Article

Role of Physical Activities during Working Hours in Promoting Planetary Health

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Abstract: Work can be a source of a meaningful life and well-being. It can also be a source of stress and mental illness. The trends concerning working life development involve intensification and individualisation, and, at the same time, the demands of expertise work are such that they need collaborative actions. With respect to well-being, there is a need for individuals to see themselves members of the community. In this study, we identified vocational education staff types by studying the connections between physical activities and experienced workload. The data were collected by using empathy-based stories. The method of analysing the data can be described as a discursive–narrative approach based on qualitative and thematic content analyses. Based on the data, four story types were established: *Forerunner*, *Exhausted*, *Leisure-Time Enthusiast*, and *Thinker*. Individual conceptions of breaks, workload, free time, and awareness of one's well-being were found to be important in the creation of a healthy working life. There is a need to discuss realistic work demands in the vocational education context. Education and active teacher members could be key actors in achieving sustainability goals and improving planetary health.

Keywords: work; physical activity; vocational education; well-being; experience; qualitative study

1. Introduction

Work is a particularly important activity for humans and for society: it is an activity whereby a person inserts themselves into the world, exercises their talents, defines themselves, actualises their potential, and creates value. These factors, in turn, give a person a sense of accomplishment, personal effectiveness, and possibly even -meaning in life [1]. As it plays such a remarkable role in human lives, creating a healthy work environment can be a game changer in many ways [2]. The World Health Organization and the World Economic Forum have highlighted the workplace as an important setting for health promotion [3], as well as a source of meeting basic psychological needs [4]. It can offer a place for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. As is recognised in self-determination theory, the social environment is seen as central to how basic psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, are to be met; furthermore, an environment that facilitates the satisfaction of basic psychological needs enables motivation and well-being in individuals [5,6]: Autonomy refers to a sense of willingness, endorsement, or volition, whereas competence refers to a sense of confidence and being effective in one's own actions. Relatedness refers to a sense of belonging, inclusion, and feeling connected to others [5]. Well-being is connected to all these elements described in self-determination theory. The strength of one's well-being is related to how that person feels in terms of being in charge of their work, how their competences are met, and what their share and position are in the work community in which they work.

One trend that is challenging healthy work is the intensification of daily duties, where more and more needs to be achieved during the same working hours [7]. There is a need to be more effective, and cognitive skills are now required in a big way, such as knowing how to remember things and knowing what to prioritise. The major causes of employee absence are stress and mental ill health [8,9]. The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported depressive disorders as being in second place and anxiety disorders as being in sixth place among the top global leading causes of years lived with a disability [3]. Nationally, Tthe Finnish Institute of Occupational Health has found that the following three main factors cause increased cognitive loads in a person's working life: distractions, interruptions, and information overload [10]. The working life barometer, which was established in 2019, showed that 60% of Finnish employees considered their work to be mentally demanding, and over one third of employees thought that their work was physically challenging [11].

In this study, well-being is broadly understood as being determined by various aspects of work, which may function as demands or resources in various ways [12]. The broad definition is used in order to connect it with sustainability, especially social sustainability, and well-being. By creating social places that involve engagement, it is possible to support well-being [13]. Connectedness and the recognition of one's stake in a work environment are important, as feeling that one is a meaningful part of the whole keeps daily work meaningful [14].

This leads to another challenge: the trend of individualisation. Individualisation is considered a globalisation trend that affects all spheres of life for a modern person, and it can also play a part in the transformation of social relationships and social character [15]. Connecting one's work to a bigger entity can add meaningfulness to one's work, as well as increase well-being [14], as employees often wish to be recognised for their individual interests and skills [16]. The reason for examining vocational education staff and their daily work originates from the individualisation processes initiated by the Finnish vocational education reform (2018), which revealed the new competencies required from teachers. The main change occurred in increasing students' competency-based and personal learning possibilities [17]. Competency is related to underlying characteristics that enable an individual to achieve exceptional performance [18]. In their broadest sense, competencies represent knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and values that are important for citizens to live a good life in society. This means a major alteration to teacher action and attitudes: teachers should not teach the subject but also help students develop themselves in accordance with the factors that are relevant in the field [17]. A teacher's work is no longer simply teaching in the classroom. In his research on vocational teachers, Kukkonen [19] found nine roles that teachers can inhabit. These positions varied from being an educator to a skilled empathetic actor, or from a critical evaluator to a workforce producer. Tapani and Salonen [20] found 53 separate skills that a vocational teacher needs to master. Moving between these positions and skills requires multitasking (see [21]) as there is often plenty going on at the same time, such as teaching, guiding, and answering phones or messages that can come from multiple channels (e.g., from both students and colleagues). If there are no breaks between the changing of tasks, then we may see increased levels of stress and cognitive load.

