

Työterveyslaitos

Enhancing employees' career renewal preparedness – A randomized controlled trial (RCT)

Otto Pankkonen & Jukka Vuori

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Työsuojelurahasto
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Background

- Socioeconomic pressure to remain employable during prolonging careers and rapid changes in working life create a need for continuously renewing and updating occupational competencies during one's career.
 - Culminates particularly in mid- and late-career where basic occupational skills need updating and new competences are required (Maurer, 2001).
 - Risk of skill obsolescence and career stagnation (Cedefop, 2010; OECD, 2019).
 - Skill development and training in the workplaces is mainly focused on job-specific skills (see Van Hootegem et al., 2019)
- Training in meta-level career competencies is needed

How to increase skills and motivation towards career renewal in mid-career?

RCT study

- We created a *Skilled and renewable career* intervention program and applied social learning in the work context as the active training method to promote career renewal and used a randomly assigned field study design for reliable data.
- The resource-building intervention is based on theories of social learning (Bandura, 1986) and cognitive stress inoculation (Meichenbaum, 2007) that emphasize **specific self-efficacies** and **preparation against setbacks** as personal resources (= **preparedness**)
- Preparedness can be increased through group interventions applying peer-learning and active learning techniques (see Vuori & Vinokur, 2005).

Aim of the study and hypotheses

Based on the theoretical background and previous intervention studies based on peer-learning, we expected the intervention program to

- 1) enhance confidence in performing career renewal activities through vicarious learning, mastery experiences and social support and
- 2) increase skills to anticipate and cope with career-related setbacks through inoculation training.

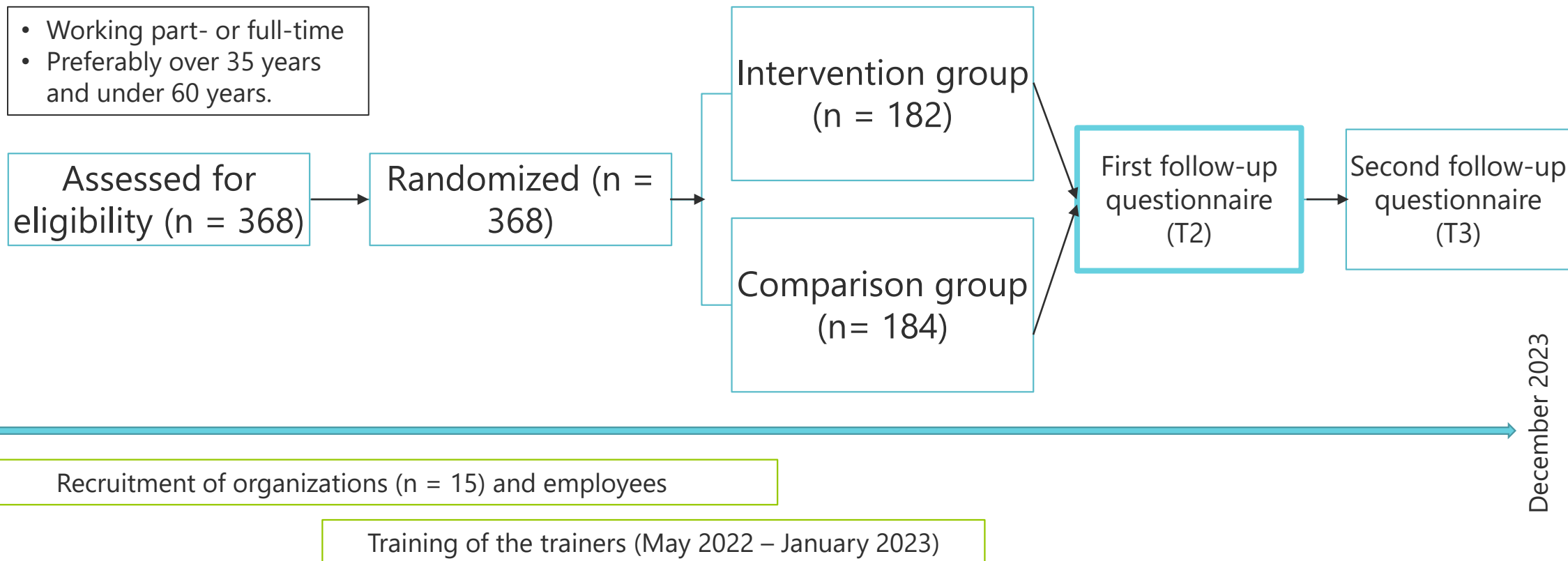
The aim of our study was to investigate the effects of a resource-building intervention on employees' preparedness for career renewal.

- The group intervention will improve employees' career renewal preparedness (H1).
- The group intervention will improve career renewal preparedness especially at mid-career (H2).



