Institute of Public Health

Research Assistant position at the Institute of Public Health, Faculty of Biomedical Sciences at USI Università della Svizzera italiana

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunity open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take center stage, and where our researchers can count on having the space to freely pursue their initiative.

Established in 1996, USI is in constant evolution, always taking on new challenges while remaining true to its three guiding principles: quality, openness and responsibility.

The Institute of Public Health (IPH) is an inter-faculty institute dedicated to teaching, research and service activities in public health sciences and its component disciplines. As such, it brings together, among others, the expertise of epidemiology, psychology, communication sciences, and economics. A key research area in the IPH is the study of determinants contributing to child and adolescent well-being and the identification of strategies and actions to promote a healthy development in early age.

The Institute invites applications for a Research Assistant position (80%) in a 3-year Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) project titled AWARE: Mental Health Portrayals on Social Media and Implications on Adolescents’ Awareness and Well-being.

The project
Mental health is a prevalent topic on social media. While it raises awareness and promotes help-seeking behaviors, it can also lead to overinterpretation and self-diagnosis. To date, little is known about how and by whom mental illnesses like depression and anxiety are portrayed on social media and which implications the portrayal has on the perceptions, beliefs, and well-being of adolescent users. Project AWARE has four research objectives:
1. Investigating how adolescents perceive mental health, particularly depression and anxiety, in their daily lives (including social media).
2. Analyzing the portrayal of depression and anxiety on social media.
3. Examining the reciprocal relationships between exposure to these portrayals and adolescents’ perceptions, beliefs, and subjective well-being.
4. Investigating the influence of algorithm literacy, parental mediation, and perceived peer norms on these relationships.

The project uses a mixed-methods approach, including a focus group study, a content analysis of social media posts, a validation study adapting a previously developed Social Media Algorithm Literacy Scale, and a three-wave longitudinal school survey. The research will focus on adolescents aged 12 to 19 as social media use intensifies and peaks during this life stage.
Project AWARE is a joint project co-coordinated by Dr. Anne-Linda Camerini at USI in Switzerland, Prof. Dr. Kathrin Karsay at University of Vienna in Austria, and Prof. Dr. Ruth Wendt at LMU Munich in Germany.

The position
The Research Assistant will be employed at USI and work under the supervision of Dr. Anne-Linda Camerini.

Tasks include but are not limited to:
- Project management (update of joint online workspace, set up and protocol of internal meetings among all project collaborators including three Co-PIs and three PhD researchers)
- Organization of three in-person project meetings (1st in Germany, 2nd in Austria, and 3rd in Switzerland)
- Organization of final workshop in Switzerland
- Public outreach activities using different, target-specific channels and formats (website, fact sheets, summaries, and presentations)
- Collaboration in research activities (contact with schools, school departments, participant recruitment, data collection, data preparation)

Candidates’ profile
Ideal candidates should satisfy the following requirements:
- Have a Bachelor or Master (or equivalent title) in Communication Science, Psychology, Public Health, or related disciplines
- Have experience in scientific project management
- Have excellent skills in oral and written German (ideally mother tongue) and English
- Be able to work independently, proactively plan and direct own work, and manage one’s time and resources efficiently
- Be able to work in a team.

Contract terms
The position is financed (80%) for the duration of 3 years (36 months), and the salary levels correspond to those set by the Swiss National Science Foundation for Research Assistants.

Workplace is USI Università della Svizzera italiana, located in Lugano, Switzerland. Availability to travel to other parts of Switzerland and abroad (especially Germany and Austria for purposes of collaboration and research) is required.

Starting date is 1st December 2024. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an online interview. Please remember that excellent German skills is a must.

The Application
The application should contain:
- A letter in which the applicant describes his or her motivation to apply for the specific project and position,
- A complete CV
- Copies of relevant diplomas, certificates as well as the full transcript of records (ECTS)
- An electronic version of the Bachelor or Master thesis accompanied by a short summary in English (1 page maximum)
- A support letter written by the thesis supervisor or former employer who knows the candidate well

Before proceeding with the ONLINE submission, please read the “Information on personal data processing of job candidates” available at the following LINK. In the online form, you will be asked to declare that you have read and understood our privacy policy.
Applications must be submitted ONLINE by filling out the form accessible through the following link: CANDIDATES. You will also need to upload the documents listed above.

Requests for further information to Dr. Anne-Linda Camerini (anne.linda.camerini@usi.ch).

Applications received before 30th September 2024, will be given priority. However, applications will be received until the position is filled.

USI strives to be an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. We guarantee that the selection process will give equal opportunities to female and male researchers. As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.

Lugano, 11.07.2024