SAFEBOOK FOR SAFE YOUTH

RESEARCH ON THE SAFETY OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Club for Youth Empowerment 018 (KOM 018), Serbia implements KA2 CBY project "Safebook for safe youth" in cooperation with Beyond Borders – Italy, Idea for Life – Poland, Youth Center "Perspektiva" – Albania, Red Cross Novo Sarajevo – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan Youth Innovation Forum – Jordan and Euro-Med EVE in Tunisia. The project idea is focused on the safety of young people, especially affected by COVID-19 pandemic. "Safebook for safe youth" project aims at promotion of safety culture among young people through newly developed manual "Safebook" for youth work in the field of youth safety. The manual was produced through Strategic partnership in the field of youth in 2021 by the applicant Club for Youth Empowerment 018 (KOM 018) together with Beyond Borders – Italy, and partners from Croatia and North Macedonia and is recognized as a good practice project by Erasmus + Program. Project will equip youth workers and educators with new educational tools in the field of youth safety focusing on 5 segments: peer violence, cyber bullying, abuse of psychoactive substances, discrimination and mental health in time of COVID-19. Project is implemented in the period 01.01.2023 – 31.12.2024 and is co-financed by the European Union.

DESK RESEARCH

SERBIA

Peer Violence

The research conducted by National Youth Council in the second half of April 2023 highlighted a concerning trend among young people when it comes to violence. There has been no reduction in the percentage of young people exposed to various forms of violence and discrimination. In fact, in many categories, this percentage has increased. The data paints a troubling picture, revealing that 49% of young people reported experiencing physical violence, a notable increase from the previous year's 40%. Verbal violence witnessed a slight decrease from 73% to 71%, while the percentage of young people exposed to digital violence rose from 40% to 47%. According to the same research, violence, especially digital and verbal, has become a daily occurrence, primarily manifesting on social media platforms. The discussion revealed a connection between physical violence in schools and subsequent instances of digital and verbal violence. Experiences of discrimination were also explored, with 62% of young people indicating that they have been subjected to some form of discrimination, a slight decrease compared to the previous year. Notably, discrimination based on age decreased from 44% to 38%. However, violence motivated by personal characteristics remained consistent. This data significantly contributes to the sense of insecurity among young people, leading to a decline in self-worth and a desire to leave their environment. In response to these distressing findings, the Youth Council assembled to discuss preventive measures and activities to enhance the safety and mental health of young people. Proposals included the establishment of youth counselling centres in local communities, incorporating mental health professionals and youth workers. A campaign to promote the mental health of young people was also proposed but has not been formalized at the time of this report. In conclusion, the prevalence of peer violence remains a critical issue affecting the well-being of young people in Serbia. The proposed measures, if implemented, could play a pivotal role in creating a safer environment for the youth. However, the urgent need for concrete actions and systemic changes is evident, as the discussed measures are yet to be adopted.
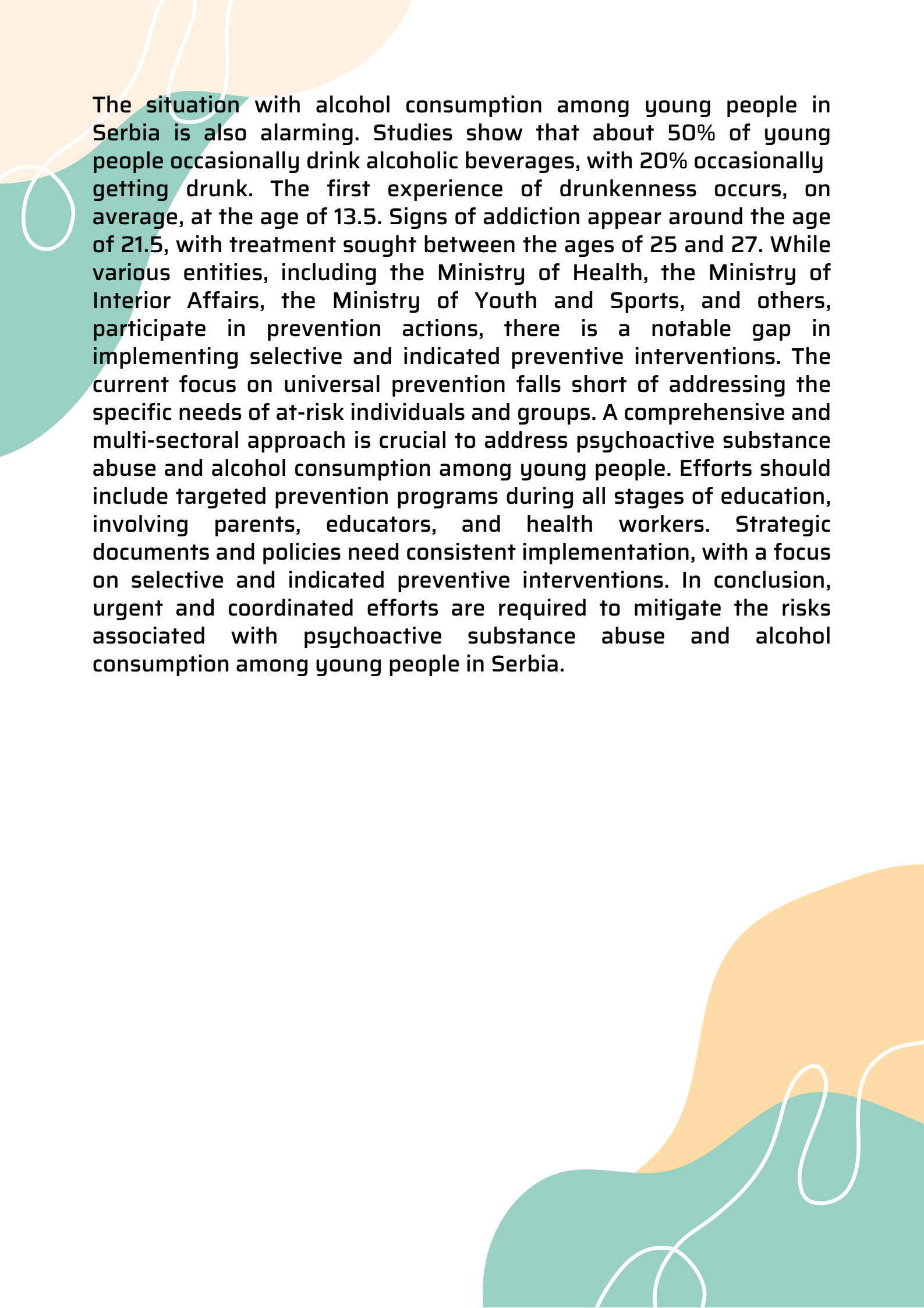
SERBIA

Cyberbullying

In the realm of digital interactions, young people, considered digital natives, are facing a rising tide of cyberbullying. According to Alternative report on position and needs of young people in Serbia, 95% of cyberbullying incidents are peer-driven, with 66% of high school students having experienced digital violence. The dangers extend further, as 30% of students have witnessed their peers falling victim to cyberbullying. Shockingly, 84% of high school students admit to putting themselves at risk on the internet. Cyberbullying manifests in various forms, including harassing messages, password theft, spreading private information or falsehoods online, sending offensive images, creating online surveys about victims, sending viruses, distributing pornography or spam, and impersonating others. The lack of awareness among young people about support measures for cyberbullying exacerbates the problem. One notable challenge in combating cyberbullying is the inadequate response from institutions. Existing policies and protocols fall short in addressing the nuances of digital violence. The lack of familiarity among young people with available support exacerbates the issue, allowing cyberbullying to persist and escalate. To effectively combat cyberbullying, a multifaceted approach is essential. Awareness campaigns should be launched to educate both young people and adults about the prevalence and consequences of digital violence. Additionally, institutions must prioritize the development and implementation of robust policies and protocols specifically tailored to address cyberbullying. In conclusion, cyberbullying poses a serious threat to the well-being of young people in Serbia. The integration of comprehensive measures, including education, awareness, and targeted policies, is imperative to create a safer digital space for the youth.

SERBIA

Abuse of Psychoactive Substances and Alcohol

Every year, approximately 210 million people worldwide use drugs, resulting in about 200,000 deaths. The abuse of psychoactive substances poses not only a health threat but also a significant socio-economic burden globally. Primary prevention, controlling the use of all psychoactive substances, is paramount. However, in Serbia, preventive interventions are primarily in the realm of universal prevention, with selective and indicated interventions for specific risk groups being underutilized. The National Survey on Lifestyles of the Population of the Republic of Serbia in 2014 revealed that 8.0% of the population aged 18 to 64 had used illegal drugs at least once in their lifetime. Cannabis was the most commonly used illegal drug, reported by 7.7% of respondents. Sedatives and hypnotics were used by 22.4% of respondents in the previous year. While strategic documents and policies align with EU guidelines, their inconsistent implementation demands increased attention from relevant institutions. Situation with use and abuse of alcohol among young people in Serbia is alarming. In the last few years, it has almost become normal that every outing of young people, birthday celebrations or passed exams is accompanied by large amounts of alcohol. The trend of alcohol consumption among young people is constantly increasing, and this is indicated by numerous studies both in the world and in our country. According to the latest research by the European Commission, every fifth inhabitant of the European Union between the ages of 15 and 24 regularly and excessively drinks alcohol. In Serbia, according to the research of the Institute for Health Protection "Trampoline", about 50 percent of young people occasionally drink alcoholic beverages, 20 percent occasionally get drunk, and seven percent of them regularly drink. Research by the "Trampoline" Institute shows that, on average, the first drunkenness in Serbia is experienced at the age of 13.5, and at the latest at the age of 20. Signs of addiction appear on average around the age of 21.5, while young people come for treatment between the ages of 25 and 27. In Belgrade, out of the total number of treated alcoholics, almost half are young people aged 30.

The situation with alcohol consumption among young people in Serbia is also alarming. Studies show that about 50% of young people occasionally drink alcoholic beverages, with 20% occasionally getting drunk. The first experience of drunkenness occurs, on average, at the age of 13.5. Signs of addiction appear around the age of 21.5, with treatment sought between the ages of 25 and 27. While various entities, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and others, participate in prevention actions, there is a notable gap in implementing selective and indicated preventive interventions. The current focus on universal prevention falls short of addressing the specific needs of at-risk individuals and groups. A comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach is crucial to address psychoactive substance abuse and alcohol consumption among young people. Efforts should include targeted prevention programs during all stages of education, involving parents, educators, and health workers. Strategic documents and policies need consistent implementation, with a focus on selective and indicated preventive interventions. In conclusion, urgent and coordinated efforts are required to mitigate the risks associated with psychoactive substance abuse and alcohol consumption among young people in Serbia.

SERBIA

Discrimination

In Serbia, discrimination presents a formidable challenge, significantly impacting the well-being of young individuals. This chapter delves into the multifaceted aspects of discrimination, highlighting various forms and shedding light on vulnerable groups and systemic challenges. Discrimination in Education remains a pressing issue, with children, especially Roma and those with disabilities, facing discriminatory practices within educational institutions. The lack of timely preventive measures and inadequate responses contribute to the persistence of this pervasive problem. Statistics reveal a disconcerting trend, with 370 reported cases of the third level of violence in 2021. This marks a 44.3% increase in reported cases from 2013 to 2019, underscoring the urgency for targeted interventions and systemic reforms. Persons with Disabilities encounter discrimination across multiple sectors, including education, work, community life, and access to services. Stigmatization and segregation persist due to entrenched prejudices and misinformation. Daily discrimination is reported, particularly in education, work, and access to services, emphasizing the need for comprehensive and inclusive policies. Vulnerable Groups identified in the National Strategy for Young People, including those at risk of poverty, young Roma, and youth with disabilities, are at the highest risk of discrimination. This highlights the intersectionality of discrimination, necessitating a nuanced and targeted approach to address the specific challenges faced by these groups. Discrimination in Peer Treatment is another dimension, with Roma children often being victims of discriminatory peer treatment. The prevalence of discriminatory peer treatment remains high, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of discrimination beyond individual acts. Challenges in Combating Discrimination are multifaceted. One significant obstacle is the tendency to categorize discriminatory behaviours solely as peer violence. Discrimination requires a distinct and comprehensive approach to tackle its root causes and systemic manifestations.

In conclusion, discrimination continues to cast a shadow over the lives of young people in Serbia.

The statistics underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions, policy reforms, and educational initiatives to foster an inclusive society that values diversity and rejects discrimination. The battle against discrimination requires not only acknowledgment but also a concerted effort from institutions and communities to dismantle ingrained biases and ensure equal opportunities for all.
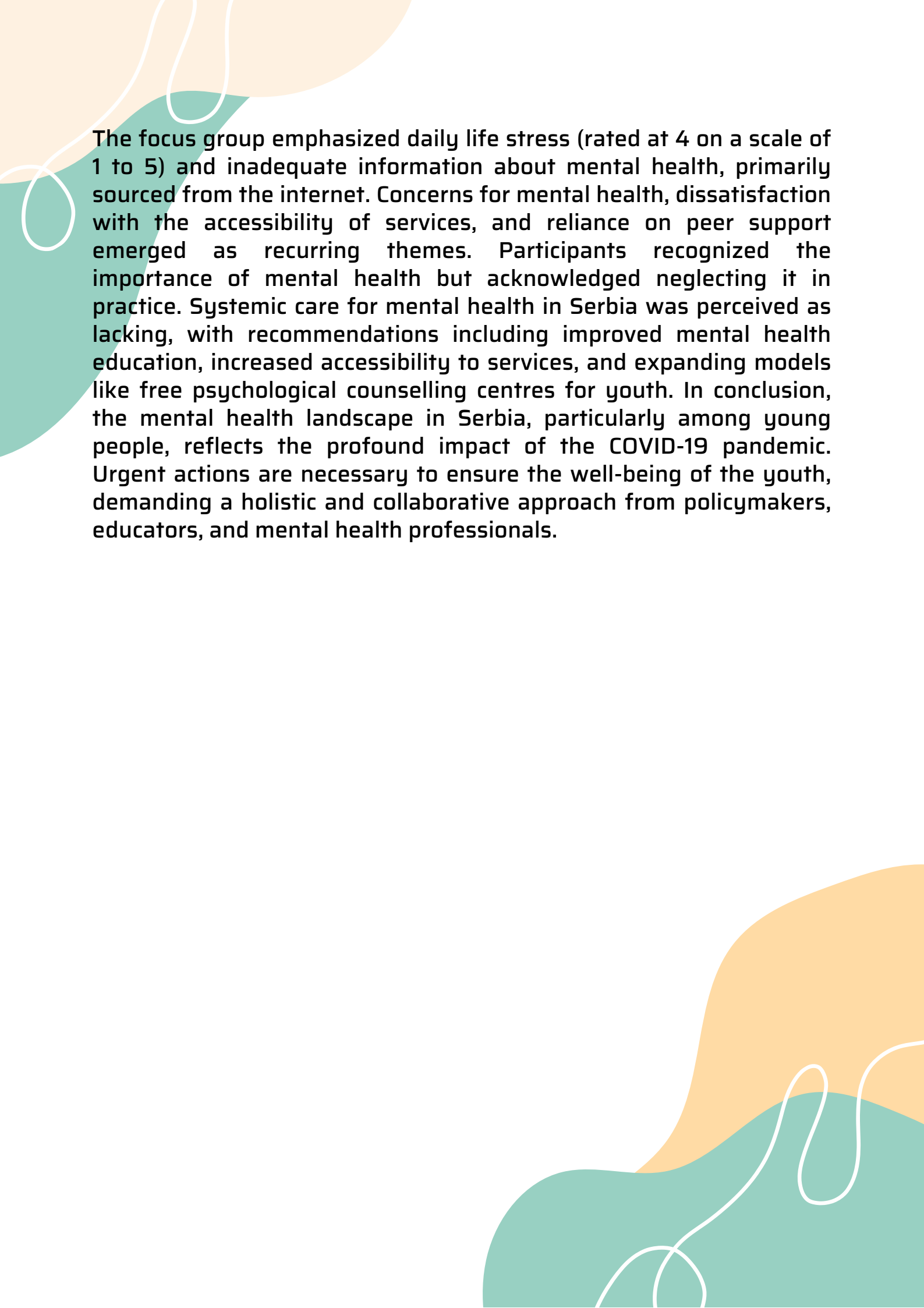
SERBIA

Mental health of young people

The COVID-19 pandemic, which started in March 2020 in Serbia, has left a lasting impact on the mental health of the population, particularly affecting young people. The country grapples with the consequences of an ongoing crisis, as seen in the stable yet evolving epidemiological situation.

