"Developing a SSPH+ Initiative for Student Mental Health?!"

Emiliano Albanese, Georg Bauer, Julia Dratva, Chantal Martin Sölch, Marcel Salathé

"Developing a SSPH+ Initiative for Student Mental Health?!"

SSPH+
SWISS SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

1. **Scoping mental health:** Positive mental health, psychological distress, mental disorder

2. **University Students:** (Inter-)national Evidence of challenged mental health

3. **Scoping possible interventions:** Promotion, Primary & Secondary Prevention

4. **Next steps:** interuniversity collaboration for shared evidence base

5. **Discussion** with SSPH+ faculty & students

DAY 1: Session D @ 16:30-17:15

DAY 2: Workshop G3 @ 9:00-10:00

Workshop – World Café with 3 tables

1.   What should a SSPH+ initiative aim for (desired outcomes for students, Universities)?

2.   Which determinants should be surveyed and potentially addressed by interventions?

3.   Who should be involved?

➢ Define next steps

Scoping mental health – what are we talking about

DEFINITIONS

Panel 4: Definitions of key terms related to mental health*

Happiness
Subjective satisfaction with life that incorporates both the emotional experience of feeling good or experiencing pleasure (hedonic tradition) and the perception of living a meaningful and good life (eudaimonic tradition); increasingly viewed as an important way of judging the success of society in meeting human needs.[50]

Wellbeing
Subjective evaluation of life satisfaction;[51] broader definitions also consider less subjective social and personal circumstances that might be considered to contribute to a good life.

Quality of life
A person's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns.[52]

Mental health
The capacity of thought, emotion, and behaviour that enables every individual to realise their own potential in relation to their developmental stage, to cope with the normal stresses of life, to study or work productively and fruitfully, and to contribute to their community.[53]

Mental disorder
Disturbances of thought, emotion, behaviour, and relationships with others that lead to substantial suffering and functional impairment in one or more major life activities,[53] as identified in the major classification systems such as the WHO International Classification of Diseases and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
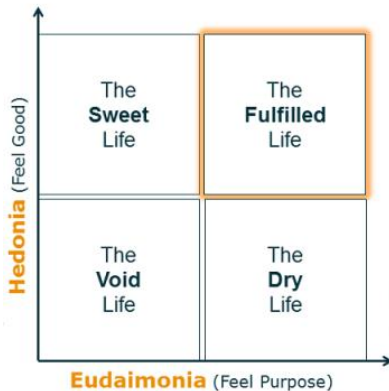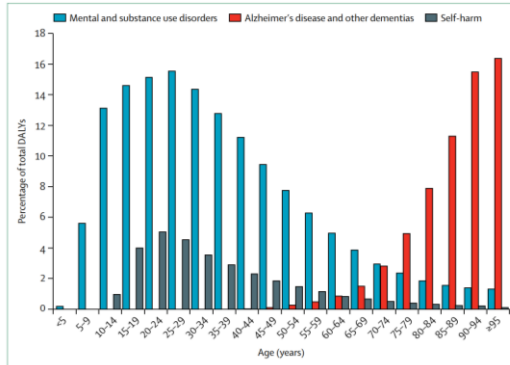

BURDEN

Figure 3: The global burden of mental and substance use disorders, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, and suicide (self-harm) in DALYs across the life course
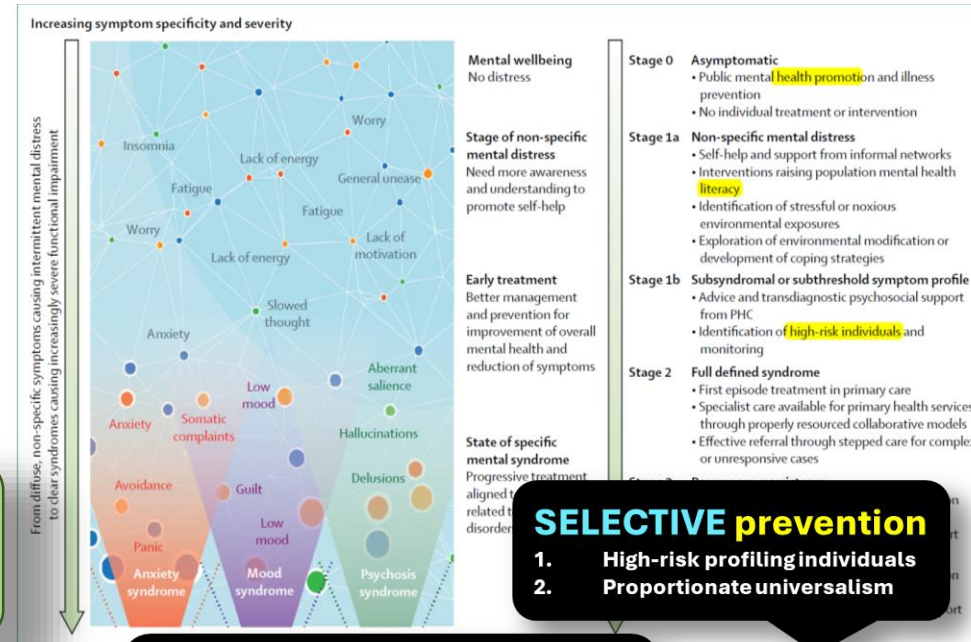
EPIDEMIOLOGY
Describe
understand

ACTION
Promote
Prevent

STAGING MODEL – dimension/ diagnostic

Figure 5: A staging... PHC=primary hea...

