

# Implementing Individual & Leader Interventions In Organizations: The EU H-WORK Approach

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 847386.



H-WORK is a European Horizon 2020 project funded to promote mental health and wellbeing in the workplaces

9 countries

14 partners





## H-WORK: European Horizon 2020 project

1. **What?** Promote Mental Health in public organizations and SMEs



2. **Why?** 10.7% of global population has any form mental health disorder (Dattani et al., 2021)

→ Especially crucial in public organizations and SMEs



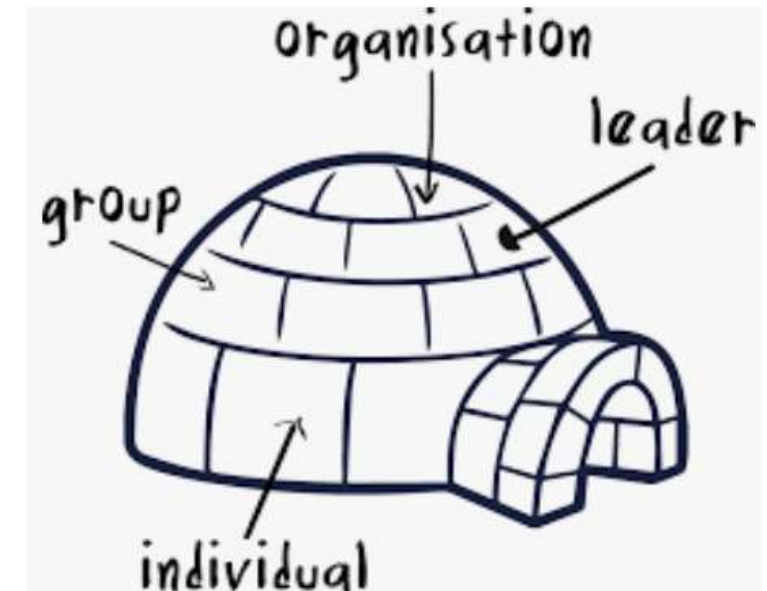
3. **How?** Multilevel interventions



→ Planned, theory-based actions that aim to improve employee health and well-being (Nielsen et al., 2010).

IGLO framework:

- I: Individual-level (e.g., Individual coaching)
- G: Group-level (e.g., Team building)
- L: Leader-level (e.g., Leadership development)
- O: Organizational-level (e.g., Work restructuring)



What are Multi-level interventions?

Nielsen, K., Yarker, J., Munir, F., & Bültmann, U. (2018). IGLOO: An integrated framework for sustainable return to work in workers with common mental disorders. *Work & Stress*, 32(4), 400-417.

# What are Multi-level interventions?

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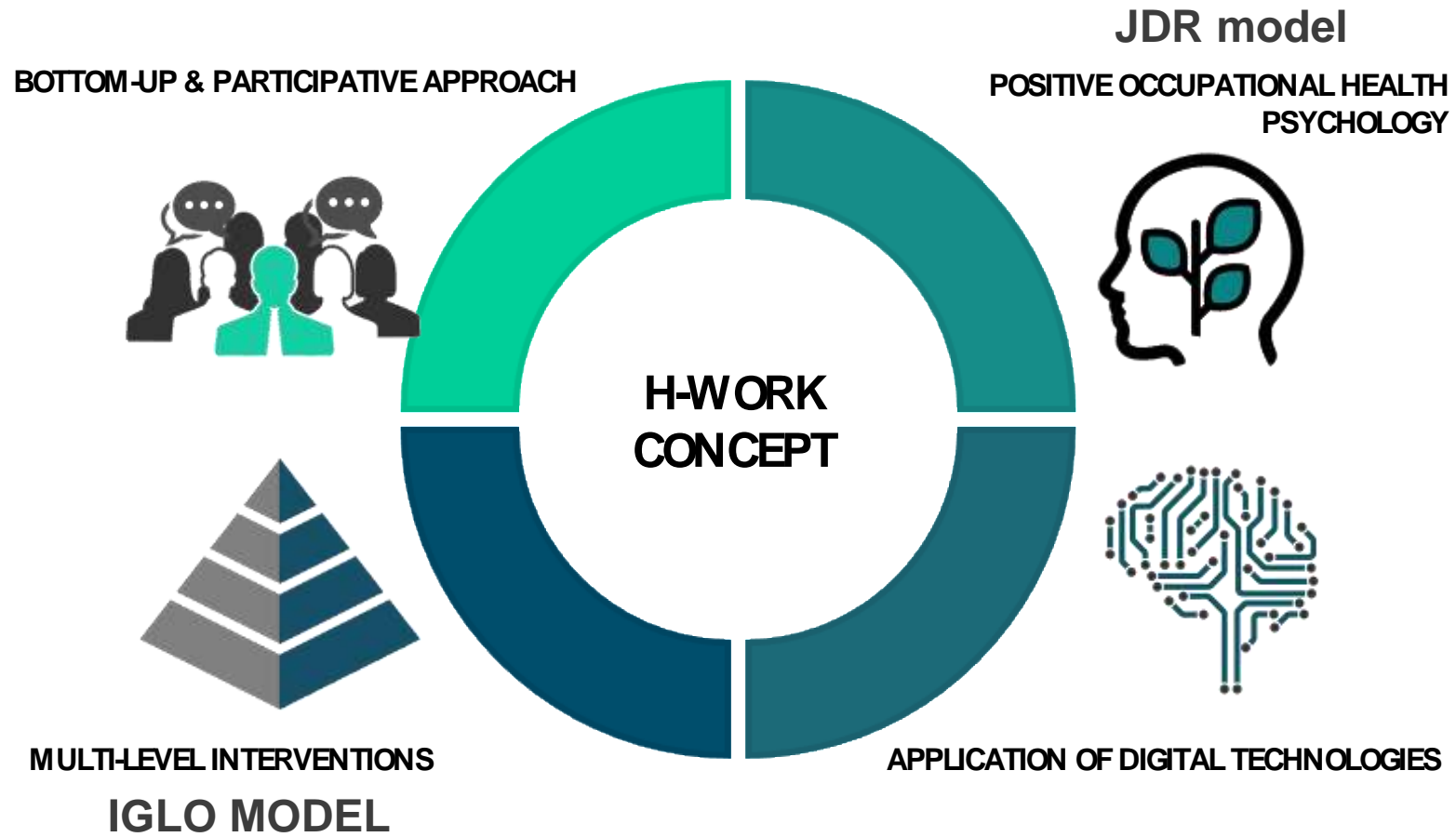
Leadership development (L)



Mindfulness-course (I)

**Multi-level interventions:** actions that target at least two levels of the organization (IGLO)

Day, A., & Nielsen, K. (2017). What Does Our Organization Do 16 to Help Our Well-Being? Creating Healthy Workplaces and Workers. *An introduction to work and organizational psychology: An international perspective*, 295.





1. Staying fit on the job: The effectiveness of work-related individual coaching in Germany.



2. Context-Mechanism-Outcome configuration of a positive stress management intervention.



3. Multilevel effects of leader transfer of training on leader and employee well-being.



4. The design and implementation of a workplace individual and leader-level intervention to promote mental health.



# Staying fit on the job: Effects of work-related individual coaching in Germany

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# Why do we need mental health interventions?