Mental health challenges have surged during the pandemic, manifesting as heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse among young individuals. Factors such as unhealthy living conditions, economic instability, and traumatic experiences have compounded these challenges, posing a significant risk to the well-being of the youth. A comprehensive research study for 2023 by the National Youth Council of Serbia provides alarming insights. Young people felt significantly worried for their mental health, majority experiencing heightened anxiety. Statistical data further highlights the severity of the situation:

- Feeling of Endangerment: Average response on the scale of 1 to 5: 2.90; Young people from big cities felt more vulnerable than others.
- Optimism About the Future: Occasionally felt optimistic: 49.5% Perception of Losing Their Minds: Occasionally: 23.2%; Often: 18.9%; All the time: 8.7%

Access to mental health services remains a challenge, with dissatisfaction expressed regarding their availability and effectiveness. Recommendations to address the mental health crisis include urgent and targeted interventions, incorporation of mental health education into the formal education system, improving the accessibility of mental health services, conducting workshops in educational institutions, and fostering a supportive community. Turning to additional insights on the mental health of young people, a focus group in Niš revealed further nuances:

- Encountering Stress, Anxiety, and Depression: 60% of young people have not encountered these issues, while 35.4% have experienced them to some extent.
- Frequency of Encountering Mental Health Issues: Stress: 72.1%; Anxiety: 52.7%; Depression: 37.8%
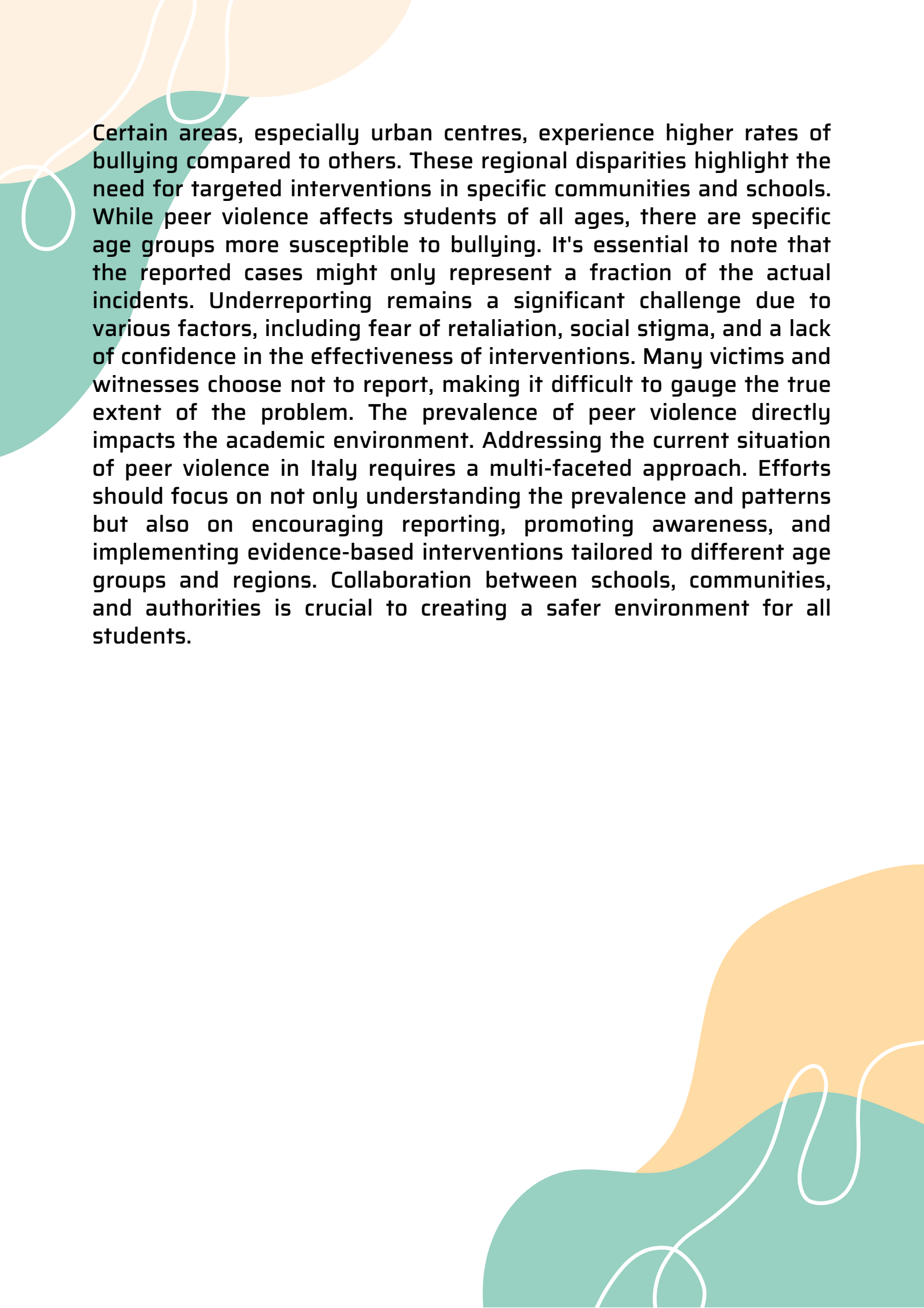
The focus group emphasized daily life stress (rated at 4 on a scale of 1 to 5) and inadequate information about mental health, primarily sourced from the internet. Concerns for mental health, dissatisfaction with the accessibility of services, and reliance on peer support emerged as recurring themes. Participants recognized the importance of mental health but acknowledged neglecting it in practice. Systemic care for mental health in Serbia was perceived as lacking, with recommendations including improved mental health education, increased accessibility to services, and expanding models like free psychological counselling centres for youth. In conclusion, the mental health landscape in Serbia, particularly among young people, reflects the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Urgent actions are necessary to ensure the well-being of the youth, demanding a holistic and collaborative approach from policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals.

ITALY

Peer Violence

In Italian schools and communities, peer violence remains a concerning issue, demanding comprehensive strategies for prevention and intervention. Indeed, recent statistics indicate a concerning prevalence of peer violence in Italian schools, with a notable increase in reported incidents. Indeed, according to the World Health Organization, Italy is among the countries with the highest prevalence of bullying among 11-year-olds, with 34% of boys and 28% of girls reporting being bullied at least two or three times in the past couple of months. Also, according to a study by Statista, in 2019, there were 1,271 cases of violence or threats against students in Italian schools, an increase of 13.6% compared to the previous year. The same study also reported that cyberbullying was a growing phenomenon, affecting 9.5% of students aged 11 to 17. Furthermore, UNICEF stated that peer violence can have negative impacts on children's physical and mental health, as well as their academic achievement and social skills. The report also highlighted the need for effective prevention and intervention programmes that involve schools, families, communities, and media. While efforts have been made to curb this trend, it remains a pressing concern. Certain regions and age groups are more susceptible to peer violence, highlighting the need for targeted interventions in these areas. In order to delve deeper into the topic, it's important to mention that the prevalence of this phenomenon in the territory is especially expressed as a consequence of acts of violence via reports from educational institutions and surveys conducted among students indicate a worrisome prevalence. Instances of physical aggression, verbal abuse, and cyberbullying persist, affecting students across various age groups and regions. In recent years, there has been a concerning increase in reported incidents of peer violence. This rise is attributed, in part, to the proliferation of digital communication channels, making it easier for bullies to target their victims online. Cyberbullying, has become more prevalent, creating new challenges for educators, parents, and authorities. Studies reveal regional disparities in the prevalence of peer violence.
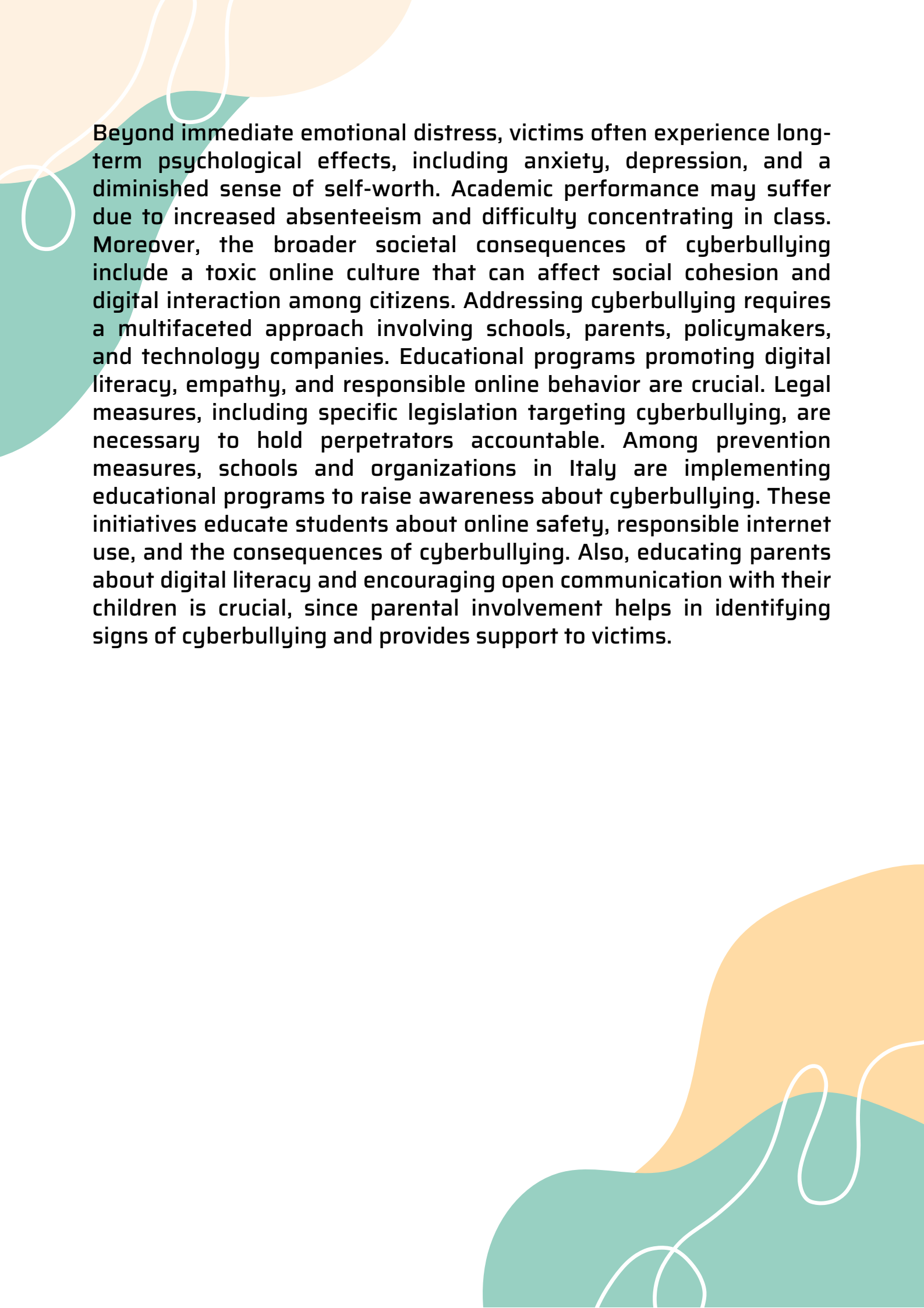
Certain areas, especially urban centres, experience higher rates of bullying compared to others. These regional disparities highlight the need for targeted interventions in specific communities and schools. While peer violence affects students of all ages, there are specific age groups more susceptible to bullying. It's essential to note that the reported cases might only represent a fraction of the actual incidents. Underreporting remains a significant challenge due to various factors, including fear of retaliation, social stigma, and a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of interventions. Many victims and witnesses choose not to report, making it difficult to gauge the true extent of the problem. The prevalence of peer violence directly impacts the academic environment. Addressing the current situation of peer violence in Italy requires a multi-faceted approach. Efforts should focus on not only understanding the prevalence and patterns but also on encouraging reporting, promoting awareness, and implementing evidence-based interventions tailored to different age groups and regions. Collaboration between schools, communities, and authorities is crucial to creating a safer environment for all students.

ITALY

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying in Italy refers to the use of digital technology, such as smartphones and social media platforms, to harass, intimidate, or target individuals, especially young people. It poses unique challenges due to its online nature, making it essential to understand the various forms it takes and the impact it has on victims. Focusing on the current situation of such phenomenon in the country, it is now on the rise with a significant number of reported cases among young people. The internet and social media platforms provide avenues for anonymous harassment, exacerbating the problem. Of course, advancements in technology, including smartphones and messaging apps, have facilitated the spread of cyberbullying in Italy. Constant connectivity has made it easier for perpetrators to target their victims anytime and anywhere, including targeted demographics, specifically teenagers and young adults, who are more vulnerable to cyberbullying. Research shows that adolescents are frequent targets due to their active presence on social media platforms. Among different causes and risk factors are anonymity and impersonation, and social media influence. For the first, it is well-recognised that anonymity provided by online platforms emboldens cyberbullies, enabling them to harass others without fear of identification. Impersonation, where perpetrators create fake profiles to attack their victims, is also a prevalent issue. On the other hand, social media platforms amplify the impact of cyberbullying. Hence, the desire for social validation, coupled with the pressure to maintain an online presence, makes young people susceptible to online harassment.

The digital nature of cyberbullying distinguishes it from traditional bullying, enabling perpetrators to extend their reach beyond physical boundaries. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, as well as messaging apps such as WhatsApp, provide fertile ground for cyberbullying incidents. Various forms of cyberbullying include the creation of fake profiles to impersonate victims, the circulation of embarrassing photos or videos, and the use of hurtful language through text messages or comments. Indeed, the impact of cyberbullying on victims is profound and multifaceted.

Beyond immediate emotional distress, victims often experience long-term psychological effects, including anxiety, depression, and a diminished sense of self-worth. Academic performance may suffer due to increased absenteeism and difficulty concentrating in class. Moreover, the broader societal consequences of cyberbullying include a toxic online culture that can affect social cohesion and digital interaction among citizens. Addressing cyberbullying requires a multifaceted approach involving schools, parents, policymakers, and technology companies. Educational programs promoting digital literacy, empathy, and responsible online behavior are crucial. Legal measures, including specific legislation targeting cyberbullying, are necessary to hold perpetrators accountable. Among prevention measures, schools and organizations in Italy are implementing educational programs to raise awareness about cyberbullying. These initiatives educate students about online safety, responsible internet use, and the consequences of cyberbullying. Also, educating parents about digital literacy and encouraging open communication with their children is crucial, since parental involvement helps in identifying signs of cyberbullying and provides support to victims.
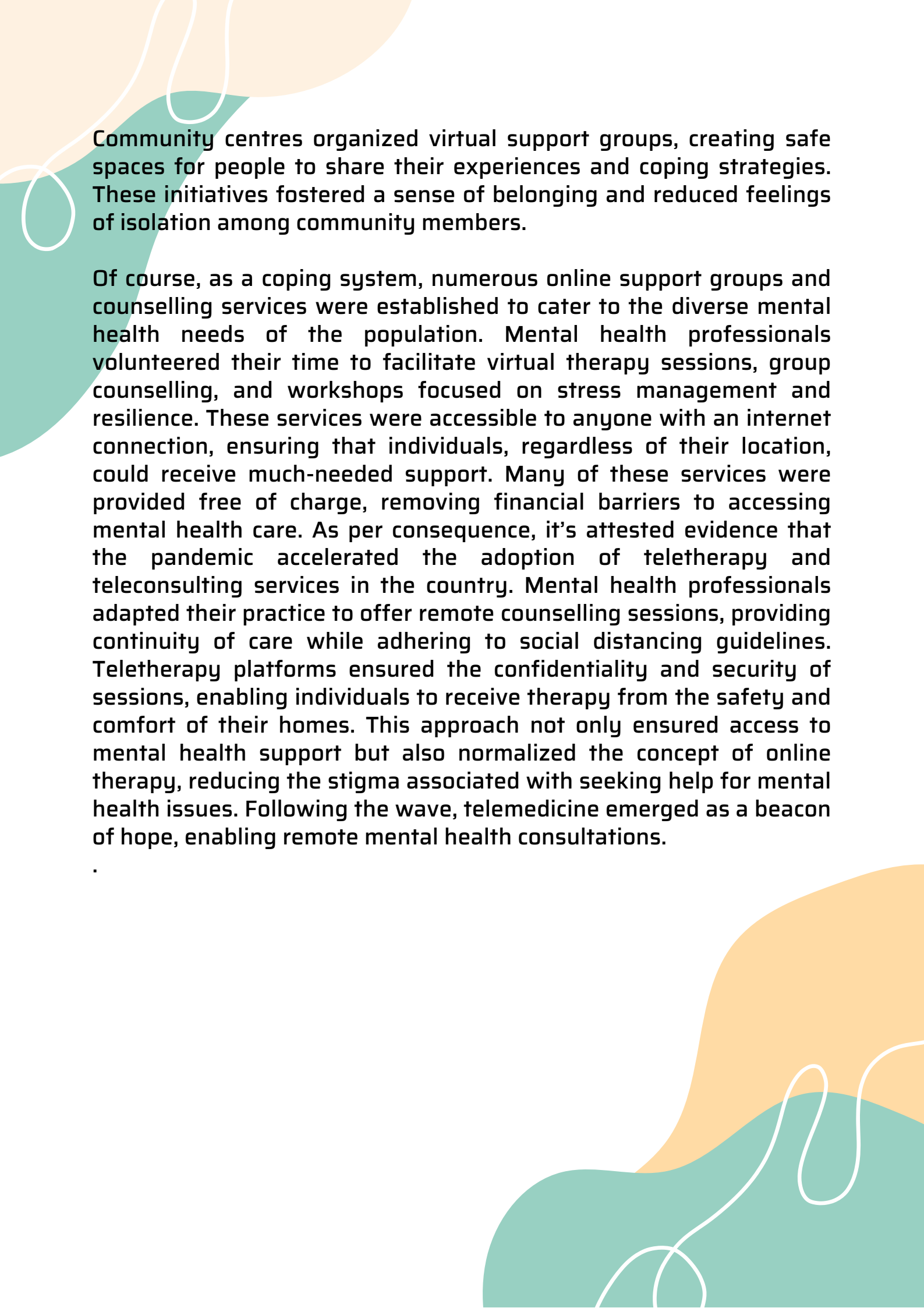
ITALY

Mental health of young people

The COVID-19 pandemic, which gripped the world in an unprecedented manner, brought with it a plethora of mental health challenges. Italy, among the hardest-hit countries during the early stages of the pandemic, faced unique and profound issues concerning the psychological well-being of its citizens. In terms of psychological effects, the pandemic-induced stressors, encompassing health concerns, economic uncertainties, and stringent lockdown measures, significantly impacted Italy's population. Anxiety and fear permeated daily life, creating a pervasive sense of unease.Moreover, the nation grappled with profound grief and loss, with families and communities mourning the loss of loved ones due to the virus. These collective traumas contributed to a surge in cases of depression and other mental health disorders. Frontline healthcare workers emerged as unsung heroes, bearing the brunt of the crisis. Their relentless efforts to save lives came at a cost, leading to burnout, exhaustion, and emotional fatigue. Elderly individuals, especially those in long-term care facilities, faced heightened risks, leading to increased isolation and mental distress. Last but not least, students and young people experienced disruptions in education and social interactions, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

As per coping strategies and support systems, the Italian government elaborated different initiatives, since it swiftly recognized the mental health toll of the pandemic implementing several possible solutions and supports. These latter included helplines staffed by mental health professionals, offering counselling and psychological support to individuals struggling with anxiety, depression, and grief. Online platforms and mobile applications were developed to provide evidence-based coping strategies, mindfulness exercises, and resources for managing mental health at home. Additionally, emergency funding was allocated to mental health services to expand their capacity and meet the increased demand. On the other hand, local communities and non-profit organizations played a crucial role in providing emotional and practical support. Volunteer-driven initiatives were launched to assist vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions, with grocery shopping, medication delivery, and social interaction via phone calls or video chats.

