

UNIC Seminar:
Mental health of students during the Covid-19 pandemic
09.12.2021 1-3 pm

Moderation: Dr. Kathrin Schopf/ Welcoming: Prof. Dr. Silvia Schneider

Title: Mental health of students DURING COVID-19 Pandemic in Croatia

Prof. Dr. Linda Rajhvajn Bulat, Associate Professor at Department for Social Work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Title: The association between mindfulness, contact with COVID-19, and mental health in Spanish adolescents

Estíbaliz Royuela Colomer, University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain

Title: "Effectiveness of a Culturally Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Intervention in Reducing Psychological Distress and Improving Well-Being Among University Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic"

Ekin Çakir (PhD researcher), Department of Psychology, Koc University, Istanbul, Turkey

Title: COVID-19 and Mental Health in the Student Population

PD Dr. Julia Brailovskaia, Department of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany

Students' perspectives on crisis:

Mentimeter participation and presentation of results

Talks with student representatives:

University of Zagreb: Patricija Biškup and Dario Topić

University of Deusto: Ivan San Atilano Campillo and Laura Gómez González

Ruhr University Bochum: Yazgi Yilmaz

Audience: Questions and comments

STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID- 19 PANDEMIC IN CROATIA


Linda Rajhvajn Bulat

Associate Professor at
Department for Social
Work, Faculty of Law

University of Zagreb

Current situation regarding studying in the context of the pandemic



- 
- Mandatory EU Covid-19 certification / recovered from COVID-19 in last 12 months / negative PCR or rapid antigen test result
 - ✓ in state and public institutions (including universities)
 - ✓ in situations of more than 50 persons at the indoor gathering


 - Mask requirement for both students and university staff
 - Social distance (in the most cases hard to achieve)

 - **Different models of studying on different faculties**
 - ✓ only mandatory EU Covid-19 certification / recovered from COVID-19 in the 12 months / negative PCR or rapid antigen test result
 - ✓ only online classes
 - ✓ combination of first two options (online lectures for students without EU Covid-19 certification)
 - ✓ only mask requirement and social distance at faculties with smaller student groups

 - Faculty or the state covers the costs of rapid antigen tests when students are on their practical work

 - Several faculties and Student centre offer **free psychological counselling for students** of University of Zagreb (in the beginning of pandemic most of them offered both face to face and online counseling)

Students' mental health – research findings



➤ Findings based on six studies conducted in 2020 and 2021 in Croatia:

- ✓ **Students and pandemic: How did we survived?** (Đorđević et al., 2021, Education and Teacher Training Agency) – 4 273 students (68 % females)
- ✓ **How are we? Life in Croatia in the time of COVID-19** (Jokić Begić et al., 2020, Department of psychology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb) – over 3 500 participants of all ages, 450 students (87% females)
- ✓ **Social support and internalized problems of students due to crisis events** (Stojanić, 2021, master thesis, Department for Social Work, Faculty of Law, Zagreb) – 239 students (85% females)
- ✓ **Parental and students' emotional changes during COVID-19 pandemic** (Kapčić, 2020, baccalaureus graduate thesis, Department for Social Work, Faculty of Law, Zagreb) – 75 students (90,7% females) and 51 parents (70,6% mothers)
- ✓ **Relationship between the COVID-19 related stress and different quality indicators of student relationships** (Lakić, 2021, master thesis, Department for Social Work, Faculty of Law, Zagreb) – 263 students (90,9% females) who are at least 3 monts in a relationship
- ✓ **Students' perception of impact of lock down on their romantic relationships during COVID-19 pandemic** (Čuljak et al., 2020, seminar, Department for Social Work, Faculty of Law, Zagreb) – half-structured interviews with 8 students (50% females)

Stressors

- The most frequent stressors:
 - ✓ **missed opportunities** (59%)
 - ✓ **social isolation or loneliness** (50%)
 - ✓ **changes in models of studying** (49%)
 - ✓ changes in daily life activities (33% very upset)
 - ✓ lack of quiet place for studying (every 4th student)
 - ✓ being apart from partner and/or vulnerable family member
 - ✓ inability to work, travel (especially of those travels already planned), get a medical examination/control
 - ✓ news and media reports regarding COVID-19 (for example, number of deceased, number of new cases, youth as main cause of virus spreading)
- 59% less satisfied with their student life compared to the time before pandemic
- 67% less satisfied with their social life
 - 73% were not in the opportunity to meet new people, as they were before 2020
- **Female** students perceive more stressors

Worries

- The most frequent worries:
 - ✓ **contagion of close ones with COVID-19**
 - ✓ **their own psychological/mental health**
 - ✓ their physical health because of prolonged time in front of the screen
 - ✓ uncertainties regarding future
 - ✓ problems of studying (how to get to the needed literature, practical work, lack of direct face to face contact with professors, final exams)
 - ✓ lack of knowledge necessary for their future profession
 - ✓ unpredictability of pandemic (especially regarding epidemiological measures and the duration of the pandemic)

- The least worries are regarding their own contagion with COVID-19

- There are **no gender differences** in the level of preoccupation with the pandemic

Emotions and mental health (1)

- Negative affect/unpleasant emotions:
 - ✓ anger (33%)
 - ✓ worry/anxiety (29,3%)
 - ✓ boredom (33,4%)
 - ✓ Irritability (26,7%)
 - ✓ more negative than positive affect
- 32% perceive that their mental health is the same as before the pandemic and **52% that it is worse**
- 30% mild or moderate **depression**, 23% severe or extremely severe!
- 20-25% mild or moderate **anxiety**, 17-20% severe or extremely severe
- **10% extremely damaged mental health** (high levels of depression, anxiety AND stress)

Emotions and mental health (2)

- Problems with (emotional) **self regulation** (60%, especially regarding faculty obligations), with attention and concentration (50%), unhealthy use of social online networks (43%), stress coping problems (38%)
- There are **no gender differences** in the level of internalising problems
- **Younger students** (baccalaurean level) have more internalised problems than the older ones (master level)
- 3% looked for formal psychological support, large number of students suppose that they will need it in the future (maybe 27%, probably 8%, certainly 3%)
- **32% would like to have online psychological counseling**
- 20% said that their University offers psychological counseling to students, 16% that it doesn't and **64% don't know**



Intimate relationships

- Though in quantitative studies there are not confirmed negative impacts of the pandemic on their intimate relationships, in interviews students stressed some **challenges**:
 - ✓ inability to make face to face, physical contact, starting with long-distance relationship
 - ✓ lack of physical and emotional closeness
 - ✓ emotional distancing due to being apart
 - ✓ more arguments/quarrels
- **Positive impacts** of pandemic:
 - ✓ more time together, more conversation
 - ✓ more topics to talk about (new topics, personal problems)
 - ✓ fewer conflicts than before the pandemic
 - ✓ temporary living together
 - ✓ new ways of spending time together
 - ✓ developing open and honest communication between partners
 - ✓ new and adjusted ways of conflict solving




Parents

- Students experience more anger, but also more happiness than their parents
- There is no differences in experiencing fear, sadness and stress
- Students perceive larger and more extensive negative impact of pandemic than their parents do
- There is no difference in the perception of the positive impact

Some more positive aspects...