Remote work is an example of a rising trend (see [2]) that has set employees as leaders in their work. Social collaboration via the use of technology in modern workplaces allows us to contact anyone at any time. The Internet, smart phones, online file sharing, etc., have all made it possible for us to work anywhere and everywhere, and this brings along fragmentation in our work, for example, 40% of someone's productive time is taken up by shifting between tasks [22]. However, as remote working allows us to work whenever we want, the individualised working possibilities are remarkable. Having said this, such a setup challenges a collective work mood: individualised working schedules may lead to disruptions if colleagues are working in different states and on different tasks.

By taking teachers' renewed work, its possibilities, and demands seriously, we could affect global and planetary health. Planetary health is defined as the health of human

civilisation and the state of the natural systems on which it depends [23]. As far as the teaching staff is concerned, they have the opportunity to promote planetary health education and increase knowledge of this among their students. Teachers are seen as role models by their students [24]; therefore, taking care of their own and students' well-being, as well as adding sustainability and planetary health-affecting elements and discussions as parts of their teaching material, can be seen as steps towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, such as quality education, gender equity, decent work, economic growth, peace, justice, and strong institutions [25]. Planetary health education across all levels and disciplines will equip and enable learners to take transdisciplinary and mutually reinforcing actions to protect and restore planetary health [26]. As preventive steps, it is possible to contribute as an individual to the global vision, in which the first principle is to reduce the demand for health services. The combination of population growth and ageing, which increase the global burden of disease, and increasingly complex diagnostic and treatment methods have resulted in a growing demand for health services [27]. Education and active teacher members could be key actors in terms of addressing climate change issues and achieving sustainability goals [28].

Finland used to be a model country for learning and teaching [29]; however, it must be noted that, in this decade, teachers do not feel as though their well-being is being maintained in their working lives. This should be taken seriously in the spirit of sustainability. Global goals concerning quality education and decent work have been set [25]. If teachers feel as though their well-being is not being taken care of, goals concerning, for example, quality education would appear to be difficult to achieve. Teachers could and should be seen as future makers: they could lead the way to equity in education and, as a model country in education, Finnish teachers specifically could lead the way in increasing the supply of qualified teachers through the international cooperation of teacher training in developing countries [30]. Achieving such a goal requires healthy Finnish teachers. However, several cases of burnout have been reported by the Finnish media (see [31]) and in research articles (e.g., [32]). Nationally, the Finnish Government has taken the development of a healthy working life and well-being at work seriously. The new programme of the Finnish Government emphasises the importance of increased physical activities as part of well-being at work, and there is now a promise to create new ways to increase the physical activities of employees in order to improve well-being at and after work [33].

Investigating the activities that occur during working hours is a continuing concern because of the sedentary world in which we live. Working hours could be a source of well-being since we spend at least 1600 h at work annually [34]. Sedentary work has been connected with both physical and mental well-being. Physically, it has effects on musculoskeletal disorders, blood circulation, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes; mentally, taking breaks is beneficial in protecting against depression as moving around and getting away from the workstation can also help preserve an employee's time and energy, which creates a greater ability to refocus and to move forward [35,36]. It has been noted that there has also been an 83% increase in sedentary jobs since 1950 [37]. In 2013, 26% of Americans reported engaging in no physical activities at all. In 2014, this number rose to 28% [38]. In Finland, 75% of the time that people are awake is spent being immobile, and most of this time is spent in a sedentary fashion [39]. Vasankari et al. [40] delivered an alarming report regarding how the physical durability of Finns is severely deteriorating. If this anticipation of a decline in physical durability comes to fruition, Finnish society will suffer from a low level of cardiorespiratory fitness in the future and face substantial societal and economicchallenges in due course. There is a need to pay attention to people who are of working age because it seems that, even now, it is difficult to find employees who are over 50 years old to work in a job that requires physical durability. One possible way to strive for a better future is for employers to consider including certain physical activities for their employees to undertake during workdays [40].

2. Methods

This study set out to investigate the types of vocational education staff that can be identified in studying the connections between physical activities and the workload experienced. We then discuss the role of physical activity in creating a healthy working life with these findings. The material was gathered from workshops that were arranged to investigate and promote well-being at work. Educational staff from two Finnish vocational education institutes were invited to participate in this research.

Fifty-five people enrolled in the workshops. The data were collected by using empathy-based stories [41]. The participants were given approximately 15 min to write the empathy-based stories that were delivered during the last workshop. In total, thirty-one participants wrote a story. Twenty-six stories were written during the workshop, and those who were not present were contacted by email; as such, five stories were received by email. Participating in the workshops and writing the stories were voluntary, and the participants were aware that they were taking part in this research while attending the workshops. They were informed about the research goals, privacy, and data management. All of the participants provided written, informed consent to participate in the study before they started to write their stories.