Community centres organized virtual support groups, creating safe spaces for people to share their experiences and coping strategies. These initiatives fostered a sense of belonging and reduced feelings of isolation among community members.

Of course, as a coping system, numerous online support groups and counselling services were established to cater to the diverse mental health needs of the population. Mental health professionals volunteered their time to facilitate virtual therapy sessions, group counselling, and workshops focused on stress management and resilience. These services were accessible to anyone with an internet connection, ensuring that individuals, regardless of their location, could receive much-needed support. Many of these services were provided free of charge, removing financial barriers to accessing mental health care. As per consequence, it's attested evidence that the pandemic accelerated the adoption of teletherapy and teleconsulting services in the country. Mental health professionals adapted their practice to offer remote counselling sessions, providing continuity of care while adhering to social distancing guidelines. Teletherapy platforms ensured the confidentiality and security of sessions, enabling individuals to receive therapy from the safety and comfort of their homes. This approach not only ensured access to mental health support but also normalized the concept of online therapy, reducing the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues. Following the wave, telemedicine emerged as a beacon of hope, enabling remote mental health consultations.
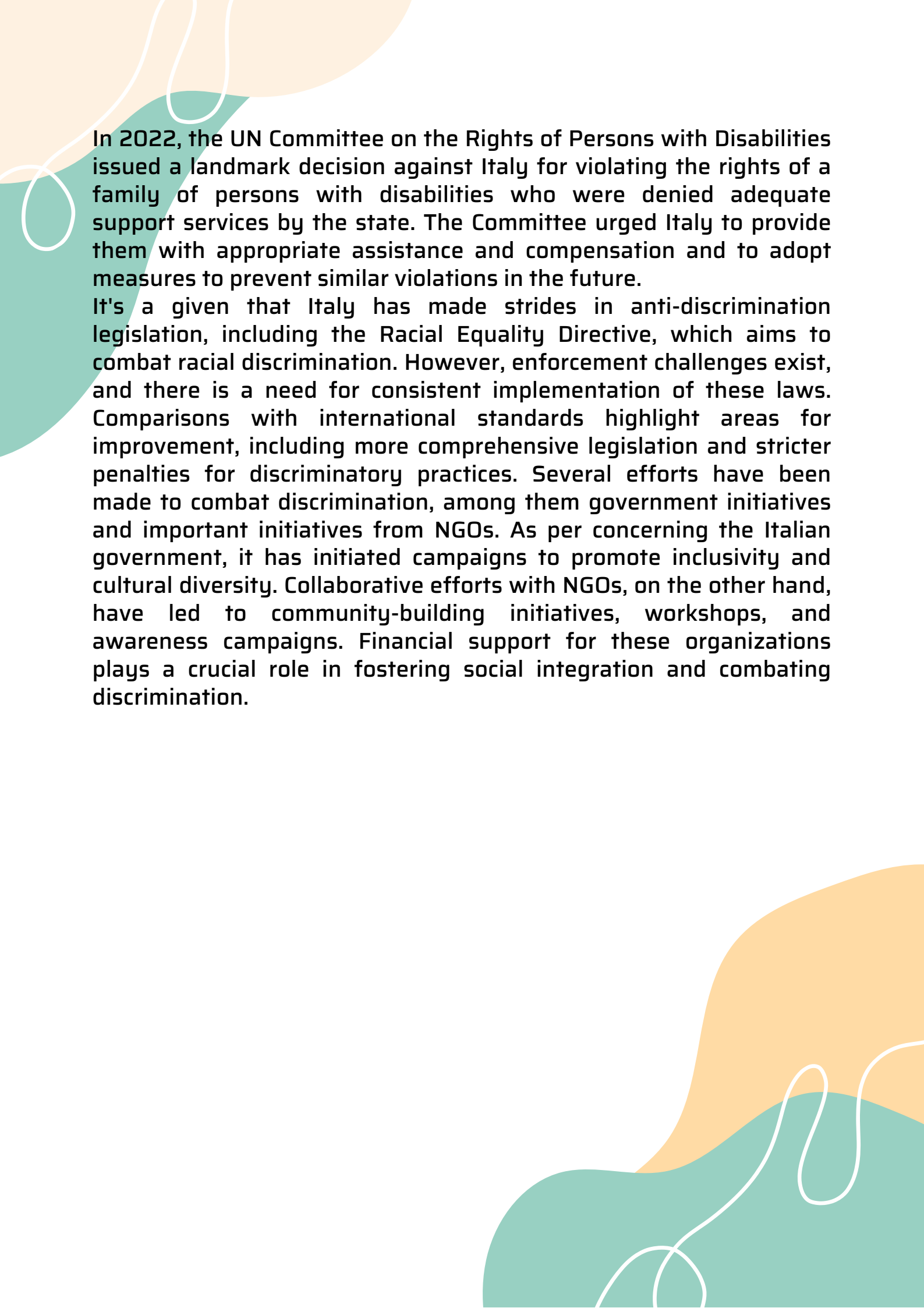.

ITALY

Discrimination

Stating that discrimination refers to the unjust or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or religion, it is universally recognised how it can adversely affect the human rights, dignity, and well-being of persons and communities. One of the most widespread types of discrimination in Italy is against migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, who frequently encounter hostility, violence, and exclusion from society. Human Rights Watch reports that Italy has implemented policies and practices that undermine the rights and protection of these groups, such as denying them access to adequate reception conditions, health care, education, and legal assistance. Moreover, Italy has collaborated with Libya to prevent migrants from reaching Europe by sea, exposing them to severe human rights violations in Libyan detention centres. A report exposed by Amnesty International stated that in 2022, Italy persisted in supporting the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept and return migrants to Libya, despite the evidence of torture, rape, slavery, and killings that they face there.

Another type of discrimination in Italy is against Roma people, who are a historically marginalized and persecuted ethnic minority in Europe. Roma people in Italy suffer from discrimination in various domains of life, such as housing, education, employment, and health care. They also face hate speech, violence, and forced evictions from their settlements. In 2022, an Italian politician from the far-right Brothers of Italy party threatened to expel Roma people from the country if his party wins the general elections in September. This statement illustrates the dangers that Europe's Roma face from rising nationalism and populism.

A third type of discrimination in Italy is against persons with disabilities, who often encounter barriers to their full participation and inclusion in society. Persons with disabilities in Italy face challenges in accessing individualized support services, reasonable accommodation, independent living, and an adequate standard of living.
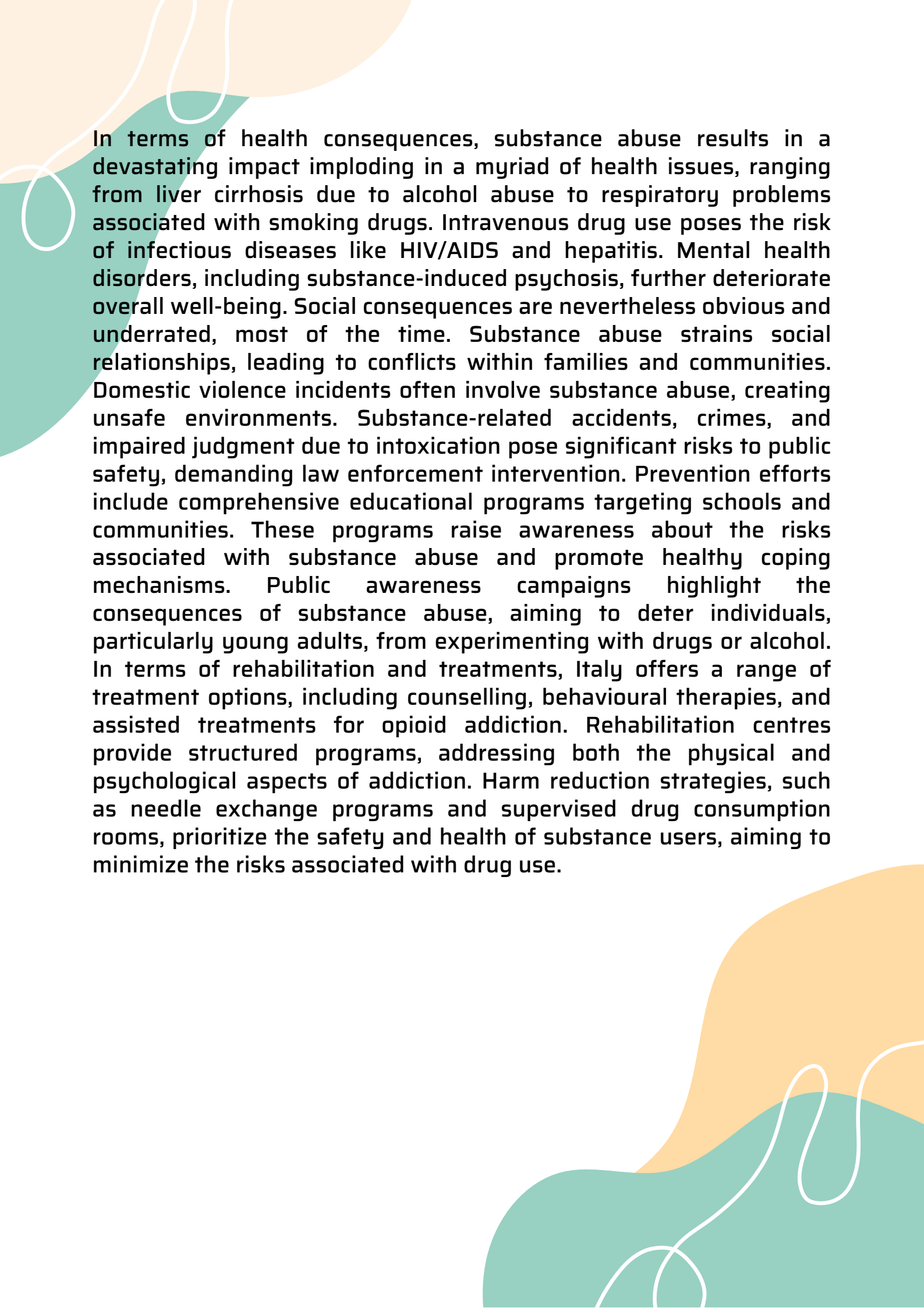
In 2022, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities issued a landmark decision against Italy for violating the rights of a family of persons with disabilities who were denied adequate support services by the state. The Committee urged Italy to provide them with appropriate assistance and compensation and to adopt measures to prevent similar violations in the future.

It's a given that Italy has made strides in anti-discrimination legislation, including the Racial Equality Directive, which aims to combat racial discrimination. However, enforcement challenges exist, and there is a need for consistent implementation of these laws. Comparisons with international standards highlight areas for improvement, including more comprehensive legislation and stricter penalties for discriminatory practices. Several efforts have been made to combat discrimination, among them government initiatives and important initiatives from NGOs. As per concerning the Italian government, it has initiated campaigns to promote inclusivity and cultural diversity. Collaborative efforts with NGOs, on the other hand, have led to community-building initiatives, workshops, and awareness campaigns. Financial support for these organizations plays a crucial role in fostering social integration and combating discrimination.

ITALY

Abuse of psychoactive substances and alcohol

Substance abuse in Italy encompasses the misuse of various psychoactive substances, both legal and illegal, leading to significant public health concerns. Psychoactive substances alter brain function and can lead to dependence, addiction, and a range of physical, mental, and social consequences. This issue is complex, affecting individuals, families, and communities, necessitating comprehensive efforts for prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. As per both types and patterns of substance abuse, Italy experiences a spectrum of drug abuse, with cannabis, cocaine, and heroin being the most commonly abused illegal drugs. However, a concerning trend is the misuse of prescription medications, especially opioids and benzodiazepines. The availability and abuse of these medications contribute to the overall burden of substance abuse in the country. Similarly, alcohol abuse is pervasive, cutting across various demographics. Binge drinking among young adults and underage alcohol consumption are notable patterns. Excessive alcohol consumption not only leads to health problems like liver diseases but also contributes to accidents, violence, and social disruption within families and communities. Throughout the development of similar patterns, it is possible to recognise some common ground factors, among them social and economic, and psychological factors. For the first ones, it has been attested those socioeconomic disparities significantly influence substance abuse rates. Individuals facing poverty and unemployment often turn to substances as a coping mechanism. Limited access to education and employment opportunities exacerbates the cycle of substance abuse, impacting disadvantaged communities disproportionately. On the other hand, psychological factors, such as stress, trauma, and mental health disorders like depression and anxiety, often underlie substance abuse issues. Individuals might resort to drugs or alcohol to self-medicate and escape from emotional pain. Co-occurring mental health disorders complicate the treatment landscape, requiring integrated approaches for effective intervention.
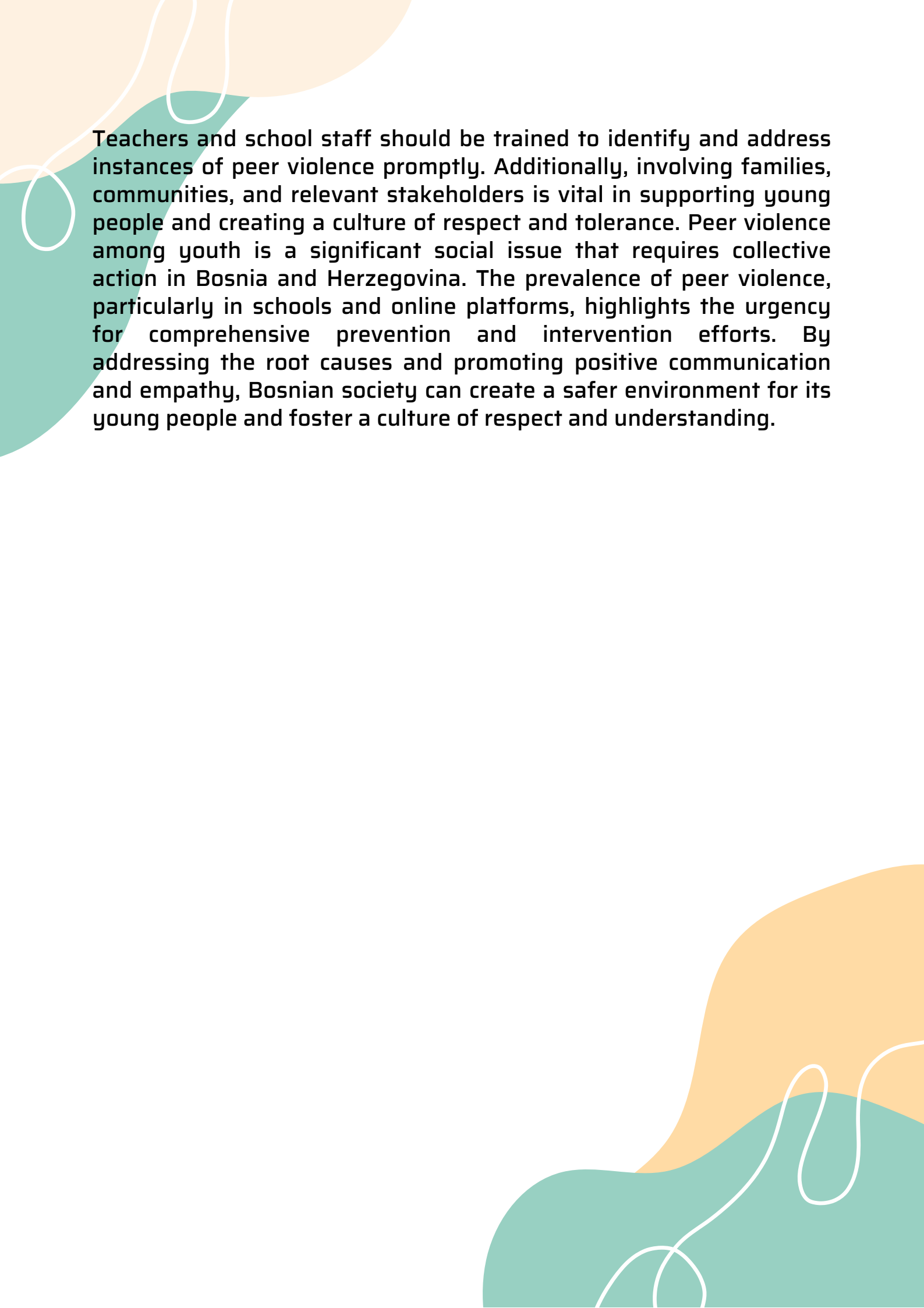
In terms of health consequences, substance abuse results in a devastating impact imploding in a myriad of health issues, ranging from liver cirrhosis due to alcohol abuse to respiratory problems associated with smoking drugs. Intravenous drug use poses the risk of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and hepatitis. Mental health disorders, including substance-induced psychosis, further deteriorate overall well-being. Social consequences are nevertheless obvious and underrated, most of the time. Substance abuse strains social relationships, leading to conflicts within families and communities. Domestic violence incidents often involve substance abuse, creating unsafe environments. Substance-related accidents, crimes, and impaired judgment due to intoxication pose significant risks to public safety, demanding law enforcement intervention. Prevention efforts include comprehensive educational programs targeting schools and communities. These programs raise awareness about the risks associated with substance abuse and promote healthy coping mechanisms. Public awareness campaigns highlight the consequences of substance abuse, aiming to deter individuals, particularly young adults, from experimenting with drugs or alcohol. In terms of rehabilitation and treatments, Italy offers a range of treatment options, including counselling, behavioural therapies, and assisted treatments for opioid addiction. Rehabilitation centres provide structured programs, addressing both the physical and psychological aspects of addiction. Harm reduction strategies, such as needle exchange programs and supervised drug consumption rooms, prioritize the safety and health of substance users, aiming to minimize the risks associated with drug use.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Peer Violence