- Students are **satisfied with their social support**
 - ✓ more gained from their friends than from their family members
 - ✓ social support received in the time of the pandemic is connected to lower levels of students' internalising problems
- 75% perceive that in the time of pandemic they could fully **dedicate themselves to studying** and to their studying duties
- Almost all students had **good conditions for long-distance studying**
- They perceive benefits of reducing traveling costs and more efficient organisation of their time
- 30,6 % feels very grateful

Recommendations

- 
- Systematically organised, highly visible and accessible **formal support and psychological counseling**
 - Grater **awareness of faculty members** regarding students' mental health problems
 - Whenever is possible – **face to face classes**
 - We have to take care that we **don't discriminate** students who don't have EU COVID certificate and that there is no discrimination between students themselves



PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN SPAIN

Estíbaliz Royuela-Colomer

University of Deusto, Bilbao (Spain)

Current situation

SPAIN

(University of Deusto, Bilbao)

- New “Normal”
- High vaccination rate (79.4 %)
- Face-to-face classes
- Online meetings

ROMANIA

(Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca)

- Restrictions
- Low vaccination rate (37.4 %)
- Online classes
- Some face to face seminars



COVID-19 AND MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

The association between mindfulness, contact with COVID-19,
and mental health in Spanish adolescents

Background

- Psychological impact of COVID-19 on young individuals:
 - Increased levels of anxiety, depression, stress symptoms
 - Non-suicidal self-injury
 - Eating disorders
 - Sleep problems
 - Screen time and social media use
 - Lower health-related quality of life, satisfaction with life and resilience



Pandemic fatigue

Background

- Why?:
 - Social isolation
 - Fear and uncertainty
 - Parental stress and family conflict
 - Adjustment to online classes
 - Academic stress
 - Lose of pleasant activities
 - Exposure to excessive information related to Covid-19



Rationale and Objectives



- Few longitudinal studies
- Few assessing the protective factors
- **Objective:** Explore whether: contact with COVID-19 and mindfulness predicted internalizing symptoms (anxiety, depression and stress) controlling for pre-pandemic internalizing symptoms in adolescents
- **Mindfulness:** “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003)

Method

- Longitudinal (October 2019-October 2020)
- 383 high school students (58% female; $M = 15.6$)
- Measures:
 - Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale-21 Items (DASS-21)
 - Mindful Attention Awareness Scale-Adolescents (MAAS-A)
 - COVID-19 contact questions





Results

Have you been infected with COVID-19?	14.9%
Have any of the people you live with been infected with COVID-19?	19.6%
Have any of the people you live with been hospitalized due to COVID-19?	2.1%
Has someone close to you been infected with COVID-19?	65.3%
Has someone close to you been hospitalized due to COVID-19?	21.1%
Has anyone close to you died from COVID-19?	13.8%

Results

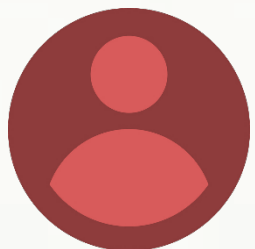
- 3 contact profiles COVID-19:



1. **No/Little contact:** No contact at all or just knowing someone (friend, family, or acquaintance outside home) with COVID-19



2. **Acquaintances:** Knowing someone outside the home (friend, family, or acquaintance) who has been infected, hospitalized, and/or died from COVID-19



3. **At home:** Being infected or living with someone who has been infected and/or hospitalized with COVID-19

Results

- Profiles **2** and **3** experienced a significant increase in internalizing symptoms from October 2019 to October 2020
- Profile **3** a significant decrease in levels of mindfulness



Conclusions

- The **reduction** in **mindfulness** levels might explain the impact of contact with COVID-19 in internalizing symptoms in adolescents.
- Living on **automatic pilot**:
 - Reduced awareness of thoughts/behaviors
 - Higher levels of stress
 - Emotion regulation
 - Awareness of coping resources (e.g., social support)
 - Unaware of positive
- Our findings confirmed the **negative impact** of COVID-19 contact on adolescents' **internalizing** symptoms



COPING STRATEGIES

Mindfulness

- Emotion regulation
- Acting with awareness
- Non-judgmental attitude
- Acceptance
- Patience
- Non-reactivity
- Social connections



What can we do?

- Positive emotion regulation strategies
- Positive family relationships
- Social support
- Physical exercise
- Control social media use
- Sense of belonging



Samji, H., Wu, J., Ladak, A., Vossen, C., Stewart, E., Dove, N., Long, D., & Snell, G. (2021). Review: Mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth – a systematic review. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, camh.12501. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12501>

Lai, A. Y., Lee, L., Wang, M. P., Feng, Y., Lai, T. T., Ho, L. M., Lam, V. S., Ip, M. S., & Lam, T. H. (2020). Mental Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on International University Students, Related Stressors, and Coping Strategies. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 11, 584240. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.584240>



THANK
YOU!

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Deusto

Universidad de Deusto
Deustuko Unibertsitatea
University of Deusto



The Problems and Coping Strategies of University Students in Turkey

Ekin akır, MSc

Ko University

Trauma and Stress Research Lab

& MiReKoc

Cultural Adaptation Stages



Free listing interviews

Key informants



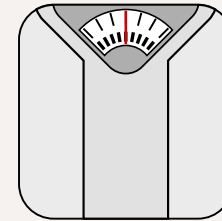
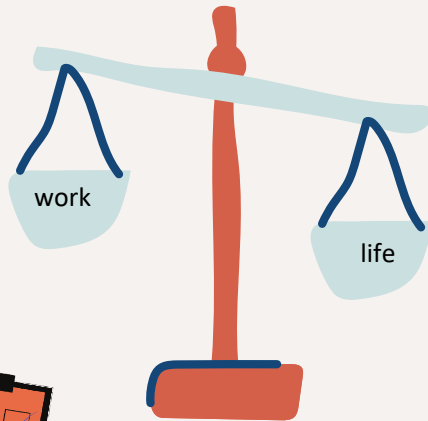
Focus groups

Main themes of problems

-  Psychological problems
-  Financial problems and lack of financial resources
-  Health concerns and problems
-  Adjustment problems
-  Social problems
-  Problems related to academic life and time-management



Several problems





In focus groups;
greater emphasis on

*economic factors and financial
obstacles

*problems related to the
resources of the universities

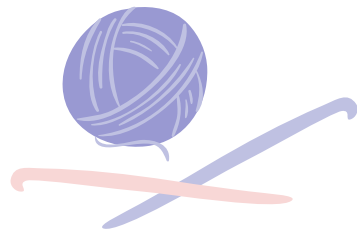
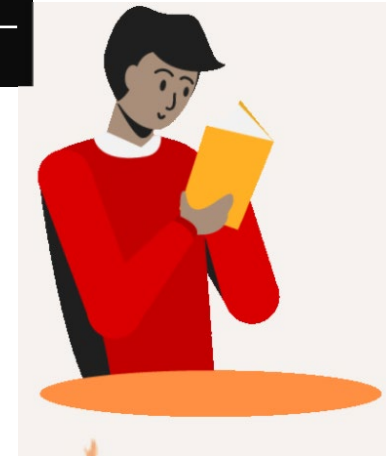
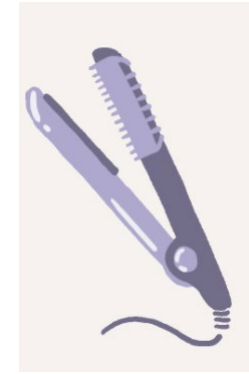
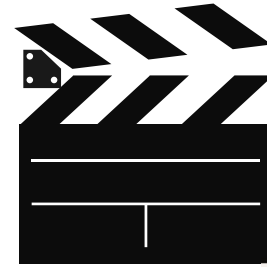
*effects of problems on well-being

What about the solutions?



