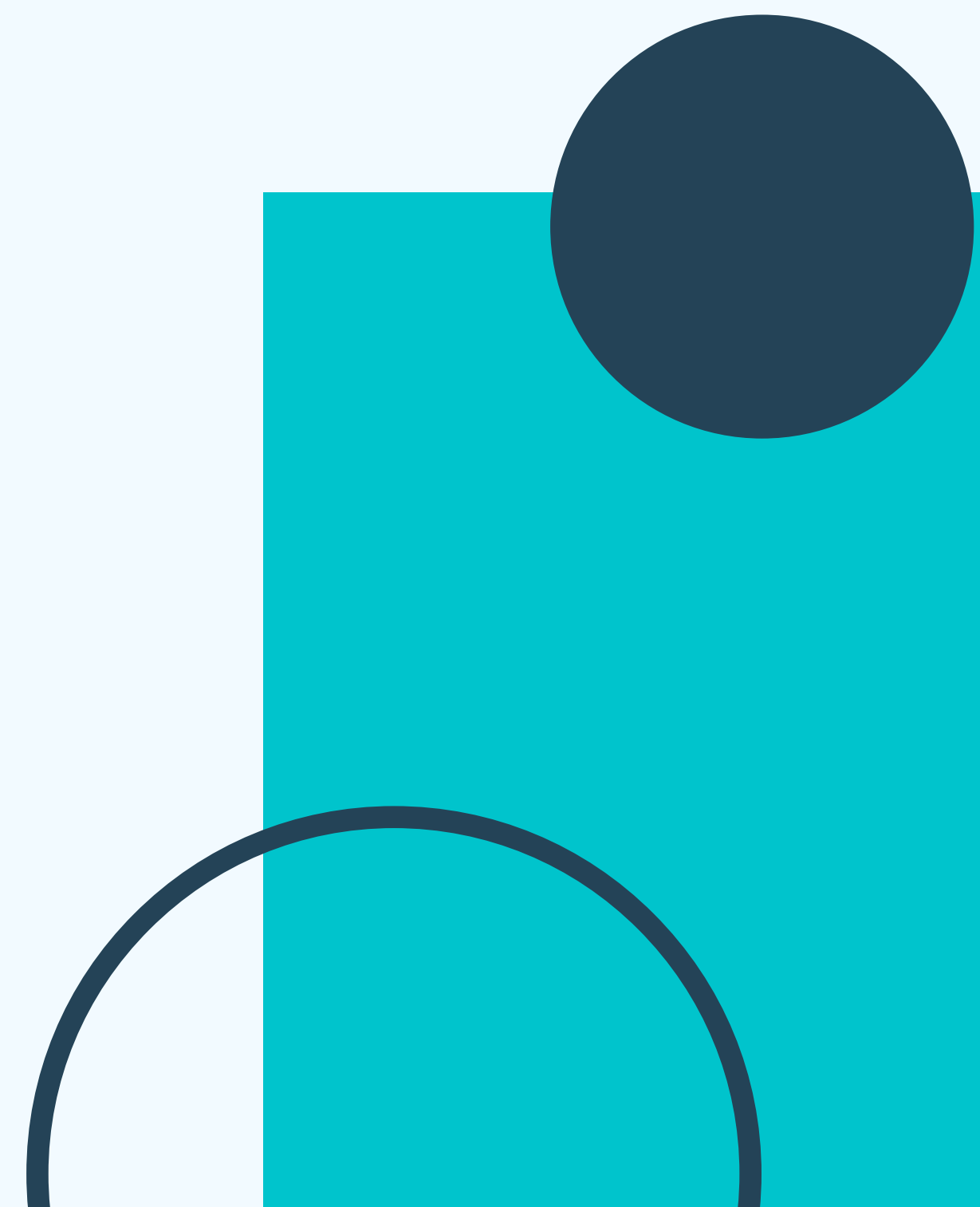


IPS Employment Specialists

Professional Role, Training, and Psychological Well-Being

Giulia Paganin, PhD

Department of Educational Studies, University of Bologna



IPS IN ITALY

Since 2010, IPS has been implemented in all 41 community mental health centers in Emilia-Romagna, involving about 1,000 service users per year, and has since expanded to Veneto and Lombardy.

Training and dissemination activities in Italy are strongly supported by IPSILON APS, a non-profit social promotion association founded by Italian professionals engaged in the application of the IPS model.

IPSILON TRAINING SUPPORT

IPSILON APS promotes the correct implementation of IPS with training programs that typically cover IPS principles, assessment and individualized planning, job development, benefit counseling, workplace disclosure issues, integration within multidisciplinary teams, supervision practices, and the use of the Fidelity Scale and IPS tools.



THE EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST

AN UNDEREXPLORED ROLE

The employment specialist (ES) is central to IPS, with the ES-client relationship identified as a core element of the intervention. The ES coordinates job search, job development, benefit counselling, and ongoing support.

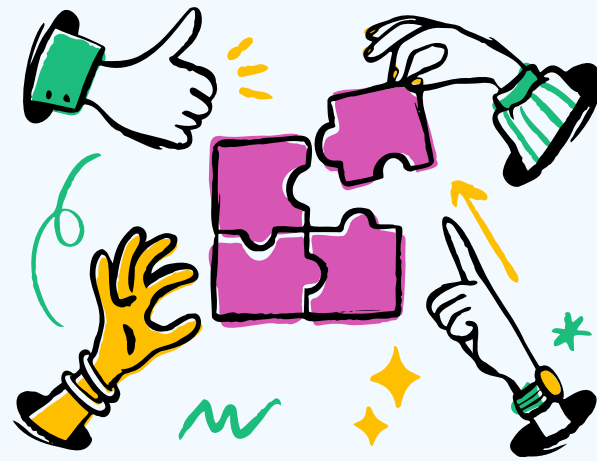
The role requires no specific qualification and relies mainly on experiential, on-the-job learning.