Peer violence among youth is a concerning social issue that demands attention in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Understanding the extent and consequences of peer violence is essential in developing effective strategies to prevent and address this problem. Data from research studies conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicates that peer violence is a significant problem affecting young people. According to a survey conducted by a local NGO in 2018, approximately 30% of Bosnian youth reported experiencing some form of peer violence in their lives. The most common types of peer violence reported were verbal abuse, physical aggression, and exclusion from social groups. Schools are a prominent setting for peer violence to occur. The same survey revealed that over 40% of students experienced bullying at school. Physical bullying and verbal abuse were prevalent forms of violence in the school environment. Bullying not only affects the victim but can also create a hostile learning environment for all students. With the increased use of digital technology, cyberbullying has emerged as a significant concern among Bosnian youth. A study conducted by the UNICEF in 2020 found that approximately 25% of adolescents in Bosnia and Herzegovina reported being victims of cyberbullying. Social media platforms and messaging apps were the most common mediums for cyberbullying incidents. The impact of peer violence on the mental health of young people is substantial. Victims of peer violence often experience emotional distress, anxiety, depression, and a decline in academic performance. Long-term exposure to peer violence can have lasting effects on self-esteem and social interactions.

Recognizing the severity of the issue, various initiatives have been implemented to prevent and address peer violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Anti-bullying policies have been introduced in schools, focusing on promoting a safe and inclusive learning environment. Non-governmental organizations and youth centres also organize awareness campaigns and workshops to promote empathy, conflict resolution, and positive communication among young people. Educational institutions play a crucial role in preventing peer violence.

Teachers and school staff should be trained to identify and address instances of peer violence promptly. Additionally, involving families, communities, and relevant stakeholders is vital in supporting young people and creating a culture of respect and tolerance. Peer violence among youth is a significant social issue that requires collective action in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The prevalence of peer violence, particularly in schools and online platforms, highlights the urgency for comprehensive prevention and intervention efforts. By addressing the root causes and promoting positive communication and empathy, Bosnian society can create a safer environment for its young people and foster a culture of respect and understanding.
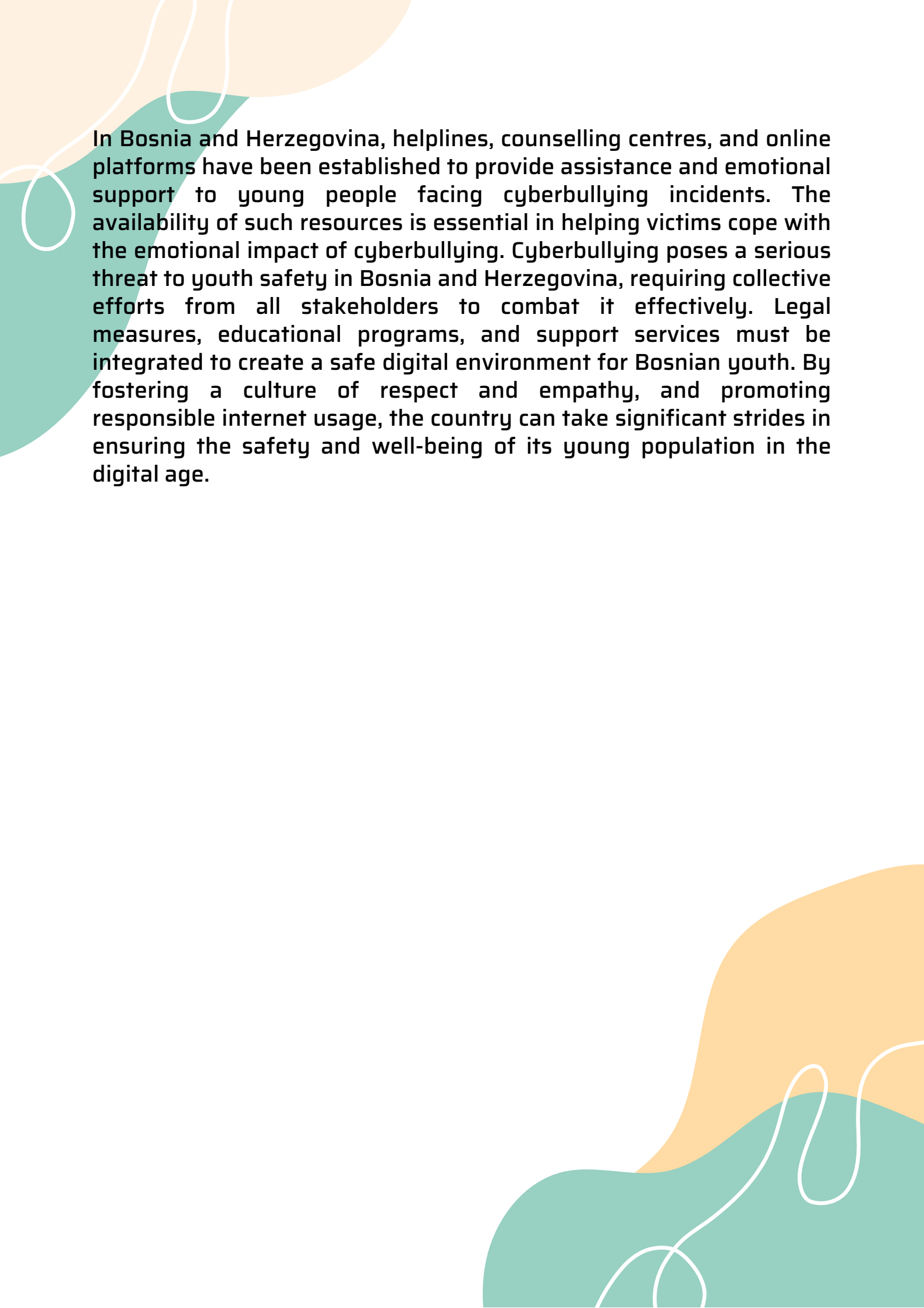
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying refers to the deliberate use of digital communication tools, such as social media, instant messaging, or email, to harm, threaten, harass, or embarrass an individual or a group. It can take the form of hurtful messages, spreading rumours, sharing private information, or creating demeaning content, often leading to emotional distress and psychological harm to the victims. Cyberbullying has emerged as a significant threat to youth safety worldwide, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As technology continues to advance, young people are increasingly exposed to online platforms, making them susceptible to various forms of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a prevalent issue affecting young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As internet usage and social media platforms become more widespread, instances of cyberbullying have increased significantly. A lack of digital literacy and awareness about online safety may exacerbate the problem, making youth more vulnerable to cyberbullying. Cyberbullying has profound consequences on the safety and well-being of Bosnian youth. Victims of cyberbullying often experience anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. In severe cases, cyberbullying has been linked to suicidal ideation and attempts, further highlighting the urgent need to address this issue.

Bosnia and Herzegovina have made efforts to address cyberbullying through its existing legal framework. Legislation related to data protection, online harassment, and child protection may encompass provisions that cover cyberbullying cases. Additionally, educational institutions are encouraged to adopt anti-bullying policies, which should include provisions related to cyberbullying prevention and intervention. Various non-governmental organizations and governmental agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina are working to raise awareness about cyberbullying and implement preventive measures. These initiatives include educational programs in schools and communities that promote digital literacy, online safety, and responsible internet usage. By empowering youth with knowledge and skills, they can better protect themselves and their peers from cyberbullying. Access to support and counselling services is crucial for victims of cyberbullying.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, helplines, counselling centres, and online platforms have been established to provide assistance and emotional support to young people facing cyberbullying incidents. The availability of such resources is essential in helping victims cope with the emotional impact of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying poses a serious threat to youth safety in Bosnia and Herzegovina, requiring collective efforts from all stakeholders to combat it effectively. Legal measures, educational programs, and support services must be integrated to create a safe digital environment for Bosnian youth. By fostering a culture of respect and empathy, and promoting responsible internet usage, the country can take significant strides in ensuring the safety and well-being of its young population in the digital age.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Mental health of young people

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the mental health of individuals worldwide, including the youth population in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The pandemic brought about unprecedented challenges, including fear of infection, social isolation due to lockdowns and physical distancing measures, economic uncertainty, loss of loved ones, and disruptions in education and daily life. These factors have contributed to heightened levels of anxiety, stress, and uncertainty, which can lead to various mental health issues. Media portrayal of COVID-19 as an exclusive threat and constant coverage of the pandemic can exacerbate panic and stress among individuals. Misinformation, rumours, and sensationalism can further fuel anxiety and fear, making it more challenging for young people to cope with the uncertainties brought on by the pandemic. Some of the mental health issues that the youth population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, like many other places globally, may have faced due to the pandemic include: Anxiety Disorders - The pandemic's uncertainty and fear of the virus's spread can trigger or exacerbate anxiety disorders in young individuals. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) – Fear of contamination and excessive handwashing or cleaning in response to the pandemic's perceived threats can lead to or worsen OCD symptoms. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – Youth who have experienced severe illness, loss of loved ones, or significant life disruptions during the pandemic may be at risk of developing PTSD. Depression – Social isolation, academic pressures, and economic uncertainties can contribute to the development of depressive symptoms in young people. Sleep Problems – Stress and anxiety related to the pandemic can lead to sleep disturbances and insomnia among the youth population.
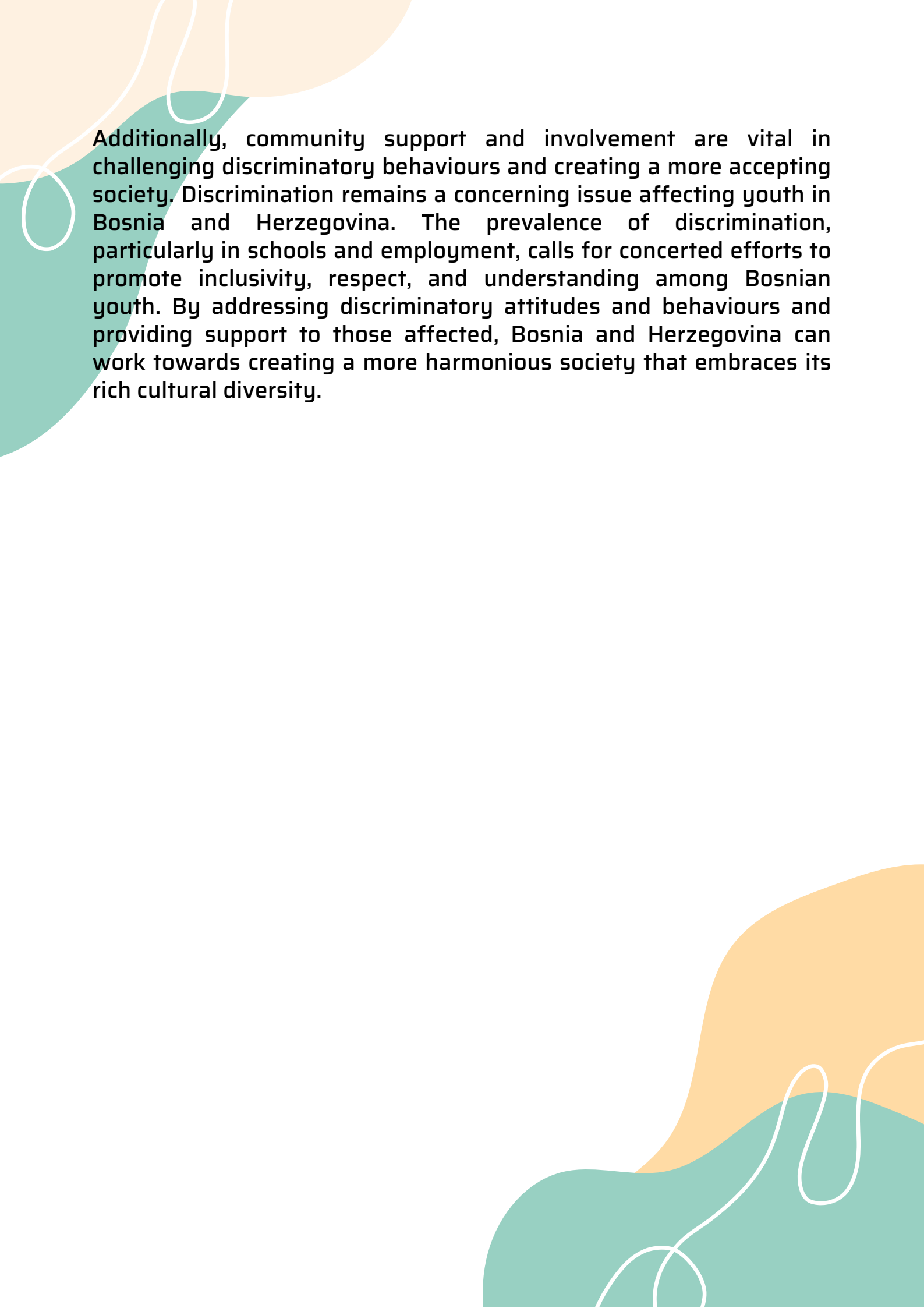
It's important for individuals, families, and communities to recognize the impact of the pandemic on mental health and seek appropriate support and resources. Governments and healthcare institutions also need to prioritize mental health services and promote mental well-being, particularly for the youth population, during and after the pandemic. Accessible and affordable mental health support can help mitigate the long-term effects of the COVID-19 crisis on mental health.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Discrimination

Discrimination among youth is a pressing social issue that needs attention in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Discrimination in various forms, such as ethnic, religious, racial, and gender-based discrimination, is reported among Bosnian youth. According to a study conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2019, about 30% of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced discrimination at least once in their lives. Ethnic discrimination was reported as the most common type, followed by religious discrimination. Schools can be a significant environment where discrimination occurs. Data from the same UNDP study revealed that around 20% of young people experienced discrimination in their educational settings. Discrimination in schools can negatively impact the academic performance and emotional well-being of young students, leading to feelings of exclusion and alienation. Data from the UNDP study also indicated that discrimination is prevalent in the employment sector. Young people from minority groups, particularly those from ethnic or religious minorities, face barriers in accessing job opportunities and are more likely to experience workplace discrimination. Discrimination can have detrimental effects on the mental health and well-being of Bosnian youth. Young people who experience discrimination are more prone to anxiety, depression, and stress. They may also face challenges in forming social connections and developing a positive self-identity.

The Bosnian government, NGOs, and civil society organizations have been working to combat discrimination and promote inclusivity among young people. Legal measures, such as anti-discrimination laws, aim to protect the rights of individuals and combat discriminatory practices. Educational initiatives and awareness campaigns are also being conducted to promote tolerance, respect, and diversity. Educational institutions play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive environment. Implementing curricula that emphasize cultural diversity and promoting intercultural dialogue can help reduce discriminatory attitudes among Bosnian youth.