How do we cope?

Many ideas!



Solutions according to the sources of problems




Individual



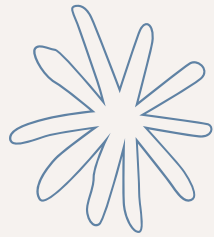
Institutional



Societal



We may forget;



What we
enjoy



How we do
what we
enjoy



That we are
not alone

Let's remember them!





Thank you!

...and many thanks to my dear supervisor, Dr. Ceren Acartürk, Trauma and Stress Research Lab members, MiReKoc and all the university students sharing their experiences

COVID-19 and Mental Health in the Student Population

Prof. Dr. Silvia Schneider, Dr. Kathrin Schopf,
PD Dr. Julia Brailovskaia

Mental Health Research and Treatment Center,
Faculty of Psychology, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany

December 9, 2021

CURRENT COVID-MEASURES @RUB

- **March 2020 – September 2021:**
 - Online-teaching only (recordings or live)
- **Since October 2021:**
 - Lectures are still held online (recordings or live)
 - Smaller courses can be held in-person (“3G”- and mask requirement)
- **University goal for WS 2021/22:**
 - Provide as many in-person classes as possible
- **But:** Incidence and hospitalisation rates are rising!
“2G” and further restrictive measures are introduced



COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB



How did the COVID-19 situation impact students' mental health?



