

How to Become a Health Promotion Practitioner? A Longitudinal Study on Professional Identity Formation and Study Success

Verena Biehl, Julie Page, Frank Wieber, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Health Professions, Institute of Health Sciences

Background

- One's profession is becoming increasingly important, a central identity-forming factor in life (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011)
- Professional identity (PI) is a complex construct of meaningfulness in which the person unites their motivation and competencies
- PI is considered to be an indicator of various positive outcomes at the professional level and beyond (e.g. strengthened social support, mental health, life satisfaction, and wellbeing (Dick & Haslam, 2012; Kroger, 2007))
- A new undergraduate program in health promotion and prevention (HP) was established in Switzerland (2016) and is subject of this study

Research question

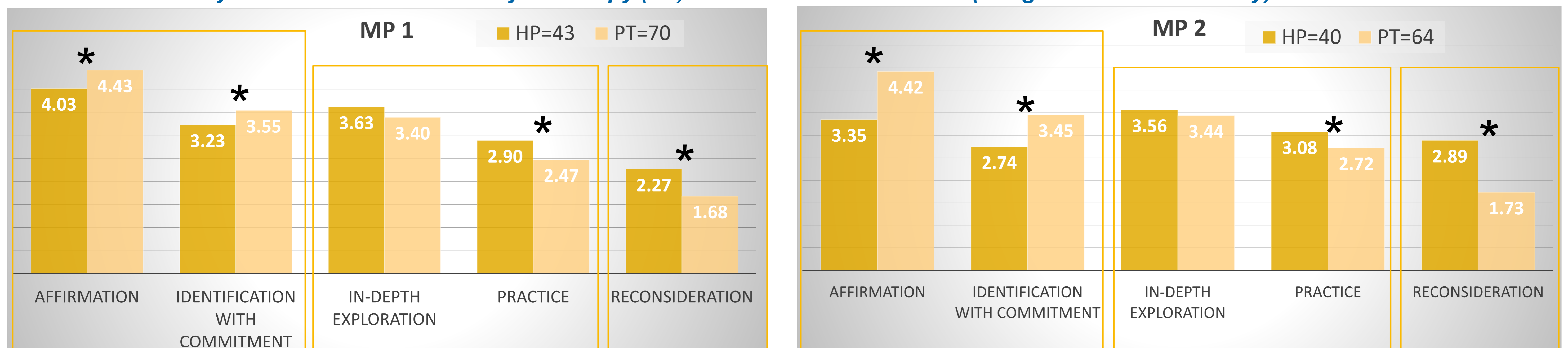
How do the students of the new undergraduate program HP develop their PI during the course of their studies and which motivational and socio-cognitive factors influence this development?

Methods

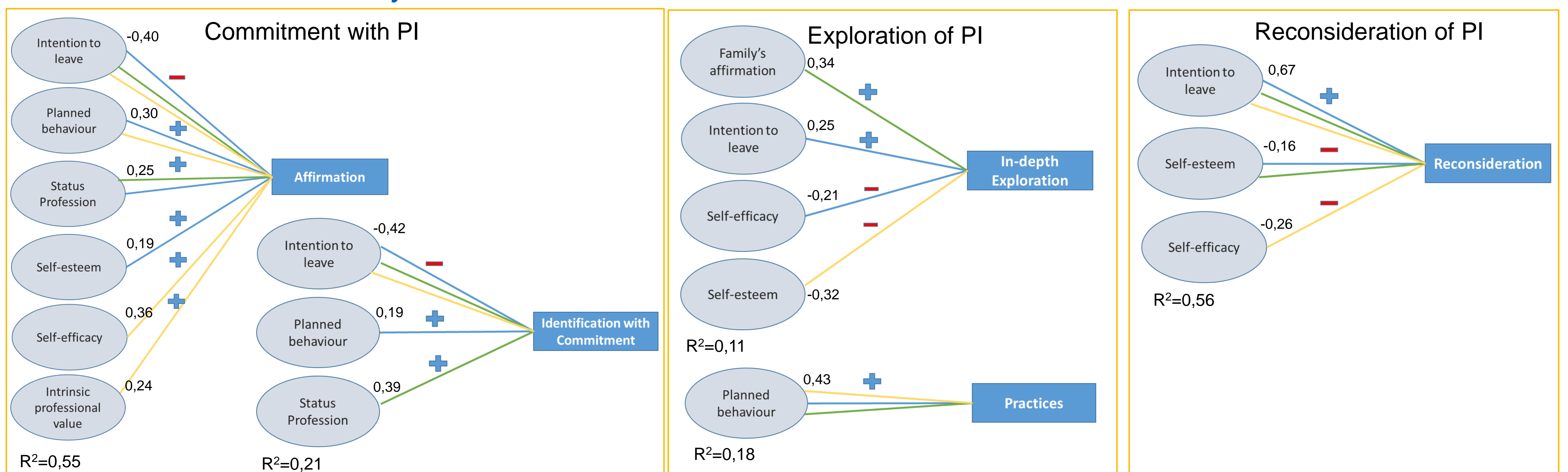
- Online PI questionnaire based on Marcia's identity status model (PISQ - 5d Mancini et al., 2015) with dimensions: Affirmation, identification with commitment, in-depth exploration, practices and reconsideration of commitment
- Longitudinal design: Measurement Point 1 (MP1) in 2016, MP2 in 2018
- 113 participants (see graphs) with a mean age 22.6 (SD=3.7), Dropout between MP1 und MP2: 8%

Results

Professional Identity Dimensions in HP and Physiotherapy (PT) Students at MP1 and MP2 (Range: 1 not at all – 5 fully)



Influences on Professional Identity Dimension



Linear regressions: MP 1 Total N, HP, PT; Standardized Beta-Coefficients and corrected R²

Discussion and Outlook

- HP students seem to struggle more with their PI at the beginning and even more in the middle of the program, compared to PT
- Influences on PI dimensions between HP and PT students:
 - Planned behaviour and intention to leave strong influence PI dimensions
 - Status of profession influences PI more for HP compared to PT students
 - Self-efficacy influences PI more for PT compared to HP students
- Potential explanation: Whereas 2 of 3 PT students (63%) mentioned PT as first study choice, only 1 of 3 HP students (37%) did so with HP
- Within HP cohorts: Professional Identity of Health Promotion students is expected to increase after field work in year 3 (MP3 in 2019);
Between HP cohorts: Over the years PI is expected to increase as the program becomes established