

**Understanding Student Well-Being Through the Interplay of Basic Psychological Needs  
and Values: A Qualitative Approach**

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### **Abstract**

Driven by the necessity to understand the state of student well-being in academia, this thesis investigates how higher education students conceptualize well-being and how the values they endorse contribute to their well-being, particularly through the interplay of values and basic psychological needs. A lack of unanimous agreement of what constitutes well-being inspired the analysis of students' subjective reflections during their Bachelor of Psychology, using a qualitative approach. To explore these concepts, twelve semi-structured interviews, each lasting 45 to 60 minutes, were conducted. The framework for this study was grounded in the principles of positive psychology, focusing on values and basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. The findings suggest that optimal well-being encompasses not only the absence of serious physical and mental health complaints but also psychological experiences of fulfillment, content, and balance. The study emphasizes the importance of eudaemonic evaluations of well-being. By identifying most commonly endorsed values and their effects on the fulfillment of needs and general well-being, this research extends the current body of knowledge and highlights areas for future investigation. The results underscore the importance of preventative measures and fostering positive experiences in academic settings.

*Keywords:* positive psychology, basic psychological needs, values, student well-being, self-determination theory

## **Understanding Student Well-Being Through the Interplay of Basic Psychological Needs and Values: A Qualitative Approach**

Mental health concerns are strikingly prevalent among university students (Stallman, 2010; Lipson et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2019). Research conducted in Australian universities showed that the rates of anxiety, depression, and elevated stress levels were significantly higher among students, with 84% of students and only 29% of the general Australian population having reported experiences of increased psychological distress (Stallman, 2010). Generally, the distress levels were higher among students compared to non-students of the same age group (Stallman, 2010). Recently, Dutch universities stated that half of the students in their study reported experiencing mental health issues (Higher Education Monitor, 2023). Universities from the US presented similarly concerning patterns of the increasing demand for counseling services (Lipson et al., 2019) and the increased severity of psychological issues among students over the past decade (Duffy et al., 2019). Considering the higher prevalence among students even compared to their non-enrolled peers, the persistence of the issue across different countries and the trend being stable over a long time, even before extraordinary circumstances created by the pandemic outbreak in 2020, highlights the context of university as a potentially instigating factor for the development of psychological problems.

According to Baik and colleagues (2019), the core responsibility of a university is to ensure positive graduate experiences and to provide high-quality education. The former seems to entail the support of student well-being. Even though the conceptualization of well-being appears to be quite a conundrum due to its potential subjectivity, broadness, and lack of unanimous agreement on what it entails, it is safe to conclude that mental health is a part of it. The evidence for that is decreased motivation, impairments in cognitive skills, increased drop-out risk, and thwarted social, physical, and emotional well-being, which all

accompany psychological problems and chronic stress (Kutrow, 2003; Marin, 2011).

Therefore, the prevalence of mental health issues among students, highlighted by statistics, signals that their well-being is often at risk. While the focus on psychopathology helps to illustrate the current state, it is not the most practical lens to adopt when looking for solutions as it might not provide an essential understanding of what aids in forming positive experiences instead of just preventing negative ones.

The view that conditions to fulfill well-being lie in preventative measures and the facilitation of positive experiences is embedded in the Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The theory, stemming from positive psychology, encapsulates human nature as inclined towards growth, self-regulation, social integration, creativity, and exploration (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT further postulates that such inclination is universal despite commonly observed contradictory behaviors. The explanation for this concerns the embeddedness of a person in the context of their environment. Ryan and Deci (2000) identified that the environment that successfully facilitates the fulfillment of basic psychological needs, particularly needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, allows this natural tendency to unfold by enabling individuals to determine their actions based on their intrinsic motivation. The needs that theory proposes are relatedness, which is the need to engage and feel emotionally connected to others; competence, which concerns the need to be successful in dealing with environmental demands; lastly, autonomy, which relates to the desire to have the agency to act by own interests and values (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). Similarly to how fulfilled needs facilitate thriving and flourishing, an environment that fails to provide sufficient conditions for needs to be met blocks an individual's ability to access this innate potential and is associated with ill-being (Ryan & Deci, 2004). Thus, according to SDT, need fulfillment is a central determinant of well-being.

A large-scale study conducted by Duffy and colleagues (2019) in 196 American higher education institutions found that from 2012, over five years, the rates of reported low flourishing increased drastically among both male and female students by 72% and 153%, respectively. Following the rationale of the SDT, such findings would indicate that universities often fail to adequately foster the fulfillment of basic needs, which seems crucial, especially during phases of transitioning into new responsibilities and environments that pose novel demands. This conclusion is supported by Dushcher's (2009) study, which illustrated that transitions into new roles are likely to present emotional, intellectual, and developmental changes, followed by increased stress. Studies examining transitions of young adults entering their internships or professional practices give insight into the potential distribution of needs at such transitions (Hoeve et al., 2018; Kunnen, 2021). The stress from newly emerged demands seemed to be followed by the highest need for relatedness and competence, with the need for autonomy being less expressed as the development of skills and deeper understanding was preferred with more supervision (Hoeve et al., 2018; Kunnen, 2021). Such findings suggest that progressing through transition phases might present varying levels of importance placed on each need. Models defining phase transition stages seem to be in favor of such claims, with theoretical frameworks, such as those of Benner (1984) and Duchscher (2008), highlighting the initial focus on developing competence upon stepping into a professional field after graduation, with a gradual increase in autonomy as the demands of environment and role are established (Graf et al., 2020).

This also applies to students starting higher education (Barnet et al., 2021). The beginning of higher education is marked by increased distress that seems to remain to a certain extent throughout the degree since it does not return to pre-enrollment levels (Bewick et al., 2010). Transitioning into university appears to be the first major role transition for many. Even though it presents challenges of academic pressures, adjustment in the social

context, separation from the comforts of family, and gaining independence, it also creates opportunities for personal development (Credé & Niehorster, 2012; Mastrokoulou et al., 2024). The latter, to some extent, seems to relate to the shifting sense of self and questioning of one's purpose (Baik et al., 2015), similar to how aspiring professionals experience the exploration of their values, preferences, and environmental offers during the transition into the role of professional self (Hoeve et al., 2018; Kunnen, 2021). While the transition to university appears to resemble the transition into new professional roles, it is not entirely clear how students might experience the priority of needs through those moments and throughout their studies.

Even though circumstances might dictate the priority of needs (Kunnen, 2021), their presence is undeniable (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Despite the need for autonomy being less expressed when entering a new role (Hoeve et al., 2018; Kunnen, 2021), it does not undermine its importance. As marked by Ryan and Deci (2000), competence without autonomy does not enhance intrinsic motivation. The choice of a degree to pursue, stemming from intrinsic motivation, was positively associated with more intrinsic motivation throughout studies (Messerer et al., 2022). This is also supported by Yang et al. (2022), who found that the intention to continue studies relied little on academic self-efficacy without intrinsically motivated intention. Hoeve et al. (2018) also found that first-year experiences impacted further motivation. However, external pressures to pursue higher education also occur (Baik et al., 2015). According to SDT, the integration of a coherent and stable organization of self, which is essential for well-being, relies on both intrinsic motivation, as well as internalization and integration of external regulations and values (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Integration refers to the assimilation of external values to the self through evaluation and adjustment in accordance with other personal values and needs, consequently allowing one to experience more autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

While increased autonomy allows one to pursue personally relevant goals, the sense of well-being might be at stake when goals and their achievement do not fulfill the three needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Pursuing goals of connectedness or personal growth relates to the satisfaction of needs, while seeking materialistic and image-based goals relates more to ill-being as they are more likely to be pursued at the expense of the basic need fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) explain that intrinsic motivations, the expression of needs, and the path of their fulfillment differ due to sociocultural background as values and behaviors are socialized in a context. Thus, values, defined as “desirable motivational goals and interests of an individual or the guiding principles in life” (Gamage et al., 2021), seem to be a crucial aspect of motivation and need fulfillment.

Pincus and colleagues (2024) observed that the conceptualization of values, the same as well-being, fluctuates across research, and could be defined as motivation or needs. There seems to be a significant overlap between these concepts, which is seen in different definitions proposed: “Values are broad *motivations* that can serve as the basis for *goals*” (Levontin & Bardi, 2019), and “<...> values as guiding actions and expressing *needs*.” (Gouveia et al., 2013). Different values seem to influence the priority of needs, and concrete values are directly related to the nurturance of certain needs (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000). Therefore, it seems essential to understand what values students endorse and how these, in turn, influence the type of motivation that guides their actions, as well as their interplay with the three needs of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In an educational context, values associated with the approach to learning and achievement (Gamage et al., 2021). Values related to self-aggrandizement, such as values of achievement and power, related to the achievement approach, which is characterized by striving for excellence in terms of grades and competition. In contrast, values of self-direction and stimulation were found to be more associated with the deep learning approach, which



encompasses intrinsic motivation to engage with the material and develop competence (Gamage et al., 2021). Both learning approaches relate to higher achievement than surface learning approaches, where meeting minimal requirements is the end goal. Furthermore, values of self-direction, achievement, and hedonism seem to be most consistently predictive positively and negatively of academic achievement, depending on the specification of the value and where it is directed (Gamage et al., 2021). Thus, values appear to impact the conceptualization and fulfillment of competence. I hypothesize that values might influence other needs of SDT as well.

