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Effectively Design your Research Poster

OpenEU Summer School Den Haag, 28. August 2026

Presented by: Leonie Pethö-Schramm



STRUCTURE SESSION

- Intro & Purpose
- **Part 1:** Rules for Designing Research Posters + examples
- **Interactive Part:** Analyse examples & apply learnings
- **Part 2:** Encourage a conversation about your poster
- Feedback & Closing



BEFORE WE BEGIN...

In which **year of your PhD** are you?



BEFORE WE BEGIN...

Did you **ever** present a research poster at a
conference/ seminar?



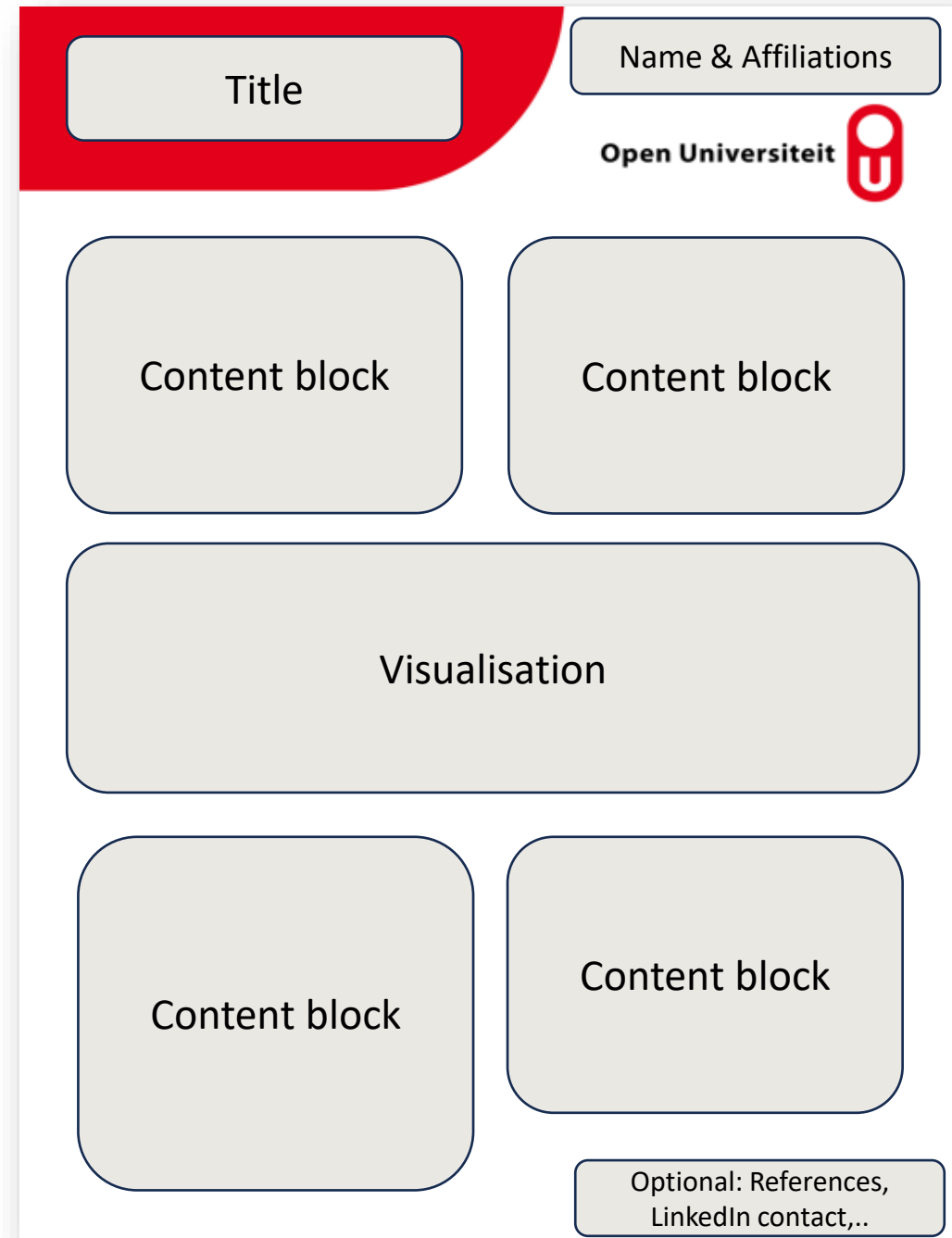
GENERAL FORMAT



Tip: Aim for **3-5 clear content blocks** in total

For example:

- 1) Research problem
- 2) Research question/objective
- 3) Method/study design
- 4) Main finding / Expected contribution
- 5) Implication /Discussion

