



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO  
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

# The MEANWELL Project: Developing meaningful work and a good work life together with organizations

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Työsuojelurahasto  
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The Finnish Work Environment Fund

# Research group and partners

## Core staff, Department of Psychology, University of Jyväskylä (JYU):

- Johanna Rantanen: project leader, main responsible researcher and coaching
- Sanna Markkula: project coordination, research and coaching
- Sanna Konsti: external communication, research and coaching

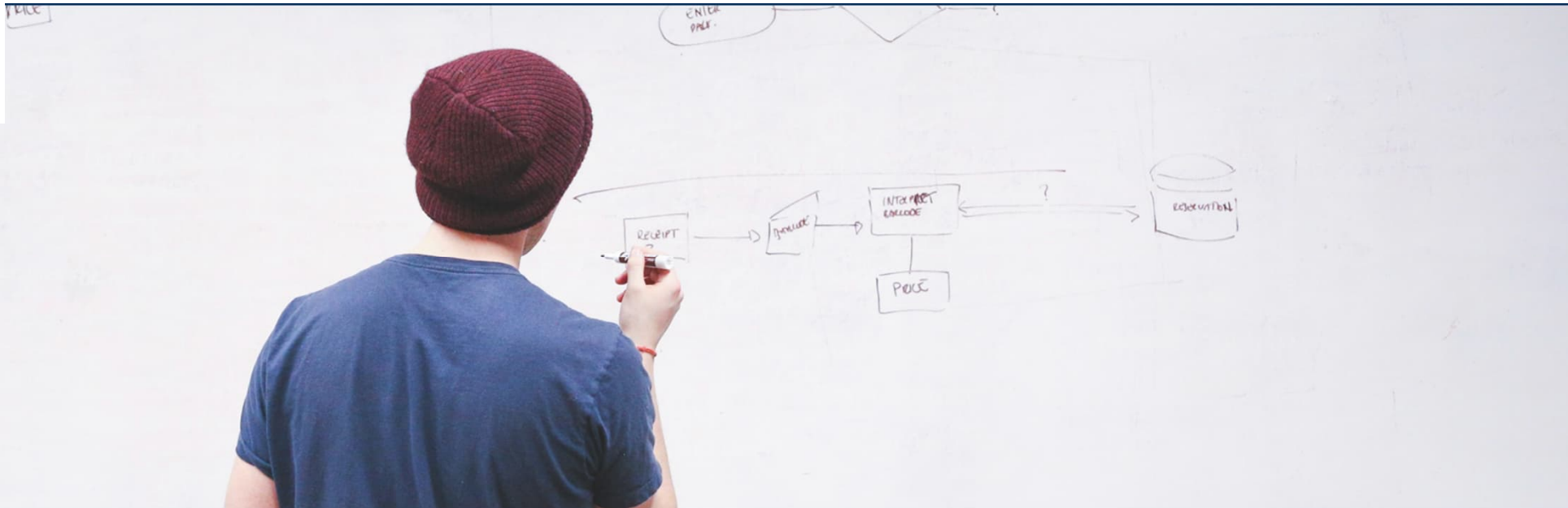
## Whole research group, JYU:

- Professors Taru Feldt & Raimo Lappalainen
- Associate professor Noona Kiuru
- University lecturers and senior researchers Saija Mauno\* & Mari Huhtala (\* professor in Tampere University)
- Doctoral researcher Elina Auvinen

## Research partners outside JYU:

- Professors Debra Osborn & Gary Peterson, Florida State University
- Professor Jari Hakanen, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
- Docent Frank Martela, Aalto University
- Docent Katriina Hyvönen, JAMK University of Applied Sciences