Self-Determination Theory also proposes that values are socialized and that successful integration of values from the environment is associated positively with well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Since background factors, such as culture, religion, gender, family characteristics, socioeconomic status, and age, are hypothesized to influence values (Gamage et al., 2021; Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004), there might be a lot of variability in what values students endorse. Nonetheless, the pool of student values is essential to understand as well-being is affected by congruence or conflict of personal values and values proposed by the current environment (Pincus, 2024; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Thus, this study aims to approach the further understanding of well-being and values in university students. Even though the conceptualization of well-being lacks consensus, subjective perspectives on what it entails can nonetheless be relevant. Conducting a qualitative study provides us the freedom to highlight individual perspectives on what constitutes well-being, combined with understanding how components of SDT are experienced and fulfilled in academia, is expected to give a nuanced answer to the first research question:

**RQ1:** How do university students at different stages of their study conceptualize well-being in the academic context?

While values are originally mentioned in the SDT, the specificity of them is not detailed enough, yet they seem to impact well-being. Identifying what values students endorse and then connecting their experiences of need fulfillment and motivations, as well as the effect on well-being to the values they hold, is supposed to provide insight into the second research question:

**RQ2:** How do values endorsed by students interplay with the components of Self-Determination theory?

The qualitative nature of the study allows free exploration and emergence of possible connections, as well as a more in-depth understanding of individual experiences over time, with a focus on the processes.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

For our study, we collected a convenience sample of 12 students currently enrolled in the BSc. of Psychology at the University of Groningen. The decision to recruit 12 participants was grounded in the seminal work of Guest and colleagues (2006), which demonstrated that saturation, the point at which no new information (codes or themes) emerges, is frequently reached within the initial 12 interviews. Each team member recruited two participants, ensuring that neither the interviewer nor the participant knew of each other before conducting the interviews. This step was essential to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants. Our participants (Table 1) consisted of six males, five females, and one participant who identified differently. Our twelve participants ranged in age from 20 to 28 years old, representing diverse nationalities, including seven from Germany, three from Romania, one from the Netherlands, and one from Luxembourg. Ensuring a comprehensive representation of experiences across various stages of the academic curriculum, we included five participants

currently enrolled in the second year, three in the third year, and four participants who are currently in their fourth year of the three-year bachelor program.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Participants	Distribution	
	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	6	50
Female	5	42
Other	1	8
Nationality		
Dutch	1	8
German	7	58
Luxembourgish	1	8
Romanian	3	25
Age		
20	2	17
21	4	33
22	3	25
23	2	17
28	1	8
Currently enrolled in		
Year 2	5	42
Year 3	3	25
Year 4	4	33

**Procedure and Materials**

Before starting data collection, the Ethics Committee from the Psychology Department approved the planned methods of the research PSY-2324-S-0302, as well as measures to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Once recruited, participants received information about the study, a demographics questionnaire (see Appendix A), and the informed consent form (see Appendix B). Each participant was then

assigned a number to prevent being identifiable by their personal information to others.

Finally, we randomly assigned each participant to one of the interviewers.

The qualitative research entailed conducting semi-structured interviews of 45 to 60 minutes following the structure of the script (see Appendix C). Preceding the data collection, the research team conducted pilot interviews to ensure that the interviewers had sufficient skills to conduct the interviews and had practice with the script. We tailored the script (see Appendix C) to the pre-defined research questions of each researcher. The script consisted of 15 questions with sub-questions that participants answered during the interviews.

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) served as a framework for building the script used to interview the subjects on their subjective experiences. The experiences of interest were students' conceptualization of well-being and the factors contributing to it. All identifiable personal information was anonymized. Once the interviews were recorded and transcribed, we deleted the recordings. Each participant then received the transcript of their interview to confirm the use of their input, with the possibility to exclude parts of the interview or to withdraw from the study entirely.

### **Data Analysis**

Our data analysis adhered to the thematic analysis approach, where the main focus lies in generating initial codes and searching for themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To understand the role of SDT on student well-being in academia, together with the underlying values and beliefs of the interviewed subjects, we have further employed the value-coding approach (Miles et al., 2013). Schwartz's theory of basic values (Schwartz, 2012) served as a guide when labeling values. Values were inferred from the questions concerning priorities when making decisions and students' motivations in academia. We conducted the coding process utilizing the digital software designed for the qualitative data analysis "Atlas.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH". Our approach was both

deductive and inductive, as we aimed to identify and generate new patterns and themes to understand student's conceptualization of well-being through the lens of SDT.

### **Coding procedure**

Initially, all team members individually transcribed two interviews and subsequently coded half of a transcript independently using open coding. As described by Williams and Moser (2019), the multi-stage coding approach helps researchers first identify distinct concepts and themes that can be categorized before attaching concrete interpretive labels. This first step was designed to improve the researchers' grasp of the topic and procedure and to uncover initial compelling findings.

In the second step, two interviews were collaboratively coded and used to create a preliminary codebook. Together, we discussed each segment of the transcript and compared our interpretations in order to reach a consensus on the most suitable codes and categories for the later use in independent analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thirdly, researchers paired up and coded two transcripts per pair according to the previously established codebook. During this process, each member coded both assigned documents individually before finalizing the codes in a collaborative session with their partner. After coding the first six interviews through the aforementioned process, the team got together to review the codes and adjust the codebook accordingly. To ensure inter-coder reliability and establish a final codebook (see Appendix D), each member proceeded to analyze further two interviews with the established codes. In a final step, the members gathered in a joint session to discuss and agree on any last adjustments.

### **Results**

This section presents a summary of the main themes that emerged from the data analysis. The first part aims to provide an overview of how students conceptualized well-being. The second part explores the interplay between values and the components of

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) to understand better how personal differences might be shaping the hierarchy of needs and how it manifests as intrinsic motivation.

### **Conceptualization of Well-Being**

A lack of unanimous agreement of what constitutes well-being generally and in specific contexts drove the investigation of the first research question: *How do university students conceptualize well-being in the academic context?* The theory chosen as a focus for the present study implies that well-being is both the fulfillment of basic needs, as well as having the potential for more positive experiences that are not limited to the minimal baseline of fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, it seemed appropriate first to investigate how students conceptualize well-being in a more general sense. The reason for this investigation lies in the assumption that well-being in a specific context does not exist in a vacuum and well-being in other life areas can have an impact on well-being in academia. Thus, understanding what factors appear important for students in shaping their general well-being informed about influences on well-being in academia that were not covered by the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Table 2 depicts the themes that emerged in relation to the conceptualization of well-being.

**Table 2**

#### *Conceptualizations of Well-Being*

Category	Code	Description	Example
Physical Health		Being physically healthy and functioning	“I have a good balance in my life right now between physical exercise and doing sports that I like, and being in the flow there, I can focus a lot more on study, So I thought overall I have a better sense of wellbeing. I do a lot better in every regard”

Category	Code	Description	Example
Mental Health		Being free from mental disorders that hinder mental, emotional, psychological, and social functioning	“My ADHD diagnosis is something that made me insecure through, and still does, makes me insecure throughout life, because you kind of get a stamp, like, you're less capable than the rest of the people”
Psychological Well-Being		Having basic psychological needs fulfilled, striving for and experiencing positive emotions, and having a healthy attitude towards oneself and external stressors	“I don't think it's full mental or physical health but it's just general content and pursuing of happiness. You don't always have to be happy but I think a part of well-being is being able to develop yourself, have friends around you, feel comfortable”
	Balance	Experiencing a balance between several aspects of life, including mental and physical health, and work-life balance among others.	“Well-being for me includes some sort of <...> balance in life over a longer time. And I guess <...> there's well-being for my body, but also well-being for my mind”
	Competence	Being able to do the things one would like to do and/or have academic achievements	"Well, I do think a sense of achievement is very important. For me. It's yeah, it's, I like to feel like I've achieved something I'd like to also be knowledgeable about that, which, to me is honestly more important than, for example, a grade."
	Content	Feeling content, being at ease, feeling comfortable	"I guess just being content with where you are in your life right now. And like having the feeling like you can do, okay, in the future, like you don't have to excel necessarily, but just the feeling of being fine for the future."
	Relatedness	Interacting with other people, having friends and feeling supported.	“And you're surrounded by people who support you and you feel loved by it's also really important.”
	Positive experiences	Having positive experiences and pursuing happiness, maintaining positive self-regard and mindset	"But there was definitely a moment where I trusted myself and had self-confidence that I can actually do it. And that felt really good. And trusting then I had a lot of motivation for the next block and kind of carried that momentum. to actually staying on top this time and not pushing it to the end again."