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- Increasing social and cognitive demands in the world of work (Hunt & Madhyastha, 2012)
- High work demands (e.g. high workload, lack of skills, high bureaucratic burden) can be stressful for employees (Lukan et al., 2022)
- What about employees with (chronic) mental disorders? (Rajgopal, 2010)
  - **Lack of person-job fit** (Edwards, 1996): (impaired) capacities can no longer meet the job demands
  - Affected by work ability, and often have **long periods of sick leave** (incidence of reported incapacity to work for mental disorders is twice as high as for physical illnesses; Linden, 2017)



Goal: individual interventions for **targeted problem solving** of the individual employee  
(no “one size fits all”)

- Effects of coaching from the literature (an extract):
  - Improved goal-attainment (Wang et al., 2021)
  - Increased work performance (Theeboom et al., 2014)
  - Higher self-efficacy (Moen & Federici, 2012; Theeboom et al., 2014)
  - Better (work) coping strategies (Theeboom et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2021)
  - Improved psychological well-being (Theeboom et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2021)

# Method - Setting, participants, coach

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On the basis of a **needs analysis** (qualitative interview analysis), introduction of individual coaching for employees of several organizations in Germany

Participants: N = 199 employees (11 non-participants, 10 drop-outs)

Coach: Behavior therapist in training (L. P. W.) under supervision of an experienced psychotherapist (B. M.)

Coaching: Three sessions (one hour each)

- Behavioral situation analysis
- Practicing alternative behaviors and/ or cognitions
- Reflection and conclusion

# Professional fields of participants

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- Classification of professional fields according to concrete work tasks (Muschalla & Linden, 2013)

Professional fields	N = 199 (%)
Office	55 (28%)
Service	63 (32%)
Education & Research	44 (22%)
Healthcare	27 (13%)
Production	10 (5%)



Work-related characteristics measured directly before and after coaching (pre-post)

## Impairment of work capacities: Mini-ICF-APP-Selfrating (Linden et al., 2018):

- Adherence to regulations
- Planning and structuring of tasks
- Flexibility and ability to adapt to changes
- Competency and application of knowledge
- Ability to make decisions and judgments
- Proactivity and spontaneous activity
- Endurance and perseverance
- Assertiveness
- Contact with others and small talk
- Group integration
- Dyadic or close relations
- Self-care
- Mobility

→ Mean value across all 13 work capacity dimensions



Work-related characteristics measured directly before and after coaching (pre-post)

## **Global Work Ability (Work Ability Index WAI; Hasselhorn & Freude, 2007)**

- Item: “Current work ability compared with the lifetime best: Assume that your work ability at its best has a value of 10 points. How many points would you give your current work ability? (0 means that you cannot currently work at all)”.

## **Job Coping Strategies (JoCoRi 7 items; Muschalla et al., 2015)**

- Example item: “When I get nervous or stressed at work, I can calm myself down.”
- Report of the mean value across all 7 items



- Classification of topics by “taxonomy of work-related stressors” (Rosen et al., 2010)

Coaching topics	N = 199 (%)
Role stressors	11 (5.5%)
<b>Workload</b>	<b>69 (35%)</b>
Situational constraints	6 (3%)
Lack of control	8 (4%)
<b>Interpersonal demands</b>	<b>71 (35.5%)</b>
Careers issues	22 (11%)
Job conditions	12 (6%)
Acute stressors	0 (0%)

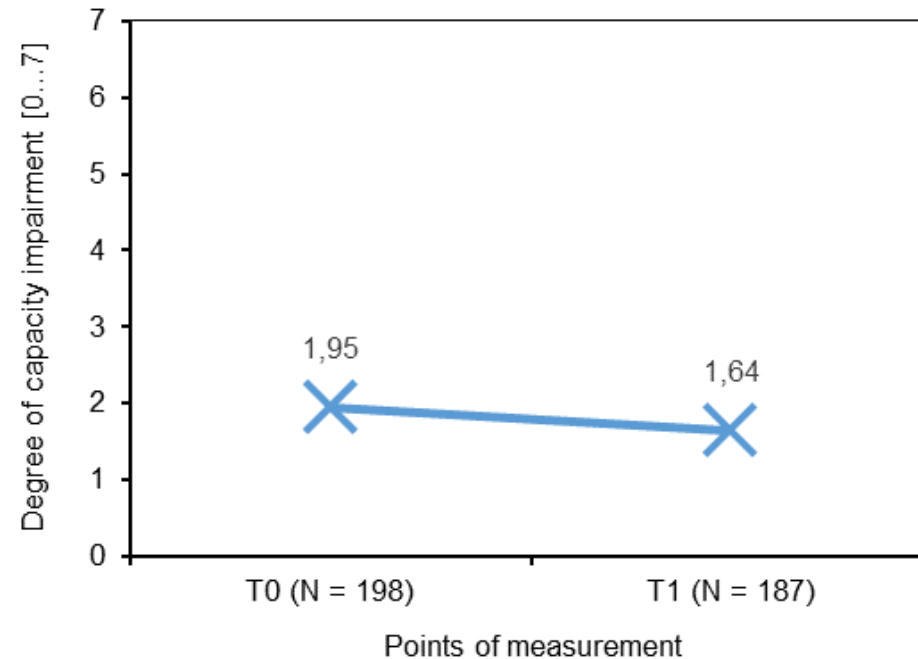


# Results: Impairment of work capacities

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Impairment of work capacities was rated lower after coaching than before coaching ( $T = 9.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d_z = 0.70$ ).



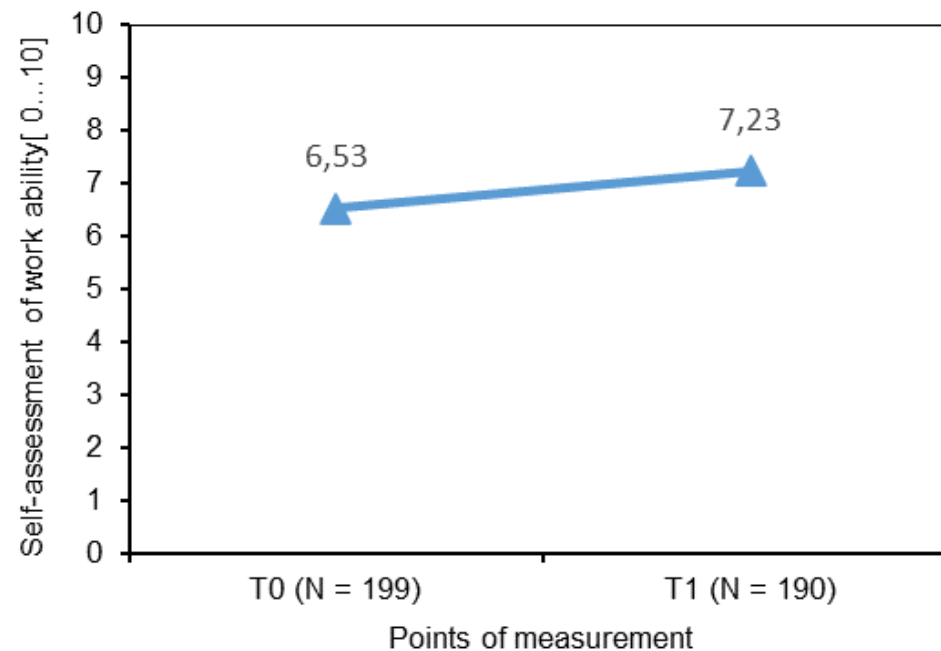
# Results: Work ability

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Global work ability is rated higher after coaching than before coaching

( $T = -5.86$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d_z = 0.43$ )



