



Sad, anxious, and undergraduate

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INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH, SUMMER 2021

Background

- ▶ Personal and professional interest
- ▶ **RQ:** How does pursuing an undergraduate degree affect mental health?
 - ▶ Is this an issue?
 - ▶ What exactly triggers impairments?
 - ▶ Are there any common systemic drawbacks? (grading criteria, assignment scheduling)
 - ▶ How can we make this experience less painful?

Sample frame

- ▶ **Target audience:** college undergraduates
- ▶ **Sample frame:** American University of Central Asia students (~1000).
 - ▶ Due to the time constraints, probability sampling was not used.
 - ▶ **Sample size:** 30 AUCA students that attended Intro to Psychology class (considered to be one of the most popular courses at the university) and joined WhatsApp group were chosen as that course is.
 - ▶ **Response rate:** ~47%
- ▶ **Limitations**
 - ▶ Variance and bias

Data Collection and Analysis

- ▶ Self-administered online survey in English
 - ▶ Avoiding stigma
- ▶ Data: table of responses
 - ▶ Variables: questions
- ▶ Methods: comparing subsets

B1 Do you have anything of the following?

- ☐ Significant loss/gain of weight (2)
- ☐ Sleeping too much or too little (3)
- ☐ Poor concentration (4)
- ☐ Feeling restless, irritable, or tense (6)
- ☐ Fatigue (5)
- ☐ Thinking or moving slower than usual (7)
- ☐ Increased muscle aches or soreness (8)
- ☐ Decrease of immune system (9)
- ☐ No (1)

Display This Question:

If Do you have anything of the following? != No

B1-1 Did you have this (these) conditions before attending AUCA?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

```
lbs_ys <- paste(lbs_ys, n, sep= " ") # add n to labels
pie(slices_ys, labels = lbs_ys, col=topo.colors(length(lbs_ys)),
    main="Spread of complaints related to mental health across years of study")

#create distribution of physical complaints
mi_ph <- subset(mi, select = c("B1"))
print(mi_ph)

#function "+="
`%+=%` = function(e1,e2) eval.parent(substitute(e1 <- e1 + e2))

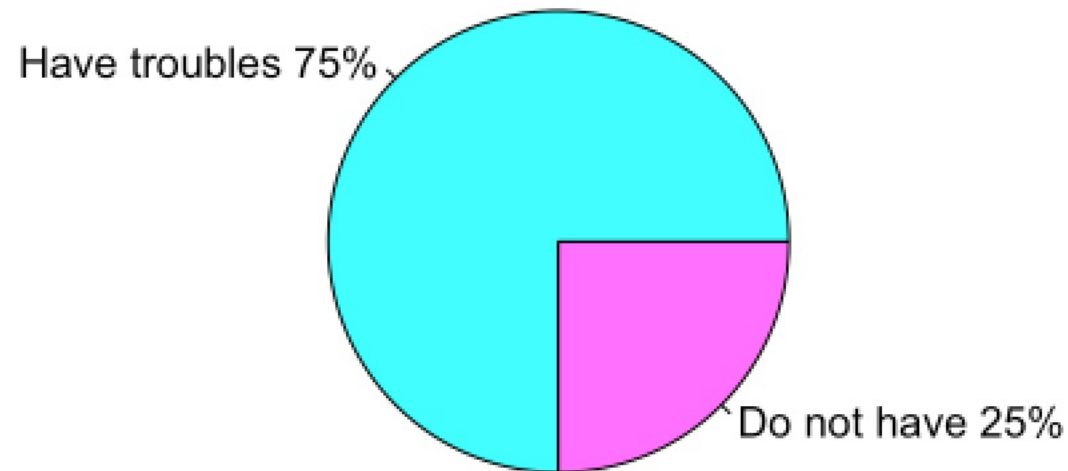
vec_sym_ph = c ("Significant loss/gain of weight",
                "Sleeping too much or too little",
                "Poor concentration",
                "Feeling restless, irritable, or tense",
                "Fatigue",
                "Thinking or moving slower than usual",
                "Increased muscle aches or soreness",
                "Decrease of immune system")

vec_ph = c(0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0)

for(i in 1:nrow(mi_ph)) {
  if(grepl(vec_sym_ph[1], mi_ph[i, "B1"], fixed = TRUE)){
    vec_ph[1] += 1
  }
}
```

