



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA



**The perception of psychological well-being in guests and volunteers at the *Beach of Values*: A project for the inclusion and care of people with severe disabilities.**

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# Background and aims

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## *Why to study the Beach of Values?*

- For its social value, as a unique context dedicated to promote well-being in people with severe disabilities, characterized by inclusion and dedicated both professional and voluntary support.

### **Focus on:**

- *Psychological well-being*, as a multifaceted and multidimensional construct including key components, such as positive affect, mental balance, emotional regulation, positive relationships, purpose in life, life satisfaction and personal growth (e.g. *edonic and heudaimonic well-being*) (Gremigni & Gorini, 2022).
- *Blue spaces*, in terms of their benefits on mental health and psychological well-being, as evidenced by international literature. (e.g. Bolognesi et al., 2023; Britton et al., 2020; Gascon et al., 2017; Georgiou et al., 2021; White et al., 2020; Vitale et al., 2022 ).

However, blue spaces have received less attention, especially in the context of disability.



# Methodology

- **Exploratory Study:** the aim was to investigate the experience of **psychological well-being** and **restorativeness** at the Beach of Values.
- **Research design:** *mixed-methods* and *repeated measures*.
- **Sample: 232** participants, staying at the beach for one week:

## 30 Guests

- Mean age: 52.8 (22-93 yrs)
- Female 50%
- Education: 63.4% college/university
- Caregivers: 85% family members
- Disabilities: SMA type 1 (severe SMA); SMA type 2 (intermediate SMA), hemiplegia, Parkinson's disease, Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), multiple sclerosis

## 75 Caregivers

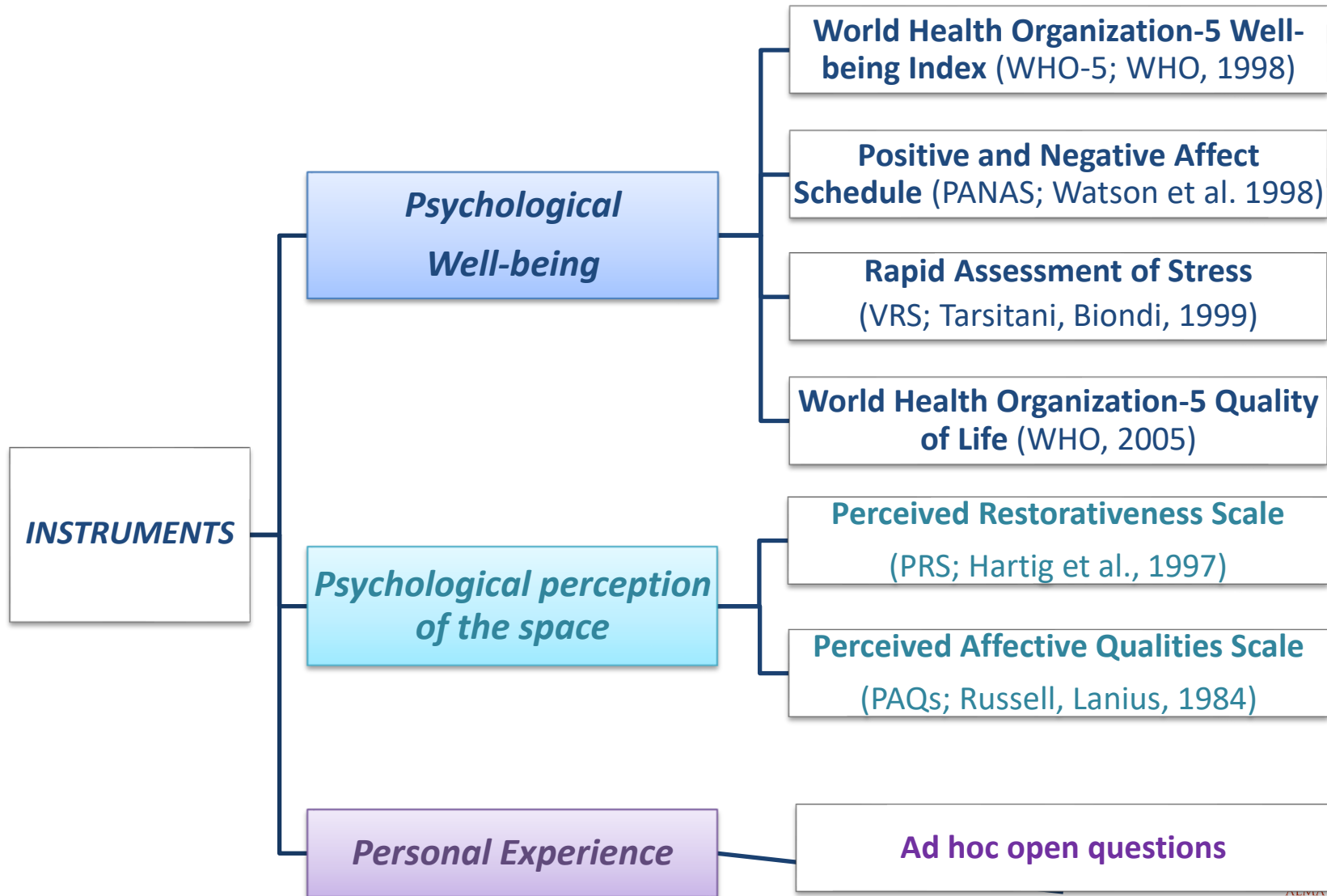
- Mean age: 53.7 (18-80 yrs)
- Female 70.7%
- Education: 72% college/university
- Illness: 29.3%
- Mild: anxiety, stress, thyroid, blood pressure.
- Severe: anxiety or depressive disorder, diabetes, migraine; cancer.

