



International Conference
The Future of Education



Holistic Faculty Development for University Mental Wellbeing: a Narrative Review

Sarah Speziali

PhD candidate at Università Telematica degli Studi IUL, Firenze

26th of June, 2025



Presentation outline

1

Research context and key concepts

2

Holistic approaches to university mental wellbeing

3

Faculty development for mental wellbeing

4

Research project & resources

Research context & key concepts



Research context

- **Increase in numbers of students with mental health problems** and insufficient capacity of in-house psychological support services (Beiter et al., 2015; Cage et al., 2021; Holzer et al., 2021)
- Lack of preliminary knowledge contributes significantly to **faculty feeling ill-prepared** to support students (Constantinou et al., 2022)
- Mental health was defined as a **“growing crisis”** (WHO 2022), activating investments and new research (Allen et al., 2023; Chen & Luck, 2022), **enhance support services** and implement digital tools that can monitor and support mental wellbeing (Gast et al., 2022; Hammoudi et al., 2023; Morgan & Simmons, 2021)
- + research focus on the mental support of the **student population** (Papadatou-Pastou, et al. 2015; Muro et al., 2018; Blaire & Simmons, 2021); - research on mental wellbeing of teaching and technical administrative staff (Hammoudi et al., 2023; Morrish, 2019)
- Faculty and higher education communities play a key role in **promoting and mitigating** mental health challenges (Brewster, 2022; Gast, 2022)

Positive mental health

“Mental health is defined as a state of **wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential**, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community ... It is an **integral part of our general health** and well-being and as a **basic human right**”.

(WHO Saxena & Setoya, 2014)

Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2030

Global shared effort to better understand and face an increasing need for:

- **knowledge**
- **clinical support**
- **preventative measures**

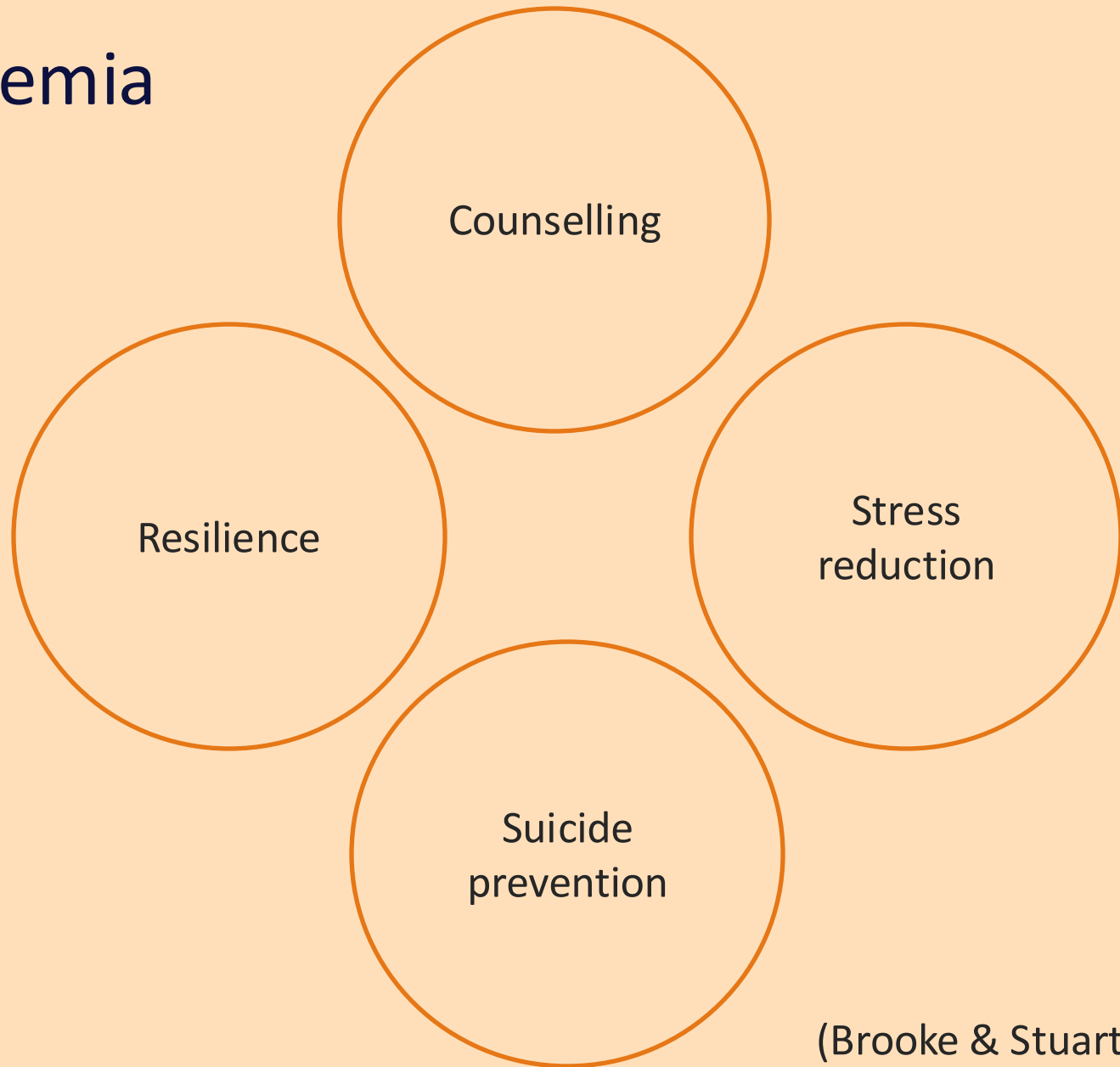
to face a “growing crisis”
(WHO 2022)