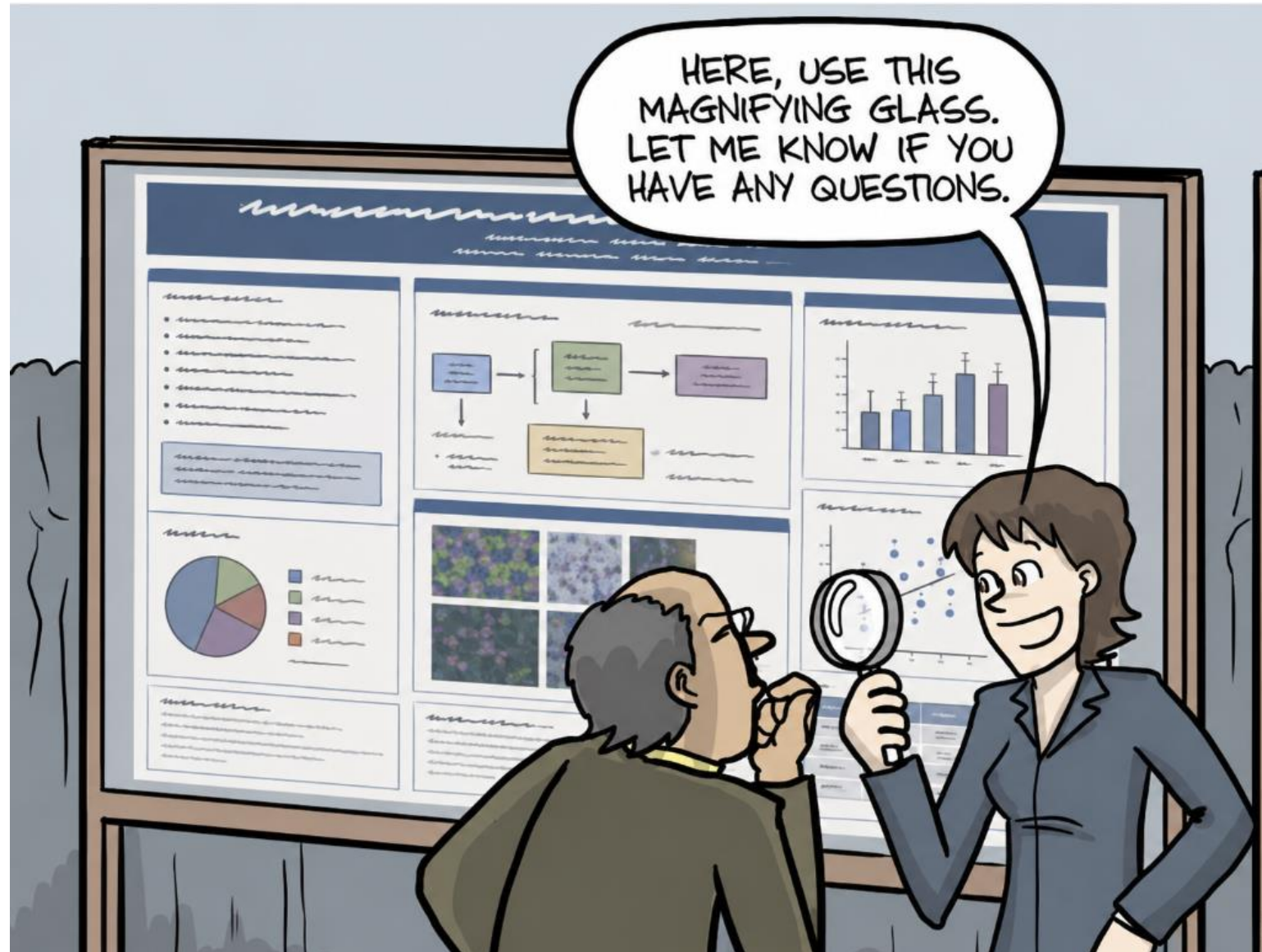




A STRONG POSTER COMBINES...

- a) ... a clear design
- b) ... strategic content choices
- c) an active approach to engage conversation

PART I: THE DESIGN OF A RESEARCH POSTER





PURPOSE OF RESEARCH POSTERS

A research poster is not a compressed paper, but a **visual invitation to a conversation.**

It helps people quickly understand...

- ✓ what your research is about
- ✓ why it matters
- ✓ what they can discuss with you



RULE 1: A STRONG POSTER COMMUNICATES ITS CORE MESSAGE WITHIN A FEW SECONDS.

Aim for **instant clarity**: a central message/finding, ..

→ helps viewers decide whether to engage further



Tip: Before designing the poster, formulate **the one sentence** you want people to remember.



RULE 2: USE VISUAL HIERARCHY TO STRUCTURE YOUR POSTER.

If you **emphasize everything** at the same time, **nothing is emphasized** in the end.

→ Decide:

What should people see first?

Usually: title, core message, main result, or key visualisation

What should people see second?

Usually: short explanation, method, implications

What can be smaller or less prominent?

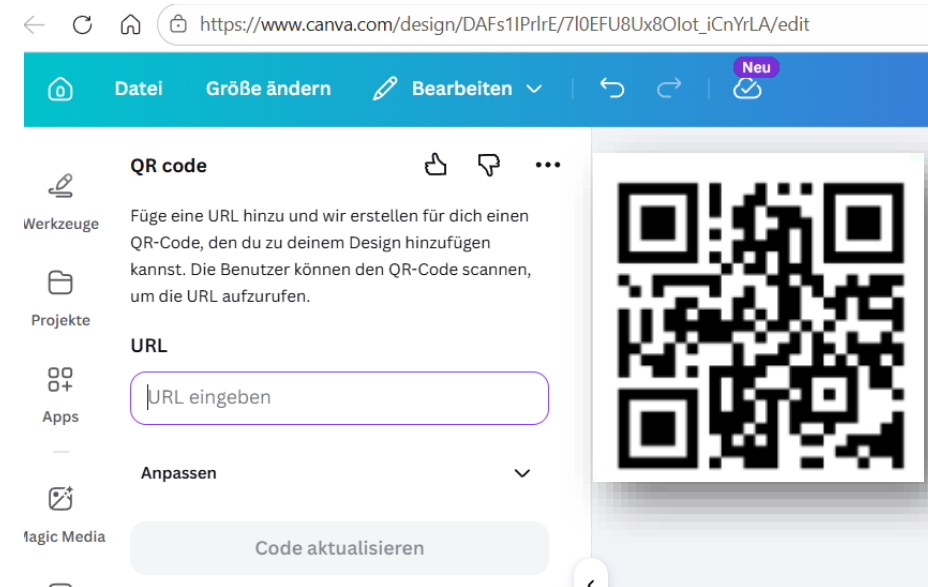
Usually: references, detailed measures, affiliations, technical details



ADDITIONAL TIPS



1) Limit yourself to **what needs to be on the poster**, not what is 'nice-to-have'



2) Use of **QR codes** to save space
(e.g. reference list)



RULE 3: EVERY TEXT BLOCK SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO SCAN IN 5-10 SECONDS.

→ Therefore use: short text, bullet points, bold keywords, & avoid long paragraphs.