Additionally, community support and involvement are vital in challenging discriminatory behaviours and creating a more accepting society. Discrimination remains a concerning issue affecting youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The prevalence of discrimination, particularly in schools and employment, calls for concerted efforts to promote inclusivity, respect, and understanding among Bosnian youth. By addressing discriminatory attitudes and behaviours and providing support to those affected, Bosnia and Herzegovina can work towards creating a more harmonious society that embraces its rich cultural diversity.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
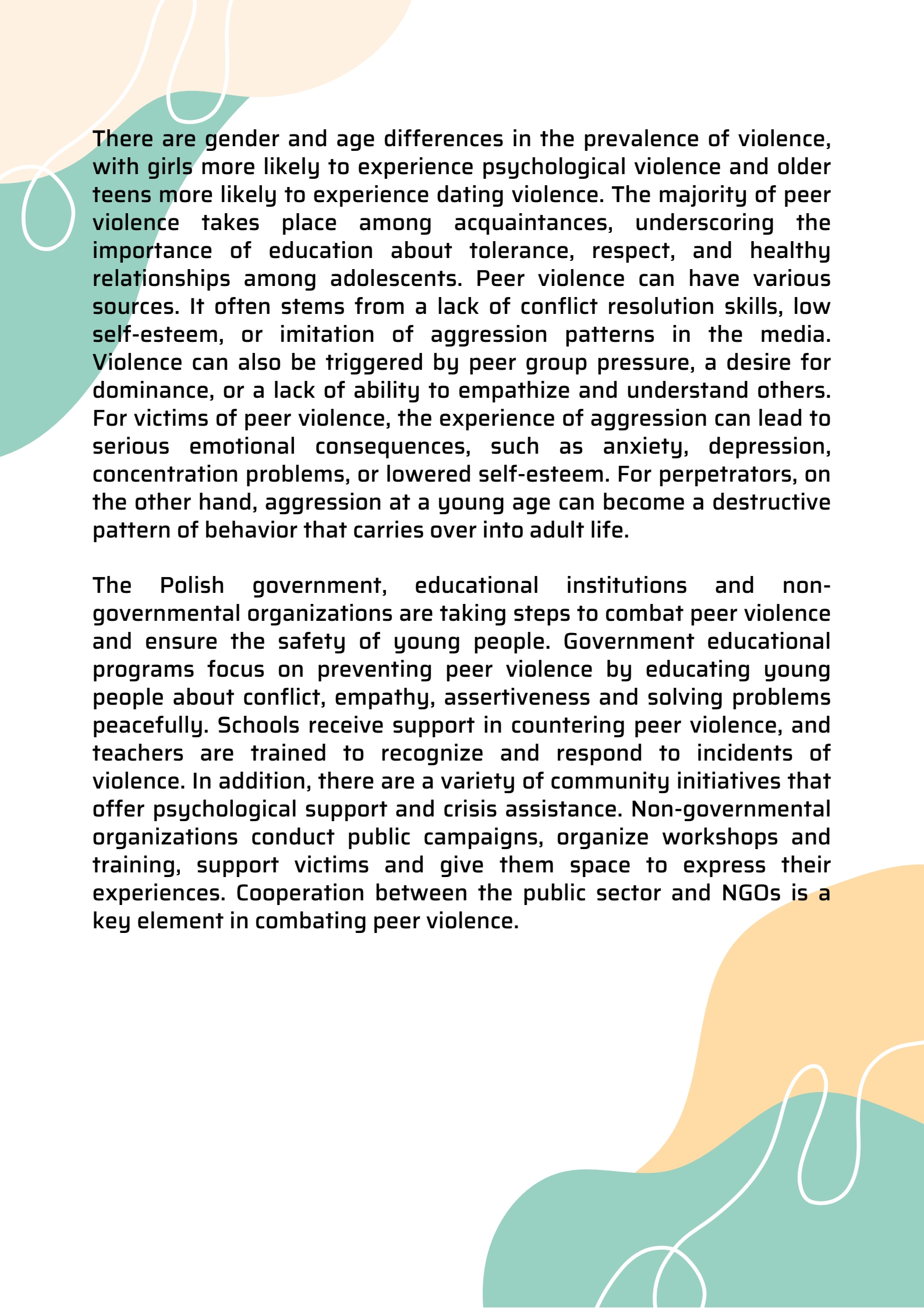
Abuse of psychoactive substances and alcohol

The abuse of psychoactive substances among youth is a serious public health concern in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Data from a national survey conducted in 2020 by the Institute for Public Health of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina revealed that approximately 13% of young people aged 15 to 24 reported using illicit drugs at least once in their lifetime. The most commonly abused substances included marijuana, followed by synthetic cannabinoids and other illicit drugs. The same survey indicated that alcohol and tobacco use among Bosnian youth was also prevalent. About 34% of young people reported consuming alcohol, and approximately 20% reported tobacco use in the past month. Several risk factors contribute to the abuse of psychoactive substances among Bosnian youth. Socioeconomic factors, peer pressure, family dynamics, and exposure to substances through media and social environments play significant roles in influencing substance use behaviours. The abuse of psychoactive substances can have severe consequences on the physical and mental health of youth. Substance use at a young age can lead to cognitive impairments, addiction, academic difficulties, and long-term health problems. Moreover, substance abuse is often linked to an increased risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

The Bosnian government and various organizations have been working to address substance abuse among youth. Prevention programs, educational campaigns, and outreach initiatives aim to raise awareness about the risks of substance abuse and promote healthy lifestyle choices. Ensuring access to treatment and rehabilitation services is crucial for young people struggling with substance abuse. Supportive services, counselling, and rehabilitation programs are essential in assisting youth in overcoming addiction and reintegrating into society. The abuse of psychoactive substances among youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a significant public health challenge. The prevalence of substance abuse calls for a comprehensive approach involving prevention, education, and access to treatment. By addressing the underlying risk factors and providing support to young people, Bosnia and Herzegovina can work towards safeguarding the well-being of its youth and fostering a healthier and more resilient future generation.

POLAND

Peer violence

Peer violence among young people has become a significant problem around the world, having a detrimental effect on physical and mental well-being. Poland is no exception, as cases of bullying, harassment and aggression among young people have been reported in various social settings, including schools and neighbourhoods. Peer violence, a form of aggression and violence between people of similar age, is a serious social problem in Poland. Young people, who should be experiencing a period full of learning, fun and mutual acceptance, often become victims or perpetrators of violence in their environment. This poses a social challenge that is difficult to overestimate, affecting many young people of different ages and backgrounds. Peer violence manifests itself in various forms, such as physical, psychological, emotional violence, as well as cyberbullying. This problem not only carries serious consequences for the safety and health of young people, but also affects their emotional, social and educational development. However, there is a lack of complete official data on peer violence in Poland, which can pose challenges in effectively monitoring and combating the phenomenon. Police statistics are often limited to crimes that took place in schools or other educational institutions. Nevertheless, available data suggest that peer violence remains a significant problem in Polish schools. According to police reports in 2021, the most frequently recorded crimes in educational institutions were theft of other people's property, burglary and property damage. It is worth noting, however, that in recent years there has been a decrease in the number of peer violence crimes on school grounds. Caution should be exercised in interpreting this data, however, as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on remote learning may have affected the number of reported crimes. Research reports present a more complex picture of peer violence in Poland. A nationwide diagnosis of the scale and determinants of child abuse, conducted on a national sample of children and adolescents aged 11-17, shows that peer violence is the most prevalent category of victimization. More than half of the respondents (57%) had experienced peer violence in their lives, and 36% had experienced it in the past year. The most frequently cited forms of violence were physical and psychological violence, gang assaults, bullying and dating violence.

There are gender and age differences in the prevalence of violence, with girls more likely to experience psychological violence and older teens more likely to experience dating violence. The majority of peer violence takes place among acquaintances, underscoring the importance of education about tolerance, respect, and healthy relationships among adolescents. Peer violence can have various sources. It often stems from a lack of conflict resolution skills, low self-esteem, or imitation of aggression patterns in the media. Violence can also be triggered by peer group pressure, a desire for dominance, or a lack of ability to empathize and understand others. For victims of peer violence, the experience of aggression can lead to serious emotional consequences, such as anxiety, depression, concentration problems, or lowered self-esteem. For perpetrators, on the other hand, aggression at a young age can become a destructive pattern of behavior that carries over into adult life.
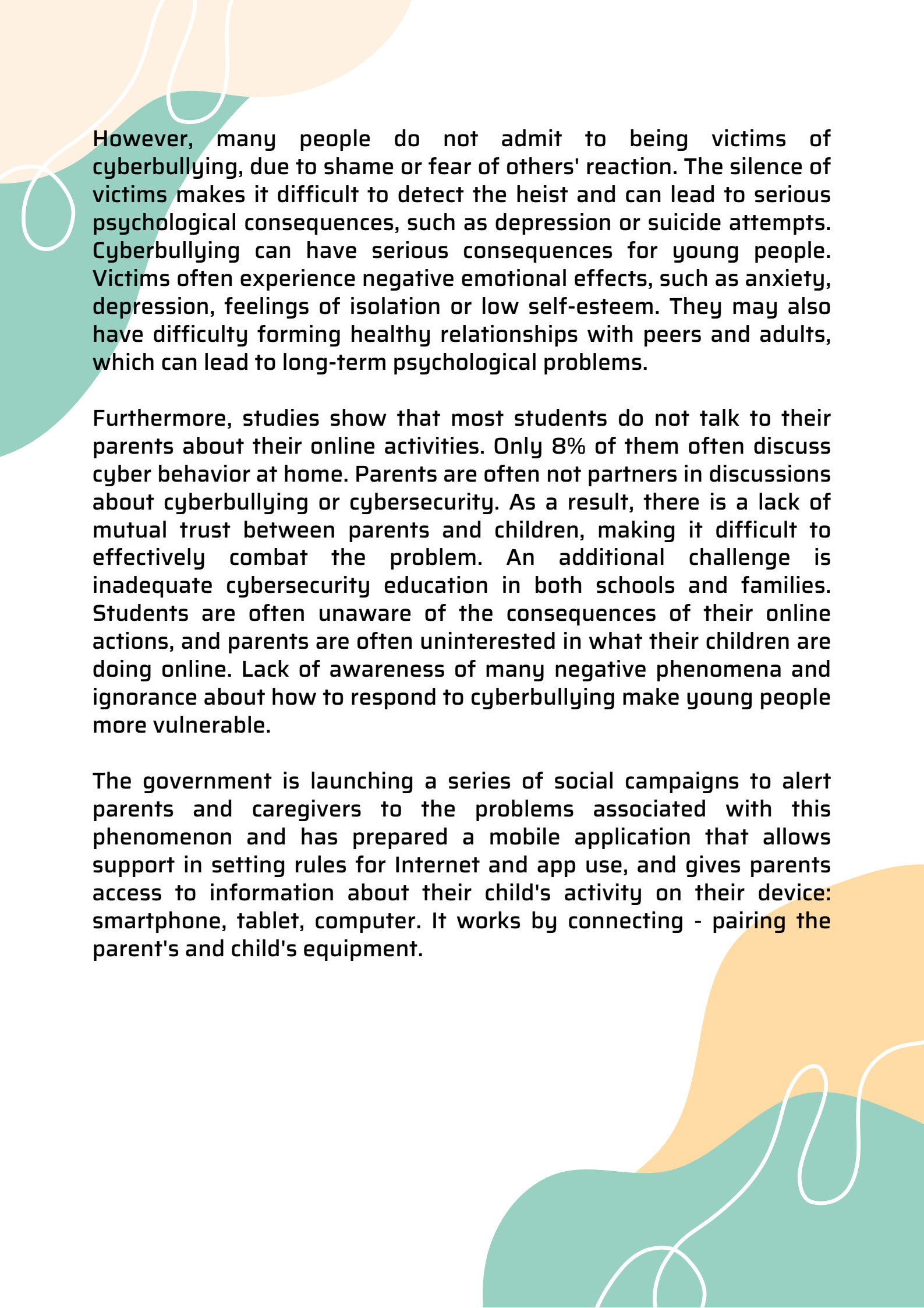
The Polish government, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations are taking steps to combat peer violence and ensure the safety of young people. Government educational programs focus on preventing peer violence by educating young people about conflict, empathy, assertiveness and solving problems peacefully. Schools receive support in countering peer violence, and teachers are trained to recognize and respond to incidents of violence. In addition, there are a variety of community initiatives that offer psychological support and crisis assistance. Non-governmental organizations conduct public campaigns, organize workshops and training, support victims and give them space to express their experiences. Cooperation between the public sector and NGOs is a key element in combating peer violence.

POLAND

Cyber-bullying

The situation in Poland regarding cyberbullying among young people is increasingly alarming. With the development of technology and the widespread access to the Internet, this phenomenon is gaining ground and affecting the lives of many young people. Further, there is a gap between parents and teachers and students in terms of knowledge and awareness of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a form of aggression that uses modern technology, such as social media, text messages, emails or online forums, to harm, insult, intimidate and ridicule others. One of the main challenges of cyberbullying is the lack of accurate statistics. Many cases go unreported, and victims are often afraid to seek help due to shame, fear of retaliation or lack of trust in the relevant institutions. However, few reports and studies indicate that a significant number of young people in Poland are affected by the problem. According to the study Children on the Web - 2020 Report (Dzieci w sieci - raport 2020) conducted by the Foundation We Give Children Strength (Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę, FDDS), as many as 43% of children and adolescents aged 9-17 have experienced some form of cyberbullying. The most common forms were insulting and bullying, which affected 30% and 24% of respondents, respectively. Additionally, 18% of survey participants were victims of ridicule, and 17% experienced vilification and gossip. Also of concern is that 10% of respondents were victims of phishing, and 6% suffered surveillance or abuse of their private content. Children are entering the world of the Internet and modern technology earlier and earlier. According to the study Teens 3.0 (Nastolatki 3.0) of the age of 7-8, a significant group of children are already beginning their own online adventure. Interestingly, about 20.5% of the teens surveyed admitted that they had their own phone with Internet access at that age. The results of the study show that this trend is growing, and even before the age of 6, some young online users, as many as a total of 12.9% of those surveyed, already had their own devices with Internet access, including phones (3.4%) and computers (9.5%). The most common reasons for being hated are beliefs (14.9%), appearance (13.5%), hobbies (11.6%), nationality (8.1%) and clothing (8.0%).

However, many people do not admit to being victims of cyberbullying, due to shame or fear of others' reaction. The silence of victims makes it difficult to detect the heist and can lead to serious psychological consequences, such as depression or suicide attempts. Cyberbullying can have serious consequences for young people. Victims often experience negative emotional effects, such as anxiety, depression, feelings of isolation or low self-esteem. They may also have difficulty forming healthy relationships with peers and adults, which can lead to long-term psychological problems.
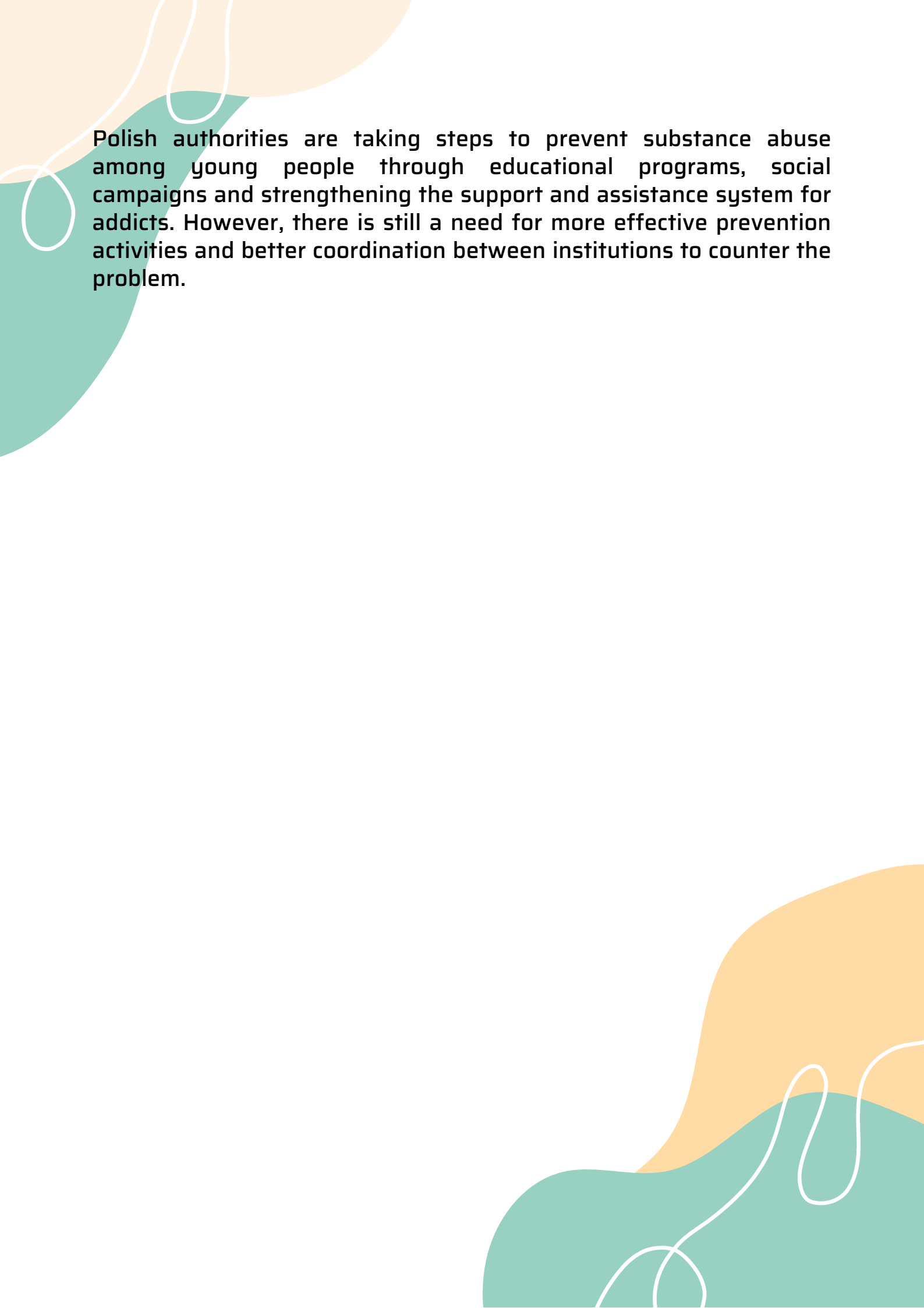
Furthermore, studies show that most students do not talk to their parents about their online activities. Only 8% of them often discuss cyber behavior at home. Parents are often not partners in discussions about cyberbullying or cybersecurity. As a result, there is a lack of mutual trust between parents and children, making it difficult to effectively combat the problem. An additional challenge is inadequate cybersecurity education in both schools and families. Students are often unaware of the consequences of their online actions, and parents are often uninterested in what their children are doing online. Lack of awareness of many negative phenomena and ignorance about how to respond to cyberbullying make young people more vulnerable.