A MASK



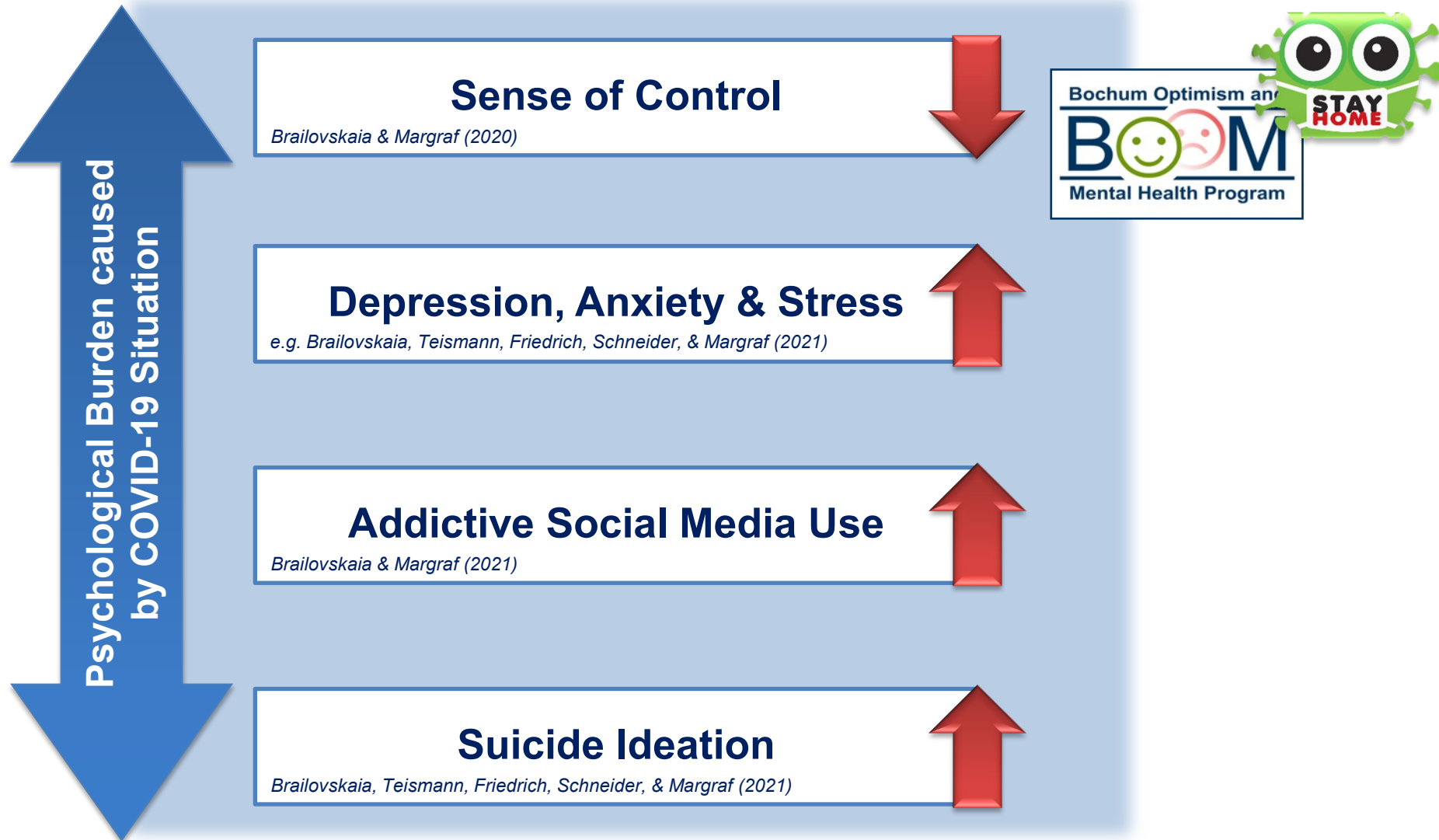
DISTANCE



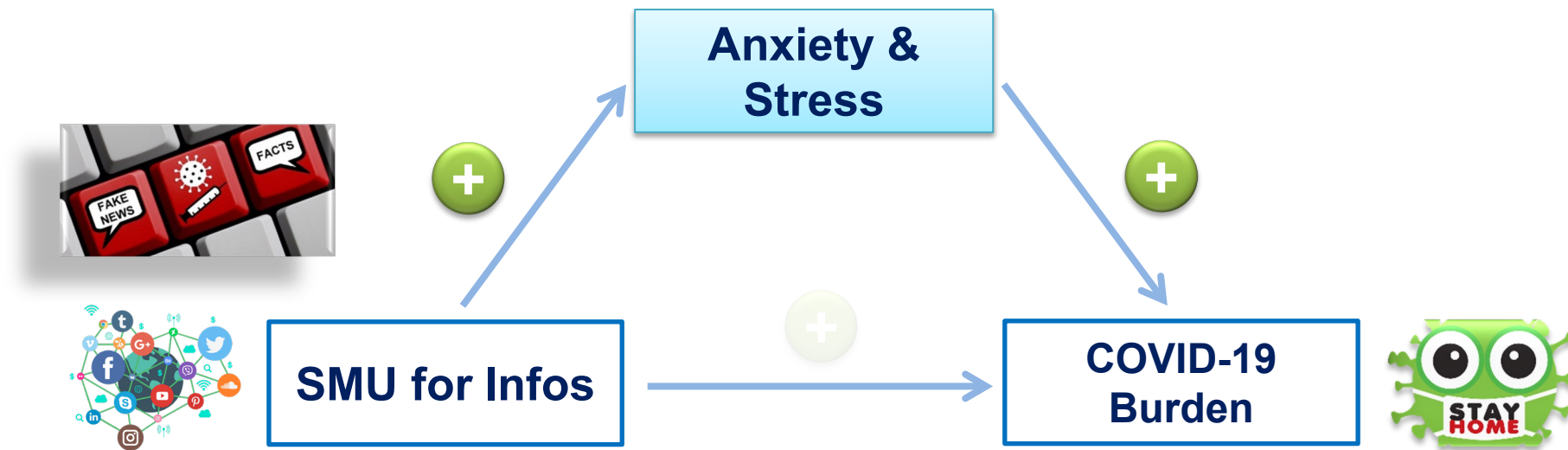
HANDS



COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB: Consequences

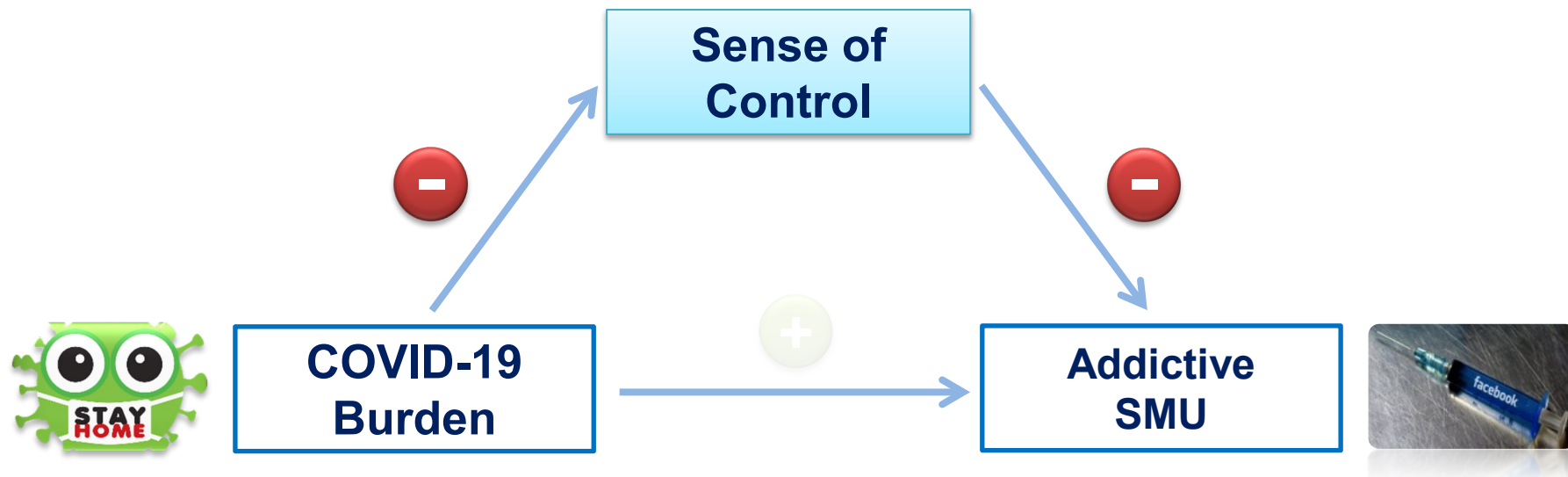


COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB: Consequences



e.g. Brailovskaia, Cosci, Mansueto, & Margraf (2021)

COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB: Consequences



Brailovskaia & Margraf (2021)

COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB



How can we protect students' mental health during COVID-19?



A MASK



DISTANCE



HANDS



COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB: Protective Factors/Strategies

- **Conscious time limits for SMU** (e.g., alarm clock, “pop-up” messages)



Less Facebook Use for 20 min over 14 days!

Brailovskaia, Ströse, Schillack, & Margraf, 2020



Significant improvement of **Mental Health**
and a **Healthier Lifestyle!**



Life Satisfaction



Physical Activity



Depression



Smoking

COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB: Protective Factors/Strategies

- **Conscious time limits for SMU** (e.g., alarm clock, “pop-up” messages)
- **Physical/sportive activity** (e.g., jogging, yoga)



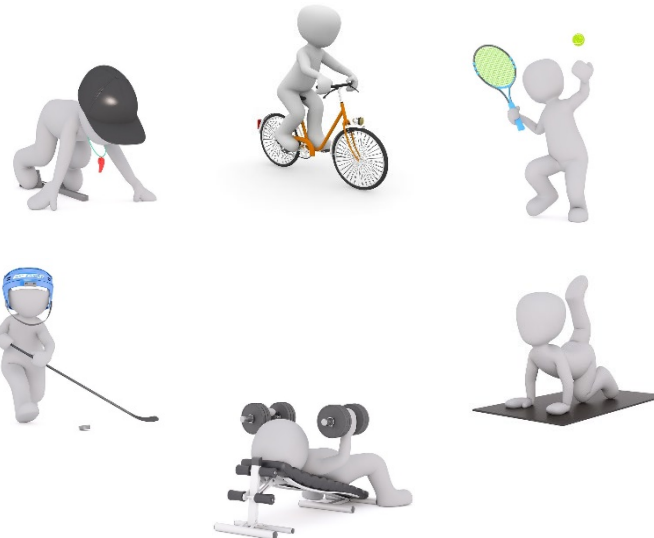
COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB: Protective Factors/Strategies – More Sport