We received 14 stories from Script A and 17 stories from Script B. The goal was to receive 15–20 stories from both scripts [42]. Using this method, variation played a key role [43] as by varying one essential element it was possible to study its impact. The varied element in these scripts was the feeling of cognitive load in one's job. By using the "I" form in stories, it was possible to refer to one's experiences [42]. The scripts used were as follows:

Script A: It was a year ago when you finished the cognitive ergonomics workshops. You notice that your workdays are now much lighter than before. You can concentrate on your work, and you recover from work much better than before. What has happened? What elements have you affected by yourself? What changes has the employer made? And how have your colleagues helped you?

Script B: It was a year ago when you finished the cognitive ergonomics workshops. You notice that your workdays are still loaded. You cannot concentrate on your work, and you recover from work in a way that is much worse than before. What has happened? What elements have you not been able to affect by yourself? What changes did you expect from your employer that have not happened? And what kind of attitudes have your colleagues shown?

Once a week, the participants received a notification via email where they were asked to evaluate their past week. In that weekly written diary, they were asked to conduct their evaluation with respect to the following question: what type of loading effects have been identified and what type of factors have most interrupted your work time? There was also an open space provided so that they could report their ideas and experiences. The purpose of requesting weekly diaries was to keep the participants aware of the process. They also received certain exercises for the following workshop, and their diaries served to remind them of being participants in this study. They were asked to pay attention to some of the special features of their work and how they themselves, or when working in a team could affect these features. These perceptions were then jointly discussed in the workshops.

The material was collected from respondents who worked in different environments compared to the researchers. Their daily working lives were not familiar to the researchers. All of the authors are qualified vocational teachers. The first and third authors worked as teachers at the University of Applied Sciences, while the second one was a Senior Specialist in an organisation that specialises in research, advice, and training in relation to well-being at work. Working in the field of education connected the respondents and researchers generally, but the respondents also worked in different types of positions, in different educational areas, and had a variety of professional backgrounds. Having this aspect in common partially, but not wholly, made it possible to study the data from the outside and allowed the participants to be open to considering the activities freely [44].

The participants had work experience ranging from 1 to 38 years, with 13 years being the average. A total of 21 participants were teaching staff members, and a further 10 represented administrative staff (e.g., head of training, study secretary, or IT support person). There were both female and male participants. The written style was rich, where most of the participants wrote in whole sentences and in a storytelling manner; however, two of them wrote using bullet points. All participants used whole sentences in their diaries.

Table 1 describes how we connected the research framework with the data collection. The analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, which involves familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming the themes, and producing a report [45]. At the beginning of the research, we had some prior knowledge of the phenomena through reading research papers. After the data collection, we reviewed the data and identified the main categories. After creating story types, we moved on to the synthesis stage and discussed theoretical views.

Table 1. Research analysis phases (modified from the method used by [45,46]).

Research Framework	Prior Knowledge and Research Data Collection
Analysis	Becoming familiar with the data/thematic analysis Identifying the main categories of physical activity expression via qualitative content analysis/thematic analysis, i.e., investigating initial codes and themes Combining themes as story types/thematic analysis, i.e., defining and naming the themes
Synthesis	Discussing story types with theoretical and global perspectives/thematic analysis and discussion

The method used in analysing the data can be described as a narrative–discursive approach [47], or, more precisely, a discursive–narrative approach that is based on qualitative content analysis [48]. In terms of written material, the individuals wrote about their experiences by means of words or concepts, which is suitable for the social and discursive reality of the shared narrative [49]. We included certain quotations from the original data under recognised themes. The pieces of expressions were put together, and we then started to construct stories in, what we describe here as, "story types".

To create story types, we employed narrative analysis [50]. Narrative analysis was used as a method for creating new stories that highlight the essential points of the data [51]. The respondents did not write the resulting stories, rather it was the researchers that created them. In this case, then, the story types were not owned by any single respondent but represented shared ideas. It is also important to note the concept of enunciation [52], which relates to a storyteller's relation to a text. Our viewpoint stems from the vocational educational context and its language and terms. Context (see [53]) plays a big role, and it was easier for the researchers to understand the language and terms used by the participants as members in the communities where these aspects of life are partially shared.

3. Results

There were 15 expressions in the empathy-based stories (N = 31) that were used in discussing physical activities and the possibilities of recovering (Organisation 1: 7 expressions, and Organisation 2: 8 expressions). In the diaries, there were 157 expressions (Organisation 1: 1 expression, and Organisation 2: 156 expressions). We established the following four categories that dealt with physical activities and their possible connections with the experienced cognitive load: the meaning of breaks, workload, the meaning of free time, and awareness of one's own well-being. The categories were derived from how the meaning of a workday was expressed; however, in viewing the employees holistically, we also included leisure time and its meaning as an ameliorating element for cognitive workload. Awareness came as a special case, thus showing that there was still a great deal of work to do in improving the causality between physical activity and experienced cognitive load.