The government is launching a series of social campaigns to alert parents and caregivers to the problems associated with this phenomenon and has prepared a mobile application that allows support in setting rules for Internet and app use, and gives parents access to information about their child's activity on their device: smartphone, tablet, computer. It works by connecting - pairing the parent's and child's equipment.

POLAND

Abuse of psychoactive substances and alcohol

The situation regarding the abuse of psychoactive substances by young people in Poland is alarming and requires special attention. Young people often face peer pressure, stress and the challenges of adolescence, which can promote experimentation with various substances in search of entertainment, an escape from problems or to even out the mood. This, in turn, can lead to serious health and social consequences. According to data from various studies and reports, the number of young people abusing psychoactive substances such as alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, amphetamines, ecstasy, or synthetic drugs is still significant. Some of these substances are available legally, which may be influencing greater accessibility for younger age groups. A study of 14- to 15-year-old first-grade high school students showed that environmental factors, such as peer influence, parental support, school bonding, subjective norms, and personality traits, play a key role in deciding adolescents' use of psychoactive substances. During the COVID-19 pandemic, an increase in the prevalence of depression among adolescents was noted, but at the same time, a reduction in substance abuse was observed. The pandemic affected the organization of social life, which may have exacerbated certain trends related to substance use and depression. It was also interesting to find that younger students were less likely to use psychoactive substances than older students, which was surprising in the context of the education reform that introduced six-year-olds into first grade. Pandemic restrictions may have influenced younger students to protect themselves from the negative influences of older peers. The most important predictor of substance use appeared to be attendance at social gatherings where drugs were used. Despite pandemic-related restrictions, adolescents continued to attend such gatherings, which is an issue to understand. Moreover, regardless of the pandemic situation, the increase in popularity of new psychoactive substances that often appear on the market with unknown health effects is also a problem. Many of these substances can be very dangerous and cause serious risks to the health and lives of users, especially young people, who are more prone to risky behavior.
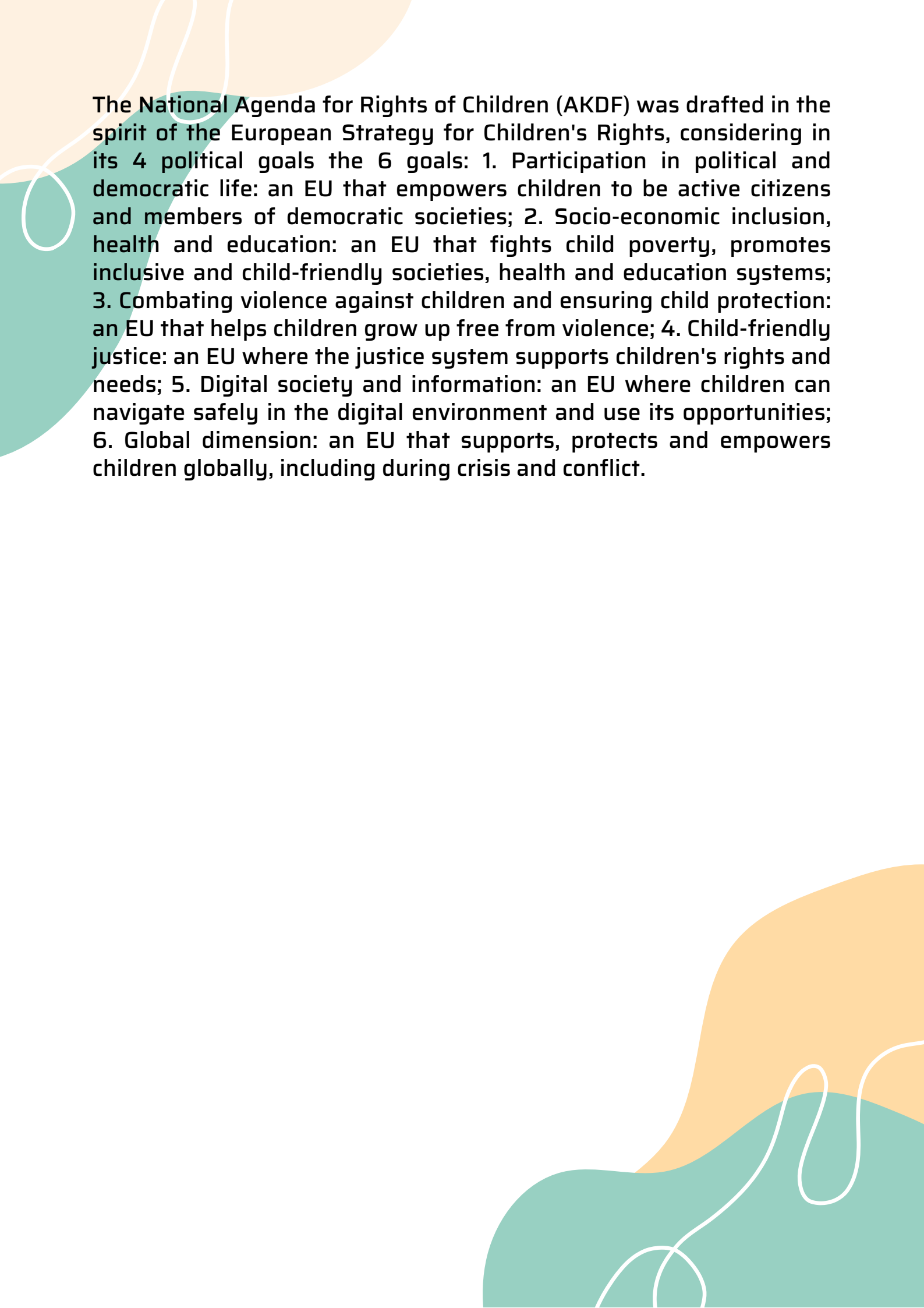
Polish authorities are taking steps to prevent substance abuse among young people through educational programs, social campaigns and strengthening the support and assistance system for addicts. However, there is still a need for more effective prevention activities and better coordination between institutions to counter the problem.

ALBANIA

Peer violence

When analysing the violence towards children in Albania, we have to take into account socioeconomic barriers taken by families in Albania. A study on "Ethics in the Albanian Education system" revealed that 83% of schoolchildren report the display of unethical behaviour by school staff, including: insults, sarcastic language, derogatory nicknames, etc. According to Ms. Ilina Polena, a social worker who works with young people in Tirana, she calls for a change in psycho-social services in schools. Due to the high number of children per psychologist, 2500 children per psychologist, who are spread over several schools, it makes an impossible environment to give proper care to each child individually. Ms. Polena explains that "in the psycho-social service, the biggest problem in Albania is that the psychologist's service is very scattered. And he/she/ they only need to go to a school once a week or twice, at best. The number of students in the schools is relatively high, so it is impossible to care for their needs fully. Ms. Polena suggests that educational system in schools should have 1 psychologist per school in order to increase the role and quality of the services the psychologist can provide. Ilisa Polena, says that over the years, children are more open to the psychologist and ask for his opinion in every case. "Children are much more inclined to talk to the psychologist than their parents. As the parents think that going to the psychologist is a major problem, while the children are sympathetic to our service and come with a lot of fun to share any worries. Even some of the children, in addition to individual counselling, also seek group counselling among each other to understand and clarify their problems".

The National Agenda for Rights of Children (AKDF) was drafted in the spirit of the European Strategy for Children's Rights, considering in its 4 political goals the 6 goals: 1. Participation in political and democratic life: an EU that empowers children to be active citizens and members of democratic societies; 2. Socio-economic inclusion, health and education: an EU that fights child poverty, promotes inclusive and child-friendly societies, health and education systems; 3. Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection: an EU that helps children grow up free from violence; 4. Child-friendly justice: an EU where the justice system supports children's rights and needs; 5. Digital society and information: an EU where children can navigate safely in the digital environment and use its opportunities; 6. Global dimension: an EU that supports, protects and empowers children globally, including during crisis and conflict.

ALBANIA

Cyberbullying

The use of social networks by young Albanians has reached relatively high numbers, where over 85% of young Albanians have access to the Internet and the average time they spend online it is over 3 hours a day. These figures are positive if we relate it to the right to information and negative when we face the risks of the Internet. This can be said about online cases, when bullying is more measurable, but what about offline cases when they are usually unreported! Secondary sources (AMA, INSTAT, etc.) show that there are high figures of the use of a verbal bullying in Albania online and offline. 60% of children and young people in Albania are victims of online bullying (isigurt.al 2019). During the years 2016-2018, over 300 cases of children and young people were reported to the platform, of which about 62% encountered online bullying. The same situation is noted during 2019, where from January - June 2019, out of 35 reported cases, 60% of them are related to hate speech, online threats and blackmail. According to a study entitled "A Study on Child Online Safety in Albania" bullying, password theft, and pornography viewings occur to 45% of children every day. Only 44% of children receive information about online safety from parents or from various channels to report online incidents.

ALBANIA

Mental Health of Young people

What institutions should do during the pandemic, which should also serve as a momentum to reflect on this aspect even later, is to first increase the number of psychologists in schools. In the future, lessons should be added specifically for children's mental health, where they talk about Covid-19 from a different perspective, trying to reduce the panic that children may have because of the news they hear in the media and social networks. Social networks, in addition to the already known positive elements, can present a danger to the mental balance of social groups, where children and teenagers are singled out. Various studies have shown that there is a relationship between excessive use of various social networks and increased depression and anxiety. Secondly, the media, through informative and educational shows, can expand the space during the pandemic in this aspect, focusing on children as a category, since as I pointed out at the top of the article, they are experiencing the worst stress from the pandemic. An even more important role is played by the institution of the family. Parents undoubtedly play their role in the education of children and will have to be more careful in this period, trying to explain the pandemic to children without negatively affecting them, increasing their panic or causing them stress and anxiety This health crisis can also serve for new opportunities for parent child cooperation, so that their bond is strengthened. Parents and children are already in a challenging situation, under the anxiety created by the virus, the overproduction of panic by the media and economic difficulties. Help has been provided by various organizations such as WHO and Unicef, which have collaborated to publish online resources during this period, where detailed advice is given for a healthier parenting. During a pandemic, the demands on health care personnel are extraordinary and constant. Successful outcomes in terms of public health are clearly conditioned by the effective functioning of the workforce within the health system, as without question a whole-of-society response is needed. The ideal situation would be a health system with sufficient numbers of staff, with minimal absenteeism due to virus infection, staff working to their maximum potential and showing low levels of burnout and stress, as well as staff equipped with the appropriate personal protective equipment, equipment and medications needed to treat patients.

Therefore, the monitoring and care for the psychological well-being of the staff in these conditions becomes even more necessary. From the moment of the outbreak of COVID-19 until today, the staff in the health care system, especially those in hospitals, have faced numerous and continuous challenges that they have not encountered before. Decisions must be made quickly, ranging from efficient tracing (triage), isolation of suspected infected patients, appropriate treatment, high mortality to deciding whether to close a particular ward or health centre when a patient or staff tests positive. On the other hand, the use of protective materials for long periods has caused difficulty in breathing, restriction in drinking water or using the toilet, causing physical and mental fatigue. The high number of hospitalized patients with COVID-19, compared to being unprepared in terms of human and material resources, with shortages in staff, in the necessary materials for personal protection or medical equipment such as ventilators, the need to use them sparingly all this, accompanied by deep ethical and moral dilemmas, as well as the impossibility of having a vaccine in such a short time, has made this pandemic quite stressful for the medical staff in general. Objectives of the study "Together for Life" had two main objectives: To identify the level of equipment with the necessary personal protection materials and the sense of security of doctors and nurses at all three levels of the public health system; Research the concerns and psychological consequences of facing the COVID-19 pandemic among health staff at all three levels of the public health system. The quantitative study phase was developed in the form of an online quantitative survey, which was self-administered by the participating subjects, doctors and nurses, covering all levels of the public health care system (primary, secondary and tertiary) in the rank national. In total, 686 professionals were interested in participating, of which 279 questionnaires were disqualified as incomplete, 101 cases were disqualified as working only in the private sector or in administrative positions, and 306 cases qualified as successful interviews (45 %). More specifically, the profile of the participants is presented below: From the sample of 306 successful interviews, 56% are nurses, 41% doctors and 3% others (laboratorians, midwives, etc.). Eight out of ten respondents (81%) work only in the public sector.
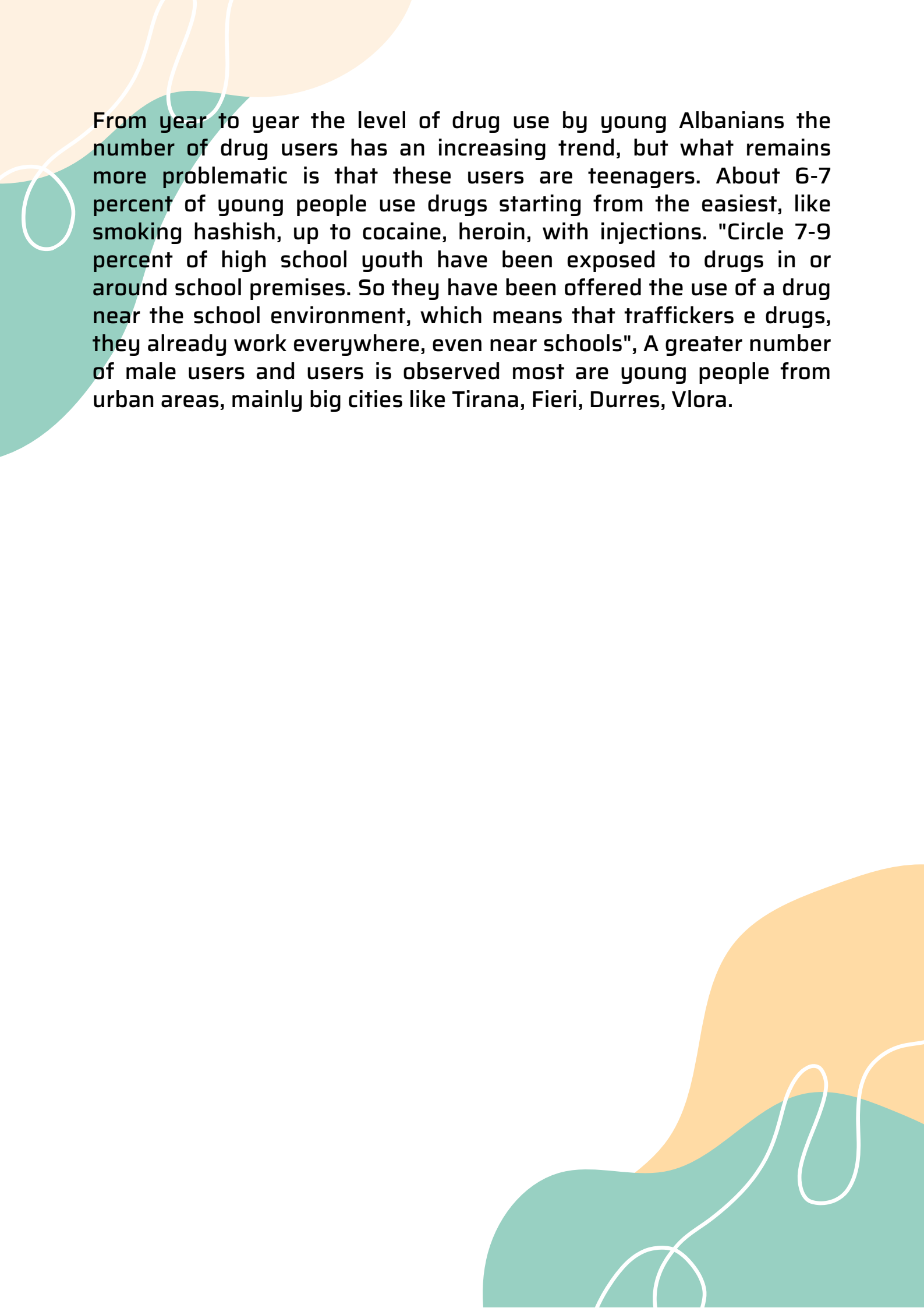
ALBANIA

Discrimination

Development of the legal framework for guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination in Albania The Constitution of the Republic of Albania sanctions the principle of equality and non-discrimination. Article 18 provides that, "Everyone is equal before the law, and that no one can be unfairly discriminated against for reasons such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic status, education, social or parental affiliation". Albania is a party to international instruments for the protection of human rights and non-discrimination. International norms have a very important influence on the legal system and national policies of our country. Their relationship with the national legislation in force, determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, gives the opportunity to refer to important international documents in the activity of our institution. In legislative recommendations and other recommendations, in decisions related to the review of complaints, in annual reports and special reports, the KMD has referred to international acts ratified by the Albanian state. The legal framework in the field of equality and non-discrimination has undergone developments during 2014, which we are informing in this issue of the report: The Convention of the Council of Europe "On the prevention and fight against violence against women and violence in the family" 1 has been ratified from Albania in 2012. With the law no. 104/2012, "On the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention 'On the prevention and fight against violence against women and domestic violence'", the Albanian state has shown its readiness to complete the legal framework that addresses domestic violence and fulfil the obligations that derive from this Convention. The convention entered into force on August 1, 2014. This convention considers domestic violence as one of the most serious forms of human rights violations. The Convention recognizes violence against women as an expression of historically unequal power relations between women and men. The Convention applies to all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, which disproportionately affects women.

