SPEAKING VS. ENGAGING:
PREDICTORS OF SESSION SATISFACTION IN ONLINE WORK SUPERVISION

Anu Tourunen*, Mikko Pohjola**, Joona Muotka*, Miriam Nokia*, Virpi-Liisa Kykyri*

*Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education and Psychology, University of Jyväskylä, Finland,

**Terveystalo, Finland

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a substantial rise in online meetings, transforming how people collaborate and communicate. Despite this shift, there is still limited understanding of the factors that contribute to effective remote meetings.

This study aimed to investigate the impact of **speaking**, as well as verbal and nonverbal **engagement**, on **session ratings** among mental health professionals in online work supervision. The hypothesis was that holistic, full-body engagement is more strongly associated with session satisfaction than the sheer quantity of verbal contributions. Additionally, we expected to identify distinct individual participation styles in Zoom meetings.

METHODS

Project. The 'Reducing Strain and Increasing Gain of Remote Work Group Meetings with Physiological Indicators' (PhinGAIN) research project (2021–2023) was a consortium of the University of Jyväskylä and the University of Oulu, funded by the Finnish Work Environment Fund.

Participants. 32 professionals in mental health and substance abuse treatment were divided into four groups of 7-9 supervisees. Each group participated in six online Zoom supervision sessions led by two supervisors. Altogether 24 Zoom sessions were video recorded. Participants also recorded their face videos and measured heart rate with a pulse oximeter during the sessions. After each session, supervisees completed a modified Session Rating Scale (Duncan et al., 2003) tailored for work supervision.

Measures. The percentage of time each supervisee spoke during working phases was calculated. Verbal and nonverbal engagement was coded every 0.5 seconds on a scale from -10 to +10. Engagement levels from +5 to +10 were categorized as full engagement, and the percentage of time spent in this state was computed for the working phases.