Among the codes, the support for the previously mentioned assumption occurred as well-being was conceptualized as a “Balance”:

*“Well-being for me includes <...> balance in life over a longer time. And I guess it has, like, physical and mental. That there's well being for my body, but also well being for my mind. So general well-being includes many different well-beings that are, in a way, more stable.”*

(Participant 8)

The quote above also introduces two pillars of well-being that undoubtedly occurred in most interviews, namely “Physical health” and “Mental health” (Table 2). Both pillars related to having and maintaining optimal health, and not having serious complaints that would interfere with functioning in other life spheres. This again illustrated the inseparable connection between different aspects of individual lives, as hypothesized, disruptions in well-being outside of academia had an impact on well-being in academia as well:

*“Mental and physical health. <...> I guess that's not directly related to academia. But for me, I can say that that also influences my academic performance a lot.”* (Participant 12)

While mental health referred to the lack of psychopathology from the objective stance, another theme that emerged “Psychological well-being” (Table 2) entailed a more subjective, nonetheless, a crucial judgment of well-being both within and outside of academia:

*“I don't think it's full mental or physical health but it's just general content and pursuing of happiness. You don't always have to be happy but I think a part of well-being is being able to develop yourself, have friends around you, feel comfortable”* (Participant 2)

Psychological well-being entails the fulfillment of basic psychological needs that results in the general sense of being content with one’s life as if nothing fundamental is lacking:

*“I guess just being content with where you are in your life right now. And like having the feeling like you can do, okay, in the future, like you don't have to excel necessarily, but just the feeling of being fine for the future.”* (Participant 7)

It is clear from the conceptualization of the participant, psychological well-being does not imply the lack of stressors but rather a healthy adaptability to one’s environment by



maintaining a positive self-regard, exercising resilience, and developing one's mindset, which seems to be a common conceptualization:

*"I think just being in a state of peace and acceptance and taking things as they come to you. And even if you are like stressed, let's say you're still able to, like manage those feelings and let them happen."* (Participant 9)

The minimal satisfaction of these needs also initiates the strive for and potential to experience positive emotions:

*"<...> for me, it's always a state of balance, where I feel like I kind of am on top of everything that I want to do. Just like being content with what I do, and then having positive experiences."* (Participant 6)

These quotes portray the importance placed on eudaemonic well-being, which relates to experiences of meaningfulness as seeing one's life as coherent, seeing broader scheme of things even when enduring stressful times, and experiencing well-being when pursuing what one finds meaningful:

*"I also tried to motivate myself and, okay, like, how can I motivate myself, like, if I see meaning in the things that I'm doing."* (Participant 11)

Generally, out of well-being components, proposed by participants, only competence seems to be exclusive to well-being in academia, while the rest transcends specific contexts, yet it provides a relevant insight into what constitutes well-being, which broadly falls into three categories of mental and physical health, as well as assigned category of psychological well-being. Even though autonomy did not appear among the conceptualizations of well-being until it was explored directly, it was found to be relevant to most, with a few exceptions where autonomy either felt unfamiliar or scary.

### **Values and Basic Psychological Needs**

Psychological well-being appears to be a synthesized state of change and stability, both internally and externally, as well as the fit of the two. Stability includes constant fulfillment of needs, while striving for positive experiences encompasses a dynamic part, all together comprising a balanced and content state. Needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness were not always met throughout the years of the studies, according to participants. However overarching concepts, such as values, might serve as a buffer for stressful times, as well as contribute to the general well-being by aligning one's actions with internal purpose. The last mentioned component of eudaimonic well-being included the concept of meaningfulness:

*“I also tried to motivate myself and, okay, like, how can I motivate myself, like, if I see meaning in the things that I'm doing.”* (Participant 11)

*“I don't know even if you have a negative effect while studying you will continue studying because you have higher values you want to achieve.”* (Participant 5)

This suggests that personal meaning guides motivation. To infer what values students hold, they were asked about what motivates them in academia and what they prioritize when making important decisions. Eight major themes related to values emerged, they are presented in Table 3. Themes of values include achievement, hedonism, knowledge, relationships, security, self-direction, self-transcendence, and stimulation. Due to the scope of the paper, only values of achievement, knowledge, self-transcendence, relationships, and self-direction are analyzed further.

### **Table 3**

#### *Values*

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Value	Description	Example
Achievement	Valuing ambition and personal success by striving for competence and social recognition	"I feel like it's also a lot about proving people you're competent, which is a shame. Yeah, but it's qualities you need. In order to get this bachelor, masters to go do a PhD. It's really important."
Hedonism	Prioritizing enjoyment and instant gratification; demonstrating a tendency towards pleasure-seeking	"I would never say no to a social gathering, and also the first two years were hedonistic, so always like seeking fun and immediate pleasure over the future orientation and maybe like reaching a long term goal."
Knowledge	Perceiving knowledge, learning, and acquiring skills as intrinsically motivating	"I love learning new things. I love, it's really exciting to me to come as close to a truth as possible, even though that also doesn't exist, you know? Being so close to the newest developments really excites me and motivates me. I like knowledge."
Relationships	Perceiving belongingness, connections as important; being mindful of others' needs and personal impact on others	"I focus a lot on my boyfriend, because we plan to have a future together. So I try to, like consider how what I choose might affect him. Because if we plan on actually living together later, I don't know what but if we want to keep this relationship going, I can't be selfish in my decisions because somebody else also is going to be affected by it."
Security	Inclination towards safer and more familiar options and/ or predetermined path and structure	"But like freedom is good in theory, but for me, I feel like it gives me too many options and it's so scary."
Self-Direction	Placing a high importance on freedom, exploration, independent choices and actions	"I really don't like when I don't have the feeling that I can do what I want to do. I don't know, I really feel like I want to work to be able to do what I feel like, in a way that makes sense. Like, I want to have the freedom to choose my next step."
Self-Transcendence	Striving for a positive change for something larger than just oneself, contributing to the enhancement of others' welfare	"I really need to like feel like just find something meaningful to my life that I can use. I dedicate myself to and will help people and help myself."
Stimulation	Preference for novelty, challenge, as well as displaying openness to experience	"Openness for experiences. Yeah, those experiences then contributed to the well-being. And yeah, being curious also. It's kind of the same, they both play into that, like having new experiences and also the, I don't know how to call it, the need for change. It's something that's not going good. I'm like, okay, I need to change something."

### **Competence**

Values of achievement and knowledge seem to be directly related to the strive of fulfilling the need for competence, however they are based on different motivations and effects on well-being. Achievement relates to holding ambition, success in valued endeavors, and social recognition of the success in high regard:

*“Competence aspect and being able to, perform well in academia kind of, probably became like part of my self concept pretty early on. So I think that's also, a big motivator to keep that, like, that image of myself of like being able to do well. Yeah, like I think I probably put most pressure on myself because like my own expectations.”*

(Participant 12)

Valuing knowledge, on the other hand, is more centered on the process of learning, and feeling competent when acquiring new skills:

*“I just have a very strong desire to learn and to acquire skills and to feel confident about those skills. <...> also be fulfilled with what I'm doing and therefore also be successful with what I'm doing.”* (Participant 8)

It is clear that the value of achievement is more extrinsically rewarding as motivation stems from maintaining an image of one being capable of achievement, whereas intrinsic motivation to learn does not exclude being successful in those same endeavors but it relies more on the enjoyment of engagement with the material and tasks. The value of knowledge seems to entail mostly positive effect of further motivation and positive emotions:

*“Being so close to the newest developments really excites me and motivates me.”*

(Participant 2)

*“If a course is interesting to me, then I'm also more motivated to put in the work to actually get good grades.”* (Participant 7)

A focus placed on achievement, on the other hand, results in both motivation and additional

pressure, as seen in the quote from participant 12. It, thus, appears to have different influences on well-being. It most evidently can be seen in the shift of an approach to competence in the reflections of participant 5:

*“I started out with really like nine to five, going to the library spending six hours every day. I was here in the beginning on the weekends, like I didn't really take a day off.”* (Participant 5)

The same participant expressed the shift in approach during their studies and consequently noticed the positive effect on its fulfillment:

*“I was always just laying in the park and just reading in the sun. And it was the best exam I've ever written because I did it exactly the way that I wanted to.”* (Participant 5)

### ***Relatedness***

Among the values that endure throughout the shifts and explorations, as observed from interviews, were those that most closely tied with the need for relatedness, specifically values of relationships and self-transcendence. Both entail concern and positive regard for others, however the value of self-transcendence is more abstract and entails a wish to contribute meaningfully to a bigger cause instead of being self-serving:

*“I really need to like feel like just find something meaningful to my life that I can use. I dedicate myself to and will help people and help myself.”* (Participant 9)

Self-transcendence appeared to be a second order value that would emerge later in the studies when a student understands what is meaningful to them. The value manifests through attempts to actively help others:

*“I do a lot of lecture notes and reading notes that I share with people <...> I like to share what I did <...> And people are always very, very grateful for it.”* (Participant 7)

Another common theme among those who valued self-transcendence was the desire to contribute to a more abstract cause, such as changing the structure of education:

*“What motivates me, I think, the idea that there are people that think like me, and that they*

*also have the same issues with the current system. So it sounds like I'm fighting for something by myself. And knowing that my efforts will, or could have some results for people who might take the courses in the next years.*" (Participant 10)

It seems to entail the value of like-minded others when striving for this change and unsuccessful attempts appear to cause frustration:

*"I do speak up to a lecturer, or I do bring it up to my teacher. And it just kind of it does demotivate you when you do all these steps and nothing works."* (Participant 10)

Another example of how values might be important to relatedness when it concerns like-minded others:

*"If my friends have similar values, we will probably make similar decisions, like, about positive or negative because we don't really always have different points of view over like the same thing."* (Participant 3)

It suggests that relatedness is not merely about other people around but people who share similar worldviews, which is further supported by participant 3:

*"With the friends, I feel like it's important to somehow have similar interests. <...> we all have the same, more or less the same worldview, opinions, more opinions. So that way, I can actually talk to them and feel comfortable around them, and also relate to their problems."*

The value of relationships illustrated how values might influence the hierarchy of needs:

*"Yeah, without relatedness, I would not study. So, without making these new friends, new connections, meeting new people, I would not study."* (Participant 6)

This statement indicates that relatedness to some is the most important need to fulfill to experience motivation and well-being as it provides a sense of security by serving as a buffer to internal and external threats to well-being:

*“Relatedness I feel like is always my highest value <...> In the first year it was more important because I felt less settled, like I have no foundation, super insecure <...> And now it’s still really important, still more important but it’s more balanced. It has become more balanced over the three years. And so I was able to focus on the things that interested me, like competence” (Participant 5)*

The opposite was also observed when relatedness concerned the context of academia, the value of relationships was, nonetheless, strong but relationships outside of academia were more valued, as became evident when asked how important relatedness in academia to Participant 6 was, they answered:

*“<...> out of the three ones, definitely the least. I didn't really think about that a lot <...> I think about more what can I put into it and what can I kind of achieve? So kind of autonomy and competence. Relatedness I think, from a social aspect is very important to me, but from an academic life perspective, not so important.” (Participant 6)*

The reflection of participant 5 provided above portrays how the priority given to one need might undermine the fulfillment of other needs if it is not in balanced proportion. The evaluation of relatedness in academia deemed as insignificant suggests that endorsing values related to relatedness might manifest as seeking fulfillment outside of academia due to more rewarding perceived prospects other connections entail.