Examples of the findings are shown in Tables 2–5. Organisation 1 (O1) or Organisation 2 (O2) at the end of a quote relates to the organisation from which the answer was received. After every table, we created a story type for each category to summarise the findings.

Table 2. Breaks in terms of how it affected the workload experienced by the vocational education staff.

The importance of breaks
I take a break regularly and we have an office workout three times a week (O2).
I have learned to take a break. In my previous job, I did not take breaks and it led to burnout. I was on the way towards going down the same path, but now I have learned to work differently. During my breaks, I leave my computer, do an office workout, or go for a walk (O2).
Colleagues remind me to take breaks (O2).
The use of existing possibilities
The school buildings are quite huge, so it is essential to walk a lot during the day (O2).
When I am working on campus, there is much more walking compared to when I work remotely (O2).
Nowadays, I use the stairs more often than the lift (O2).
New trials and innovations
I used a balance board during my work and this added to my physical activity (O2). I bought a kettlebell and an exercise stick for my workstation and learned to use them (O2).
I included some physical elements in parts of my teaching (O2).
During the meeting, I stood up every now and then (O2). When I have some time to wait for a new meeting or lesson, I do some kind of exercise (O2).
Humour is an essential part of my daily work. I joke with my good colleague about the things that disturb our job. During breaks, I joke and laugh at myself, sometimes at others, too (O1).
Recovering prerequisites
Today, it was possible for me to recover during work time because I could concentrate on my work and there were no surprises all the time (O2).
Physical activation helped to ease my cognitive load (O2).
It was possible for me to schedule my work better so that the transitions between work duties were recovering moments (O2).

Table 3. Workload in terms of how it affected the recovery of the vocational education staff.

Lack of breaks
I have had no time for breaks, which were so important for me before (O1).
I have no time for breaks because students come to ask for help, and I want to help them (O1).
There is no possibility for an office workout (O2).

Table 3. *Cont.*

Lack of recovering

On Friday, I was exhausted not only physically but also mentally (O2).

The work affects my sleep quality and makes me feel stressed (O2).

Occasionally, I am overactivated, and this hinders my sleep. Sometimes I wake up in the early morning hours, but now, for the first time, it has been impossible for me to fall asleep (O1).

Lack of energy

I just try to survive the workdays; I have no energy to do anything during my free time (O1).

There is no time for hobbies (O2).

I know I should have gone for a walk after the workday, but I was too tired. I lay on the sofa and ate candies (O1).

Table 4. Free time in terms of how it affected the workload experienced by the vocational education staff.

Good balance

Work and hobbies are in good balance. When I concentrate on one, I get rid of the other. I have noticed that I do not have to do highintensity training all the time. Quiet walking calms my mind in a good way (O1).

I have switched from scheduled exercises to training that I can do according to my own schedule (O2).

Daily walks with my dog (2 km) and swimming (2 km). During the weekend, I visit the gym, go for a walk to work, do a training session, and practice yoga. This is becoming a new normal for me (O2).

Training before work

It cheers me up to exercise in the morning and walk to work (O2).

The workdays feel somehow different if I have the possibility to jog in the morning (O2).

Gym training and walking refreshed the start of the workday (O2).

Table 5. Awareness in terms of how it affected the workload experienced by the vocational education staff.

Reflection

I have thought a lot about things concerning my well-being (O2).

I have paid more attention to well-being than before (O2).

Things concerning well-being were more active in my mind (O2).

The meaning of the workshops

The workshops regarding physical activity have made me think about how to have more breaks during the workday (O2).

The material we got from and in between the workshops helped me to remember breaks, concentrate on work, and stop multitasking (O2).

The challenge week had an impact on my exercises (O2).

Breaks seemed to play a large role as far as the cognitive load and lightening it were concerned. Table 2 shows the importance of breaks, the use of existing possibilities during breaks, and its role in new trials and innovations. There were also certain prerequisites mentioned, for instance, requiring some equipment for training. Walking on campus was found to be the easiest way to add physical activity to the workday. We also took humour as a special case in terms of recovery because there are studies that suggest the positive health effects of humour and laughter. For example, Robinson et al. [54] showed how humour lightens burdens, inspires hope, and keeps a person focused and alert. Laughter relaxes the whole body and decreases stress hormones [54].

3.1. Story 1: Forerunner

I take regular breaks, leave my computer, and try to go for a walk. We take on-foot meetings with colleagues. Colleagues are important in reminding me of the meaningful breaks. My job assignments require me to move during the workday. In the workplace, I try to walk between different workstations. I also use the stairs as often as possible. Remote days are more inactive.