Mental health in academia

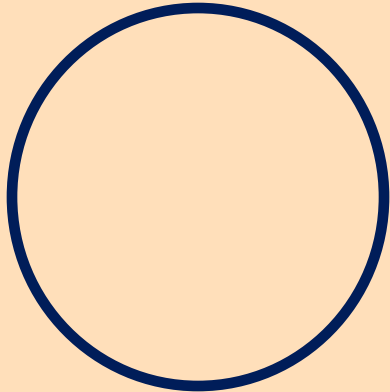
Structural frameworks
(models & guidelines)

Individual interventions
(support services)

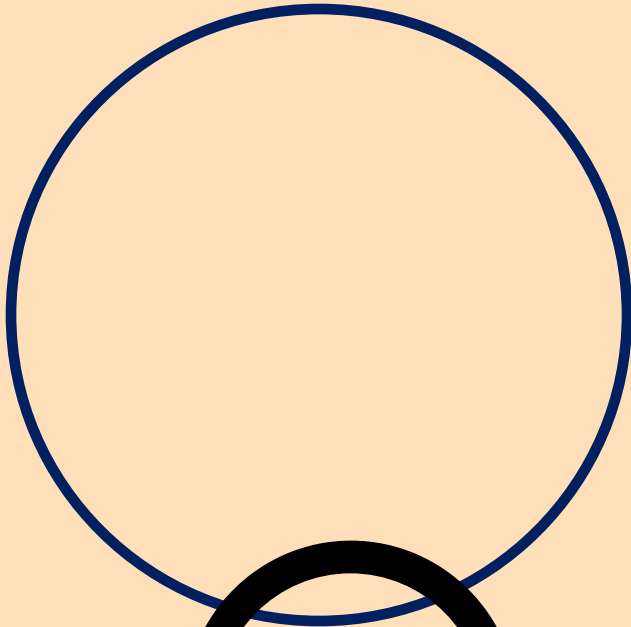


(Brooke & Stuart, 2020;
Johnson & Lester, 2022)

