# Unveiling the Role of Psychological Flexibility During the Transition to Higher Education

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# Outline

Introduction

Definition of psychological flexibility

Aim of the study

Method

Theoretical and parsimonious models

Results

Limits of the study and practical implications

❖ Transition to higher education: a **crucial** and **difficult** period
→ 60% failure/drop-out in France and Belgium (De Clercq et al., 2023)

❖ **Student challenges**:
- academic pressure
- social adaptation
- personal uncertainties (lack of personal effectiveness)

❖ **Impact**: Lower **performance** & **well-being** (Conley et al., 2014; Trautwein & Bosse, 2017)
→ **Need** : Understand what promotes success & well-being

💡 **Psychological flexibility** (PF):
- a **key** resource for well-being & success during transition

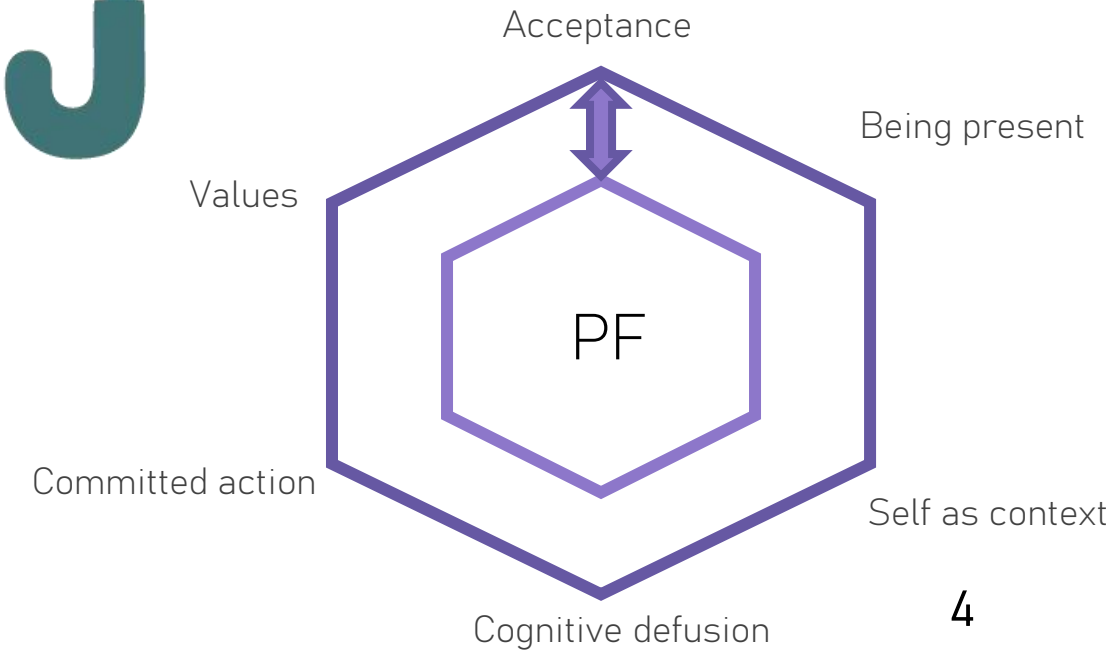
- Emerging focus in research, but still underexplored (Hailikari et al., 2022; Asikainen & Katajavuori, 2021)

