



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

# Higher Degree by Research

## Wellbeing, Engagement, & Research Culture project (HDR WERC)

### ACGR

### 12 November 2021

Belinda Bern & A/Prof Stacey Parker

# Why was this research conducted?

Australian HDR context

Factors of mental health & well-being

Research environment

# Survey Development Process

Survey Scoping (PRES, PREQ)

UQ Student-Staff Partnership

UQ Advisory Group

**Outcomes:** Mental health, wellbeing, and engagement

**Predictors:** Enabling and constraining; individual and contextual

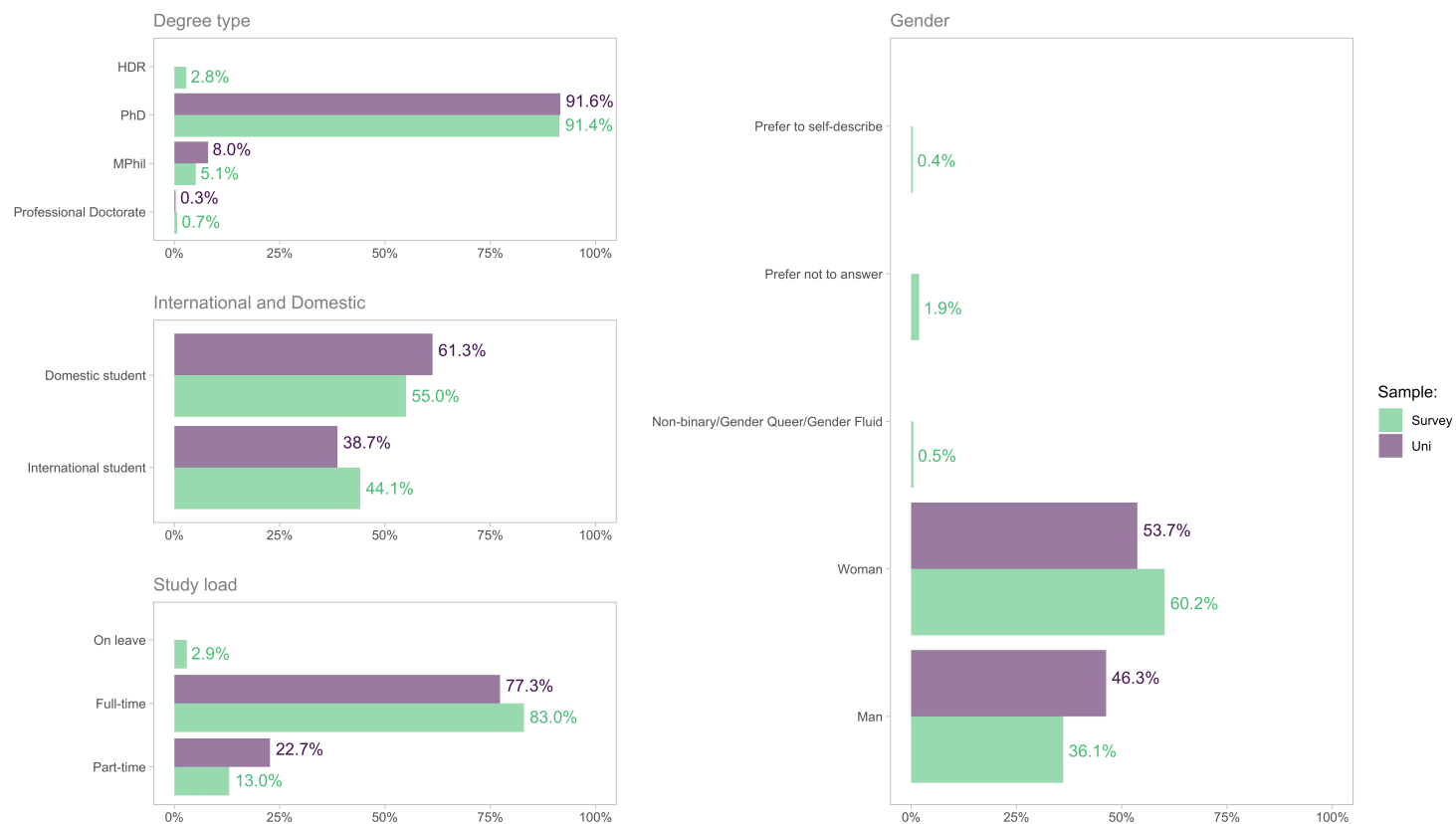