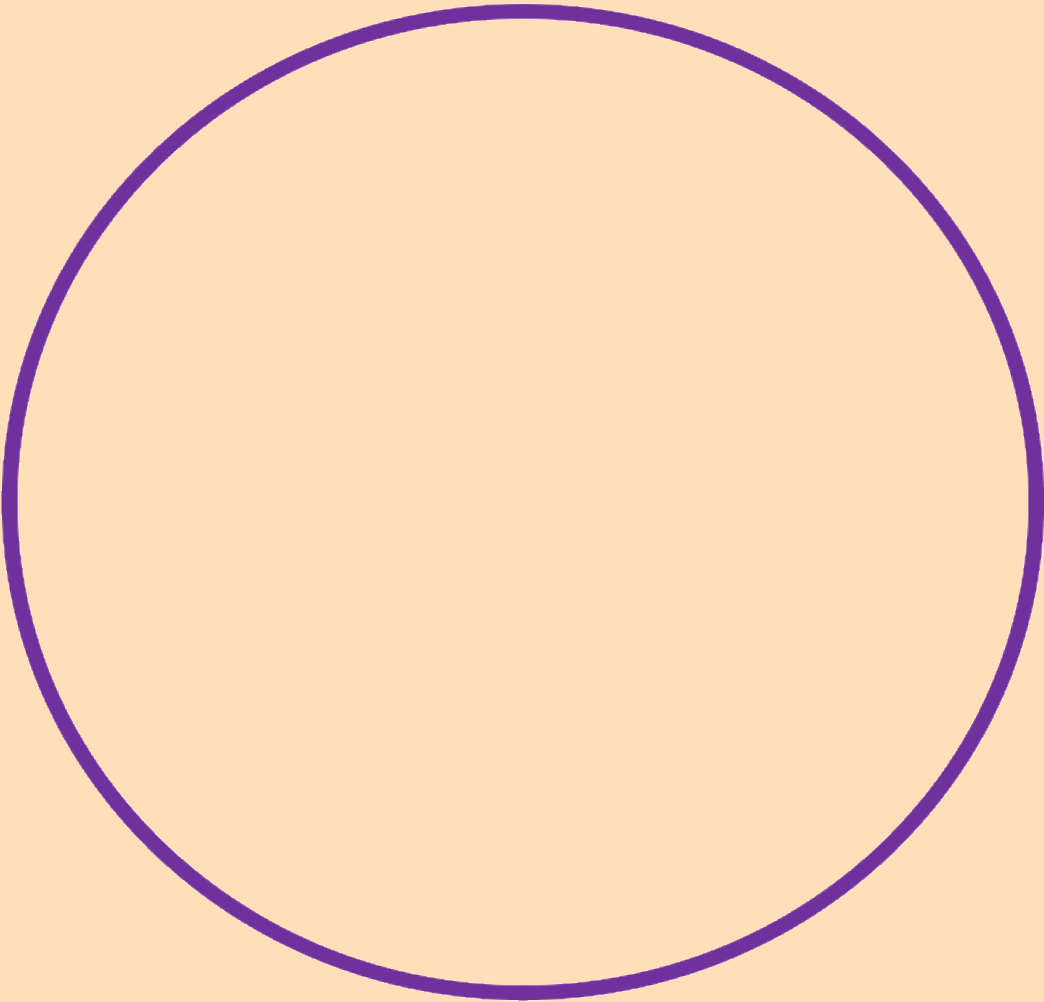
Research focus



Staff

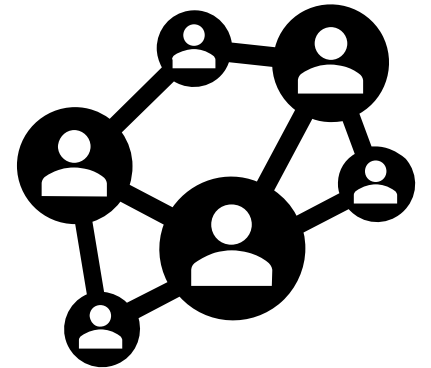


Faculty

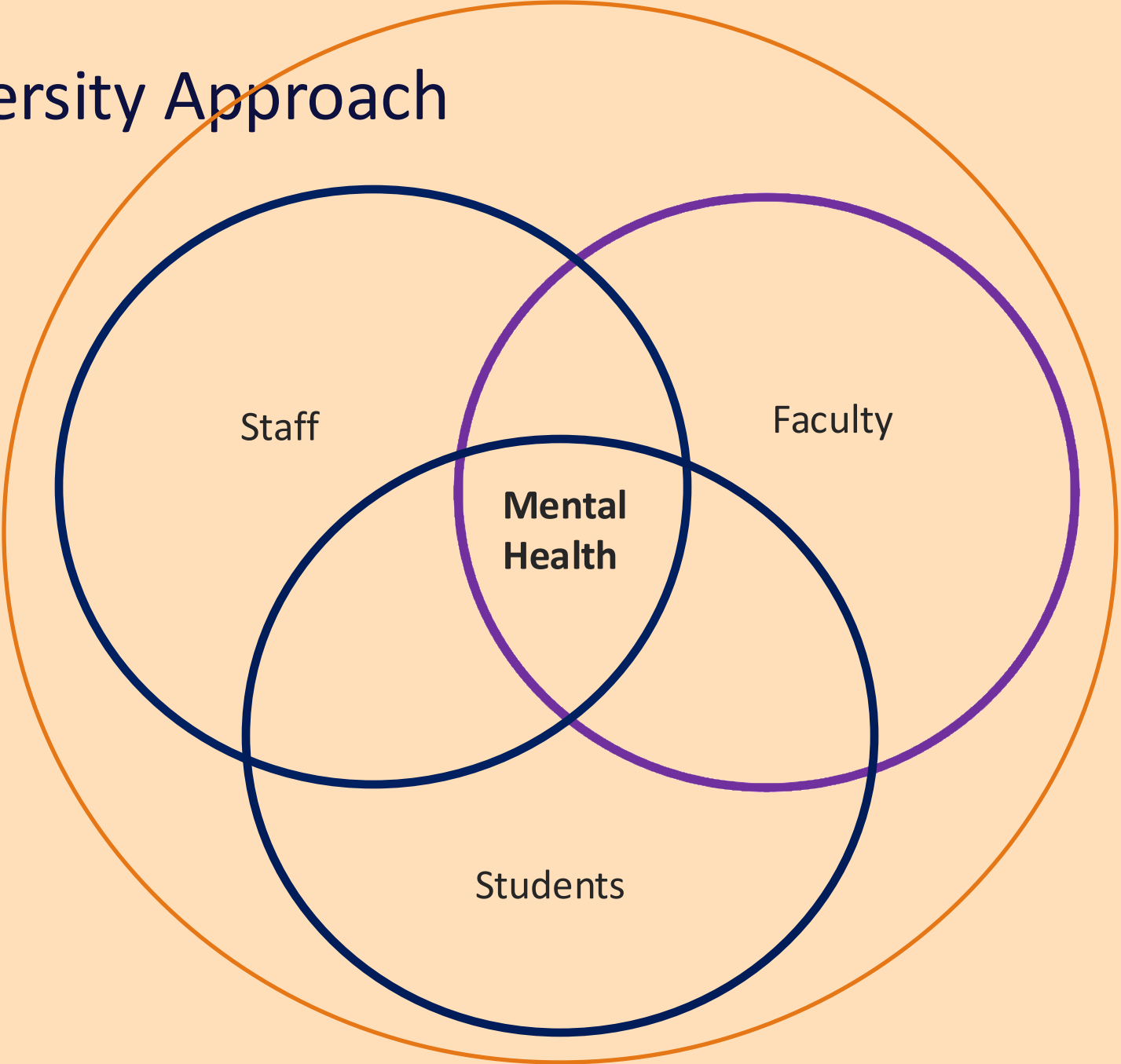


Students

Holistic approaches to university mental wellbeing

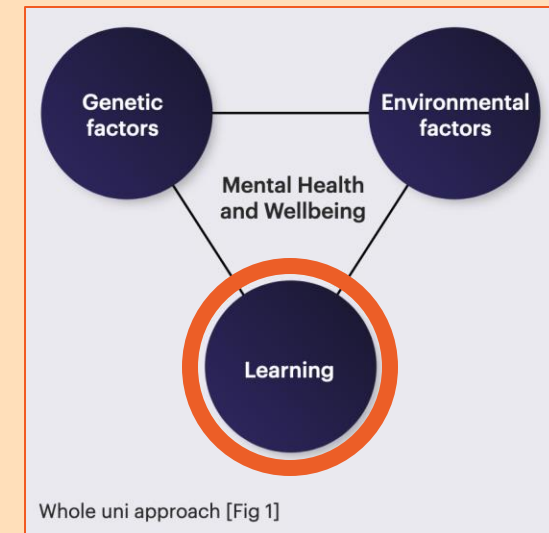


Whole University Approach



Whole University Approach

- ❑ 2015: The International Health Promoting Universities and Colleges creates the Okanagan Charter
 - ❑ 2019: The University Mental Health Charter (Hughes & Spanner, 2019)
 - ❑ 2020: The Whole University Approach (Dooris et al., 2020)
-
- ✓ cultivate an organisational **environment and culture** that promotes health, wellbeing, support
 - ✓ support the connection of the academic community in the **areas of work, learning and life**
 - ✓ **evaluate active initiatives** => integrate and enhance successful practices
 - ✓ involve the **entire university population**, curriculum, environment and services
 - ✓ develop **insight, understanding and skills**
 - ✓ **co-create** the process with students



ABCs of mental health model

ABCs model of mental health developed in 2002 in Australia: **Act-Belong-Commit**

Socio-ecological model of mental health and well-being

protective factors: individual (e.g., mental well-being literacy, emotional resilience), community (e.g., sense of belonging, social support), and structural (e.g., supportive environment, social, economic, and cultural conditions)

- increase knowledge and understanding
- engaged in self-reflection
- increase openness to discuss mental health
- promoted mentally healthy behaviors and conditions