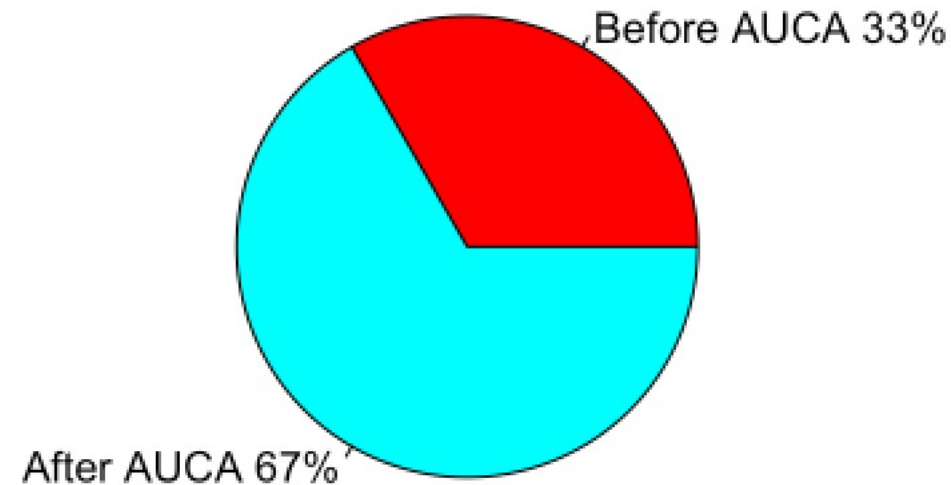
Is this problem relevant?

**Ratio of
students having any troubles related to mental health
to students who do not have any complaints about it**



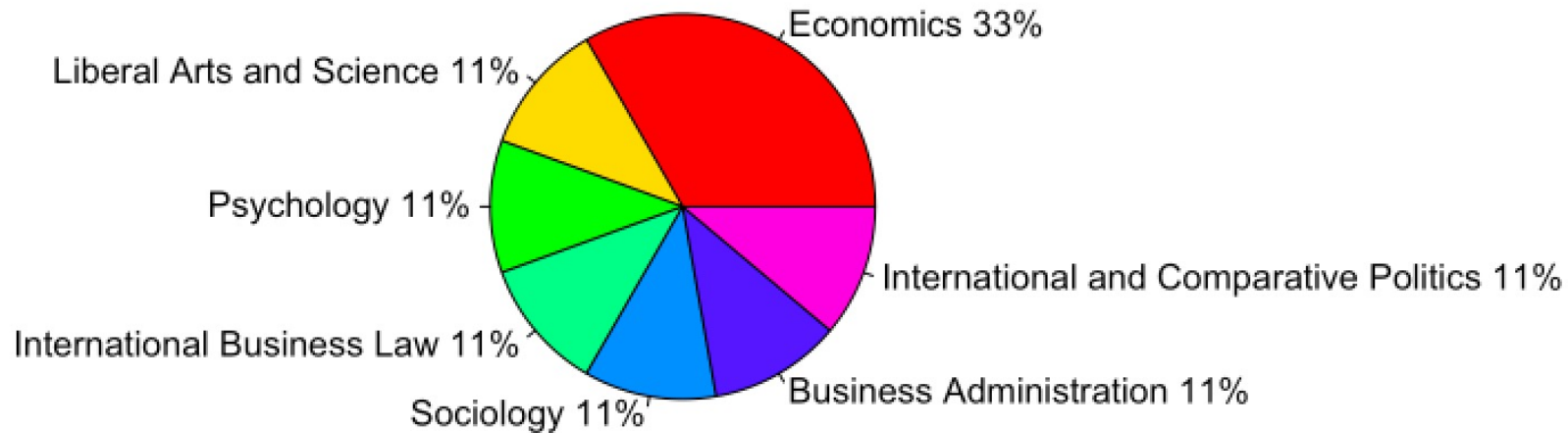
Is this problem really caused by AUCA?