I want to try different equipment, such as a balance board, kettlebell, or exercise stick, to activate my body during the workday. I have new ideas for undertaking physical activities at work, and I developed them by myself too. I have also tried to include some physical activities in my teaching to support both students' learning and to maintain my alertness. I have utilized waiting time to do exercises or participated in meetings by standing, not merely sitting. I have learned to plan my week so there are recovery moments available. Additionally, we sometimes have so much fun with colleagues, which helps me to relax.

For some, the workload was so great that it hindered undertaking any physical activity during workdays. There are also certain other psychological hindering factors that were mentioned: "I had no energy to use the stairs as much as earlier" (O2). Conversely, there was a perception that exercise was not a part of one's duties: "Physical activity, it is not my duty" (O2). For some, there was no time for breaks during the workday, and the amount of free time that these types of respondents had seemed inadequate for recovery, i.e., work took all of their energy. A lack of recovery is known to cause physical effects, deteriorate quality of sleep, and result in feelings of tension within a body (see Table 3).

3.2. Story 2: Exhausted

I have no time for breaks, although I truly need them. However, the students need me more. The employer has not arranged any equipment for an office workout, so it is not possible to do that, even if I had a break. After workdays, I am so tired that I have no energy to do anything. I work long hours, so I do not even have time for hobbies. I know I should, but I do not have the energy. I am so tired.

I know I should, I ought to... I have good intentions, but the workload is so huge. I am not able to sleep well anymore. Work thoughts are not leaving me in peace. On Fridays, I am so tired that I can feel the load of the week in my body. The mental load has become physical.

I have no time for hobbies. As I mentioned, I know I should. However, I have no energy, no motivation. It is harrowing that the work weeks just pass, and I have only energy to work. If I do an office workout, it is not enough to get rid of the workload and duties.

Free time and how to use it also plays a significant role in recovering. Some of the informants felt that their free time and work time were in good balance, and, for some, physical exercises in the mornings gave them a fresh start to the workday (see Table 4).

3.3. Story 3: Leisure-Time Enthusiasts

I exercise actively, usually after workdays, and an exception to this is that I will exercise in the mornings before work if I have the chance. I love all kinds of sports: walking, dancing, water sports, gym, and yoga. I feel that exercising refreshes and works my body

in a good way. After workdays, I recover from work with hobbies that I have planned by myself. Sometimes just walking in peace is good for me.

An awareness of one's own well-being was found to be mainly as a result of participating in this research project. The participants became more aware of their working habits and how these habits may have been having an effect on them. This category was found to be more at the ideal level due to the presence of good intentions (see Table 5).

3.4. Story 4: Thinker

I am aware of the importance of exercise, and I can pay attention to stressful situations and to my own recovery. Holistic well-being is on my mind more actively than before. I think about my well-being more than before.

This project drew my attention to this theme. I received new ideas and materials, and now, I am more aware of physical activities during workdays. It was important that we were reminded of this theme by the weekly diaries. They helped to keep this theme in mind.

4. Discussion

Our aim was to determine what kind of vocational education staff types can be identified when studying the connections between physical activities and the workload experienced. In the discussion section, we will combine these types with the broader research framework in order to understand their relation to planetary health. We will also express the concerns associated with growing mental health problems, as well as illustrate the possibilities for workplaces in terms of decreasing them.

In total, 31 empathy-based stories were collected from the vocational education staff. Based on the data, we established the following four story types to describe the type of physical activity undertaken and its effect on work-based cognitive load: *Forerunner*, *Exhausted*, *Leisure-Time Enthusiast*, and *Thinker*. The results showed that the essential categories affecting cognitive load were as follows: meaningful breaks, workload experienced, free-time activities, and awareness of one's well-being.

Forerunners and *Thinkers* could be seen as actively drawing attention to recovery possibilities, either in practice or in a psychological manner. Röning and Skytten [55] noted that the meaning of work in a community is huge and the significance of one's work plays a dominant role. The social nature of experiences is remarkable: it seems to be important to have "permission" for breaks [56,57]. For a *Forerunner*, colleagues were understood as important actors in influencing the participants to take a break from their workstation. For *Thinkers*, it was important to receive suggestions, almost orders, to take breaks. Knowledge and awareness can enhance well-being. On this note, Biddle et al. [58] noticed that most of the participants (92%) in their study felt that the education seminar they conducted increased their awareness of the health consequences of sitting for many hours at a desk, which, in turn, motivated them to change their behaviour. Receiving feedback on their sitting time and support from the research team encouraged behaviour changes. It was recognised that adding movements during a workday is beneficial, but the presence of haste in their workday removed these good intentions [56,59]. It was found that it is hard to break habits. Furthermore, to have an impact on social sustainability, it is important to create places that involve engagement [13]. It seems that jointly working towards achieving better quality in the workday could increase both health and cohesion in the workplace. A collegium that takes care of its members and offers a place for trust, open debate, and prosocial behaviour is meaningful [60]. In this way, collegiality could serve as a platform for having an impact on the quality of daily work, and, through it, working towards a better quality of life and improved health.

