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Mapping Sustainable Employability Instruments and Interventions: An Integrative Framework to Guide Employer Decision-Making

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Background: In the context of an ageing workforce, a rising retirement age, and persistent labour market shortages, sustainable employability has become an important topic in human resource management and occupational health psychology. Although many organizations aspire to enhance the sustainable employability of their employees, in practice, employers often struggle to identify appropriate instruments and interventions available to support their goals. Existing review studies employ a wide range of dimensions to categorize sustainable employability instruments and interventions. This diversity of classification approaches makes it difficult to obtain a coherent overview of available options for organizational action. To provide employers with a systematic overview that can serve as a basis for selecting instruments and interventions that suit their needs, we examined how sustainable employability instruments and interventions are categorized in the scientific literature and explored how these classifications can be combined into a practical framework.

Method: We conducted a review of systematic literature reviews focusing on HR practices, instruments, and interventions related to sustainable employability, and health and well-being at work. From these reviews, we extracted the dimensions that authors used to classify instruments and interventions. Subsequently, we selected the dimensions that appeared most consistently in the literature reviews and applied these dimensions to organize a dataset of sustainable employability instruments published by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

Results: The review studies showed that a variety of dimensions are used to categorize sustainable employability instruments and interventions. When comparing these classifications, four dimensions appeared most consistently. These relate to: (1) the target level of the instrument (organization, team, individual); (2) the stage in the change process (diagnosis, plan, action, evaluation); (3) the improvement objective (physical health, mental health, competence, mobility); and (4) the change orientation (protective, promotive). When applied to the dataset, these dimensions enabled systematic categorization of a wide variety of instruments and interventions, such as tests, action plans, training, coaching, employee benefits, working-time arrangements, ergonomic adaptations, and job redesign. The resulting classification framework was integrated into an online tool through which employers can identify appropriate interventions by selecting filters corresponding to their needs.

Conclusion: The classification system developed in this study provides a systematic overview of the instruments and interventions available to support sustainable employability. The framework enhances transparency and supports informed decision-making in practice. The accompanying online tool makes the overview accessible and supports organizations in selecting instruments that match their needs when working towards long-term, healthy, and sustainable participation at work.