# Results 1

## About the respondents

# Respondents

## Representativeness of survey respondents



Total survey responses = 746

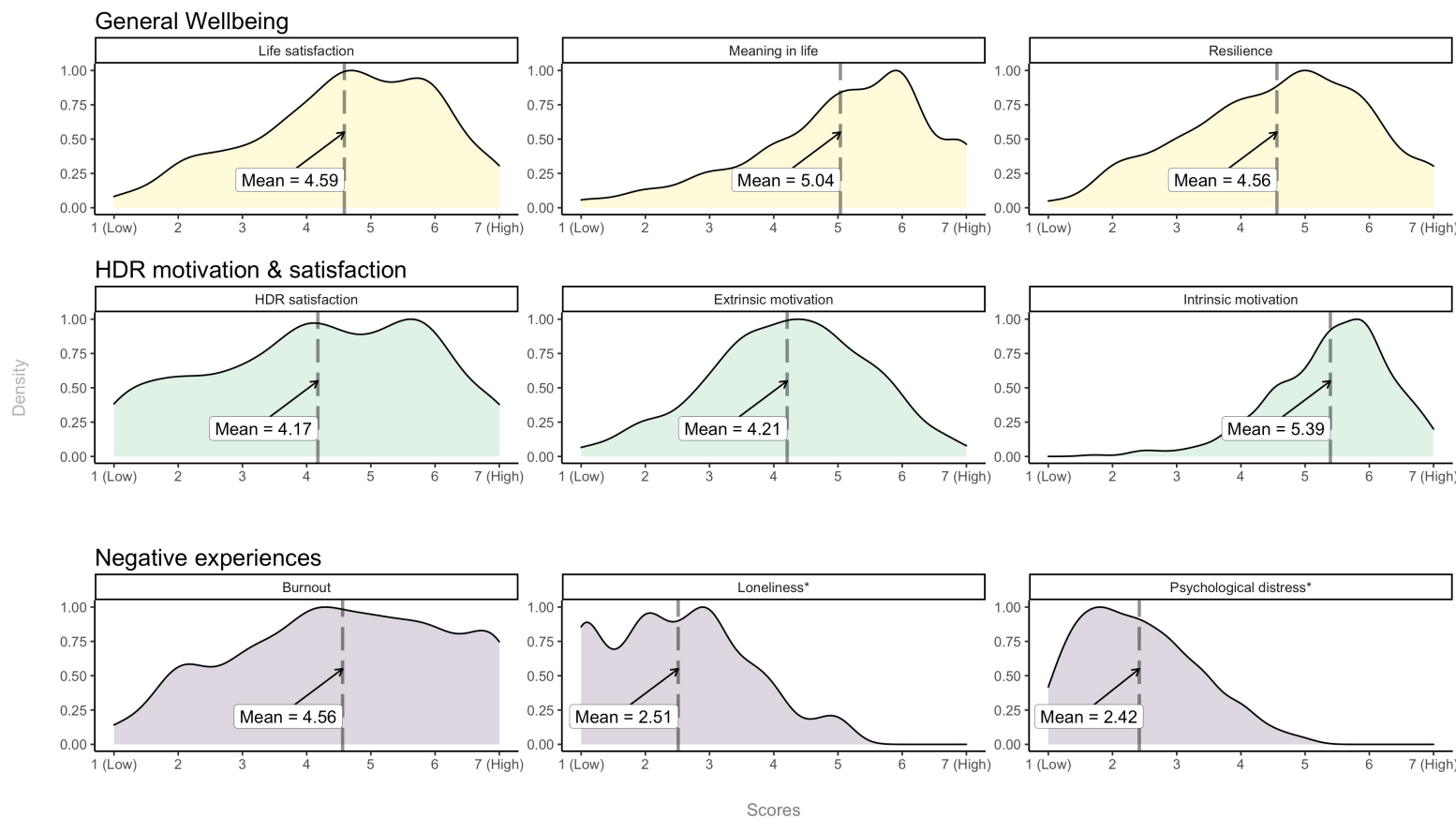


# Results 2

## Distribution of outcomes

# Results

## Distribution of Wellbeing and Engagement outcomes



Note: \*Psychological distress & Loneliness was measured on a scale with anchor points between 1 - 5

### In general HDR students...

- are satisfied with life
- have meaning in life
- consider themselves resilient
- are more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated

### BUT they also...

- have mixed satisfaction with their HDR program
- experience burnout, loneliness, and distress