### ***Autonomy and Intrinsic Motivation***

Similar tendency was observed with the value of self-direction, which seems to be the most connected to intrinsic motivation as it implies exploration, independent thinking and choice of activities to engage in:

*“I really don't like when I don't have the feeling that I can do what I want to do. <...> I really feel like I want to work to be able to do what I feel like <...> Like, I want to have the freedom to choose my next step. <...> So I took two gap years and I was like, okay, let's move*

*there. And I did it and then I got this job. And always kind of scrambled through and I think that's really important to me <...> When I feel like I don't [have autonomy], then I quickly feel boxed in, I think I kept a little bit like, why am I so dependent on this?" (Participant 6)*

This further connects the relation between different life spheres to the final subjective sense of psychological well-being as to someone who values self-direction, academia might not be the only focus. It is similar to how relatedness was not important in academia to some because it was more fulfilling outside of it, and academia might not be able to provide conditions to all nuances in individual differences. Individual variation, even of what constitutes autonomy, is mostly entailed by this value as it relates to independent choice and exploration. Based on reflections of some participants, autonomy was related to having opportunities for making own choices in academia and understanding own agency:

*"You really are more autonomous as a university student than a high school student, and that is important for me also to take ownership, actually, of this learner identity rather than school where we struggle with that much more than I do now. Because now it's the subject I have chosen <...> in school, you just get like, get your subjects you have to do them no matter what. And here like I've chosen a subject I get to choose the different courses to a large extent within the course. And so that's awesome. More ownership on what I really want to learn that I'm interested in and I think that really helps us." (Participant 4)*

The quote above encapsulates the transition from common school conditions to university environment. It appears that university provides more opportunities for autonomy or at least the understanding of its importance and responsibility it entails. As explained by participant 4, autonomy is more salient in university, which poses a risk to some who value security when transitioning to higher education. If autonomy used to be unfamiliar and at times even discouraged in a school context, sudden gain of autonomy in university context might endanger well-being. It seems that participants who value security experience a low



need for autonomy as it feels unsafe to them and they prefer the opposite that is structure and predetermined or imposed decisions:

*“But like freedom is good in theory, but for me, I feel like it gives me too many options and it's so scary.” (Participant 9)*

Yet, it might be one of the values that do not endure the test of time in the context of academia, especially if academia poses a necessity to be more autonomous:

*“I'm just like used to the script of how the course should be and the liberty to do so much was a bit scary. But it was interesting, and I think <...> it's opened my eyes to different ways that you can learn and should be able to learn.” (Participant 9)*

To some extent this shift in approach and mindset relates to personal growth over time and initial stages of integrating the value imposed by the environment.

Yet, considering that values motivate action, it is also clear that some participants who highly value self-direction, express the tendency to seek it when it is not met in academia in other places, either through extracurricular activities or job, or the approach they apply to the same tasks:

*“I really feel like I want to work to be able to do what I feel like <...> I want to have the freedom to choose my next step. What can I do like, So I took two gap years and I was like, Okay, let's move there. And I did it and then I got this job <...> that's really important to me, <...> I quickly feel boxed in” (Participant 6)*

The quote also entails a strive for stimulation, which is another value closely linked to intrinsic motivation (Table 3-Stimulation).

Generally, the variety of individual nuances and perspectives that emerged through the analysis of values provided an insight into how specific values might shape the approach students apply to tasks, what priorities they establish, how they interpret stressors, and how well-being is affected when they can or cannot act in congruence with their values.

## Discussion

The aim of this study concerned understanding student well-being in academia through Self-Determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and exploration of student values. The first research question, which concerned student conceptualizations of well-being in academia, was only partially explored as it was extended from the initial specification of the research question by investigating what well-being means to students in a general sense. Well-being, according to our participants, constitutes optimal physical and mental health and extends to subjective evaluations of psychological states that concern fulfillment of basic psychological needs, experiences of content and balance, as well as a strive for positive experiences. Thus, it follows the premises of SDT and supports further accentuation of positive psychology when investigating student well-being. Free associations of well-being included needs of relatedness and competence, however, autonomy was not mentioned directly by any participant. Yet, further investigation with a direct presentation of the components of SDT has shown that autonomy is a crucial element of well-being. Potentially, autonomy may not be so easily cognitively accessible when judging one's well-being because unlike, relatedness or competence, it is not externally established but rather concerns internal evaluation of whether the choice is self-endorsed (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Often, this evaluation occurs in the moment of stress and the ownership of the willing engagement with the stressor reminds of a reason one has to engage in the activity and persist. Since values are believed to represent "desirable goals that motivate action" (Gamage et al., 2021), reasons for engagement in activities to a certain extent are encompassed by values. Thus, the interest in what values students endorse and how those values shape the experience of basic psychological needs, which was the second aim of the study, connected naturally. Eight major themes emerged with the values related to the fulfillment of basic psychological needs counting highest frequency. Due to practical implications, only the values that were most

frequently inferred and influential on well-being gain the spotlight of discussion.

Values of relatedness and self-transcendence were found to be most enduring and served as buffers against various obstacles encountered by participants throughout their studies. The observation worth noting is that students endorsing these values tended to imply the importance of values when relating to others, as the connection was more meaningful when values and worldviews were shared. Lastly, the value of self-direction was the most closely related to autonomy, with a lot of variation in its expression, encompassing the variety of ways each need and intrinsic motivation can manifest. Similarly to how well-being transcended the context of academia, the pursuit of values tended to portray a similar trend, especially when it concerned the values of relationships and self-direction. Potentially, it relates to the conceptualization of values as they are not exclusive to situations (Gamage et al., 2021), thus a strong value might drive one to pursue the fulfillment of the value and of the need related to it despite external obstacles. However, as proposed by Pincus (2024), values are equivalent to needs, thus a certain direction of value might aid in fulfilling a certain need, but when out of balance, might thwart well-being by undermining other needs, which was also noticed in the reflections of participants in the current study.

Achievement and knowledge were found to be guiding values striving for competence, with knowledge encompassing more intrinsically motivated strive. While both values contributed positively to the experience of competence, achievement was more associated with a negative impact on well-being due to increased pressure from internal or external expectations. While competence was mainly defined through the perspective of intellectual engagement, such as achievement (grades) or intrinsic motivation for learning (value of knowledge), SDT provides a broad understanding of competence - being capable of dealing with the demands posed by the environment. The demands students focused most on were related to study tasks themselves but, as mentioned in the introduction, university poses

stress also because of a transition into a new role and new responsibilities, demands do not only relate to managing the course load and grades, but personal development as well (Arnett, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Since the target group of this study was university students, the study gained a better insight into how SDT can be used to foster student well-being by highlighting the role of different values and how they influence the fulfillment of each need and motivation, in turn affecting general well-being, especially the subjective evaluations of it.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The components of well-being, defined by students, illustrate that defining well-being through the lens of positive psychology is justified and, consequently, SDT (2000) seems like a valid tool to apply when approaching the prevention of ill-being in academia. The qualitative approach allowed us to capture the meaning behind concepts related to well-being and values, and to appreciate the complexity of individual experiences, which all shape the conditions and perceptions of well-being. While SDT (2000) entails the importance of values, the current study elaborated on how different values influence the fulfillment of basic needs and which values have a certain superiority by balancing the effects of external demands. The study provided an understanding of the well-being of a specific target group, which is higher education students, and it sought to take values into account when trying to understand and foster well-being in students might be important. However, due to the sample being small and tied to the context of a specific university and bachelor program, the results cannot be generalized. However, the study did not focus merely on values, and, thus, inferring values from so few questions might not be enough, especially considering that several values would be inferred for one student at times. While it could have shown the exploration and refinement of values, there is still a suggestion for improving the sensitivity of instruments used to investigate students' values. Even though there were few questions, their use and

quality is justified, nonetheless. Following the proposal that values are the same as emotional needs (Pincus, 2024), questions about the importance of each need of SDT provided a nuanced perspective on how values and needs interplay, which extends SDT qualitatively.

Similarly, considering values to be an overlapping concept with motivations, asking what motivated students in academia gave an insight into what values they endorsed, and what intrinsic and extrinsic motivations guided their choices. Lastly, values were inferred through another question of what a student prioritizes when making important decisions, which was suggested to be a valid inquiry (De Graaf & Paanakker, 2022), with the freedom to interpret the meaning of an important decision individually, thus giving insight on what a stressful sacrifice would look like when contrasting uncompromising values. However, the subjectivity of inferring the values from these questions remains a limitation.