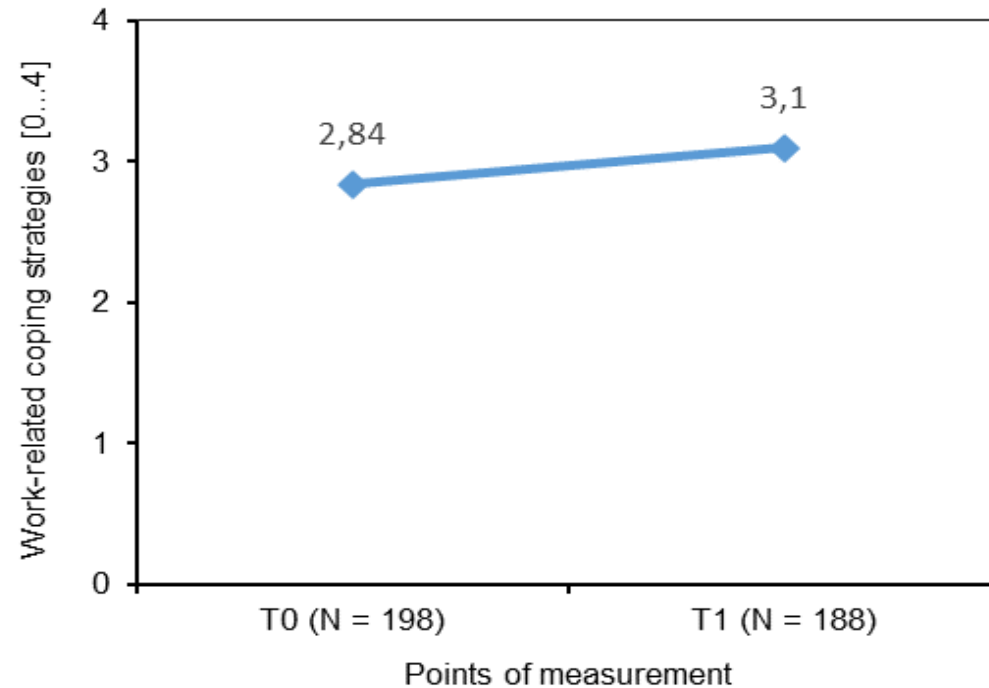
# Results: Job coping strategies

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Job-coping strategies are rated higher after coaching than before coaching

( $T = -8.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d_z = 0.59$ )





- + Improvement in work relevant capacities, work ability and coping strategies is consistent with previous research on individual coaching (e.g., Losch et al., 2016; Theeboom et al., 2014)
- + Individual focus on one topic
- + Three sessions
- + Low-threshold access
- + Identification of mental disorders through psychopathological expertise of the coach (behavioral therapist)

## Limitations:

- Convenience sample
- No control group (= no effectiveness statement)
- Self-assessment of participants
- Sample with high resources (few impairments in pre-measure - nevertheless improvements!)



- Short coaching of three sessions can **improve work related resources**.
- Coaching should be **behavioral** and **focused on one individual topic**.
- The approach to **mentally ill employees** (25-30% of general work force) and **healthy stressed employees** is **different**.



- Edwards, J. R. (1996). An examination of competing versions of the person-environment fit approach to stress. *Academy of Management Journal*, *39*, 292-339.
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- Wang, Q., Lai, Y. L., Xu, X., & McDowall, A. (2021). The effectiveness of workplace coaching: a meta-analysis of contemporary psychologically informed coaching approaches. *Journal of Work-Applied Management*, *14*, 77-101.

# Context-mechanism-outcome configuration of a positive stress management intervention

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## Local Public Healthcare Organisation in Italy (n=1551/8200)

- 3 Departments: Emergency – Medicine – Neurological Institute
- I-G-G-L

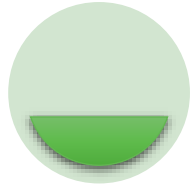
## Spanish SME on digital services and digital transformation (n=99)

- 3 Areas: Finances, Logistic and Consulting & Research
- I-L-0

## Spanish SME in the mechanical engineering sector (n=45)

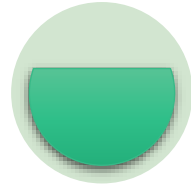
- 5 Areas: Finance, Commercial, Quality, Operations, and Process Engineering
- I-G-L





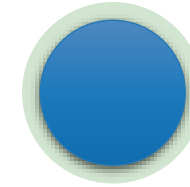
## Need Analysis

38 interviews with middle and senior managers  
11 focus groups 77 employees  
Contextual measures



## Implementation

Multilevel intervention strategies mainly based on Positive Psychology  
237 participants in Italy  
89 participants in Spain  
  
167 participants at the Positive Stress Management training module



## Effect and Process Evaluation

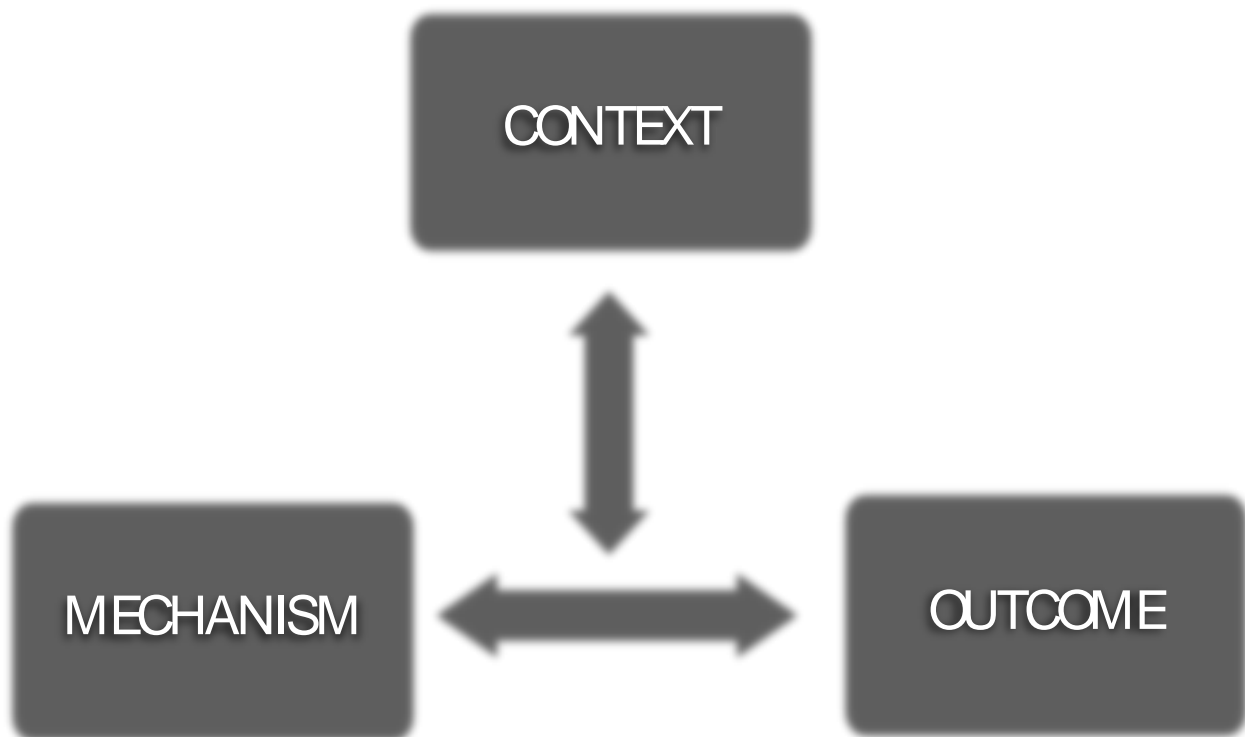
Perceived Stress  
Burnout  
  
Context Participation  
Role of the consultant  
Training Design  
Training Acceptance  
Opportunity to Integrate

- **Impact of the Pandemic:** work overload, burnout and stress (Benfante et al., 2020)
- **Coping strategies:** especially among healthcare (Greenberg et al., 2020).
- **Stress Management Interventions:** Adaptive responses to stress (Tetrick & Winslow, 2015)
- **Positive Stress Management Interventions (PSMI):** emerging (Coo & Salanova, 2018), focus on the underlying mechanisms of the intervention (Liu et al., 2019).

