

Mental Health References on Instagram's Academics Posts

Eli S. Hou;¹ Junnie Kim;² Bradley Kerr, MS³

¹ International School; ² Brown University; ³ University of Wisconsin



Introduction

- Academic standards have been increasing for students and is associated with anxiety, depression, and stress.
- It is unclear how these students expressed their feelings on mental health in academics through social media, such as Instagram.
- **The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of mental health related posts of academics-related hashtags, such as #aptesting and #highschool on Instagram.**

Methods

Design:

- A content analysis was conducted on Instagram posts.

Subjects:

- 50 posts per hashtag were analyzed under #aptesting and #highschool.
- These posts were the top 50 most popular posts in their respective hashtags.
- Posts with fewer than 1000 likes were not included.

Variables:

Variable	Definition	Example Words
Stress	A state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation.	"stressed," "stress," "pressure"
Anxiety	An emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure.	"anxious," "anxiety"
Depression	A mental disorder that negatively affects how you feel, think, act, and perceive the world. It involves a depressed mood or loss of pleasure or interest in activities for long periods of time.	"depressed," "depression"
Mental Health	A person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.	"mental health", "disorder", "suffering"
Emotional Distress	A strong, unpleasant emotional reaction to an event, memory, or condition that can cause mental suffering.	fear", "sadness", "sad"

Analysis:

- We analyzed the frequencies of mental health related posts within the top 50 posts of each hashtag while looking at the number of likes.
- We also analyzed the percent of posts who agree with the mental health concern referenced in the post.

Results

Subject Information:

- We had 100 subjects total, 50 per hashtag.
- The mean likes within both hashtags were 26,919
- The mean comments within both hashtags were 428.

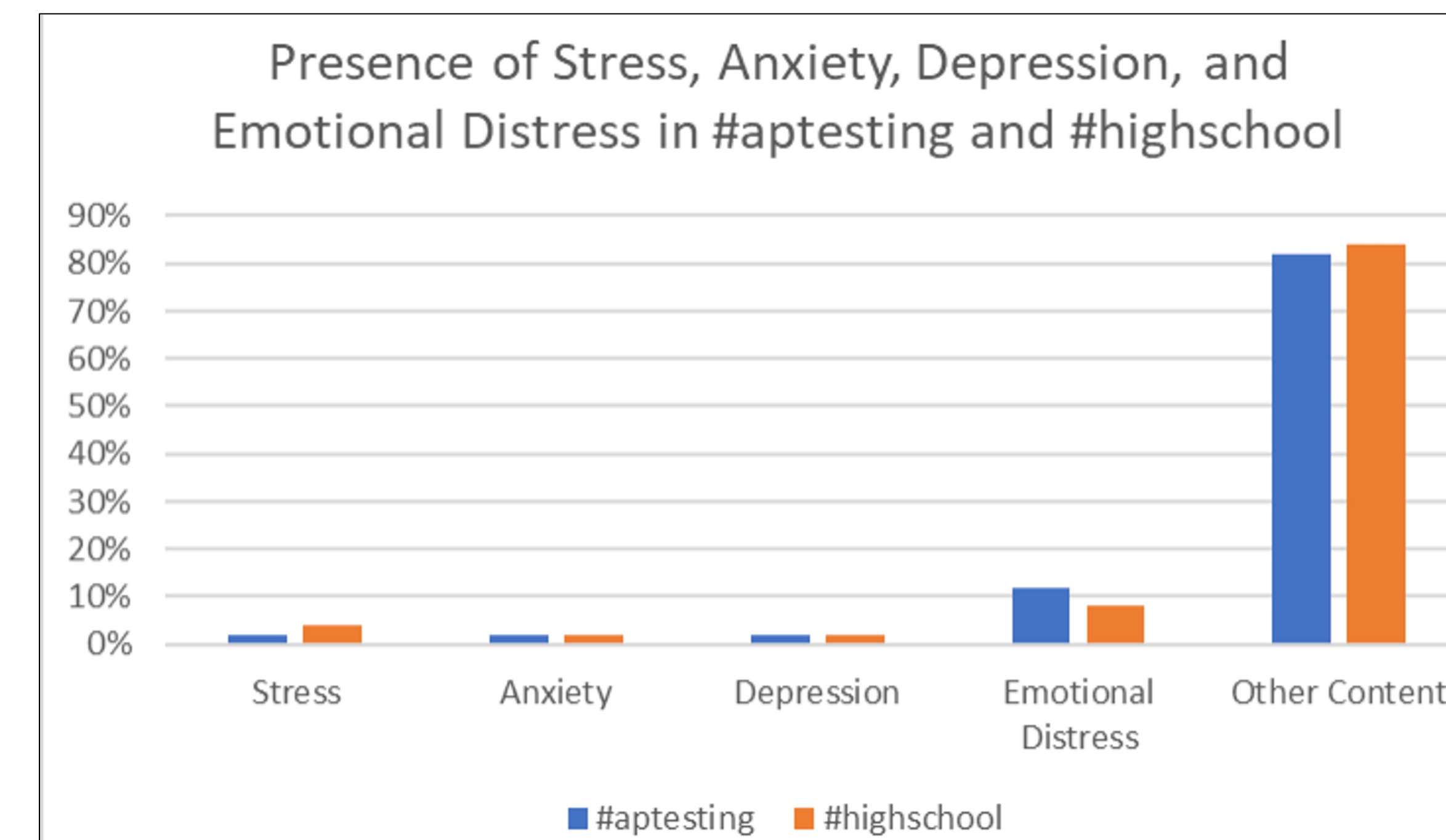
Main Points:

Posts referencing mental health were uncommon in both hashtags

- 17% of posts referenced mental health topics.
- 83% of posts referenced topic unrelated to mental health.

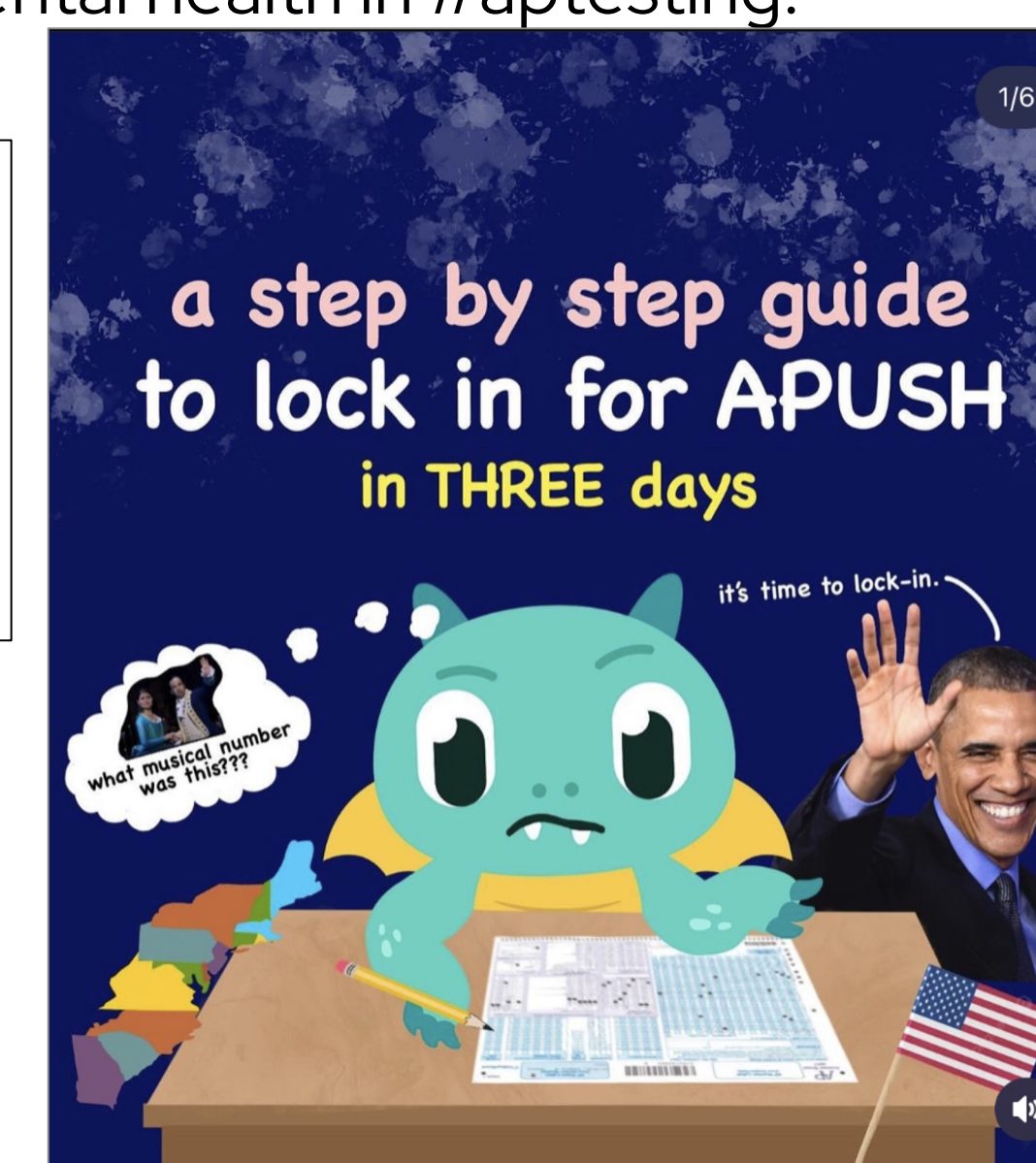
The amount of mental health references in both hashtags were similar.

