

Singapore Perspectives Conference 2024 -YOUTH

Mental Wellness and Health of Youth- epidemiological findings and impact on life trajectory

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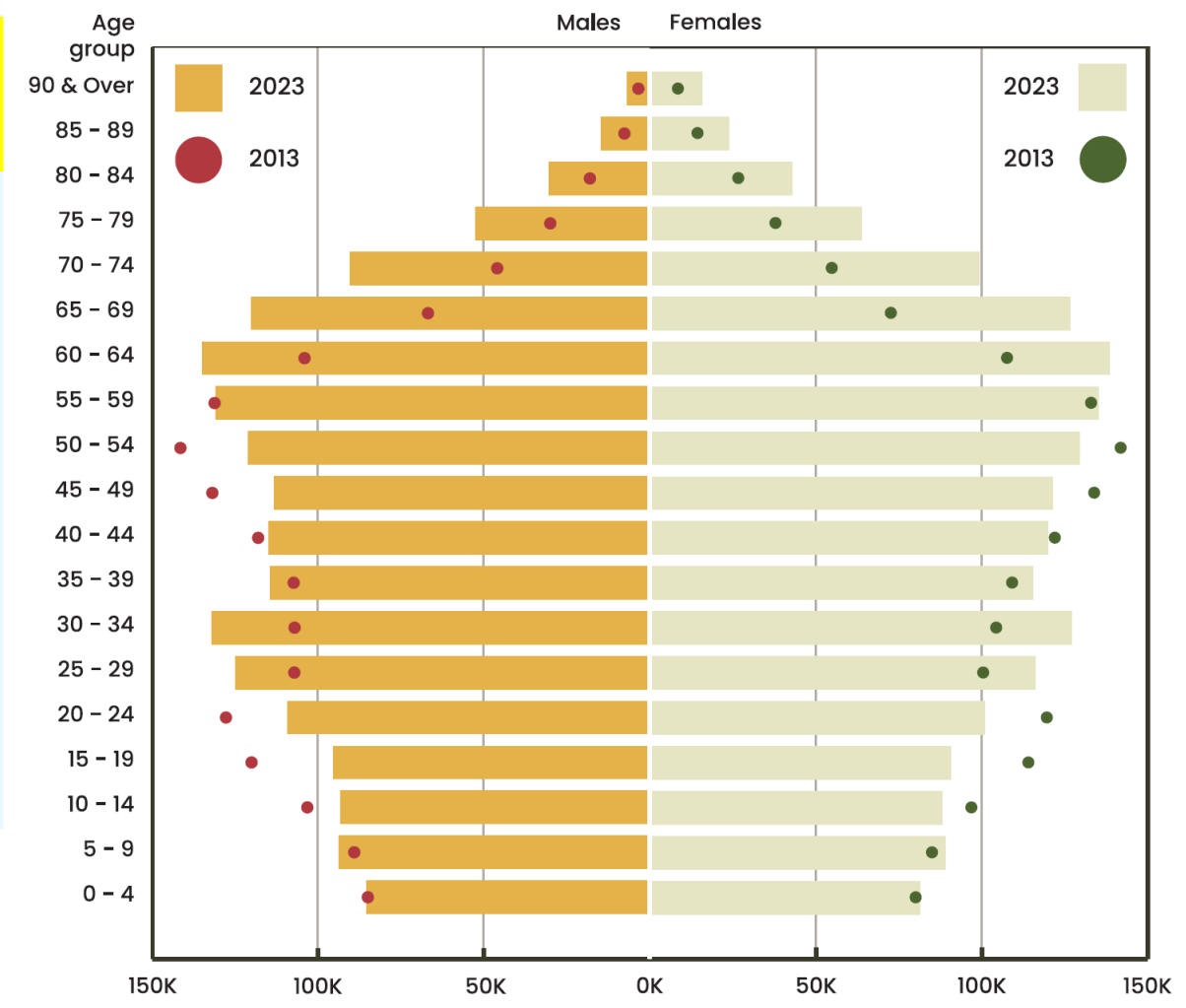
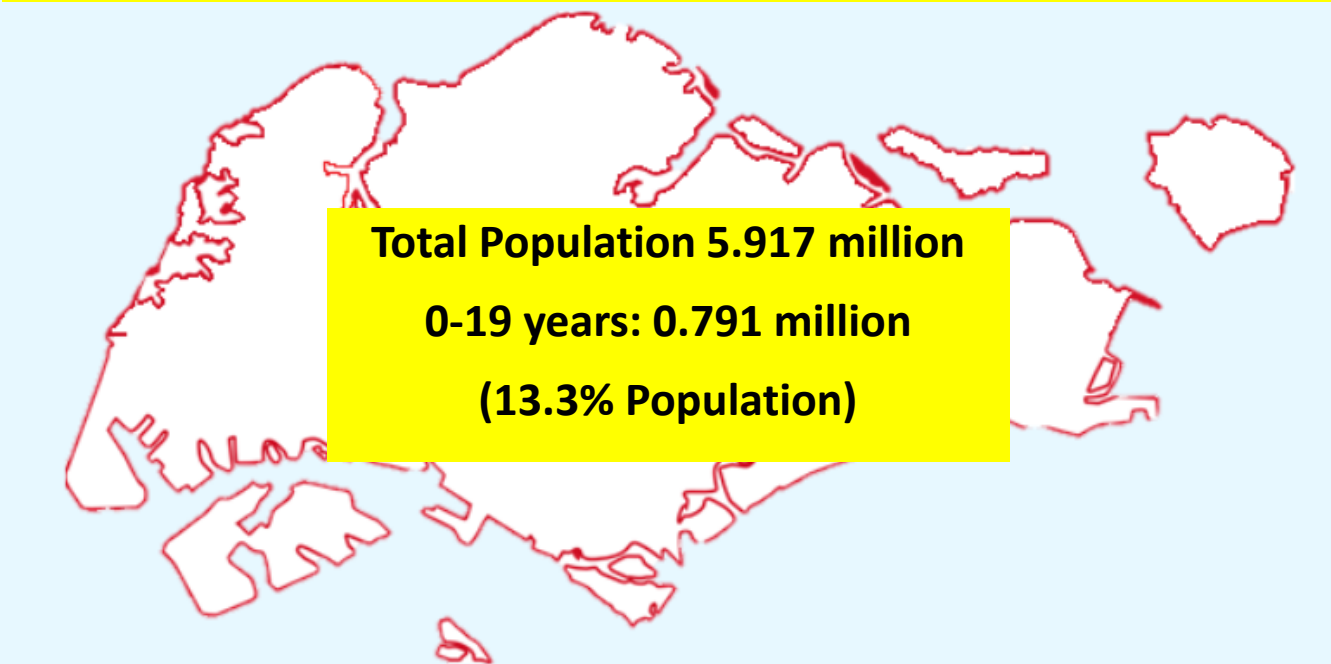
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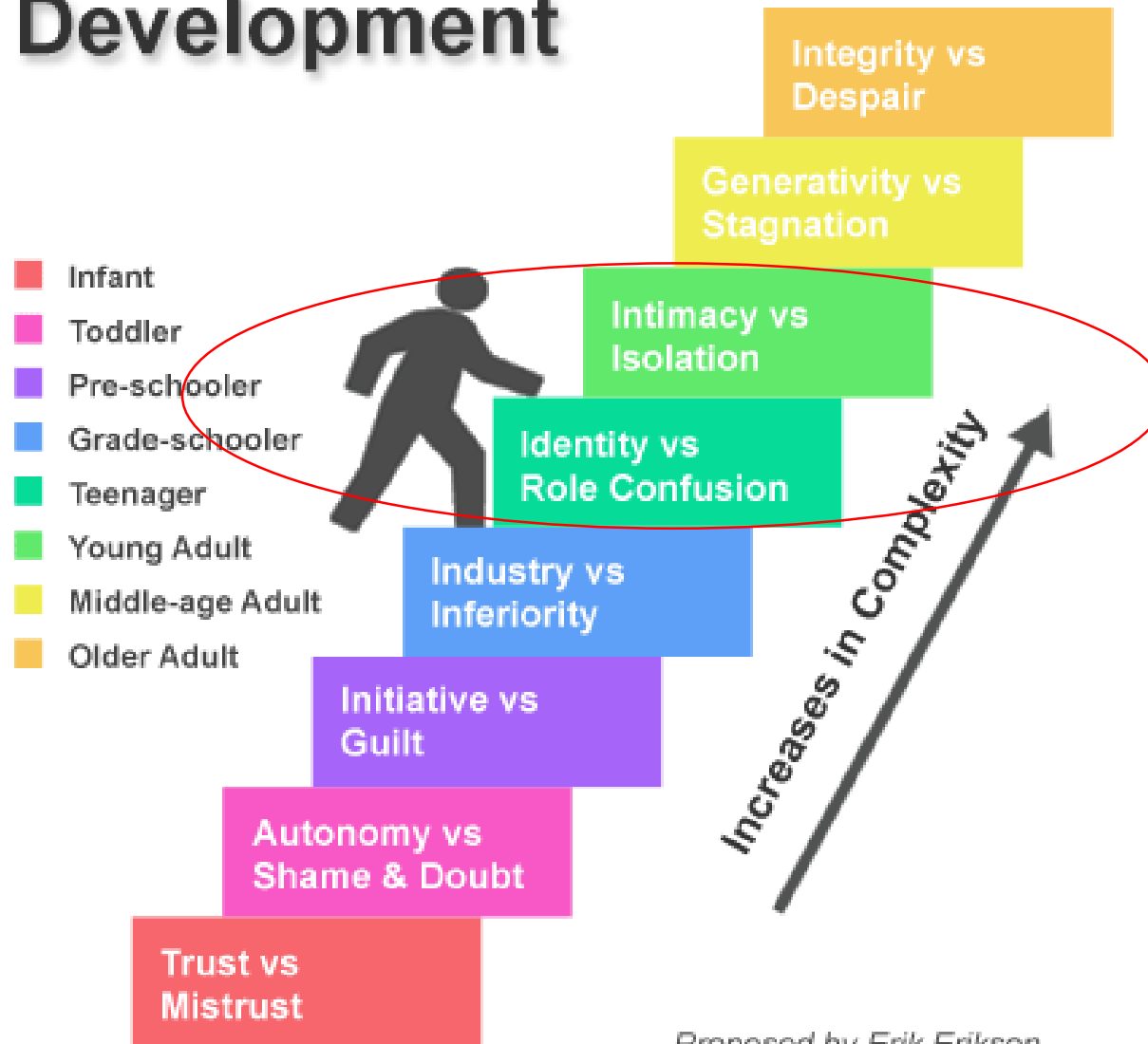
Population Demographics 2023



