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Supporting the mental health of adults bereaved by suicide : A systematic review of protective factors

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BACKGROUND

- Exposure to the suicide of a loved one is associated with poor mental health outcomes, including an increased risk of **depression**¹, **post-traumatic stress disorder**², **prolonged grief disorder**² and **suicidal behavior**³.
- Thus, understanding the characteristics and mechanisms that promote mental health in suicide-loss survivors is essential for developing appropriate interventions and support for this vulnerable population.

➔ We therefore sought to systematically synthesize the evidence on protective factors in adults bereaved by suicide.

METHOD

- Following guidelines for systematic reviews, searches were performed using **PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science** and **Embase** by two independent reviewers using the same criteria and search procedures.
- Studies were included if they **1)** were original research published in peer-reviewed journals in English or French prior to May 2024, and **2)** focused on protective factors that moderate the risk of developing psychopathologies or support good mental health in adults bereaved by the suicide of a close relative.

FINDINGS

- After screening (see Figure 1), **31 articles** were included, including 4 longitudinal, 17 cross-sectional and 10 qualitative studies.

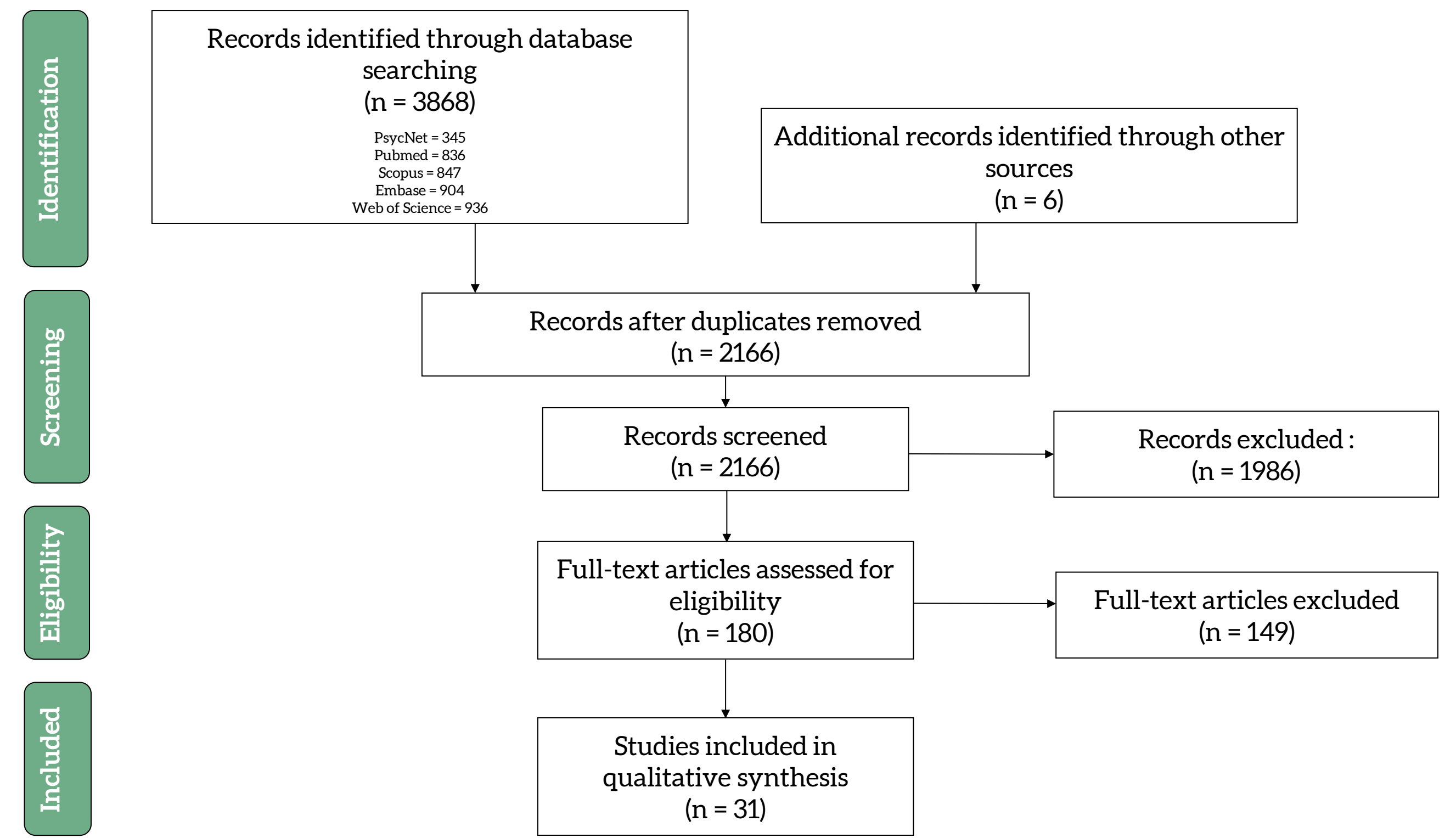
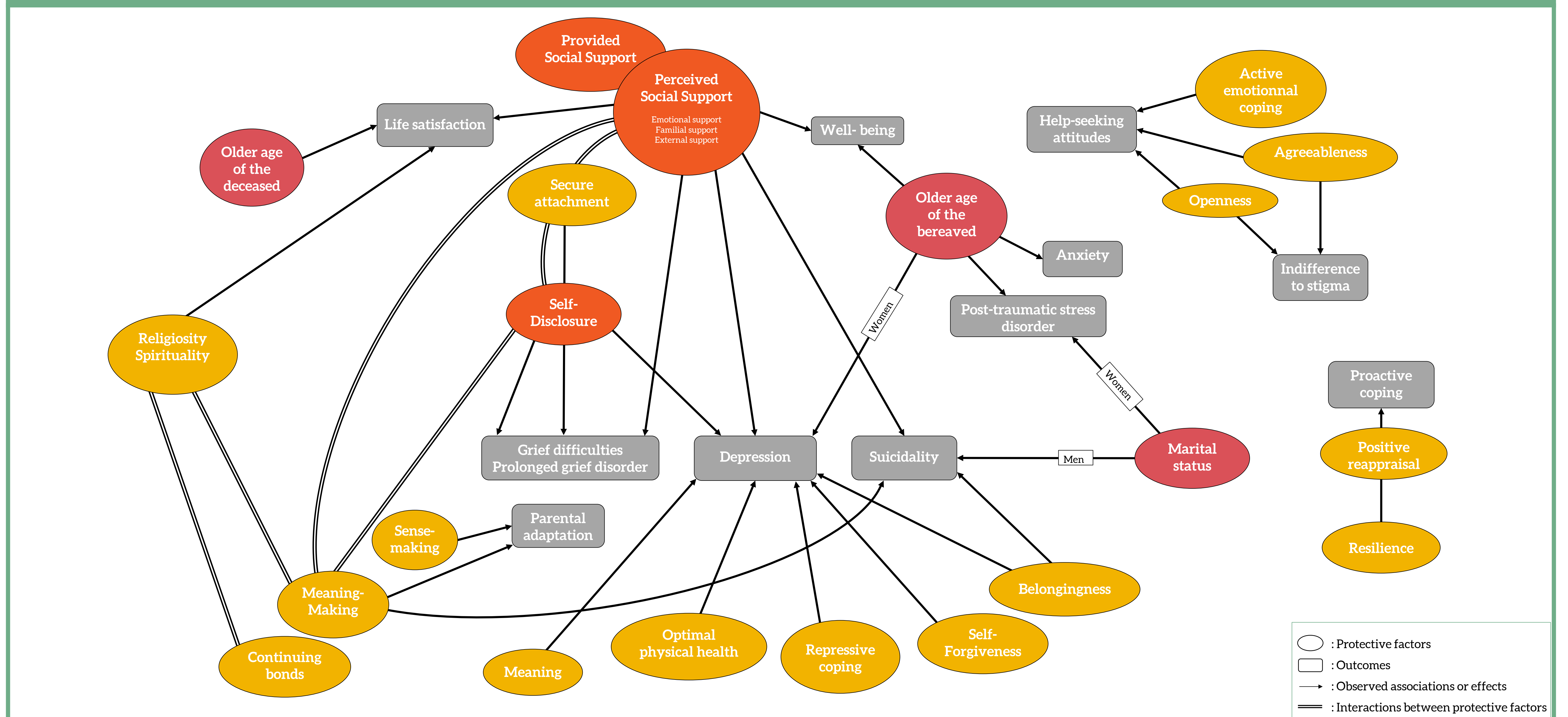


Fig.1. PRISMA Flow Chart

- Results revealed several **interpersonal**, **intrapersonal** and **sociodemographic** factors that can prevent the development of mental disorders in adults bereaved by suicide.

Mapping Protective Factors and Mental Health in the Bereaved by Suicide



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- Despite the major impact of suicide on loved ones, various factors can support the mental health of the bereaved. These factors need to be understood from a **biopsychosocial perspective**, involving individual, interpersonal, and sociodemographic characteristics.
- However, most of the included studies were cross-sectional, which limits the ability to make causal inferences between protective factors and outcomes. Additionally, some studies involved the same participants, reducing the scope of their results, and most had limited sample sizes.
- To better identify the elements and underlying mechanisms of resilience in suicide loss survivors, **further large-scale longitudinal studies are needed.**

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