

Changes in social identification amongst teleworkers during COVID-19: A person-centered approach

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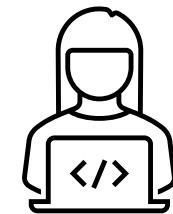
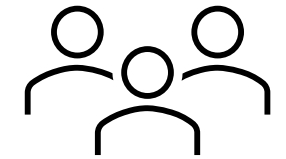
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Key concepts

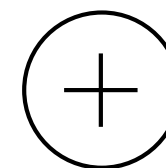
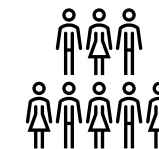
- **Social identification** = the positive, emotional, and cognitive bond and oneness between the employee and the social entity (e.g., Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Edwards, 2005; Leach et al., 2008)
- **Teleworking** = work that is conducted away from a central workplace using technology to interact with others as needed to conduct work tasks.



This study

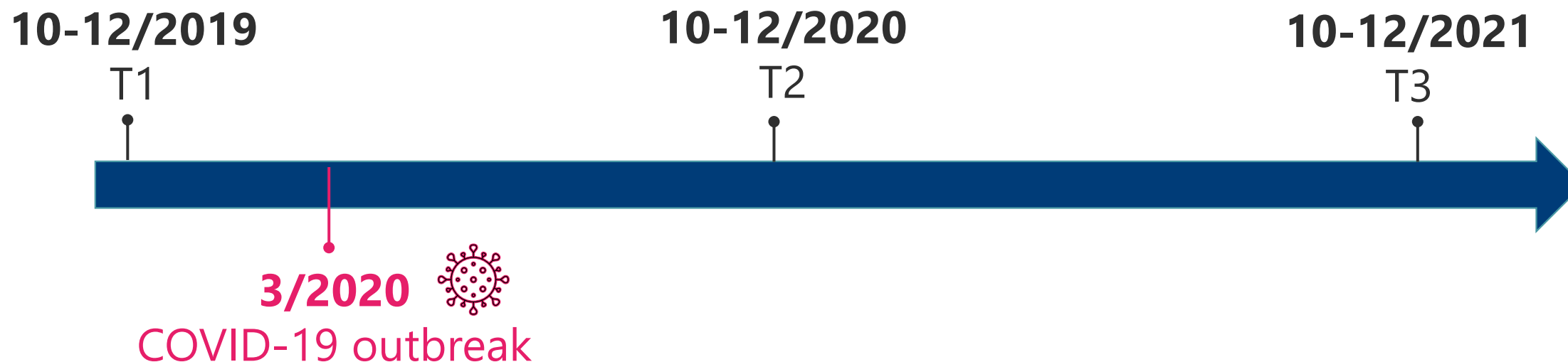
Given the increase in teleworking and its potential risk for social relationships it is essential to understand:

- a) how social identification at work evolves and if there are subgroups that differ in such changes and levels
- b) how to promote identification (predictors), and
- c) implications of identification (outcomes)



The data and context

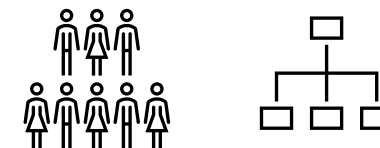
- We examined levels and changes in **organizational and relational co-worker identification** in seven Finnish organizations **during a major shift to teleworking** across two years (three-wave longitudinal data collected from teleworkers: $N = 895$)



Identification scales as basis of profiles (T1&T2&T3)

- **Organizational identification:** 4 items (Postmes et al., 2013; Leach et al., 2008) $\alpha = .87 / .89 / .88$

e.g., "Being an employee at [organization X] is an important part of how I see myself."



- **Relational identification with co-workers:** 3 items (Sluss et al., 2012).

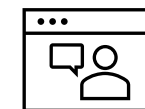
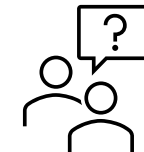
$\alpha = .76 / .76 / .79$

e.g. "My relationship with my colleagues is an important part of how I see myself."



