

Take Care – together!

Implementing a culture of care in the healthcare sector: Presentation of the scientific study

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Background

Healthcare professionals face growing pressure from staff shortages, reduced working hours, declining recruitment, rising care demands, increasing multimorbidity, shorter lengths of stay, and unstable team structures. These conditions contribute to absenteeism, staff turnover, and reduced quality of care, while also affecting resilience, professional identity, team cohesion, and organizational culture. In this context, developing a caring organizational culture is especially important. The project of Diakonie Deutschland supports providers and state associations, particularly in eastern Germany, in sustainably developing and embedding such a culture. It responds to a disastrous downward spiral: rising demand for healthcare services collides with chronic underfunding, overburdening, the loss of resilience-building structures, underprovision and misallocation of resources, as well as a lack of public appreciation. A caring organizational culture can slow this dynamic, and initial indications suggest that training in Spiritual Care can contribute to this. Nevertheless, validated concepts for such a culture in healthcare institutions are still lacking - and this is precisely where the present study comes in.

Aim

- Sustainable Development and the Institutionalization of a Caring Corporate Culture in Diaconal Institutions.
- Strengthening the resilience, job satisfaction, and employability of healthcare professionals and sustainably improving staff retention.

Methods

Intervention:

Conducting two training sessions based on the curriculum “Spiritual/Existential Care interprofessionell” at six project sites (→ Figure 1) (two sessions of 40 teaching units each per site in 2026 and 2027).

Evaluation:

- A) Employee survey (→ Figure 2): conducted at two times (before and 3 months after the training sessions, for the trained group and an equally sized control group) using validated questionnaires on topics including general and spiritual/existential well-being, individual resilience, and Spiritual Care competencies, plus a survey of part-time employees regarding potential for increased hours.
- B) HR data collection (→ Figure 3): At the start and before the conclusion of the project, key metrics—including headcount, absenteeism, and turnover—will be collected from HR departments via questionnaires. Based on these results, a participatory concept for fostering a caring organizational culture will be designed and implemented, with attention to site-specific requirements.

Conclusions

- Training employees in Spiritual/Existential Care is crucial for developing and implementing a caring organizational culture, as it builds essential skills in recognizing and addressing spiritual needs and enables holistic care.
- Its potential to strengthen resilience and foster staff retention suggests that it plays a strategically valuable role in alleviating the shortage of skilled workers.

(Expected) Results

The development and implementation of a caring corporate culture at the pilot sites will have an impact on

- employees: empowering healthcare professionals, reducing burnout and turnover, enhancing spiritual competencies, satisfaction, resilience, and self-care.
- institution: contributing to the alleviation of the shortage of skilled workers in the healthcare sector, employability, psychosocial climate, quality indicators, and positive effects on organizational culture.
- organization: Visible positioning of Diakonie Deutschland as a pioneer for a holistic, caring corporate culture.

Figure 1: Participating institutions (project sites)