The work community could be a key factor in changing habits and creating new ones. Chau et al. [56] demonstrated how work demands take priority, but that colleagues and team members are still significant factors. In this study, it was noticed that other people's examples were important for changing habits: if colleagues worked standing up more

frequently, it made others also stand more in turn. From the employer's point of view, recovering and reducing sitting are also important goals. Sedentary activities during working hours can diminish productivity, performance, and health. Faghy et al. [59] provided a strong indication that university employees experience high levels of inactivity during work and leisure time, which shows that interventions encouraging regular movement and preventing sedentary behaviours at work are therefore required. Productivity at work is also connected with work well-being; thus, productive employment is one of the elements on the agenda for achieving sustainable goals [61]. By reducing sitting, it is possible to promote the aforementioned goals.

Although there is no evidence regarding a *Thinker*'s good intentions coming true, raising awareness is nevertheless still a potentially impactful goal (see [58]). Despite the strong focus on the relationships between job demands and health, relatively little attention has been paid to the psychological and physiological processes that may explain why health is adversely affected by high job demands [62]. The concept of psychosocial work refers to how an individual experiences and responds to their surroundings; thus, through this, the individual becomes the focus [63]. In a psychologically beneficial job, it is important for the employer to control the organisational and social conditions, as well as requirements, at work. The psychosocial work environment could be seen as an intermediate step in a causal pathway linking economic, social, and political structures with health and illness through psychological and psycho-physiological processes [63]. The psychosocial aspects of work link daily work with the aforementioned importance of collegiality. Together, there is a possibility to rethink working habits, make improvements, learn new ways to recover, and deliver increased well-being in the workplace. Creating this kind of social future could be essential in keeping vocational teachers committed to their work and also in keeping them committed to educating future skilled employees. This manner of social acting, joint thinking, and collaborative learning promotes the social sustainability and cohesion of working teams [13].

In our case, the *Forerunner*, *Thinkers*, and *Exhausted* types could benefit from communal work-day-based recovery elements. Vuong et al. [57] reinforced the results of Chau et al. [56] with respect to the importance of community in physical activities: the primary reason for attending a sports day was not to participate in physical activities but to promote social benefits, such as creating a sense of community and building on existing relationships with colleagues. This suggests that individuals participate in physical activity events because these events help to create a social support network [64] and because individuals want to enhance social cohesion [13]. Interaction, in one way or another, is important for increasing motivation for physical activities. In the shelter dog pilot study [65], participants walked with a dog and a partner for 30 min during their lunch break. Participants were motivated by the opportunity to interact with dogs, and this also showed that physical activity levels could be aided by the presence of dogs. The positive benefits associated with having pets in the workplace have already been noticed [66,67], but Sartore-Baldwin et al. [65] also noticed an additional benefit of physical activity opportunities when a pet is available, where it was found that interaction with dogs is a significant motivator for engaging in a workplace physical activity programme for those employees who like or love dogs. That study suggested that when those employees returned to work, they were happy after interacting and walking with the dogs. Dogs, or animals in general, also serve as a good connection to nature and bigger entities. This kind of animal-supported well-being is a good example of promoting connectedness and, through it, planetary health by connecting daily routines with nature and animals (see [27]).

A significant number of teachers feel that their recovery from work is inadequate. The reasons for inadequate recovery are diverse; they may be inadequate in terms of quantity (time) and/or quality. Prolonged exposure to high demands may be seen as endangering an individual's psychophysiological systems if they have difficulty relaxing at home after a stressful working day, as has been noted by the *Exhausted* type of workers (see [62]). The activities undertaken during a person's free time are meaningful. As the *Leisure-Time*

Enthusiasts put it, active leisure activities appear to promote recovery [68]. Well-being after the weekend was found to be higher when individuals engaged in social activities over the weekend [69]. The risks of inadequate recovery should be taken into consideration when planetary health issues are discussed. Feeling stressed aggravates the symptoms of diseases, such as coronary artery disease or rheumatoid arthritis [70], and this might also serve as a risk for health organisations in the form of an increasing workload. To recover, free time, weekends, quality sleep, friends, family, walking in nature, and hobbies are important [55]. In this study, free-time activities played a big role, especially for *Leisure-Time Enthusiasts*, who took care of their physical well-being in versatile ways (see also [68]). Nature can be seen as a source for promoting health; a connection with nature can promote meaningfulness in terms of being a part of a bigger entity. In addition, this also applies to one's responsibility to take care of nature as a source of well-being not only for oneself but also for future generations [71].