Stages of Psychosocial Development

Youth

- Period of transition from **dependence** of childhood to adulthood's **independence**
- Awareness of **inter-dependence** as members of a community



Mental Health

- What is mental health
 - State of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to *make a contribution* to his or her community.
- Determinants of mental health
 - Social factors: e.g. dysfunction in family, life transitions
 - Psychological: e.g. psychological trauma, attachment styles
 - Biological: e.g. genetics, prenatal damage

Mental Wellness

- Importance of mental wellness
 - Being in control of your thoughts, emotions and behaviour
 - Enables us to *handle challenges*, build strong relationships and enjoy life
- Working towards mental wellness
 - Paying attention to own needs and feelings
 - Set goals to work towards your objectives / goals
 - Maintain *healthy lifestyle*
 - Build strong relationships

What we know about mental disorders

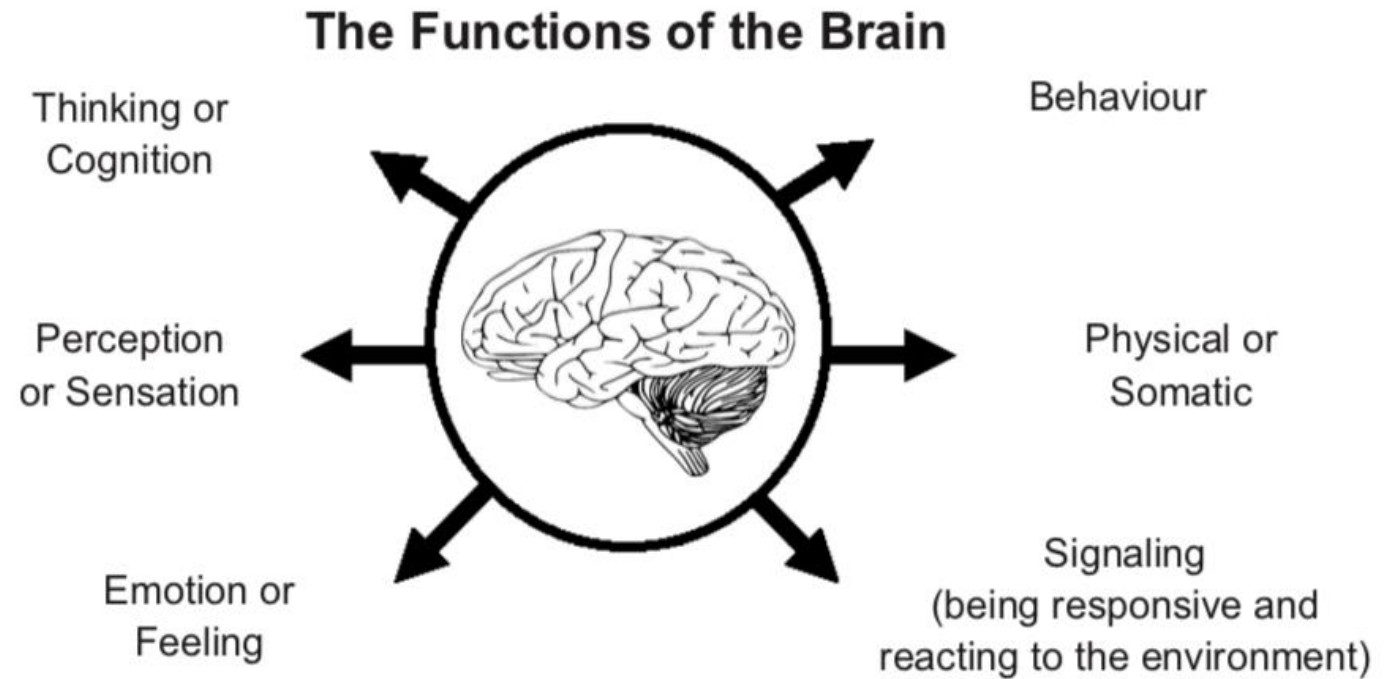
- Disturbances of **emotion, thinking, and/or behaviour**
 - Derive from perturbations in the function of various **brain circuits**
Arise from a complex interplay between **genetic and environmental factors**
 - May range in intensity
- Lead to **functional changes or impairment** (*interpersonal, social, vocational, etc.*)
- **Respond to evidence-based treatments** provided by trained professionals

How the brain is involved

Mental disorders are associated with disturbances in **six primary domains** of brain function.

Disturbances in brain functions present as

- **Signs**: what others **see**
- **Symptoms**: what the person directly **experiences**



Life course approach

- All stages of an individual's life are intricately intertwined, interconnected with each other, and other people in social system, including past, present and future generations of their families.
- Early life experiences, including events experienced in the pre-conception phase, play a role in determining the developmental origins and trajectories of health and wellness or disease across an individual's life course
- Health and wellness of individuals, as well as communities, depend on interactions between multiple risk and protective factors throughout one's life.
- early and appropriate interventions during child and adolescent years are shown to be the most effective prevention strategies to promote optimal public health and human development, as they will grow into healthier adults who can contribute positively to society.

Prevalence of mental health problems and psychiatric disorders

Youth Self-Report (YSR)

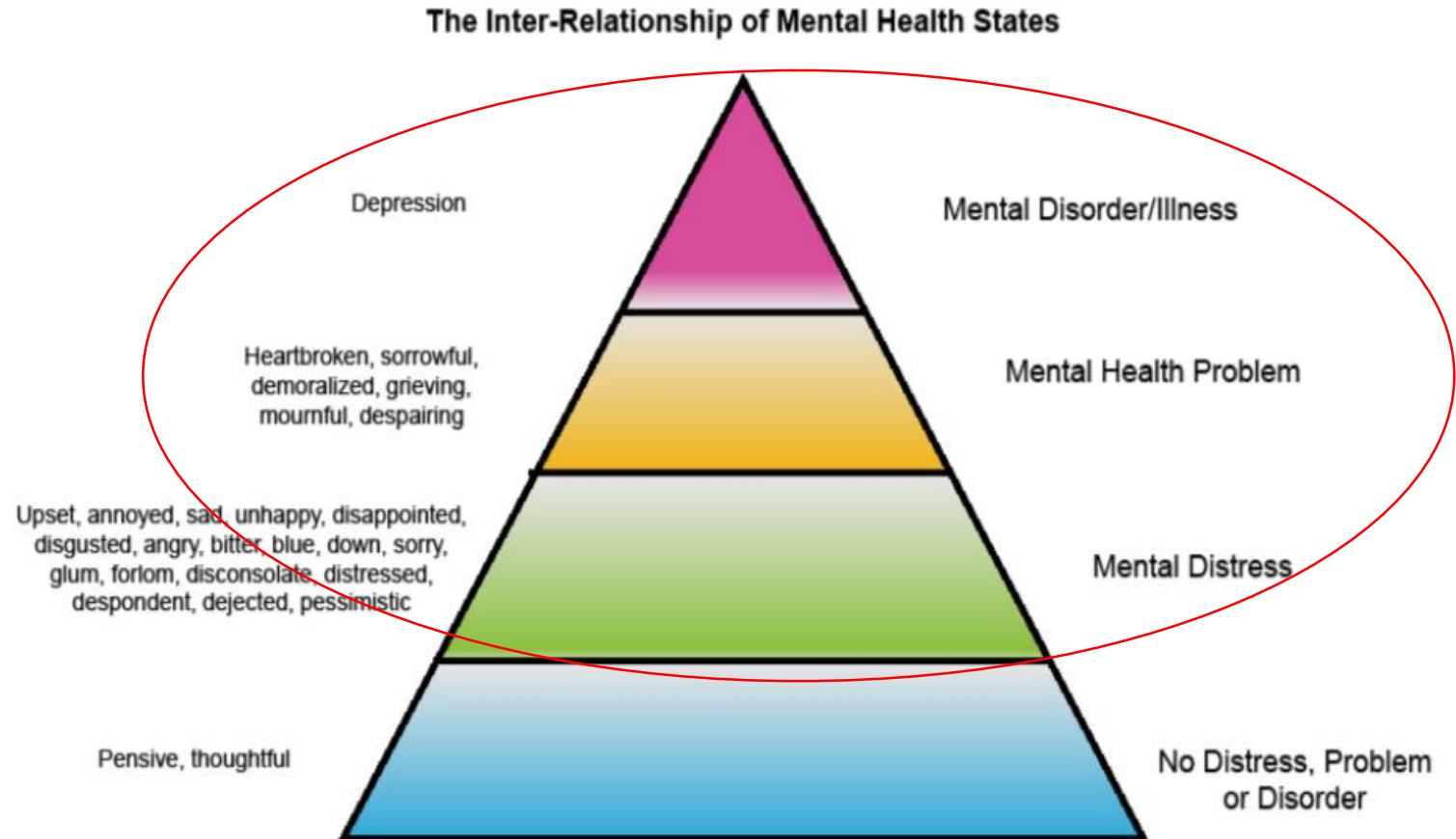
Kiddie-schedule for affective disorders and schizophrenia (K-SADS)