Physical Activity

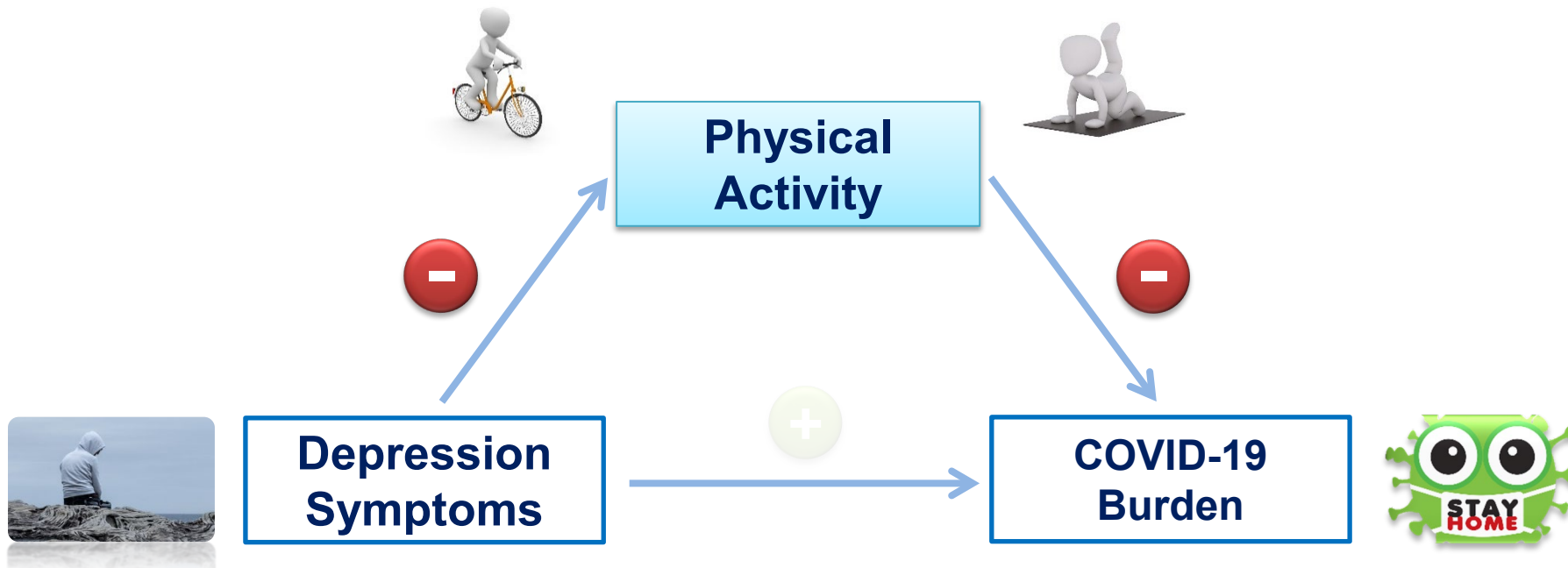


30 minutes a day significantly increase
physical and mental health!

World Health Organization (2003)



COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB: Protective Factors/Strategies – More Sport



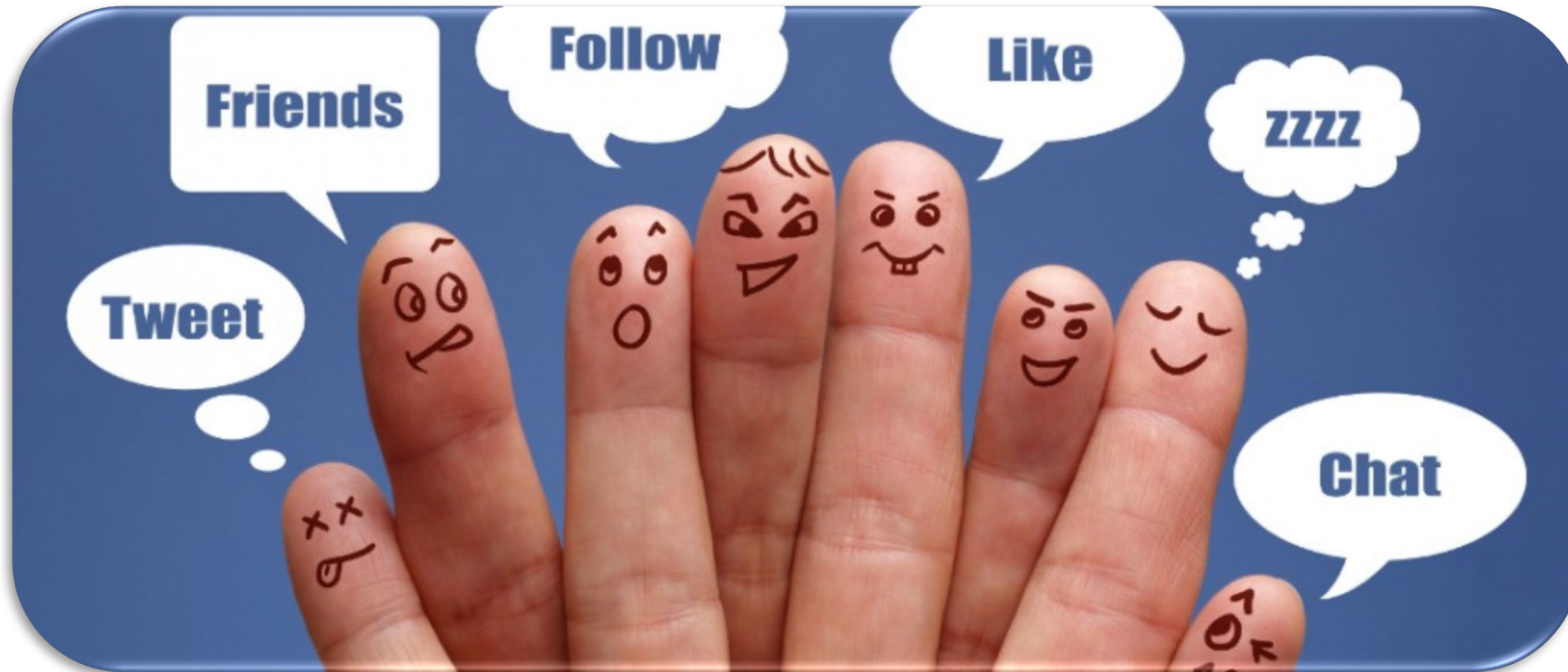
Brailovskaia et al. (2021)

COVID-19 and Mental Health at the RUB: Protective Factors/Strategies

- **Conscious time limits for SMU** (e.g., alarm clock, “pop-up” messages)
- **Physical/sportive activity** (e.g., jogging, yoga)
- Keeping of **daily routine** (work/study, leisure time, mealtimes, bedtimes)
- **Social interaction** via telephone
- Each day, do something **good for yourself!**
- Don't panic! Keep calm! AND **VACCINATION!**