# The psychological flexibility

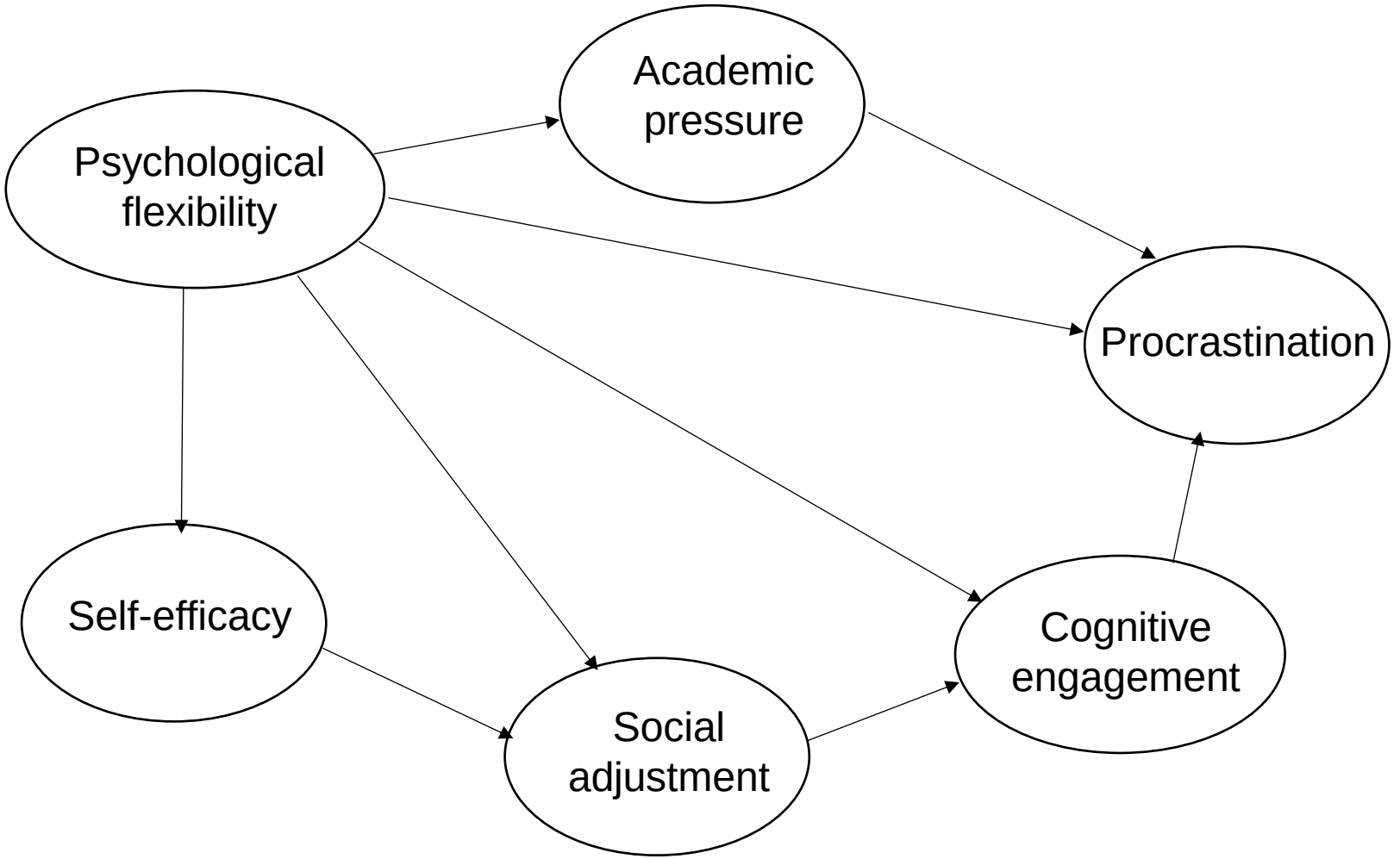
- A dynamic meta-process that can be continuously developed and improved (Monestès, 2016).
- **Purpose**:
  - manage **interference** (negative thoughts)
  - Take **appropriate action** despite discomfort
  - Stay aligned with **personal values, goals & well-being** (Cherry et al., 2021).
- **Six fundamental ACT processes**:
  - Acceptance
  - Cognitive defusion
  - Presence
  - Self as context
  - Values
  - Committed action

🧩 These processes work **together**, in an **integrated and coordinated** way.


Focus on the canvas of our umbrella



- The relationship between **psychological flexibility** and determinants of success and well-being during the transition to higher education.
- Conceptualization the transition as a dynamic interaction between (De Clercq et al, 2023) :
  (1) emotional pressure in higher education,
  (2) social environment
  (3) motivational beliefs.
- Confirmation theorical model (Räihä et al., 2021; Asikainen and Katajavuori, 2021; Hailikari et al. 2022; Shankland & Martinie, 2024).



## Sample

N = 772 first-year students aged 18 to 24 (♀: 566 ; ♂: 206)

## Design

Data collected via self-reported questionnaire

In the auditoriums of UCLouvain Saint-Louis and Louvain-la-Neuve

From 05 to 15 February 2024

## Data analysis

- Structural equation modelling (SEM)
- CFA demonstrate a good fit of the scales with the data