### **Implications**

Counteract the subjectivity, quantitative research could be conducted to determine the prevalence of certain values and to test their connection to well-being, using more objective measures. However, the broadness of the pool of values and different theories categorizing them could inform further qualitative research as well, with the potential generation of more insights and hypotheses. Nonetheless, the findings of a current study highlight the importance of subjective evaluations and conceptualizations of well-being, as well as the importance of values that contribute to the fulfillment of basic psychological needs and general well-being. Current findings highlight the importance of designing an intervention of value literacy to promote student engagement in their self-development (Astin, 1999). Values are mostly endorsed without much effort of thinking about them and the concordance between values and behavior is mediated by situational factors (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Pincus, 2024). Thus, providing students with an opportunity to reflect on their values and how those might be affecting them in daily life, as well as how to act according to them could be a potential

intervention to counteract the stressful transition into higher education. Additionally, the distinction of striving for competence through valuing achievement and knowledge suggests that the educational structure could benefit from a shift to the approach that develops intrinsic motivation, such as following the framework of Social Constructivism (Adams, 2006).

### **Conclusion**

The current study aimed to deepen the understanding of student well-being by exploring basic psychological needs and their interplay with values. Our findings support and highlight the practicality of positive psychology perspectives informing well-being. The results provide theoretical and practical implications: identifying values through qualitative methods allowed us to illustrate nuanced processes of need fulfillment and inspire potential interventions. However, the characteristics of the sample do not allow broad generalizations. Thus, the findings should be supported by data from a more varied population, such as students of different degrees. Nonetheless, the qualitative approach enriched the understanding of student well-being and the factors influencing it and allowed us to generate more hypotheses and draw connections between various concepts. In conclusion, applying the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in the context of academia and enriching it with specific values provided a nuanced understanding of how personal and environmental factors interact to shape well-being.

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## Appendix A

### Demographics Questionnaire

***Demographic Questionnaire Study: Understanding Well-being in Academia through Self-Determination Theory (SDT)***

Participant \_\_\_\_\_ (filled out by the researcher)

We kindly request some brief socio-demographic information from you as a participant. This information will assist us in understanding your responses within context.

1. I am  male  female  other  prefer not to say
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_ years
3. Nationality \_\_\_\_\_
4. Concerning my studies
  - a. I'm currently enrolled in the
   
 Bachelor  Master
  - b. I am in my
   
 1<sup>st</sup> year  2<sup>nd</sup> year  3<sup>rd</sup> year  4<sup>th</sup> year

If you have any further questions concerning the interview study, do not hesitate to ask. Again, thank you very much for participating in our study and helping us get better insights into well-being at the university.

Contact: L.Ballato@rug.nl  
University of Groningen

Bachelor Thesis Project  
Well-being in Academia

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent

#### **Informed Consent for Interview Study within the Project: Understanding Well-being in Academia through Self-Determination Theory (SDT)**

April 2024

I, [Participant's Name], hereby consent to participate in the current research conducted by [Researcher's Name], a student at the University of Groningen. Contact: [Researcher's Contact Information]

I have agreed to participate in the study "Understanding Well-being in Academia through Self-Determination Theory (SDT)," understanding that my participation is entirely voluntary. I acknowledge that my data will be kept confidential. I reserve the right to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty and to request that my responses not be used. The researcher is responsible for the secure storage of the data.

I will have the opportunity to review a summary of my interview and indicate whether I wish particular parts not to be considered in the analysis. The data will be only used for educational purposes and will not be published.

I read and understood the information form, which provides more detailed information about the research.

Date: [Participant's Date]

Signature Participant:

Date: [Researcher's Date]

Signature Researcher:

## Appendix C

### Script

<b>Q nr.</b>	<b>Conceptualization of Well-Being</b>
<b>1</b>	In general, what does well-being mean to you? (When you hear “well-being” – what comes to mind?)
<b>Self-Determination-Theory</b>	
	(A concise introduction of SDT) For the questions that follow, please try your best to stay within the framework of academia and the three psychological needs of SDT competence, relatedness and autonomy. Do you have any questions about SDT?
<b>2</b>	What is autonomy within academia for you?
	When you look back at your studies, were there certain periods during which you felt more or less autonomous? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How was this need (not)met in your first year compared to now?</li> </ul>
	What importance did autonomy play over the course of your studies?
<b>3</b>	What makes you feel competent within academia?
	When you look back at your studies, were there certain periods during which you felt more or less competent? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How was this need (not)met in your first year compared to now?</li> <li>● How do exam periods impact your feelings of competence?</li> <li>● How do you feel your personal level of resilience, your ability to bounce back, influences your feelings of competence?</li> </ul>
	What importance did competence play over the course of your studies?
<b>4</b>	What is relatedness within academia for you?
	When you look back at your studies, were there certain periods during which you felt more or less relatedness? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How was this need (not)met in your first year compared to now?</li> </ul> How has your relationships influenced your persistence in academia? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can you describe a time when you felt a sense of belonging in academia?</li> <li>● Have there been any experiences where your relationships posed difficulties or distractions during your studies? (<i>In case they have answered this earlier can be omitted</i>)</li> </ul>

	What importance did relatedness play over the course of your studies?
<b>Values and Identity</b>	
5	What does an important decision look like to you?
	What do you prioritize when making important decisions during your study years? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did it change through the years of study? If so, how?</li> </ul>
6	What motivates you within academia? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why?</li> </ul>
7	How did you choose your third-year courses? ( <i>For first and second year students: how will you choose...?</i> )
8	What does it mean for you to be a student?
9	In what ways do you think your student identity influences your overall well-being in academia? ( <i>If the student is unsure what is meant with student identity, refer them to their answer to the previous question, as this captures their student identity.</i> ) (Identity: How you see and express yourself)
10	How easily do you bounce back from a stressor such as not passing an exam within your academic life? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel this has impacted your sense of well-being within academia?</li> </ul>
<b>Influencing well-being</b>	
11	Think of a moment where you had the feeling your well-being was fulfilled. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did your perception of being a student contribute to feeling well-being in that very moment?</li> <li>• Were there some other <u>internal</u> factors that contributed to that feeling of fulfilled well-being?</li> </ul>
<b>Who is responsible for student well-being</b>	
12	Who do you think is responsible for student well-being? ( <i>Ask this open question first, before asking specifically about themselves or university. If they already talk more about one or the other; let them, don't redirect them into talking about one thing first.</i> )
13	To what extent are you responsible for your own well-being in academia?
	What are the actions you have taken to enhance your experience of well-being? ( <i>If the student does not really know what to say, remind them of the three needs.</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What motivated you to take this initiative?</li> </ul>
	Are there any behaviors that you wanted to implement, but have not done so so far? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why?</li> </ul>

<b>14</b>	To what extent is university responsible for student well-being?
	What is the university doing right now to foster student's basic psychological needs? <i>(If the student does not really know what to say, remind them of the three needs)</i>
	What do you think the university can do to further enhance student's basic psychological needs? <i>(If the student does not really know what to say, remind them of the three needs)</i>
	What were you missing from the university with regards to fostering the three needs in your first year?
<b>15</b>	Is there anything else that we haven't talked about yet that you think influences your well-being?
	Is there anything else you would like to add?



## Appendix D

### Codebook

#### *Conceptualization Well-Being*

Category	Code	Description	Example
Well-Being	CONC WB: Balance	Experiencing a balance between several aspects of their lives, including mental and physical health, and work-life balance among others.	"So general well being includes, like, many different well beings that are, in a way, more stable, like, the balance is quite stable"
	CONC WB: Competence	Being able to do the things one would like to do and/or have academic achievements	"Well, I do think a sense of achievement is very important. For me. It's yeah, it's, I like to feel like I've achieved something I'd like to also be knowledgeable about that, which, to me is honestly more important than, for example, a grade."
	CONC WB: Content	Feeling content, being at ease, feeling comfortable	"I guess just being content with where you are in your life right now. And like having the feeling like you can do, okay, in the future, like you don't have to excel necessarily, but just the feeling of being fine for the future."
	CONC WB: Mental health	Being free from mental disorders that hinder mental, emotional, psychological, and social well-being and functioning	"I guess physical and mental health kind of? Yeah, are like the two main things that are necessary for wellbeing for me. Yeah."
	CONC WB: Physical health	Being physically healthy and functioning	"Okay, so there are two broad components to it, I would say, like a physical and a mental one. Physiological and psychological component."
	CONC WB: Positive experiences	Having positive experiences and pursuing happiness	"Overall, I think, for me, it's always a state of balance, where I feel like I kind of am on top of everything that I want to do. just like being content with what I do, and then having positive experiences, I would say. "
	CONC WB: Relatedness	Interacting with other people, having friends and feeling supported.	"And you're surrounded by people who support you and you feel loved by it's also really important."