## 127 Volunteers

- Mean age: 25.8 (13-75 yrs)
- Female 59.8%
- Education: 50.3% college/university
- First experience as volunteer: 40.2%
- Type of volunteering: scout, church, etc.

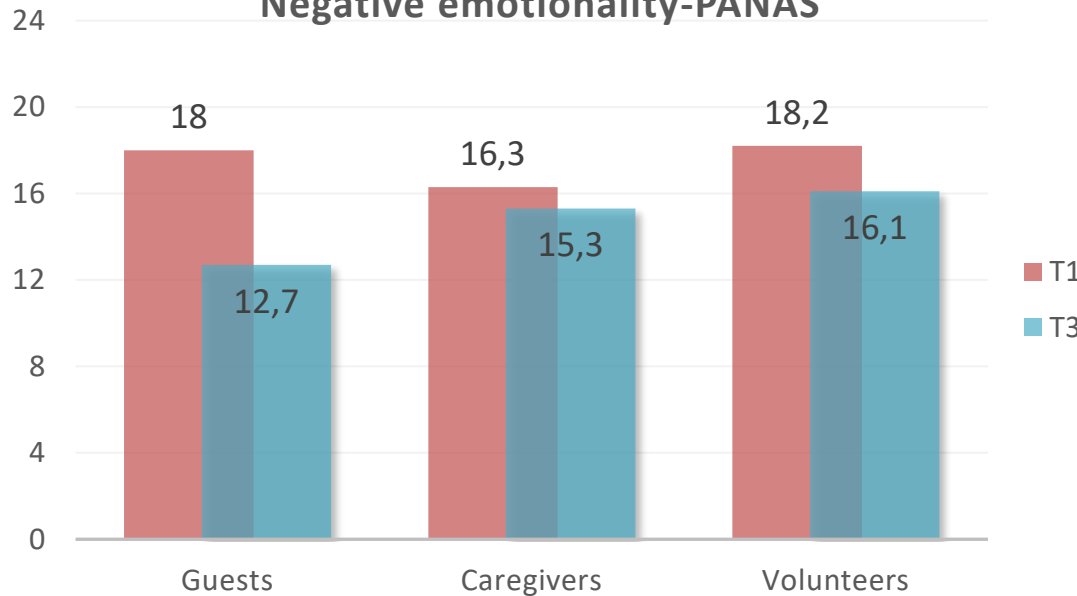


- **Procedure and instruments:** data were collected by a psychologist in August-September 2024 in 3 different steps (T1, T2, T3= first, third and last day):