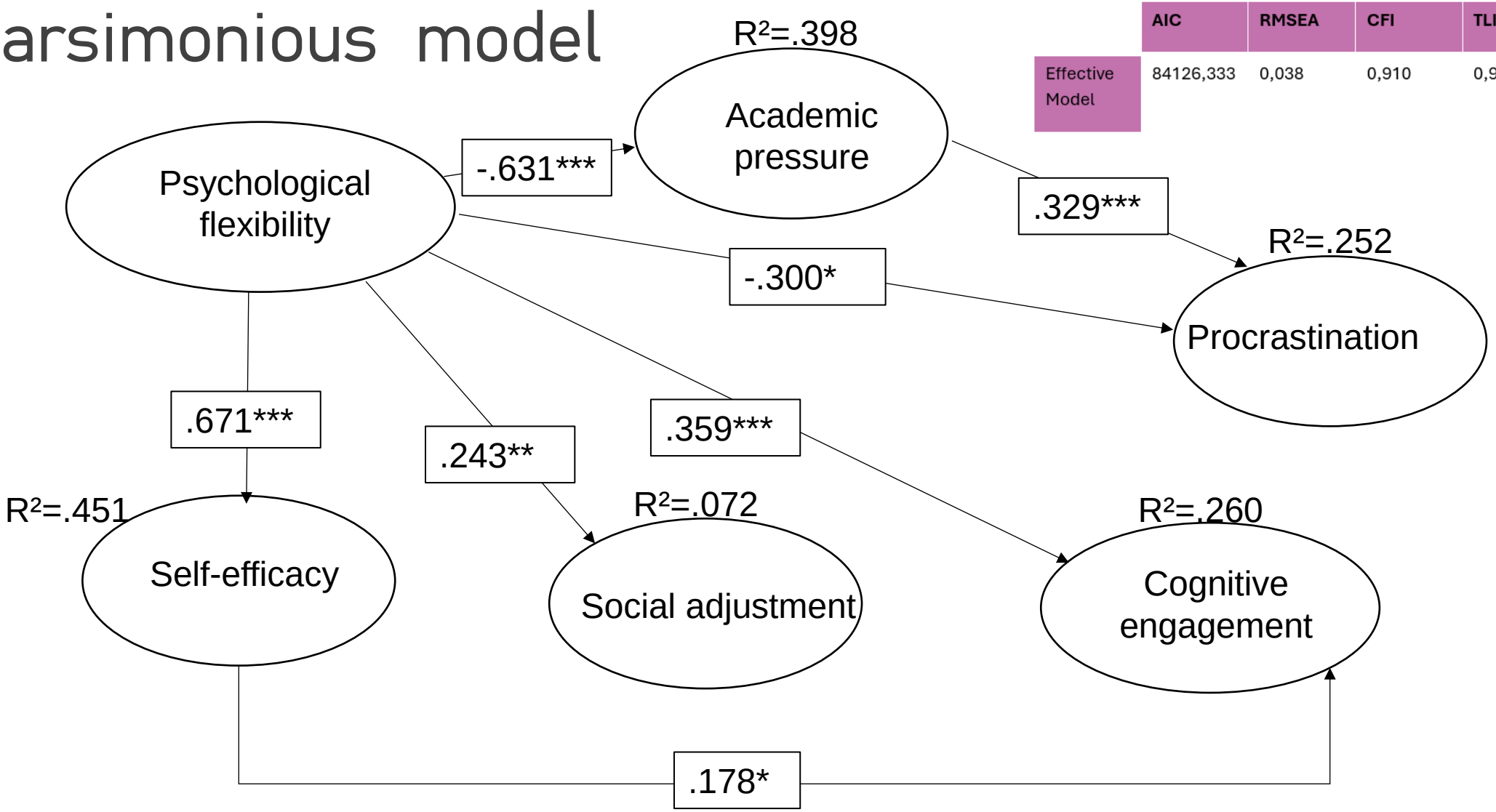
| | AIC | RMSEA | CFI | TLI | SRMR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Effective Model | 84115.226 | 0,038 | 0,911 | 0,903 | 0,056 |

- Latent variables were measured using validated scales. The table below shows their internal consistency (Cronbach's α)

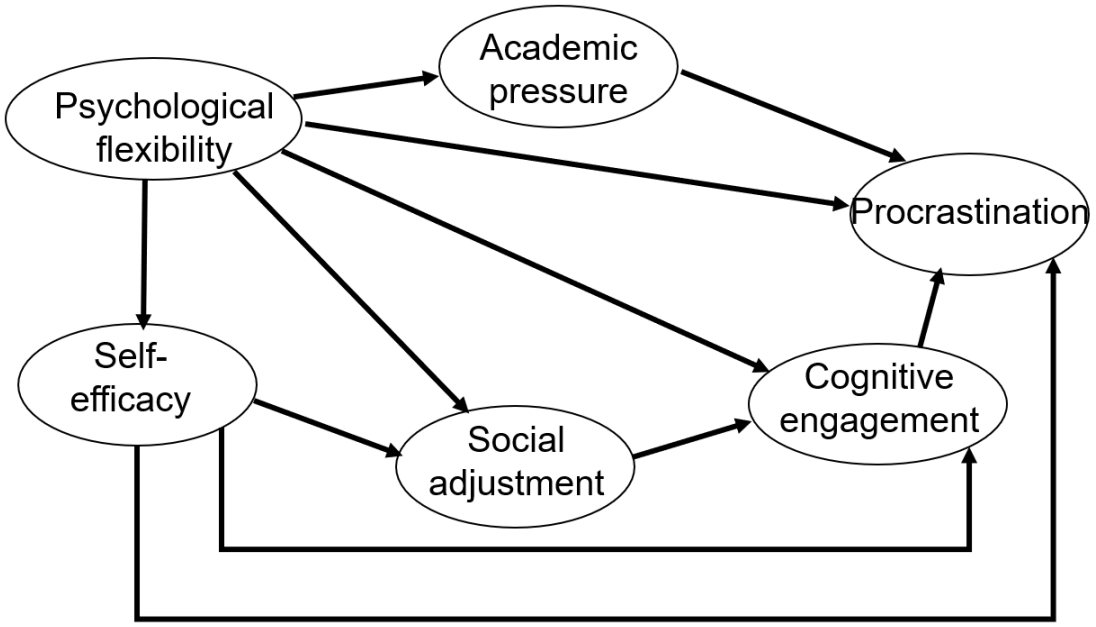
| | No. of items | Cronbach's α |
|---|---|---|
| PF | 6 | .713 |
| Self-efficacy | 7 | .802 |
| Academic pressure | 6 | .810 |
| Social adjustment | 6 | .811 |
| Procrastination | 7 | .899 |
| Cognitive engagement (study skills) | 6 | .770 |