3 Group session of 3 hours each for 6 weeks total

Stressors, Mindfulness, Positive Coping Strategies, Personal Strengths, Values and Action Plans

15 intervention sessions  
From June till November 2021



- **Process evaluation:** which mechanisms trigger the effectiveness of the intervention (Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017).
- **Occupational health interventions:** employees' involvement, participation and acceptance (Lines, 2004; Nielsen, 2013).
- **Individual acceptance:** training transfer (Biron, et al., 2010).
- **Role of the consultant:** intervention uptake (Sekhon, et al., 2017).
- **Contextual factors:** may facilitate or limit participants' transfer (Blume et al., 2009).



## CHALLENGES

- Lockdowns
- Digital intervention adaptation
- High turnover and rotation
  - Project champion
  - Senior Manager
  - Employees and teams
- Ethics requirements:
  - Anonymity vs Matchmaking
- Parallel mental health initiative in the Italian test site



## 167 Participants

- 118 questionnaire
- 82 used



### **Context Participation** (Sorensen et al., 2018)

"In this organization, managers across all levels consistently seek employee involvement and feedback in decision making."

### **Training Design** (Holton III et al., 2000).

"The activities and exercises the consultant(s) used helped me know how to apply my learning on the job."

### **Role of the Consultant** (Vuori, et al. 2012)

"Did the consultants make you feel like your participation was valued?"

### **Training Acceptance** (Martin, et al. 2020)

"The format of the training and the materials were appropriate for my needs."

### **Opportunity to Integrate** (Holton III et al., 2000).

I have the necessary resources to use what I learned in training.

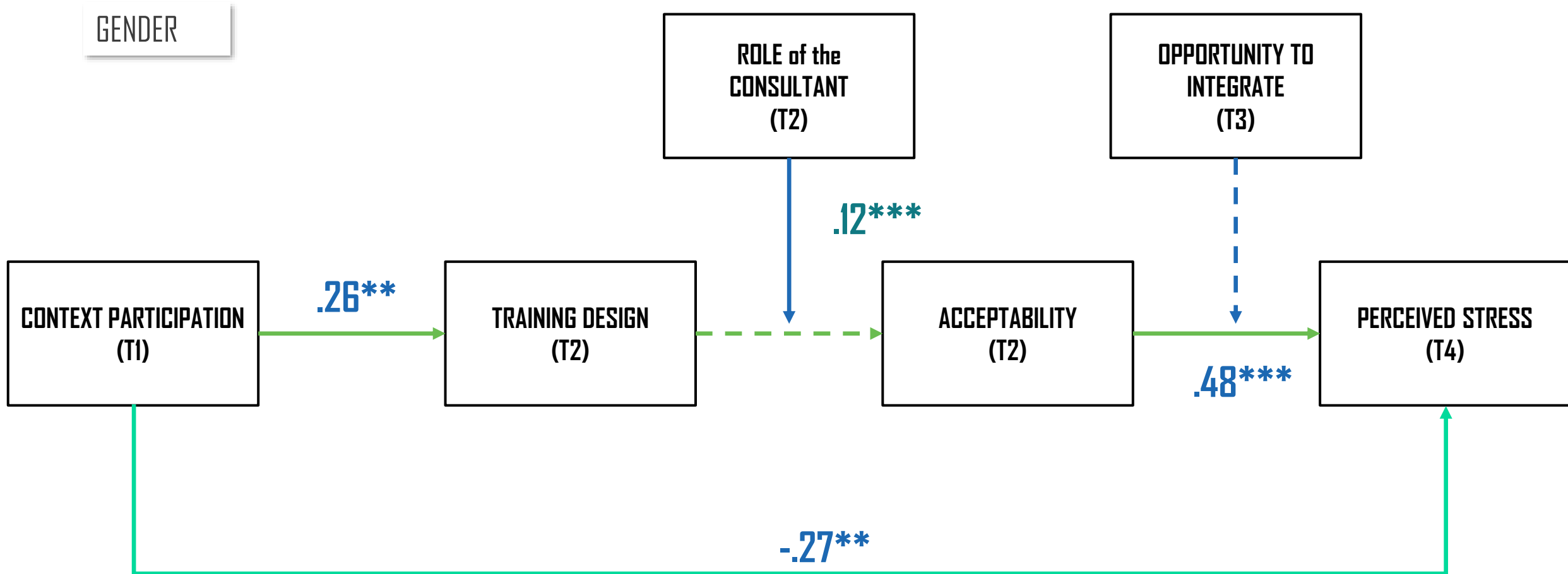
### **Perceived Stress** (Cohen et al., 1983)

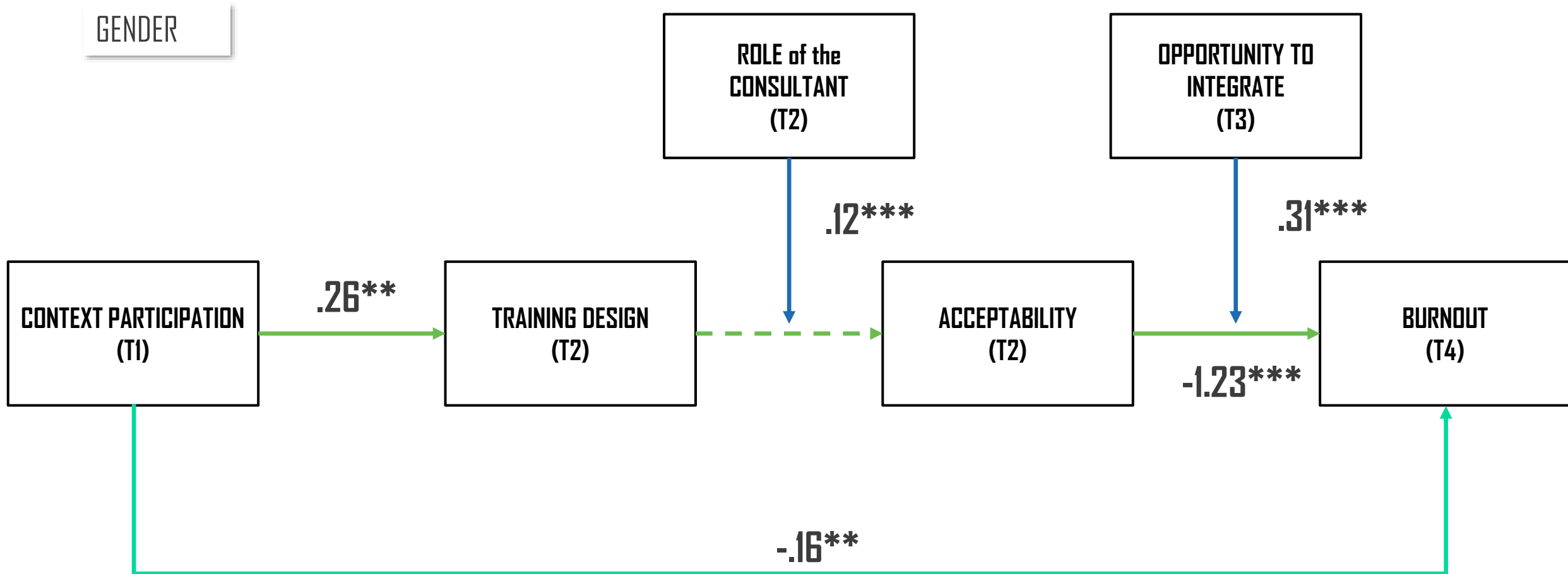
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

### **Burnout** (Schaufeli et al., 2020)

When I get up in the morning, I lack the energy to start a new day at work.