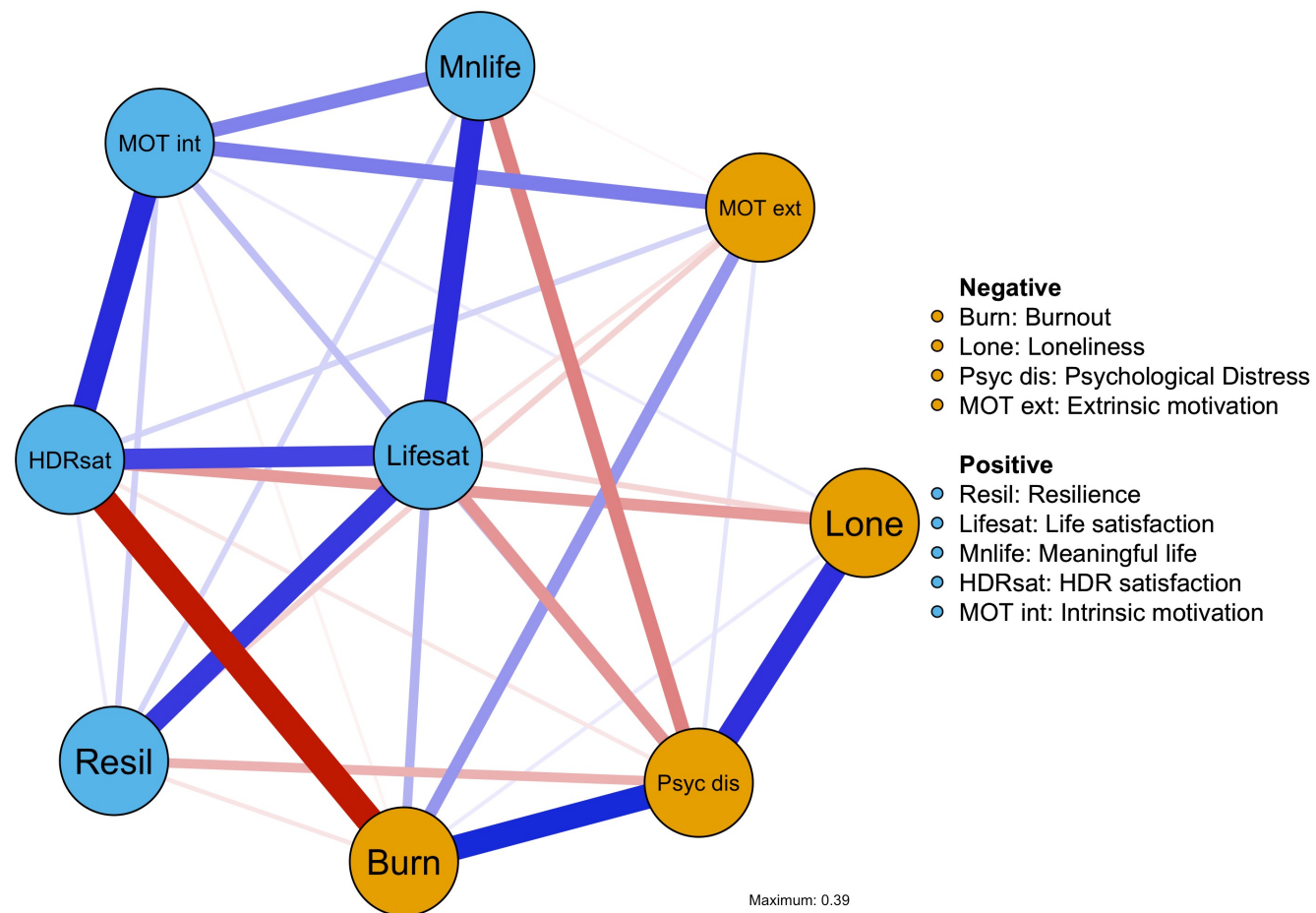
# Results 3

## Relationships between outcomes



# Results

Wellbeing & Engagement network



Psychological distress, HDR satisfaction and life satisfaction have the strongest