



Faculty of Arts



CHARLES STURT  
UNIVERSITY



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE & LIBERAL STUDIES

# Emotional wellbeing of first year university students: Critical for determining future academic success

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# Background

- Student Self Reporting
- 2007 FYHE Conference Roundtable Discussion
- The Next Step .....



## The next step .....

- How will we investigate students experiences and emotional wellbeing?
- Do negative emotional issues impact on academic performance?



# Aim of Study

To identify whether first year university students were experiencing emotional & mental health issues,

and if they were,

did those emotional and mental health issues impact negatively on their academic performance?



# Methodology

## Participants

- 189 first year internal students
- 66% female / 34% male
- 67% - 17 – 19 yrs / 28% - 20 – 29yrs  
5% - 30+ yrs
- Rural - 48% / Urban - 52%
- across courses & faculties



## Questionnaire

- Based on *a priori* assumptions gathered by information from existing evidence based research
- Based on information from combined sources
- Self report format
- 100 descriptive statements



## Questionnaire Item Examples

- I experienced difficulty in doing assignments for my subjects
- My first year was a very positive experience
- I suffered from very low self-esteem
- I had a problem controlling my alcohol intake
- I had family problems outside university
- I felt I had a lack of academic skills
- I felt comfortable approaching the lecturers
- I experienced sexual harassment



## Procedure

- Personal request for voluntary participation
- Exploratory Principal Components Factor Analysis
- Correlations & Multiple Regression





# Results

## Self Report Findings of Item examples

50% - being really stressed

26% - suffering from anxiety

24% - suffering from depression

18% - experienced violence

10% - self harming behaviour

10% - extremely negative sexual experience

65% - I am not coping with my responsibilities



55% - my friends were involved in drug use

30% - I experienced drugs on campus

27% - I took illicit drugs

24% - had a problem controlling alcohol intake \*\*

58% - needed friends for emotional support

39% - felt as though I needed help but didn't seek it

10% - visited counsellor outside university

8.5% - visited university counsellor



# Results

Principal Components Exploratory Factor Analysis

## 4 Factors Extracted

1. Positive Social Interaction
2. Mental Health Problems
3. Negative Experiences
4. Academic Difficulties



# Results

Mean Scores for the four identified factors

| FACTOR                      | MALE       | FEMALE      |
|-----------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Positive Social Interaction | 3.80 (.65) | 3.65 (.62)  |
| Mental Health Problems      | 2.14 (.75) | 2.40 (.70)* |
| Negative Experiences        | 2.37 (.63) | 2.22 (.56)  |
| Academic Difficulties       | 2.94 (.77) | 2.77 (.71)  |