**Cronbach alpha's:** All measure above the threshold.70







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**Organisational context participation:** Leadership and employee engagement enhance intervention perception, improving mental health

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**Consultant role:** Facilitating open, stress-sharing sessions to reduce burnout's negative effects

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**Coping focus:** Addresses emotional consequences, not stress sources

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**Stress perception:** Deep-rooted perceptions persist despite coping improvements

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**Intervention scope:** Targets specific burnout aspects, leaving others unaddressed

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## Limitations and Future Research

Measurement time points

Sample and test sites

Missing values

Advance statistics



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# Multilevel effects of leader transfer of training on leader and employee well-being



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**Presenter:** Cristian Vasquez

Co-authors: Nielsen, K., Peláez Zuberbühler, J., Salanova, M., Christensen, M., Schmitt, J., Lofajová, D.  
van den Heuvel, M., Mazzetti, G.



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- **Leader behavior** influence **employee well-being** (Inceoglu et al., 2018).
- **Leadership training** positively **affect** different **employee outcomes** (Avolio et al., 2009; Lacerenza et al., 2017).
  - **Leadership training** has positive effects on **employee well-being** (Nielsen & Taris, 2019).
- **Leader behaviors** impact their own **well-being** (Kaluza et al., 2020),
  - **Evidence** regarding this relationship in the case of **leadership training is scarce** (Urrila, 2021).





## Leadership interventions

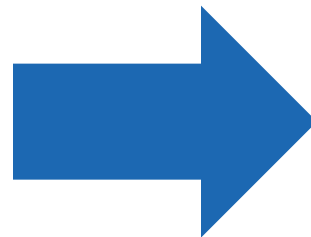
Little is known about the **specific mechanisms** that **lead to improvements** in both leaders' and followers' well-being (Avolio et al., 2009; Nielsen & Taris, 2019).

## Realistic evaluation

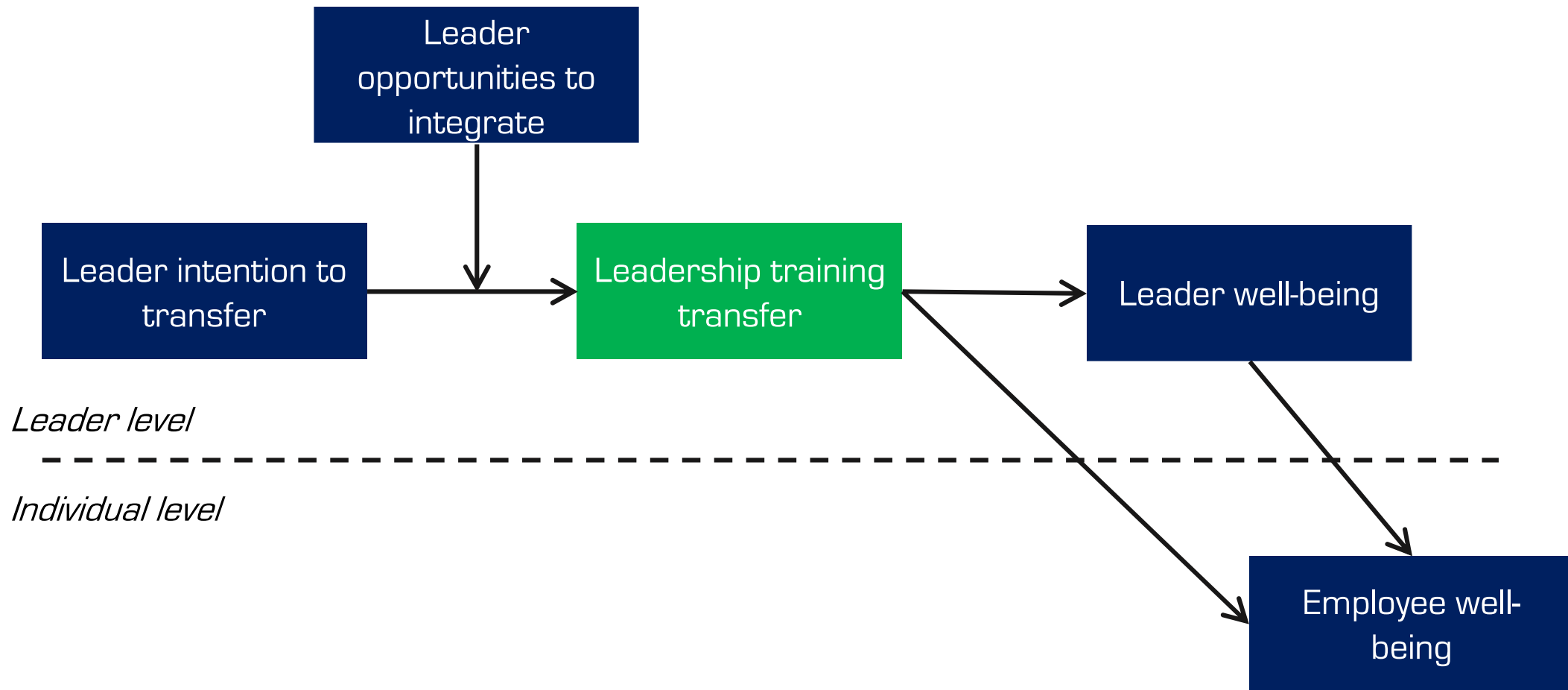
“What works for whom in which circumstances” (Pawson & Tilley, 1997)