connection within the network of wellbeing and engagement.

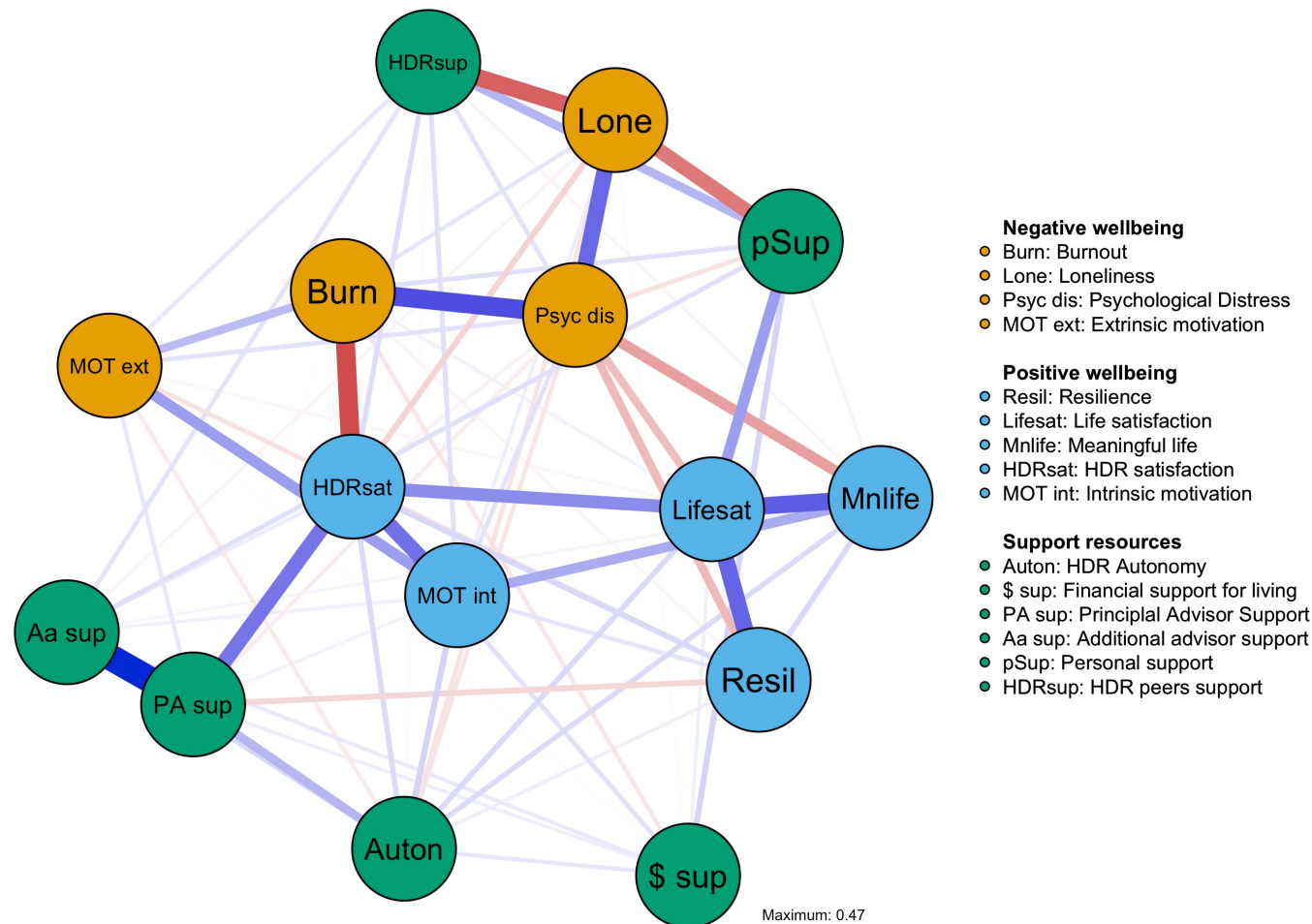
Psychological distress is linked to greater HDR burnout and loneliness, and lower life satisfaction and meaningful life.