Differentiating Mental Health States

Understanding how to differentiate a mental disorder from the usual “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” is a **core mental health literacy** competency.

Three related components of mental health:

1. **Mental Distress** - inner signal of stress
2. **Mental Health Problem** - when faced with much larger stressor than usual
3. **Mental Illness** - medical condition, arising from interplay of genetic makeup and environmental factors



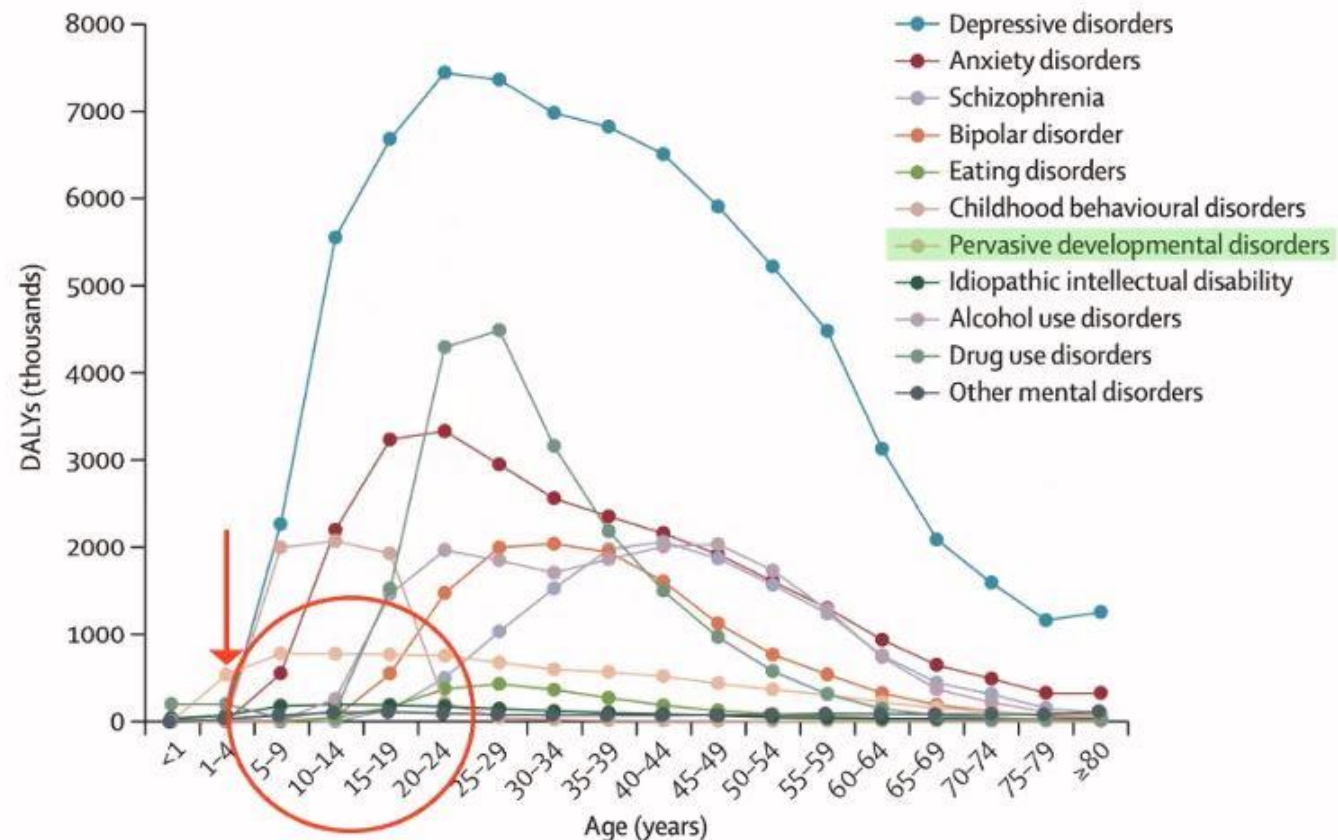
General Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders

- 12% of children and adolescents met full diagnostic criteria for having at least 1 current disorder
 - Compared to 14.5% in 2019 (Taken from Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation*)
- 6% of adolescents had previously met criteria for at least one disorder more than a year ago, and are no longer meeting the criteria for the same disorder, suggesting that their condition may have improved