SELECTIVE prevention
1. High-risk profiling individuals
2. Proportionate universalism

Whole-population level
1. Passive engagement
2. No need to identify individuals at-risk
3. Unconscious behavioral change

INDICATED prevention
1. Early detection/diagnosis
2. Early treatment

Health promotion
is about making the healthy choice the easier choice

Students' mental health in Switzerland

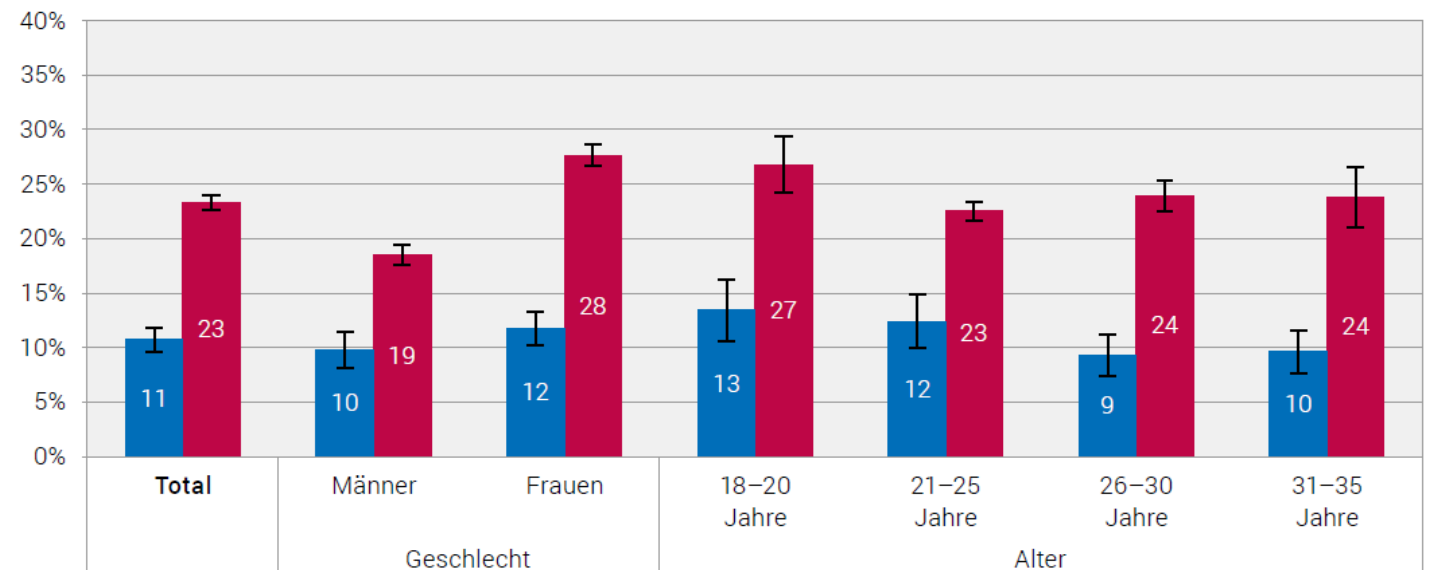**National Swiss students survey 2016 and 2020**

Swiss Students (20 – 35 yrs.) rate their health as less good than the general population.

They have higher depression scores compared to the same age peers.

U.S. Healthy Minds Study

in 2020–2021, >60% of students ≥1 mental health problem
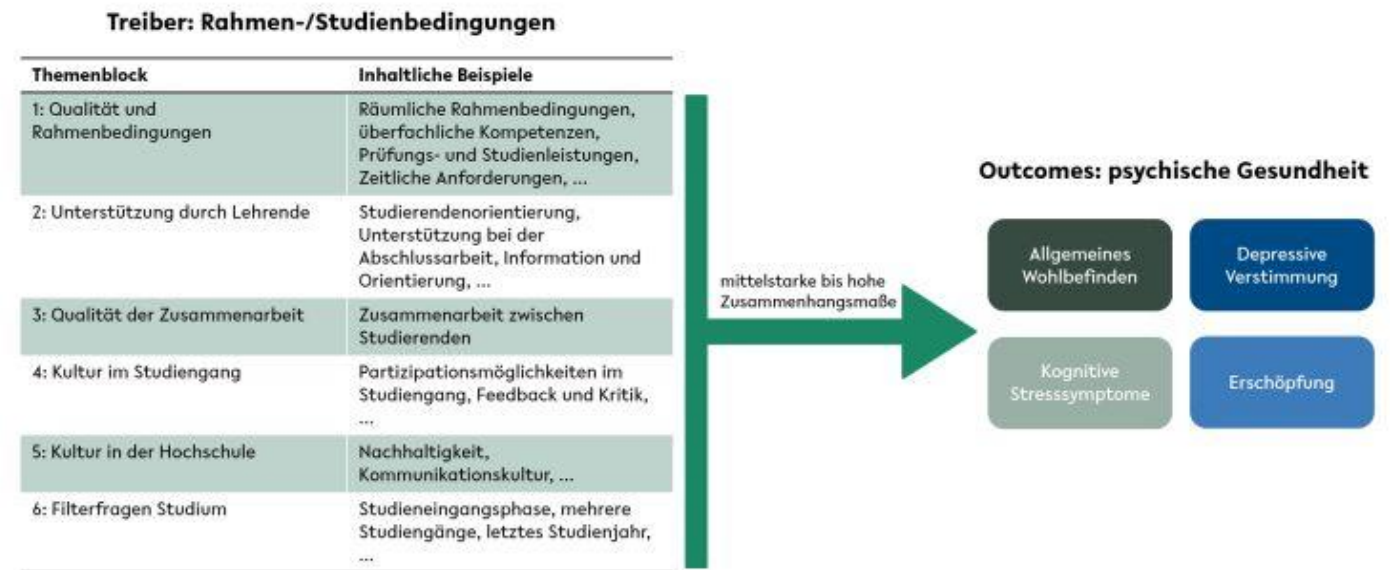
~ 50% increase from 2013