## AIM OF THE MEANWELL PROJECT:

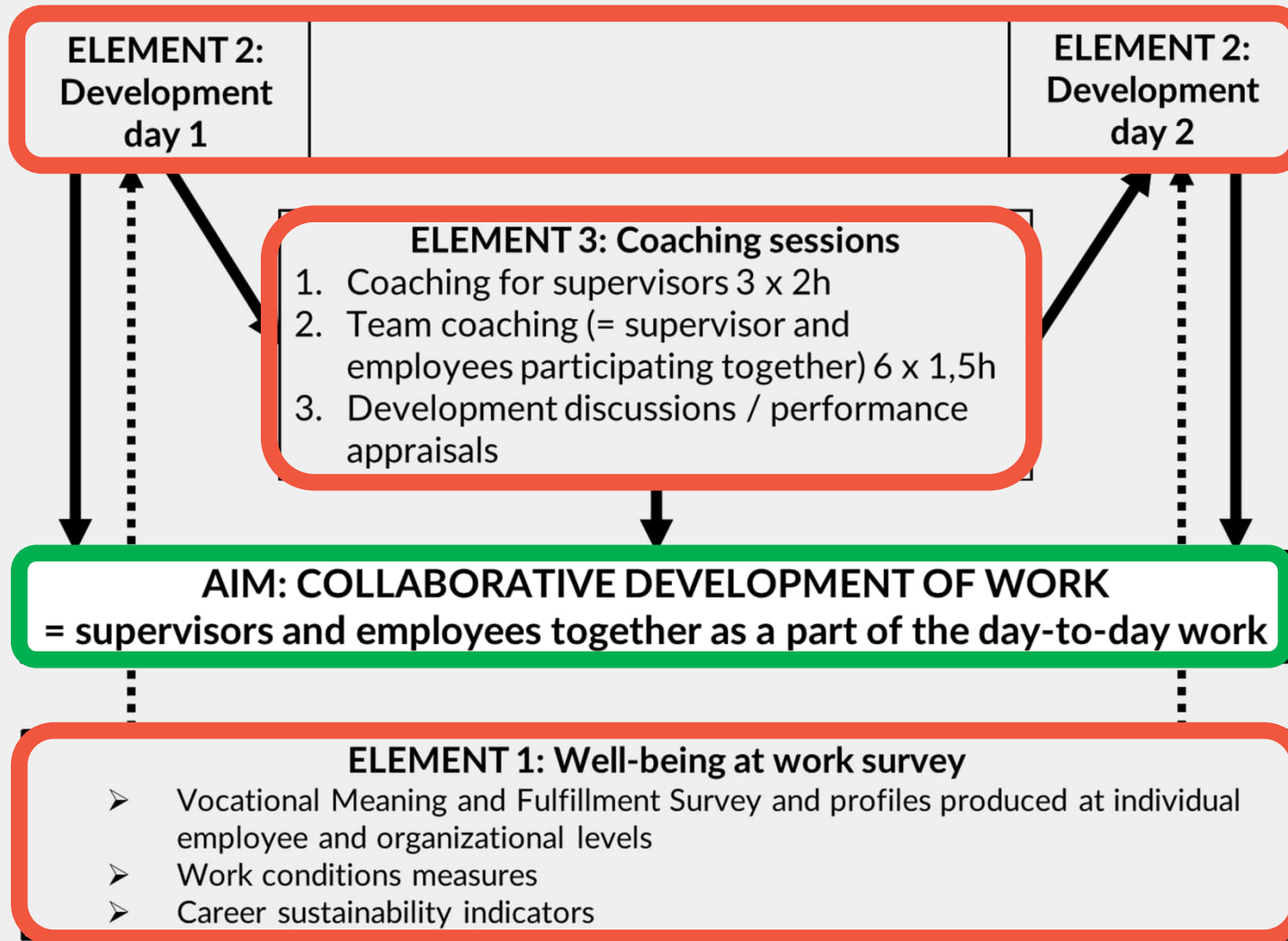
To create an operating model and test its validity in promoting

- 1) meaningful work,
- 2) well-being of workers

and in the long run possibly also the productivity of organisations.



