing and autonomy of workers. Human-centred design principles should be integrated into developing artificial intelligence systems, virtual/digital environments, and other technological interventions to ensure that they enhance rather than replace human experiences and relationships.
- (5) *Focus on Creating Positive Physical- and Virtual/Digital Environments and Meta-Verses:* POP 2.0 recognises the importance of both physical and virtual/digital environments in shaping organisational experiences. It emphasises the design and optimisation of physical spaces to promote wellbeing, productivity, and positive interactions. Additionally, it emphasises the development of virtual/digital/meta environments that facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing, and engagement among individuals and teams, as well as enhancing wellbeing and performance. POP 2.0 explores the creation of positive meta-verses, immersive digital environments that transcend traditional boundaries and offer new possibilities for collaboration, learning, and wellbeing. It seeks to harness the power of virtual worlds and digital platforms to foster positive interactions, meaningful connections, and shared purpose among individuals and organisations.
- (6) *Development and Deployment of Artificial Human Companions:* POP 2.0 explores the potential of artificial human companions as tools for enhancing collaboration and wellbeing in organisations. It investigates the integration of AI-based assistants and robotic companions to support individuals and teams in their work, providing personalised guidance, feedback, and emotional support. It considers the impact of automation on freeing up human time and energy, such that it can be redirected in greater proportion toward the kinds of creative service activity that the current generation of AI resources remains poorly equipped to address well.

- (7) *Strategies for Enhancing Robot-Human Collaboration*: POP 2.0 focuses on developing strategies and frameworks for effective collaboration between humans and robots in organisational settings. It addresses issues such as trust, communication, and task allocation to maximise the benefits of human-robot partnerships and create synergistic work environments.
- (8) *Real-time Status Tracking and Assessment of Positive Characteristics*: POP 2.0 leverages real-time tracking technologies and innovative assessment methods to monitor and evaluate positive characteristics in organisations. It enables continuous feedback and assessment of wellbeing, engagement, team dynamics, and other relevant factors to facilitate timely interventions and support positive growth.
- (9) *Advocating for More Sustainable Approaches to Work and Wellbeing*: Given the increasing focus on sustainability and environmental concerns, POP 2.0 should incorporate the principles of sustainable organisational practices. This includes exploring how POP 2.0 can contribute to creating environmentally conscious workplaces, promoting eco-friendly behaviours, and fostering a sense of environmental responsibility among employees and leaders. This approach also advocates for exploring innovative practices that promote work-related wellbeing while also considering the ecological impact and long-term sustainability of these interventions. One such approach involves incorporating walking meetings, where participants engage in discussions while taking a stroll outdoors. This not only encourages physical activity but also enhances creativity and cognitive functioning (Carr et al., 2023). Additionally, micro-positive interventions are gaining attention as sustainable practices in POP. These brief, low-cost interventions can be easily implemented within the organisational context, promoting positive emotions, resilience, and overall wellbeing among employees. By emphasising sustainable approaches to work-related wellbeing, POP endeavours to create a harmonious balance between the welfare of individuals and the ecological footprint of organisations, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable work environment.
- (10) *Valuing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Recognising the Needs of Diverse and Marginalised Groups*: POP 2.0 recognises the importance of exploring how organisations can contribute to promoting cross-cultural understanding, diversity, and inclusion on a global scale. It advocates for diversity, equity/justice and inclusion within organisations and develops and implements positive practices that address the challenges faced by diverse populations. This involves recognising and addressing cultural differences in organisational practices, leadership styles, and employee wellbeing. It further emphasises the empowerment of marginalised groups in organisations, giving voice to the voiceless and highlighting the unique values, strengths and contributions of different cultures, ethnicities, gender, age etc., in creating flourishing teams and promoting wellbeing and engagement.
- (11) *Embraces Stakeholder Engagement*: POP 2.0 engages various stakeholders, including organisational leaders, employees, journal editorial boards, policymakers, and the broader community. Stakeholder involvement provides valuable insights, promotes collaboration, and ensures research and interventions' relevance and applicability in real-world organisational contexts.

### Challenges, opportunities and future perspectives

With the nature, characteristics, and purpose of POP 2.0 clearly conceptualised, we next examine its challenges and opportunities. By exploring these factors, we aim to shed light on the critical areas that require attention and the potential avenues for future development within POP 2.0.

