

Supporting Transitions: The Role of Prosocial Behaviours in Post-Graduation Well-Being

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Introduction


Graduating from university is a major life transition, which may elicit negative emotions and uncertainty. However, few studies have examined how to support students during this period.

Studies have shown that prosocial acts promote well-being (e.g., Aknin et al., 2020).

Here we examine whether students on the cusp of graduation anticipate engaging in prosocial behaviours and if that predicts their mental and physical health.


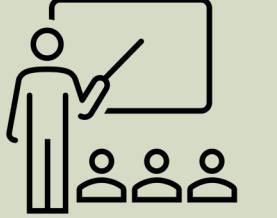


Methods

Participants

 66 graduating students at SFU ($M_{\text{age}} = 19.6$, 36% female).

Procedure

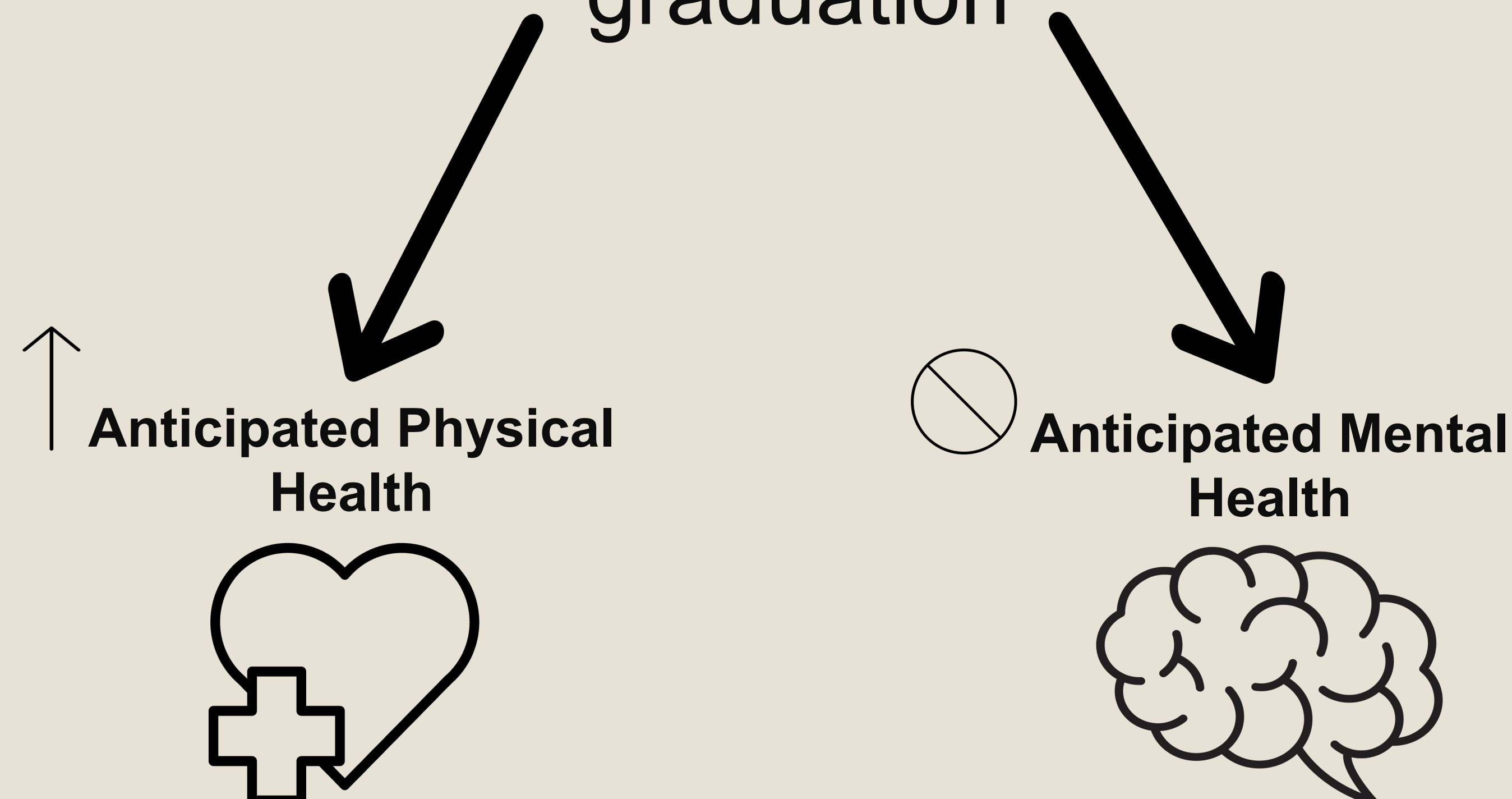
Participants were asked to:

-  1) Rate their current happiness, as well as their depression and anxiety over the past two weeks.
-  2) Rate their student experience at SFU.
-  3) Predict post-graduation mental and physical health changes (**DV**; rated from -5 (decline) to +5 improve).
-  4) Select which activities they plan to engage in post-graduation and share their feelings about their transition out of university (**IV**).

Most graduates **did not** think about engaging in **prosocial behaviours** post-graduation.



Anticipated engagement in prosocial acts post-graduation



? Pre-Registered Hypotheses:

H1: Do most people plan to engage in at least one prosocial act when thinking about their life after graduation?

H2/3: Do people who plan to engage in more prosocial behaviours after graduation also report greater anticipated mental and physical health?

Results

38% of participants reported that they plan on engaging in **at least one** prosocial act post-graduation, $\chi^2 = 3.38$, $p = 0.66$.

Contrary to our pre-registered hypotheses, participants planning on engaging in more prosocial acts after graduation **did not** anticipate better **mental health** ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = 0.71$), but **did** anticipate slightly better **physical health** ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.77$).

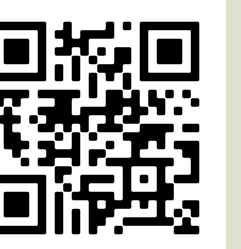
Conclusion

Implications

Graduating students may not realize that prosociality could be one strategy to help support them through their upcoming life transition.

Future Directions and Limitations

Further work is needed to investigate whether prosociality is a beneficial support strategy for other major life transitions.



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