

## INTRODUCTION

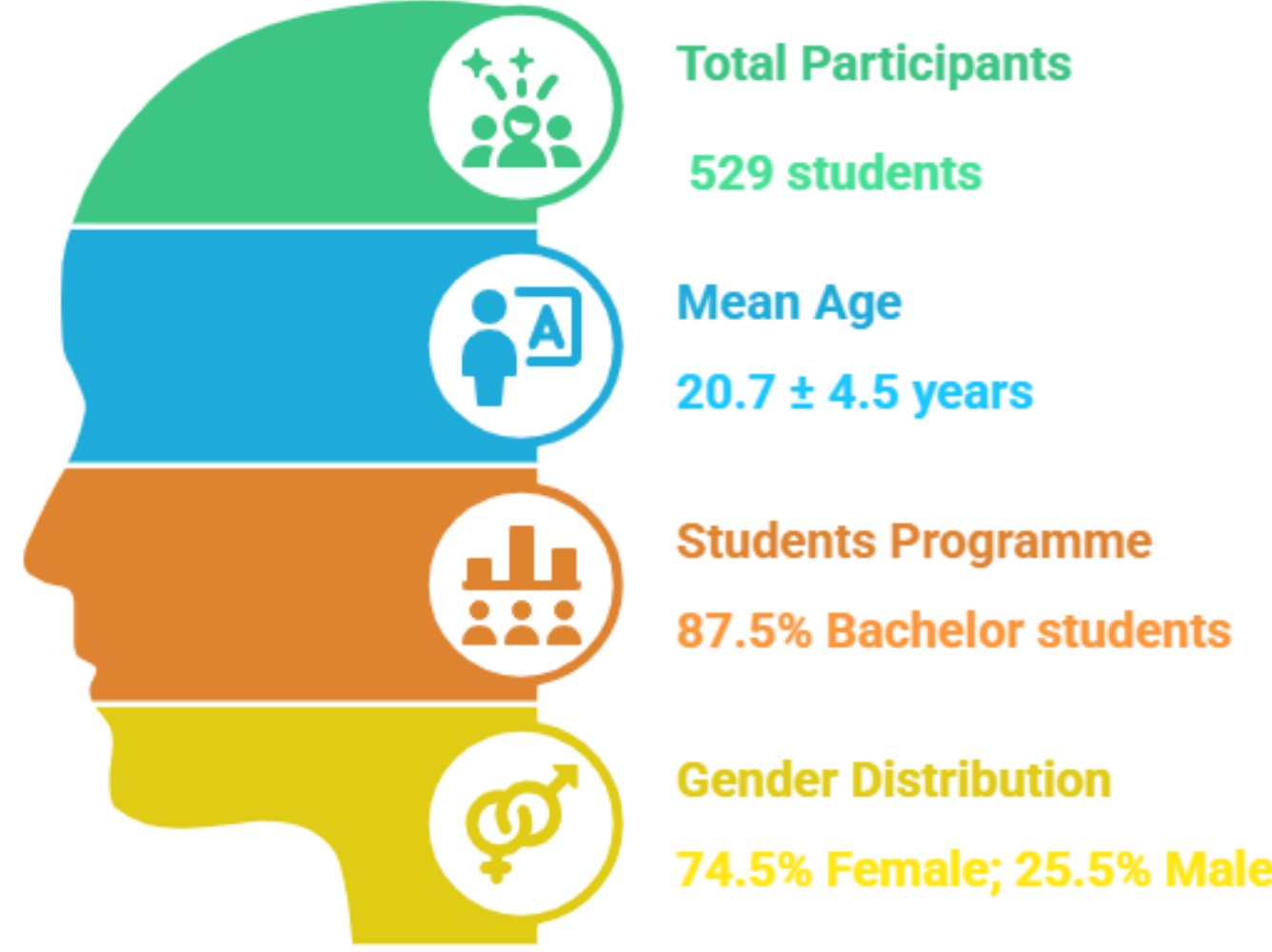
Higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly expected to go beyond teaching and research to actively engage with societal challenges [1,2]. In Portugal, this shift has gained prominence through initiatives such as the Observatory for Social Responsibility and Higher Education Institutions (ORSIES), which has established a strategic framework of 34 Social Responsibility (SR) indicators across four dimensions and developmental levels—ranging from initial awareness to monitoring and innovation [3,4]. Within this framework, University Social Responsibility (USR) is essential, particularly in health sciences education, where institutions are urged to align their efforts with community health priorities [1,4,5].

Despite the recognized benefits of USR in fostering civic engagement and key competencies [1], student awareness and participation remain limited [1,4]. For instance, nearly half of students in one study were unaware of USR in their institutions [1]. Recent data shows a modest improvement in SR implementation across Portuguese HEIs, with the average score rising from 2.36 to 2.55 (on a 1–4 scale) between 2020/21 and 2021/22 [4]. While *lifelong learning* stands out as a strength (3.63), areas like *alumni relations* (1.67) and *environmental education* (1.69) continue to face significant challenges [4]. Nonetheless, there is a pressing need for deeper understanding, stronger institutional commitment, and more inclusive stakeholder engagement in advancing USR across Portuguese HEIs [3]. Additionally, research still lacks robust tools to assess how these initiatives influence student attitudes—an important area, given students' future roles as socially responsible professionals [6,7].