*list of included disorders may not match that in YEAR

The Disability Burden of Mental Disorders Across Lifecycle

Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) by age for mental disorders in 2010



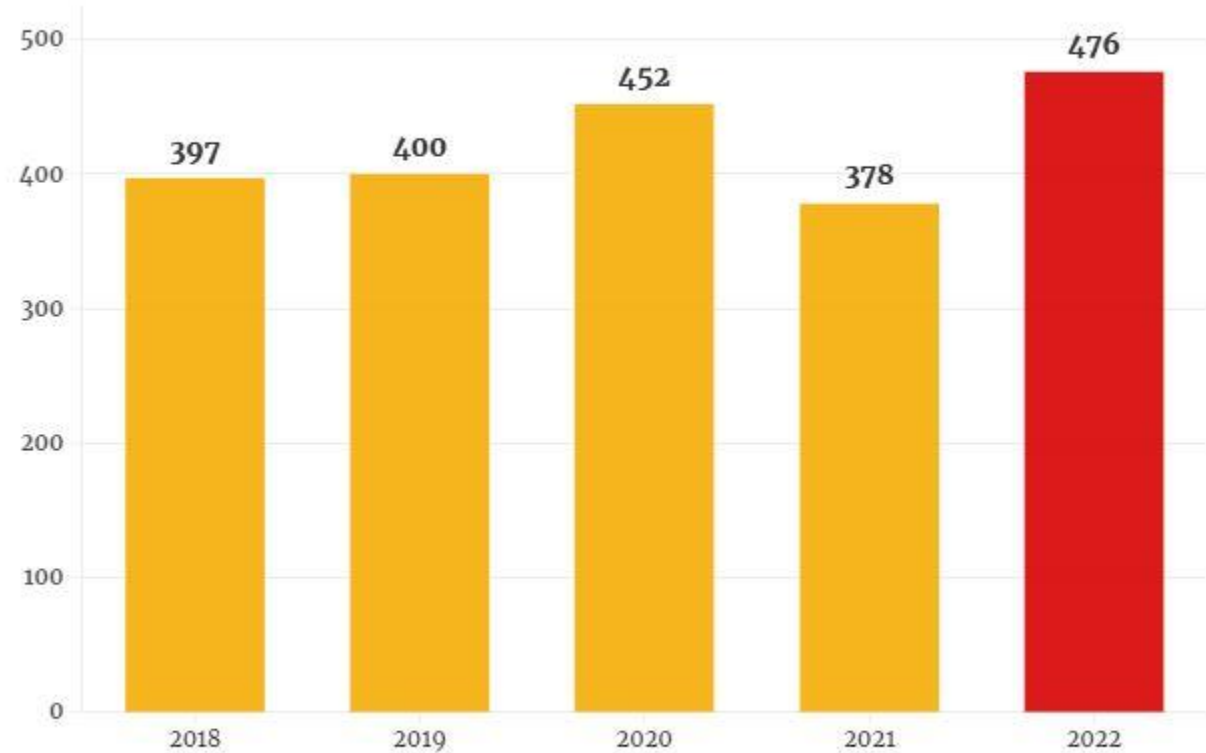
476 suicides reported in Singapore in 2022; highest in more than 20 years

The number of suicides in Singapore rose by 25.9 per cent last year.