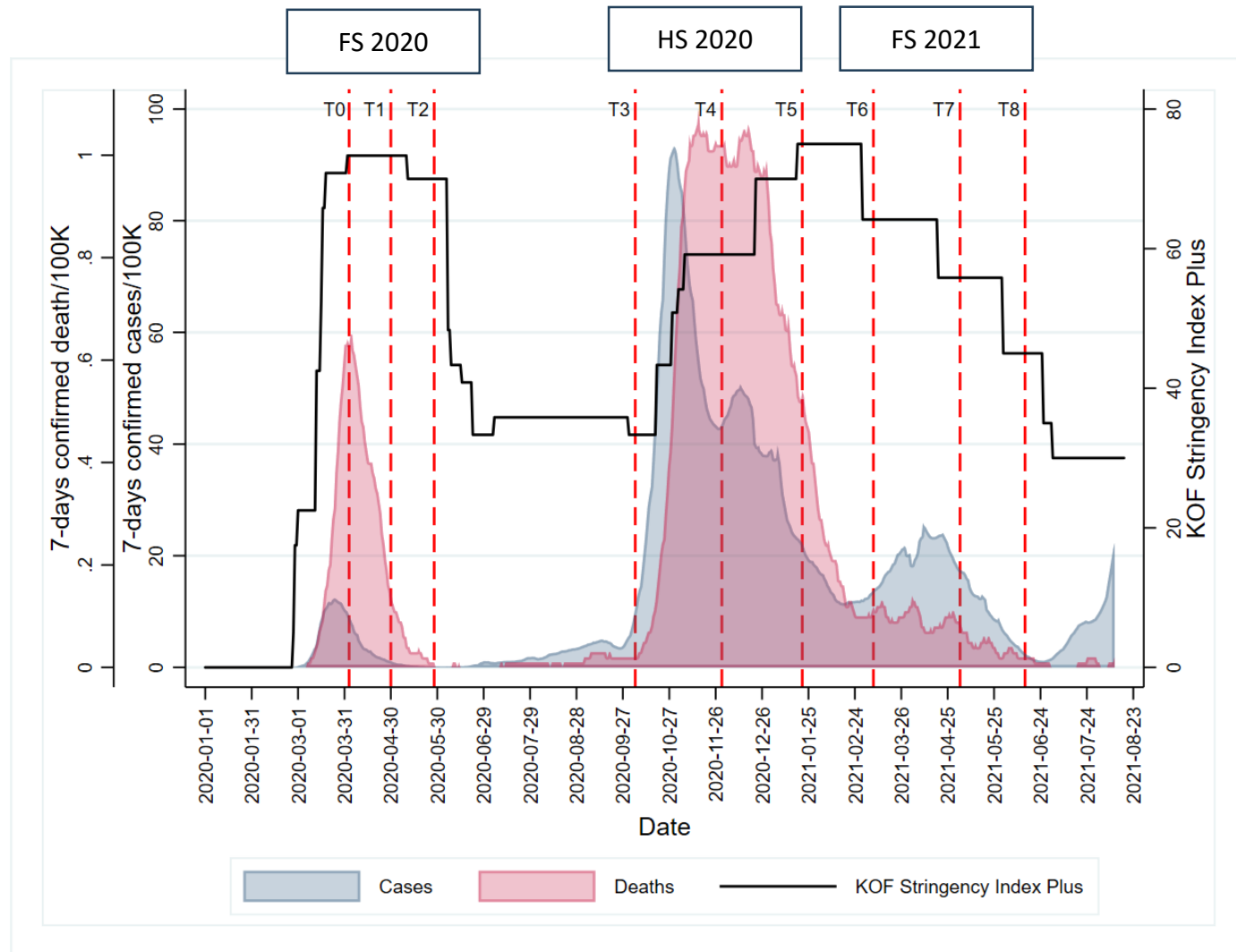Prevalence moderate/severe depression score 20 -35 yr.olds

blue – general poulation/red- university students /BFS – SGB 2017, SSEE 2020

National and international actions

- SWIMSA position paper https://swimsa.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AK_20191024_Positionspapier-Psychische-Gesundheit_D.pdf

- Verband der Schweizer Studierendenschaften& SWIMSA resolution https://vss-unes.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-05-14_Resolution_psychGesundheit.pdf

- Bielefelder Studierendengesundheit
  investigating university structure and conditions in relation to mental health in 13 German universities

- Healthy Minds - annual survey on mental health and related issues and service utilization among college students, faculty, and staff since 2007

- COST action group REMO
  https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA19117/

https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/verwaltung/dezernat-p-o/gesundheitsmanagement/bielefelder-fragebogen-zu-1/das-projekt-1/#comp_00006615f2aa_0000001951_00da

ZHAW – Health in Students
during the Corona Pandemic and after

Generalized anxiety by latent class

2020 (20% PR)
- high in the overall sample: 16.4% moderate and 6.4% severe anxiety
- differs by latent classes of Covid-19 impact on studies and social life

Distribution of classes	Low ~ 27.5%		Medium ~ 45.0%		High ~ 27.5%	
Total (n = 2223)	Latent Class 1 [1] (n = 615)		Class 2 [1] (n = 1004)		Class 3 [1] (n = 604)	
GAD-7 sum score [2] M (SD)	6.5 (4.4)	3.6 (3.1)		6.0 (3.5)		10.3 (4.5)	
GAD-7 categories (in %)		unadj.	adj. (95% CI) [3]	unadj.	adj. (95% CI) [3]	unadj.	adj. (95% CI) [3]
Minimal (0–4)	38.6	69.1		38.4		7.8	
Mild (5–9)	38.6	26.5		45.9		38.9	
Moderate (10–14)	16.4	3.1		13.8		34.1	
Severe (15–21)	6.4	1.3	1.3 (0.4–2.2)	1.8	1.7 (0.9–2.5)	19.2	18.1 (14.6–21.5)
Moderate to severe (>10)		4.4	4.5 (2.8–6.2)	15.6	15.5 (13.1–17.9)	53.3	51.4 (47.0–55.9)

[1] Latent class 1 = low; 2 = moderate, 3 = high impact on wellbeing and daily life, based on latent class analysis;
[2] GAD-7: General anxiety disorder scale; [3] adjusted for age, sex, social status and affiliation.