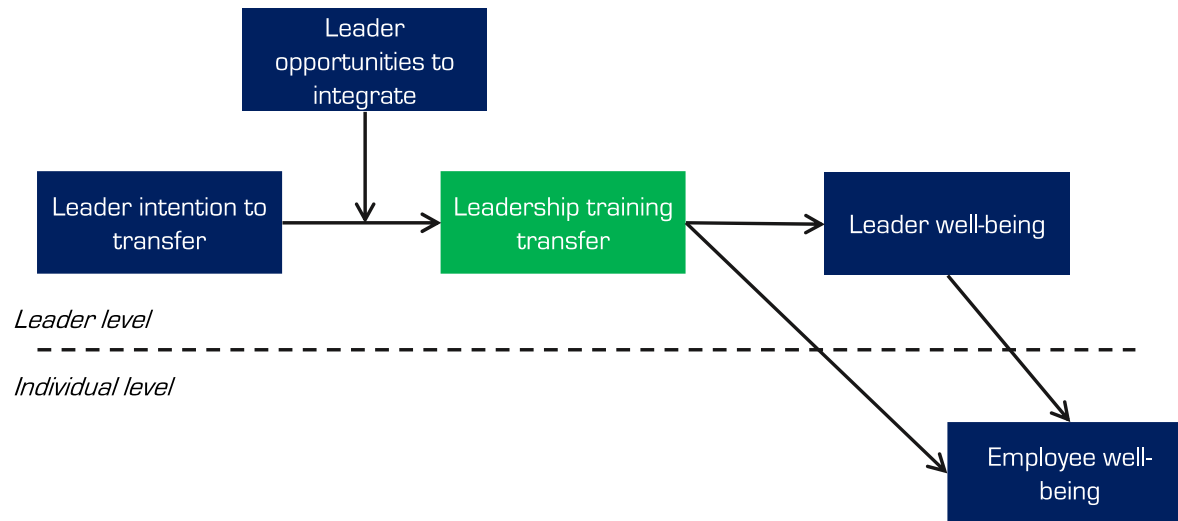
## CMD Configurations

Context + Mechanism = Outcome



What **mechanisms** and **context** variables can explain the effects of **leadership interventions** to promote **well-being**?





- Central **mechanism: training transfer**.
- Drawing on the **COR theory**, leadership training will positively impacts both leaders' and employees' well-being.
- **Training activities** may act as a source of **resources**.
- Based on **crossover of resources** (Hobfoll et al., 2018), **leader resources** can be interpersonally transferred to **employees**, increasing their **well-being**.
- Influence of **context** – **Opportunities to integrate**.



## Procedure

- 3-wave design (4-6 months time lag)
- Leader reported intention to transfer (T1), opportunities to integrate (T2), training transfer (T2) and well-being (T3)
- Employees reported well-being (T3)

## Sample

- Private and public sector organizations in the Czech Republic, Italy and Spain.
- T1: 111 leaders
- T2: 103 leaders
- Match T2-T3: 66 leaders
- T3 collecting data

## Interventions

- Activities consist of developing leadership strengths based on positive leadership development and coaching sessions (Malinga et al., 2019), distributed in three to six sessions.

## Measures

- **Intention to transfer**, a three-item scale from Yelon et al. (2004),  $\alpha = .82$
- **Training transfer**, three-item scale from Grohmann & Kauffeld (2013),  $\alpha = .82$
- **Opportunities to use**, three-item scale from Holton et al. (1997),  $\alpha = .82$
- **Well-being** – burnout and work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006; 2019).

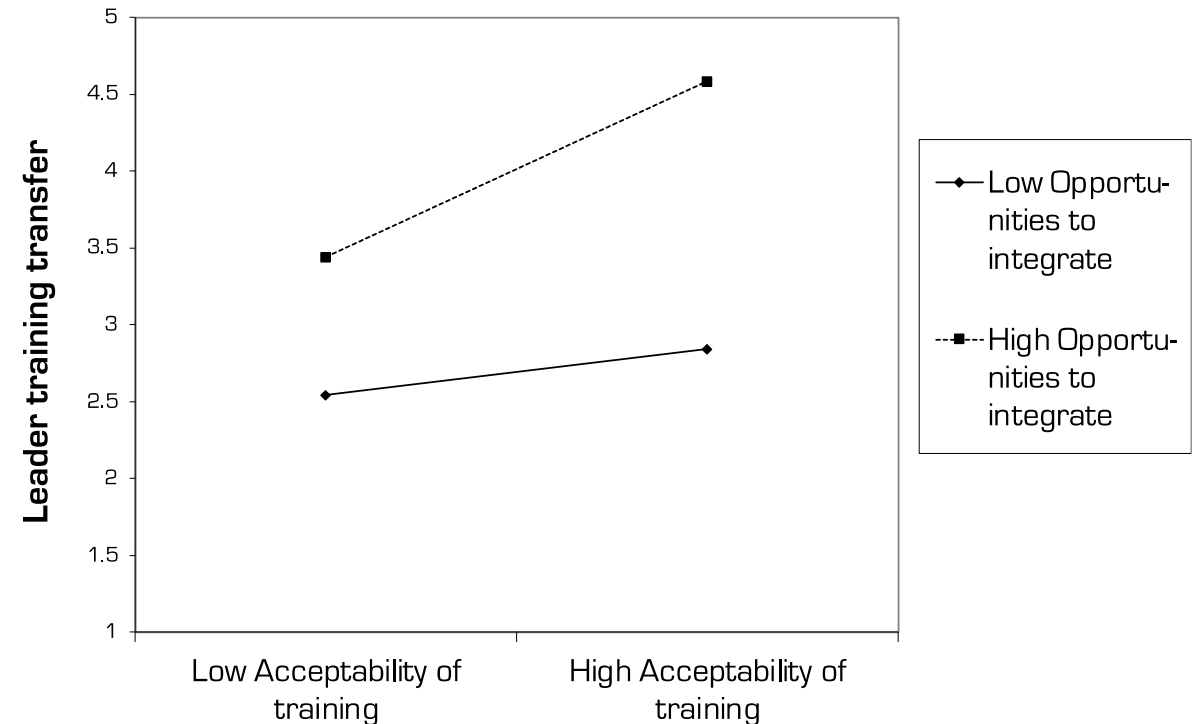


# Preliminary results

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- Leader intention to transfer (T1) and opportunities to transfer are positive (T2) and significantly related to training transfer (T2) ( $r=.22, p < .05$ , and  $r=.69, p < .01$ , respectively). However, interaction effect is not significant ( $r = .17, p = .15$ )
- Leader acceptability (T1) and opportunities to transfer are positive (T2) and significantly related to training transfer (T2) ( $r = .36, p < .01$   $r = .66, p < .01$ , respectively). However, interaction effect is not significant ( $r=.21, p < .05$ )



# Potential limitations

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- Study still ongoing... we haven't been able to conduct multi-level analysis (full multi-level moderated mediation model).
- Realistic evaluation: Potential influence of additional mechanisms (e.g., perception of design) and context variables (e.g., demands and resources).
- Unable to compare our data with leaders' and employees' well-being who did not participate in the interventions.





This study contributes to the assessment of the process evaluation framework applied to leader-level interventions. Based on realist evaluation (Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017), we test specific mechanisms (e.g., leader intention to transfer, training transfer, and elements of the design) that can explain the influence of leader training, and potentially influence their and employees' well-being.

Contribute to organizations and practitioners by suggesting a simple assessment of leadership training and sharing evidence-based training concepts for improving leaders' well-being.