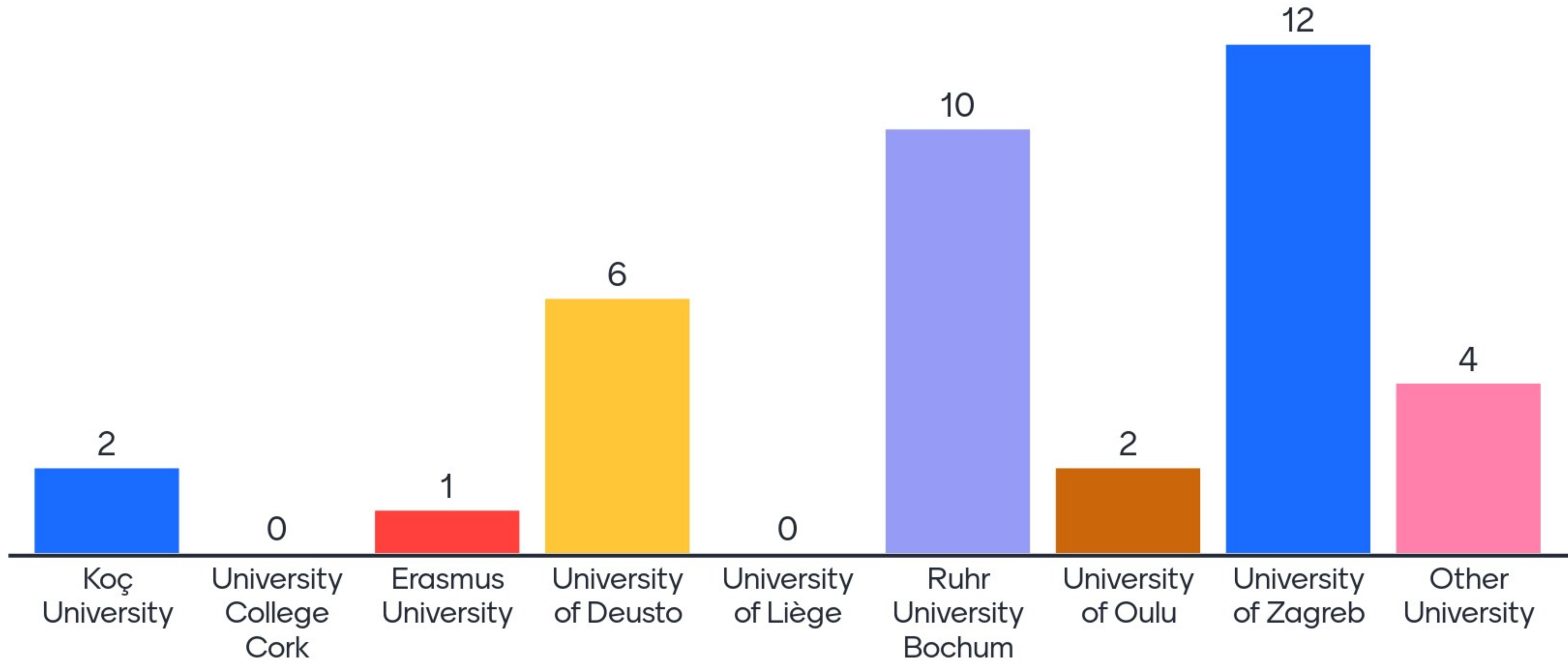


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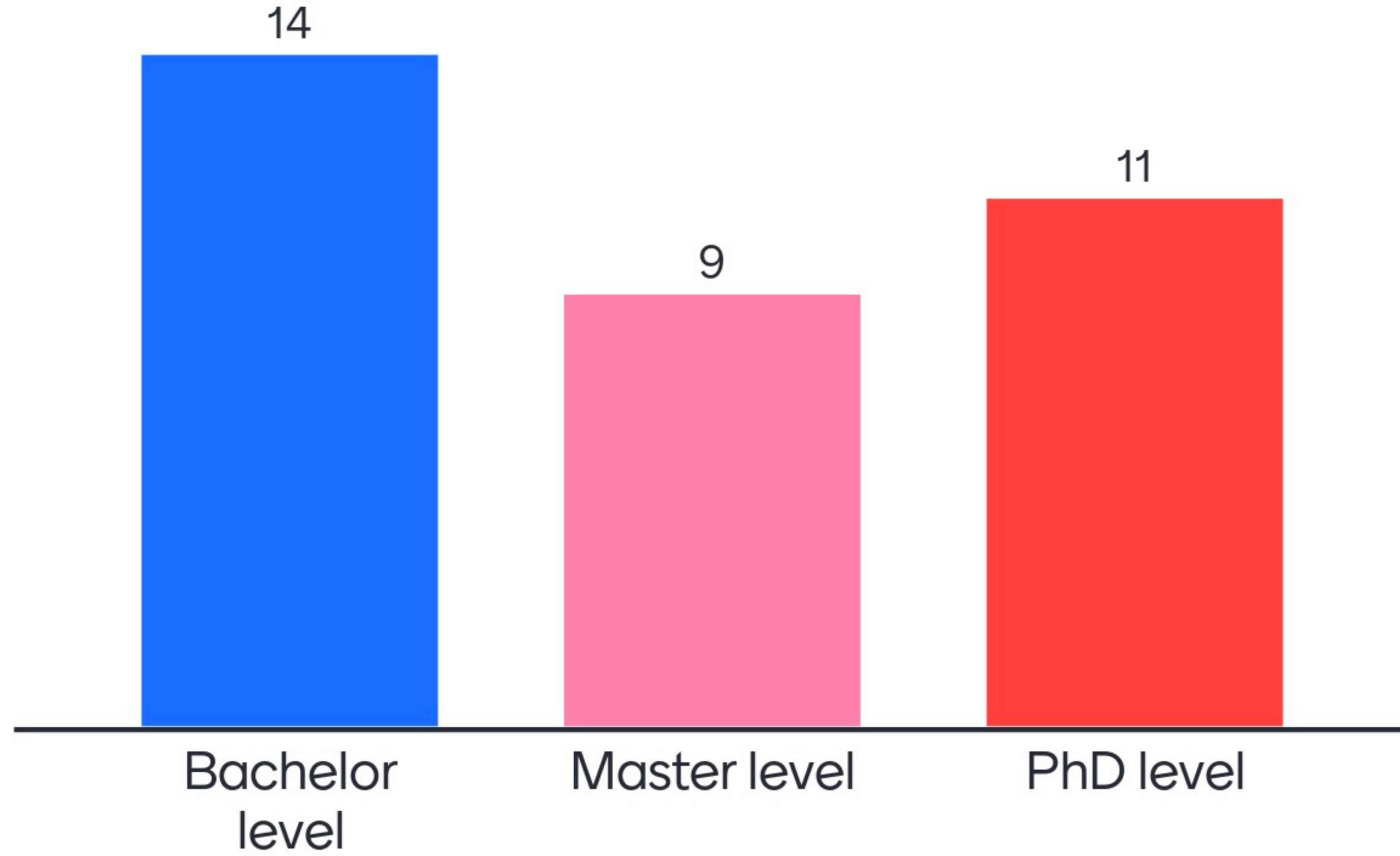