Predictors of identification profiles

- **Organizational fairness T1:** 3 items (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009) $\alpha = .89$
e.g., "Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization"
- **Co-worker support T1:** 4 items (Peeters et al., 1995) $\alpha = .84$
e.g., "If needed, my colleagues help me with a certain task."
- **Tenure T1:** "How many years have you worked in your current workplace?"
- **Face-to-face interaction T2:** "How often are you in contact with your co-workers face-to-face?"
- **Interaction via audio and/or video T2 :** "How often are you in contact with your co-workers via video- or audio calls (for instance by using Teams, Zoom, or Skype)?"

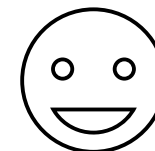


Outcomes of identification profiles (T3)

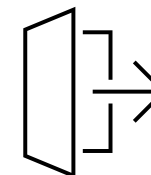
- **Work engagement:** 3 items (Schaufeli et al., 2017)

$\alpha = .90$

e.g., "At my work, I feel bursting with energy"

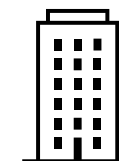


- **Turnover intentions:** I often think about quitting my job.



- **Attitudes towards hybrid work:** 3 items (Khalifa & Davison, 2008) $\alpha = .94$

e.g., "Working also at the office is good for me."

