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**Risk and Protective Factors for Psychological Wellbeing in University Students Accessing
Counseling Services: The PROBEN Project**

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Abstract

Introduction

The PROBEN project ("University for Psychological Wellbeing: From Prevention to Intervention"), funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research (MUR), promotes student mental health through prevention and early intervention. Among different lines, line F focuses on students accessing

university psychological counseling. In this line, a specific study will investigate features of students and clinicians and evaluate the impact of brief, multi-approach counseling interventions in a multicenter academic setting.

Methods

This quantitative, multicenter study uses a naturalistic pre-post design with cross-sectional and longitudinal elements. Data will be collected from about 390 students accessing counseling services at seven universities in Lombardy. Participants will complete an anonymous online self-report battery at baseline (T0) and post-intervention (T1), including: CORE-OM (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation – Outcome Measure), SAES (SInAPSi Academic Engagement Scale), Brief COPE (Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced), DERS-SF (Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale – Short Form), RFQ-8 (Reflective Functioning Questionnaire – 8 items), ad hoc items from the C-SSRS (Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale, self-report), an ad hoc NSSI (non-suicidal self-injury) questionnaire, WHO-ASSIST (Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test, items 1–2), BAQ (Behavioral Addiction Questionnaire), and a satisfaction survey. Clinicians will complete a monitoring form after each session and the TRQ-SF (Therapist Response Questionnaire – Suicide Form). Additional data include demographics, clinician training, and professional activity. Descriptive and inferential analyses will explore profiles and pre-post changes.

Results

Data collection is ongoing. The study explores links among suicide risk, substance use, emotion dysregulation, and reflective functioning. Students are expected to present clinical or subclinical difficulties at baseline. Post-intervention, improvements are anticipated in wellbeing, coping, engagement, and reflective functioning, with similar outcomes across in-person and online formats.

Discussion

This is among the first coordinated efforts in Italy to assess university counseling with validated and tailored tools. Findings will inform national strategies for prevention and improve service effectiveness and access.