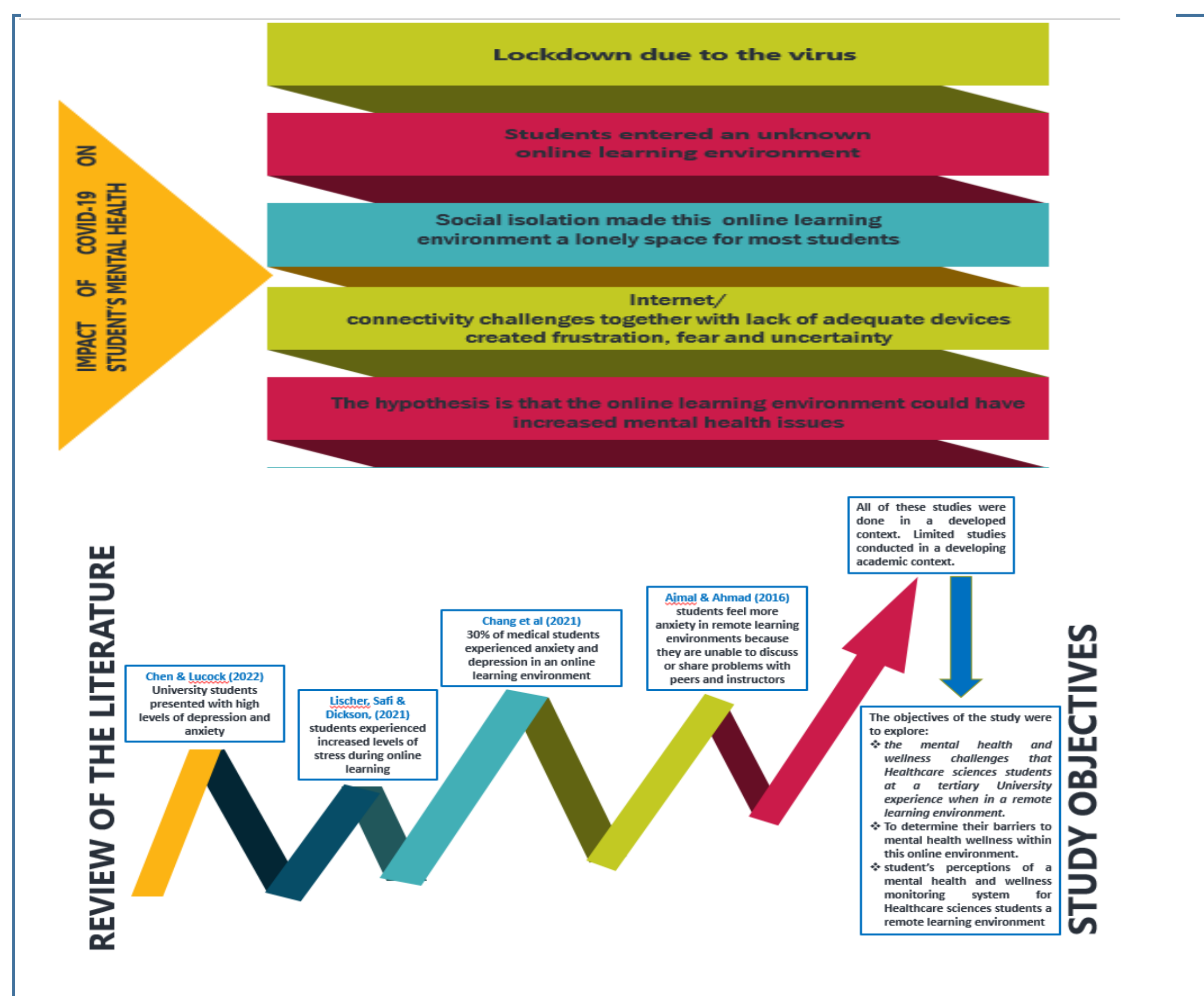


BUILDING A HEALTHY WORKFORCE : MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF HEALTHCARE SCIENCES STUDENTS IN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

