



Experiences and Perceived Impact of a Holistic Wellness Intervention for Head Start Educators

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Background

Wellness

- The practice of living healthy in various aspects—mentally, socially, and physically—so an individual can make a balanced life (Brasfield et al., 2019).
- A holistic concept that involves multiple facets (Kwon et al., 2022)

Early care and education (ECE) educators' Wellness

- ECE educators (i.e., teachers, leaders) often experience burnout, psychological stress, and various health issues (Ford et al., 2024; Schaack et al., 2020)
- The stakes may be especially high for Head Start (HS) educators given increased standards and high job demands (Bullough et al., 2012; Wells, 2015).
- Therefore, studies that attempt to improve HS educators' various aspects of wellness are scarce.

Preliminary Findings from Interview

How HS educators found the intervention useful

- Fitbit
 - Helpful in reminding themselves about the importance of physical movement as they checked their steps and heart rates in real-time.
 - Encourage spontaneous social interactions and conversations about wellness among educators as they shared their steps with each other.
- Online modules
 - Provide new knowledge
 - Increase awareness of the importance of self-care and self-confidence
- Coaching: useful for educators to set up and reflect on their own wellness goals.
- Wellness room: provide a safe space for privacy and physical and mental breaks.

Challenges HS educators experienced

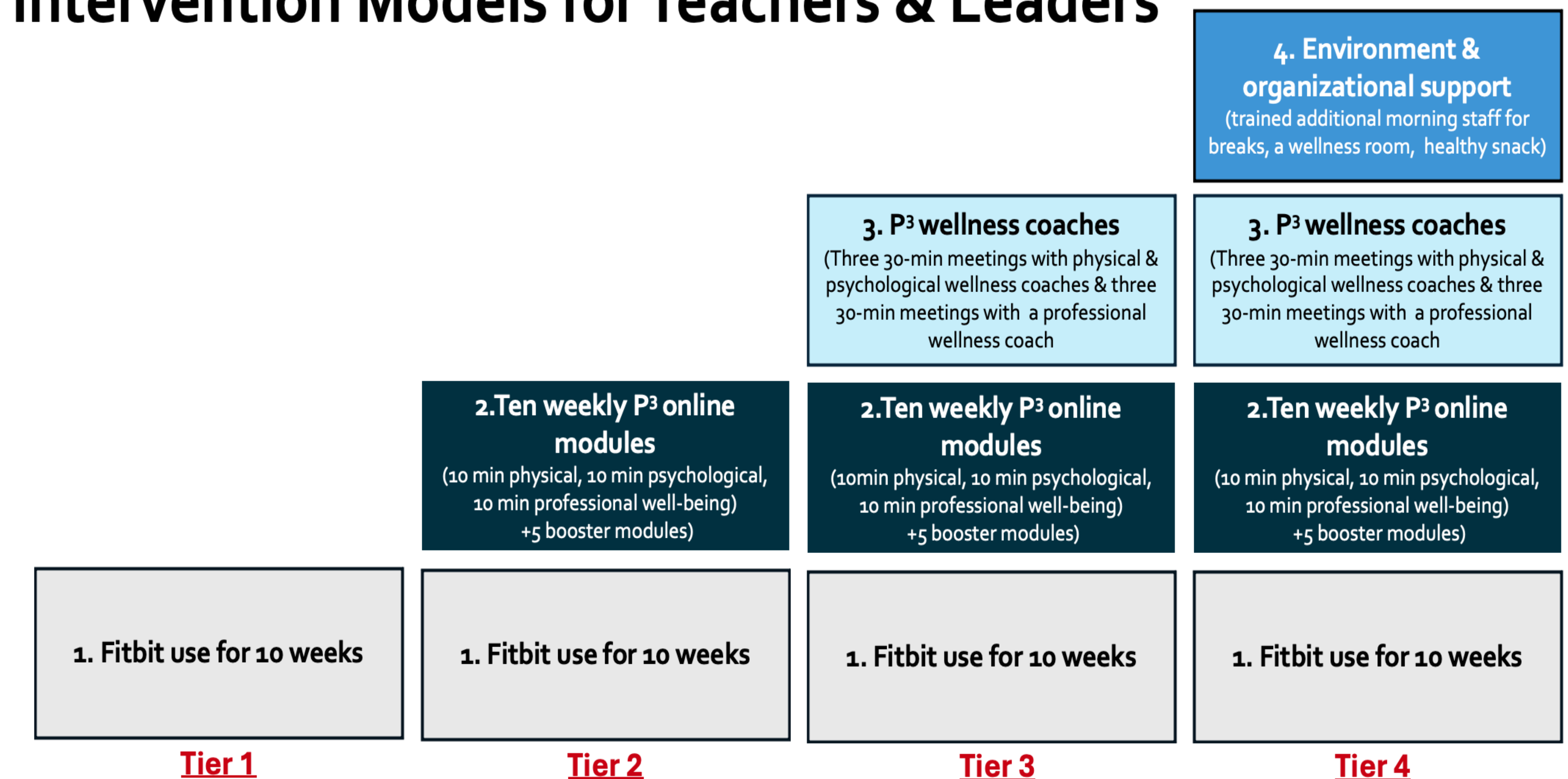
- Hard to find time for online modules
- Wearing Fitbit all the time was uncomfortable
- Reluctant to share personal experiences with coach

Happy Teacher Wellness Intervention

Happy Teacher Wellness Intervention

- **Happy Teacher Wellness Intervention** was designed by considering the importance of holistic wellness (including **physical, psychological, and professional**, which we refer to as P3 wellness)
- The intervention was implemented over a 10-week period focusing on wellness, incorporating multiple elements: wearable devices (i.e., Fitbit), online modules for self-directed activities, coaching, and a dedicated room for respite (i.e., wellness room)
- Each center was randomly assigned to one of these five tiers (Tiers 0 to 4; Tier 0 as business as usual).

Intervention Models for Teachers & Leaders



- In total, 468 educators participated throughout three cohorts (Spring 23, Fall 23, Spring 24) from 44 urban and rural HS centers in Oklahoma.
- 24 group-interviews were conducted with participants (n=63) via Zoom

Preliminary Findings from Survey

- Most participants were satisfied with our intervention and thought that it was helpful for their wellness.
- 97.7% (215 out of 220) of the participants responded as slightly, moderately, or very satisfied.
- 95.9% (209 out of 218) of the participants reported that the intervention helped improve their well-being.

Implications

- Overall, participants had positive experiences with and benefited from different layers and elements of the intervention.
- This study provided practical suggestions for improving ECE educators' holistic wellness.

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