

## Assessing the Mental Health of Widening Participation (WP) Students across their journeys into and through Elite Higher Education (HE) Institutions



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## **Context**

Growing numbers of HE students coming from WP backgrounds

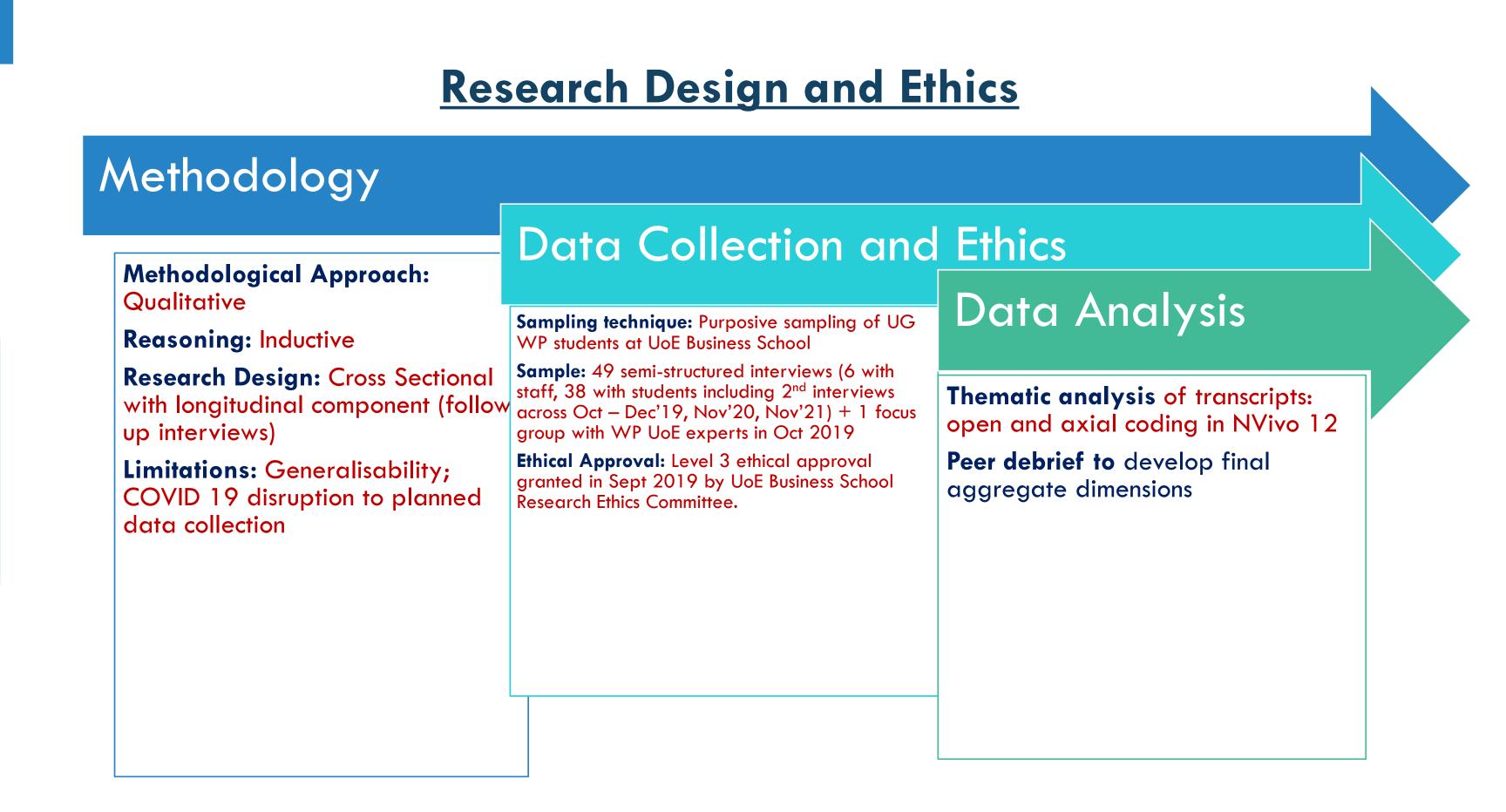
Considered more vulnerable to experiencing a greater range of challenges to their mental well-being, such as social isolation, loneliness, financial insecurity, complex family circumstances and longer working and commuting hours outside of university.