Methods

Study design



Contents of the intervention

Conducted within 2 to 4 weeks

Module 1 (3h)

- Self-appraisal and strengths use at work
- Transferable skills

Module 2 (3h)

- Learning experiences and decision-making in one's career
- Skill development through formal and informal learning behaviors
- Preparation against changes in one's career

Module 3 (3h)

- Competence development from the viewpoint of the employer
- Utilizing social networks to promote career advancement
- Challenges and solutions in expressing career-related goals

Module 4 (3h)

- Communicating one's career-related goals
- Career planning and goal selection



Discussions

Exercises and role plays in pairs and groups



Individual reflection assignments

Preliminary assignments before modules 1, 2 and 4



Peer learning

Active components of group training

- Career renewal skills training
- Inoculation training
- Active learning and teaching methods
- Skilled trainers
- Supportive learning environment

Measures and statistical analyses

Demographic characteristics

- Age, gender, educational level, tenure

T-tests and χ^2 -tests for comparisons of baseline demographics between groups

Integrity of the intervention

- Active components of the intervention
- Contents of the intervention

Career renewal preparedness (T1)



Career renewal preparedness (T2)

Linear regression analysis, estimated using MLR

Preliminary results

Results: demographics and integrity of the intervention

Demographic variable	M(SD) / %
Age	49.5 (7.35)
Under 50 years	53.0
50+ years	47.0
Gender	
Female	78.7
Male/other	21.3
Educational level	
Low	25.4
High	74.6
Tenure	
0-7 years	32.8
8-15 years	34.0
over 15 years	33.2
Marital status	
Married / civil partnership	54.5
Other	45.5

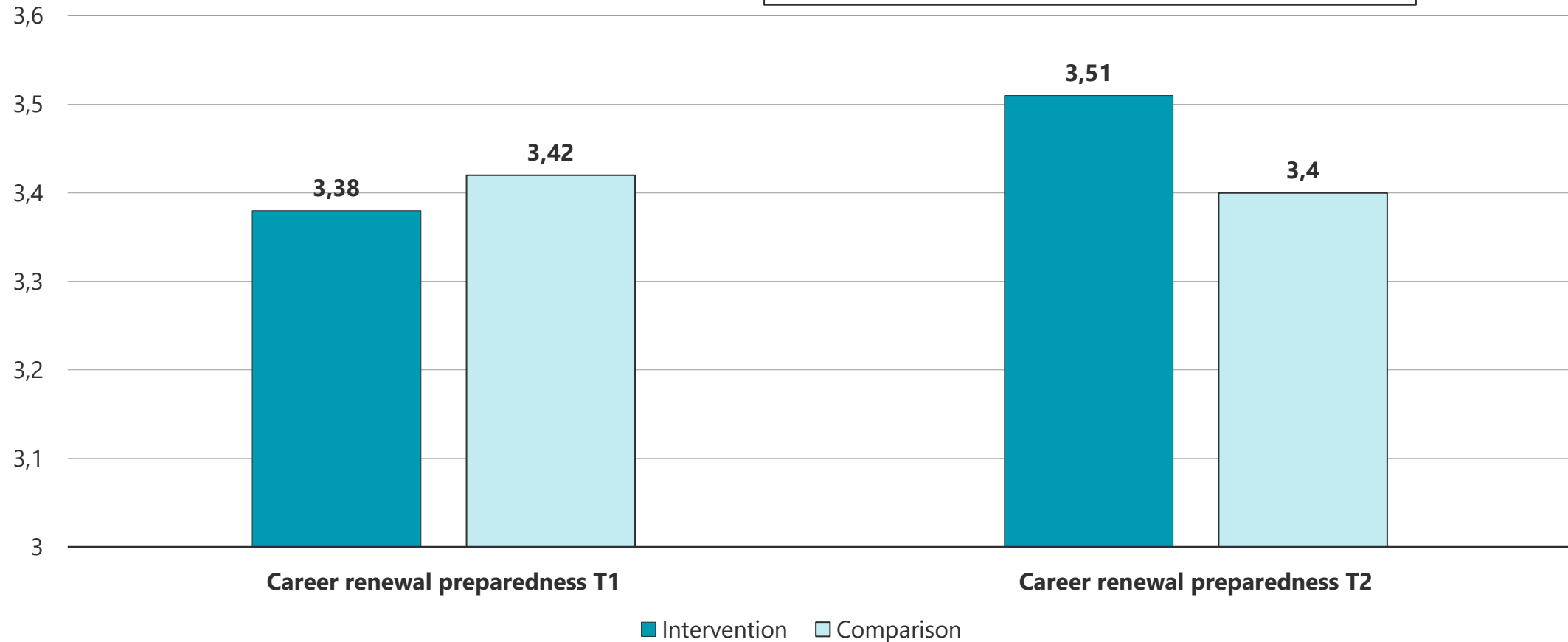
No significant differences between intervention (n = 134) and comparison (n = 134) groups based on the demographics.