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### Just ask us

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# The Design and Implementation of a Workplace Individual- and Leader-level Intervention to Promote Mental Health in Junior University Teachers

University of Amsterdam

Vince Pelzer

Machteld van den Heuvel

Roy Sijbom

Edwin A.J. van Hooft



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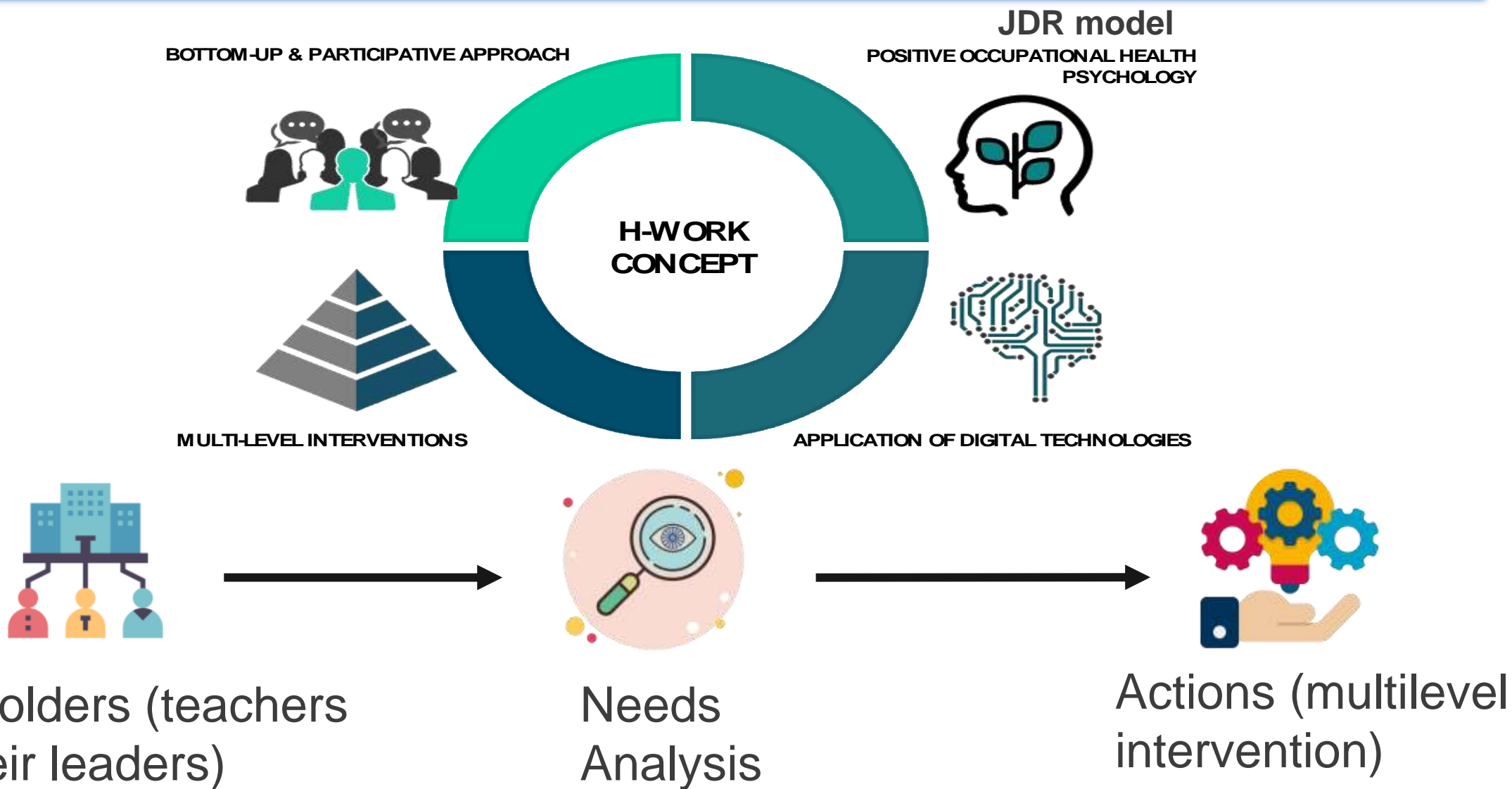
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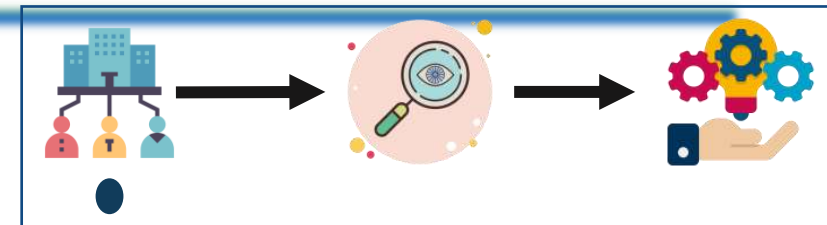


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# Step 1: Stakeholders & setting

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I-level



Junior teachers

- Temporary contract
- 22-30 years old
- Different departments

L-level

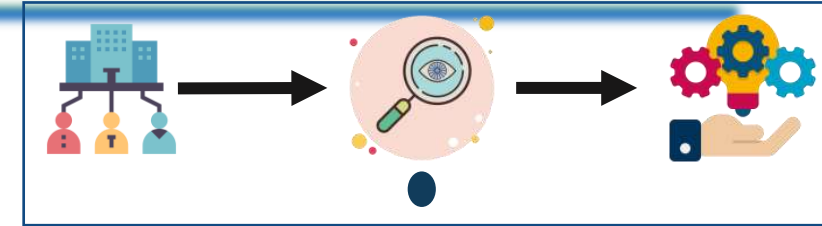


Department leaders

- Supervision of junior lecturers
- Professors

# Step 2: Needs analysis

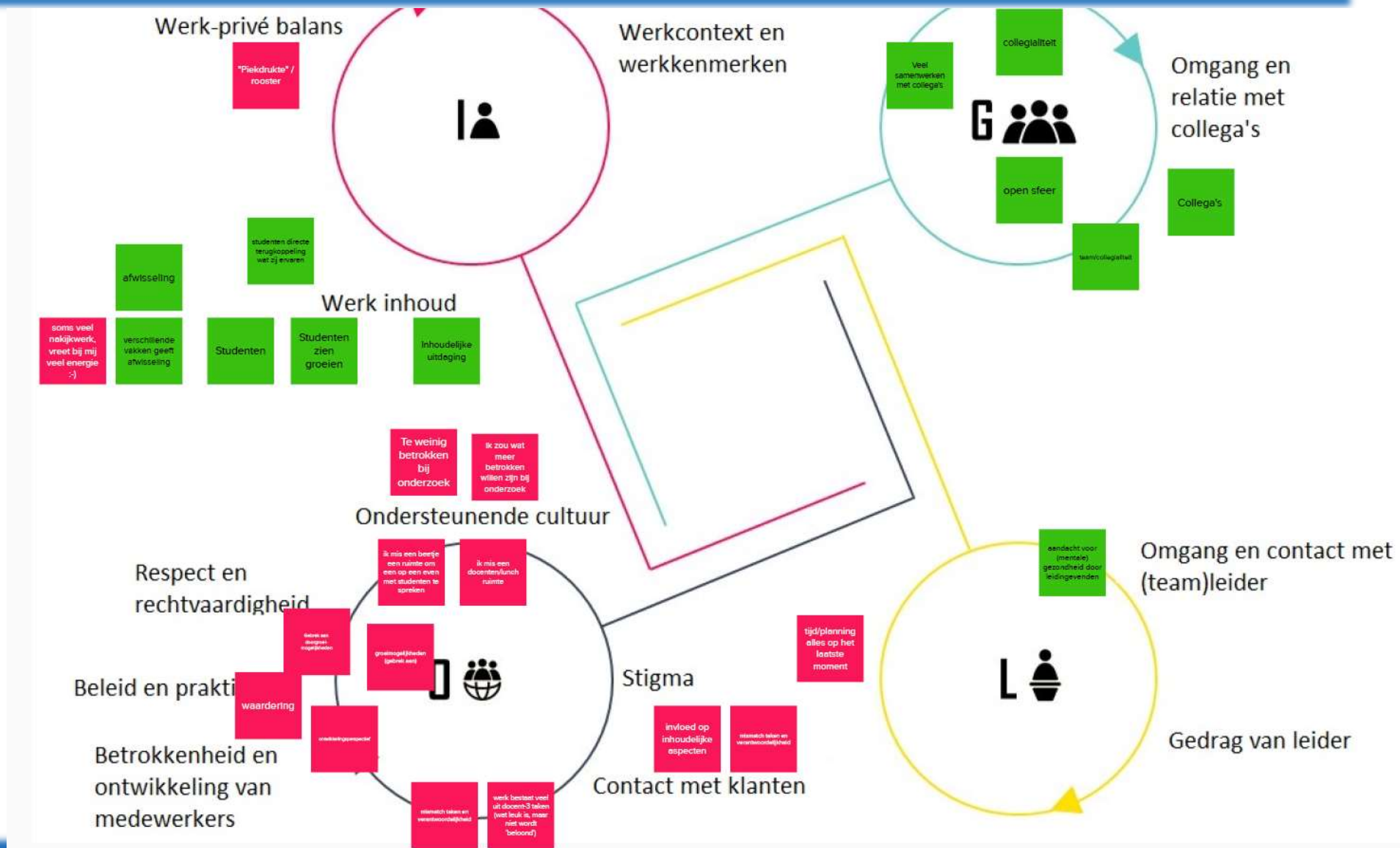
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Example:

- Using Mural to identify job demands and resources on the IGLO levels

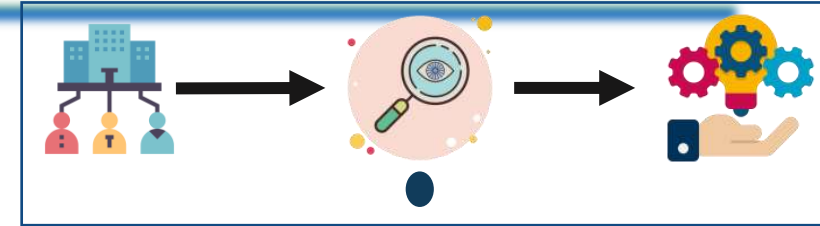


# Step 2: Needs analysis - Identifying broader themes

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Colour coding themes with JD-R



## Green

- Job resources, e.g.,:
- Leader support
  - Autonomy
  - Colleague support

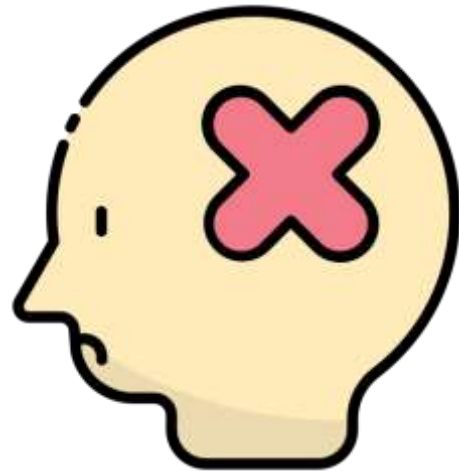
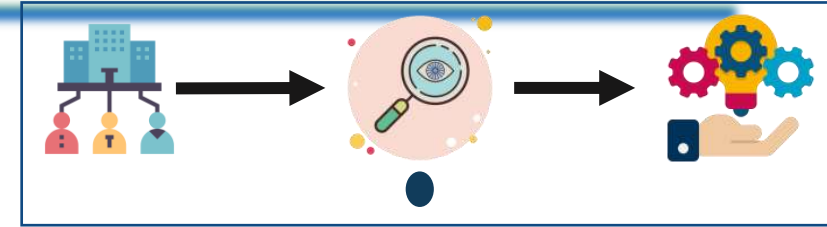


## Red

- Job demands, e.g.,:
- Job insecurity
  - Lack of leadership
  - Workload

# Step 2: Results Needs analysis

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Career uncertainties

Appreciations & Recognition by leaders

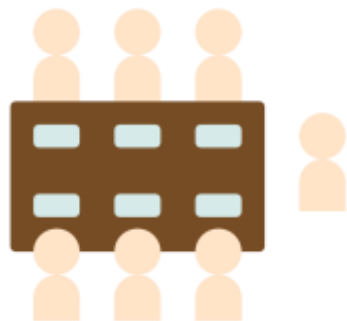
High work load

# Step 2: Stakeholder meeting

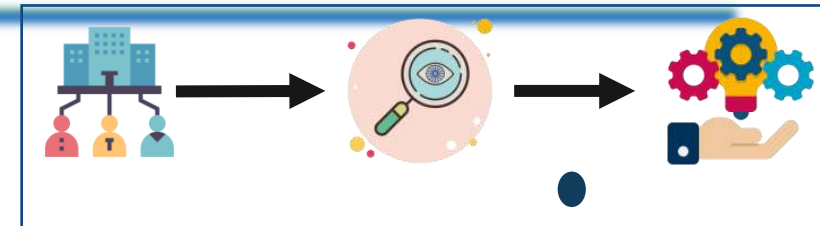
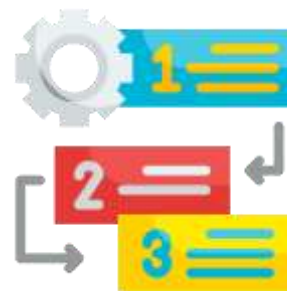
FOLLOW US



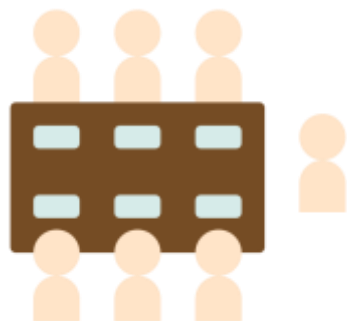
Meeting 1



Prioritize demands



Meeting 2



Choose actions, appropriate for prioritized demands



We (researchers) brainstormed before this second meeting on possible actions

# Step 3: Actions

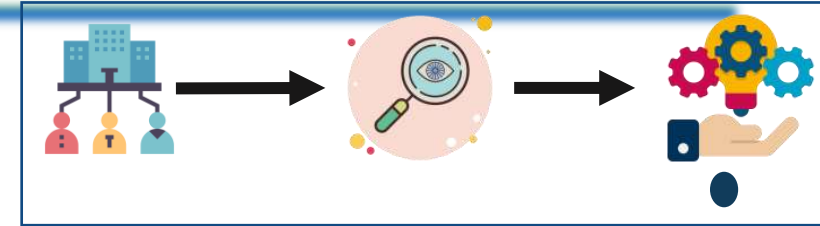
FOLLOW US



## Career Crafting

Goal: support teachers in their **career possibilities**. Developing **proactive career behaviours**.

- 1 session of 4h.
- Based on **job crafting**
- Initiate changes for their future career developments with **action planning**



## Leadership intervention

Goal: to support senior and middle managers on the development of leader **coaching skills**

- 1 intake session, and 1 session of 4h
- Based on **positive leadership**
- Reflect on leadership behaviors with focus on **collaboration, support and guidance**





Career uncertainties



**Career Crafting**

Appreciations & Recognition by leaders



**Leadership intervision**



## Take-aways:

- Structured approach like the H-WORK approach helpful in boosting mental health
- Important to include stakeholders on different levels

## Lessons learned:

- Thorough needs analysis is important
- Actions on multiple levels is important
- Take different stakeholders into account

Available for everyone → online platform (<https://www.mentalhealth-atwork.eu/>)



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### Just ask us

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Subscribe to our newsletter and get news and updates about H-WORK project straight to your inbox.



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