Prevention, protection of women against all forms of violence, prosecution of perpetrators, elimination of violence against women and domestic violence, elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, as well as promotion of real equality between men and women are some from the main pillars of this international act. The situation of discrimination in Albania This part presents the situation regarding some of the most widespread types of discrimination, referring to existing sources and findings from the activities of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. From the practice of implementing the law no. 10221, dated 4.2.2010, "On protection from discrimination", year after year, a greater awareness of the general public and special groups on the legal means for protection from discrimination is being noticed. This is also reflected in the increase in the number of registered complaints and the implementation of the law "On Protection from Discrimination" in the courts as well. But, even though the number of complaints has increased, the awareness of the population still remains a priority of the KMD. It is worth noting that the increase in the number of complaints submitted to the KMD office is also highlighted in the Progress Report for Albania for 2014, which states that: "In the field of anti-discrimination, the number of complaints handled by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (KMD) increased from 107 in 2012 to 256 complaints in 2013, while the number of ex-officio investigations launched by the KMD increased from 16 in 2012 to 31 in 20132". But, referring to this report, "The level of public awareness about the law and the complaint mechanism remains low".3 Regarding the situation of discrimination in Albania, it results those representatives of different groups such as representatives of the Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabled, women, representatives of the LGBT community, etc., face various forms of discrimination.

ALBANIA

Abuse of Psychoactive Substances and Alcohol

Drug proliferation is an expanding social tumour. Some research finds that there are 30 thousand users of PAS. Drug trafficking is one of the most profitable illegal activities in the world organized crime along with human trafficking, smuggling, economic crime and money laundering. Albania is not only a transit route for illegal drugs, but it it is the place where the drug is cultivated (mainly Cannabis Indica), produced (hashish oil and marijuana), is traded locally and abused. We cannot talk about an exact number of drug users from young Albanians but the Institute of Public Health in cooperation with other national and international organizations has carried out and continues to carry out a series of studies about this field. According to the YRBS (youth risky behaviour survey) study conducted in schools with young people aged 14-18 showed that 5.4% of the respondents had experimented with cannabis, 4% with ecstasy, 1.4% had used heroin and 1.6% had used cocaine. The capital holds the largest number of drug users who are teenagers and young adults. Institute of Public Health, but also centers that treat them report an increasing number of cases of people who take narcotics in Tirana Drug trafficking is one of the most profitable illegal activities of organized crime along with human trafficking, smuggling, economic crime and money laundering. Albania is not only a transit route for illegal drugs, but it is the place where the drug is cultivated (mainly Cannabis Indica), produced (hashish oil and marijuana), is traded locally and abused. We cannot talk about an exact number of drug users from young Albanians but the Institute of Public Health in cooperation with other national and international organizations has carried out and continues to carry out a series of studies about this field. According to the YRBS (youth risky behaviour survey) study conducted in schools with young people aged 14-18 showed that 5.4% of the respondents had experimented with cannabis, 4% with ecstasy, 1.4% had used heroin and 1.6% had used cocaine. The capital holds the largest number of drug users who are teenagers and young adults. Institute of Public Health, but also centres that treat them report an increasing number of cases of persons who take narcotics in Tirana.

From year to year the level of drug use by young Albanians the number of drug users has an increasing trend, but what remains more problematic is that these users are teenagers. About 6-7 percent of young people use drugs starting from the easiest, like smoking hashish, up to cocaine, heroin, with injections. "Circle 7-9 percent of high school youth have been exposed to drugs in or around school premises. So they have been offered the use of a drug near the school environment, which means that traffickers e drugs, they already work everywhere, even near schools", A greater number of male users and users is observed most are young people from urban areas, mainly big cities like Tirana, Fieri, Durres, Vlora.

JORDAN

Peer violence

Peer violence remains a significant concern in Jordan, impacting many young people across different settings, particularly within schools. According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Education, approximately 20% of students in Jordan have experienced some form of peer violence.

Among the victims, 55% reported experiencing physical violence, 30% faced verbal abuse, and 15% endured social exclusion.Such violence may manifest as physical aggression, verbal abuse, or social exclusion. Disturbingly, the study revealed that peer violence affects boys more frequently than girls, and the negative repercussions include feelings of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem among the victims.

Cyber Bullying

The rise of technology and social media has brought forth a new form of aggression known as cyber bullying. The National Center for Human Rights reported that 15% of students in Jordan have experienced cyber bullying. Unlike traditional forms of bullying, cyber bullying occurs in the virtual realm, where individuals face harassment, threats, or humiliation. Disturbingly, the study found that cyber bullying is more prevalent among girls and primarily concentrated in urban areas.

The emotional toll on victims can be equally severe, leading to symptoms of depression, anxiety, and self-harm. The most common platforms for cyber bullying were social media (70%), followed by instant messaging apps (20%) and online gaming communities (10%).

JORDAN

Abuse of Psychoactive Substances

The abuse of psychoactive substances is a grave concern among Jordanian youth, contributing to a host of detrimental consequences. According to a study by the Ministry of Health, 10% of students in Jordan have engaged in the use of psychoactive substances. Among substance users, 42% admitted to using cannabis, 33% used prescription drugs without medical guidance, and 25% tried other illicit substances.

The abuse is more common among boys and within urban communities. The ramifications of substance abuse can be severe, ranging from addiction and mental health issues to involvement in criminal activities.

Discrimination

Discrimination remains a persistent problem affecting many young people in Jordan. A study conducted by the United Nations revealed that 5% of students in the country have experienced discrimination based on their race, religion, or gender. The main forms of discrimination included racial or ethnic discrimination (45%), religious discrimination (30%), and gender-based discrimination (25%).

This form of prejudice can be particularly challenging for refugees and minority groups and is more prevalent in urban areas. The emotional toll of discrimination is significant, leading to feelings of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem among its victims.

JORDAN

Mental Health

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought unique challenges to the mental health of young people in Jordan. A study by the World Health Organization found that 1 in 5 young people in Jordan experienced mental health problems since the onset of the pandemic. Among those with mental health issues, 60% reported symptoms of anxiety, 35% experienced depressive symptoms, and 5% exhibited signs of post-traumatic stress disorder.

These problems include heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Compared to other countries, Jordan has faced a particularly severe impact on the mental well-being of its youth population, likely due to the profound effects of the pandemic on various aspects of life.

JORDAN

National and Local Support Measures:

To address the multifaceted challenges of youth safety, several national and local support measures have been implemented in Jordan:

- The Ministry of Education has taken proactive steps by launching programs aimed at preventing peer violence in schools. These initiatives focus on promoting positive behavior, conflict resolution, and peer support.The Ministry of Education's programs against peer violence have reached approximately 70% of schools across the country, benefiting over 100,000 students.
- The Ministry of Health has initiated awareness campaigns to sensitize young people about the dangers of cyber bullying, encouraging responsible digital behavior and reporting mechanisms. The Ministry of Health's awareness campaigns on cyber bullying have achieved a 25% increase in reporting incidents to relevant authorities.
- The National Center for Human Rights has developed a comprehensive toolkit to aid schools and communities in tackling discrimination and promoting inclusivity and acceptance among young people. The National Center for Human Rights' toolkit on discrimination has been distributed to 90% of schools in Jordan, enabling educators to address discriminatory behavior.
- The World Health Organization has provided essential support to Jordan in developing a national mental health strategy, emphasizing the importance of accessible mental health services and support systems for young people. The World Health Organization's support in developing a national mental health strategy has led to the establishment of 30 new mental health centers across the country.
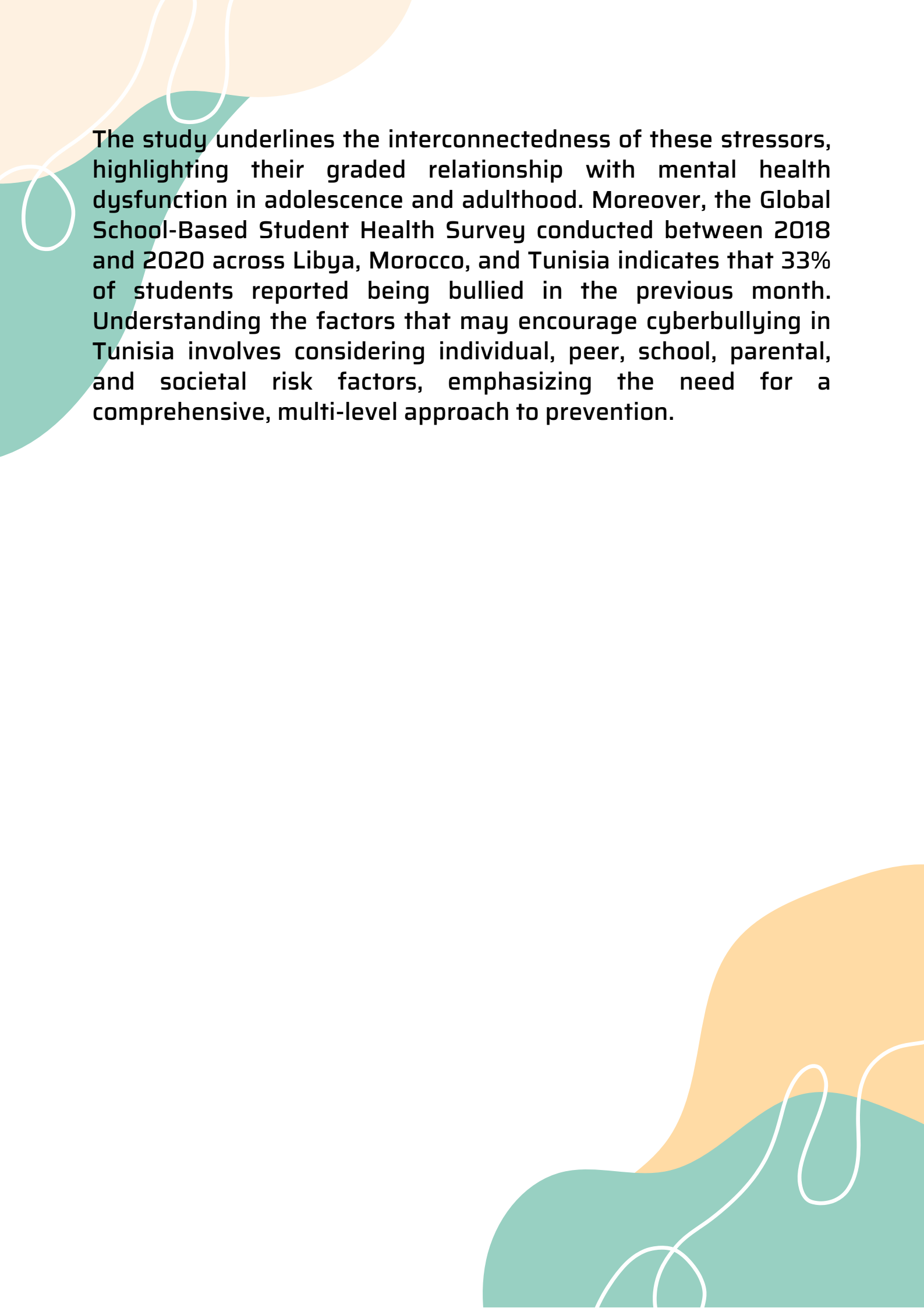
TUNISIA

Peer violence:

Exploring the landscape of peer violence in Tunisia reveals critical insights into the challenges faced by individuals, particularly victims of violence. The research conducted by the Department of Forensic Medicine at the University Hospital Ibn El Jazzar of Kairouan (Tunisia) during an eight-year period (2009-2016) sheds light on the demographic aspects of victims. The study included 216 victims, ranging in age from 3 to 82 years, with a mean age of 20.4 years. Strikingly, the majority of victims were single (84.3%), unmarried (90.7%), and predominantly residing in rural areas. Rape, a severe form of violence, was found to be committed by a single individual in a significant percentage of cases (94.9%), and only 26.8% of cases involved a known assailant. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms for individuals affected by peer violence, especially in rural areas where access to resources and assistance may be limited. Moreover, the prevalence of single assailants in instances of rape calls for a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to such occurrences and effective preventive strategies. Tackling peer violence requires a multifaceted approach that considers not only the immediate consequences for victims but also the societal and cultural factors that may perpetuate such behavior. The study provides a valuable baseline for developing evidence-based policies and interventions aimed at preventing and addressing peer violence in Tunisia. Additionally, addressing peer violence necessitates a comprehensive understanding of risk factors and potential interventions. It is crucial to explore the dynamics of violence among peers, including the role of bystanders, the impact of school environments, and the influence of familial and community factors. This holistic approach is essential for creating effective prevention strategies and fostering a culture of safety and respect among Tunisia's youth.

TUNISIA

Cyberbullying

In the evolving landscape of digital interactions, cyberbullying emerges as a pressing concern, particularly among the youth population in the Islamic world, where 80% of individuals aged 13-19 use the internet and social sites extensively. According to the Arab Center for Educational Research for the Gulf States, cyberbullying is characterized by the deliberate and repeated use of information and communication technologies for aggressive behavior against a victim who may struggle to defend themselves. The study conducted in 2015, involving a representative multistage sample of 1584 students in the Region of Sousse, Tunisia, using the revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire, provides insights into the prevalence and dimensions of cyberbullying among adolescents. The results reveal that 11.7% of respondents were classified as pure victims, 7.8% as pure bullies, 3.2% as bully-victims, and 75.5% as bystanders. Understanding the nuances of cyberbullying involves recognizing various forms, such as written bullying (including phone calls, text messages, and emails), visual bullying (posting indecent images), exclusion from internet groups or chatting, and the sophisticated form of impersonation, which entails stealing a person's identity or using another person's account. Importantly, only 30.3% of cyberbullying victims indicated that they reported the incidents to someone, indicating a significant underreporting and the need for increased awareness and reporting mechanisms. The majority of students perceived that classmates (54.1%) and teachers (39.5%) took no action to counteract bullying, emphasizing the importance of fostering a supportive environment. Categorizing cyberbullying and its impact in Tunisia involves recognizing its association with adverse childhood experiences (ACE), including physical or sexual abuse and witnessing domestic violence.
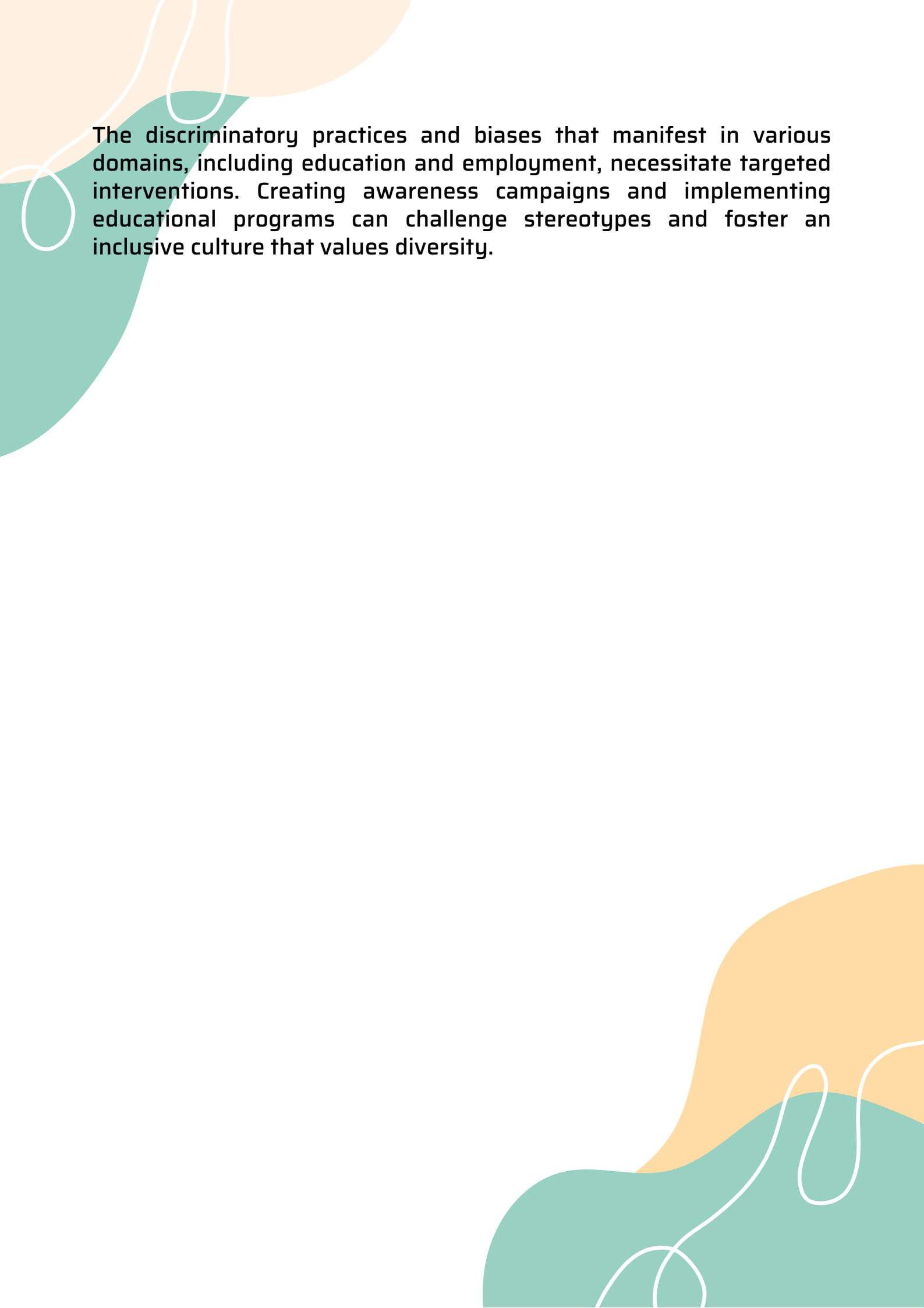
The study underlines the interconnectedness of these stressors, highlighting their graded relationship with mental health dysfunction in adolescence and adulthood. Moreover, the Global School-Based Student Health Survey conducted between 2018 and 2020 across Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia indicates that 33% of students reported being bullied in the previous month. Understanding the factors that may encourage cyberbullying in Tunisia involves considering individual, peer, school, parental, and societal risk factors, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive, multi-level approach to prevention.

