Coping, fulfilment, and successful outcomes:
Assessing eustress in everyday challenging situations
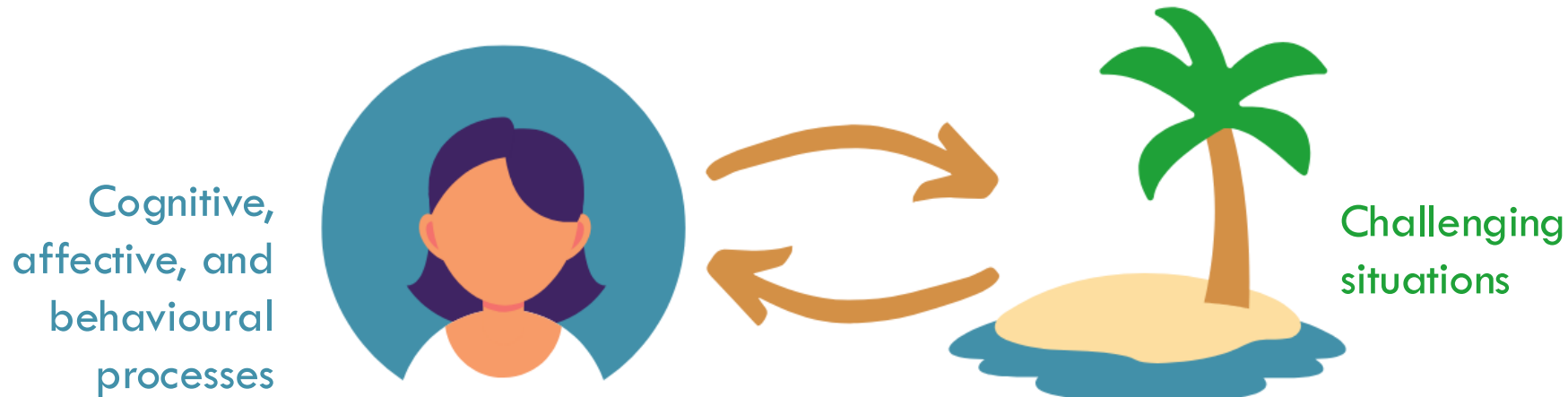
Juliane Kloidt & Lawrence W. Barsalou
Manuscript in preparation

Background

- Eustress—the positive experience of a challenging situation—emerges from transactions between individuals and their environment

Cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes

Challenging situations

- Little research addresses how individuals experience eustress *across* various areas of life and what underlying processes are related to it in these situations

(Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987)

Study overview

- **This pre-registered study measured how UK adults experience eustress and its underlying processes across real-life challenging situations where it occurs.**

- **Participants:** 251 UK adults (M_{age} = 44 years; 125 women)

- **Multi-level design** with all participants evaluating eustress and nine validated influential processes across a standardized set of situations

Situated Assessment Method (SAM²)

Eustress and 9 influential processes
from the CHE model

20 validated UK situations with varying types and levels of challenge

* Generated with an LLM-augmented process
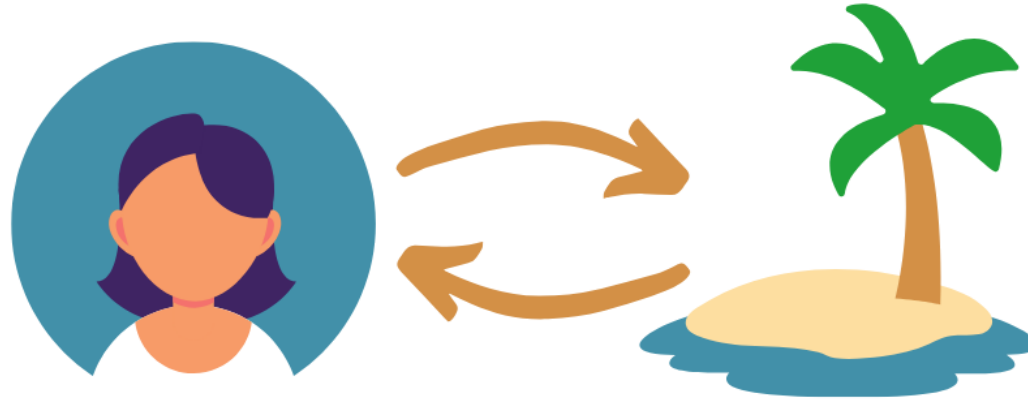
- Eustress
- Environmental support
- Cognitive skills
- Positive affect
- Coping & action
- Successful outcomes

- Connection
- Mindfulness
- Fulfilment
- Engagement

"Plan a surprise party of a loved one"

"Give a public speech in front of a large audience"

(Dutriaux et al., 2023; Kloidt & Barsalou, 2024)