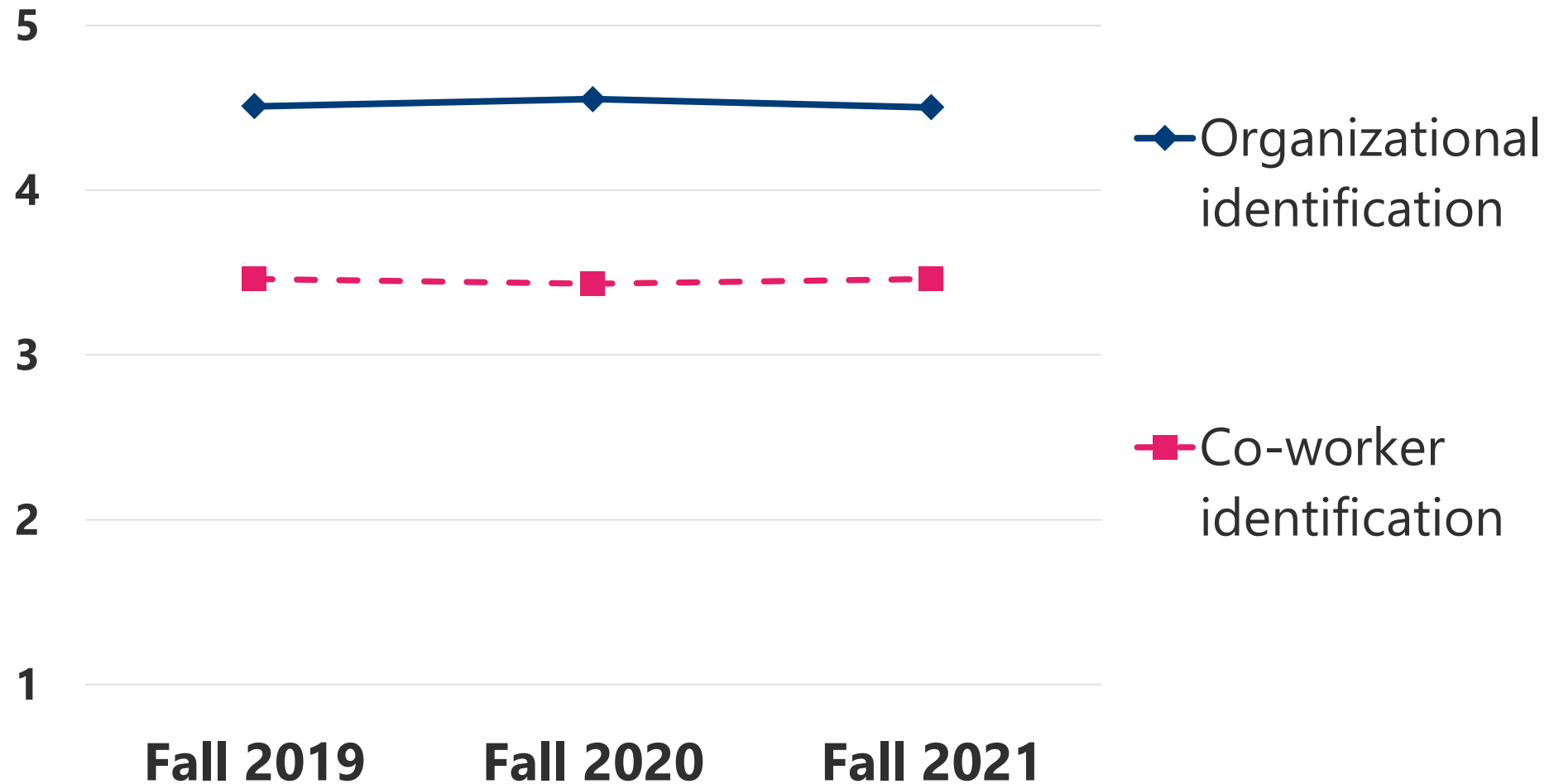


The person-centered analysis

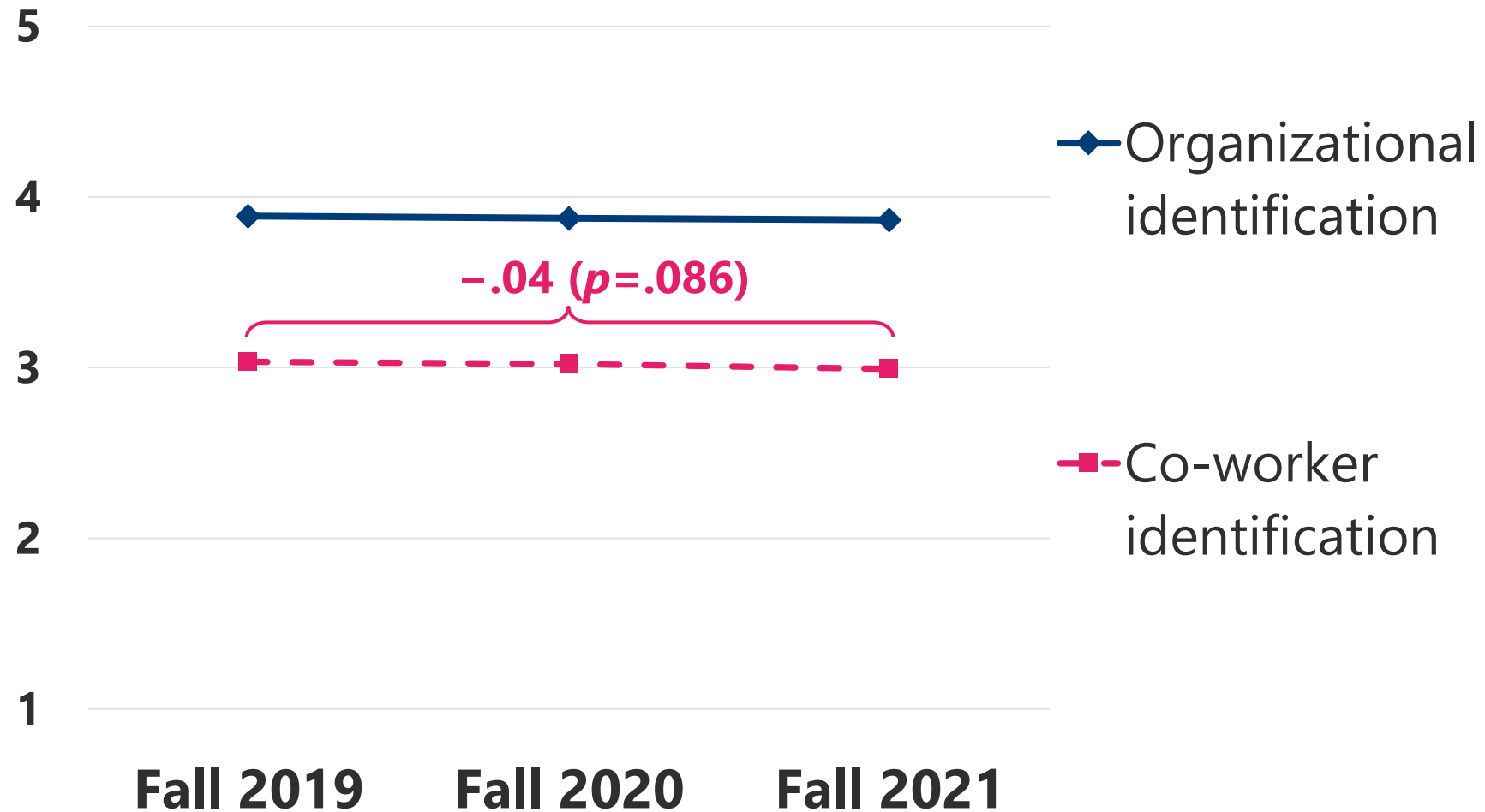
- Growth mixture modeling in Mplus
 - Supported a solution of three profiles / subgroups within the data in terms of levels and changes in identification.