# MEANWELL operating model in organisations





# Theoretical background behind the MEANWELL operating model

1. Process model of sustainable careers (de Vos et al., 2020)
  - emphasizes 1) employees' strong sense of agency and meaning, 2) person-career fit and 3) health, productivity and happiness as key indicators of sustainable careers
2. Integrative multilevel framework of factors fostering meaningful work (Lysova et al., 2019)
  - similarly attaches great importance to person-environment fit by stating that *"meaningful work is an individual experience that tends to occur when an individual's motivations, values, and goals are in congruence with those of their environment"* (p. 385).
3. Four-fold framework of multiple and individual sources / mechanisms / pathways to meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Rosso et al., 2010)
  - ✓ 1) Developing and becoming oneself, self-connection, autonomy
  - ✓ 2) Expressing one's full potential, individuation, competence
  - ✓ 3) Unity with other, unification, relatedness
  - ✓ 4) Service to others, contribution, beneficence



The  
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Practical tool for the MEANWLL operating model:

**Vocational Meaning and Vocational Fulfillment Survey**  
by Peterson, G., MacFarlane, J., & Osborn, D. (2019)



# Vocational Meaning Survey and Vocational Fulfillment Survey

... addresses two fundamental questions about one's employment/staff's work:

1. What aspects of work are especially important to an employee/staff? (VMS, vocational meanings)
2. To what extent is one's current employment providing opportunities to fulfill what is important to an employee/staff in and at work? (VFS, vocational fulfillments)





# Refined version of Vocational Meaning and Fulfillment Survey (VMFS-RE)

by Rantanen et al., work in progress



VMFS-RE MAIN DIMENSIONS	SUB-DIMENSIONS (measured with 26 or 48 items, i.e., short and long versions)	MEANINGS: How important it is to you that <u>work in general</u> provides opportunity for each of the following items. FULFILMENTS: This time evaluate the items below in terms of how well <u>your current work or job</u> fulfills your expectations.  Example items:
BASIC NEEDS	Subsistence Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtaining housing (desired) for me and my family</li> <li>• Balance and routines in my daily life</li> </ul>
CAREER SUCCESS	No sub-dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receiving merit promotions or raises</li> </ul>
SELF-ENHANCEMENT	Recognition Capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel that my contribution at work is appreciated</li> <li>• To feel myself skilled at work</li> </ul>
INDEPENDENCE	No sub-dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To decide and take responsibility on things/tasks independently at work</li> </ul>
SELF-REALIZATION	Authenticity Self-development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To implement/realise things that are important to me at work</li> <li>• To develop my professional skills and learn new things</li> </ul>
TEAM-ENHANCEMENT	Sense of belonging at work Contributing to belongingness at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To belong to a community that is important to me</li> <li>• To support others in the work community to succeed</li> </ul>
TRANSCENDENCE	Doing good for others Contributing to broader purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make a positive impact on other people's daily life</li> <li>• To make a positive impact on the society</li> </ul>