Instead of one long paragraph with multiple citations

Sustainable Human Resource Management has received increasing attention as organizations are expected to balance economic performance with employee well-being, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability (Aust et al., 2020). However, the concept remains broad and is defined in different ways across studies, which makes it difficult to compare findings and assess how Sustainable HRM is implemented in practice. Existing measurement scales often focus on partly overlapping aspects of Sustainable HRM, such as employee development, fairness, health, participation, or environmental practices (Mariappanadar, 2020). As a result, it remains unclear whether these scales capture the same underlying approach or identify different patterns of HR practices. This study therefore examines how several Sustainable HRM scales relate to one another and whether different scale patterns are associated with employee outcomes such as well-being and work engagement

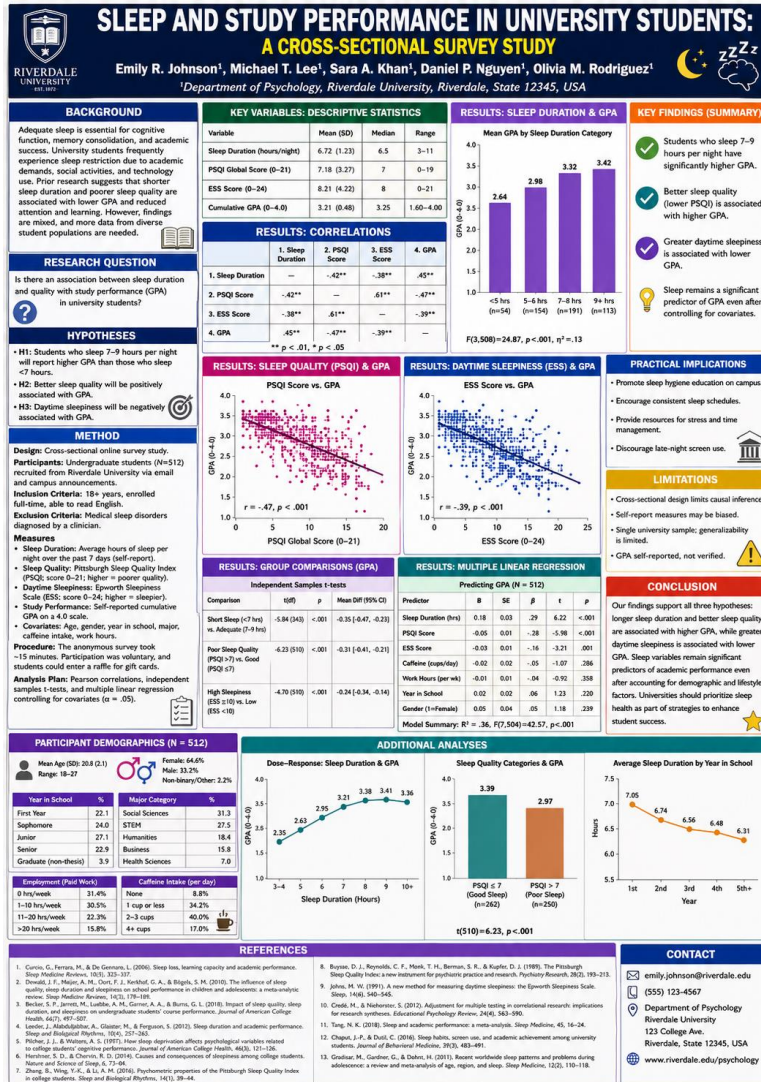
Use 3 short lines

Problem: Sustainable HRM is conceptually broad and inconsistently measured.

Gap: Existing scales capture overlapping but distinct dimensions.

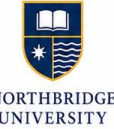
Aim: This study compares measurement patterns and links them to employee outcomes.

RULE 4: WHITE SPACE IS NOT EMPTY SPACE



VS.

Sleep and Study Performance in University Students



Emma L. Carter, Daniel J. Lee, Priya N. Shah
Department of Psychology, Northbridge University, Northbridge, UK

BACKGROUND

University students often experience irregular sleep due to academic demands and lifestyle factors. Poor or inconsistent sleep may impair attention, concentration, and learning.

AIM

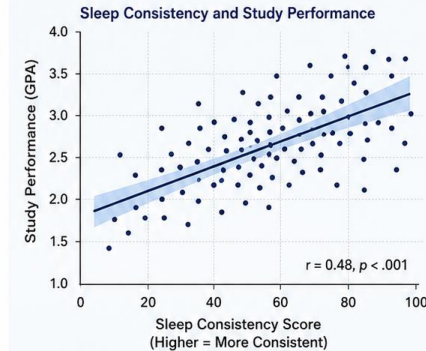
To examine the relationship between sleep consistency and study performance in undergraduate students.

METHOD

- Design:** Cross-sectional survey
- Participants:** 238 undergraduate students (18-24 years)
- Measures:**
 - Sleep consistency (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index - consistency component)
 - Daytime concentration (Visual Analogue Scale)
 - Study performance (self-reported GPA band)
- Analysis:** Multiple linear regression controlling for age, gender, year of study, and average sleep duration

KEY FINDING

Students with more consistent sleep report better concentration and higher study performance.



Note. Higher sleep consistency is associated with higher self-reported GPA.



IMPLICATIONS

Encouraging regular sleep routines may support students' concentration and academic success. Universities should promote sleep health as part of student well-being initiatives.

✓ Helps for structure & reduces cognitive load

✓ Do not fill space just because space is available 😊



RULE 5: MAKE SURE ALL ELEMENTS ARE ALIGNED.

Every element should line up with something else

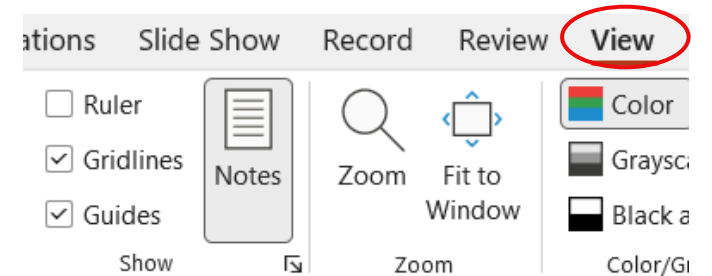
💡 Tip: In PowerPoint use **View** → **Gridlines** and/or **Guides**

Always check:

Are all section headings aligned?

Do text blocks have the same width?

Are margins consistent?