GAD-7 over three pandemic semesters

GAD: Age and gender adjusted prevalence
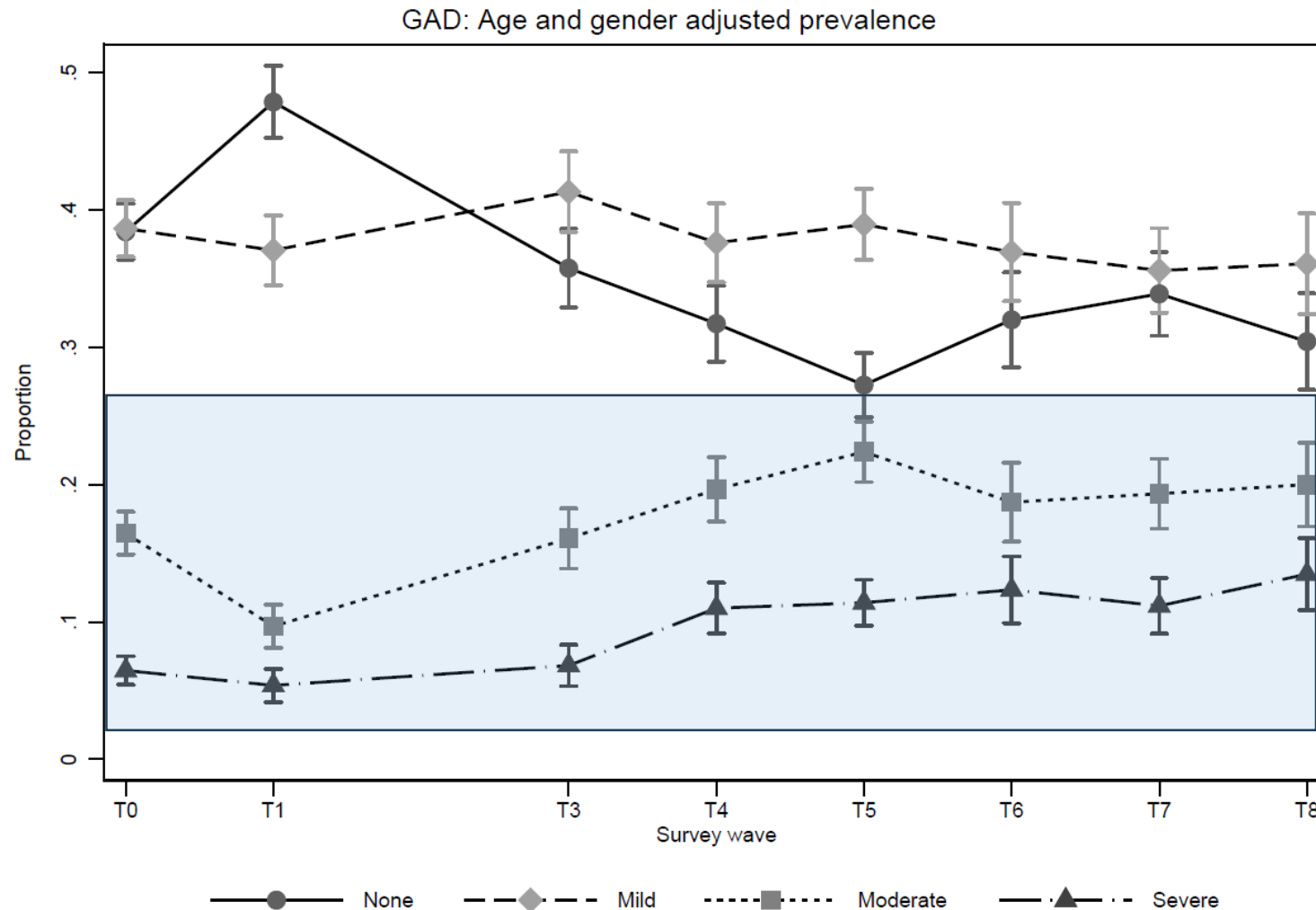
2023(10% PR)

moderate and severe anxiety scores are comparable to the 2020 results.

Monitoring surveys at the University Fribourg:

➤ **«How are you»:**
- all new students during their first term at the University Fribourg
- Each year
- Understand difficulties, monitor the adaptation at the University Fribourg and the needs of new students

➤ **«Feeling good»:**
- All students
- Every 2 years
- Monitor well-being and quality of offers towards students
- Promote best study conditions

https://www.unifr.ch/uni-social/fr/assets/public/files/Rapport_how_are_you_2023.pdf
https://www.unifr.ch/uni-social/fr/assets/public/assets/public/rapport_feeling_good_2023.pdf

Current Results with regard to mental health and stress

«How are you» 2023: (1905 invited, 480 answered, 25%)
- 59 % report concentration difficulties
- 31% report **low mood**
- 37% report **anxiety**
- 46% report high **stress levels** with regard to their studies
- 51% report difficulties in managing their stress

«Feeling good» 2023 (7297 invited, 898 answered, 12%)
- 45% report concentration difficulties (2021: 55,8%)
- 33,9% evaluate their **mood** as too low (2021: 41,5%)
- 36% report **anxiety** (2021: 41,3%)
- 60,6 %report high **stress levels** related to their studies (2021: 70,4%)
  - ☞ Perceived stress was linked to motivation
- 56,2% report difficulties in managing their stress (2021: 61%)
- 81% report satisfactory **quality of life**
- 82,3 report a continuous or very frequent feeling of **fatigue** (2021: 84,5%), → linked to stress
- 29,2% have received psychological support

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Psychological Risk and vulnerability factors of mental health in university students and association with reported pain symptoms

