

“THE HELPERS’ STRESS”: AN ONLINE INTERVENTION TO IMPROVE COPING WITH SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

Katarzyna Zukowska, Martyna Kowalska, Anna Pankiewicz, Ewelina Smoktunowicz, Roman Cieslak
Department of Psychology, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw, Poland

The study evaluates the effectiveness of a newly developed, web-based empowerment program (“The Helpers’ Stress”) designed to reduce secondary traumatic stress and job burnout in professionals working with trauma survivors. This study is in progress. A randomized controlled trial will be conducted among first responders, social workers, fire fighters, nurses, and paramedics.

INTRODUCTION

- Professionals working with traumatized clients are at risk of developing **job burnout and secondary traumatic stress**.
- According to **Social Cognitive Theory** (Bandura, 1997), **self-efficacy beliefs** play an important role in coping with trauma and its effects. Another resource facilitating effective coping is **social support**. Additionally, the enabling hypothesis (Schwarzer & Knoll, 2007) claims that perceived social support facilitates self-efficacy.
- The longitudinal study conducted among social workers and first responders (Zukowska & Cieslak, 2011; Smoktunowicz & Cieslak, 2011) **confirmed that**:
 - self-efficacy mediates the effect of perceived social support on secondary traumatic stress
 - self-efficacy mediates the relationship between perceived social support and job burnout.
- **Based on these results was developed “The Helpers’ Stress”** – an online psychological intervention to help first responders and social workers in effective coping with secondary trauma and to assist them in mobilizing individual and social resources.

OBJECTIVES

Research aim

To evaluate the **effectiveness** of “The Helpers’ Stress” intervention, targeting social support or self-efficacy enhancement.

Hypothesis

Compared to the controls, participants in “The Helpers’ Stress” would report higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs and social support and lower levels of secondary traumatic stress and job burnout at the post-test and follow-up.

Variables

- Dependent: perceived social support, self-efficacy, job burnout, secondary traumatic stress.
- Independent: group allocation

METHOD

Participants

Participants (N = 300) will be recruited among professionals working with traumatized clients.

Inclusion criteria:

- Age \geq 18 years
- Working as a first responder, social worker, fire fighter, nurse or paramedic
- Indirect exposure to trauma through work
- Work experience \geq 1 year