To recover, it is important to have time for something different that can help get rid of thoughts about work. For some, however, this is not possible. Job demands should be kept in balance (see [62]), but this was not the case for *Exhausted* types; it was not possible for them to relax during either their workdays or in their free time. In comparing a group of employees reporting relatively low levels of work-related effort and one with relatively high levels of work-related effort, van Hoof et al. [62] found that the high-effort group was more fatigued at the end of the workday; this group also engaged less often in active leisure in between workdays than the low-effort group. On weekends, the high-effort group remained significantly more fatigued than the low-effort group. The high-effort group also spent more time on overtime work. This was found to be related to arrangements in the workplace. As such, adequate control of the opportunities in job settings could allow employees to adjust their work behaviour in favour of their current needs for recovery. Workers should be encouraged to engage in leisure activities that can potentially contribute to their recovery process, such as active leisure. The time spent on overtime work should be kept within acceptable limits, as overtime work impedes the recovery process [62]. Employers should not demand excessive overtime in order to guarantee that their employees have sufficient (potential) recovery time (see also [72]). In our study, the *Exhausted* types shared the same idea: work takes too much of their energy. Work demands were their priority, and this overrode one's own needs (see, e.g., [56]). The *Exhausted* types spent all their energy at work and had no time or mental capacity to promote physical activity during their free time, which is alarming as far as physical condition and durability are concerned (see [40]). These *Exhausted* types should receive greater attention: noone should be left alone with their workload, as expressed in the Sustainability Goals [73]. The research on vocational staff's cognitive load [74] has emphasised the meaning of teams and colleagues, in addition to self-regulation, in the context of work. The results show that, although there are self-regulated and innovative staff members, some need more support from their team members and leaders because of the huge workload experienced. Social collaboration in workplaces is twofold: it is considered important ("colleagues remind me of breaks"), but it also draws one's attention ("students need my help"). This finding corroborates the ideas of Salmi et al. [75], that is, the demand for leaders to be more familiar with their staff. It can be challenging for leaders to cope with how their employees' experiential qualities differ, but, in time, the better the leaders understand their employees and their different experience qualities, the easier it is to create positive experiences and promote their well-being. The challenge is to identify the different experience qualities in real time and to act based on this information. Although employees are considered specialists in their fields, they may need certain examples or encouragement when it comes to looking after their well-being at work [75].

After becoming familiar with these individual qualities, it is important for leaders to encourage leisure activities and adequate recovery time [62]. In our results, the *Exhausted* types did not receive any benefits from physical activities because it was impossible for them to eliminate work thoughts or because there was too much of a workload. Bordi et al. [12]

recognised the same kind of problems in this digitally loaded era: to manage the sheer amount of digital communication present in their job, the participants would, for example, check emails after work. Furthermore, they found this kind of spillover highly problematic, as it may induce unpaid overtime, impede recovery, and cause work–life conflict, which hinders employees' ability to detach from work and takes time away from their non-work activities. The *Exhausted* types worked overtime and had no energy for hobbies to aid with recovery during their spare time, and they also had no time for recovering during their working hours. These people would benefit from organisational support, or even orders. Digital and online working possibilities are a double-edged sword: reducing commuting minimises the impact on the climate [76] but, at the same time, it can stress workers as they have to manage their own work duties in isolation. In addition, it challenges work communities as they have to invent new social cohesion methods in order to create a sense of connectedness [13].

A special feature of cognitive ergonomics, specifically information ergonomics, was introduced by Bordi et al. [12]. It is an emerging domain of ergonomics, where the focus is on the management of workloads and handling technostress in information-intensive tasks. Thus, information ergonomics can be seen as an approach that helps to support performance and well-being at work in information-heavy work settings. From our data, it could be observed that the use of digital technologies as sources of daily well-being is not remarkable. Rather, it was colleagues or the individual themselves who reminded them to take breaks. In everyday experiences, digital technologies have been more commonly identified as having a negative influence on teachers and their well-being, but there is still a need to study their positive possibilities [77]. Flexibility and digital communication are seen as great resources when they increase the sense of control and autonomy over one's work; however, the overwhelming and control-reducing aspects of digital communication seem to act as demands that hinder well-being [12]. Flexibility was available to the *Forerunner* types, who used their greater flexibility to, for example, go for a walk outside, whereas digital communication was used less as a source of well-being and instead more as a means for work, such as how to deal with a huge workload, fragmented concentration, or avoiding multitasking (this also applies to the *Thinker* type). The demand for information ergonomics exists, but it is seldom acknowledged.