- Cross-cultural context
- N=188
- Network analyses
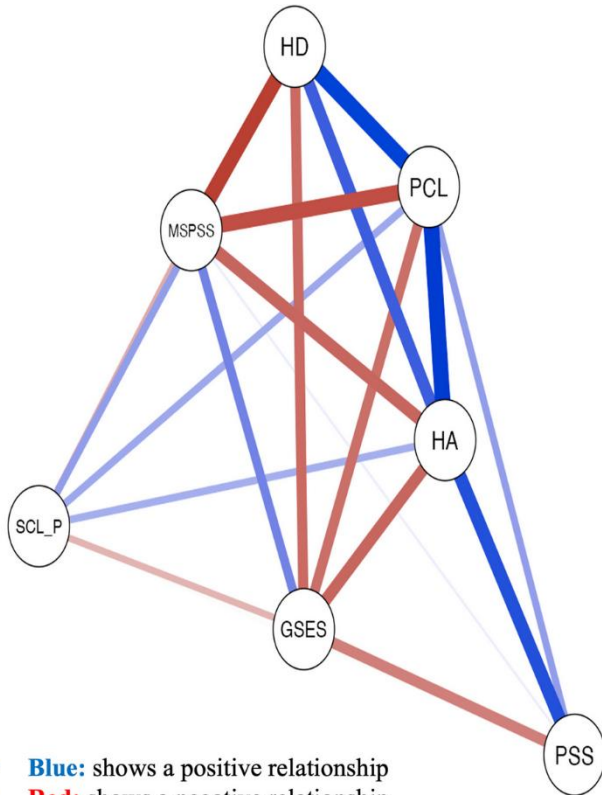
- **SCL_P**: Physical Pain
- **HA:** Anxiety
- **HD:** Depression
- **PSS:** Perceived Stress
- **PCL:** Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- **MSPSS:** Social Support
- **GSES:** Self-Efficacy

- **Blue:** shows a positive relationship
- **Red:** shows a negative relationship
- **Width** shows the strength of the relationship
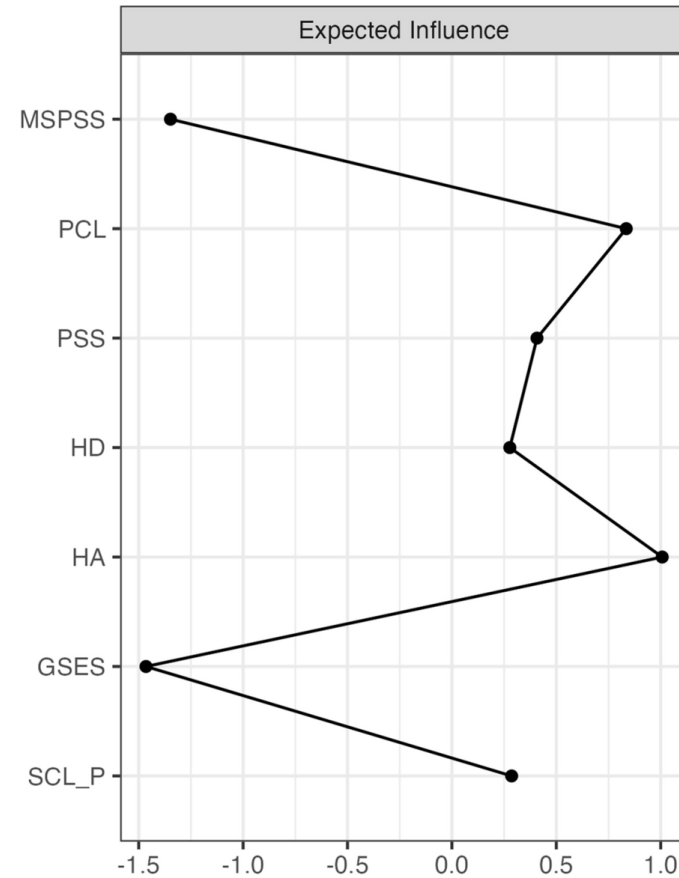
This figure shows the expected influence centrality indices which indicate the most important nodes for both samples were anxiety (HA), post-traumatic stress disorder (PCL), perceived stress (PSS), and depression (HD

Tandon, T. et al. (2024). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-024-05767-3

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UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG

Short-Term Effects of a Multidimensional Stress Prevention Program on Quality of Life, Well-Being and Psychological Resources. A Randomized Controlled Trial

Romina Evelyn Recabarren*   Claudie Gaillard   Matthias Guillod   Chantal Martin-Soelch

> 8 weeks groupal modular program
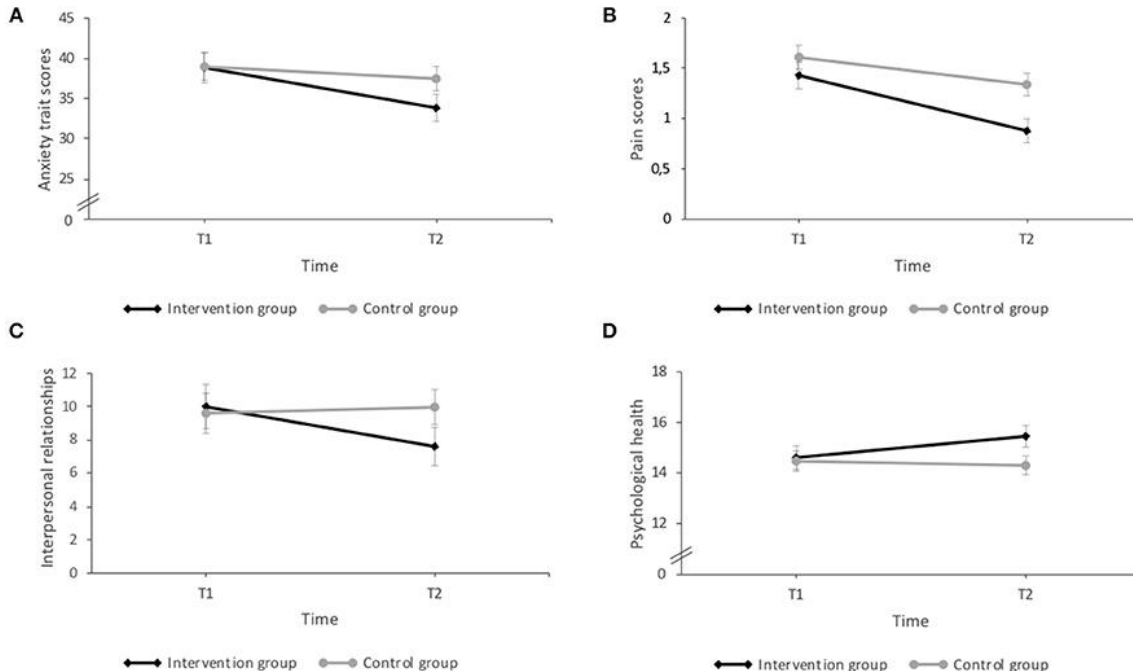
Institutional measures