Not aligned

The Impact of Sleep on Academic Performance

Jane Smith, Alex Lee, Maria Garcia
Department of Psychology
State University

BACKGROUND

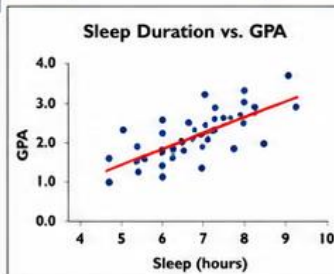
Sleep is essential for cognitive function, learning, and memory. This study examines the relationship between sleep duration and academic performance in university students.

METHOD

- 120 undergraduate students
- Sleep tracked for 2 weeks using wearable devices
- GPA obtained from university records
- Correlation analysis

PARTICIPANTS

N = 120 students
Mean age = 20.4 years
58% female



IMPLICATIONS

Improving sleep habits may enhance academic outcomes. Universities should promote sleep hygiene programs.

RESULTS

Sleep duration was positively correlated with GPA ($r = 0.45, p < .001$). Students who slept 7–8 hours had higher GPAs.

CONCLUSION

Adequate sleep is associated with better academic performance. Students should prioritize 7–8 hours of sleep per night.

REFERENCES

1. Walker, M. (2017). Why we sleep.
2. Curcio, G. et al. (2006). Sleep and learning.

Aligned

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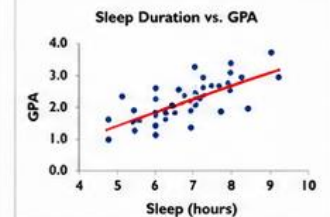
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FIGURE 1



CONCLUSION

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REFERENCES

1. Walker, M. (2017). Why we sleep.
2. Curcio, G. et al. (2006). Sleep and learning.



RULE 6: INCLUDE AT LEAST ONE VISUAL TO SUMMARIZE THE RESEARCH LOGIC/ MAIN FINDING.

Strong visuals are:

→ research model, flow diagram, key graph, or study design overview



Tip: Early-stage project **without results?**

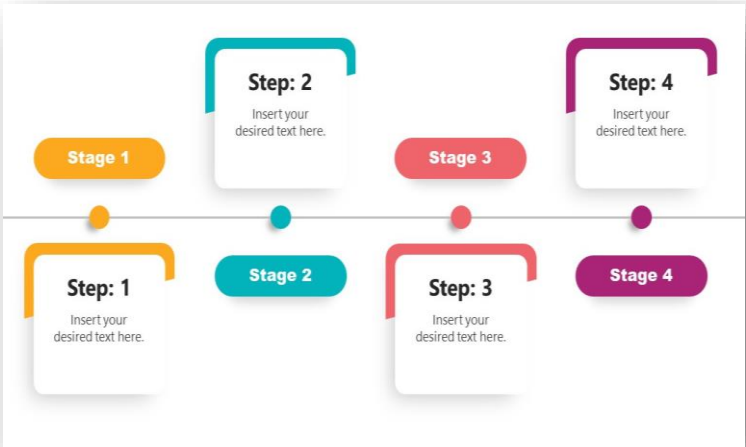
Use a..

- conceptual framework
- research design timeline
- model of expected relationships
- visual map of problem
- table comparing concepts, cases, or mechanisms

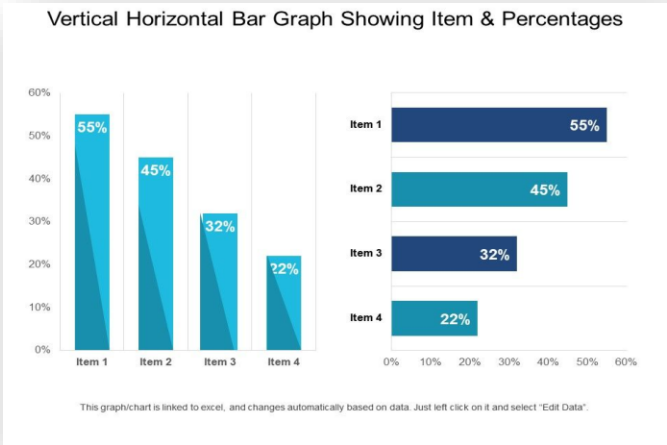


Some inspiration:

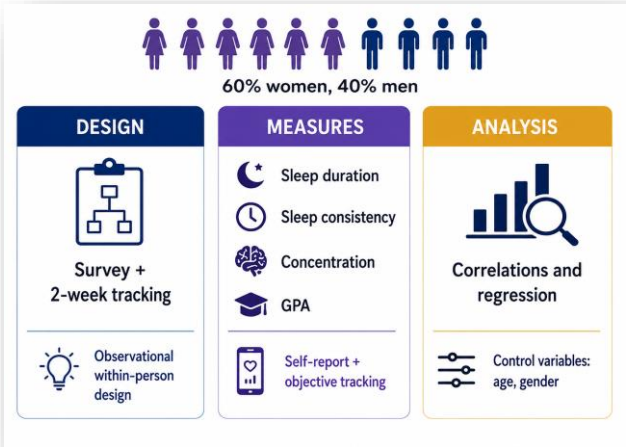
Time-line/ Flow diagram:



Key Graph:



Study Design Overview:



Research Model:

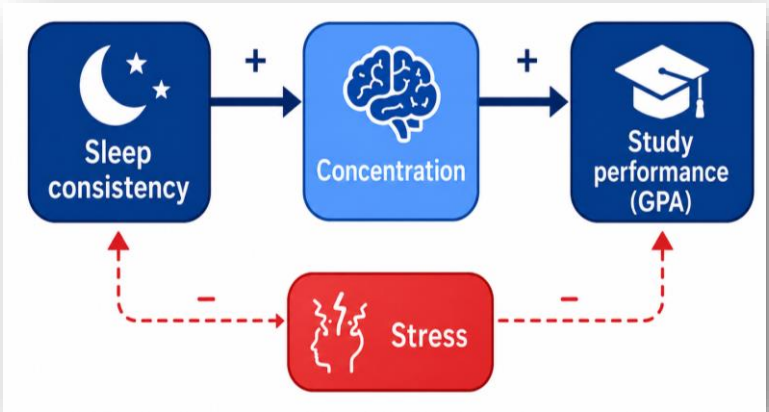


Table comparing concepts:

Concept	What it means	Expected link to performance
Sleep duration	Total hours slept per night	↓ Too little sleep may lower performance
Sleep quality	How restful sleep is	↑ Better quality may support concentration and learning
Sleep consistency	Regular sleep pattern	↑ More regular sleep may support better GPA



RULE 7: USE VISUAL ELEMENTS INTENTIONALLY & STRATEGICALLY, NOT AS DECORATION.

a) Use of **colour**, font (**bold**/*italics*), font size

b) **Distinguish** sections

c) Highlight the **main message**

d) **Connect** related elements



Tip: Also check OU format requirements

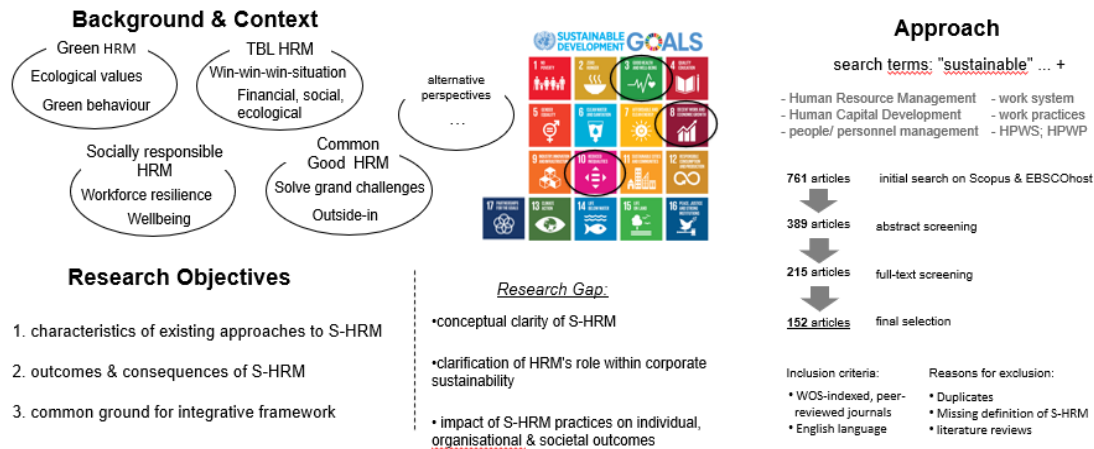


Compare:

Where does it come from, where does it go?

A systematic literature review on Sustainable HRM

Open Universiteit

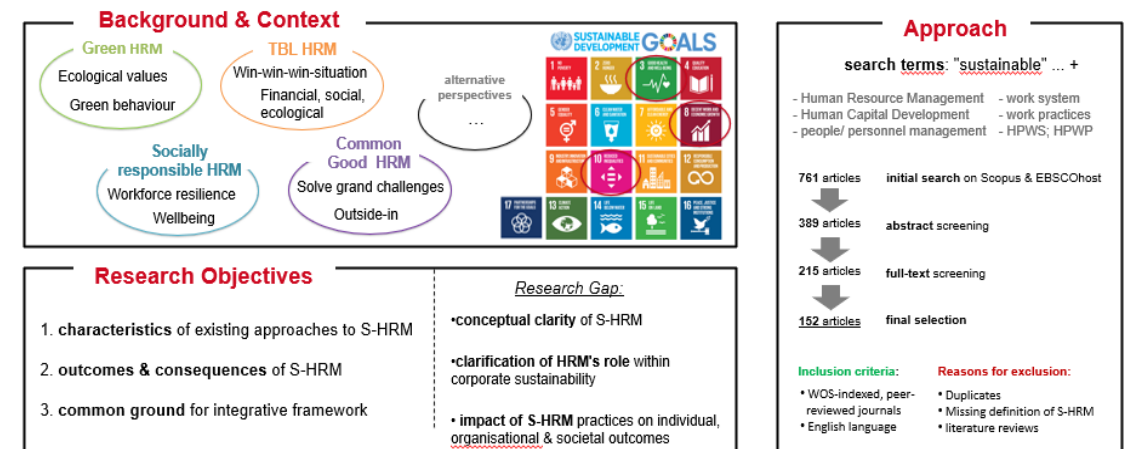


Steps towards an

Where does it come from, where does it go?

A systematic literature review on Sustainable HRM

Open Universiteit



Steps towards an



RULE 8: TEST YOUR POSTER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE VIEWER.

Poster from a distance -test → clear from 2 meters away?

What attracts your attention first?

What is the main message/ topic?

What would you ask about if not knowing the topic?





ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE WE PROCEED?





Employee Satisfaction and Organizational Performance: A Consideration of White- and Blue-Collar Employees

Introduction

- Perspectives about employees shifting from the principal-agent theory (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Taylor, 1911), to human relations theory (Herzberg, 1959; McGregor, 1960; Maslow, 1958).
- Human capital theory emphasizes the importance of investing in employee well-being to enhance productivity.
- Higher employee satisfaction is associated with higher stock returns (Edmans, 2012), improved future earnings (Hales et al., 2018), greater customer satisfaction (Chi and Gursay, 2009), greater firm innovation output (Chen et al., 2016; Mao and Weathers, 2019), lower likelihood of corporate fraud (Zhang et al., 2020).
- In contrast in some studies higher employee satisfaction is associated with negative financial outcomes (Tornow and Wiley, 1991; Gorton and Schmid, 2004), stock price crash risk (Ben-Nasr and Ghouma, 2018).

Motivation

- Dual labour market theory, dichotomizes the labour market into a primary and secondary (Doeringer and Piore, 1971)
- Importance of job satisfaction across different types of workers (Logan et al., 1973)
- mWhite-collar workers are more satisfied with their job than their blue-collar counterparts (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Humphrey et al., 2007)
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), 71 million jobs associated with blue-collar occupations out of a total employment of 164 million in 2020, representing 44 percent of the overall workforce.