Contact: Julia.Brailovskaia@rub.de

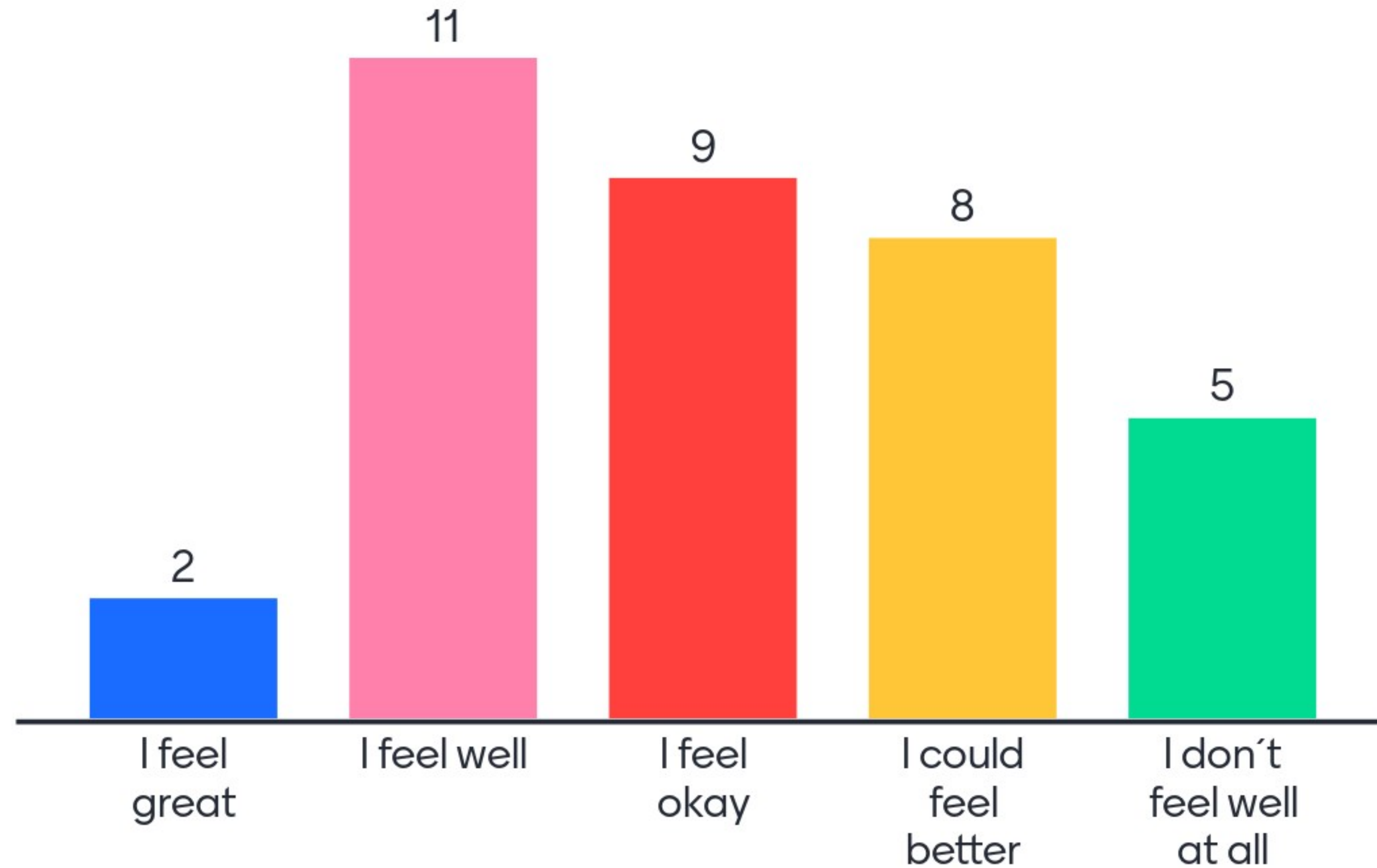
At which university do you study?



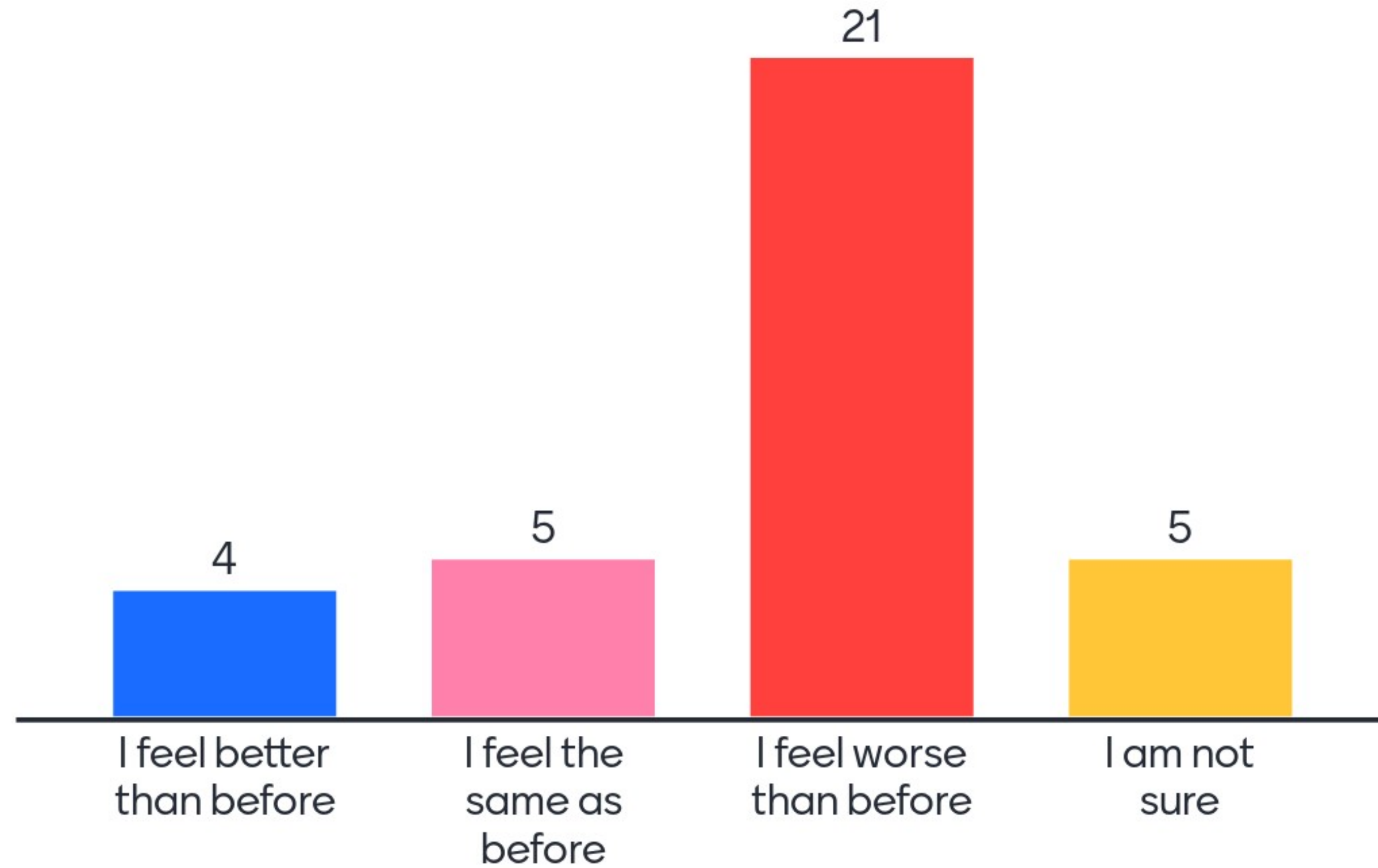
What is your current study level?