> Psychological counseling offer at the University
> Specific workshops on procrastination or motivation
> Campus dogs
> Workshop and coaching for neurodiversity students (ADHD, Autism)
> «Ressource» resp. prevention week

To come:

> Development of a mental health / well-being strategy
> Preparation of a mental awareness week together with students

Recabarren et al. (2019) https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2019.00088

EPFL

- November 2022: Survey on mental health and well-being
- 18'742 invited, 4'293 (23%) responded

Survey respondents, by category and gender identity

Category	Value
EPFL	4293
Students	2093
Academic staff	241
Doctoral students	556
Scientists	385
Admin. and technical staff	802
Identify as "female"	1641
Identify as "male"	2133
Questioning	25
Other gender identity	27
Multiple identities	33
Prefer not to answer	144
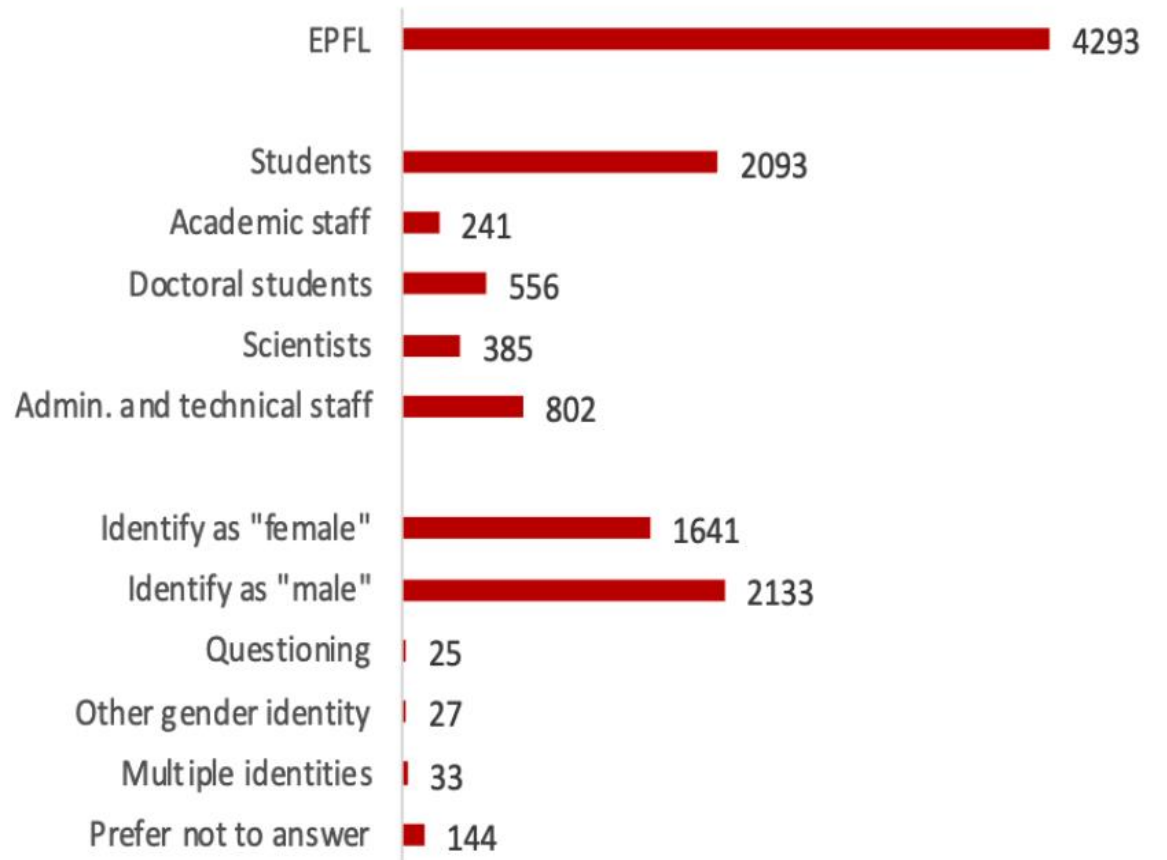
EPFL

Burnout, by category and gender identity

	No symptoms	At least one symptom
EPFL	47%	53%
Students	38%	62%
Academic staff	58%	42%
Doctoral students	49%	51%
Scientists	65%	35%
Admin. and technical staff	60%	40%
Identify as "female"	44%	56%
Identify as "male"	50%	50%
Questioning	36%	64%
Other gender identity	23%	77%
Multiple identities	38%	63%
Prefer not to answer	43%	57%
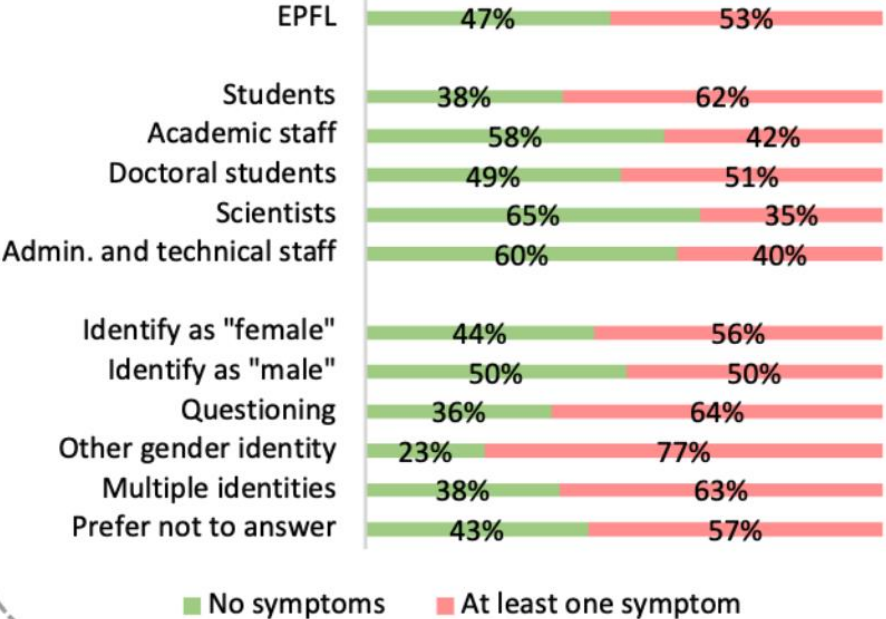
Overall mental health, by category and gender identity