Contribution

- First, longitudinal and cross-sectional data to investigate the impact of job satisfaction among white- and blue-collar employees on both firm financial and non-financial performance.
- Second, identifies specific elements of employee satisfaction that are significant for white- and blue-collar workers
- Third, helping managers in developing strategies to boost satisfaction and enhance their organizations' performance.

Conclusion

- White-collar employees have a higher degree of satisfaction than their blue-collar co-workers.
- White-collar satisfaction positively contributes market value of firm.
- Blue-collar employees' satisfaction positively contributes to firm profitability.
- In non-labour-intensive industries, there is a difference in the impact of employee satisfaction on performance metrics compared to labour-intensive sectors.
- No significant relationship between both white- and blue-collar employee satisfaction and non-financial performance of firms.
- White- and blue-collar employees respond similarly to intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and satisfaction criteria, both groups prioritize intrinsic factors over extrinsic ones.

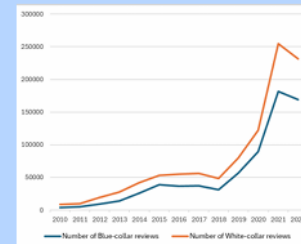
Research Questions

- How does employee satisfaction, across different employee groups, relate to organizational performance?
- How do motivational factors vary between white- and blue-collar employee groups?

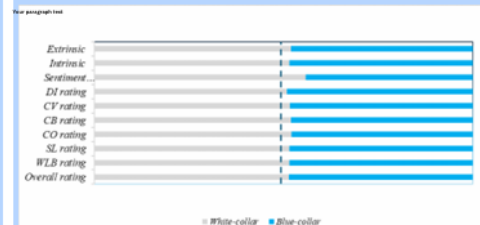


Methodology

- U.S. listed firms from 2010 to 2022
- Glassdoor.com
- Refinitiv
- Factset, CRSP, Compustat
- Pooled OLS, Fixed Effect regression



	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
White-collar	1,009,209	59.07	59.07
Blue-collar	699,242	40.93	100.00
Total	1,708,451	100.00	



Attention points:

Align length of title boxes

Structure of sections

Keywords not highlighted





How Do Institutional Pressures for Sustainability Affect Supervisors' Performance Management Management Enactment and Effectiveness?

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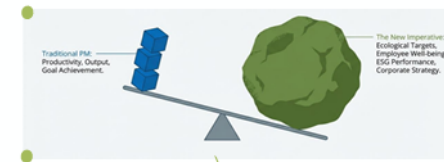
Contact: h.bak@ou.nl



How do sustainability pressures shape supervisors' Performance Management (PM) role ambiguity and does this undermine PM effectiveness?

Background & Context

Sustainability is now embedded in corporate strategy but translating it into day-to-day performance management falls on supervisors who receive mixed signals from both formal policies and normative expectations about what it means in practice.



Research Gaps

Missing insights into supervisors: Past research has predominantly focused on employees' PM experiences (e.g., appraisal reactions), thereby overlooking the perspective of those responsible for enacting PM.

Complexity of embedding sustainability: Lack of insights in how supervisors can navigate the extended focus of PM effectively.



Theoretical Lenses

We integrate **Institutional Theory** and **Signalling Theory** to explain how external pressures relate to role ambiguity among supervisors and subsequent PM effectiveness (Connelly et al., 2011; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2014; Spence, 1973)

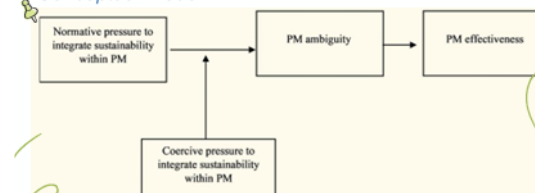
Normative Pressure: Value based expectations (weak signals)



Coercive Pressures: Formal Requirements (shield/moderator)



Conceptual Model



Hypotheses

1. Normative pressure is positively related to PM role ambiguity
2. Coercive pressure buffers the normative pressure ambiguity link
3. PM role ambiguity is negatively related to perceived PM effectiveness
4. PM role ambiguity mediates normative pressure → PM effectiveness
5. The indirect effect is weaker under high coercive pressure (moderated mediation)

Method

Study 2: Vignette Experiment

Design: Between-subjects experiment; 2 conditions
Conditions: High normative + Low coercive vs. High normative + High coercive
Sample: Supervisors in the Netherlands, scenario-based manipulation
Outcome: PM role stress judgments + manipulation checks

Study 1: Time-Lagged Survey

Design: Two-wave survey with 6-week time lag (T1-T2)
Sample: Supervisors across industries in Turkey
Measures: Normative & coercive pressure (T1) - Role ambiguity (T1) - PM effectiveness (T2)
Analysis: PROCESS moderated mediation (Hayes, 2018)

Contributions

Supervisor focus: Shifts attention from PM system design to individual enactment. Supervisors bear the burden of reconciling vague institutional goals with daily operational practice.

Theory refinement: Institutional pressures do not operate uniformly coercive signals reduce role ambiguity while normative signals amplify it. We refine institutional accounts of HRM by demonstrating this asymmetry.

Practical implication: Organisations should formalise sustainability expectations in PM frameworks to reduce supervisor role ambiguity and protect the effectiveness of PM processes.

Works well:

Visuals support the message

Keywords highlighted/ coloured

Sections clearly separated

Attention points:

Many background colours

Title & Research Question similar

Use of many different icons



Bridging Gaps: Exploring Perspectives on Sustainable HRM

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Starting point

What is known..

HR can contribute to sustainability-related issues

(Aust et al., 2020)

What is unknown..

- 1) how stakeholder interpret Sustainable HRM
- 2) potential conflicting views & outcomes

(Bush, 2020; Järström et al., 2018)

Theoretical basis

Attributions of HRM determine its outcomes

(Nishii et al., 2018)

How do HR managers, supervisors, & employees understand the link between HRM & Sustainability?

Exploring how ...