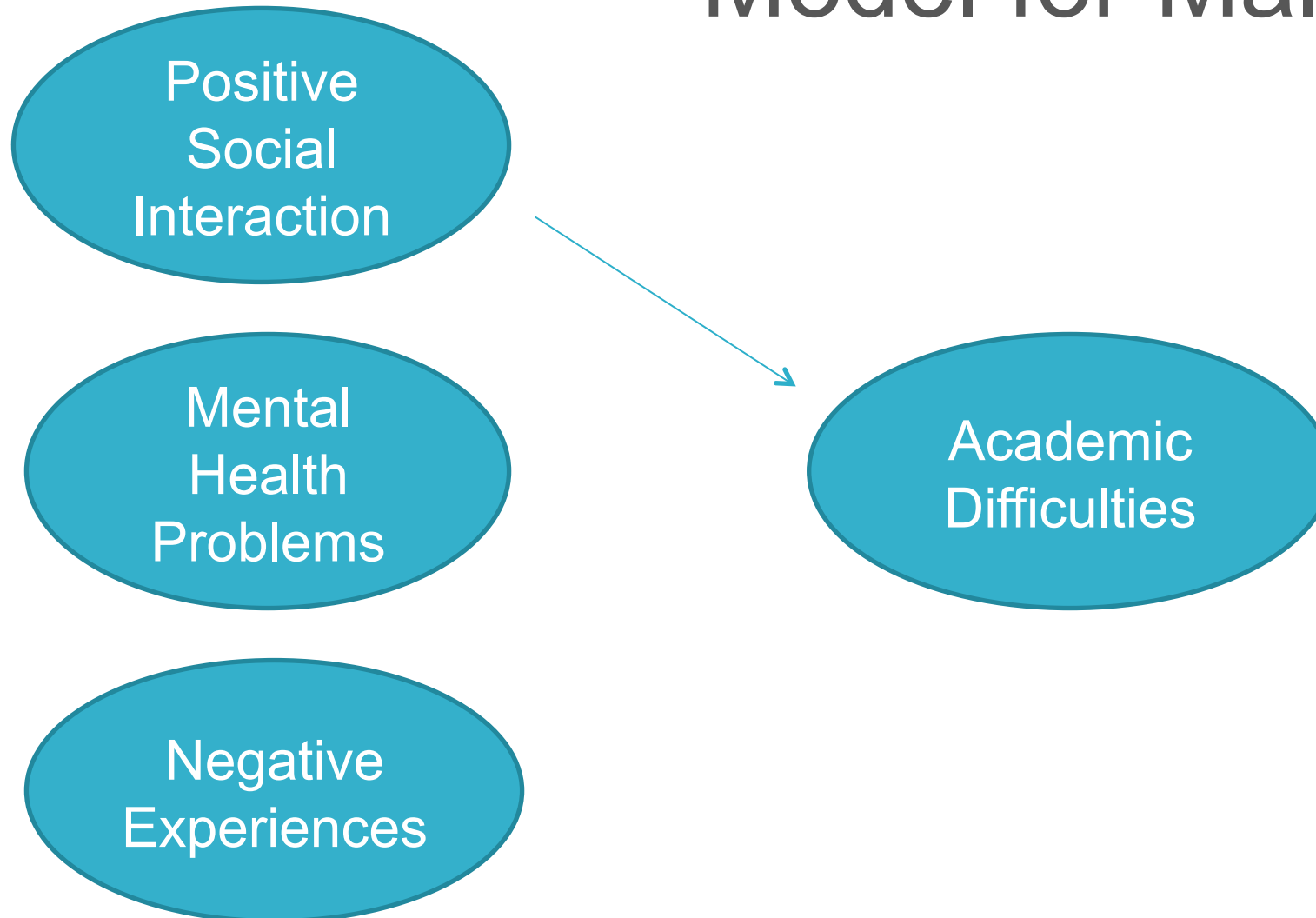
# Results

Multiple Regression Analysis for experience of **ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES**

| Predictors                  | Beta  | t     | p    |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|------|
| <u>Male</u>                 |       |       |      |
| Positive Social Interaction | -.327 | -2.23 | .030 |
| Mental Health Problems      | .275  | 1.83  | .072 |
| Negative Experiences        | .234  | 1.81  | .076 |
| <u>Female</u>               |       |       |      |
| Positive Social Interaction | -.157 | -1.89 | .060 |
| Mental Health Problems      | .343  | 4.02  | .001 |
| Negative Experiences        | .304  | 3.73  | .001 |

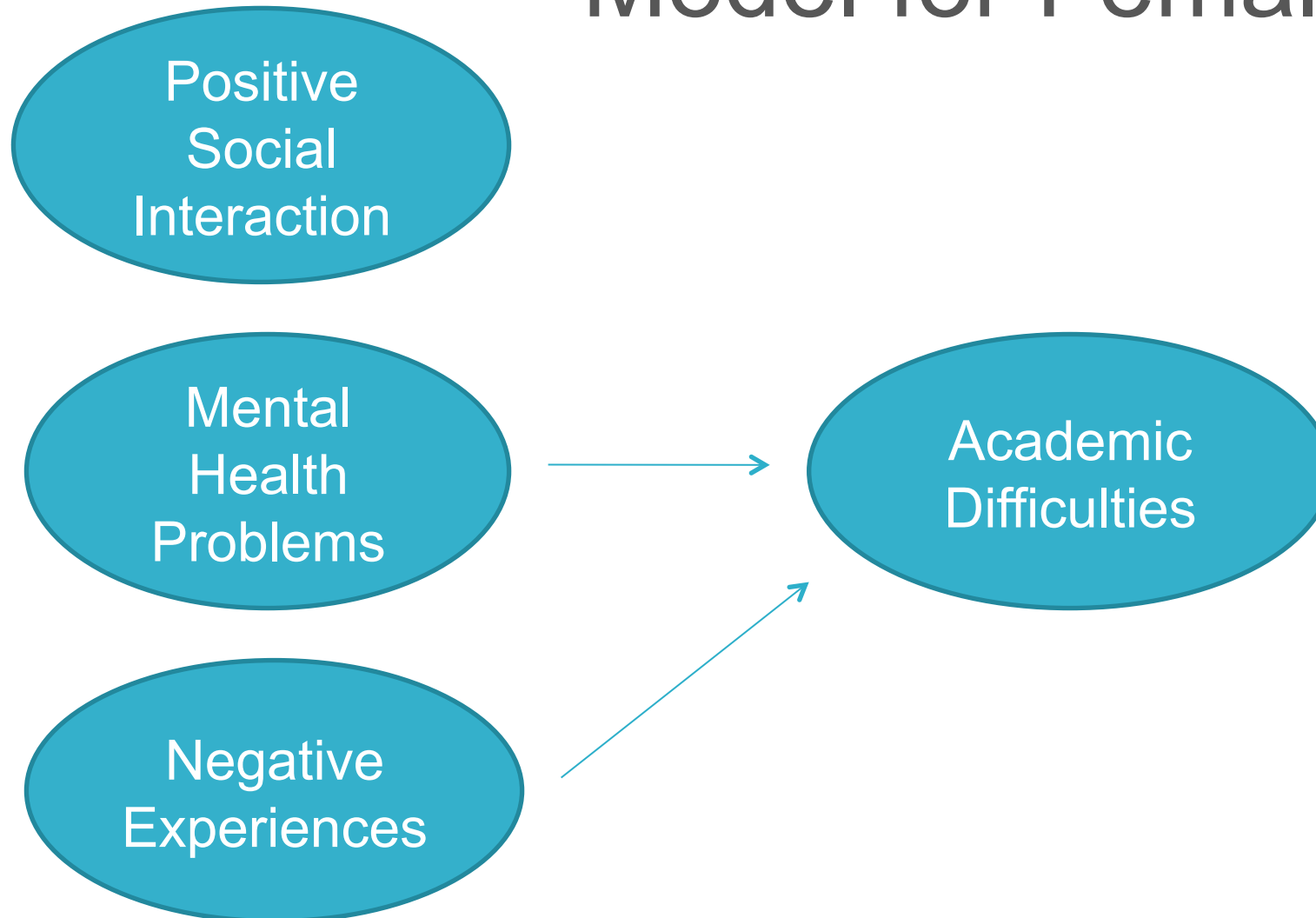


# Model for Males





# Model for Females





# Meanings

- Large numbers of FY students in this study have indicated wide range of emotional and mental health problems
- Females mental health & emotional wellbeing can predict Academic Difficulties
- Males and females show different predictive models for academic difficulties





# Where to from here?

- Further Research
- Implications
- University Services
- Retention & Attrition of students



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