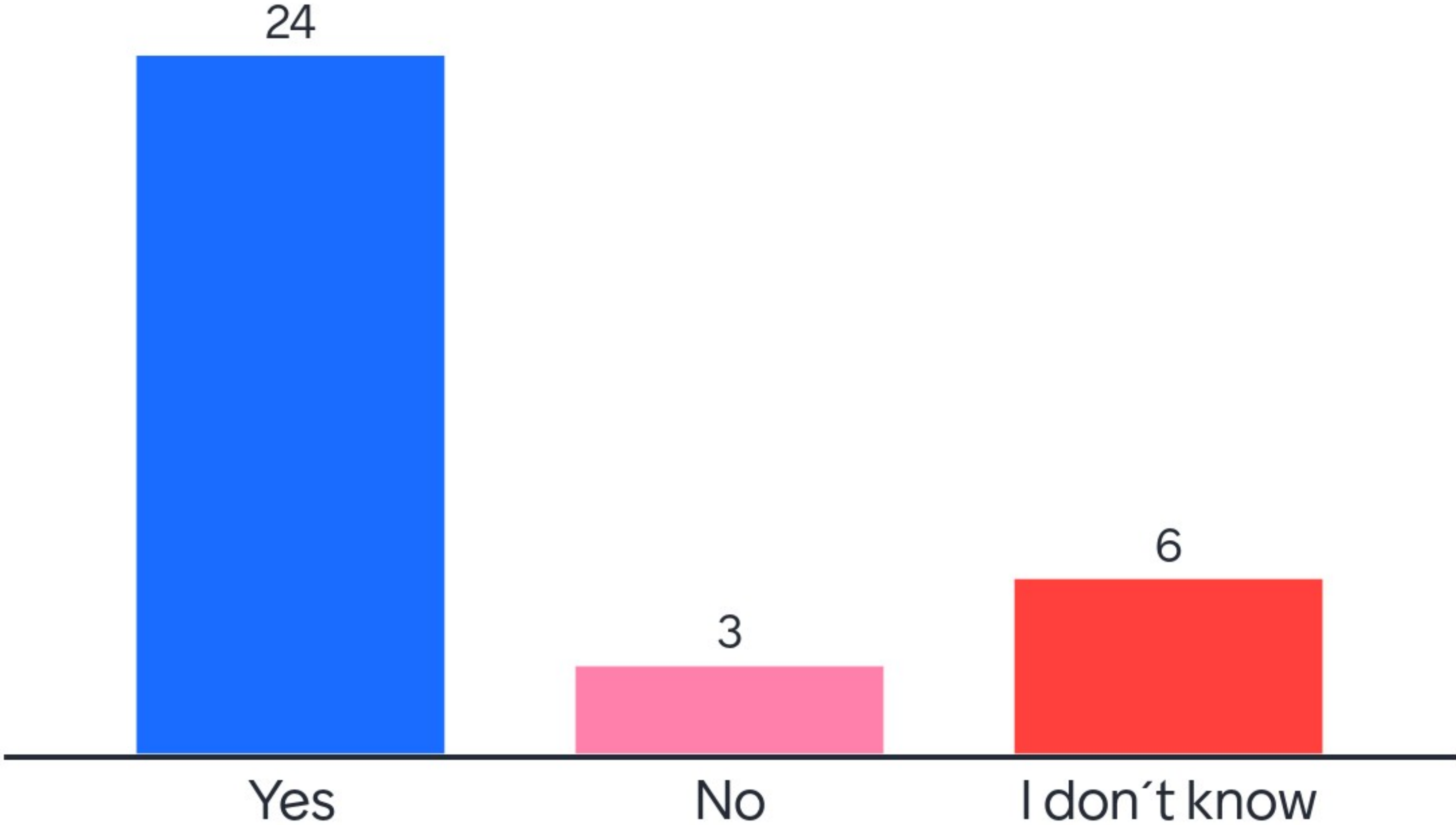
How would you describe your current mental health state?



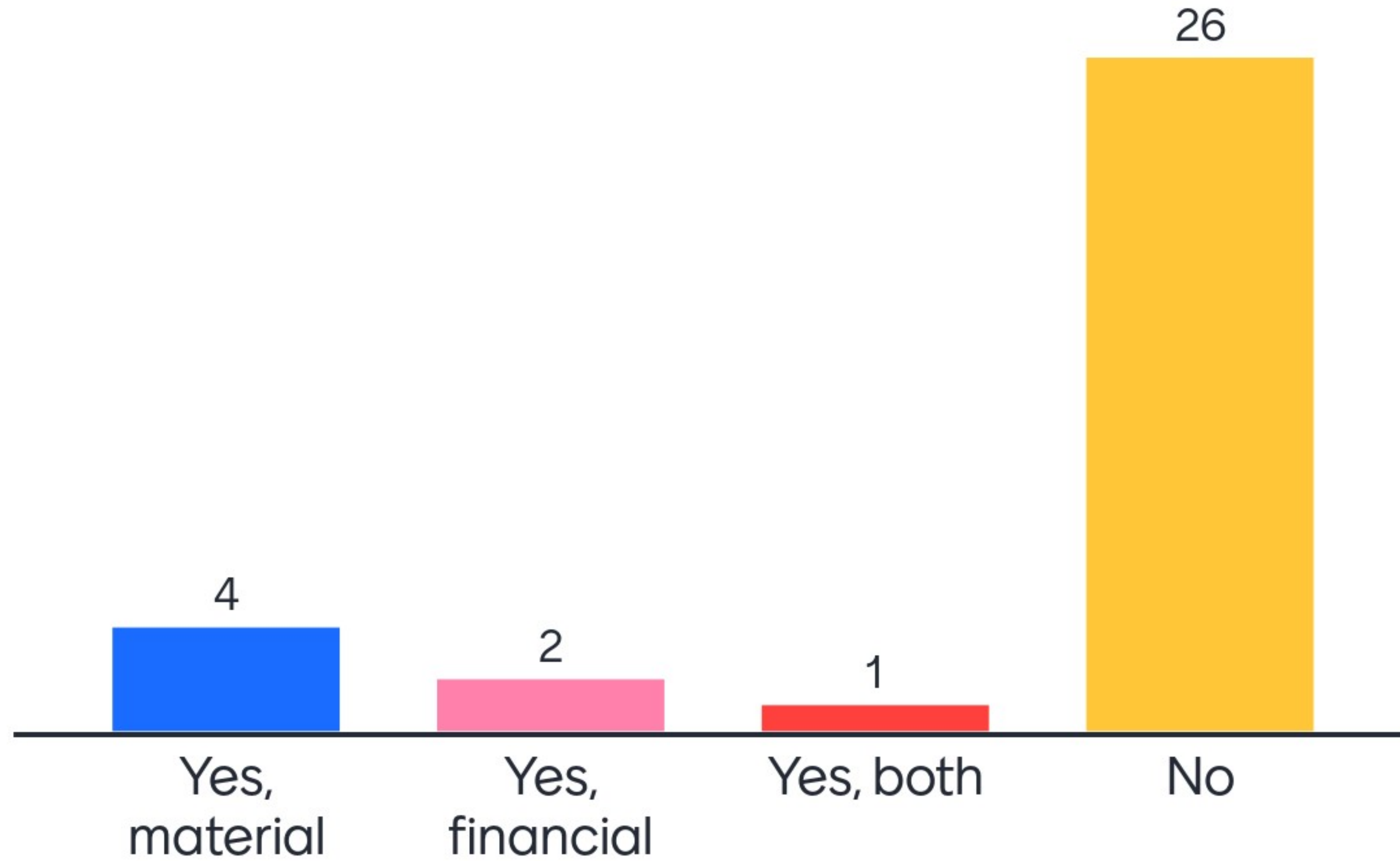
Do you feel differently compared to before the pandemic?



Did/does your university offer psychological support and/or counselling to students?



Did/do you receive additional material (e.g. laptops) and/or financial support from your university?



Do you feel that the interests of students have been taken into account during the pandemic by your government?