ABC-uni model

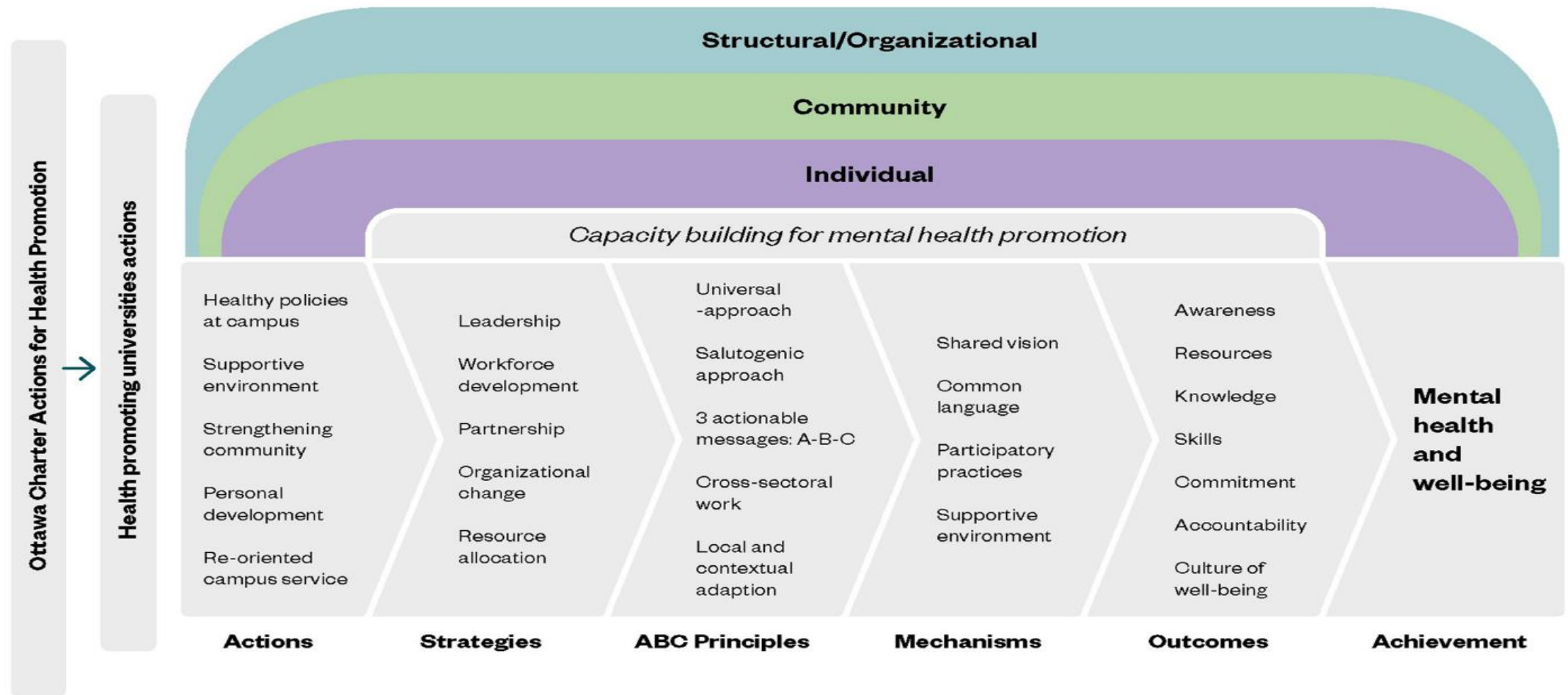


FIGURE 1

The program theory of ABC-uni showing the theoretical foundation and the process of change to be implemented.

ABC-uni model

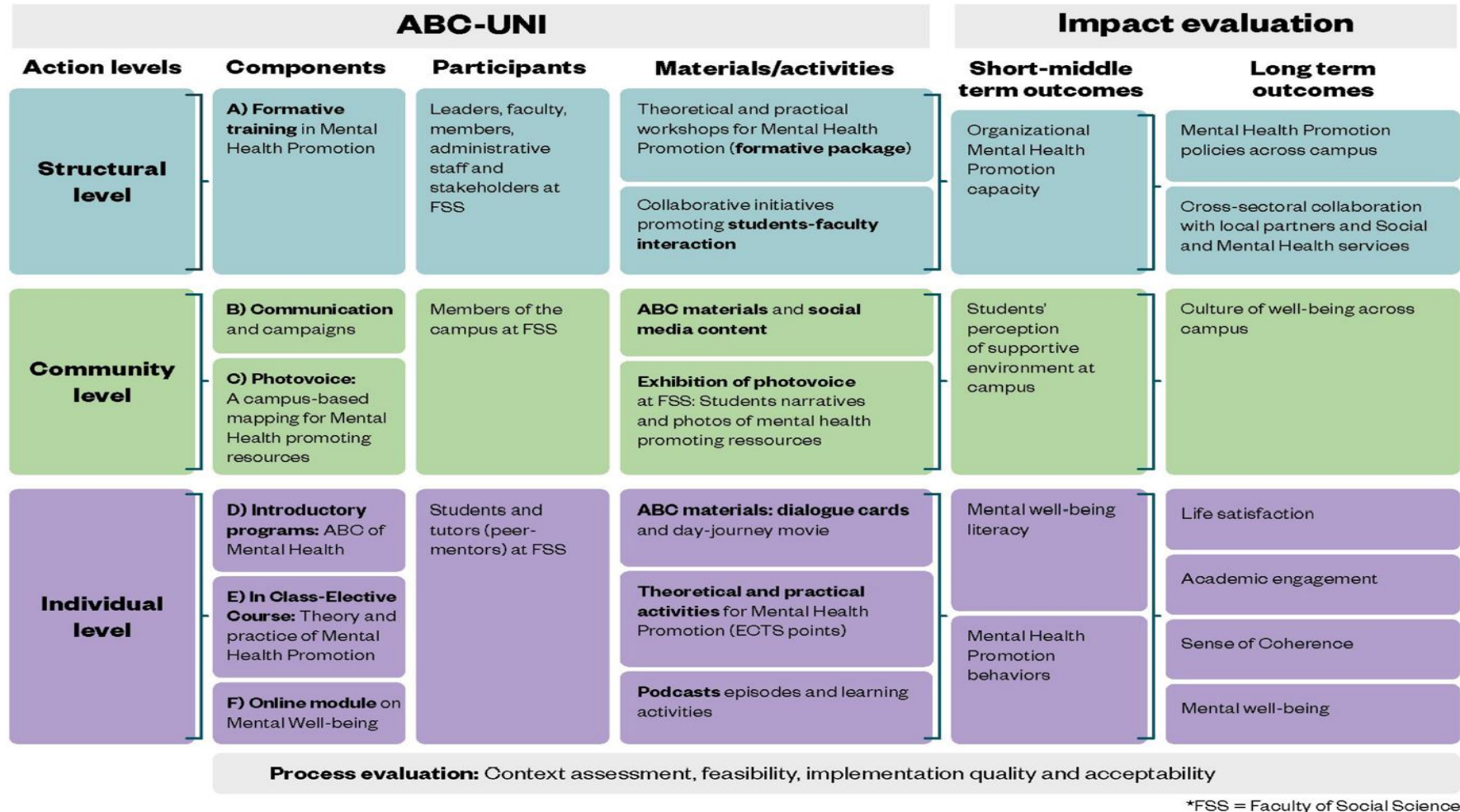


FIGURE 2

The logic model of the ABC-uni showing the action plan for each intervention component and the expected outcomes.