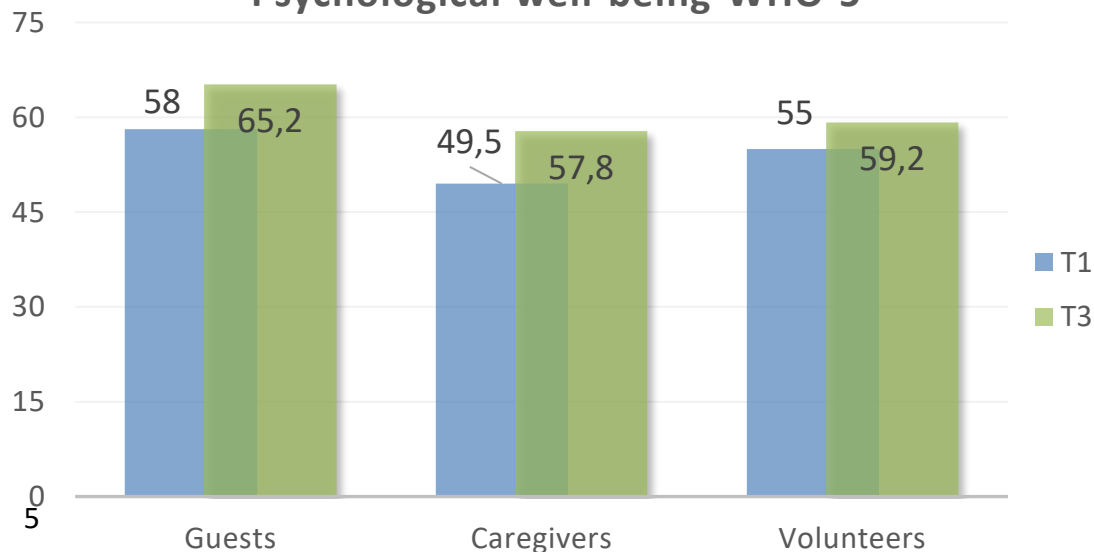


# Results on Psychological well-being

## Negative emotionality-PANAS



## Psychological well-being-WHO-5



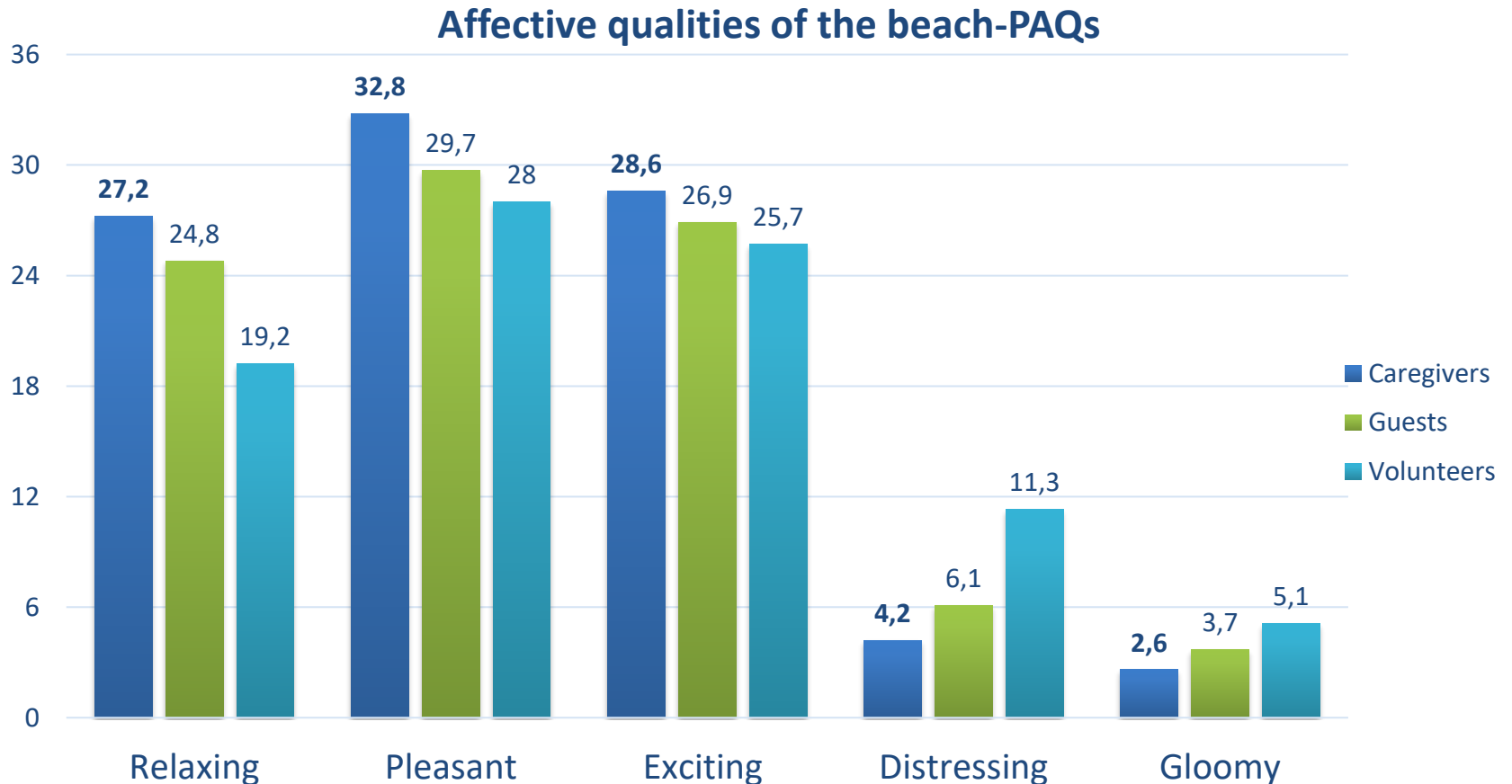
### During a week (from T1 to T3):

- Negative emotional states significantly decreased ( $p < 0.005$ ).
- Well-being significantly improved ( $p < 0.005$ ).
- Positive emotional states remain stable and high (T1 → T3: mean score 33.3- 34.3).
- Perceived stress remains low to moderate (T1 → T3: mean score 13.1-12.8).