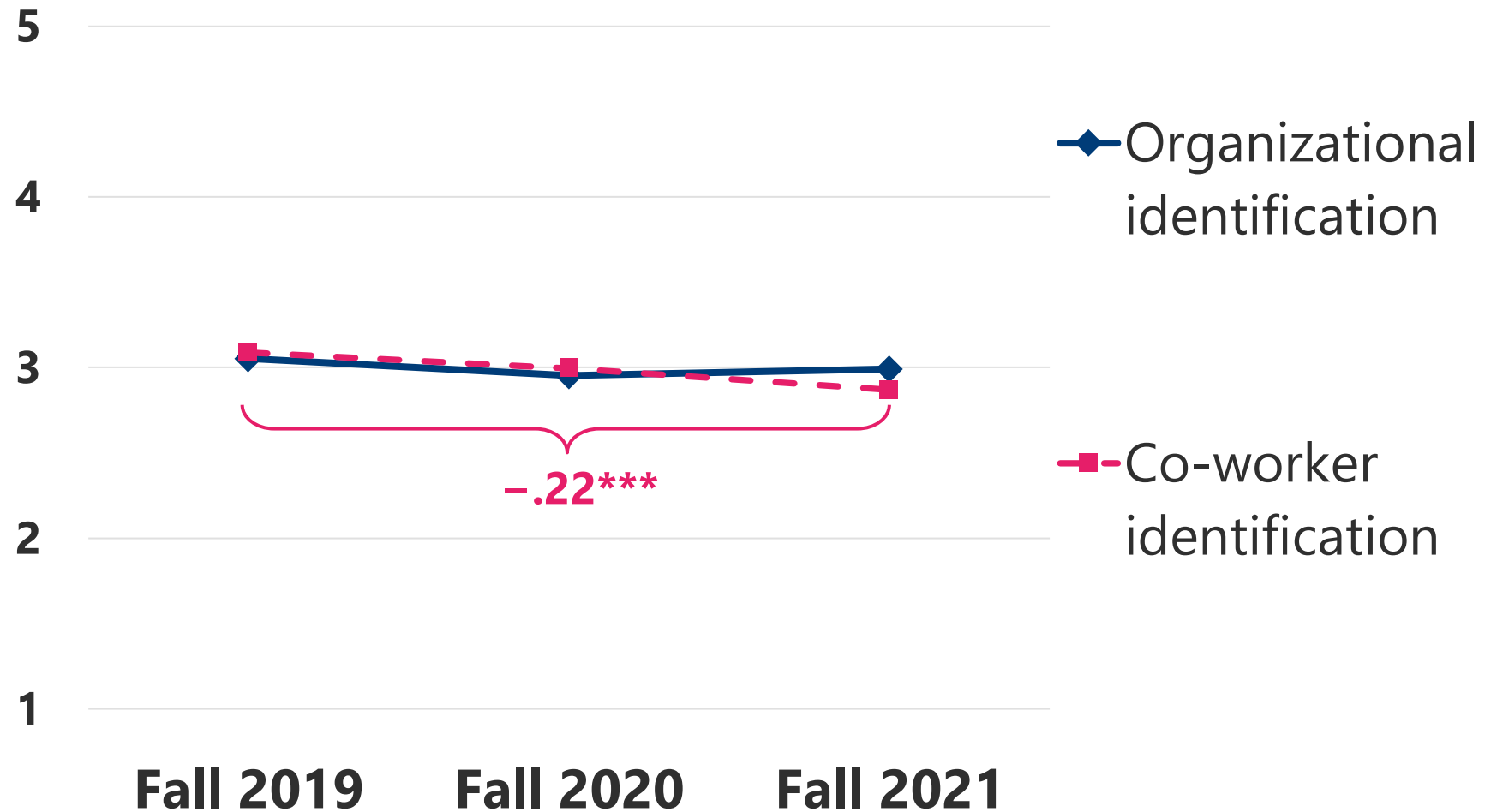
Profile 1/3: "favorable", N=415 (46.4 %)