RUKSHAKA framework - King's College London and Manipal University

- Recent scoping review -> RUKSHAKA: faculty seen as mental wellbeing and support “**guardian**”
- ✓ Equipping faculty with **knowledge, practical skills and resources** to respond effectively to mental health challenges
- Concern about the lack of clear **professional boundaries** and responsibilities (Hughes & Byrom, 2019; Payne, 2022; Spear, Morey, & van Steen, 2021)
- ✓ RAKSHAKA comprehensive **reference for the development and implementation of faculty training** programmes aimed at enhancing support for student mental health
- ❑ **Framework’s effectiveness can be improved when the scope of student services aligns with faculty development components**

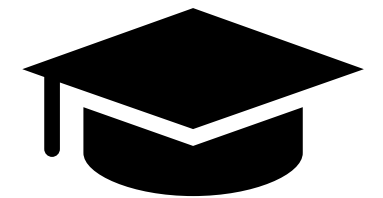
RUKSHAKA framework – 8 themes

- **R:** faculty **guides**, operating **procedures**, reporting systems, on and off campus emergency contacts, videos and flyers, apps
- **A:** **acknowledging** students' emotions, maintaining eye contact, using open questions, coping techniques, positive learning environment
- **K:** mh education programs, guide in **identifying** the behavioural, physical, cognitive, and emotional signs of psychological distress



- **S:** mh problems' **analysis** based on levels of severity of risk of suicide and self-harm
- **H:** physical and mental well-being, self-care practices and open communication **promotion**
- **A:** **support** inclusive learning by reducing prejudice and stigma
- **K:** **normalise** distress, provide coping strategies and establish clear professional and confidentiality **boundaries**
- **A:** protocols and flow charts to effectively **refer** students

Faculty development for mental wellbeing



Faculty mental health support

- ✓ cultivation of **positive relationships, personal growth, self-acceptance**, as well as developing a **sense of purpose** in their role as lecturers (Gast et al. 2022; Hammoudi et al. 2023)

Professor Hippo-on-campus

Health Education Programme for Educators and Navigators - McMaster University (Canada)

- ❑ 8 modules on Mental Health Literacy:

 - understanding** mental health and mental disorders -> improved knowledge

 - decreasing** stigma -> improved attitudes

 - increasing** effectiveness in seeking help -> improved behaviour or confidence

- ❑ 3 hours of asynchronous online modules, 2 hour synchronous workshop

- ❑ University staff as '**gatekeeper**' in direct contact with students

 - > identify, communicate and connect individuals with support

 - > prevent mental health challenges

(Halladay et al., 2022)



Professor Hippo-on-Campus

Table 1. Professor Hippo-on-Campus module descriptions.

Module	Content
1. Why Professor Hippo?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the program, campus, and McMaster Student Mental Health and Well-being Strategy • Inspiration behind name and program • Epidemiology of post-secondary students and changing demographics • Information about emerging adults and the emerging adult brain
2. Stress, Resilience, and Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining and understanding stress, types and sources of stress, effects on the body, performance and functioning • Defining resilience • Stress reduction and coping strategies
3. Emotions, Mental Health, and Mental Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotions and the expression of emotions • Defining mental health and mental disorders, including The Keyes' Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health⁵⁴ • Etiology of mental health disorders and bio-psycho-social interventions • Social determinants of mental health
4. Creating a Mental Health Positive and Inclusive Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating mental health positive and inclusive learning environments • Unconscious biases and stigma • Introduction to Universal Design for Instruction or Learning (UDI) • Recent addition: Virtual Learning Environments – Lessons from COVID-19 (not included in version evaluated here)
5. Communicating with Stressed and Distressed Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant legislation and liability issues • Recommended active listening and communication strategies to employ when students are experiencing stress or distress • Communication dos and don'ts
6. Recognizing and Responding to Students in Distress or Difficulty	<p>Overview of The McMaster 5 R Protocol: Responding to Students in Distress or Difficulty, which includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Recognizing</i> a student's signs of distress 2. <i>Reaching out</i> to the student 3. <i>Rating</i> the severity of distress 4. <i>Responding</i> to the situation and the student 5. <i>Reviewing</i> the situation with the appropriate designate and reflecting on process and impact
7. Accommodations: Context and Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding disability, accessibility and the context of academic accommodations in Ontario and Canada • Academic accommodations process and responsibilities of educators and students
8. Mental Health Matters for Educators and Navigators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving and maintaining mental health and self-care • Ways to seek help and institutional resources for educators and navigators