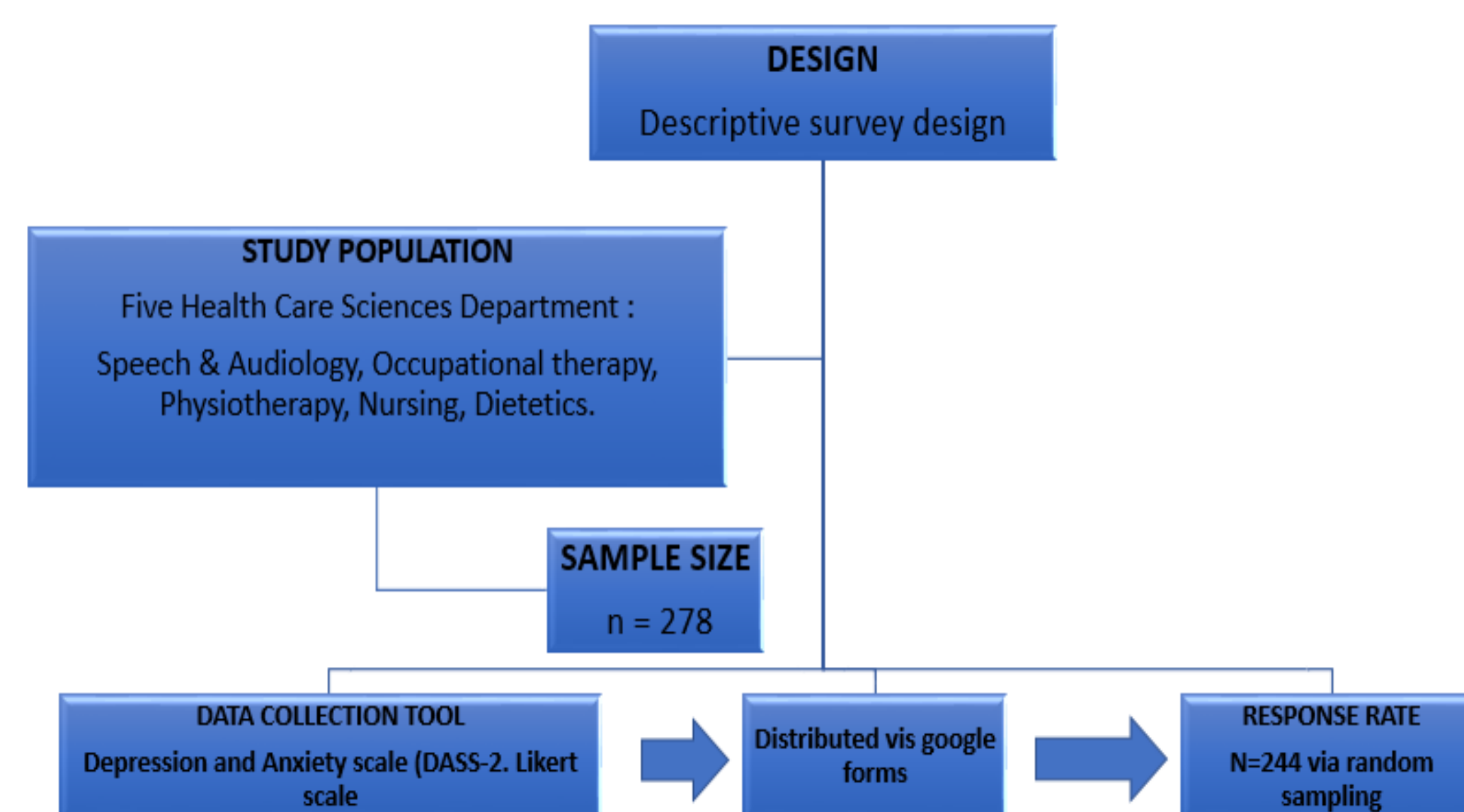
SAMANTHA GOVENDER
INDEPENDENT STUDY

INTRODUCTION

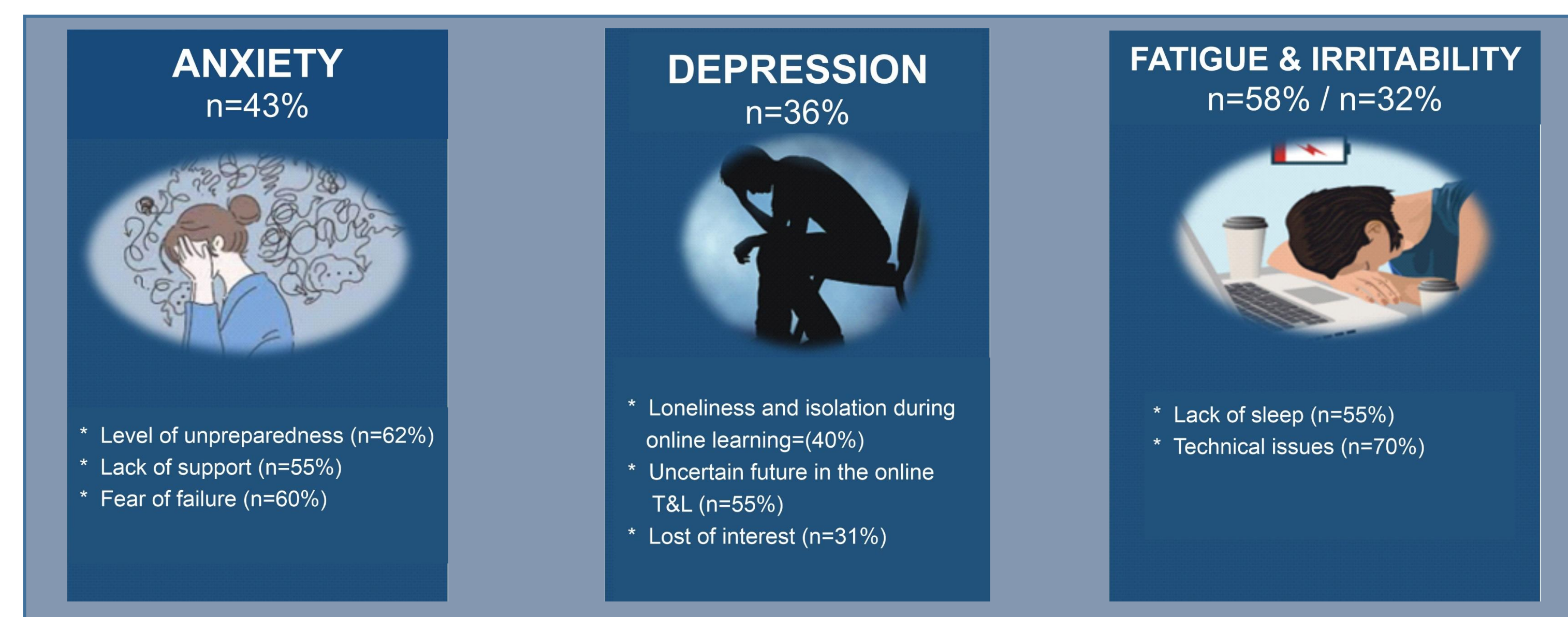
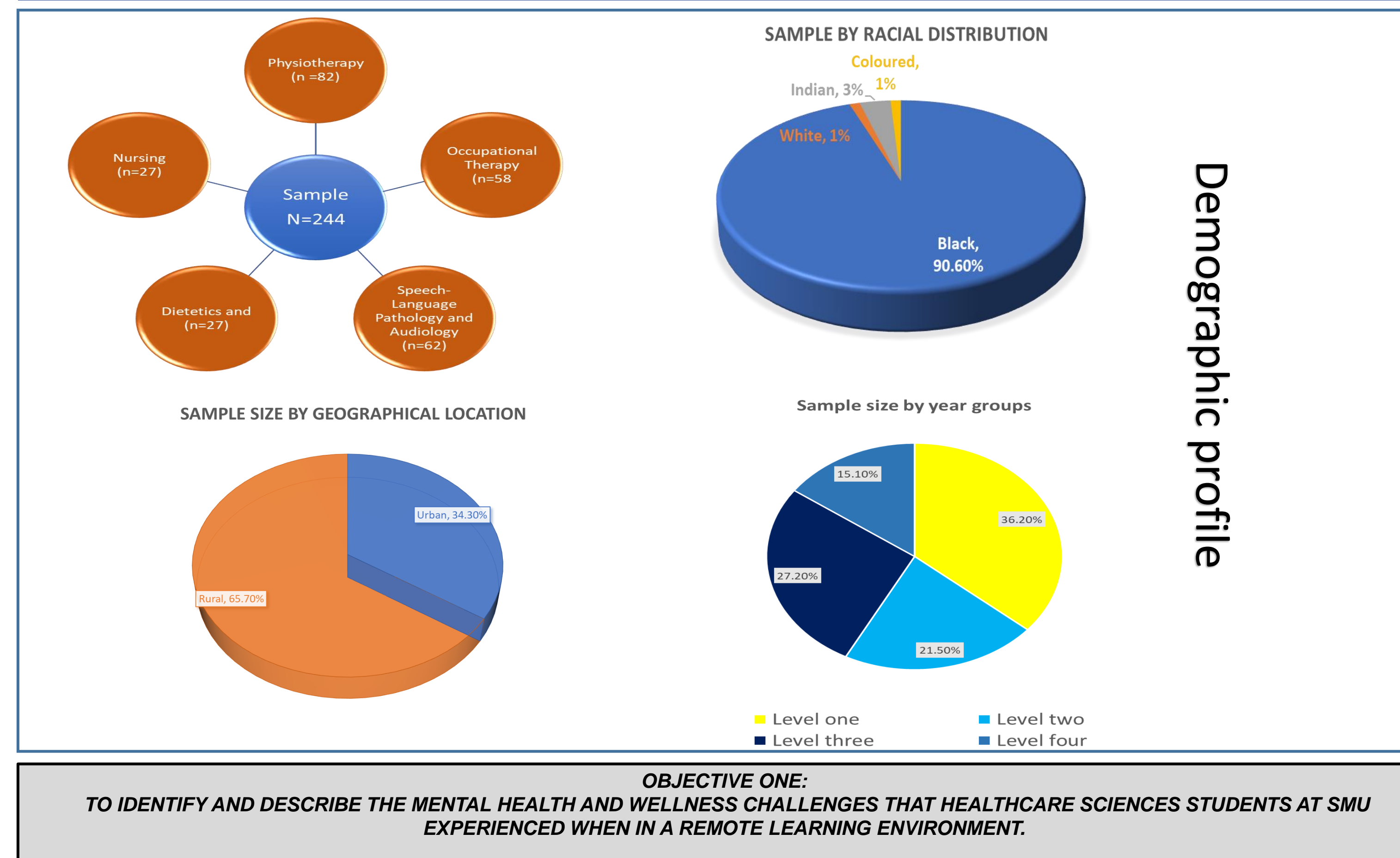
The global prevalence of mental health problems among healthcare workers is estimated to be around 49%. Almost 69% of physicians report experiencing depression and 13% have thoughts of suicide. Almost 34% of university students experience depression, anxiety and related symptoms attributed to a combination of stress, financial challenges, untreated mental conditions and anxiety. University students face stressful events like tough syllabus, challenging work assignments and projects, residing in hostels. Adding to the already existing problems with managing mental health among students is the shift from contact learning to remote learning. In order to ensure a healthy workforce in our country, healthcare has to begin at the level of the student so that healthcare sciences students can be supported to maintain optimal mental health and wellness. In this way, students can go on to take better care of the population under their care. **Audiologists are among the group of healthcare workers that struggle with mental health issues (Bennet, 2021).**