Nonverbal engagement 40%
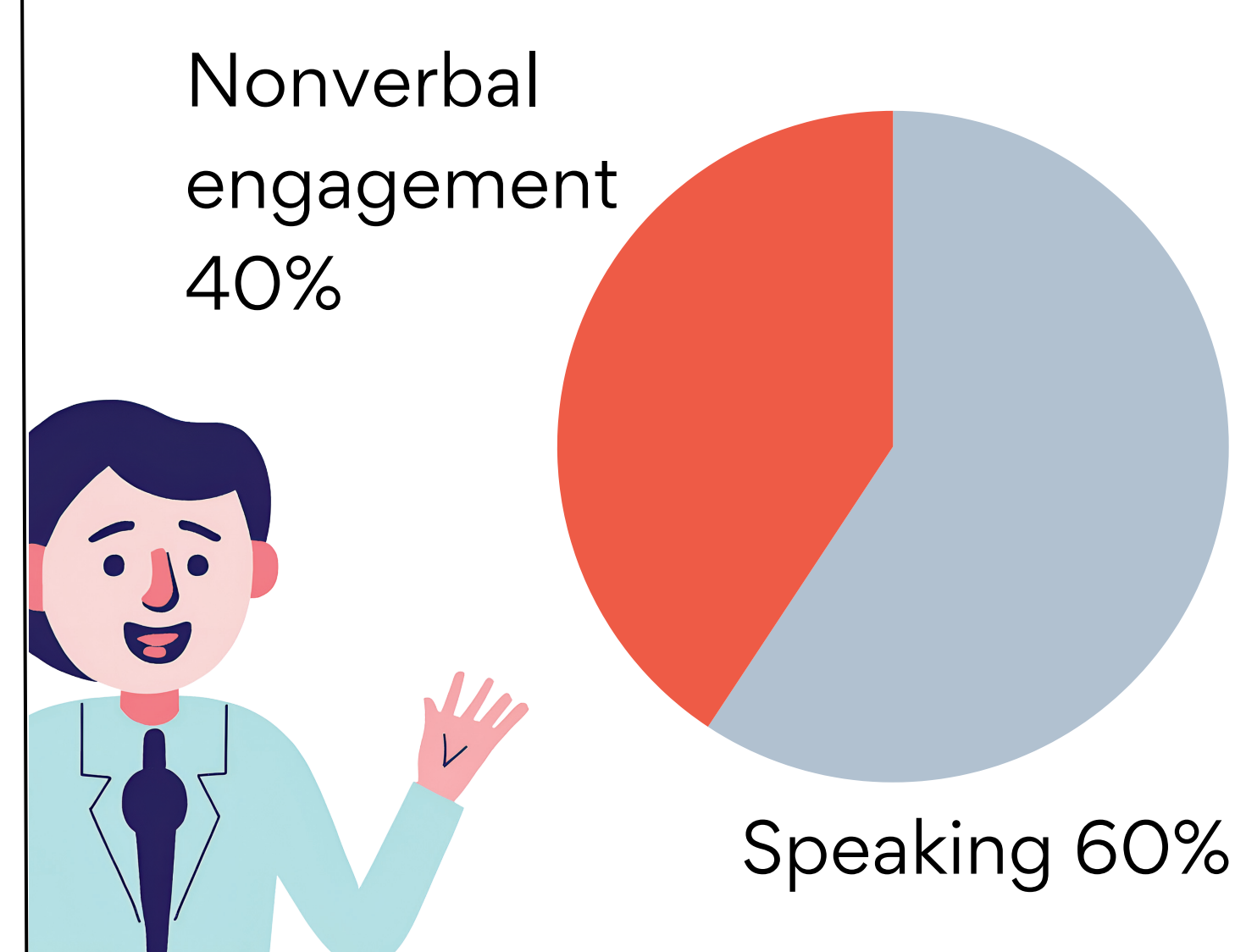
Speaking 60%

FULL ENGAGEMENT

- Speaking or attempting to take a speech turn
- Speaking on top of someone else
- As a listener, actively showing engagement through minimal vocalizations (e.g., "mm"), nods and/or facial expressions
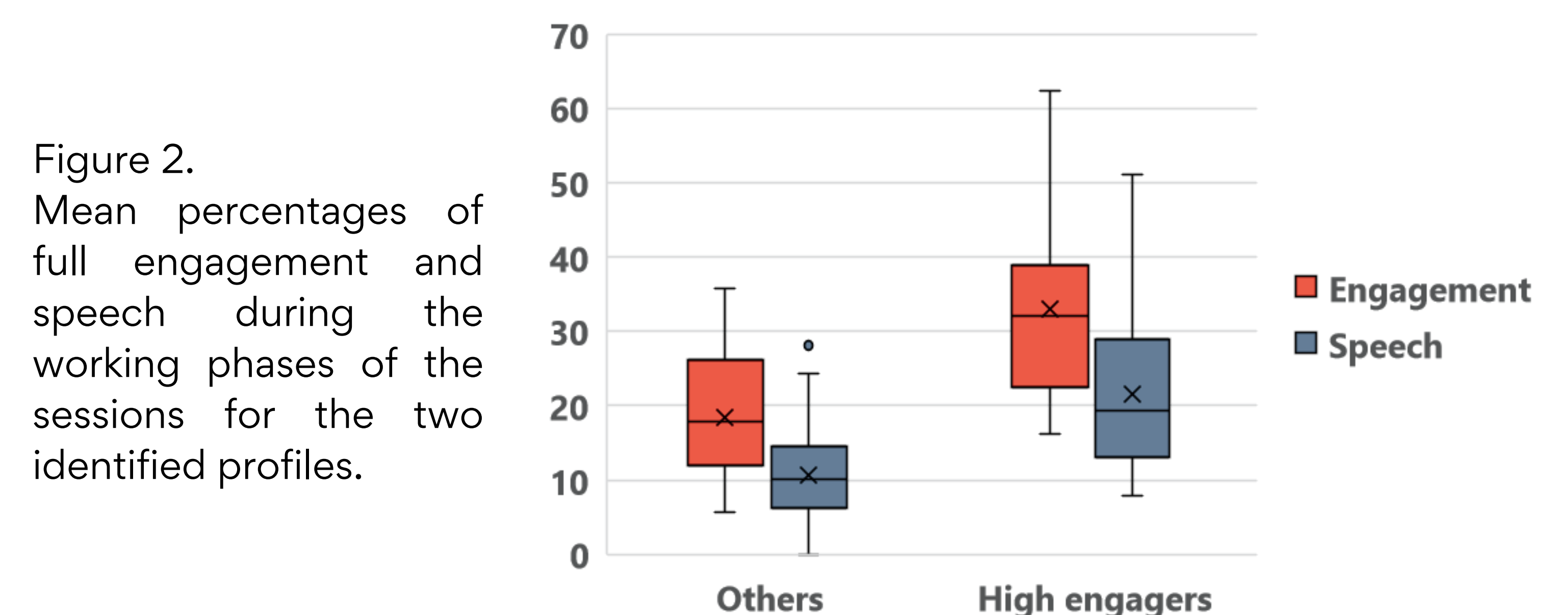
Figure 1. Estimate of verbal and nonverbal elements in supervisees' full engagement during Zoom meetings (n = 63 facial video recordings), derived from the mean levels of full engagement adjusted for mean speaking time.

ANALYSES

Analyses were conducted using Mplus and included two-level latent profile analysis and regression models. The regression models employed maximum likelihood with robust standard errors (MLR) and used the complex method to account for nested data.

RESULTS

The intra-class correlation (ICC) for variance due to individual differences was 30% for speech, 39.3% for engagement, and 46.5% for session ratings. A two-level latent profile analysis, based on between-level classification, identified two distinct profiles for full engagement and speech (Figure 2).

Figure 2.
Mean percentages of full engagement and speech during the working phases of the sessions for the two identified profiles.

The smaller profile, "high engagers" (n = 23 observations from 6 individuals), was characterized by higher percentages of full engagement and speaking compared to the others (n = 92 observations from 26 individuals). The average latent class probabilities for the most likely class membership were 0.914 for high engagers and 0.925 for the other profile, indicating clear classification of the two groups. Mean differences between the two profiles were significant based on aggregated data.

Table 1.

Predictor	Beta (β)	Standard Error	p-value
Speech	0.140	0.069	0.007
Full engagement	0.158	0.069	0.022

In regression models, speaking accounted for 6.7% of the variance in session ratings, while full engagement explained 12.9% (Table 1). When both factors were included in the same model, the effect of speech became non-significant, whereas the effect of engagement remained significant.

CLINICAL INSIGHT

Clients' bodily engagement in online therapy may be a more reliable indicator of their session satisfaction than how much they speak.

DISCUSSION

Active, embodied participation is important also in remote interaction. The hypothesis that full-body engagement would be a better predictor of session satisfaction than the amount of speaking was confirmed, with full engagement explaining 13% of the variance in session ratings (medium effect size; Cohen, 1988). While engagement varied across sessions, latent profile analysis identified a distinct group of 20% of supervisees who consistently spoke more and demonstrated higher engagement. The findings deepen our understanding of remote interaction, guiding efforts to make online work more beneficial for participants and to reduce Zoom fatigue.