Profile 2/3: "neutral", N=351 (39.2 %)

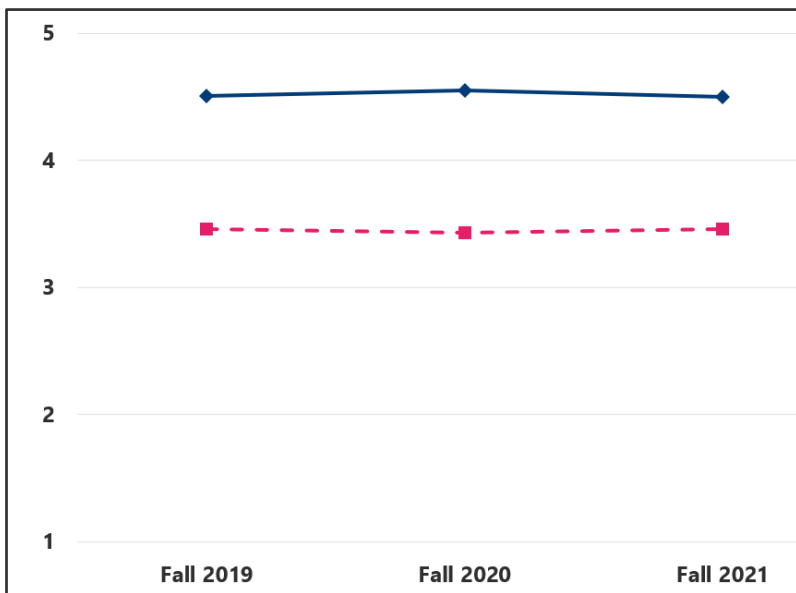


Profile 3/3: "unfavorable", N=129 (14.4 %)