Category	Code	Description	Example
Autonomy	CONC AUTO: Being in control	Being in control of your own actions and choices	"I feel like it is quite important because you want to feel like you have control of your studies, right? You want to feel like this is what you want to do and what you chose to do"
	CONC AUTO: Decision-making	Making decisions how to study, prepare for an exam, or how to engage with the material.	"And like, the less I can choose which materials to use, the less autonomy I feel like I have, somehow"
	CONC AUTO: Freedom	Having the freedom to do what you would like in your studies, like participating in extracurricular activities etc.	"You choose your own path, and you feel the freedom"
	CONC AUTO: Independence	Feeling like you can do something by yourself, without needing support from others	"Yeah, and to not need, like to rely on someone else. Like of course, you need the professor to like in the lecture and everything, like provide you with the materials and then that you don't need additional or great additional amounts of help like a tutor outside of that you can with the help from the professor and like the normal materials, develop your own grasp material without additional offset."
Competence	CONC COMP: Comparison to others	Comparing own achievements, skills, grades, etc. to those of other people.	"I would compare myself maybe to glimpses of what I would see, how other people would deal with the situation"
	CONC COMP: Deeper understanding	Being able to go beyond the passive receiving of information from courses, to being able to have deeper discussions about the material.	"Seeing what you think about things and just being like very engaged in the academic world"
	CONC COMP: Effort	Putting genuine effort into your studies and trying to complete courses successfully.	"I think a competence that I have is I know how much I can do and what is enough. And I can really just put enough effort into it. So there's something that is satisfying for me."
	CONC COMP: Extracurricular activities	Participating in activities (academic and not) outside of the normal curriculum..	"I think that grades are probably the biggest source of feeling of competence and from academia. But like for me, probably also being in the Honors College just because obviously, you need to have certain grades to get in and you obviously also need to apply and then get accepted and do more things next to all the other things you already have to do."
	CONC COMP: Grades	Understanding competence in connection to grades	"Yeah, I guess I mean, the framework of grades, for example, and it's already contributing to feeling competent... "

Category	Code	Description	Example
	CONC COMP: Having the resources	Having resources available that allow the student to live up to their full potential.	"It helps me when there's a thorough proper syllabus, and when the, when the people around me like my mentor, my teacher, as well is willing to put in the effort to help me and to give me like the space and the time and the effort that to make the sessions well."
	CONC COMP: Learning	Being able to successfully study and retain the information gained during one's studies.	"I felt like non competent, like, so bad, because I did nothing like nothing. That showed off, you know, I only mean, if I, for example, read a book, but don't talk about this book. And I don't feel I learned something."
	CONC COMP: Personalized feedback	Receiving personalised feedback from a professor or teaching assistant.	"If you have like smaller courses, and then you get feedback, that's actually really good. And then you see, okay, I can improve here. I'm already doing good here, but maybe I can improve."
	CONC COMP: Resilience	Being able to bounce back from setbacks such as bad grades.	"If I would feel less resilient, I would feel less competent. Um, Yeah, I guess it made me it made my feeling of competence more stable."
	CONC COMP: Self-development	Enhancing one's academic and personal skills.	"I definitely also had a learning curve on how to approach them and how to interpret certain things. So kind of as a scientist. I think I've definitely gained some skills that helped me navigate in the academic sphere."
	CONC COMP: Self-efficacy	Knowing what one is capable of doing and believing that one is able to live up to that level of skill.	"I think a competence that I have is I know how much I can do and what is enough. And I can really just put enough effort into it. So there's something that is satisfying for me."
Relatedness	CONC RELA: Belonging	A sense of connection with and feeling that one fits in the group.	"Relatedness is for me, once feeling related with my fellow students, feeling of belonging, maybe also developing the identity of being a psychology student."
	CONC RELA: Having things in common	Sharing common fate, similar interests, opinions, and having similar worldviews.	"And so I would say that that's part of relatedness that you like are working together with others. But I also think in lectures for example, it can be when you because oftentimes lectures, a bit more interactive that you can see that other people share your point of views or have similar ideas and thoughts about things as you do."
	CONC RELA: Connections fellow students	Having peers to exchange ideas with, learn from, and study with. these peers also be friends who support each other.	"...Ask my friends if they understood something that I might not have understood. Exchange notes, like things that people will use to study for exams and everything like that. So it helped with having a support system, but also to help with the studies because you have someone there going through the same exact thing. "

Category	Code	Description	Example
	CONC RELA: Connections teachers	Being able to approach, talk to the teachers, asking them questions about the content.	"...and then probably also having connections to researchers having connections to, to lectures having, feeling like I can approach them and ask questions. Just probably the opposite of just feeling alone and feeling ostracized."
	CONC RELA: Content of classes	Having a sense that the content of the class is interesting and meaningful. Sparking a curiosity to learn more about the subject.	"The content, actually, the content, because when I read the content, meaning also, it's really interesting, and I liked it a lot. But the negative part of it is sometimes the extrinsic motivation, I would love to engage way more"
	CONC RELA: Having friends	Fostering meaningful connections with friends within and outside academia that one could relate to and connect over positive and negative experiences.	"I think for me, mainly, this means having, having friends, having people that understand me that go through the same things I'm going through right now. And being able to connect to them, talk to them."
	CONC RELA: Familiarity	Being acquainted with people in the lectures, faculty and having the comfort of recognizing the place.	"I also think lectures help if there are people, a lot of people showing up. It's nice to be in this big group and then have your own little group that you always sit with, but you recognize all the faces and it's comfortable."
	CONC RELA: Empathy	Ability to understand and share the feelings, thoughts and experiences of another person.	"I'm in the Red Cross, in a committee, and we wanted to do like a party thing and we wanted to like the donations to go to mental health (...) I think we already like, quite like a bunch of like just more human people, if that makes sense."
	CONC RELA: Physical presence	Attending university in person, having face-to-face interactions as opposed to online education and communication.	"Like at this point, I'm in Heyman's like every day and I'm meeting my friends here and I'm having meetings and I'm kind of connected to a lot of people because of the activities I'm doing within academia. So then I think both on a like very kind of physical hands on way that really, really, really helps with my sense of belonging for compared to the beginning where I was just at home, but never really at uni."
	CONC RELA: Studying with other people	Having people one could study with to stay connected and motivated.	"Having friends in your, that you can study with, um, or just chill with think, um, it really helps me. It really, like I need social pressure to study as well."
	CONC RELA: Support	Having supportive others within and outside of academia to help deal with setbacks, persevere; engaging in the mutual aid with others in the pursuit of current goals.	"Ask my friends if they understood something that I might not have understood. Exchange notes, like things that people will use to study for exams and everything like that. So it helped with having a support system, but also to help with the studies because you have someone there going through the same exact thing."

*Influencing Factors Well-Being*

Category	Code	Description	Example
Internal factors		Things about the participant more internally that affects their well-being (in academia)	
	INT F: Achievement oriented	Being hardworking, goal-oriented and/or aiming for high grades	"It's really important, like I don't know this is like a belief that has been instilled in me by my parents for so long. It's just like okay, work is the most important thing. You need to work you need to earn you need to like just be a hardworking person. "
	INT F: Attitude / mindset	Participant's perception that mindset one adopts can shape one's perceptions, attitudes, and reactions to life events, and thus affects one's overall well-being	"I'm a bit of an over thinker, and then I'm having sometimes those kind of downward spirals, where I think, just because this doesn't work well right now, or I'm so stressed, how will I ever get out of this acute phase of stress? And then I'm also kind of thinking five steps ahead and then like in a negative direction. "
	INT F: Comparing self to others	Participant's tendency to compare themselves to other people	"Yeah, because I thought that everybody else had already their groups and their people and stuff, and then I was a bit like, I don't know, like, not the odd one out, but like, like, I did know some people, but I wasn't so close friends with them that I thought, okay, or I thought, okay, they're in person friends already, and I kind of need to join in and stuff, and in the end it worked. But also, like, at first I remember that was very intimidating as well."
	INT F: Confidence / self-efficacy	Participant's general sense of confidence and self-efficacy, their perception of their ability to succeed in a given situation	"But there was definitely a moment where I trusted myself and had self-confidence that I can actually do it. And that felt really good. And trusting then I had a lot of motivation for the next block and kind of carried that momentum. to actually staying on top this time and not pushing it to the end again."

Category	Code	Description	Example
External factors	INT F: Mental health	Mental health (problems) including e.g., depression, ADHD.	I think, so, my ADHD diagnosis is something that made me insecure through, and still does, makes me insecure throughout life, because you kind of get a stamp, like, you're less capable than the rest of the people. So that really bothered me in the beginning, because you start a new thing, you start new studies, you start new things every year, even though it's one bachelor's. And then you're like, okay, so this is different for me than for other people, but what does that mean for me? Does that mean that I cannot do this, maybe? But I really got over that now, I think. I think that will start again when I do a master's.
	INT F: Openness to experience	Participant's openness to experience, learning and sense of curiosity	"Openness for experiences. Yeah, those experiences then contributed to the well-being. And yeah, being curious also. It's kind of the same, they both play into that, like having new experiences"
		External factors affecting well-being in academia	
	EXT F: Online education	Participants perception that online education had a critical role in their well-being in academia	"And I think when I felt at least competent was my first year COVID, everything's online. You just feel like you're not even doing the study. So when you get a grade, you don't care because, um, it kind of feels like you don't deserve that grade."
	EXT F: Parents	Participants perception that parents had a critical role in their well-being in academia	"I just saved myself the money of renting and stayed at home which was the right decision in my opinion for me"
	EXT F: Weather	Participants' perception that weather influences their well-being in academia	"the weather that's definitely, also a very important factor, obviously"
	EXT F: Workload Outside Degree	Participants perception that a workload outside their psychology degree had a critical role in their well-being in academia	"Because I, for me, I'm working right now. Quite a lot, probably more than I should. But then doing honours College, everything, that's not really possible."