.. sensemaking process across organizational levels



.. relates to tensions & hindering sustainable achievements



..roles & responsibilities are perceived

Level

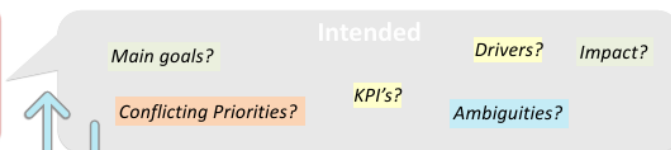
Key Themes

Data collection

N = 60

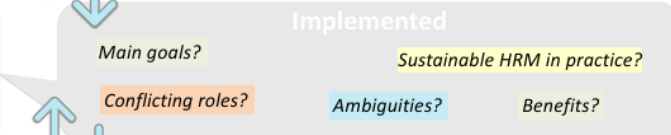
Across 5 organization

HR manager



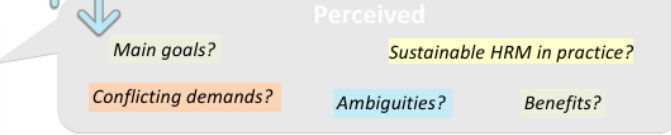
10 interviews

Supervisor



6 per focus groups

Employee



Contributing to..

Societal Transition

&

Behaviour Change

- ✓ Identify key impacts of Sustainable HRM (e.g. wellbeing, working conditions,...)
- ✓ Inform HR policies & implementation of sustainable targets:

- ✓ Reduce tensions by understanding perspectives & responsibilities
- ✓ Resolve practical challenges hindering HR sustainability



Works well:

... ?

Attention points:

Contrast of white text on grey box

No reference list

.....



A QUALITATIVE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The shift to virtual learning has transformed education, yet students' lived experiences remain underexplored. This study investigates how students perceive virtual learning environments (VLEs), focusing on challenges, benefits, and overall engagement. The findings aim to inform improvements in digital education strategies.



METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative phenomenological approach to examine the experiences of university students in virtual learning. Data were collected through 25 semi-structured interviews and three focus group discussions with students from diverse disciplines and academic levels. Participants were recruited via purposive sampling to ensure representation of varying levels of engagement with VLEs. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software, with triangulation of interviews and focus groups to enhance validity.

RESULTS

Quantitative insights were drawn from the thematic analysis to highlight key findings:

92%



of participants appreciated the flexibility of virtual learning

68%



faced moderate to severe challenges with internet connectivity, particularly in rural areas

Challenges with Internet Connectivity

■ No Issues
■ Moderate
■ Severe



76%



of students felt disengaged during online classes due to limited interaction

85%



reported increased engagement, when breakout rooms were used effectively

Students Reporting Engagement Improvements with Breakout Rooms

■ Engage
■ Not Engaged



DISCUSSION

The study highlights the dual-edged nature of virtual learning: while flexibility enhances accessibility, poor engagement and technical challenges hinder learning outcomes. These findings underscore the need for robust digital infrastructure, consistent use of engagement tools, and personalized support systems.

CONCLUSION

To improve virtual learning, institutions should:

- Provide comprehensive training for students and instructors on digital tools.
- Standardize engagement practices, such as interactive discussions.
- Enhance technical support services and address digital equity issues.

REFERENCES

- Smith, J. A., & Lee, K. H. (2021). Student engagement and motivation in virtual classrooms: A qualitative exploration. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 45(3), 215-229. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jet.2021.0306>
- Brown, R. T., & Miller, S. P. (2020). Navigating the digital divide: Challenges and opportunities in virtual learning environments. *International Journal of Distance Education*, 32(2), 98-112. <https://doi.org/10.5678/ijde.2020.0205>

- Thompson, L. M., & Garcia, M. A. (2022). Perceptions of online learning: A case study of university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35(4), 341-356. <https://doi.org/10.7890/epr.2022.0402>

[All information here is for demonstration purposes and does not reflect actual data or outcomes.]

<https://www.visme.co/templates/posters/qualitative-research-poster-1425294075/>

PART II: PITCHING YOUR RESEARCH POSTER

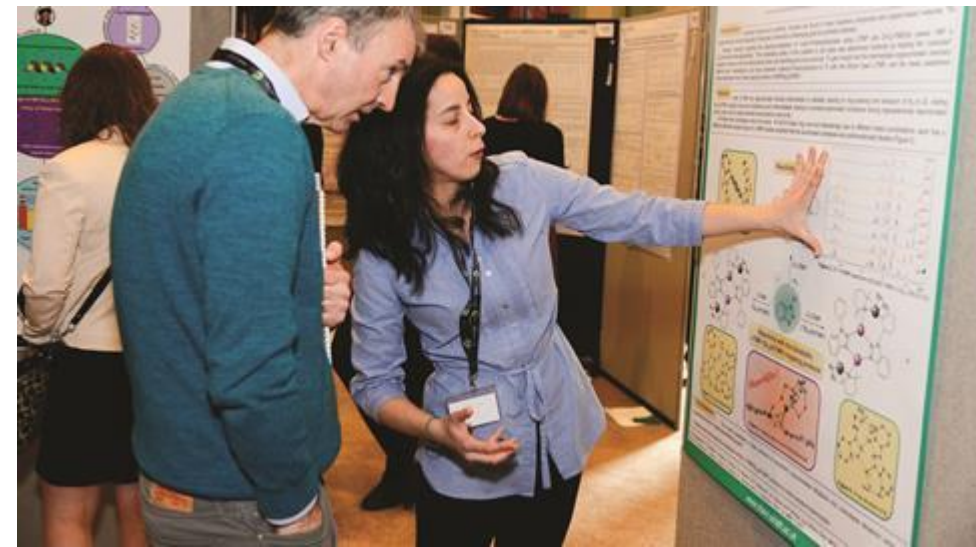




RULE 9: THE POSTER IS NOT THE END PRODUCT, BUT THE CONVERSATION STARTER.

→ **Interaction** around the poster often **determines** whether the poster session actually **becomes useful**

Goal: not a speech, but **opening a conversation**





TIP 1: PREPARE 1-2 MINUTE PITCH ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH POSTER



→ Don't expect to deliver this pitch, but provides elements to use in potential conversation

Possible structure:

Context: What broad problem or topic does your research address?