Individual differences, situation effects, and individual-situation interactions

- Large, reliable individual differences (M = 5.15; SD = 2.97; α = .81)

- Substantial situational variation (M_Δ = 8.34 on a 10-point scale)

- Large individual-situation interactions ($ICC2$ = .27)
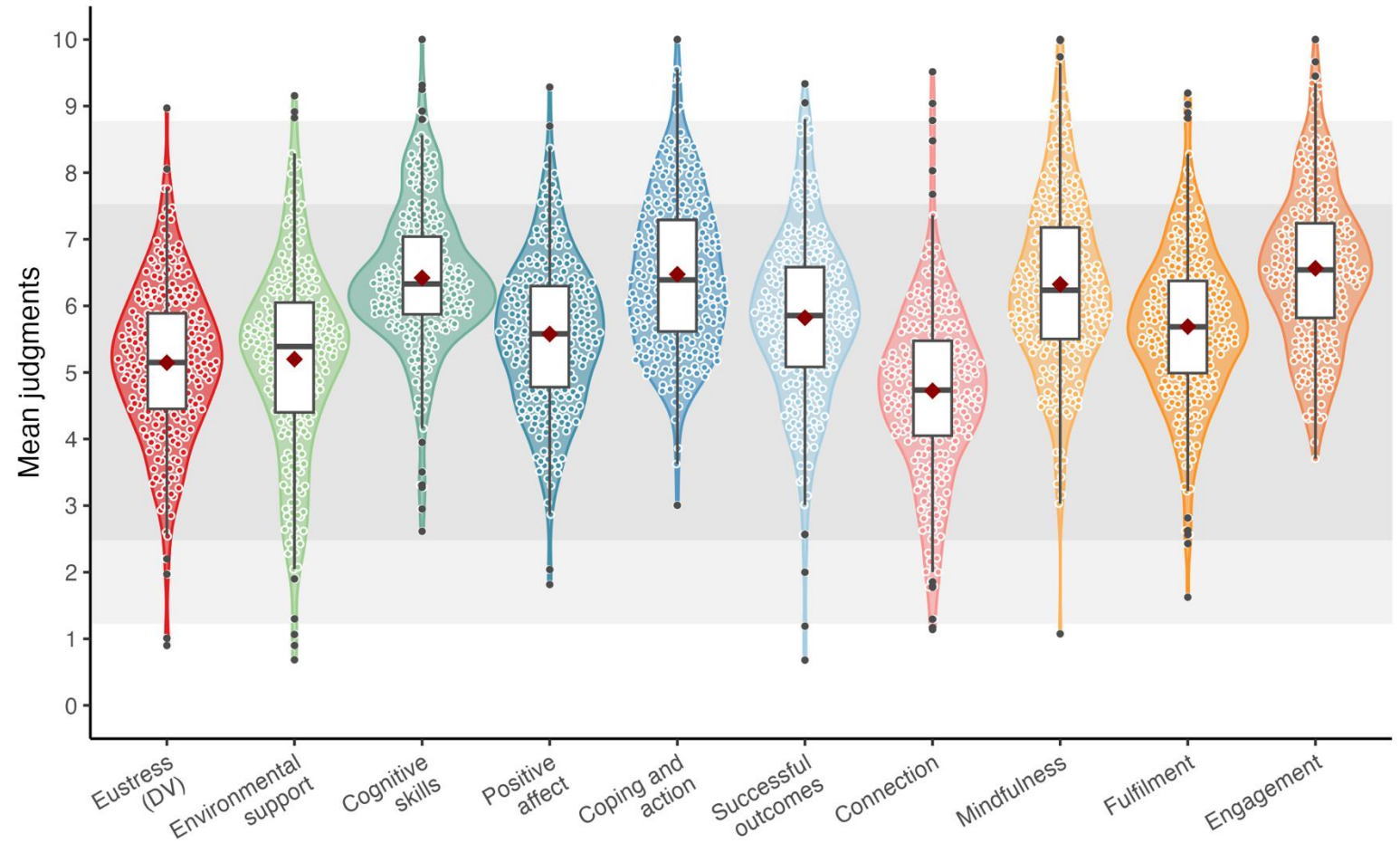
Influential processes predict and explain situated eustress

- All processes strongly correlated with eustress (ρ = .35 − .70; p < .001)