## PURPOSE

The aim of this study is to evaluate higher health students' attitudes toward community service within higher sciences education

## PARTICIPANTS



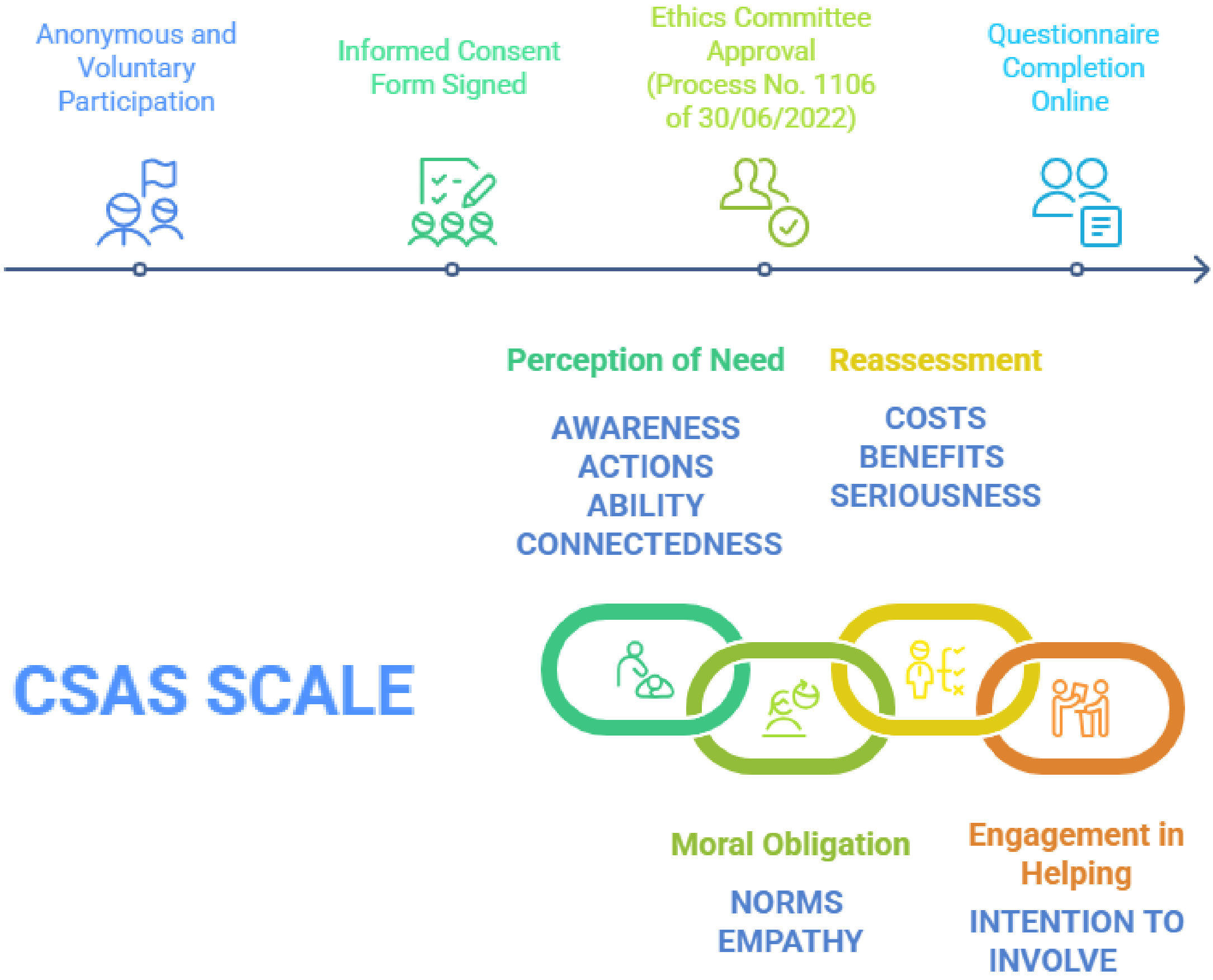
## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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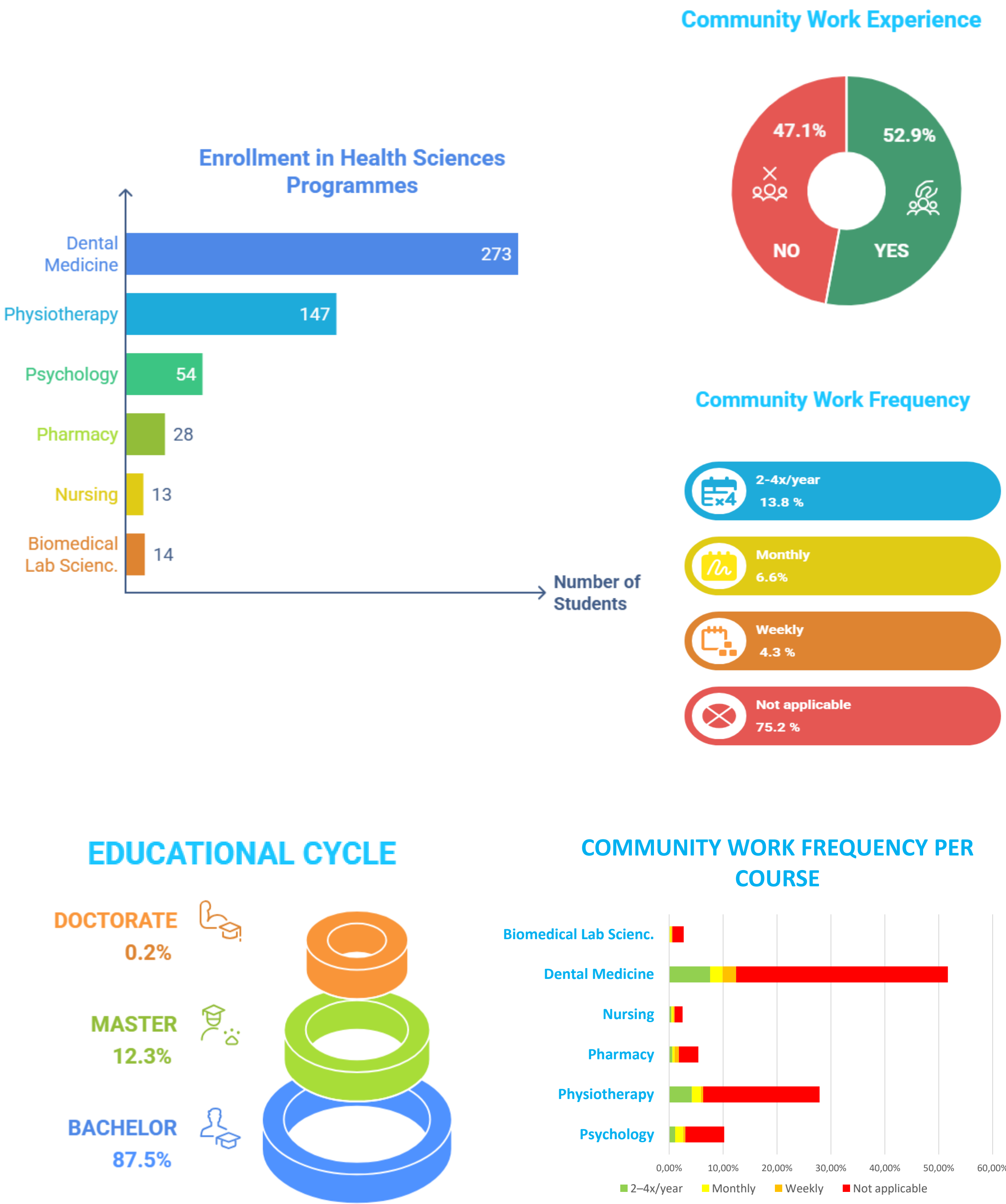
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## METHODS



