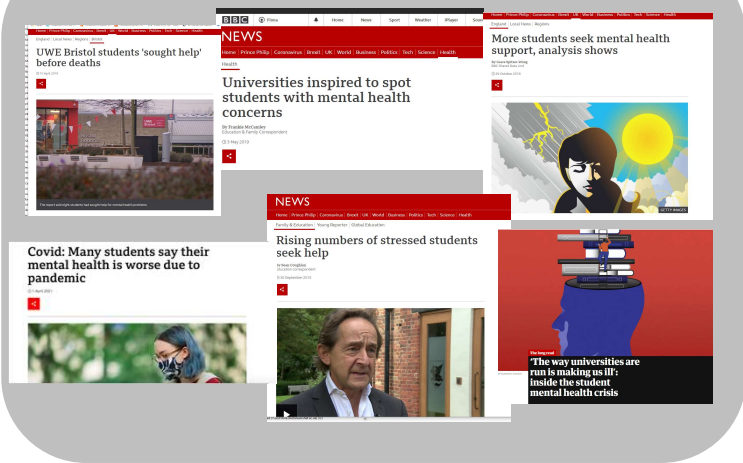




# Factors Associated with Poor Mental Health and Wellbeing Amongst University Students in the UK – A Systematic Review

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## BACKGROUND



## METHODS

### Systematic review

Searched - 5 electronic data bases and relevant websites for evidence

PPI engagement – throughout review

### Inclusion criteria

- UK only
- Students at university or higher education
- 2010-2020
- Observational studies, qualitative studies
- Poor mental health and mental wellbeing outcomes

Quality assessment - JBI tool for observational studies and

Synthesis - Narrative synthesis

## FINDINGS (31 included studies)

### Vulnerabilities

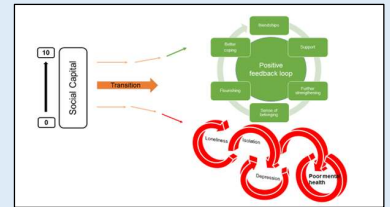
- Childhood trauma
- Abuse
- LGBTQ
- History of mental illness
- Autism spectrum
- Family history of mental illness

### Triggers

- Social isolation
- Loneliness
- Difficulties in relationships with peers
- Stress
- Body image concerns

### Red flags

- Lack of engagement
- Unhealthy lifestyle behaviours
- Lack of help seeking



### Buffers

- Self esteem
- Adaptability
- Resilience
- Optimism
- Engagement in physical activity
- Good induction programmes

- Low morale for BAME groups 'all the cleaners were black and the lecturers were white'
- Peer pressure to say 'it's amazing'
- Health and wellbeing services are hard to see, hard to access or unhelpful
- Competitive toxic environments

PPI voices

## LIMITATIONS

- Research is heterogeneous - limits extent to which datasets can be synthesised in a meaningful way
- Most studies recruited from only 1 university
- Poor representation of minority groups in sample
- Only 7 longitudinal in design (most cross-sectional survey designs)

## CONCLUSIONS

- This review aimed to go 'upstream' to look at the factors that lead to poor mental health and positive mental wellbeing amongst students in Higher Education.
- We identified a range of factors that work in inter-related and compounding ways to affect mental wellbeing: 'vulnerabilities', 'triggers', 'buffers' and 'red flags'.
- Improved knowledge of the factors that are associated with poor mental health and those that increase wellbeing can provide a foundation for designing strategies and specific interventions that can prevent poor mental health and ensuring targeted support is available for students at increased risk. An animation is one way we are using this work to support first year university students.