- Together, they explained a median variance of 82.80% in individual-level regressions
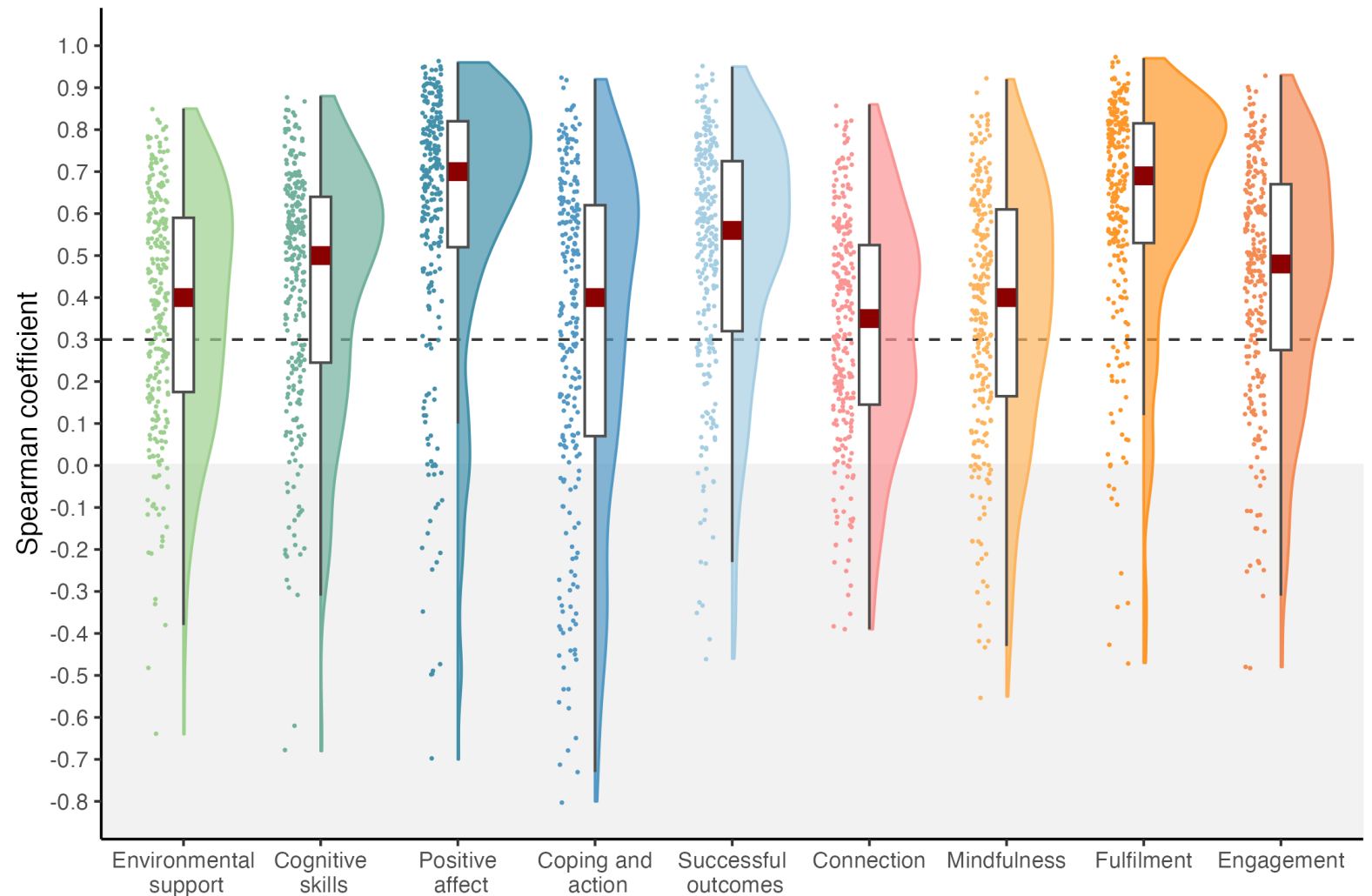
Low correlations with trait-level measures

Situated eustress judgments correlated

- strongly with trait-level eustress[1] (ρ = .36; p < .001)

- moderately with stress-is-enhancing mindsets[2] (ρ = .17; p < .01)

- not with trait-level distress[3] (ρ = −.09; p = .137)

[1] Comprehensive Hierarchical Eustress Review – Stable Qualities (CHER-Qual; Kloidt & Barsalou, under review)
[2] Stress mindset measure (SMM; Crum et al., 2013)
[3] Perceived stress scale (PSS-10; Cohen et al., 1983)

Key takeaways

The SAM^2 Eustress effectively captures individual and situational variation in eustress.

- Large individual-situation interactions support the transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987)

- Large predictive correlations and individual-level regressions support the CHE model of eustress (Kloidt & Barsalou, 2024)

Situated assessments can inform personalised and contextualised interventions to foster eustress where desirable.

- This study, however, is limited by its correlational design, UK context, and self-report measures

Assessing eustress in everyday challenging situations

I look forward to hearing from you!

Juliane Kloidt, *University of Glasgow*

University of Glasgow

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