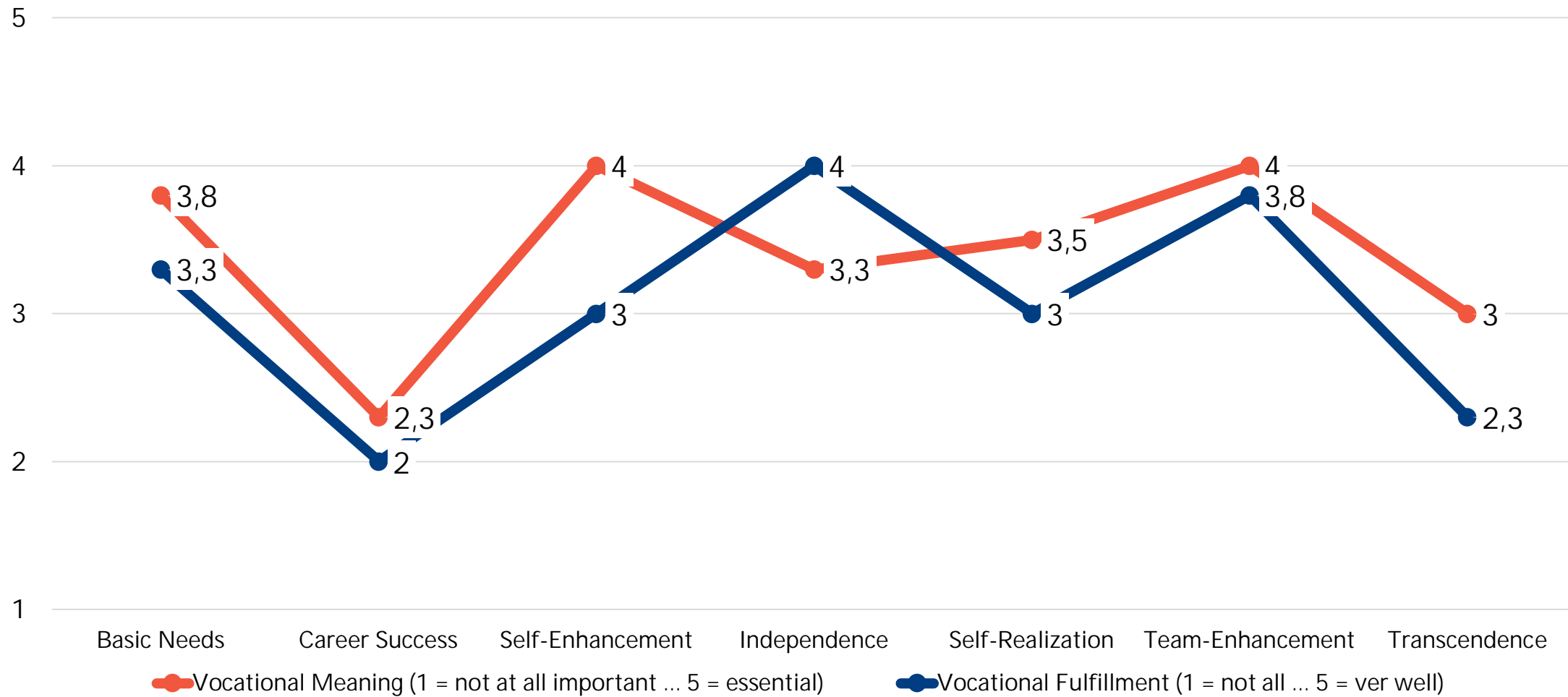
Correlated 12-factor model fit for the short VMFS-RE

Vocational meanings part:  $\chi^2 = 562.20^*$  (186),  $p = 0.000$ , RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.03, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.95

Vocational fulfilments part:  $\chi^2 = 588.62^*$  (186),  $p = 0.000$ , RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.04, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.96



