LYNDEL KENNEDY

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HIGHER EDUCATION SUCCESS FOR NEURODIVERGENT STUDENTS

POSITIONALITY

Neurodivergent conditions:

- Autism spectrum

- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

- Specific Learning Disorder (eg dyslexia)

- Developmental Coordination Disorder

- Tic disorders (eg Tourette's)

- Communication disorders (DSM-5)

- 10-15% of the population

- Co-diagnoses are common

WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW

Increasing enrolments of students with disabilities

Lower completion rates for students with autism, ADHD, and SpLD

Supports exist, but are underutilised:

- Stigma and discrimination

- Disclosure / registration process, costs

- Unaware of eligibility or wanting to try on their own

Previous research:

- Investigated conditions individually

- Rarely included people with multiple conditions

OUR RESEARCH

Goal:

- Understand differences between neurodivergent and non-neurodivergent students
- How can we make higher education better for neurodivergent students?

Method:

- Neurodiverse research team with paid neurodivergent advisors
- Mixed-methods anonymous online survey
- 30-45 minutes

Eligiblity:

- Studied in Australia or New Zealand
- At a university, TAFE or ITP
- Aged 18+
- With/out neurodivergent and mental health conditions

PARTICIPANTS:

N = 204

Neurodivergent (131)

Non-neurodivergent (73)

ADHD (53)

Autistic (33)

AuDHD (23)

ND other (22)
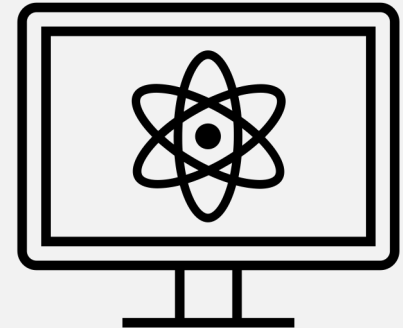
Non-neurodivergent (73)
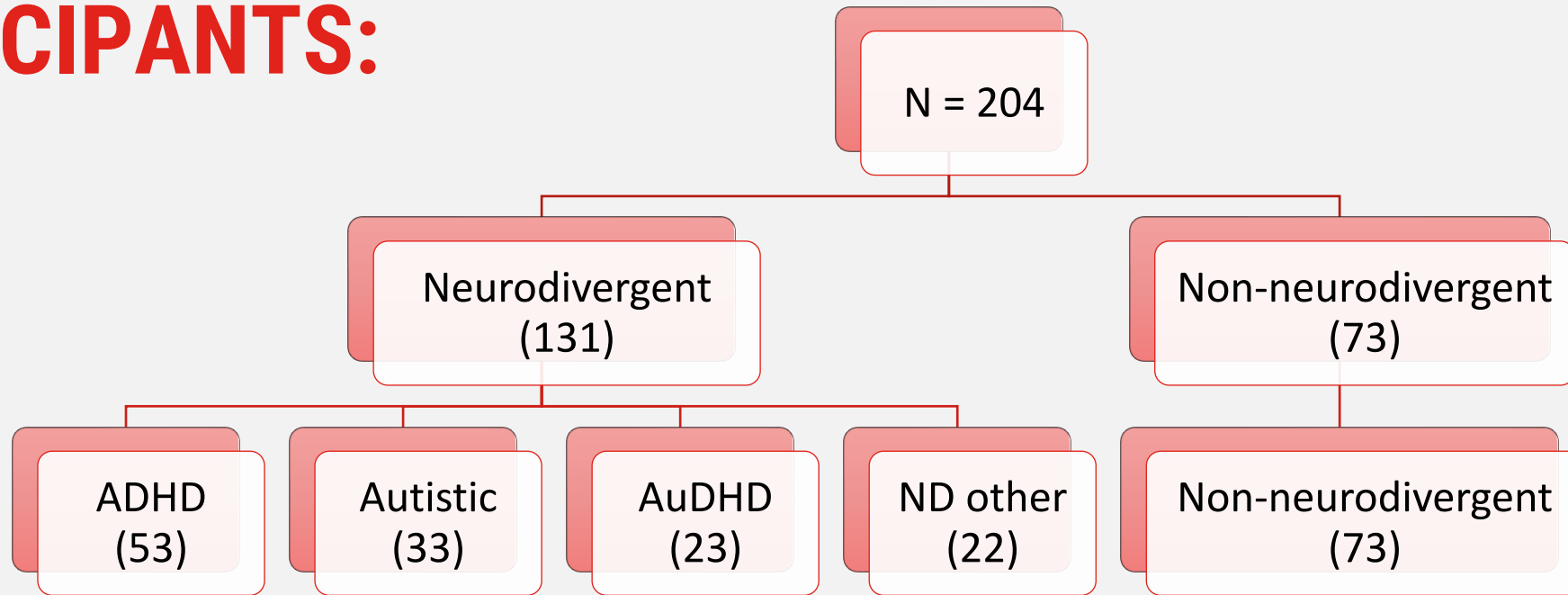
RESULTS:

- Neurodivergent traits (autism, ADHD, sensory)
- Executive functioning and self-efficacy
- Mental health conditions
- Anxiety, depression, wellbeing

- Enjoying HE
- Disclosure
- Supports usage

Differences were greatest for the AuDHD group
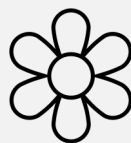
CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Low / surviving
n=53

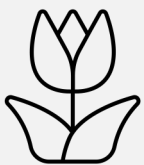Low traits
Low exec functioning
Low self-efficacy

Low / thriving
n=54

Low traits
High exec functioning
High self-efficacy

High / surviving
n=46

High traits
Low exec functioning
Low self-efficacy

High / thriving
n=40

High traits
Average exec functioning
High self-efficacy

Anxiety
Depression
Wellbeing

CLUSTER ANALYSIS

|	Low / surviving n=53	Low / thriving n=54	High / surviving n=46	High / thriving n=40
	Low traits Low exec functioning Low self-efficacy	Low traits High exec functioning High self-efficacy	High traits Low exec functioning Low self-efficacy	High traits Average exec functioning High self-efficacy
Passing all:	64%	**93**%	63%	83%
Enjoying HE:	83%	**98**%	85%	85%
Disclosed:	34%	22%	33%	**53**%
Used supports:	53%	20%	50%	**65**%

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Some neurodivergent students are finding HE challenging, but it's not about the label
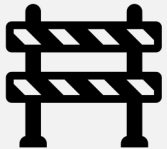
Reduce barriers to disclosure, eg recency of documentation. Simplify processes and provide menus.

Strategies to develop executive functioning skills and self-efficacy beliefs

Co-create and deliver new supports with teams that represent the different neurodivergent groups.

THANK YOU

latrobe.edu.au/otarc