
Professor Sir Cary Cooper, CBE¹

1. **As 50th Anniversary Professor of Organizational Psychology and Health, President of the CIPD, Co-Chair of the National Forum for Health & Wellbeing at Work, President of the Institute of Welfare, on the basis of your precious expertise and vision, which are the more important challenges for next years in the field of Organizational Psychology and Health?**

As we are continuing to live and work with Covid-19 for the foreseeable future, and we are about to enter a worldwide recession worse than any in the past 100 years, we should be concentrating on the mental wellbeing of people in the workplace. The mounting evidence is that the workplace will be dramatically transformed as people begin to working more flexibly/remotely to minimise the risk of the virus as well because employers want to save on their central office, and organisations will downsize their workforce to reduce labour costs during the major recession we are entering and which will be with us for many years to come. The challenge for organizational psychologists is to help create wellbeing cultures that work that make people more secure, which provides them with manageable workloads, realistic deadlines, some autonomy and control over their job and ensures that line managers are trained in their social and interpersonal skills or EQ (emotional intelligence). Given that line managers are the ones ultimately responsible for the health and wellbeing of their staff, as well as their performance at work, it is important that businesses consider training and recruiting managers for their «people skills» as well as their technical skills. Organizational psychology has a role to play in identifying this as a major issue in the next 5 years if we are to overcome an epidemic of mental ill health cases amongst our staff

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and to get the most out of people with less resources and worries about their job security.

2. Which are the research and intervention areas you consider more promising, also considering the situation due to Covid-19?

In terms of interventions, and obviously research on these as well, I would say the following:

First, allow people who can and want to work flexibly to do so. The evidence is that this works for those who have multiple work and family demands, and makes them feel that you trust and value them. Second, organisations should now treat workplace wellbeing as a strategic issue and make it a Boardroom agenda item, which also means developing the role of Director of Health and Wellbeing at Work. This will mean that metrics can be collected for the organisation and researchers as to the effectiveness of which interventions work and which do not! So doing more research on what an effective organisational or individual intervention looks like will help drive less stress-related ill health and enhanced productivity. Third, encourage employers to put wellbeing data in their annual report eg. stress-related sickness absence, presenteeism, job satisfaction etc. And finally, in terms of training exploring «what works» in terms of individual interventions eg. resilience training, mindfulness, mental health first aiders, etc.

3. Which suggestions would you like to offer to both young researchers and young professionals who are beginning their career as organizational psychologists interested in the subject of health?

Given the coronavirus and the recession the next few years need researchers to upskill themselves in the health and wellbeing field. The opportunities are great, with more and more companies and public sector bodies hiring in occupational health psychologists reporting to HR Directors/ Chief Medical Officers. Getting more expertise in this field for purposes of consulting and research will pay off dramatically, given the high levels of workplace transformations,

the recession, the downsizings, the levels of job insecurity and less employees doing more work because so many staff have lost their job. Also employers are looking for people who can help not only with employee health but also the productivity of their workers — this is a real challenge.