## A vocational FIT vs. GAP profile provided by VMFS-RE



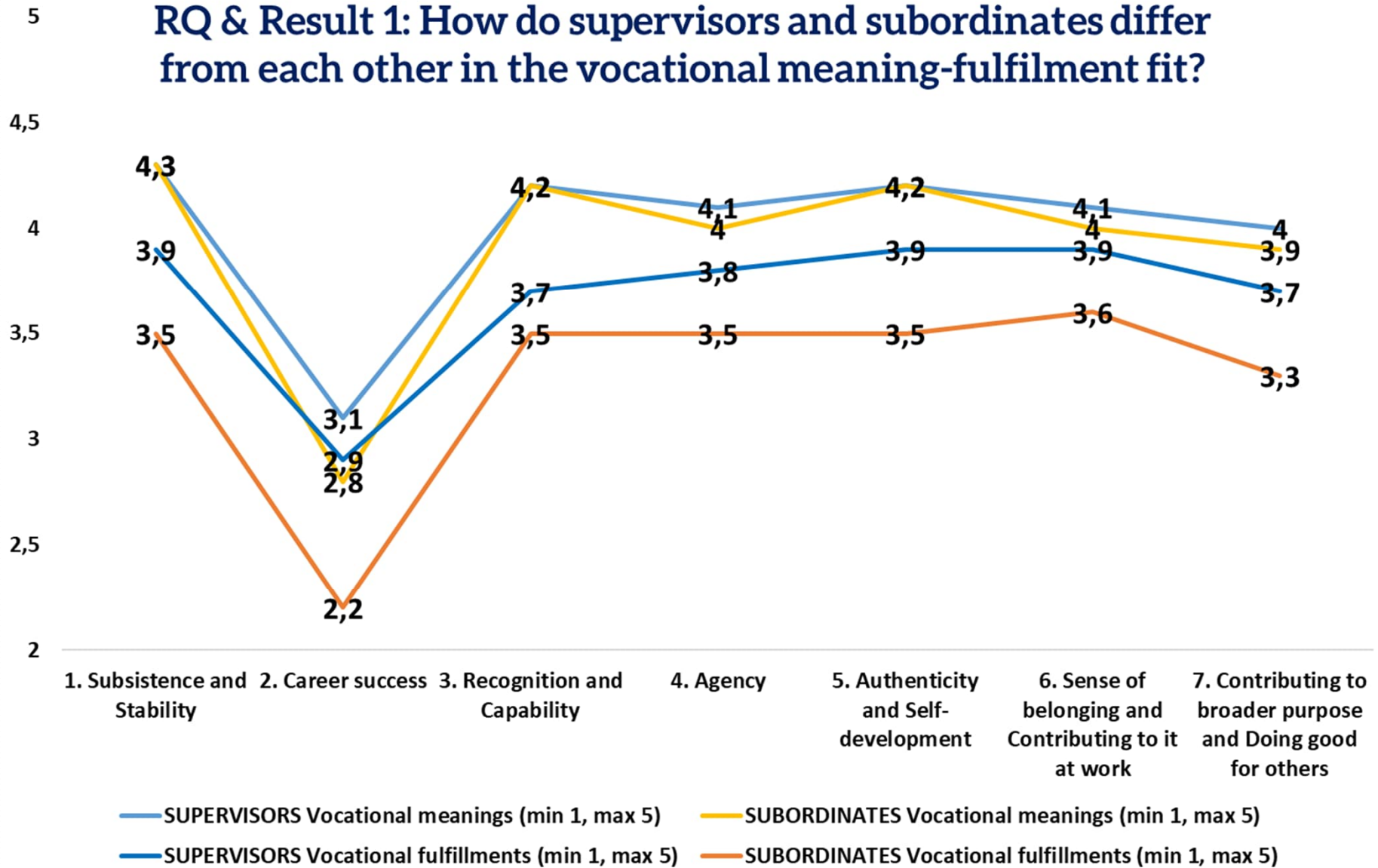


## Participating organisations

- Five organizations, n = 484
  - a school district, 26%
  - a university faculty, 22%
  - a retail network, 14%
  - a temporary work agency, 11%
  - municipal services, 26%
- Participant characteristics
  - 77% women; mean age 44 years
  - average organization tenure 9 years; average weekly working hours 38
- Research data collected
  - Well-being at work survey: supervisors/managers 22% (n = 105), subordinates 78% (n = 379)
  - Focus group interviews: 4 supervisor groups (n = 17), 10 subordinate groups (n = 32)
  - Individual interviews: 13 supervisors, 16 subordinates



