

# Interventions Studies to Foster Sustainable Employability's Four Core Components: A Systematic Review

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**Background:** Over the last years, retaining aging and more diverse employees at work as far as possible, simultaneously maintaining them vital and productive, has become crucial for employers, social partners, and governments (de Jonge & Peeters, 2019). COVID-19 outbreak around the world has further increased, among others, challenges related to workers' sustainable employability (SE) (Rudolph et al., 2020). In recent years, the scientific literature has indeed built more than one model keeping together employability and career issues with sustainability aspects (De Vos et al., 2020; van der Klink et al., 2016). Workplace interventions, in a long-term perspective, have the potential to enhance resources facilitating a sustainable working life in terms of employee health, productivity, and value (e.g., motivation, skills, and positive attitude) (Van der Heijden et al., 2020). However, evidence for the effectiveness of employees' SE interventions is still scarce. This review aims at outlining the effectiveness of workplace interventions in promoting SE core components – health, productivity, valuable work, and long-term perspective.

**Methods:** A systematic search of the literature was performed in three databases (EconLit, PsycInfo, and Web of Science) covering the period from January 1999 to January 2020. The methodological quality of each included study was assessed consistently with the study method – quantitative, qualitative, or mixed –, and data of each intervention were extracted by means of a customized form to categorize interventions' content and outcomes according to SE core components.

**Results:** The initial search identified 14.100 articles, of which 14 were included. The methodological quality of the included studies ranged from moderate to weak. Various kinds of interventions – targeting employees and in some few cases managers as well, delivered in large or small firms of industrialized or emerging countries – showed to have mixed effects on SE core components. All interventions covered the valuable work component in content, and the majority also the health component. Fewer times, productivity and long-term perspective issues were addressed in interventions content. Interventions covering at least three SE components had more positive effects on SE outcomes. Overall, more positive effects were found for valuable work outcomes.

**Conclusions:** Providing employees with valuable resources and opportunities seemed fundamental for the effectiveness of interventions. More high-quality studies and SE interventions focused on promoting all SE core components simultaneously are needed. A sufficiently broad evaluation period is required. Further investigation on the impact of SE interventions on the sustainability of each employee career, and more broadly, on the possibility of considering SE interventions as sustainable career interventions is needed. From a diversity perspective, future research should also focus on diverse categories of employees, such as self-employed and unemployed employees, employees belonging to minority groups, employees with health issues, employees at different levels of employment, flexible contract employees, and low-educated employees. Intervention research should possibly focus on employees of all working ages in order to detect subgroups specific needs and start promoting and monitoring sustainable careers at an early stage.

**Keywords:** Sustainable employability; interventions; core components; health; productivity; valuable work; long-term perspective; systematic review

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