MATERIALS AND METHODS



RESULTS



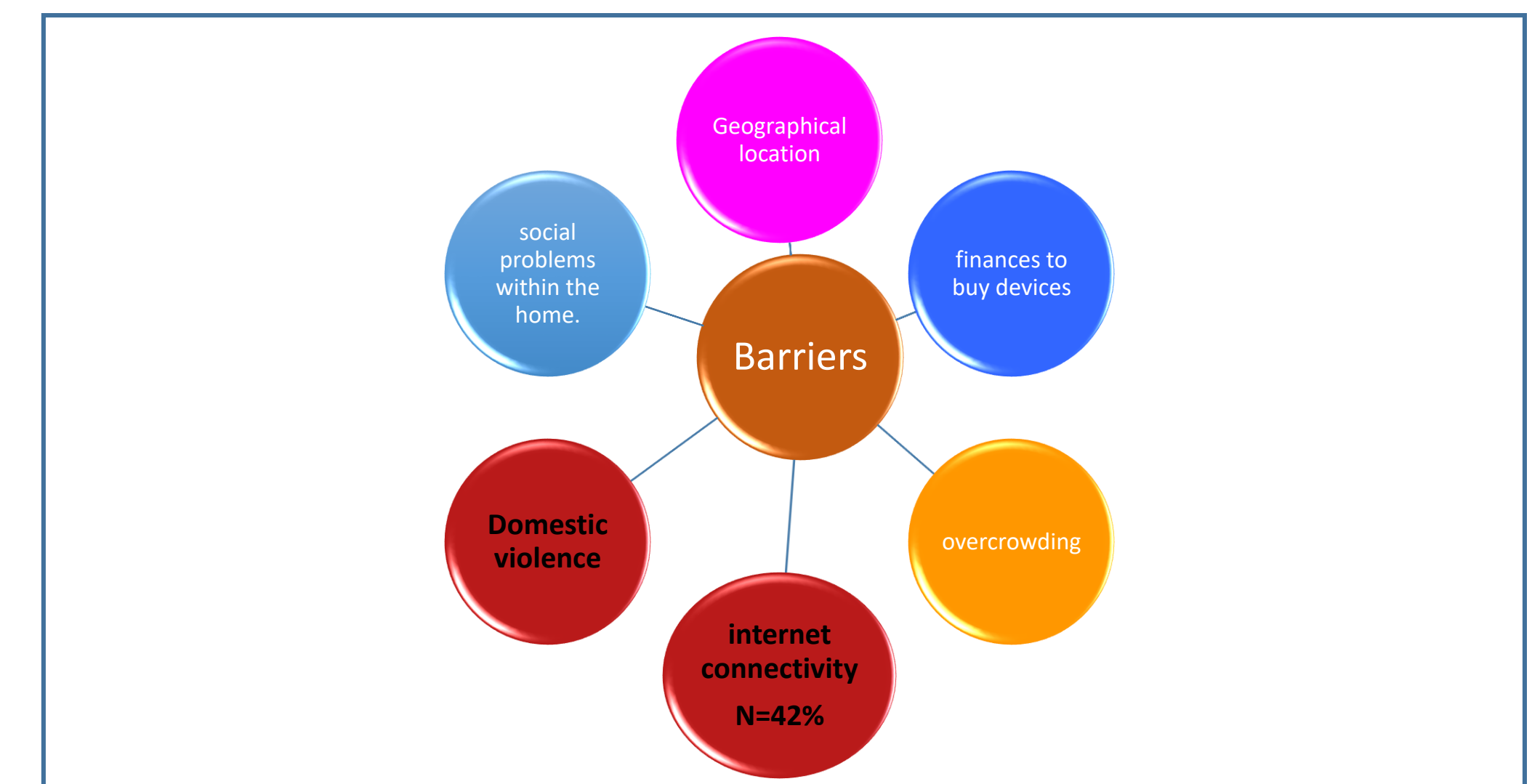
A statistically significant difference ($P = 0.006$) was found when students from rural and urban areas were compared. Students from the rural areas were more likely to feel angry, depressed and frustrated in the online learning environment than those in the urban areas. 9% of students had to seek medical/professional help due to my mental health during the lockdown and 30% of participants tried to seek medical advice for their mental illness during the lockdown but could not access the required assistance. **A total of 11% of the total sample indicated having suicidal thoughts during the lockdown due to the uncertainties and frustration in the online learning environment.**

CONCLUSION

Students within an online learning environment do experience **anxiety, depression, anger and frustration**. The study revealed **under preparedness** to learn in a remote learning environment. Living arrangements, internet issues were major barriers in a remote learning environment. **Suicidal thoughts** were experienced by students during lockdown. Students do support the implementation of an **online mental health and wellness program** and provided some valuable suggestions toward its contents and offering.

"In order to build a healthy workforce within healthcare, we need to start with ensuring that our students are maintaining good mental health"

OBJECTIVE TWO:
TO DETERMINE THE BARRIERS WITH THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORT IN A REMOTE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.



Factors impacting on the participant's experiences in a remote learning environment was that of socio-economic factors relating to overcrowding, finances to buy devices as well as social problems within the home. **A statistically significant relationship ($p=0.00$) was obtained, indicating that those residing in the rural areas experienced significantly more challenges relating to access and connectivity.**

OBJECTIVE THREE::
TO DETERMINE THE STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF AN ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS MONITORING SYSTEM



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