Took a swim/going to take a swim	%
Guests	93.3%
Caregivers	90.7%



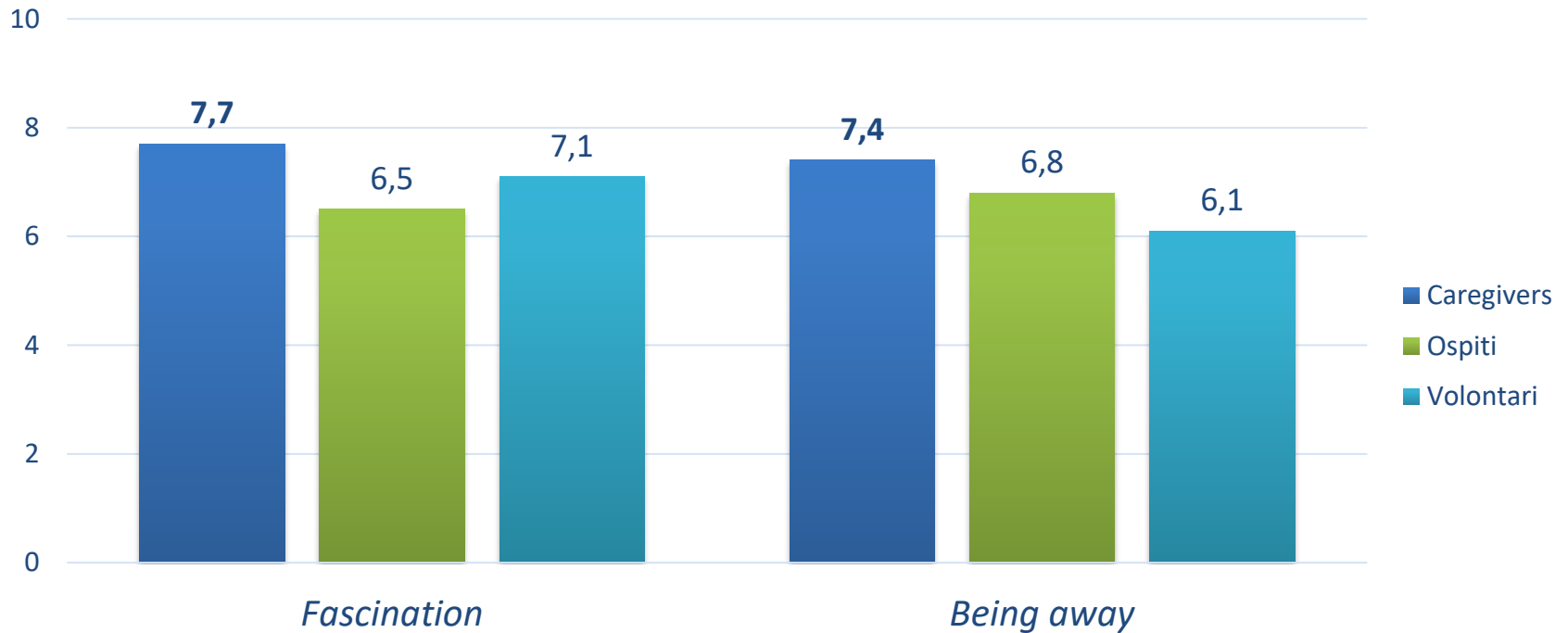
# Results on Affective perception of the place



- All users showed a high perception of positive qualities of the beach and a low perception of negative ones.
- *Caregivers* showed the highest (for positive qualities) and lower scores (for negative) compared to volunteers ( $p < 0.005$ ).



## Results on Restorativeness (PRS)



- All the users showed a high degree of restorativeness, especially for what concerns «being away» and «fascination» scores.
- Among them, *caregivers* showed the highest scores ( $p < 0.005$ ).



## Some reports from young volunteers...

- ✓ I chose to come here to bring a smile to people less fortunate than me
- ✓ I believe that everyone needs importance, especially those who are fragile and, for this reason, are excluded from society

✓ I laugh and play with my friends and at the same time I help people and get to know them

- ✓ It is a way to help others that helps me to draw many considerations about life
- ✓ It is a mental and physical commitment that allows you to have an impact on someone's life
- ✓ It was something that scared me a little and I wanted to overcome my fear by doing something good and helping others



## Some points for discussion and future research

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- The findings suggest that the stay at the beach is associated to:
- Global improvement of well-being in all participants, independently of health condition and role;
- Positive perception of the place, especially by caregivers.
- The **joint value** of the specialized characteristics of the beach, which allows people with various disability conditions and their families to reclaim moments of pleasure, feel supported and experience significant social interactions thanks to the presence of volunteers and operators, along with the restorative effect that natural blue spaces may elicit (WHO, 2021), contributes to improving psychological well-being, even in case of severe disabilities.
- It might also alleviate the negative consequences of psychophysiological stress on the whole family system.
- **To explore:**
- *Impact of duration of exposure, the role of contact with water, psychophysiological measures, caregivers' and volunteers' perspectives*
- **If you have similar experiences in your country, we really would like to create connections and exchanges!**



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