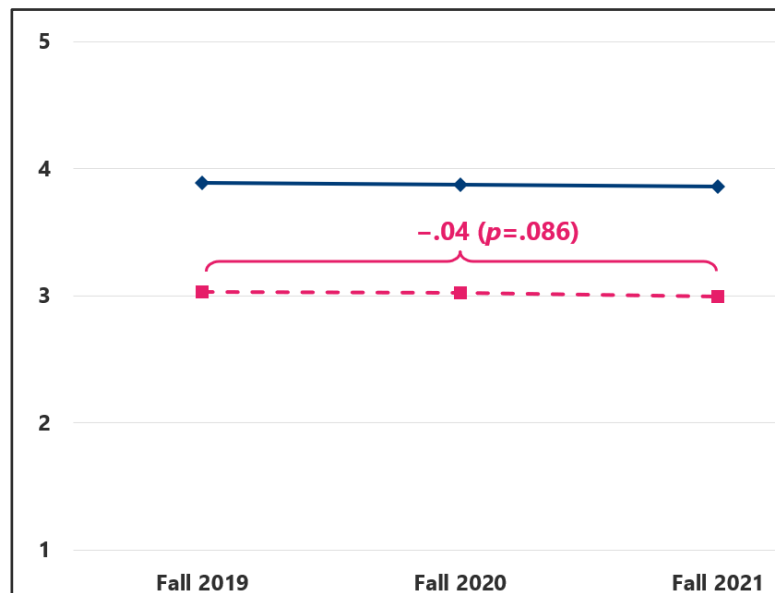


The three subpopulations in the sample

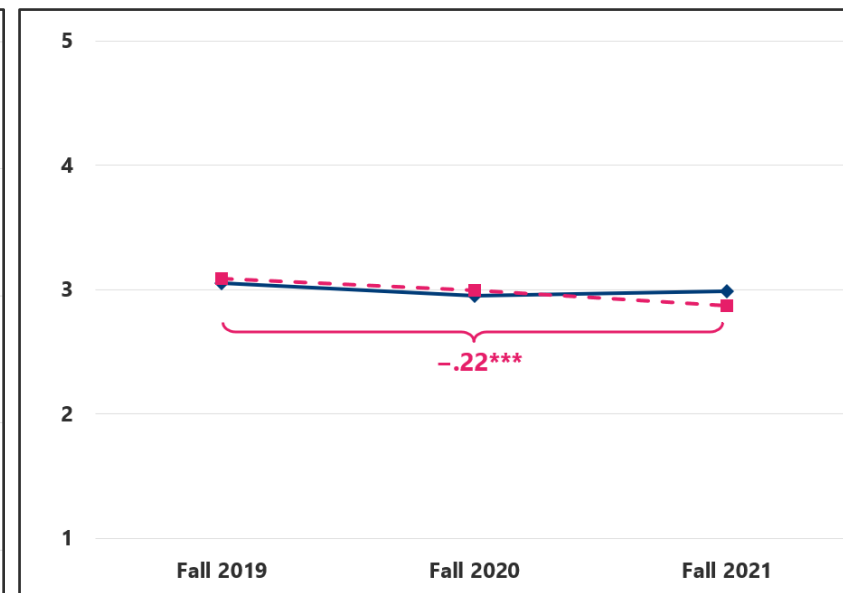
P1: favorable, 46 %



P2: neutral, 39 %



P3: unfavorable, 14 %



—◆— Organizational identification

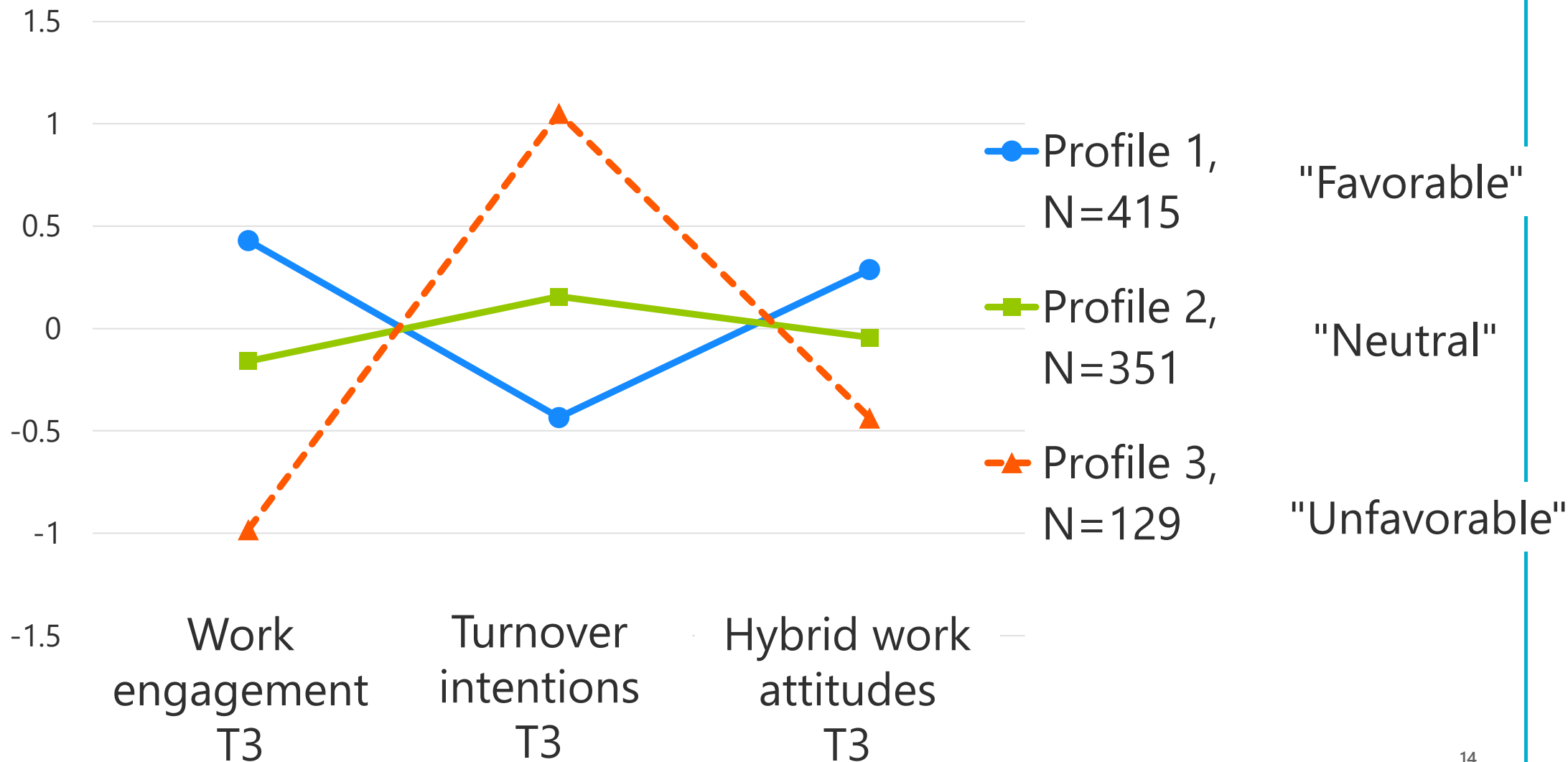
—■— Co-worker identification

Predictors of profile memberships

Favorable vs. neutral | Favorable vs. unfavorable | Neutral vs. unfavorable

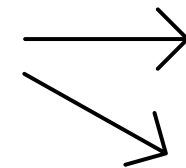
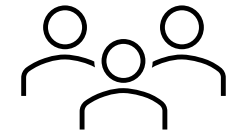
| | P1 vs. P2 | | P1 vs. P3 | | P2 vs. P3 | |
|--|----------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|
| | Coeff. | Odds ratio | Coeff. | Odds ratio | Coeff. | Odds ratio |
| Organizational fairness T1 | 1.53*** | 4.61 | 2.61*** | 13.53 | 1.08*** | 2.93 |
| Social support from co-workers T1 | .77*** | 2.15 | .50 | 1.65 | -.26 | .08 |
| Tenure T1 | .05*** | 1.05 | .09*** | 1.10 | .05** | 1.05 |
| Face-to-face interaction T2 | .10 | 1.11 | .37** | 1.45 | .27* | 1.30 |
| Audio/video interaction T2 | .19 | 1.21 | .22 | 1.25 | .04 | 1.04 |

Outcomes of profile membership



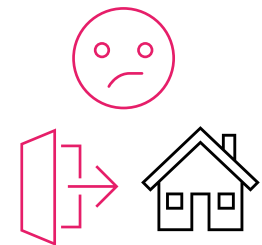
Findings and implications 1/2

- Identification amongst teleworkers may evolve differently in different groups - not similarly captured by variable-centered analyses.
- Co-worker identification may be more difficult to maintain amongst teleworkers.
 - Decreases in co-worker identification were found in 14 % of the sample, in addition to the tentative decreases in 39 % of the sample.
 - Those with lowest identification showed most substantial co-worker identification decreases.