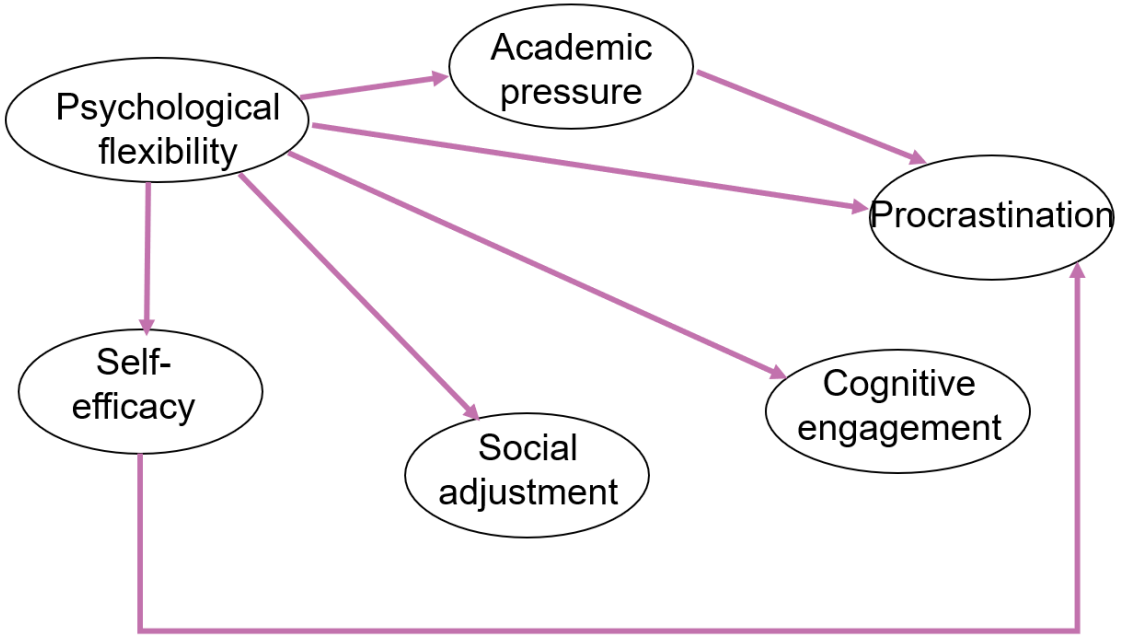
# Parsimonious model

| | AIC | RMSEA | CFI | TLI | SRMR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Effective Model | 84126,333 | 0,038 | 0,910 | 0,902 | 0,058 |



# The central role of psychological flexibility



# Limits

## 🧩 Key Predictors *(Dupont et al., 2015)*

- Entry characteristics
- Social environment
- Motivational beliefs

## 👨‍👩‍👧 Social Environment

- Link between family and psychological flexibility

## 📊 Additional analyses

- Gender distribution
- Faculty affiliation
- Psychological flexibility by faculty

## 📈 Stress measures

- Current: Self-report (subjective)
- Future: Biometric data (heart rate, EDA) (*Campanella et al., 2023)*

## ⏳ Model Limitations

- No causal relationships

# Future perspective

## 📅 Study 2 : longitudinal study

Explore how psychological flexibility relates to:
- Well-being
- Time management
- Learning strategies
- Academic performance (development over time)

**Design**:
- Participants: 300 students
- 3 time points: Week 1, End of Semester 1, End of Semester 2
- Analysis: Cross-lagged modeling & latent growth analysis

## 🧮 Study 3: Experimental intervention

Evaluate the impact of an **intervention** on psychological flexibility during the transition to higher education.

**Design**:
- Participants: 300 students (self-report), 100 (biometrics)
-Same measures as study 2
  - Biometric data (e.g., heart rate variability, EDA)

Thank you for your attention

Do you have any questions?

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