Life satisfaction is associated with greater HDR satisfaction, resilience, and meaningful life.

HDR satisfaction is linked to lower loneliness and HDR burnout, and higher intrinsic motivation and life satisfaction.

# Results

Support resource & wellbeing network



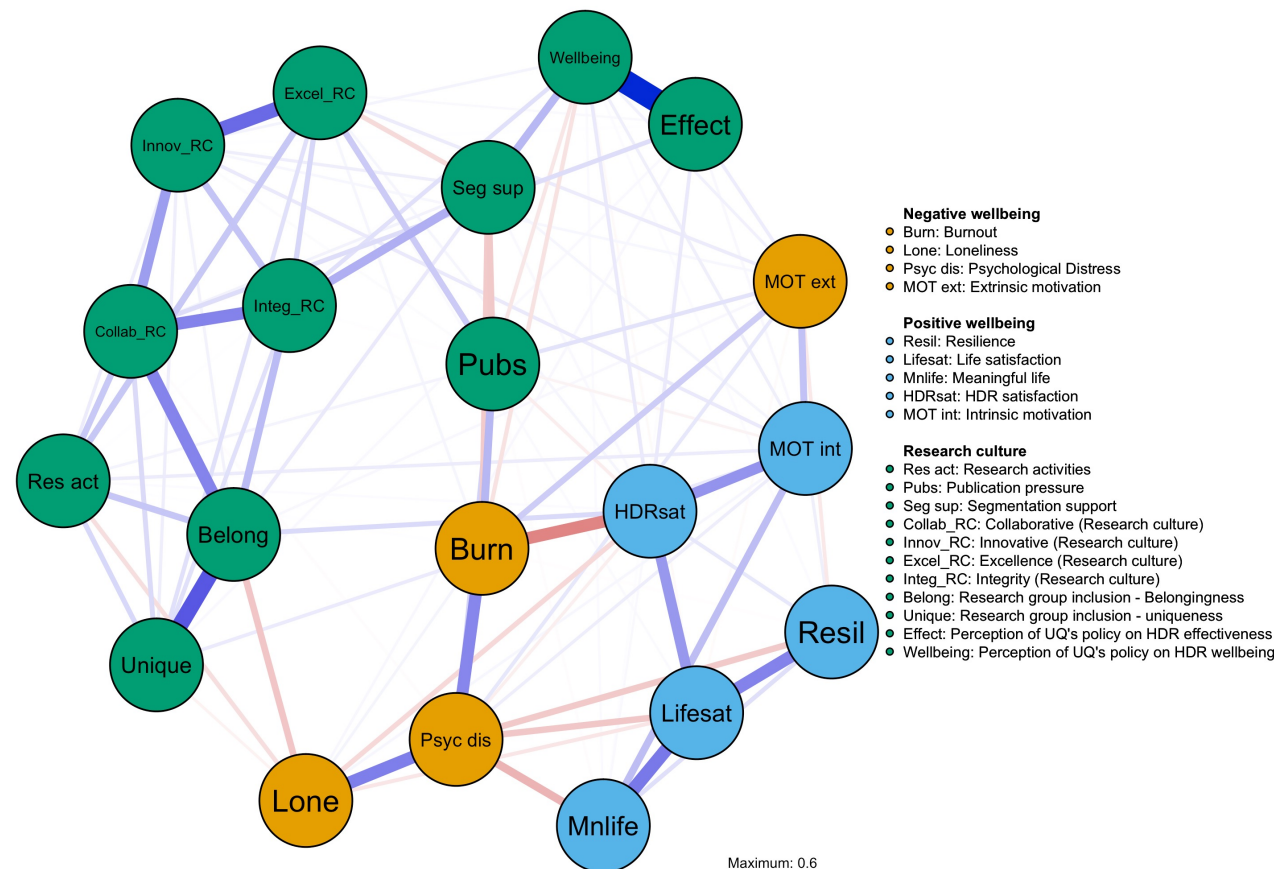
HDR peer support is linked to lower loneliness.