Research has mainly focused on client outcomes, while the professional role, training, and well-being of ES remain underexplored.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

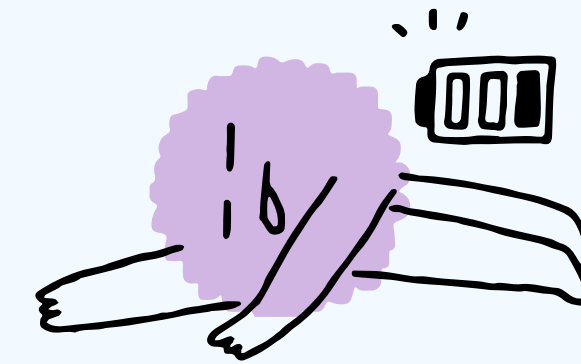
A MIXED-METHODS APPROACH



RQ1: What role does training play in the construction of IPS employment specialists' professional role and in providing the competencies needed to deal with the practical, systemic, and relational complexity of IPS practice?



RQ2: What training needs do IPS employment specialists identify in relation to the practical, systemic, and relational demands of their work?



RQ3: Are burnout dimensions, work engagement, supervision support, and economic recognition associated with turnover intentions among IPS employment specialists?

PROCEDURE

DATA COLLECTION

- Online questionnaire distributed by email to 70 current and former IPS operators in Emilia-Romagna
- Dissemination facilitated by an IPS supervisor, trainer, and IPSILON Vice-President
- Questionnaire open for about one month, with two reminder emails
- Participation was voluntary and anonymous; no personally identifying information was collected

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

SAMPLE (N = 42)

32 currently active IPS operators and 10 former operators in Emilia-Romagna, Italy

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

52.4% self-employed professionals; 47.6% employed by an organization

EXPERIENCE

42.9% more than 5 years; 26.2% under 1 year; 23.8% 1-3 years; 7.1% 3-5 years

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

40.5% psychologists, 28.6% psychotherapists, plus educators, pedagogists, and other profiles

Two complementary analytic strategies were used to examine different types of data collected in the study. Quantitative responses were analyzed using statistical methods, whereas open-ended responses were examined through qualitative analysis.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The qualitative analysis aimed to provide a structured summary of participants' perspectives rather than an in depth interpretative account.

The analysis followed a stepwise process.

- Familiarity with the content
- Initial codes
- Similar codes were grouped together
- The themes were then reviewed and refined
- Themes were defined and described in relation to the study aims.



QUALITATIVE RESULTS



A decorative image on the left side of the slide featuring several colorful paper airplanes (white, purple, green, orange, yellow, and blue) scattered on a dark blue textured background. The airplanes are in various orientations, some pointing towards the top right and others towards the bottom left.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

1. Training as professional positioning — provided “all the concepts related to the methodology” (P1) and helped clarify IPS principles
2. Operationalizing IPS in real-world complexity — Participants valued the theoretical and methodological foundations of the training, but felt “very theoretical and less applicable” (P24)
3. IPS work as system navigation: a recurring theme concerned the need for stronger preparation in navigating the institutional and regulatory employment context requested “more knowledge on labour regulations” and benefits counselling (P1, P15)



QUALITATIVE RESULTS

4. Relational and client-specific complexity – need for “interview conduction techniques” (P4) and preparation for diverse client profiles

5. Training as an ongoing process – participants asked for “more time to absorb the content” (P40) and regular refresher courses



QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Variable	M	SD
Exhaustion	2.29	0.79
Mental Distance	1.78	0.64
Perceived Support	4.40	0.59
Work Engagement	4.59	1.00
Turnover Intention	2.86	1.54
Satisfaction with Supervisor	3.98	1.05
Economic Recognition	1.95	0.73

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

BOOTSTRAPPED CORRELATION

Association	r	p	95% CI
Exhaustion ↔ Mental Distance	.53	< .001	[.23, .73]
Mental Distance ↔ Work Engagement	-.63	< .001	[-.81, -.36]
Mental Distance ↔ Turnover Intention	.46	.002	[.19, .68]
Work Engagement ↔ Turnover Intention	-.56	< .001	[-.73, -.32]
Turnover ↔ Supervisor Support	-.45	.003	[-.69, -.12]
Turnover ↔ Economic Recognition	-.41	.007	[-.62, -.14]
Exhaustion ↔ Turnover (n.s.)	.28	.072	[-.04, .56]



DISCUSSION

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Training supports professional identity, but ES want more practical, system-navigatio content.

Mental distance, rather than exhaustion, is the key risk factor for turnover intentions.

Work engagement may act as a protective factor against turnover intentions

Lower satisfaction with economic recognition and supervisory support raise turnover intentions

Supervision supports both staff well-being and IPS implementation quality

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS



STRENGTHENING IPS

- Structure training as an ongoing, practice-oriented process, not a one-off theoretical course
- Add case-based learning, simulations, and modules on labour regulations and welfare benefits
- Treat relational competencies as core skills, taught and reinforced through supervision
- Monitor early signs of psychological disengagement through supervision spaces
- Invest in stable supervision, clear leadership, and adequate economic recognition

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

SAMPLE SIZE

Small sample, though it represents a substantial share of IPS employment specialists in Emilia-Romagna

SELF-REPORT BIAS

Quantitative data based on self-report measures, which may involve response biases

NO OBJECTIVE DATA

No objective or longitudinal data on turnover, and no national reference data for Italy

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should combine subjective and objective indicators of workforce stability

WRITE ME...

giulia.paganin2@unibo.it

Thank
you