**Ratio of
students experienced mental issues before attending AUCA
to students who got them after attending AUCA**

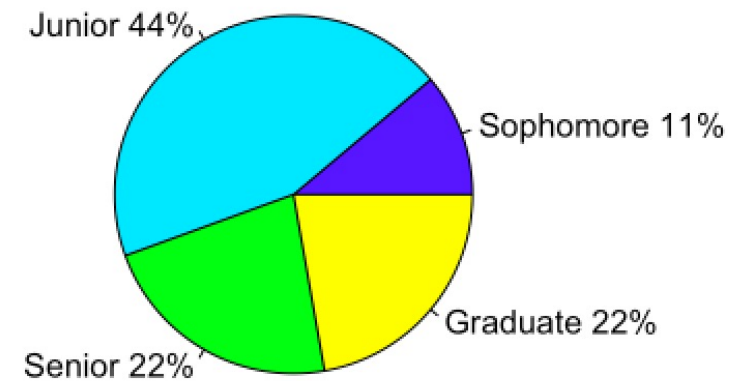


Are there any risk factors?

Spread of complaints related to mental health across majors

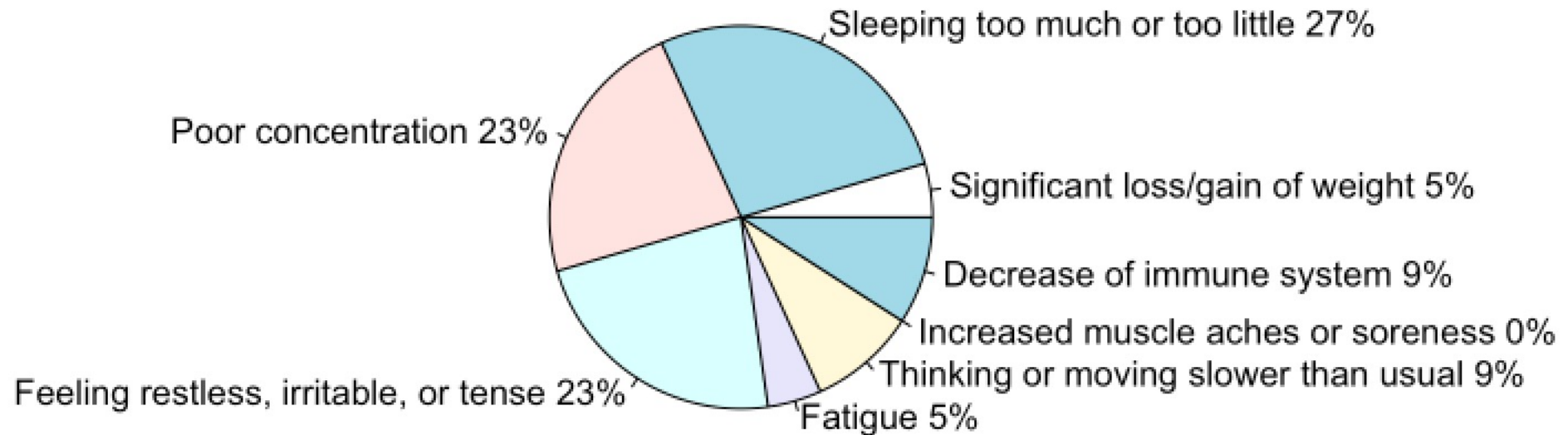