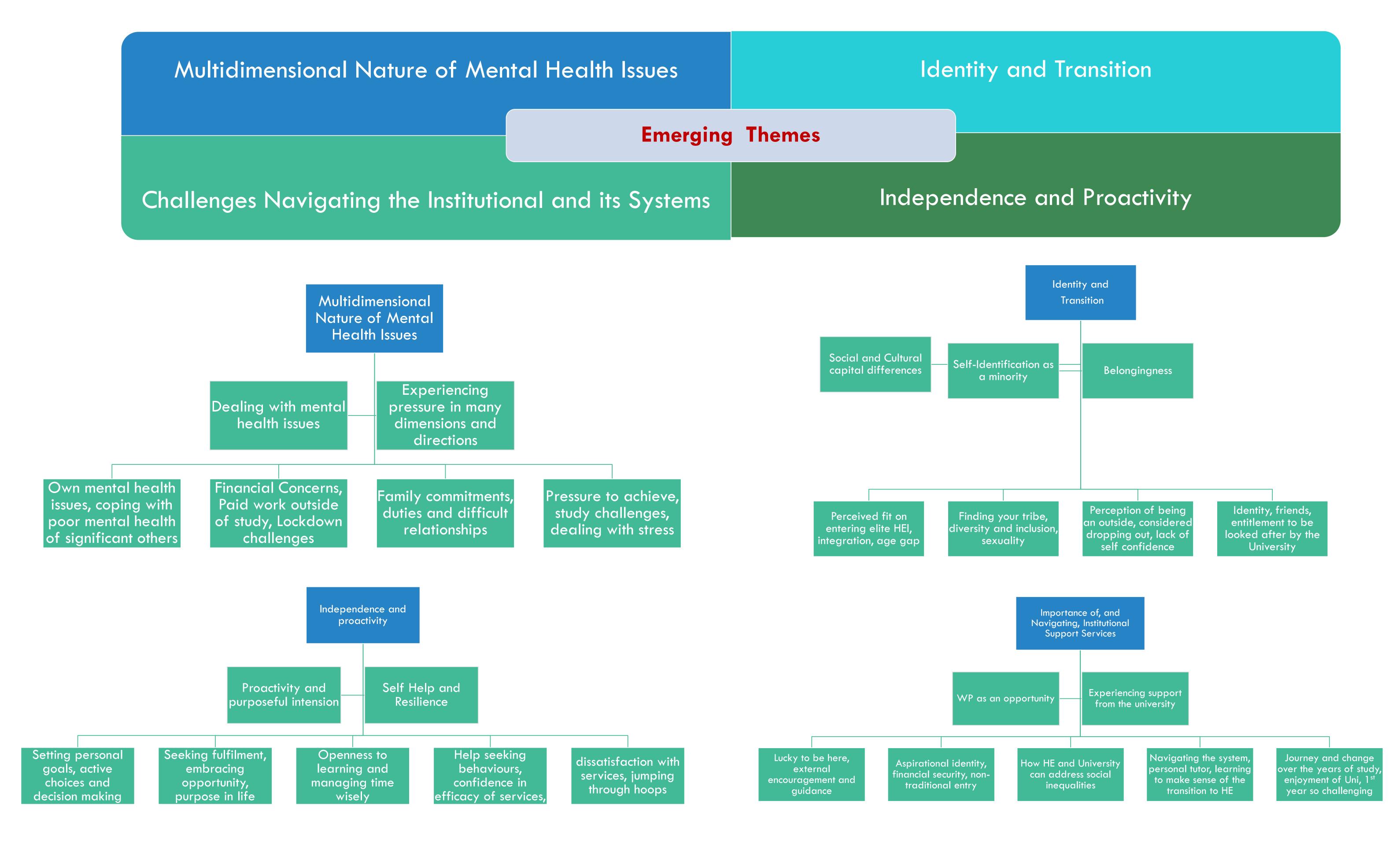
Experience of HE may differ from others due to class politics, other forms of exclusion, the negotiation of various identities while at university and the support networks (personal and professional) available to them.

Experience can be amplified for WP students who gain admission to "Elite" universities

## **Project Aim**

To explore, identify and understand the journeys of WP students in, and through, an elite university in terms of mental health challenges, perceived well-being, and institutional supports and impact.





## **Emerging Lessons**

WP students are heterogeneous with differing levels of knowledge, identification and comfort with their WP status and a perception that others know the rules of the game and they are always playing catch up.

WP students reported high levels of self reliance, resilience and independence leading some to reject institutional support services

WP students need support to build connections with, and belonging to, a community of students, staff and alumni "like them"

Better integration across levels, and collaboration between, complex multi level institutional support services in order to reduce barriers to asking for help, improve communication about, and between services, reduce administrative burden on students and improve student experience.

Hybrid Learning may help level the playing field for some WP students by helping to enhance belonging, building unexpected friendships, and fostering a stronger sense of community.

When comparing to their non-WP peers,
WP students perceive that they under
achieve, are unable to compete
academically and professionally. No matter
how hard they work they are slipping
behind there non WP peers. This hampers
their academic attainment, restricts their
professional opportunities and limits the coand extra-curricula opportunities they can
take-up at University.