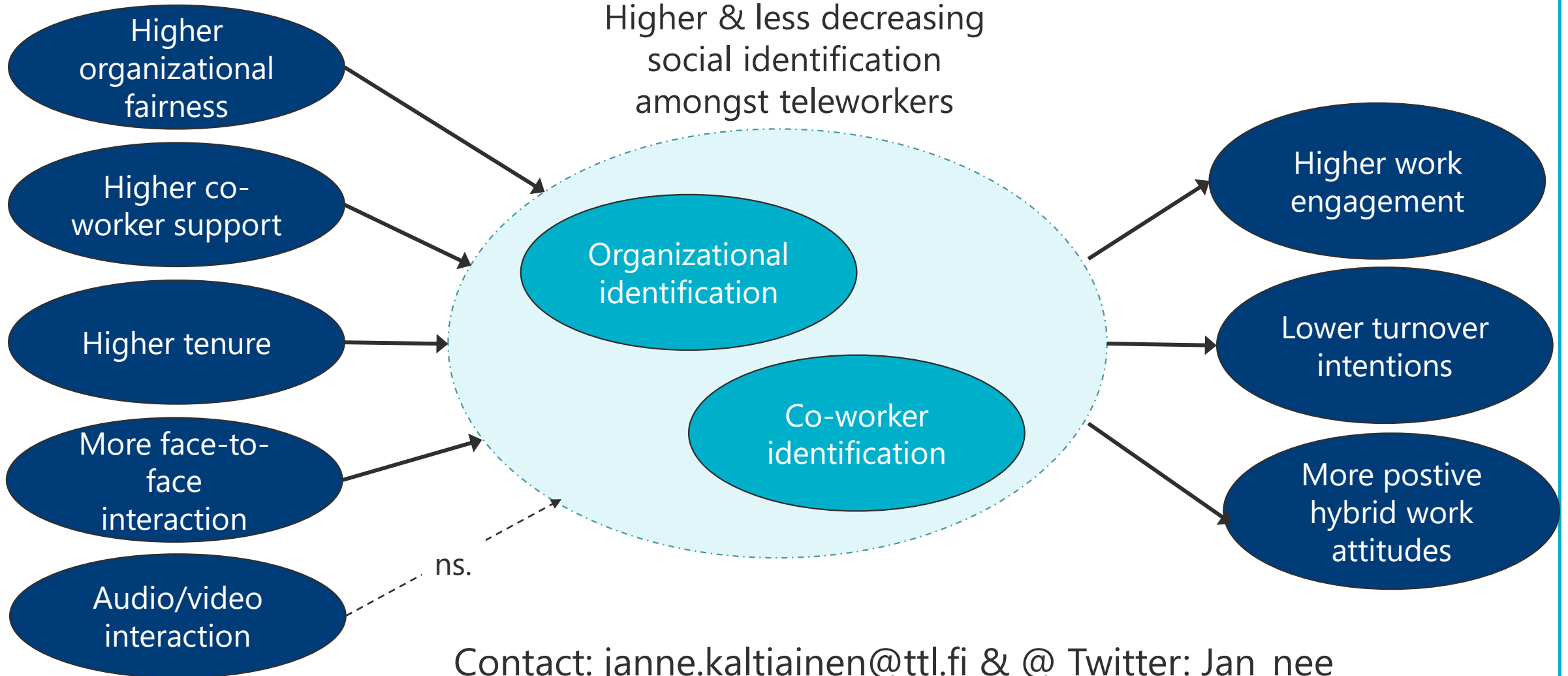


Findings and implications 2/2

- Fair treatment and co-worker support may promote identification (also) amongst teleworkers.
- Teleworkers with lower tenure (e.g., newcomers) more at risk for low and decreasing identification.
- Lack of face-to-face interaction may be a risk for identification amongst teleworkers.
 - Audio/video interaction may not counter this risk.
- Deterioration and low levels of identification may harm employee well-being, turn them into a flight risk, and amplify their wishes to telework more in the future.



Thank you!



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