Component of delivery	M (SD)
Career renewal skills training	3.60 (.86)
Inoculation training	4.05 (.82)
Active learning and teaching	4.17 (.59)
Trainers' skills	4.38 (.59)
Supportive learning environment	4.31 (.63)

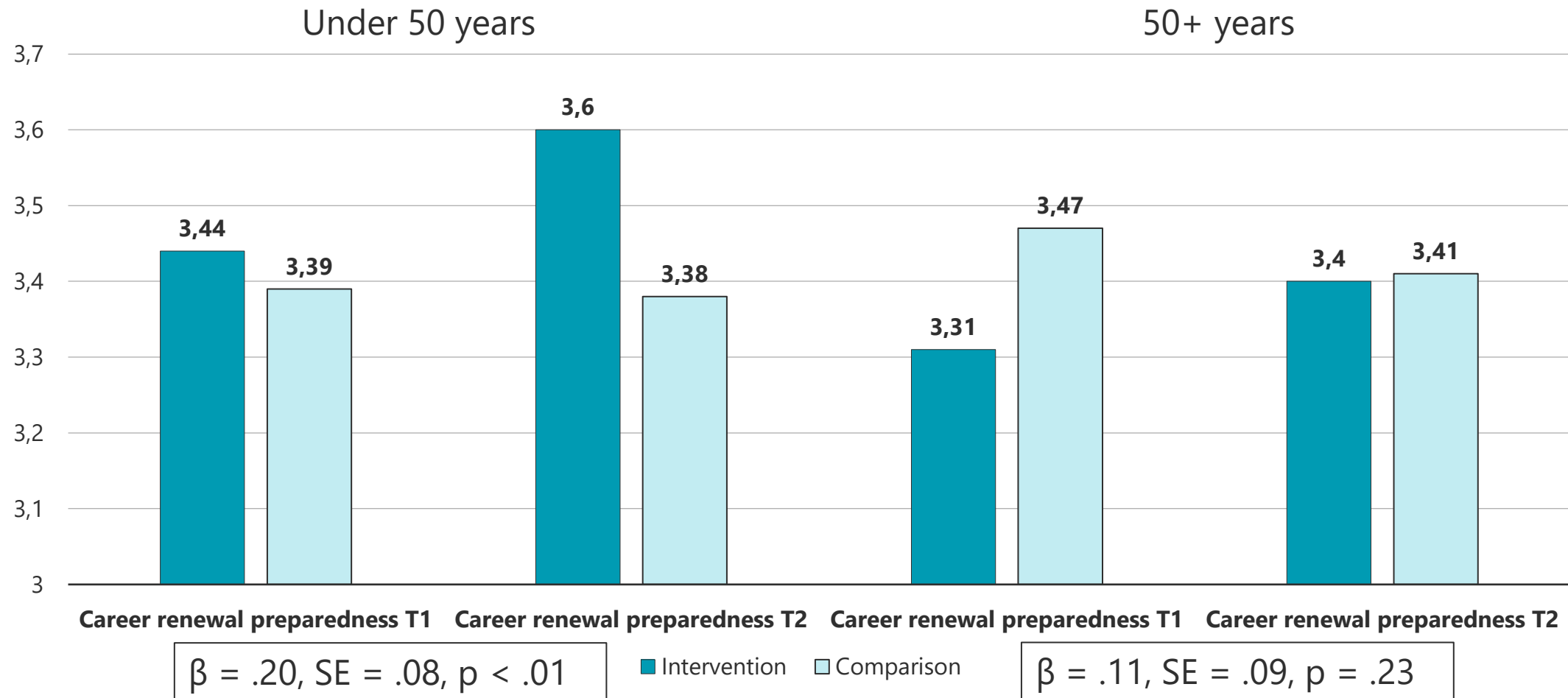
Content of the intervention	M (SD)
Competence renewal	3.05 (.89)
Coping with changes	3.12 (.96)
Self-appraisal	3.48 (.91)
Clarifying one's career goals	3.29 (.94)
Utilizing social networks	3.08 (1.00)
Examining career possibilities	2.79 (.90)

Results: main effects

Career renewal preparedness increased statistically significantly more in the intervention group compared to the control group ($\beta = .16$, $SE = .05$, $p < .01$). Cohen's d-value was 0.32 indicating a small-sized effect.



Results: main effect of intervention on career renewal preparedness based on age



Strength and limitations

Limitations

- The trial results are limited to immediate effects.
- Sample size may limit the statistical power to detect statistically significant differences between groups.

Strengths

- Sample of employees working in different fields and educational levels.
- RCT enables to study causal relationships.

Take away and practical implications

- Our RCT study demonstrated that preparedness towards career renewal can be enhanced with a cost-effective group intervention.
- The intervention seems to be especially useful for employees of under 50 years of age (mid-career).
- Long-term possible positive career and occupational health effects should be studied.



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Thank you!

email: otto.pankkonen@ttl.fi

Twitter: @OPankkonen