Both organisational and individual actions are needed to better aid recovery from work and increase well-being. They are important not only for individuals but also on a larger scale, that is, for promoting global well-being. It starts with a minor step and can lead to bigger changes, that is it can lead to creating a health-promoting work environment. Teachers can be role models to their students [24]. Leaders can promote self-awareness [75], as well as agency. Professional agency is a dominant factor in terms of the teaching profession. Professional agency is a behavioural phenomenon: it is something that people do and enact in their working lives, and it is closely associated with actions. It occurs in the relationship between individuals and contexts [78]. Ideas regarding increasing one's well-being in teaching (*Forerunner*) were observed; furthermore, these ideas could result in a potential impact on future employee well-being, and they could also be used to work towards achieving a sustainable working life for people and improving planetary health [28]. The impact of community on staff, leaders, students, etc. is remarkable; however, more collaborative communication and greater accessibility to sources of social support are needed. These discussions and provisions will be crucial in supporting teachers and, therefore, the educational system, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic [79]. A psychosocial work environment could be a useful concept in linking economic, social, and political structures with health and illness through psychological and psycho-physiological processes [63].

In this era of change, who is responsible for decent work conditions? How do we define decent work conditions? In a Finnish context, we experience cognitive load from emails and colleagues who interrupt tasks being conducted. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals for decent work conditions encompass objectives such as minimising

environmental harm, protecting labour rights, and stopping modern slavery and child labour [80]. Decent work conditions depend on the national situation. In the context of Finnish education, as vocational teachers and educators, we are interested in the types of elements we should add to teacher education programmes and how teachers can promote a better and more sustainable working life for themselves and for their students (who will be future employees). How can teacher education and training be improved so that the national state of well-being is taken into account? In certain cases, there is a need to add knowledge and awareness (see [58]); sometimes, practical discussions and reflections on future visions of working life are needed. There is a need for workplace discussions regarding the kind of future we are aiming for. As such, planetary health and everyone's participation and share in it are recommended platforms to start with.

5. Conclusions

One's job and their workplace appear to play a big role in an individual's identity and dignity [1,81,82]. On the one hand, they can serve as a place for the fulfilment of basic psychological needs [5] and can bring the joy of living. On the other hand, they can serve as a place for disorders and illnesses. To tackle the latter, ideas and actions to improve planetary health are needed. Planetary health starts with every single member of the work community; thus, everyone has a stake in it. In other words, both sides are needed; individual and community. At the same time, there is a need to discuss work as it currently is. Although work is recognised as valuable in Finnish society [81], there are also reasons at the individual level as to why it is important to work: for some, work is just work, while for others, personal interests are involved in it, that is, there is no perceived need to separate work from spare time (see, e.g., [83]). Although, in this study, the emphasis was on the workplace as a source of, for example, basic psychological need fulfilment [5], all opinions should be taken into account.

With the results of this study, we stress communality as a key element in creating both a sustainable and healthy working life. Communality can help with responding to the demand to include everyone in improving well-being. Collegiality calls for trust and allows for the presentation of ideas concerning better working habits [60]. In improving planetary health, every action can be meaningful. We can understand the value of communality using a practical example from Sartore-Baldwin et al. [65], who conducted an experiment where workers took time out of the workday to walk with shelter dogs. We would like to see everyone walk with a workmate in nature. In addition to walking, we could increase individual and organisational well-being via innovative ideas, by refreshing old ones, or by simply asking; How are you today? Joint discussions regarding decent work conditions in a national context are needed. To see one's work in a global context could be a starting point for defining what basic work is needed to carry out one's contribution to society at an adequate level.

The major limitation of this study is that it is a qualitative study. Moreover, it is further limited by the fact that it was solely carried out in a Finnish context, specifically in vocational education. The respondents participated voluntarily in the workshops, and they were somewhat engaged with the values being studied; as such, they already had a certain degree of interest in developing themselves. Another limitation is the timeframe. During this study, we found that inactivity at work and its effect on health have led to discussions regarding how more movement can be added to workdays, as was investigated in several other pilot studies. However, how this increased movement can change or affect things in relation to planetary health goals will require more longitudinal research.

The aim of this study was to identify different types of vocational education staff by studying the connection between physical activity and workload. We found four meaningful categories: breaks, workload, free time, and awareness of one's well-being. We also established four story types based on these categories: *Forerunners*, *Exhausted*, *Leisure-Time Enthusiasts*, and *Thinkers.* According to our study, both individual and organisational tasks are needed to promote well-being and a better working life, with physical activities

playing a significant part in this. To promote a sustainable working life, communality is a key element. Discussions around work, especially with respect to decent work conditions, are needed, and there is also a need to view one's daily work on a global scale.

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