Personal support is also associated with lower loneliness, but also greater life satisfaction.

Principal advisor support is linked to greater levels of HDR satisfaction.

# Results

Research culture & Wellbeing network



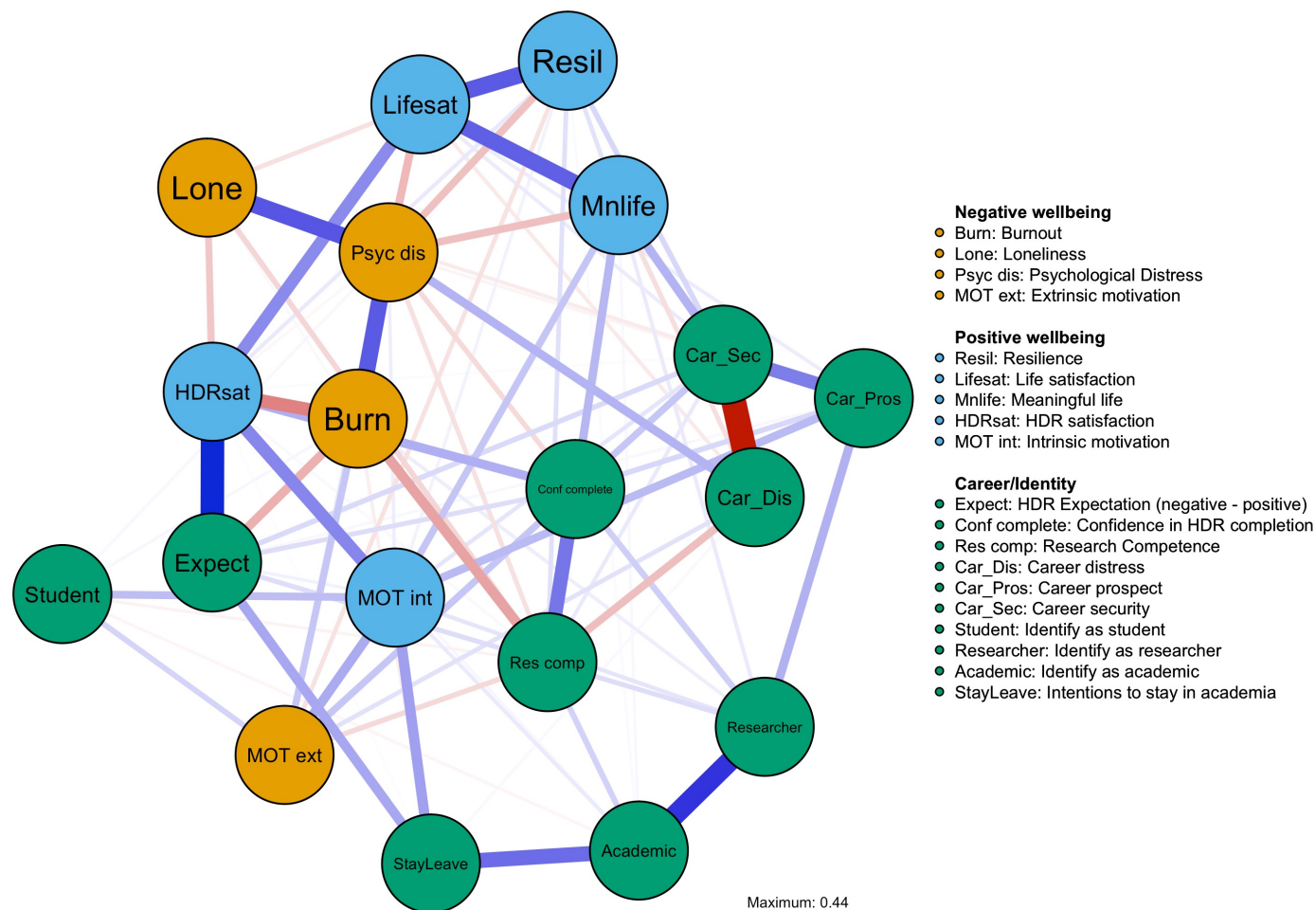
Publication pressure is linked to greater HDR burnout and psychological distress.