Spread of complaints related to mental health across years of study



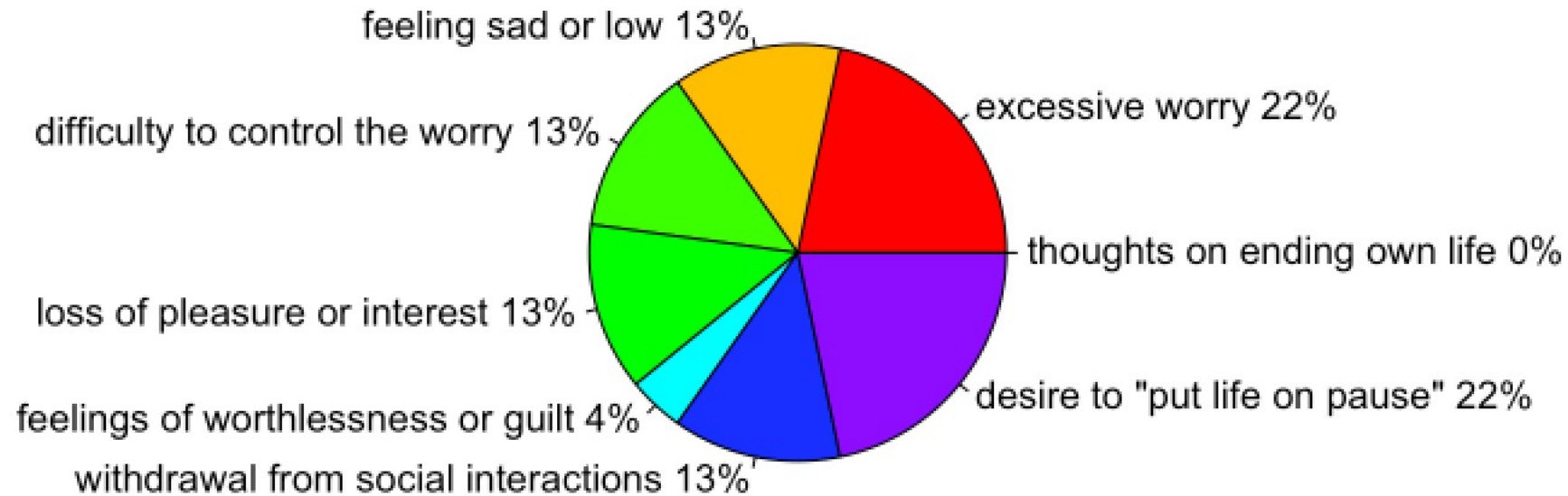
How are mental issues expressed physically?

Spread of complaints related to physical health



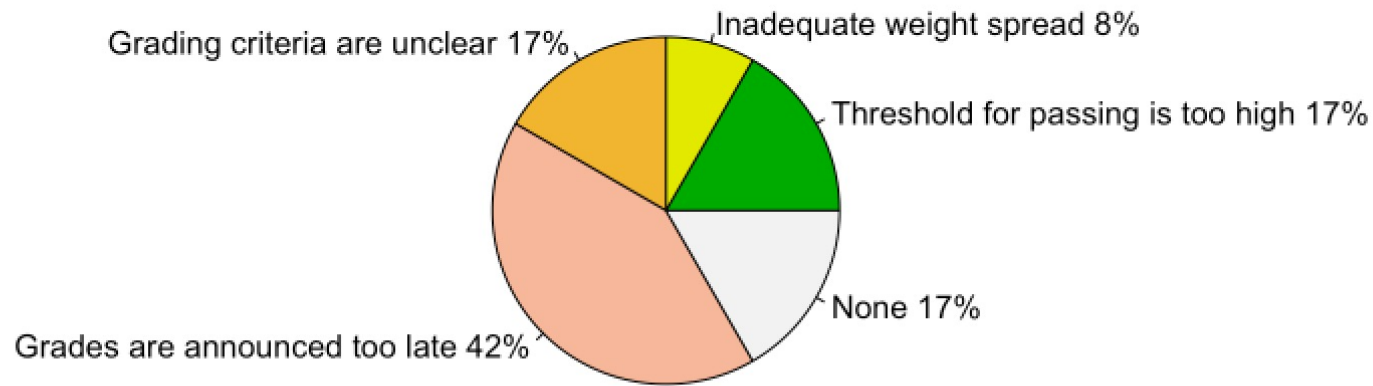
How are mental issues expressed emotionally?