#### Clarifying meta-theoretical assumptions

To advance POP 2.0, it is crucial to clarify the meta-theoretical assumptions that underpin its development. This involves explicitly stating the purpose of theories within the discipline and identifying the types of theories or methods needed for their advancement. Critically evaluating the criteria for theory development and evaluation is essential, as it helps establish rigorous standards and guidelines (van Zyl et al., 2023). Furthermore, addressing broad and paradigmatic issues related to general theory development will provide a clearer and more robust theoretical foundation for POP 2.0. POP 2.0 should engage in developing a comprehensive perspective that defines its

understanding of organisational reality. This involves examining how POP defines reality and how its values and assumptions relate to the nature of organisational phenomena (Wissing, 2022). By explicitly articulating its metatheoretical perspective, POP 2.0 can better guide research and practice within the discipline. It is also necessary to clearly define its epistemological beliefs. This involves addressing questions about how knowledge is acquired and validated within the discipline (Wissing, 2022). By clarifying its epistemological position, POP 2.0 can enhance the quality and reliability of its research findings.

POP 2.0 should also strive to develop its own theories and approaches specifically tailored to studying positive organisational phenomena. While drawing upon relevant theories from other disciplines is valuable, the field needs to establish its unique theoretical contributions to advance its development (Lomas et al., 2020). This involves creating theories and frameworks that capture the complex interplay of positive factors within organisational contexts.

### ***Holistic, multi-levelled approaches are required***

Another critical challenge for POP 2.0 is to move beyond aggregating individual experiences to higher levels of abstraction as a means to understand the unique characteristics of positive institutions (e.g. using mean scores of individual experiences to indicate 'team' experiences: Donaldson et al., 2022). This requires developing a conceptual framework that captures the distinct features and dynamics of organisations as positive entities and not just a mere sum of individual experiences (van Zyl et al., 2023). By focusing on the specific qualities that contribute to positive organisational functioning, POP 2.0 can provide valuable insights into the design and management of organisations. Further, POP 2.0 should also consider the impact of social environments and social systems on the functioning of individuals, groups, and organisations. Adopting a holistic approach that incorporates the social context will provide a more comprehensive understanding of positive organising and how different systems interact (Lomas et al., 2020). To fully grasp the complexities of positive organisational dynamics, POP 2.0 should also acknowledge and examine the influence of society and communities on the creation of positive experiences at work. Considering the societal, cultural, economic, geopolitical influences and socio-cultural factors that shape positive organisational behaviour and practices will enrich the field's understanding of positive phenomena in different contexts.

One example of a holistic approach that may be useful in helping scholarship move beyond the predominantly individual-level focus of organisational psychology in general and POP is Lysova et al. (2019) 'integrative multilevel framework' of meaningful work. This framework integrates various factors that contribute to workers' experiences of meaningfulness and explores the intricate and multifaceted interactions among these factors across four levels: individual, job, organisational, and societal. In essence, the framework suggests that organisations seeking to cultivate meaningfulness should leverage workers' capacity for constructing meaning through (a) well-designed, fitting jobs that encourage job-crafting, (b) transformative leadership within rich cultures supported by inclusive policies and practices, and (c) communities with public policies facilitating access to safe, fair-paying work that enables work-life balance. Although the framework is more comprehensive than a theory, it allows researchers to empirically examine specific segments of the model using appropriate statistical techniques such as multilevel modelling, wherein workers and/or leaders are nested within jobs, organisations, and regions. Such a design allows for isolating predictors of well-being at different levels while accounting for the influence of other levels.

### ***Capitalising on rapid-changing technologies***

To stay relevant and harness the potential of emerging technologies, POP 2.0 must catch up with the rapid pace of technological advancements. This involves actively embracing and integrating new technologies into research, assessment, and developmental intervention practices (Lomas et al., 2020). The field should explore and develop innovative assessment and development approaches that leverage emerging technologies. Embracing data-driven methodologies, such as machine learning, natural language processing, and big data analytics, can provide more accurate and nuanced insights into optimal functioning within organisations.

Further, the metaverse presents an opportunity for POP 2.0 to explore and create positive virtual environments that enhance individual and organisational wellbeing. Meta-verses refer to digital worlds that exist parallel to the real world. Investigating the design of immersive digital workplaces aimed at enhancing team cohesion and collaboration and creating emotionally responsive digital colleagues and managers can revolutionise how we work and interact in the digital age. By designing and leveraging metaverse applications, POP 2.0 can extend its reach and impact in fostering positive organisational experiences.