	Not in psychological distress	In psychological distress
EPFL	69%	31%
Students	64%	36%
Academic staff	81%	19%
Doctoral students	67%	33%
Scientists	75%	25%
Admin. and technical staff	79%	21%
Identify as "female"	65%	35%
Identify as "male"	73%	27%
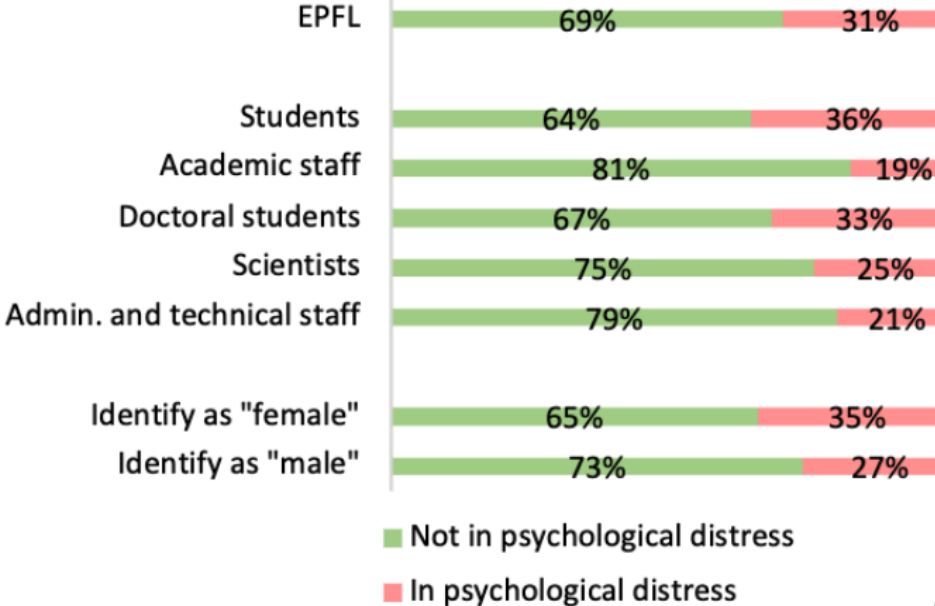
EPFL

Open-ended comments

Topics mentioned most often (as a share of respondents):

Workload/lack of rest time	34%
Mental health issues linked to work/study at EPFL	11%
Concerns about the survey approach	10%
Institutional culture adverse to mental health	9%
Uncertainty/insecurity	9%
Lack of support from superiors	9%
Need for more/better therapeutic counseling	6%

Full results at https://www.epfl.ch/campus/security-safety/en/mental-health-well-being-survey/

Scoping Possible Student MH Interventions
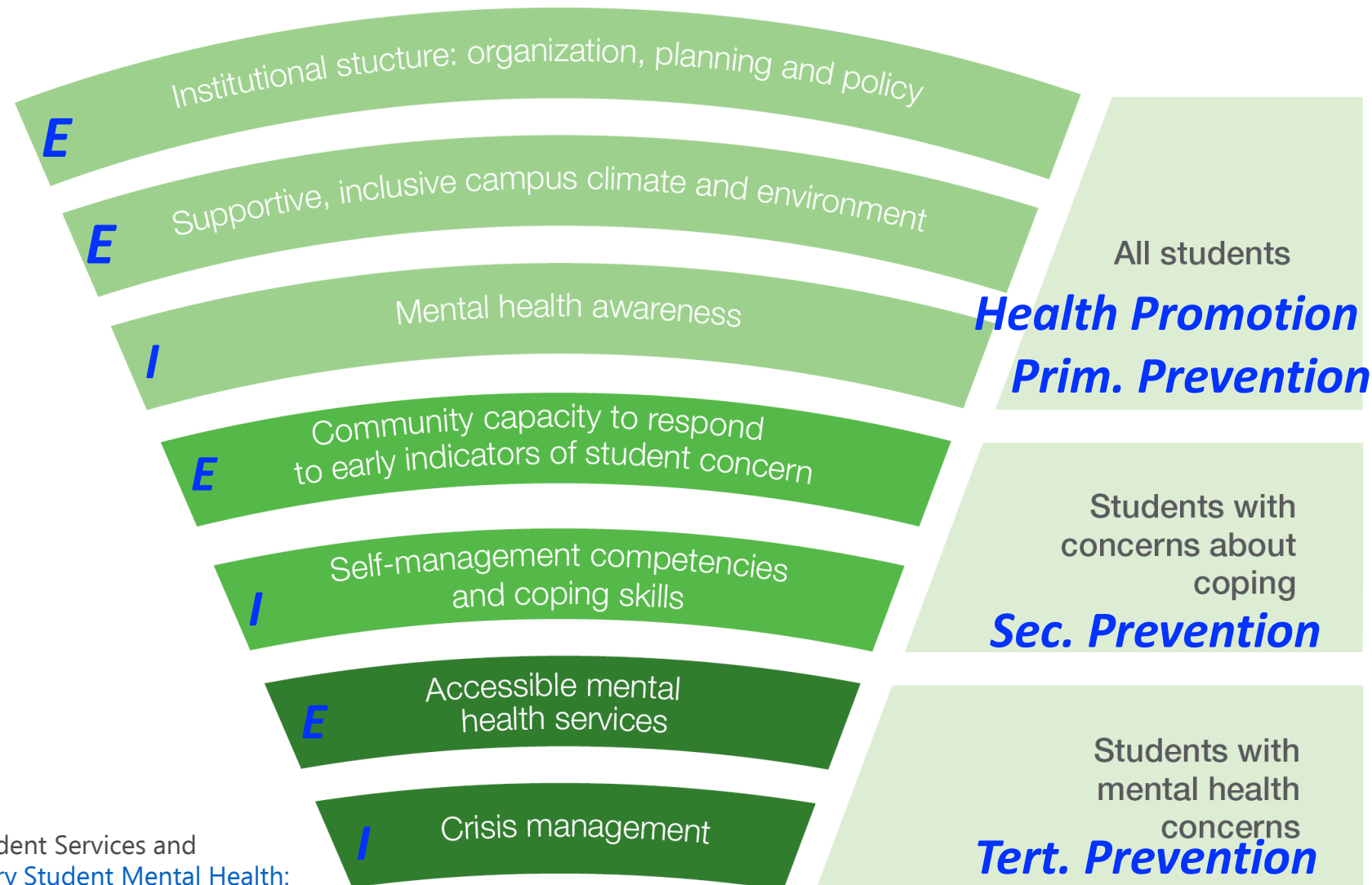
Levels