Total deaths by suicide from 2018-2022

Total deaths

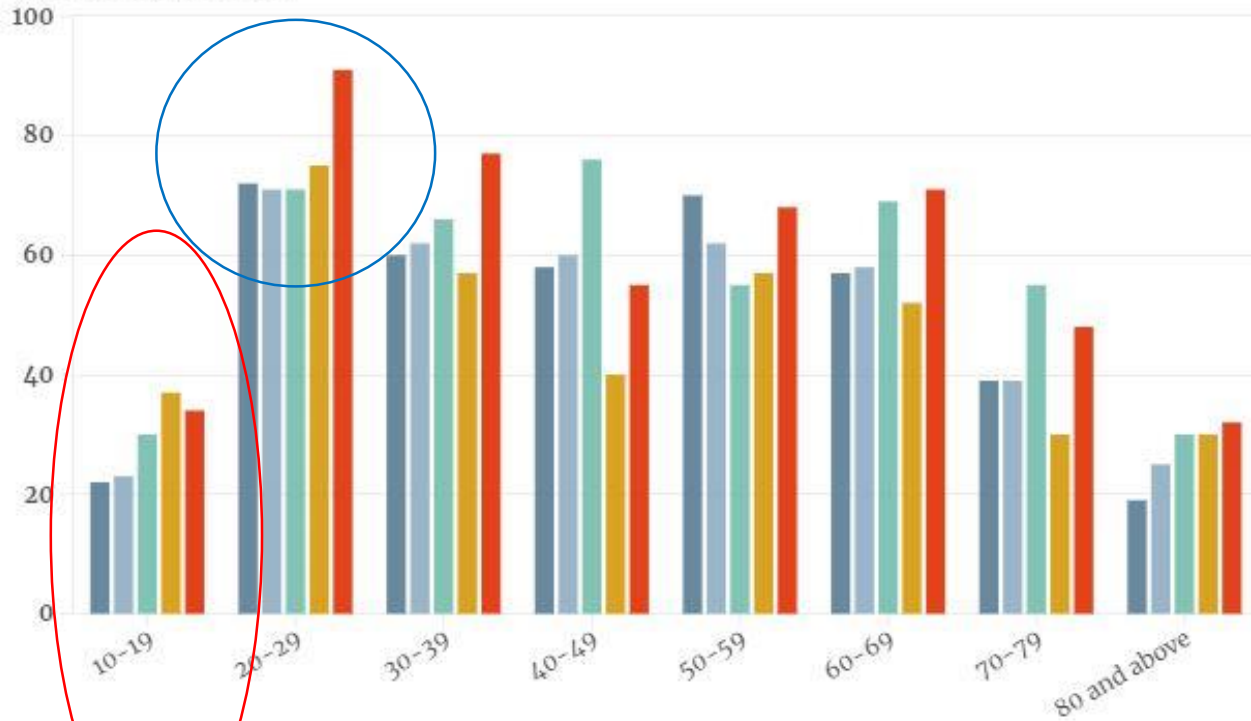


Infographic: Clara Ho
Source: Samaritans of Singapore, Jul 1, 2023

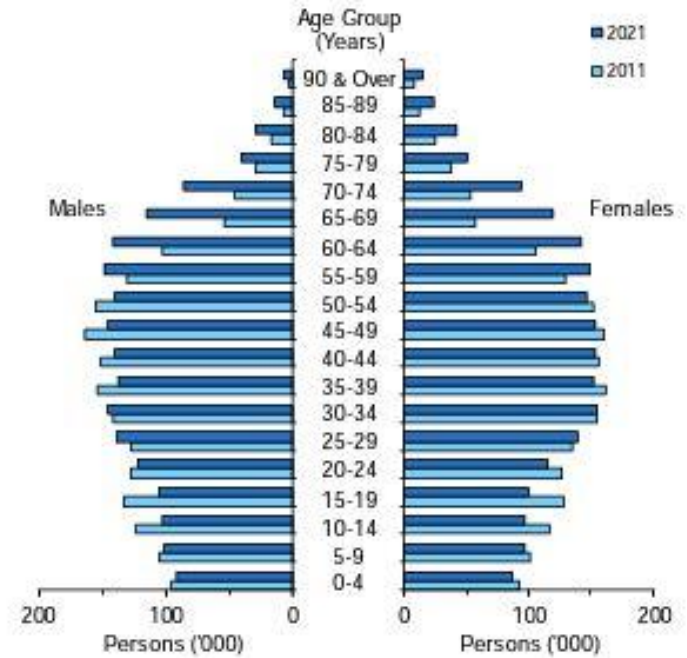
Suicides by age group from 2018-2022

2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Total deaths by suicide



Infographic: Clara Ho
Source: Samaritans of Singapore, Jul 1, 2023



Singapore Department of Statistics

Population Trends, 2021 ▶ 3

Resilience

Singapore Youth Resilience Scale (SYRESS)

Resilience definition :

doing well during or after an adverse event, or a period of adversity

It is:

- develops through a **dynamic process** involving individual factors (e.g. temperament), environmental factors (e.g. family relationships) and the interaction between those factors
- exists on a spectrum
- can change over time*
- everyone can learn – to deal with current adverse experiences or to prepare for future adversity
- may look different in different settings, including family, cultural and broader community environments

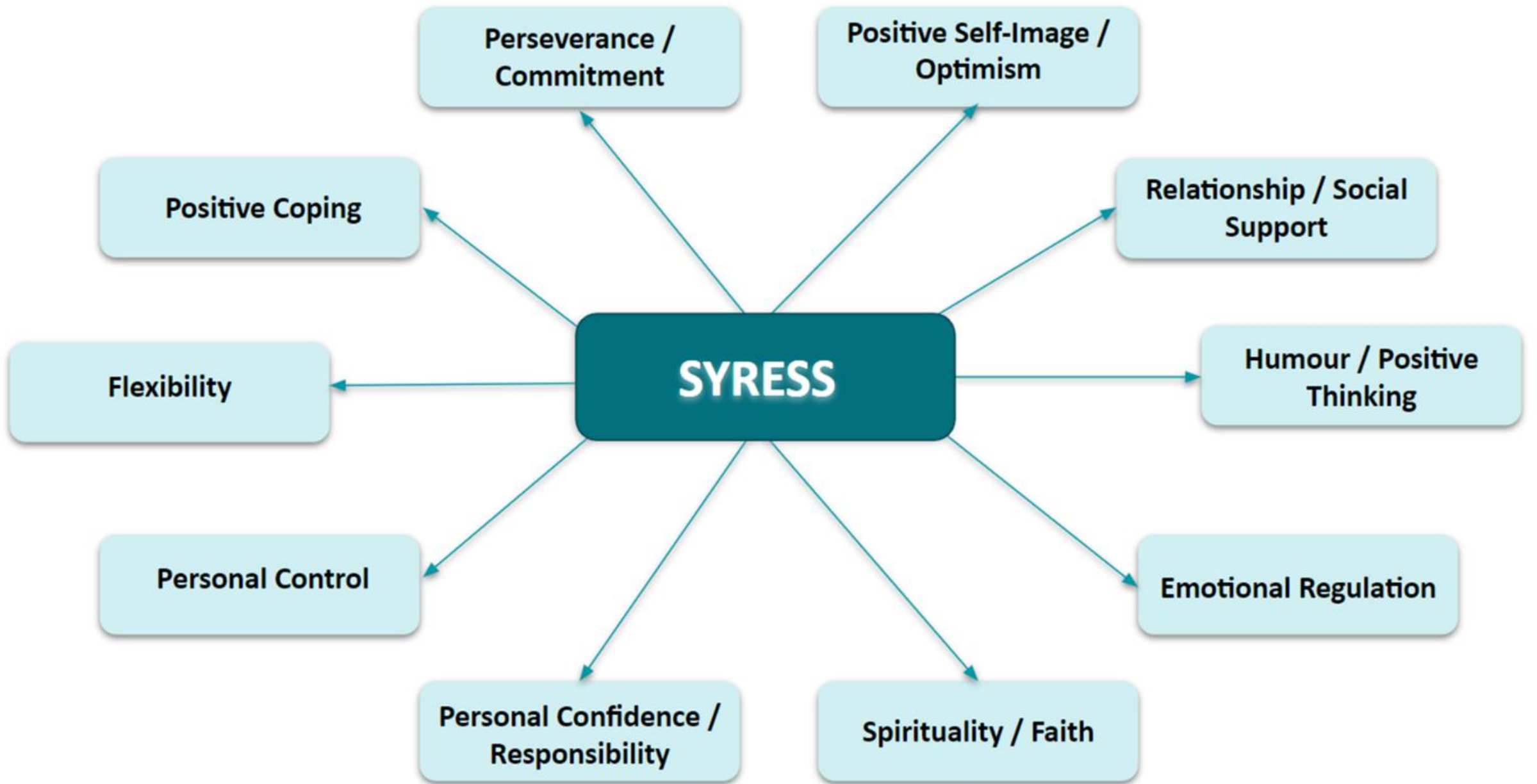
It is not:

- a child has or does not have
- solely about the skills and capabilities of the individual child
- an innate quality that only some people are born with
- a fixed character trait (i.e. either have it or you don't)
- freedom from negative emotions*

SYRESS

- Singapore Youth Resilience Scale (SYRESS) (Lim et al., 2011) is a **50-item self-reported scale** that measures the different aspects of resilience amongst adolescents in Singapore
- Culturally appropriate tool
 - Constructed and validated based on the contextual and cultural aspects of the Singaporean adolescents population ($\alpha = 0.95$)
- SYRESS measures the multi-dimensional aspects of resilience
 - **10 different domains** of resilience

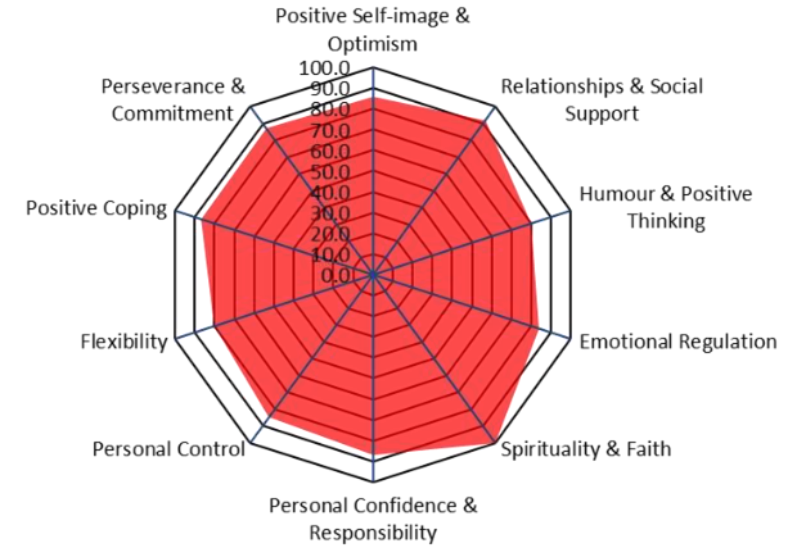
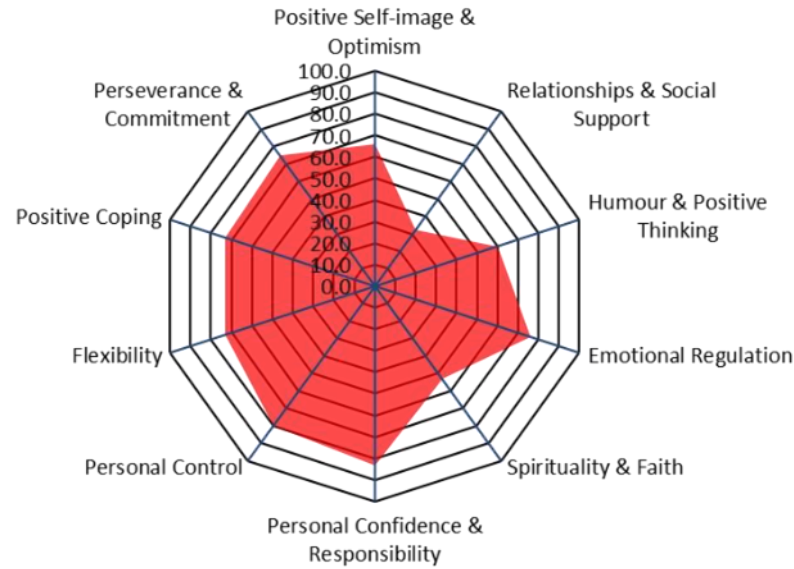
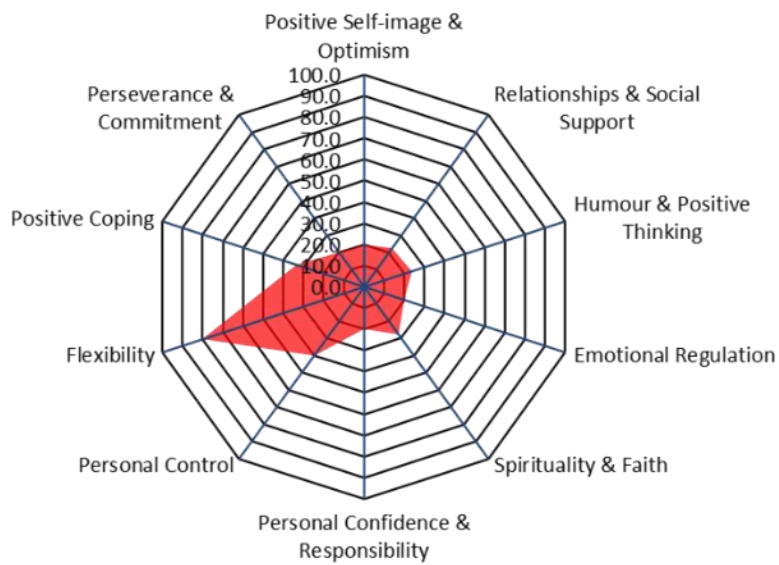




Resilience Profiling Tool

- SYRESS is a useful resilience profiling tool that can be administered on adolescents to allow them to understand about:
 - Areas of strengths that they can tap on and,
 - Areas of resilience they can continue to build on
- Growing their resilience capacity will empower adolescents to better cope in terms of adversities and serve as a protective factor from the risk of developing mental health disorders.
 - Tailor interventions according to adolescents' resilience profiles

Resilience Profiling Tool: Radar Plot



Differences between Parents' and
Youths' ratings

CBCL Key Findings

- In contrast to adolescents' report, **one in ten** parents reported mental health distress of clinical levels in their adolescents on the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) based on the international norms, compared to **one in three** in adolescents' self-report.
- Similar to adolescents' reporting, parents observed more internalising symptoms.
- A similar peak in scores for internalising problems and overall mental health distress was observed at 16 years old.