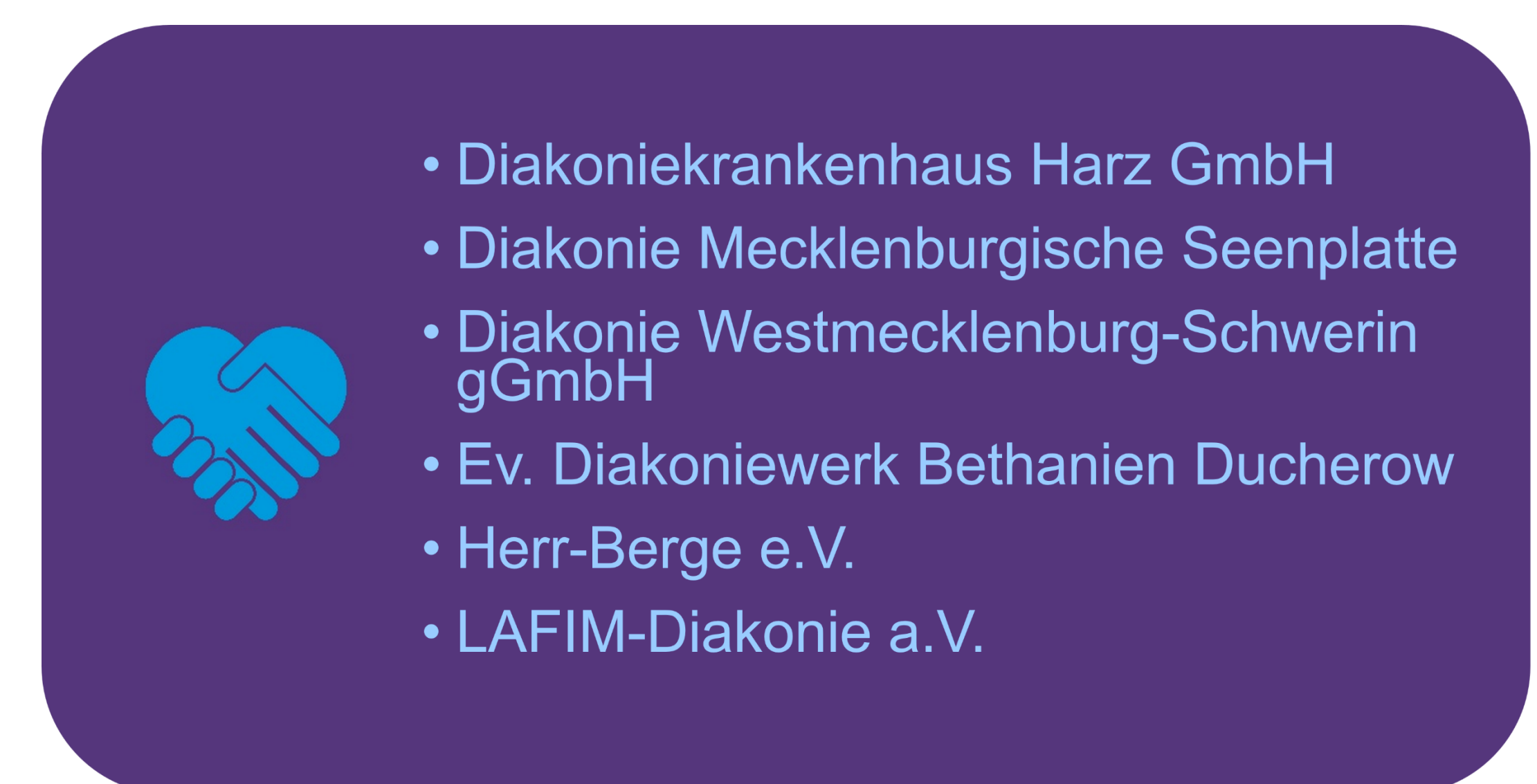


Figure 2: Study Design – Employee survey

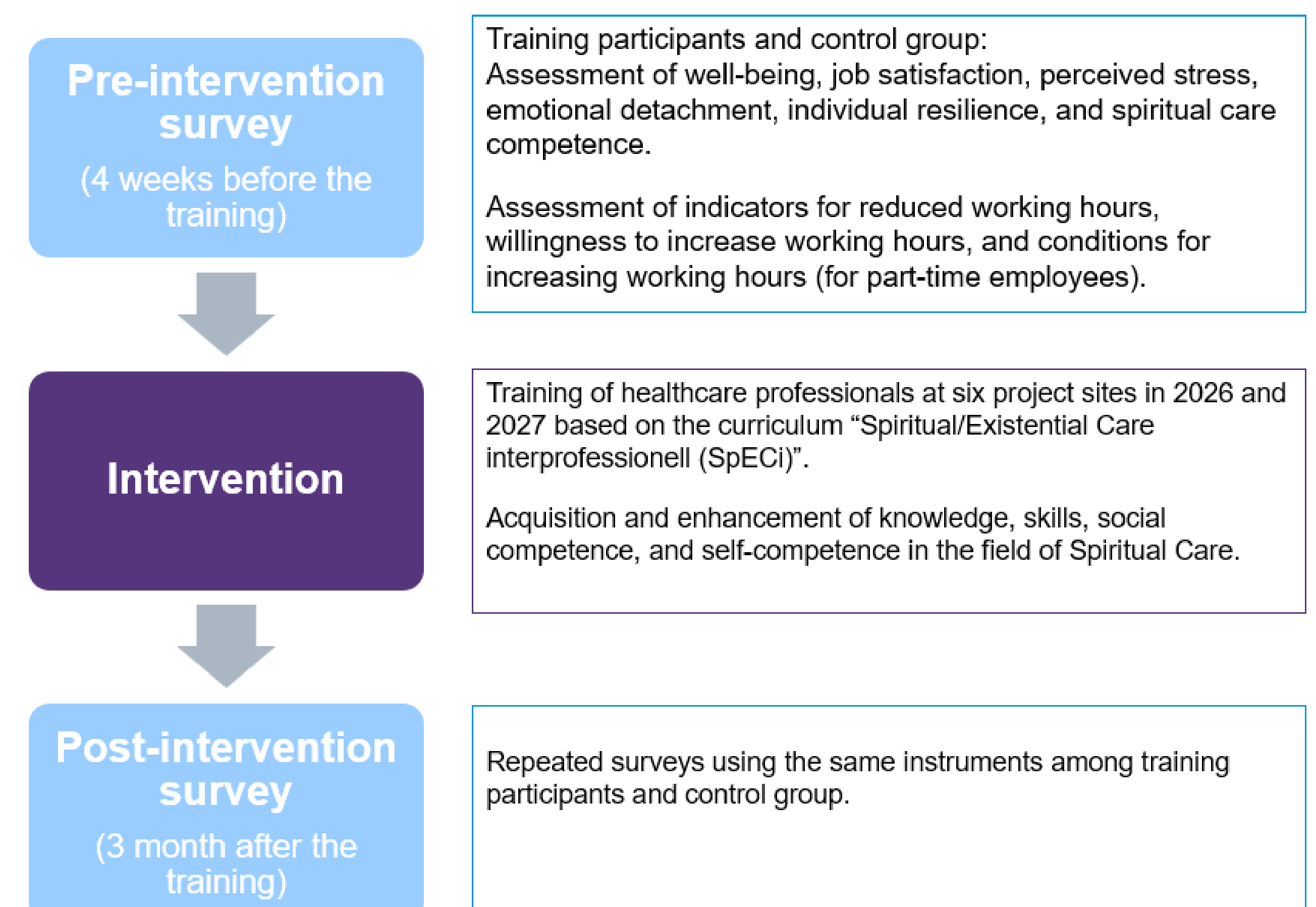


Figure 3: Study Design – HR survey