Spread of complaints related to mental health

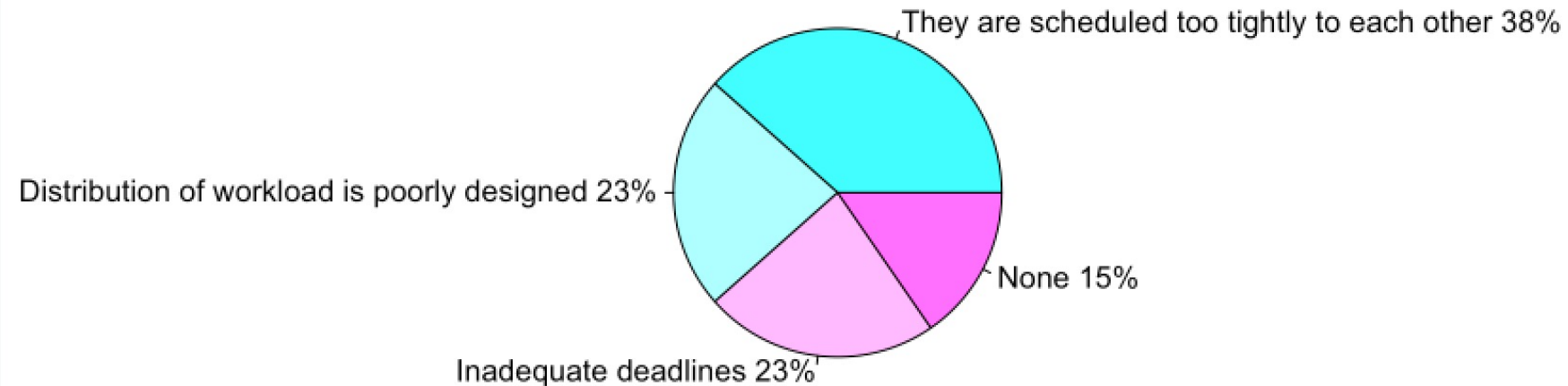


Common complaints?

Discontent with grading

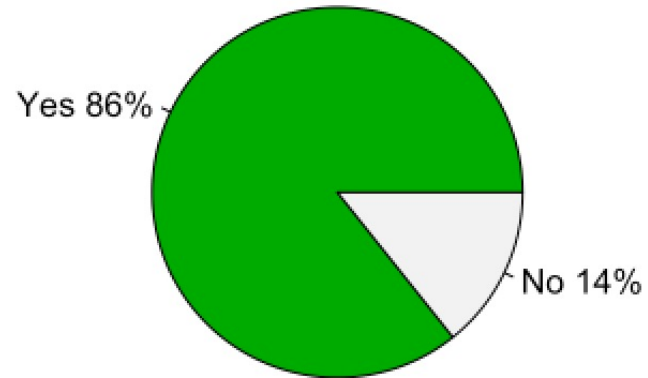


Discontent with academic scheduling

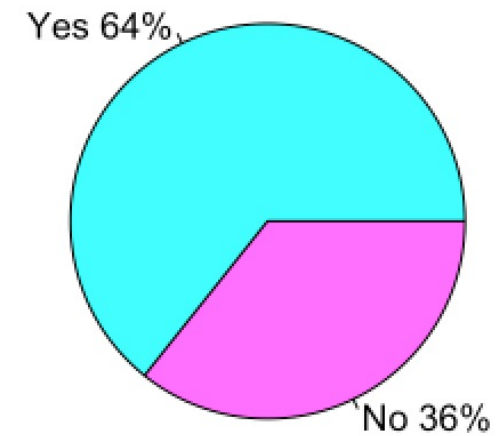


How do AUCA help?

Do you know about free academic advising available at AUCA?



Do you know about free counseling service available at AUCA?



Discussion

- ▶ There is a tendency of mental health impairment among undergraduate students
 - ▶ Is this unavoidable in life? *(no comparison with people who do not pursue higher education)*
- ▶ A deeper research on causes
 - ▶ Is it an age problem? Socio-economic?
 - ▶ Is there any particular majors that are mainly affected?
 - ▶ Is this cumulative?
- ▶ How can university become better?
 - ▶ Reducing factors that affect negatively
 - ▶ Promoting factors that can help

Conclusion

- ▶ Getting an undergraduate degree might indeed worsen one's mental state
- ▶ Mental issues affect students not only emotionally, but physically as well
- ▶ There is not enough awareness among student body about tools that AUCA provides to help with mental issues
- ▶ Further Research:
 - ▶ Deeper research on risk factors (major, year of study, socio-economic, citizenship)
 - ▶ Effect of socializing in university
 - ▶ Efficiency of AUCA's counseling/academic advising service
 - ▶ Online vs. offline education