*BPN Fulfillment*

Category	Code	Description	Example
Autonomy	BPN: AUTO: Fulfilled	Expression of an experience/situation within their studies in which their need for autonomy was met.	"Yeah, I think that especially now, like in my third and fourth year, where I could actually choose subjects and so on, that also played a big role because, um, I could do what I was interested in and I could also try out different subjects and so on. So I think I really enjoyed that. So then I think that was good."
	BPN: AUTO: Not fulfilled	Expression of an experience/situation within their studies in which their need for autonomy was not met, either being too low or too high.	"But I would have still preferred if I didn't have to repeat statistics this many times. And this whole thing caused like a study delay, and then it affected like the whole rest of my studies, and it made it quite chaotic. So I, yeah, I really didn't like that part. I would have liked to choose to study that life on myself if I really wanted it, right."
Competence	BPN: COMP: Fulfilled	Expression of an experience/situation within their studies in which their need for competence was met.	"My feeling of competence was quite high during the whole first year. And that was definitely getting more in the first weeks. Like when I started, I thought, okay, well, I'm not sure if I'm going to pass all these courses, and it's going to be so hard. And then, after the first exams, I thought, okay, well, I'm fine. Alright."
	BPN: COMP: Not fulfilled	Expression of an experience/situation within their studies in which their need for competence was not met.	"When you study for something, and then you feel okay, it was alright. But then you get the results back and it was just not right at all. So I think that was definitely one of my low points in terms of competence."
Relatedness	BPN: RELA: Fulfilled	Expression of an experience/situation within their studies in which their need for relatedness was met.	"I think it's not hard for me to fit in or to at least have the feeling that I belong, and I think that also makes me feel very safe and secure "
	BPN: RELA: Not Fulfilled	Expression of an experience/situation within their studies in which their need for relatedness was not met.	"I didn't have any bond within my academic skills mentor group in the first year, like none. I wouldn't even recognize over half of the people that were in there. Uh, even though it's really meant to be a learning community, right? Like you're meant to be kind of like a friend group, support each other. So it was really lonely."

*Importance of BPN*

Code	Description	Example
Importance autonomy	Personal evaluation of the need for autonomy in academia to be of high or low importance	"I would say it's quite important for me, just because that, again, makes it way more interesting for me if I have autonomy, that makes sense, if I don't have autonomy, I feel like a lot of times it feels forced and then I get bored by the tasks."
Importance competence	Personal evaluation of the need for competence in academia to be of high or low importance	"Relatedness I think, from a social aspect is very important to me, but from an academic life perspective, not so important, I don't really link it to the concept of my academic self."
Importance relatedness	Personal evaluation of the need for relatedness in academia to be of high or low importance	"It's something I think about a lot, because I compare myself a lot to other people and friends. And if I don't feel competent in my studies, I start spiraling."

*Aspects Linked to Students' Identities*

Code	Description	Example
IDENTIY	Aspects that are linked to students' identities	
ID: COMM HIGH	Showing a high commitment to plans and decisions	"Yeah. I mean, I would like to do therapy. So I would choose my courses according to that."
ID: COMM LOW	Showing a low commitment to plans and decisions or not having concrete plans	"But overall, I think I just chose it based on what sounds interesting in a moment. One course I chose just for the vibes because all of my friends took it"
ID: EXPL HIGH	Demonstrating a high level of curiosity and a strong tendency to explore in one's decisions and actions.	"I'm just here to kind of maximize the whole experience but also really, like, I took my time going to university (...) I'm here because I want to learn stuff here because I want to see what's out there and I think there's kind of motivation"
ID: EXPL LOW	Demonstrating a low level of curiosity and a weak tendency to explore in one's decisions and actions.	"Then I did forensics, sexology, CBT, also just because I wanted to really dive into it. And yeah, so I didn't even look at the other courses."



Code	Description	Example
ID: Student	Identifying as a student and acknowledging that this conceptualization influences other aspects of their lives	"I have like a positive image of being a student. Like, it's not like I think being a student is a burden or something. So like, overall, I think it's cool learning experience. I think that does, like positively influence my academic well being."
ID: Belonging	Feeling accepted, valued, and connected to a group or community	"And then like, giving the presentation about it felt like really good. And everyone was like, That was so good. And then I felt like okay, maybe this is something that I that I do like belong to also."
ID: Being student relates to WB	Explicitly mentioning how being a student influences well-being	"Being a student gives me a good feeling, a good place in life right now."
ID: Development	Expressing that one developed mentally	"I think coming from where I came from, anxious little first year girl, I'm just really proud of myself for everything that I've done."

### *Aspects Linked to Students' Values*

Code	Description	Example
VALUE: Achievement	Valuing ambition and personal success by striving for competence and social recognition	"I feel like it's also a lot about proving people you're competent, which is a shame. Yeah, but it's qualities you need. In order to get this bachelor, masters to go do a PhD. It's really important."
VALUE: Hedonism	Prioritising enjoyment and instant gratification; demonstrating a tendency towards pleasure-seeking	"I would never say no to a social gathering, and also the first two years were hedonistic, so always like seeking fun and immediate pleasure over the future orientation and maybe like reaching a long term goal."
VALUE: Knowledge	Perceiving knowledge, learning, and acquiring skills as intrinsically motivating	"I love learning new things. I love, it's really exciting to me to come as close to a truth as possible, even though that also doesn't exist, you know? Being so close to the newest developments really excites me and motivates me. I like knowledge."

Code	Description	Example
VALUE: Relationships	Perceiving belongingness, connections as important; being mindful of others' needs and personal impact on others	"I focus a lot on my boyfriend, because we plan to have a future together. So I try to, like consider how what I choose might affect him. Because if we plan on actually living together later, I don't know what but if we want to keep this relationship going, I can't be selfish in my decisions because somebody else also is going to be affected by it."
VALUE: Security	Inclination towards safer and more familiar options and/ or predetermined path and structure	"But like freedom is good in theory, but for me, I feel like it gives me too many options and it's so scary."
VALUE: Self-Direction	Placing a high importance on freedom, exploration, independent choices and actions	"I really don't like when I don't have the feeling that I can do what I want to do. I don't know, I really feel like I want to work to be able to do what I feel like, in a way that makes sense. Like, I want to have the freedom to choose my next step."
VALUE: Self-Transcendence	Striving for a positive change for something larger than just oneself, contributing to the enhancement of others' welfare	"I really need to like feel like just find something meaningful to my life that I can use. I dedicate myself to and will help people and help myself."
VALUE: Stimulation	Preference for novelty, challenge, as well as displaying openness to experience	"Openness for experiences. Yeah, those experiences then contributed to the well-being. And yeah, being curious also. It's kind of the same, they both play into that, like having new experiences and also the, I don't know how to call it, the need for change. It's something that's not going good. I'm like, okay, I need to change something. I want to change something."

### *Aspects Linked to Students' Resilience*

Code	Description	Example
Motivational strategies	Students use bad grades as a motivator to do better	"When I get a bad grade, that's a big motivator for me...it's like a rush, almost like a dopamine rush"
Active problem solving	Students act on their willingness to change	"I think generally, um, when something bad happens, um, after like a moment of shock and of letting it out and so on, I'm also usually always already thinking, okay, what to do after that situation"

Code	Description	Example
Emotional regulation	Students are not overly emotional about setbacks and remain calm	"Just having the faith that is going to be fine because it will be if you just keep working on it"

### *Factors Influencing Relatedness in Academia*

Category	Code	Description	Example
RELA HIGH		Positively affecting relatedness.	
	RELA HIGH: Connection to others	Feeling connected to other people.	"I think it's really important to feel like you're not alone. I think if I felt very lonely, I don't know if I could have made it through this degree, because I think it's so important to have friends that you can just complain to, um, and that are going through the same thing as you."
	RELA HIGH Institution	This can be interpreted as the university, faculty or current year of study(i.e first, second year etc.)	"Like first, I just had the student assistant job for like a year and then beginning of last year I started the teaching job...but like I'm creating, creating and changing education like on a kind of daily basis with my jobs and I think that also really really helped me helped with my sense of belonging and also kind of forming that identity"
	RELA HIGH:Support network	Having a support network, such as family, friends, and/or a partner	"Well, I think it's important I think the support I received like that was important. And I do think that definitely, being here being like present physically at the university at the student life like going to the lectures in person, that's also in a sense, part of connectedness."
RELA LESS		Negatively affecting relatedness.	
	RELA LESS: (Lack of) Connection to others	Feel disconnected from other people.	"I think it's like almost impossible to do it without having people around you. And of course it's about psychology, but I want to compare to [Censored second Bachelor study] because like, I feel a lot less related to the people there, they're younger."
	RELA LESS: Exam period	The exam season	"When it's exam phase? Less, because I'm in the library a lot. And I know other students, they sometimes learn in groups, but I haven't found a good one yet. So I was always like studying for myself. Yeah, so on that period, I feel less."
	RELA LESS: Practical groups	Assigned groups in the practical courses for the bachelors	"...Everything when we had to, like contribute something ourselves, we pretty much had to do it individually. So there wasn't really a lot of relatedness. And it was just me and this paper that I had to write for my academic skills or something."

Category	Code	Description	Example
	RELA LESS: Unsure about future	Uncertainty about the future	"...Sometimes I felt like everyone was so sure of like, what they're doing in their study. And, like, already, like, a lot of people have plans, what they're going to do in their masters. And even after in this, like, very clear vision of what they want to do with the bachelor. And for me, I was always like, yeah, I don't really know."

### *Types of Connections in Academia Described by Participants*

Connections	Description	Quote
Fellow students	Having peers to exchange ideas with, learn from, and study with. These peers can also be friends who support each other.	"It helped with having a support system, but also to help with the studies because you have someone there going through the same exact thing."
Teachers	Being able to approach, talk to the teachers, asking them questions about the content of courses.	"Also having connections to researchers, having connections to lecturers, feeling like I can approach them and ask questions."
Content of classes	Having a sense that the content of the class is interesting and meaningful, sparking a curiosity to learn more about the subject.	"The content, because when I read the content, meaning also, it's really interesting, and I liked it a lot."
University/faculty	Feeling like one belongs with the university, within the faculty and the university buildings.	"I am having the sense of belonging to my uni and having the sense of belonging to my faculty"

### *Influence of Relationships on Well-Being*

Code	Description	Example
RELATIONSHIPS affect negatively	Relationships had a negative impact on their wellbeing	"I don't think anything crazy like even now, um, three weeks ago, actually, I broke up with my boyfriend, who I had, like, for a very longtime. So throughout my entire study period, so that kind of, you know, I feel like at the moment changes a lot all of the sudden. Um, but and that of course like I see that it puts a lot of stress on my body and my ability to focus and so on."