POP 2.0 should explore the potential of blockchain technology and its applications in managing decentralised identities and building trust within organisations. By leveraging blockchain's capabilities, the field can develop novel approaches to enhance collaboration, transparency, and ethical practices in organisational settings. Adopting the concept of digital twins, which involves creating virtual replicas of physical objects or processes, can provide valuable insights for optimising organisational functioning (Van Zyl & Rothmann, 2022a). Finally, using immersive virtual reality can offer unique opportunities for POP 2.0. By creating immersive experiences that simulate positive organisational environments, the field can enhance learning, collaboration, and well-being for individuals and teams.

Further, POP 2.0 offers opportunities for studying human-robot relations and collaboration. Research in this area can focus on understanding and facilitating better relationships between humans, robots and AI companions within the workplace. Exploring ways to enhance collaboration between humans and robots can lead to more efficient and effective work processes and improved well-being and organisational effectiveness. Similarly, POP scholars should focus on developing and managing artificial human companions. This includes the development of work bots, social bots, and AI-enabled digital coaches. This research may involve linking AI, autonomous animation, and emotion research to create more human-like and emotionally intelligent digital entities. Understanding how these artificial companions can enhance collaboration, well-being, and performance in organisational settings is crucial for designing effective human-technology interactions.

Advancements in computer-brain interfacing also offer opportunities for exploring the intersection of technology and human cognition. Research on brain reading neuroinformatics and electroencephalography (EEG) can provide insights into controlling electronic devices with brainwaves, enabling new ways of interaction and communication in the digital workplace (Van Zyl & Rothmann, 2022a).

Finally, real-time status tracking represents a promising avenue for research within POP. By leveraging technological advancements, organisations can track and assess positive characteristics in real-time, allowing for timely interventions and adjustments to enhance well-being, performance, and organisational outcomes.

### ***Cross-cultural, indigenous, and meta-digital perspectives on POP***

POP 2.0 should actively strive to include and amplify the voices of marginalised and underrepresented

groups (Donaldson et al., 2023). By embracing cross-cultural and indigenous perspectives, the field can better understand positive organizing across diverse cultural and societal contexts (Van Zyl & Rothmann, 2022b). Additionally, considering meta- or digital perspectives will allow for the exploration of how digital technologies intersect with organisational and individual wellbeing.

### ***Regulation and standardization***

As POP 2.0 continues to evolve, there is a need for professional regulation and the standardised assessments and practices. Establishing guidelines and ethical frameworks will ensure the integrity and quality of research and practice within the field. To uphold ethical standards and promote the responsible use of data, technology, and interventions, POP 2.0 should develop comprehensive ethical research and practice guidelines. These guidelines should address issues such as privacy, informed consent, and the responsible application of technological innovations in order to minimise risk and the potential for harm. In the realm of digital ethics, future research can focus on topics such as data protection and identity management. Understanding the ethical considerations and developing guidelines for responsible data usage and privacy protection in the context of POP is essential to ensure the wellbeing and trust of individuals and organisations.

### ***Capitalising on applied research***

POP 2.0 should actively pursue applied research opportunities to bridge the gap between theory and practice. By collaborating with organisations, practitioners, and policymakers, the field can generate knowledge that directly informs and improves organisational practices, policies, and interventions. Applied research can contribute to evidence-based decision-making and promote positive change within organisations and society.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, the emergence of POP 2.0 represents a transformative shift in our attempts to understand positive organisational phenomena and their implications. With its emphasis on interdisciplinary relevance, advanced data-driven methodologies, the rapid adoption of technological innovations, and closer collaboration between science and practice, POP 2.0 offers new avenues for understanding and promoting optimal functioning in organisations. By embracing holistic, multi-levelled approaches, POP 2.0 acknowledges the



interplay between individuals, teams, leaders, organisational structures, and broader societal influences, paving the way for a comprehensive perspective on positive organising. Continuing research and practice in POP 2.0 hold immense potential for fostering positive organisational experiences, enhancing wellbeing, and driving sustainable organisational success.

## Note

1. Work and Organisational Psychology is the mother discipline of Positive Organisational Psychology. POP is usually taught as a module within broader Work and Organisational Psychology programs. Thus, a decrease in student registrations in the one, implies a decrease in the other.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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## Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Author contributions

LVZ conceptualised the manuscript and wrote the first draft. All authors made intellectual contributions to the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version before submission.

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