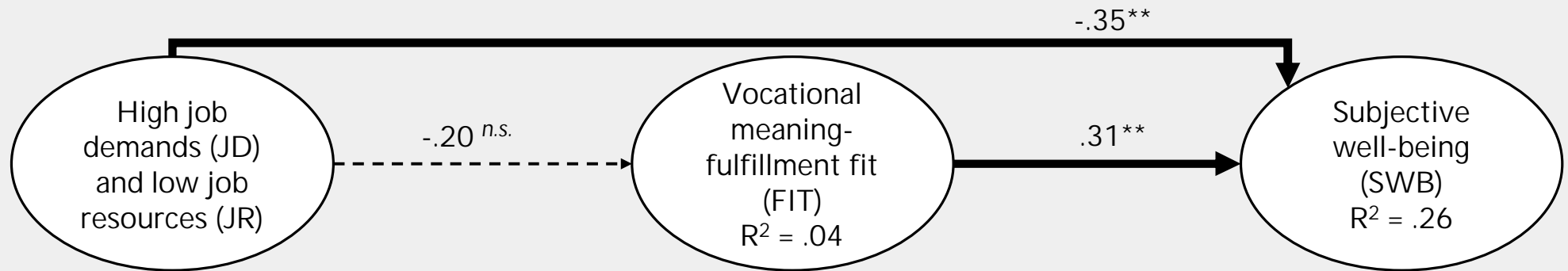
## RQ & Result 1: How do supervisors and subordinates differ from each other in the vocational meaning-fulfilment fit?



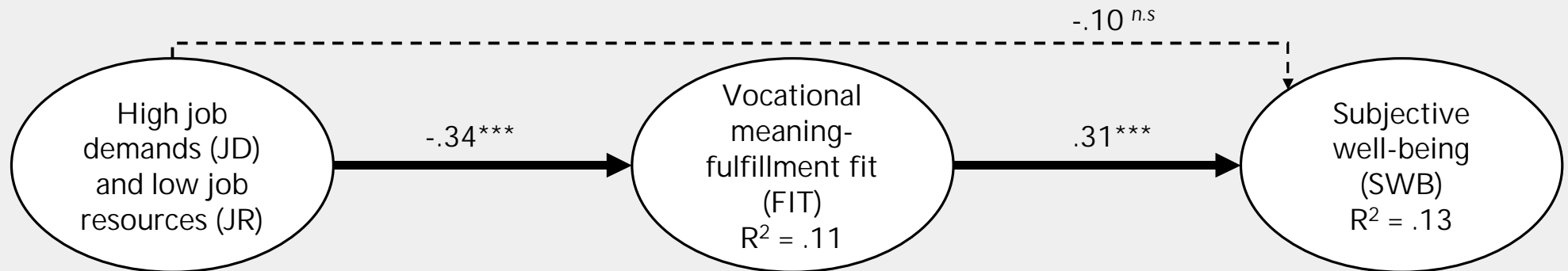


# RQ & Result 2: How is the vocational meaning-fulfilment fit related to subjective well-being among supervisors and subordinates?

SEM for Supervisors



SEM for Subordinates



SEM based on the process model of sustainable careers estimated separately for supervisor and subordinate data sets.  
Model fit for supervisors:  $\chi^2(86) = 110.30, p = .040, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.07$   
Model fit for subordinates:  $\chi^2(85) = 210.87, p = .000, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.06$



## RQ & Result 3: Does the MEANWELL operating model encourage supervisors and subordinates to co-foster meaningful work?

*"You get a better result [together] than alone"*

- Improving meaningfulness was seen as a shared and collaborative issue and useful on a personal, team and work community level
- Most valuable: to pause and discuss, hear each other's thoughts and experiences, brainstorm together
- Changes:
  - Individual level: finding new perspectives, structuring thoughts, recall how meaningful current work is, compassion for self, balancing life and work, increased subordinate understanding, increased sense of agency
  - Team / (organizational) level: openness, mutual understanding, trust, collaboration, belongingness and cohesion increased
- Collaborative development also a challenge: limited participation and lack of commitment from different parties



## To take home

*Co-fostering of meaningful work* is important because ...

- ✓ there are similarities in vocational meanings between supervisors and subordinates but also inequality in vocational fulfilments and vocational meaning-fulfilment fit ratios to be considered.
- ✓ subjective wellbeing effects resulting from high vs. low vocational meaning-fulfilment fit are equally significant to supervisors and subordinates.
- ✓ promoting meaningfulness should be a community-based activity requiring the involvement of all personnel groups.



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# THANK YOU!

Any questions, comments? Want to collaborate?

We are very happy to be in touch:

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