Experiencing higher levels of belongingness in one's research group is linked to lower levels of loneliness.

Segmentation support is linked to lower levels of HDR burnout.

# Results

Career/Identity & Wellbeing network



Having a more positive HDR experience than expected is linked to greater HDR satisfaction and lower HDR burnout.

Research competence is associated with less HDR burnout, while confidence in completion is linked to more HDR satisfaction and meaningful life.

Career distress is associated with more psychological distress, while career prospects more intrinsic motivation, and career security more meaningful life.

Holding a student identity is associated with more intrinsic motivation, as is having a stronger intention to stay in academia.



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# Recommendations

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# Next steps

# Recommendations

## Candidate support

- Increase access to dedicated **HDR counselling support**
- Ensure **clear and consistent expectations to monitor progress**
- Consistent mechanism to establish **shared expectations at Induction** for Candidates/Supervisors

## Candidate development & resources

- **Expand wellbeing offerings** and extend Mental Health First Aid to all HDRs
- Continue and **expand career advising** activities.
- Integrate the use of an **Individual development plan** into the candidate journey map.

## Research environment

- **Needs analysis to improve local research environment**
- Increase **reach and profile of peer networks** - HDR Leaders and Postgrad Society
- Explore space and opportunities for co-location for **HDR candidates**

## Supervisor development & quality

- **Mental health awareness training** for all Principal Supervisors & Post Graduate Coordinators
- **Supervisor Development** – include strategies for inclusive practices, supporting the wellbeing and development of candidates
- Add nurturing & supporting HDR wellbeing as a criteria for **HDR Supervision Awards**
- **Community of Practice** for HDR supervision

## Next steps

1. **Report** to the UQ Mental Health Strategy Board and the UQ HDR Committee key findings and recommendations for improvements for developing researchers across the UQ community. Form a working group for implementation.
2. **Present findings and recommendations** to key stakeholders in the second half of 2021 to **understand key issues more deeply** and inform the implementation of recommendations.
3. **Revise survey tool based on feedback** and **readminister** in late 2021.
4. Develop an **ECR version for 2022**.



# HDR WERC Project Team

- **Belinda Bern** (Director, UQ Graduate School; UQ HDR Committee)
- **Professor Annemaree Carroll** (Associate Dean Research, Faculty of Humanities & Social Science, UQ; UQ HDR Committee)
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# *Thank you*

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