## RESULTS



Community Service Attitudes Scale X Course

Scale Dimension	Pharmacy	Biomedical Lab Sciences	Dental Medicine	Physiotherapy	Psychology
Ability	Higher	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
Connectedness	Higher	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
Norms	Higher	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
Benefits	Higher	Lower	Higher	Lower	Lower

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## DISCUSSION

- This study shows programme-specific differences in students' attitudes toward community service, reinforcing the role of **course context** and **institutional culture** in shaping civic engagement [1,].
- No significant gender differences were found, aligning with prior studies showing **mixed results** on gender and USR attitudes [1,7,].
- Students from **Dental Medicine** and **Physiotherapy** reported more prior community work experience than peers in other programmes. This may relate to the **clinical nature and early patient interaction** in these fields, suggesting that **curriculum structure** and proximity to real-world practice foster engagement [1,9].
- Pharmacy students** reported higher levels of *Ability*, *Connectedness*, and *Norms*, likely due to advanced-stage students' stronger professional identity.
- Dental Medicine students** reported greater perceived *Benefits* than Physiotherapy students.
- Professional identity development** and **curricular exposure to community roles** may influence civic attitudes, supporting literature linking disciplinary focus to social responsibility engagement [1].

## CONCLUSION

- Positive signs** of student engagement in community service and social responsibility were observed.
- Institutional efforts** are promoting awareness and shaping constructive attitudes.
- Programme differences** reveal the need for a more **cohesive and integrated USR approach**.
- Emphasizing **experiential learning**, **critical reflection**, and **interdisciplinary opportunities** can strengthen USR in the curriculum.
- The university is well positioned to lead in **social transformation** and generate lasting community impact.
- Future research** should expand sample diversity and include **comparative studies** across institutions for broader insight.