Gap or puzzle: What is still unclear, underexplored, or problematic?

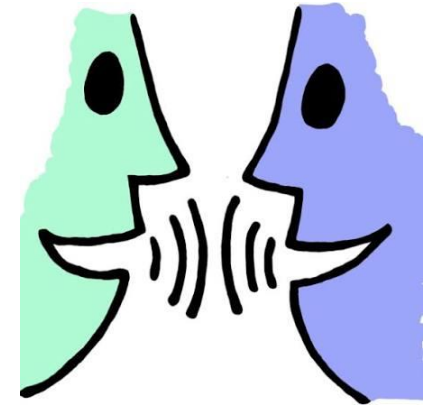
Your study: What are you investigating, and how?

Main insight/ expected contribution: What can others learn from this?

Conversation invitation: What would you like feedback on?



TIP 2: START THE CONVERSATION ACTIVELY



You could ask...

...if **people work on a related topic**, or what's their research field/ sub-topic?

... what **methods they work with**/ experience with your data collection approach etc.

... if they would like you to **give a short overview**?

... if anything on the poster **caught their attention**/ interested in a specific part?

...



TIP 3: PREPARE SOME CONTENT-RELATED QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS.

→ prepare 1-2 (easy) questions to get some feedback

For example:

“Is the research question clear?”

“Is the visual diagram/ framework/ model clear?”

.....





TU WIEN TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT WIEN

ISTA Institute of Science and Technology Austria

$$\frac{g}{2\pi} = \frac{\mu E_0}{h} \approx \frac{\mu J_r}{d} \sqrt{\frac{Z}{2h}}$$

FWF Österreichischer
Wissenschaftsfonds

beyondC

Funded by
the European Union
NextGenerationEU

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LET'S SUM UP:

What makes a Research Poster (session)
effective?

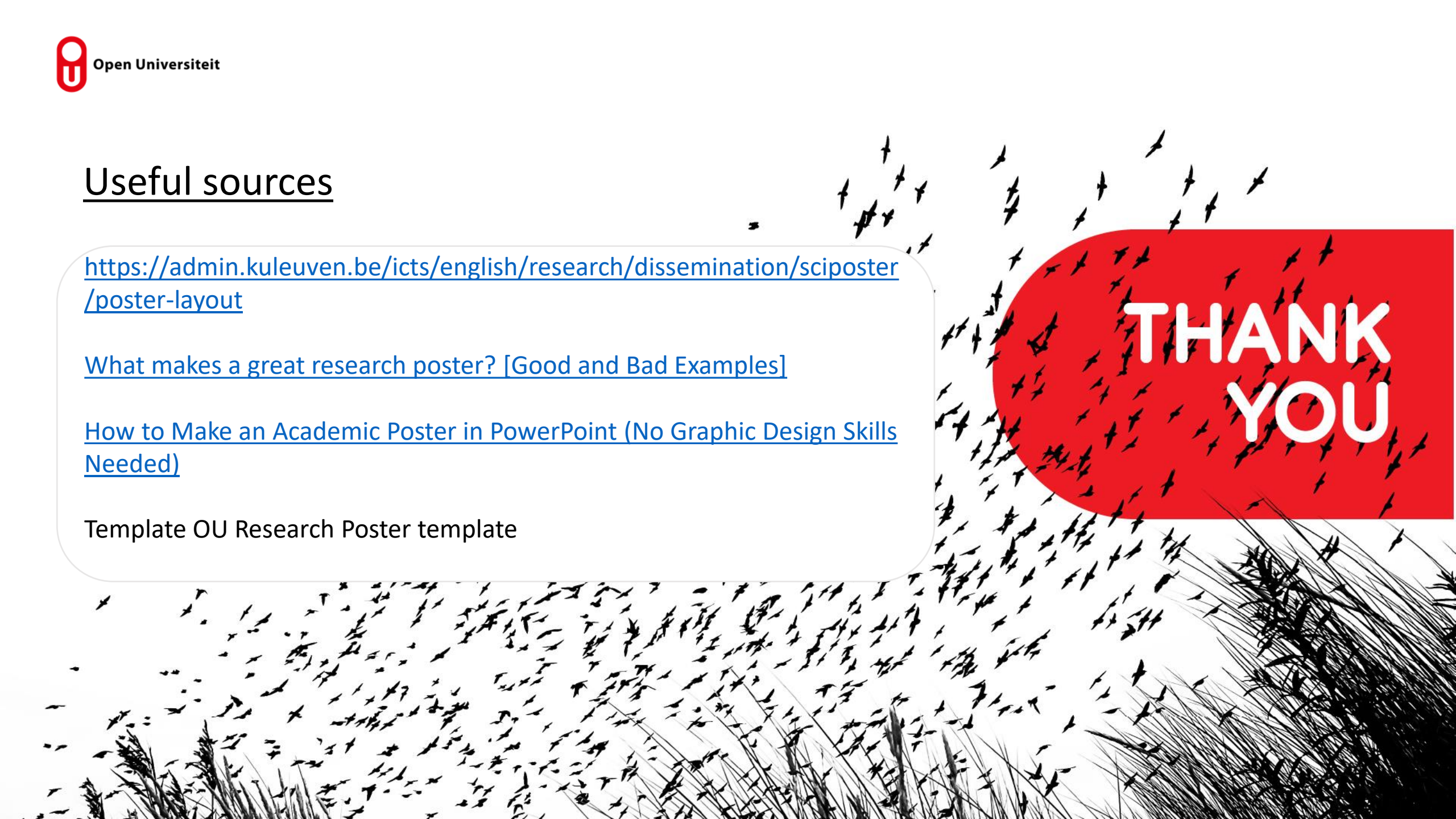
Useful sources

<https://admin.kuleuven.be/icts/english/research/dissemination/sciposter/poster-layout>

[What makes a great research poster? \[Good and Bad Examples\]](#)

[How to Make an Academic Poster in PowerPoint \(No Graphic Design Skills Needed\)](#)

Template OU Research Poster template



THANK
YOU