Identity Development

Assessment of Identity Development in Adolescence

Identity Development and AIDA

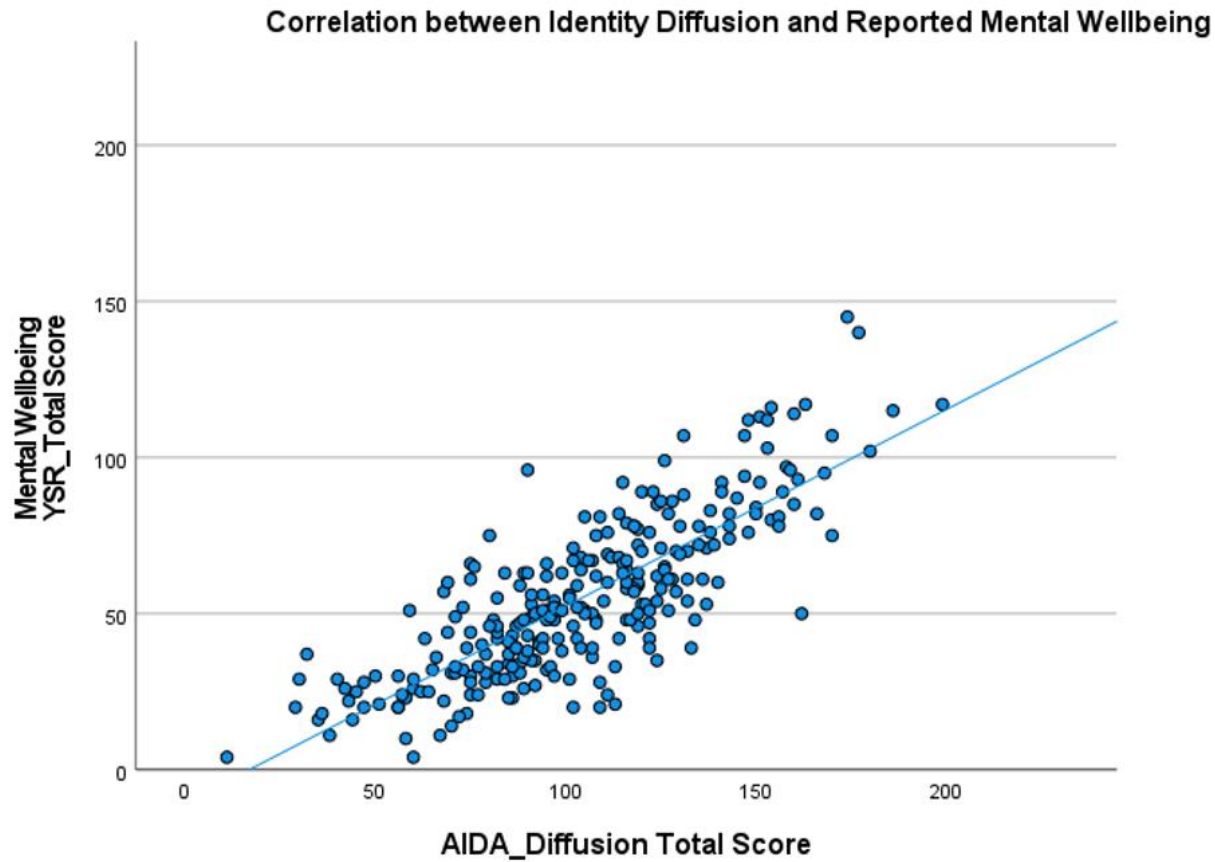
Background

- AIDA was developed by Prof Goth K., Foelsch P., Schluter-Miller S. & Schmeck K. (2012) from Europe to measure identity development
- AIDA assesses identity development in terms of impairments in personality functioning in adolescents aged 12-18 years by self-report. It enables differentiation between healthy and impaired identity development.
- “Identity disturbance” is the central construct for detecting severe personality pathology, (notably BPD), containing the dimensions: lack of commitment, role absorption, painful incoherence and lack of consistency (Westen, 2011)

Identity Development

- During the adolescent years, youths may experience Identity Crisis (Kernberg, 2000): a discrepancy between rapidly shifting physical and psychological experiences, and a widening gap between self-perception and the experiences of others’ perceptions of the self
- **Coherence of self** should remain across situations and across time despite experimentations with different roles, and usually resolves into a normal, consolidated identity with flexible and adaptive functioning
- **Continuity of self** involves integration of the concept of self and significant others, and coherence in self-definition and commitment to values, goals, or relationships over time

Association between Mental Wellbeing and Identity Development



- good correlation: higher identity diffusion is associated with higher YSR, Internalizing, and Externalizing scores.

Key findings

Epidemiology

- High level of anxiety, depressive symptoms
- context of disease burden, distress triggering disruption to family and school learning environment
- early detection, access to assessment and intervention
- Inter-generation differences: perception and real time sensing, (values and expectations)

Recommendation

- Early detection, screening and access to assessment / treatment intervention for Anxiety and depression at primary care, school and community agencies
- Emerging Mental Health issues : fear of losing out/ performance anxiety, dysthymia, disadvantaged/ dysfunctional family
- Preventive MH: Reaching out to the low resilience, low or no symptoms subgroup
- Interagency outreach to families and parents

Key takeaway

- Resilience building – an eco-system approach involving self, family, school system, community environment
- Hypothesis - boredom, digital & virtual exposure, projecting fantasy into virtual reality, competitiveness, performance anxiety, social demographic disadvantage and biological/ genetic risk
- Advent of virtual digitization offers new dimensions to life experiences and fantasy and lost of routines
- Apparent lag in parental awareness of Youth's emotional and mental health struggles

Conclusion

- a multidimensional understanding of the state of mental health of the Singapore adolescents, at different layers of :
 - mental health prevalence (symptom level vis-à-vis diagnosed level),
 - state of resilience that mitigate the effects of mental health problems.
- Our youths grow up in an increasing complex environment with evolving demands and challenges and shifting lifestyle.

Thank you!