Measures

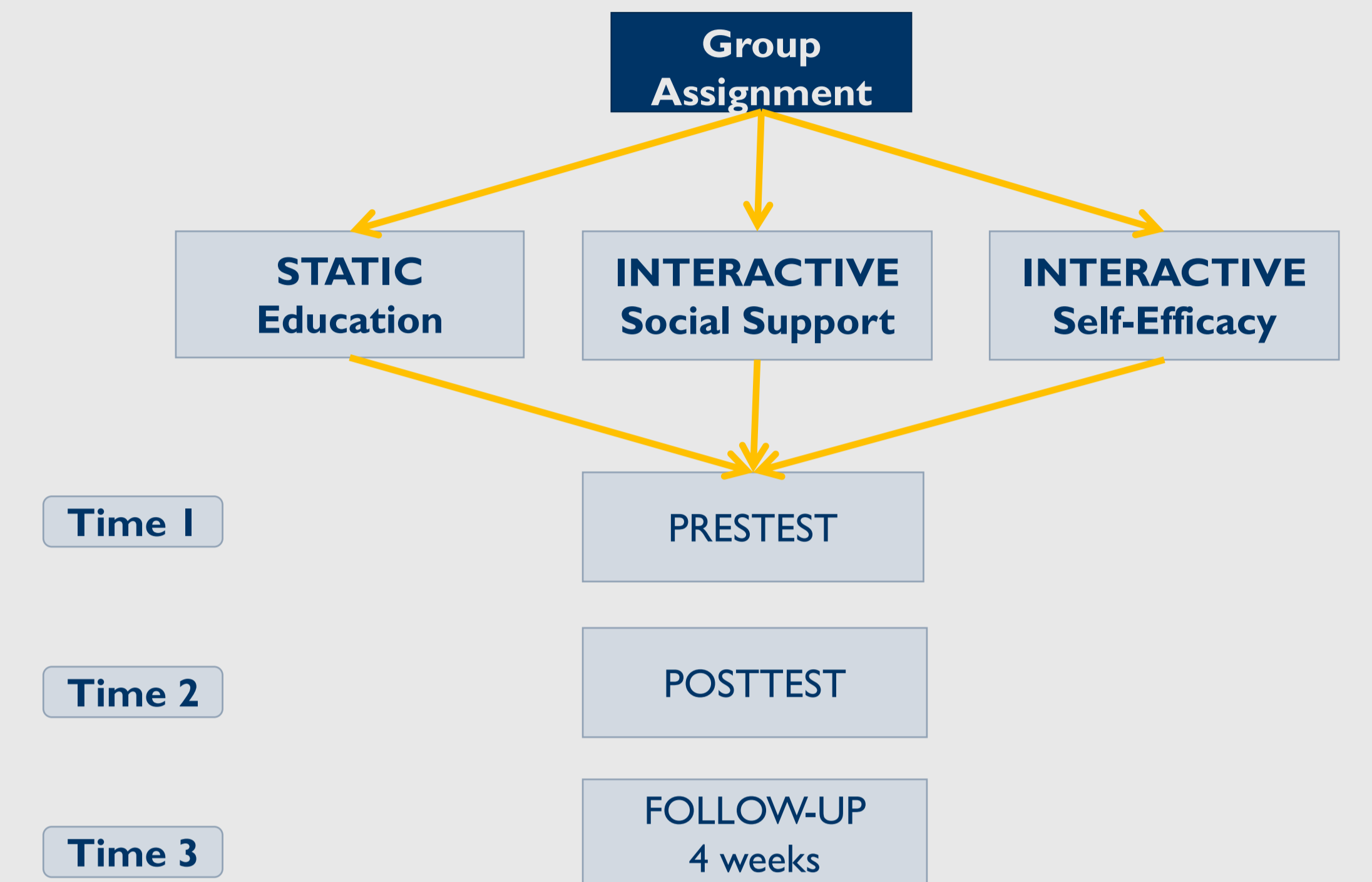
- *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support* (Zimet et al., 1988), 12 items, alpha = .96
- *Work Stress and Burnout Self-Efficacy Scale* (Lua, 2008), 9 items referring to beliefs about the ability to deal with burnout, alpha = .91
- *Secondary Trauma Self-Efficacy Scale* (Benight et al., 2004); 9 items, alpha = .92
- *The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory* (Demerouti et al., 2003), 16 items, alpha = .88
- *Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale* (Bride et al., 2004); 17 items, alpha = .91

Procedures

- Random assignment of participants to one of three conditions:
 - 1) **EDUCATIONAL** intervention (the control group)
 - 2) **SOCIAL SUPPORT** enhancement intervention
 - 3) **SELF-EFFICACY** enhancement intervention.

Participants will complete the survey before the intervention or control group procedures (**Time 1**), immediately after the intervention or control group procedures (**Time 2**), and 4 weeks after Time 2 (**Time 3**).