- ✓ significant improvements in faculty **attitudes, knowledge, and stigma** toward student mental health issues
- ✓ meaningful increases in faculty and staff **confidence in identifying** and responding to students experiencing distress, difficulty, or mental health problems
- ✓ 94% felt the program should be **mandatory**

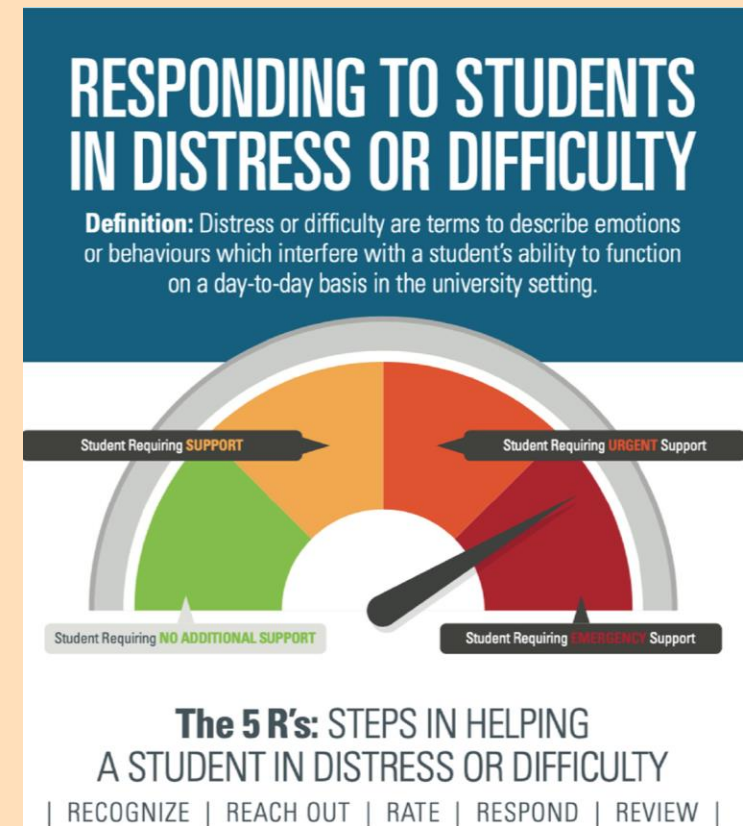
(Halladay et al., 2022)

Professor Hippo-on-Campus

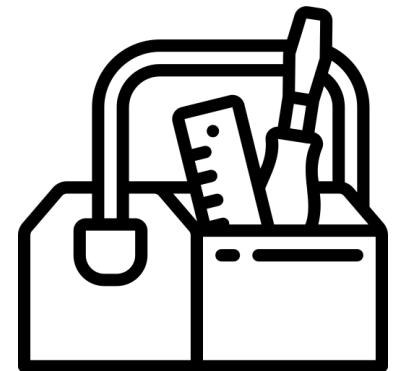
“Responding to Students in Distress and Difficulty” protocol

1. **Recognize** (signs of difficulty or distress)
2. **Reach out** (to the student or identify an alternative helper)
3. **Rate** (the level of student distress or difficulty as no additional support (green), support (yellow), urgent (orange), or emergency (red))
4. **Respond** (recommend, refer or accompany, act)
5. **Review** (student and supporter needs)

(Halladay et al., 2022)

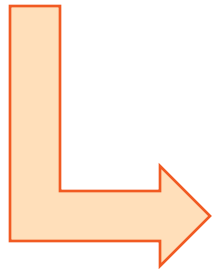


Research project & resources



Objectives, questions & outputs

1. What Whole University Approach-based training programmes exist internationally on mental wellbeing in academia?
2. Which tools linked to the Whole University Approach have the greatest impact on mental wellbeing in academia?
3. What is the state of the art of participants' perception of needs?
4. What kind of impact does an ad hoc training intervention have in increasing mental wellbeing withing an online Italian public university'?



- a. Create an ad hoc, **synchronous online training** intervention, based on the levels of mental wellbeing and perceived needs
- b. Prepare evidence-based materials to be used individually **asynchronously**
- c. Measure the **impact** of the training intervention on participants' mental wellbeing

Research methodology

RESEARCH TARGET

Students

Faculty

Staff

MIXED METHODS (Creswell & Clark, 2023)

- Narrative review (Popay et al., 2006; Silverman 2008)

Scopus and Web of Science search portals

Published open access articles in last 10 years

Italian and English

- Validated Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) questionnaire (Gremigni & Stewart-Brown, 2011)

- Semi-structured interview (Trinchero, 2004)

- Case study (Yin, 2005) on IUL - 100% public Italian Telematic University

FUTURE RESEARCH ACTIONS

1. Request informed consent from research participants
2. Submit questionnaires to analyse the needs of faculty, students and staff at the IUL university
3. The questionnaire data will inform the training course to be designed
4. Structuring ad hoc training intervention informed by the IUL ethics committee
5. Exploring the analysis of possible bias with tools such as the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Response (BIDR) (Hart et al., 2015)

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

- Public online university
- Case Study
- Circumscribed to a specific time

Practical resources



*21 reasons why to use ABC
model of mental health*

SCAN ME



Professor Hippo-on-campus

McMaster University

*Responding to Students in Distress or
Difficulty Protocol*

Extra practical resources



"I Care" University of Pennsylvania
Participant Packet



Crimson Folder
Harvard University
*Guidance and resources to assist
students in distress*

Presentation recap

1

Research context and key concepts

2

Holistic approaches to university mental wellbeing

3

Faculty development for mental wellbeing

4

Research project & resources

Any questions?