- 8 out of 50 posts referenced mental health in #highschool.
- 9 out of 50 posts referenced mental health in #aptesting.



Other content included posts unrelated to mental health, majority consisting of high school sports, study guides, and school events.

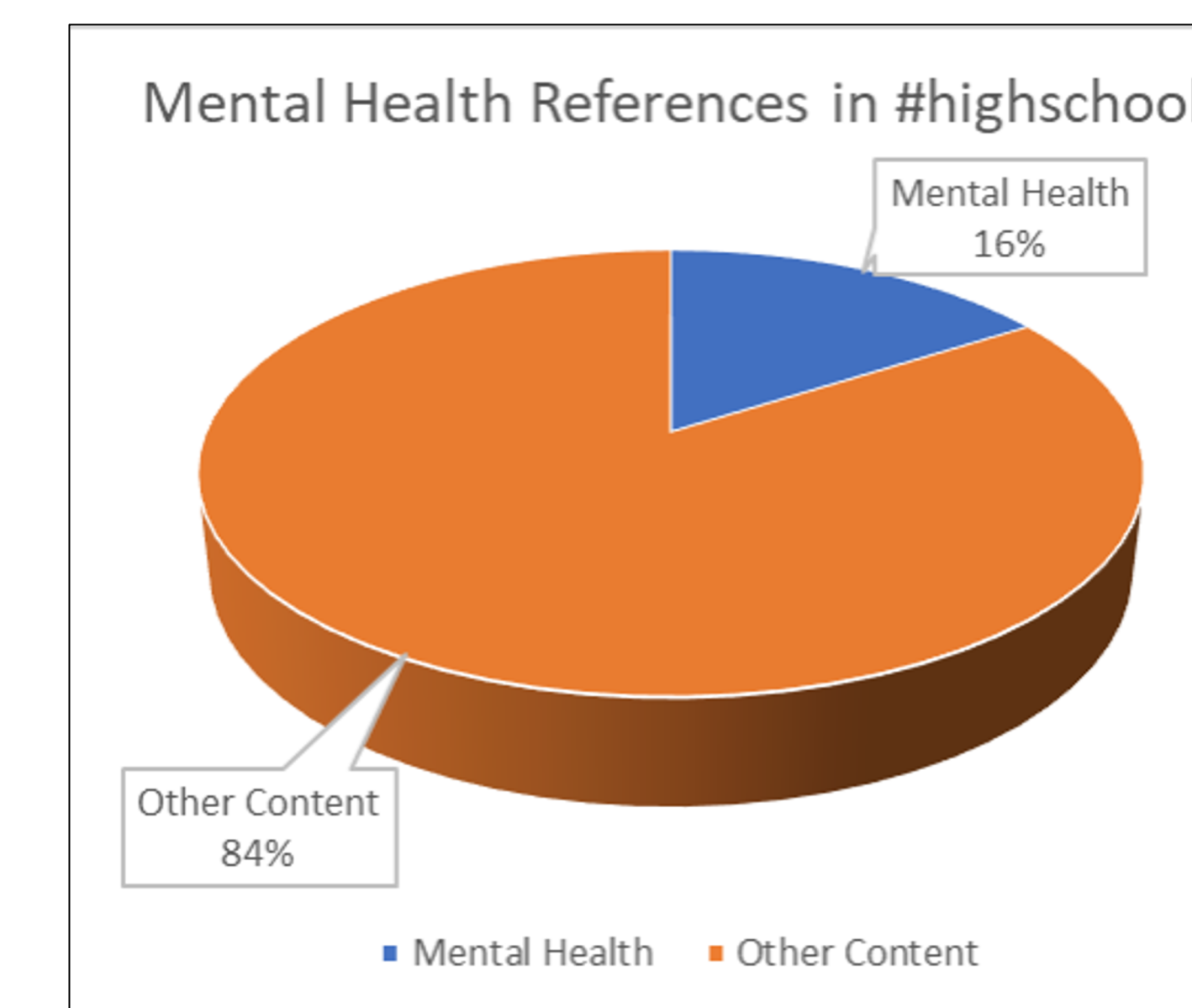
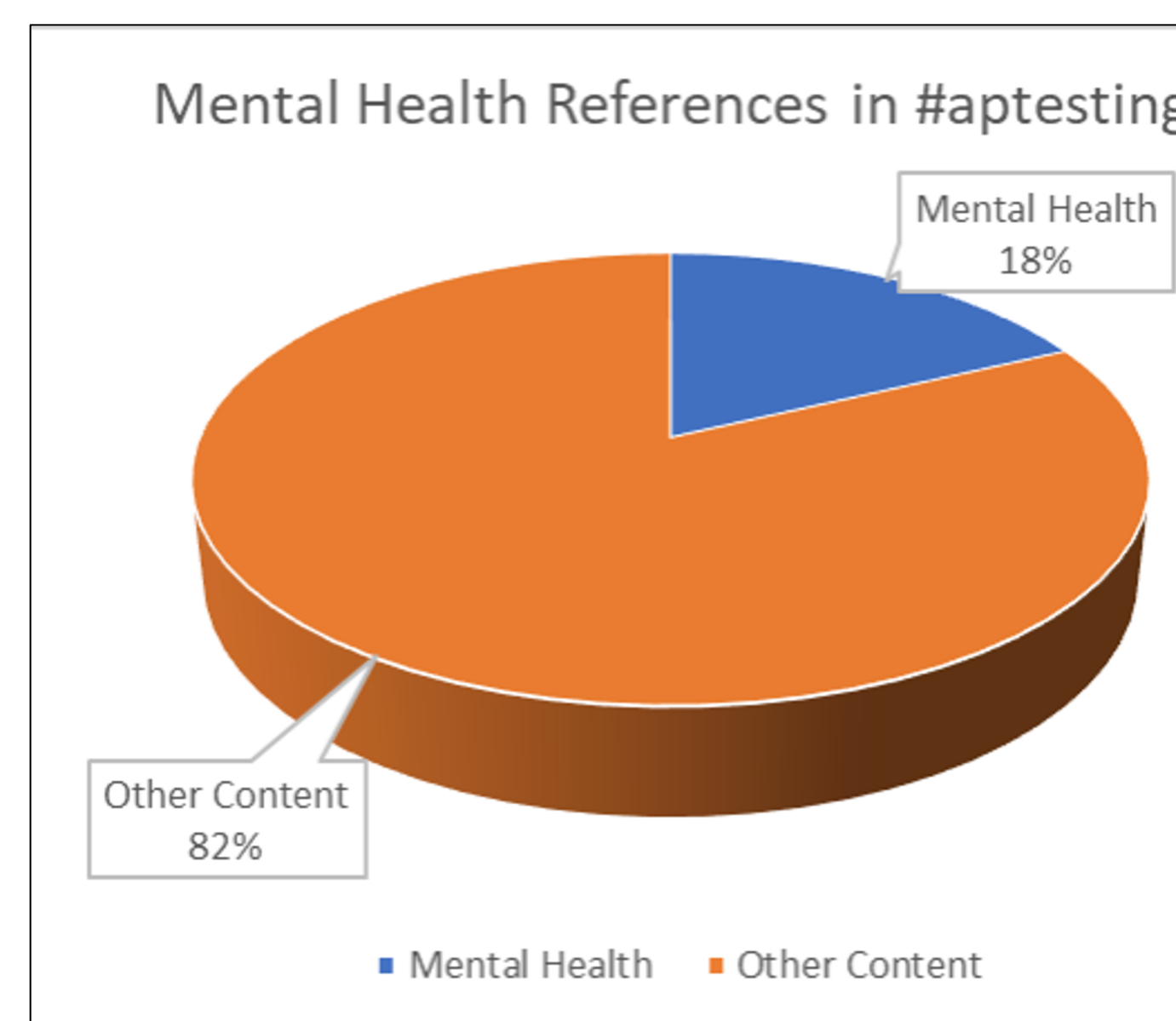
One thing I've learned about anxiety is that ur going to have good & bad days. Some days ur anxious but able to cope. Other days ur anxiety is so high it will feel overwhelming. And sometimes you'll forget about anxiety completely. So if you're having a rough day, know it'll pass



Example post unrelated to mental health.

Example emotional distress post

If someone tells you they're struggling, don't question it. Instead, ask how you can help. It takes a lot of strength to admit that you're not okay and the last thing they need is to be told someone "has it worse".



Conclusions

Key Findings:

- Many posts were not related to mental health and were about other aspects of the hashtag.
 - Only 17 out of 100 posts mentioned mental health.
- Posts referencing mental health were mainly focused on the emotional distress of users.
 - All mental health references in #aptesting were emotional distress.
 - 4 out of 8 mental health references in #highschool were emotional distress.

Limitations

- Limitations include a focus on these two academic-related hashtags.
 - Other hashtags could have included more content referencing mental health.
- The small sample size limited the amount of data collected for other variables.



Implications

- A follow up question to understand this problem could be how is mental health in academics-related hashtags on Instagram received by users?
- These findings can explain if mental health is well received in the field of academics and whether people will want to talk about it.

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my peers for joining me and providing me insight throughout this program.
- I would like to thank the SMAHRT program and the entire SMAHRT team for providing me this opportunity.

Contact us

Eli Hou
elihou3471@gmail.com

