



Work-related stress during the PhD:

Possible Causes from a Psychological Point of View



Psychological Counseling Services (PCS)

Program

- Advice provided to doctoral candidates by the Psychological Counseling Services of UZH/ ETHZ
- Supervisor – doctoral candidate relationship: mutual expectations and needs from a psychoanalytical perspective
- Other specific situations of doctoral candidates that can lead to psychic pressure
- Support services



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Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

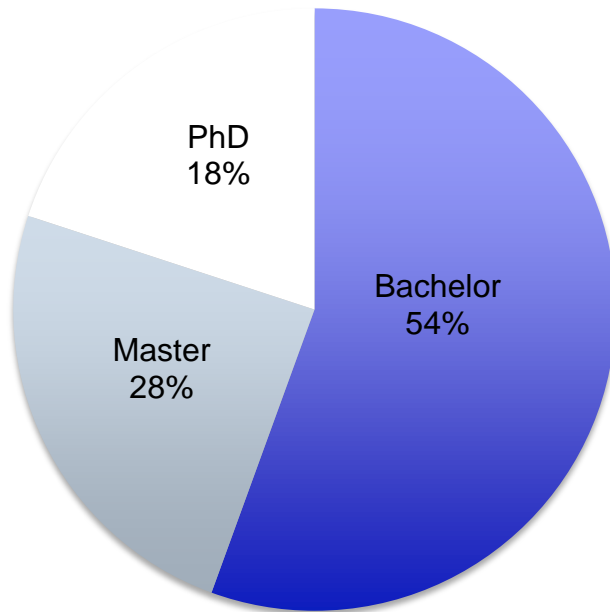
Psychological Counseling Services (PCS)

Psychological Counseling Services UZH/ ETHZ

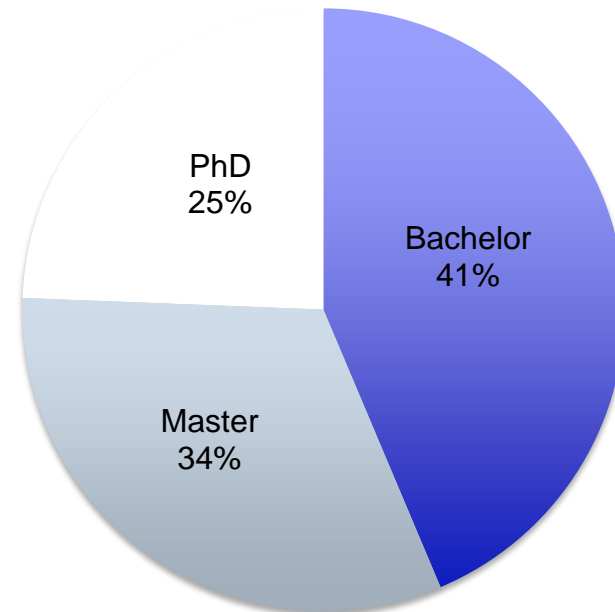


Academic Levels

UZH: New registrations to the PCS



ETHZ: New registrations to the PCS





Psychological Counseling Services (PCS)

PCS provides support with:

- Relationship problems
- Family-related pressures
- Dealing with stress
- Cultural integration
- Anxiety and tension during examination periods
- Lack of motivation to work
- Writing advice
- Guidance when embarking on doctoral degree program
- Conflicts faced by doctoral candidates
- Psychotherapeutic diagnosis
- Crisis intervention



Case example: Leo

- Feeling pressure cannot be cured despite an understanding supervisor
- Too high expectations of his own performance due to inner conflict



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Working Relationship between Professor and Doctoral Candidate



Relationship: Specific characteristics

- Exclusive relationship of high significance to both sides and based on inter-dependency
- From a psychological perspective, comparable with adolescent – parents relationship: Doctoral candidate desires support but also autonomy



Relationship: Dealing with various expectations

- Mostly unconscious desires and fears from both sides
- Different mechanisms are used to reduce anxieties that can arise in this relationship:
 - Doctoral candidate holds own opinion back for fear of excessive criticism
 - Supervisor is too lenient, protects doctoral candidate for fear of damaging the student's self-confidence
- Aim: to better recognize these mechanisms and build a good relationship



Hindering Expectations

of the doctoral candidate:

- highly idealized, omnipotent supervisor, who should be able to understand and solve all problems
- too high expectations of support from an academic perspective
- but also irrational expectations: the professor should fulfill wants, that are as yet unfulfilled in life

of the professor:

- too high expectations of what the doctoral candidate can achieve



Hindering Fears

of the doctoral candidate:

- Over-critical and punishing supervisor
- professor does not accept the student's own opinion; could even prevent successful PhD completion

of the professor:

- selfish doctoral candidate
- only interested in benefitting from the research; then leaves thanklessly



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Other Specific Situations of Doctoral Candidates that can lead to Psychic Pressure



Other Possible Sources of Conflict

- Various phases of the PhD project
- Young age of doctoral candidates
- Female doctoral candidates
- Cultural aspects
- Lack of work-life balance



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Support Services



Support Services

- Human Resources UZH
- Human Resources
- Services provided by Graduate Campus/ Transferable skills UZH
- Psychological Counseling Services UZH/ ETHZ