Code	Description	Example
RELATIONSHIPS affect positively	Relationships had a positive impact on their wellbeing	"...I also have friends that are like, very determined, and I think that can also, like has definitely also motivated me to do more and like seeing how passionate they are about the stuff also made me like a bit more excited, I guess about the study. So yeah, I think it has helped me."
RELATIONSHIPS no affect	Relationships had no impact on their wellbeing	"Yeah. Not really, like it's all stable."

*Responsibility of, Acts by, and Wishes for University Observed by Participants to Foster Student Well-Being*

Category	Code	Description	Example
RESP UNI:		What is the university responsible for regarding student well-being?	
	RESP UNI: Basis of social safety	Providing an environment that prioritized social safety, limits discrimination and takes student well-being into account.	"I think a big factor is overall the university plays a big part in how they design a programme, how they, the professor's they hire the environment that you created. Is it more of a hostile environment? is it caring environment?"
	RESP UNI: Good quality of education	Providing good quality of education, including organization of courses as well as hiring capable teachers.	"The education needs to be good by capable people. I think that's sometimes difficult because not everybody within academia wants to teach. But I think good education gives students feel the competence, give students the motivation because they see a competent person, it's inspiring"
	RESP UNI: WB Resources	Providing well-being resources, including study advisors, student psychologists, and accommodations for disabilities.	"There should be student doctors, student psychologists, very important, mentors, very important, study advisors, those are base things that the university has to provide"

Category	Code	Description	Example
ACT UNI:		Acts by, or features of the university observed by participant to foster student well-being	
	ACT UNI: Autonomy	Fostering student autonomy	"So I think that is like the academic autonomy that the university does give, of course, more or less by default, by the way it's structured."
	ACT UNI: Competence	Fostering student competence	"With the competence, I mean, there's a lot of programs on like, external facility, study associations, all of that, that you can be a part of, and I think that can increase your competency. So I think there's a lot of university or more like slightly external organizations that are provided"
	ACT UNI: Relatedness	Fostering student relatedness	"I really do think that there is usually an attempt of the university to foster some more relatedness even within courses by encouraging course, group work. I like to create group projects within certain courses that people work together. It doesn't always work out to a very like to like the extent that many people want it to and not liking having to do all of the coursework, but I do think it's the attempt in this case, like on this sense that counts like and it is this an opportunity to meet new people like to get to know like other people, of course, that you maybe haven't known if you were like randomly assigned to like some small group project with Yeah, I think that's so think they're doing a lot."
	ACT UNI: Structure courses	Features of the structure or content of specific courses	"Because we did have like a lot of like, we did have some mentors that throughout the year, I think the first year was a lot of mentors, like for academic skills for the research part, for statistics"
	ACT UNI: Structure curriculum (large scale)	Features of the curriculum at a larger scale, degree wide	"Well, the fact that you get to choose first of all your degree that you've gone for, and then that you have some, ok here in the first two years less but in the third year more choice of subjects, electives. And that kind of stuff."

Category	Code	Description	Example
	ACT UNI: WB resources	Well-being resources that the university provides, including study advisors and student psychologists among others	"I mean, like I just said, they have therapists. I really liked the fact that they offer study advisors. Yeah. Cuz with the whole study delay thing I really appreciated having somebody to go to who could help me figure out what steps I have to take next, for me to actually be able to do what I want to do"
WISH UNI:		Aspects the participant thinks the university could improve on to foster student well-being	
	WISH UNI: Autonomy	Changes that would improve student autonomy	"Giving more freedom with like, projects and choosing courses earlier, or just, yeah, project stuff. I think that would help me a lot to feel happier in the studies."
	WISH UNI: Communication	Changes regarding the communication with / from the university to students	"but they should have had clear rules for every course, the same thing, because this was just confusing. And it was almost like, they didn't even explain why things change sometimes."
	WISH UNI: Competence	Changes that would improve student competence	"I remember within statistics three, they were like, if you failed two, you cannot pass, which is bullshit, I think, because there are so many reasons why students fail courses, which is, I think, almost most of the time, not related to if they were capable to do the course. I kind of believe if you get in university, you're capable. Maybe that's naive, I don't know. But I think saying that takes away a lot of feeling of competence of a student"
	WISH UNI: Assessment and grading	Changes regarding the mode of assessment, types of exams, grading and feedback on assignments.	"I don't think realistically, but just in some utopian thing, like, get rid of the multiple choice tests, just do essays, or open questions."
	WISH UNI: Financial	Changes that addressed students' financial situations.	"Increasing the number of student jobs because a lot of students need jobs, and a lot of students will be fit to do the job."
	WISH UNI: Pressure	Changes regarding the pressure on students, including workload and course prerequisites among others	"When I compare what my friends say, and what younger students say, there are a few classes that repeatedly share the same sentiment of this was way too much. It's too much reading and too many lectures. And I just don't understand but you don't get any extra help."

Category	Code	Description	Example
	WISH UNI: Relatedness	Changes that would improve student relatedness to each other and from teacher to student	"I would prefer if there was a bit more personal interaction, at least possible with not just the other students because that is possible but also to like the staff"
	WISH UNI: Structure courses	Changes regarding the structure of or setup within courses.	"I would say that some of the courses can probably be restructured. But I don't know if that will directly influence student wellbeing. In terms of being a bit less stressful, less workload, but still teaching somewhat of the same amount of material. I think there are probably ways to do that, which is obviously hard but not undoable."
	WISH UNI: Structure curriculum	Changes regarding the curriculum on a larger scale, including the length of study blocks among others.	"to do it like in the biology bachelor where you're like, have a course for a few weeks and then have an exam for that one course. That you're doing it one at a time because that would help me a lot personally, so so much to just focus on one thing at a time and I would have like, it's so straightforward, and it makes so much more sense that I didn't just have the exam and move on"
	WISH UNI: Understanding	Changes regarding the university's (and teacher's) understanding and empathy towards students, including force majeure circumstances, mental health, and feedback on courses.	"They don't care about the people with chronic illness, who can't show up to class, there's courses who require your mandatory participation, and just like one time, you can miss it, and they see like, Okay, if someone died, or if you're ill, but like, they, again, don't care about people, with chronic illness, no matter if it's mental or physical."
	WISH UNI: WB resources	Changes regarding the well-being resources that our university offers, including extra resources and the availability of those resources	"But I think, for example, it takes a while to get into the study advisors here. I think that's terrible. I think you should be able to make an appointment very quickly because it's already very anxiety-provoking to go there and that you have to wait for weeks."



*Responsibility of, Acts by, and Wishes for the University Observed by Participants to Foster Student Well-Being*

Category	Code	Description	Example
ACT OWN		Acts taken by the participant themselves to foster their student well-being.	
	ACT OWN AUTO	Fostering own autonomy.	"I kind of feel like I made a decision in my third year. I started in other studies, and I spread out my third year a little bit because I'm doing my thesis in my fourth year, which gave me even more autonomy and time to decide."
	ACT OWN COMP	Fostering own competence.	"I feel achieved or feel competent when I [...] present myself in meetings in a professional way, or the sessions [that I am teaching] go well."
	ACT OWN RELA	Fostering own relatedness.	"If I see somebody in a lecture and I think, oh, they seem cool, I actively try to talk to them."
	ACT OWN: Self-compassion ACT OWN: Checking in on yourself	Treating yourself with kindness, understanding and support. Taking a moment to assess ones current mental, physical and emotional state.	"Over the years, I've grown to accept the fact that bad things can happen. I have bad reactions to the bad things. But that is just human." "I think I'm good at detecting when I'm not doing so well, like just from a well being perspective. Um, and then usually also realize, okay, I need to find a solution for this. I need to calm down and to prioritize my well-being."
	ACT OWN: Taking responsibility	Taking responsibility for the outcomes of ones actions.	"I'm like, okay, I need to change something. I want to change something. This can't continue like this. Like, I'm having like a down phase. I can't get up to study. Okay, what do I need to change?"

Category	Code	Description	Example
WISH OWN	ACT OWN: Therapy	Seeking out professional psychological help.	"I did go to therapy at some point. So I did get a package of knowledge that I can use. And I know that somehow I have to do those things to be okay."
		Aspects the participant thinks they themselves could improve on to foster their student well-being.	
	WISH OWN: RELA	Action to increase sense of relatedness that the student wishes to take in the future	"Finding a study group would be something that I want to do."
	WISH OWN: COMP	Action to increase sense of competence that the student wishes to take in the future	"I would just like to stop the comparison, because I am my own person. And my success is independent of how well [my friends] do. Even if they do better, I still do good."
	WISH OWN: AUTO	Action to increase sense of autonomy that the student wishes to take in the future	"I want to get back in touch with my hobbies, just to stay anchored in my identity and develop it a bit more. I also need to put effort into something else [than school]."
	WISH OWN: Self-compassion	Wishing to be more compassionate towards oneself in the future	"I feel like there is still room for more acceptance towards my grades."
	Wish OWN: Work/Life balance	Wishing to have more balanced life in the future	"I am always saying that I want to have weekends off, I think that is a big thing."