Target Groups

Environment (E)

- **Organisation**
  (University, Faculties)

- **Leader**
  (Professors, Lecturers)

- **Group**
  (Classes, Students)

Individual (I)

E Institutional stucture: organization, planning and policy

E Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment

I Mental health awareness

E Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern

I Self-management competencies and coping skills

E Accessible mental health services

I Crisis management

Supported student

All students
**Health Promotion
Prim. Prevention**

Students with concerns about coping
Sec. Prevention

Students with mental health concerns
Tert. Prevention

Key Interventions: Action Call by Swiss Students

1. promote destigmatization and awareness-raising at universities

2. set up professional advice centers at universities - known to students

3. communicate with students to reduce pressure

4. combat discrimination at universities

5. relieve the financial burden on students

[VSS|UNES|USU]

VSS | Verband der Schweizer Studierendenschaften
UNES | Union des Etudiant-e-s de Suisse
USU | Unione Svizzera degli e delle Universitari-e

6. promote student engagement

Resolution: Psychische Gesundheit von Studierenden

Von den Delegierten anlässlich der 180. DV in Basel (13.&14.05.2023) verabschiedet.

7. create more clarity {evidence base}

Die Studierenden in der Schweiz sind psychisch angeschlagen. Der Verband der Schweizer Studierendenschaften (VSS) fordert Hochschulen, Kantone und Bund auf, die mentale Überbelastung von Studierenden ernst zu nehmen und entsprechend zu handeln.

Strengthening mental health together: Healthy during studies and at work
(„Mentale Gesundheit gemeinsam stärken: Gesund im Studium und Job")

- **Transdisciplinary**, elective module (3 ECTS) open to all students of UZH (FS 2024)

- **Learning objectives**: Improving personal mental health literacy & peer support

- **Focus:** crafting & strengthening resources

- **Key disciplines:** Health Promotion / Salutogenesis, Positive Psychology

- **Format:** weekly lectures & 2 one-day workshops with students

- **UZH Teaching Fund** - development, pilot, evaluation -> role out?
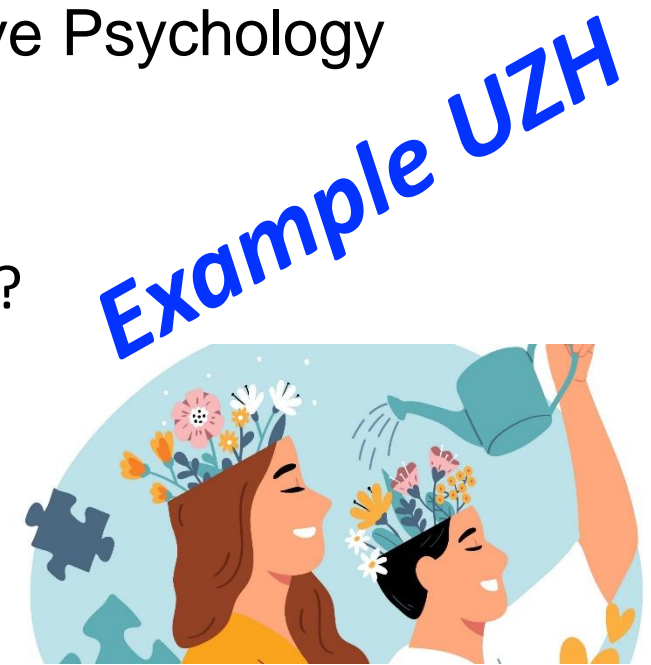
Example UZH

Next steps: interuniversity collaboration for shared evidence base (SSPH+ application)

Objectives: To define

1. The overall scope of the SSPH+ mental health initiative
   a. mental health and mental disorders incl. relevant outcomes,
   b. population to address (students, PhDs, academic staff)
   c. Stakeholders to be involved
2. Data needs/Survey
   a. which determinants and outcomes to measure
   b. which methods and instruments to apply
3. Scope of existing interventions in Switzerland and beyond for the above target groups
   a. Interventions to promote mental health and well-being
   b. Interventions to prevent psychological distress and mental disorder

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5. *Discussion with SSPH+ faculty & students*

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DAY 2: Workshop G3 @ 9:00-10:00

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1. What should a SSPH+ initiative aim for (desired outcomes for students, Universities)?

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➢ Define next steps

Workshop «Stundets' Mental Health»

Workshop – World Café   **TOMORROW at 9:00**

1. What should a SSPH+ initiative aim for (desired outcomes for students, Universities)?

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➢ Define next steps