Thank you
for **your attention**

Sarah Speziali

Psychologist, PhD candidate

s.speziali@iuline.it

www.sarahspeziali.com

Bibliography

- Allen, Rosie, Chathurika Kannangara, Mahimna Vyas, and Jerome Carson. "European university students' mental health during Covid-19: Exploring attitudes towards Covid-19 and governmental response." *Current Psychology* 42, no. 23 (2023): 20165-20178.
- Beiter, Rebecca, et al. "The prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and stress in a sample of college students." *Journal of affective disorders* 173 (2015): 90-96.
- Brewster L., Jones E., Priestley M., Wilbraham S., Spanner L. & Hughes G. (2022) 'Look after the staff and they would look after the students' cultures of wellbeing and mental health in the university setting, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 46:4, 548-560, DOI: 10.1080/0309877X.2021.1986473
- Cage E., Jones E., Ryan G., Hughesd G. and Spannere L. Student mental health and transitions into, through and out of university: student and staff perspectives, *JOURNAL OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION*, VOL. 45, NO. 8, 1076–1089, 2021
- Chen, Tianhua, and Mike Lucock. "The mental health of university students during the COVID-19 pandemic: An online survey in the UK." *PloS one* 17, no. 1 (2022): e0262562.
- Constantinou, Costas S., et al. "Training of faculty and staff in recognising undergraduate medical students' psychological symptoms and providing support: a narrative literature review." *Behavioral Sciences* 12.9 (2022): 305.
- Creswell, John W., and V. L. Plano Clark. "Revisiting mixed methods research designs twenty years later." *Handbook of mixed methods research designs* 1.1 (2023): 21-36.
- Dooris, Mark, Sue Powell, and Alan Farrier. "Conceptualizing the 'whole university approach': an international qualitative study." *Health Promotion International* 35, no. 4 (2020): 730-740.

Bibliography

- Halladay, Jillian, et al. "Professor Hippo-on-Campus: Developing and evaluating an educational intervention to build mental health literacy among university faculty and staff." *Journal of american college Health* 72.8 (2024): 2470-2481.
- Hammoudi Halat, D., Soltani, A., Dalli, R., Alsarraj, L., & Malki, A. (2023). Understanding and fostering mental health and well-being among university faculty: A narrative review. *Journal of clinical medicine*, 12(13), 4425.
- Nielsen, L., et al. "ABC for mental health—a tool for better wellbeing." *Månedsskrift for Almen Praksis: Denmark* (2021).
- Holzer, Julia, Marko Lüftenegger, Selma Korlat, Elisabeth Pelikan, Katariina Salmela-Aro, Christiane Spiel, and Barbara Schober. "Higher education in times of COVID-19: University students' basic need satisfaction, self-regulated learning, and well-being." *Aera Open* 7 (2021): 23328584211003164.
- Johnson, Adam P., and Rebecca J. Lester. "Mental health in academia: Hacks for cultivating and sustaining wellbeing." *American Journal of Human Biology* 34 (2022): e23664.
- Gast, I., Neelen, M., Delnoij, L., Menten, M., Mihai, A., & Grohnert, T. (2022). Supporting the well-being of new university teachers through teacher professional development. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 866000.
- Goel, Arush, et al. "How the faculty across higher education institutes are facilitated to develop skills on student mental health and well-being?—A scoping review." *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* (2024): 1-13.

Bibliography

Morrish, Liz. Pressure vessels: The epidemic of poor mental health among higher education staff. Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute, 2019.

Linden, Brooke, and Heather Stuart. "Post-secondary stress and mental well-being: A scoping review of the academic literature." *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health* 39.1 (2020): 1-32.

Popay, Jennie, et al. "Guidance on the conduct of narrative synthesis in systematic reviews." A product from the ESRC methods programme Version 1.1 (2006): b92.

Saxena, Shekhar, and Yutaro Setoya. "World Health Organization's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020." (2014).

Silverman, David, and Amir Marvasti. *Doing qualitative research: A comprehensive guide*. Sage, 2008.

Trinchero, Roberto. *I metodi della ricerca educativa*. Laterza, 2004.

World Health Organization. *World mental health report: Transforming mental health for all*. World Health Organization, 2022.

Yin, Robert K., ed. *Introducing the world of education: A case study reader*. Sage, 2005.