FLOW CHART

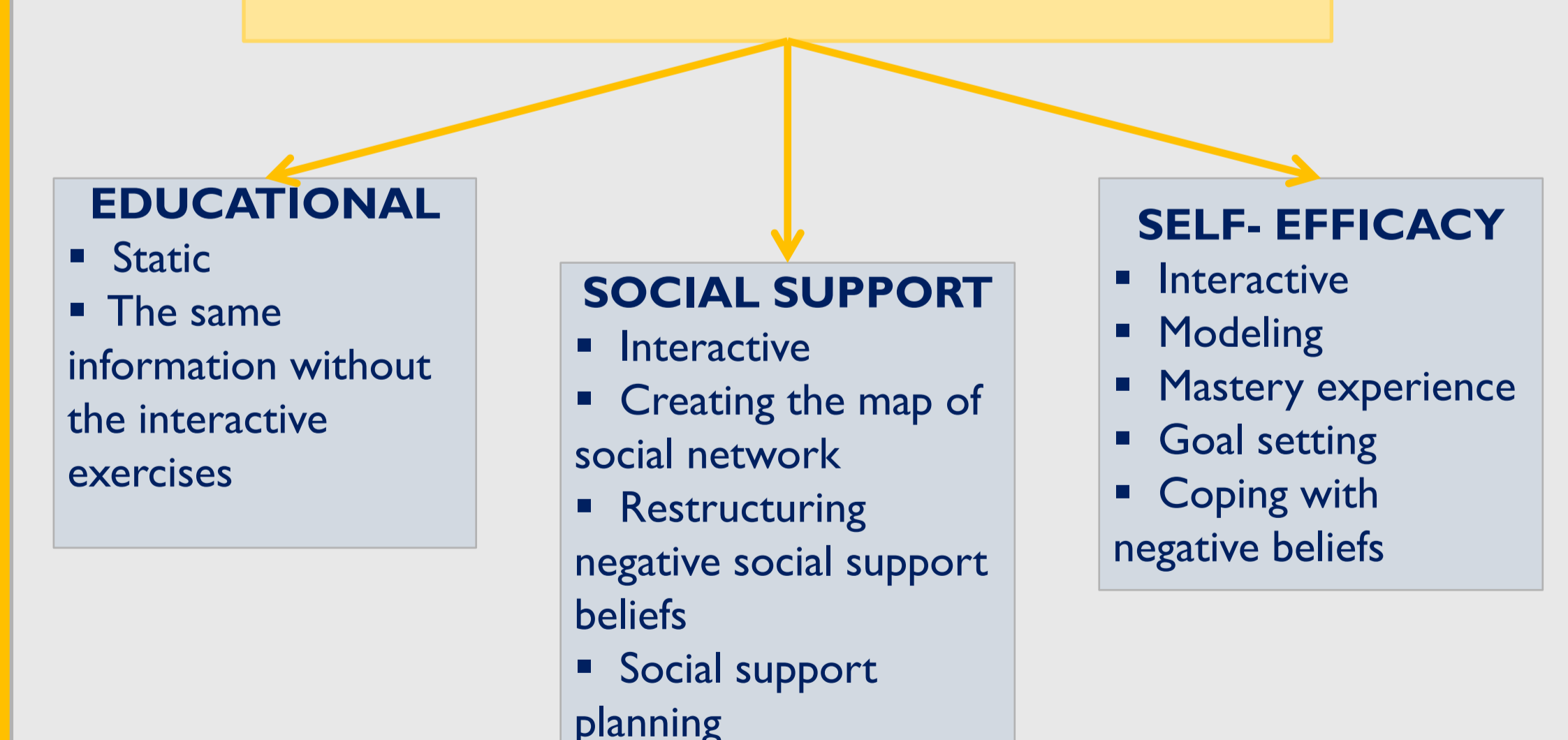


THE HELPERS’ STRESS WEBSITE

The intervention consists of three modules:

- 1) **EDUCATIONAL** materials presenting knowledge about coping with secondary trauma and work stress,
- 2) Interactive cognitive and behavioral activities focusing on **SOCIAL SUPPORT** enhancement,
- 3) Interactive cognitive and behavioral activities aimed at increasing **SELF-EFFICACY**.

THE HELPERS’ STRESS



RESULTS

This study is in progress.

Repeated measures analysis of variance and mediation analysis will be applied.

For further information about this study or the Helpers’ Stress website, please contact kzukowska@swps.edu.pl