TUNISIA

Discrimination

Examining the landscape of discrimination in Tunisia reveals multifaceted challenges and areas for intervention. The enrolment of girls in education has accelerated, and the literacy rate among young females (ages 15-24) has significantly increased from 63% to 96% between 1984 and 2019. Tunisia stands out as one of the first Arab countries to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, underscoring its commitment to gender equality. In the realm of employment, women face disparities, being less likely to be in paid jobs and more prone to engage in precarious and informal employment, earning substantially less than their male counterparts. This gender-based discrimination in the labor market reflects broader societal challenges and necessitates targeted efforts to ensure equal opportunities and fair treatment. Exploring the educational context, certain risk factors contribute to school bullying in Tunisia. Individual factors, such as being underweight or obese, belonging to a higher socioeconomic status, and being male, can influence bullying dynamics. Peer factors, including non-conformity to peer-group norms and having a delinquent record, are associated with bullying. School factors, such as the overall school environment and teachers' responses to bullying behavior, also play a role. Additionally, parental factors, such as experiencing physical abuse and being from low socioeconomic status families with authoritarian parents, contribute to the complexity of the issue. Understanding the nuances of discrimination further involves recognizing disparities in stress levels between genders. Girls in Tunisia perceive themselves as more stressed than boys, highlighting potential sources of gender-based stressors that require attention and mitigation strategies. Efforts to combat discrimination should also address societal attitudes and perceptions.

The discriminatory practices and biases that manifest in various domains, including education and employment, necessitate targeted interventions. Creating awareness campaigns and implementing educational programs can challenge stereotypes and foster an inclusive culture that values diversity.

TUNISIA

Mental health of Young people

Research on mental health in Tunisia has addressed various aspects, including psychosocial well-being among adolescents, particularly in urban areas. A cross-sectional survey involving 699 secondary-school students unveiled a concerning 20.7% overweight rate, shedding light on the potential intersection of physical health and mental well-being. Teachers' perspectives on the causes and interventions for mental illness provided valuable insights into prevailing attitudes. One noteworthy finding was that 43.8% of students believed that a lack of self-discipline and willpower was a significant cause of mental illness. Additionally, a substantial portion of teachers identified stressful life events as a cause of schizophrenia. The study underscored the importance of understanding societal perceptions, as these play a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward mental health. Examining gender-based differences, it was revealed that a significant percentage (21.9%) of the female population did not consider depression as a mental illness. This raises questions about the awareness and understanding of mental health issues, especially among young women. The reluctance or perceived unlikelihood to seek help from health professionals among a considerable portion of respondents (39.6%) also indicated potential barriers to accessing mental health services. Furthermore, the study delved into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young segments. The global crisis amplified existing mental health challenges, leading to higher levels of psychological distress, anxiety, loneliness, and chronic stress. The analysis, conducted on articles focused on stress, distress, anxiety, and depression, revealed the widespread psychological consequences of the pandemic, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. Another aspect considered was the variation in the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on mental health worldwide, with a specific focus on the Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.
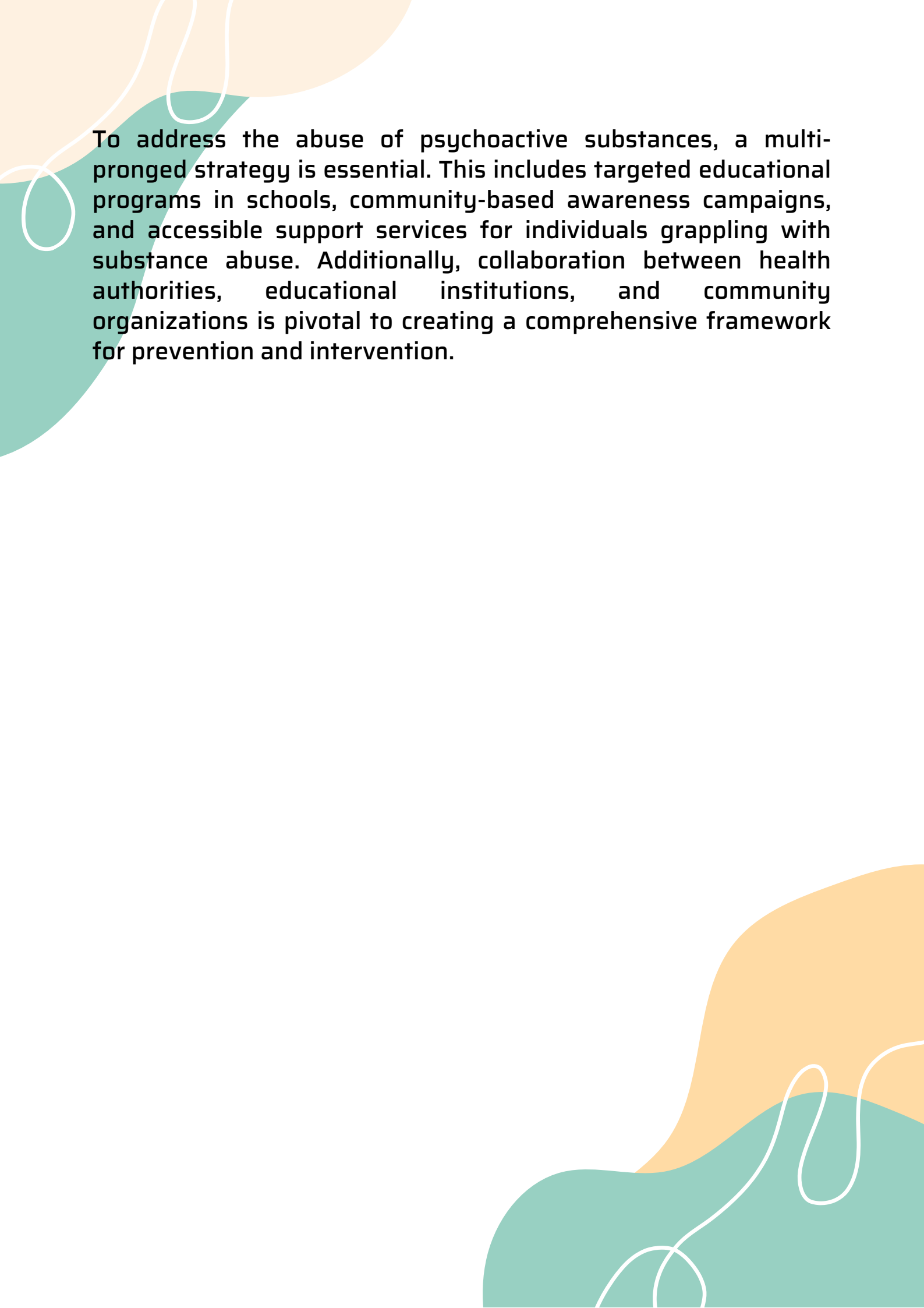
Research in this region indicated a high prevalence of depression among the geriatric population, emphasizing the need for nuanced approaches to address mental health challenges across different age groups.

TUNISIA

Abuse of Psychoactive Substances and alcohol

The issue of psychoactive substance abuse among Tunisian youth demands a comprehensive response, considering the multifaceted nature of the problem. The available epidemiological data point to a concerning trend, with approximately 350,000 drug users in Tunisia in 2012. This highlights the urgency of addressing substance abuse and implementing effective prevention and intervention measures. In terms of tobacco and alcohol consumption, the statistics are alarming. In a 2020 national survey, 34.5% of out-of-school young people (aged 15 to 24) reported smoking tobacco, with a notable gender difference—54.4% for boys and 7.5% for girls. Moreover, the 2020 national study on young people aged 15 to 19 revealed that 7.9% admitted to drinking alcohol, with significant variations between genders—15.2% for boys and 0.3% for girls. Regional disparities in alcohol use further emphasize the need for targeted interventions. Eastern Tunisia recorded the highest rate of alcohol use at 10.7%, while Southern Tunisia reported the lowest at 1.4%. This underscores the importance of tailoring substance abuse prevention strategies to address regional variations and specific risk factors. Understanding the socio-economic factors contributing to substance abuse is crucial for effective interventions. The correlation between childhood social adversities and nicotine dependence, with 74% and 58% explained in females and males, respectively, highlights the need for early interventions and support systems for at-risk youth. Moreover, the link between adverse childhood experiences (ACE), such as physical or sexual abuse and witnessing domestic violence, and addictive behaviors necessitates a comprehensive approach. The recent adaptation of the ACE measure by the World Health Organization allows for a nuanced assessment of the negative impact of additional adverse experiences, shedding light on the interconnectedness of various stressors in adolescence.

To address the abuse of psychoactive substances, a multi-pronged strategy is essential. This includes targeted educational programs in schools, community-based awareness campaigns, and accessible support services for individuals grappling with substance abuse. Additionally, collaboration between health authorities, educational institutions, and community organizations is pivotal to creating a comprehensive framework for prevention and intervention.

YOUTH WELL-BEING SURVEY: COUNTRY REPORTS

SERBIA

Demographic Insights:

The survey covered a wide age range, revealing that 49% of respondents belong to the 15-19 age group, followed by 27% in the 20-24 range, and 24% in the 25-30 category. This points to a significant representation of the younger demographic in the study. Gender diversity is a notable aspect of the survey, with 61% identifying as women, 24% as men, 4% as non-binary, 1% as gender-fluid, and 10% choosing not to disclose their gender. The survey reflects a predominant urban presence, with 71% of respondents residing in urban areas and 29% in rural regions.

Key findings:

1.Digital and peer violence:
-Examining social media habits, the survey found that 44% of respondents spend 4-6 hours on these platforms, while 21% dedicate over 7 hours. Notably, only 2% reported using social media for less than an hour daily, indicating a significant engagement with online platforms.
-Disturbingly, 44% of respondents either witnessed or personally experienced some form of digital violence, underscoring the prevalence of online challenges faced by young individuals in Serbia.
-As most common forms of digital violence, young people recognized following, hate speech 67%, spreading rumours 58%, sexual harassment 56% and revenge porn 46%.
-Approximately 42% of respondents reported experiencing peer violence, while a striking 63% witnessed such incidents. These figures highlight the pressing need to address interpersonal challenges among the youth in Serbia.
-Physical (64%), verbal (60%) and emotional (51%) peer violence were recognized as most present among young people.

SERBIA

Key findings:

2.Discrimination:
-A concerning revelation is that over 90% of young people believe discrimination exists in Serbia.
-Almost half (44%) admitted to being exposed to some form of discrimination.
-Following aspects: sexual orientation (69%), nationality (68%), and religion (61%) were identified as key grounds for discriminatory acts in Serbia.
-Public places and educational systems emerged as primary arenas where discrimination is most visible, as reported by 68% and 61% of respondents, respectively.

3.Substance Consumption:
-While 49% of young people reported never consuming alcohol, more than 50% acknowledged drinking, with 21% doing so at least once a week.
-Additionally, 11% admitted to using psychoactive substances, primarily marijuana (86%), amphetamine (22%), MDMA (22%), and cocaine (18%).

4.Mental Health:
-A substantial portion of respondents expressed concerns about their mental health, with over 50% feeling worried
-61% of respondents experiencing sleep troubles, and varying percentages reporting feelings of sadness (61%), difficulty in concentration (58%), anxiety (50%), and depression (32%).

ITALY

Demographics:

The age distribution revealed a significant representation from the 20-24 age group (45%), followed by those aged 25-30 (25%) and 15-19 (30%). This demographic composition allowed the insight into the experiences and challenges faced by Italian youth across different life stages. Gender diversity was evident, with 45% identifying as female, and 35% as male, 17 preferred not to say and 3% as non-binary.

Key Findings:

1. Digital and peer violence:
-Italy's youth showcased a significant presence on social media, with over 60% spending 4-6 hours daily. This reflects the pervasive role of digital platforms in their lives.
-Cyberbullying awareness was high, with more than half familiar with the term. Shockingly, 40% admitted to engaging in cyberbullying, indicating the urgent need for targeted interventions and awareness campaigns.
-The top three most common cases, as voted by respondents, were revenge porn, online violence, and cyberstalking.
-Peer violence awareness was moderate, and approximately 70% admitted to participating in such acts either as observers or as perpetrator. The prevalence of physical, verbal, and sexual violence among peers raises concerns about the safety and well-being of Italian youth.

ITALY

Key Findings:

2. Discrimination:
  - Over 70% of respondents believe discrimination exists in Italy, showcasing a collective recognition of societal challenges.
  - Discrimination experiences were reported by 70%, and over 30% admitted to discriminating against others. Addressing discrimination requires complex strategies, including education, awareness, and legal measures.
  - Discrimination based on sexual orientation, nationality, and religion emerged as major grounds for discrimination, highlighting the complex nature of discriminatory acts.

3. Substance Consumption:
  - The survey uncovered insights into alcohol and psychoactive substance use among Italian youth. Approximately 30% consume alcohol once a week or less frequently, but 80% acknowledged using psychoactive substances.
  - Marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamine were reported as most common substances. The findings emphasize the importance of targeted education and prevention programs to address substance abuse.

4. Mental Health:
  - Mental health concerns were numerous, with over 70% expressing worry about their emotions. Sleep troubles were reported by 60%, indicating potential links between emotional well-being and sleep patterns.
  - Common mental health issues included anxiety, sadness, and panic attacks. These findings highlight the need for accessible mental health resources and support systems tailored to the unique challenges faced by Italian youth.

POLAND

Demographics:

Age distribution was diverse with 45% falling within the 15-19 age group, 30% in the 20-24 category, and 25% in the 25-30 category. Gender diversity was evident, with 55% identifying as female and 40% as male and 5% as non-binary. The rural-urban divide reflected a dynamic landscape, with 35% residing in rural areas and 65% in urban settings.

Key Findings:

1. Social Media Engagement:
-The results from Poland revealed significant social media engagement with more than 50% spending over 4 hours a day on social media
-In response to the question about identifying forms of cyberbullying, the majority of participants highlighted hate speech as the most prevalent (60%), followed by sexual harassment (54%), online harassment (51.9%), cyberstalking (43%), blackmailing (39%), scamming (30%), and revenge porn (38%).
-Peer violence awareness was high, with 96% familiar with the term. Disturbingly, nearly 39% acknowledged personal experiences, underscoring the urgent need for interventions.
-Witnessing peer violence was predominant at 67.7%, while 11% admitted to participation.
-In the multiple choice question, the interviewees were asked what were the most common forms of peer violence according to them, from which, 67% stated that it is physical violence, 79% claimed that it is verbal violence, 63% think that it is emotional bullying and 48% think it is cyberbullying.

POLAND

Key Findings:

3. Discrimination:
-Discrimination awareness stood at 79%, with 48% reporting personal experiences. Addressing discrimination on multiple fronts, including gender and ethnicity.
-When asked about the grounds for discrimination, respondents identified several factors. Religion, nationality, and race emerged as significant contributors, with 31%, 68%, and 43% respectively.

4. Substance Consumption:
-While concerns about psychoactive substances emerged, 26.7% admitted consumption.
-79% of theme had consumed marijuana, 8% cocaine 3% MDMA and 2% LSD

5.Mental Health:
-A substantial portion of respondents expressed concerns about their mental health, with over 69,3% feeling worried about their emotions
-68% of respondents experiencing sleep troubles, and varying percentages reporting feelings of sadness (72%), difficulty in concentration (42%), anxiety (62%), and depression (34%).

ALBANIA

Demographics:

Albania provided a diverse pool of participants aged 15-30. The demographic distribution reflected the youthful composition of the sample, with 45% falling within the 20-24 age group, 24% in the 25-30 category, and 24% aged 15-19. When it comes to gender diversity 75% of respondents are identifying as female and 24% as male. The urban majority (85%) showcased the evolving landscape of Albanian society.

Key Findings:

1. Digital and peer violence:
-The survey illuminated the prevalence of cyberbullying awareness, with 87% having heard of it. Almost half reported experiencing or witnessing cyberbullying, indicating the need for proactive measures.
-In response to the question about identifying forms of cyberbullying, the majority of participants highlighted hate speech as the most prevalent (62.4%), followed by sexual harassment (59%), online harassment (55.9%), cyberstalking (44%), blackmailing (47%), scamming (49%), and revenge porn (48.8%).
-Peer violence awareness was high, with 98% familiar with the term. Disturbingly, nearly 30% acknowledged personal experiences, underscoring the urgent need for interventions.
-Witnessing peer violence was predominant at 79.7%, while 9% admitted to participation.
-In the multiple choice question, the interviewees were asked what were the most common forms of peer violence according to them, from which, 53% stated that it is physical violence, 80% claimed that it is verbal violence, 75% think that it is emotional bullying and 51% think it is cyberbullying.

ALBANIA

Key Findings:

3. Discrimination:
   - Discrimination was recognized as a dominant issue by 98% of participants. Personal experiences revealed that 51.2% felt discriminated against at some point in their lives.
       - According to respondents, prevalent grounds for discrimination in the country include sexual orientation (79.2%), religion (32.1%), nationality (24.1%), race (24.1%), and appearance (1%).

4. Substance Consumption:
-While concerns about psychoactive substances emerged, only 13.7% admitted consumption.
-24% of theme had consumed marijuana, 1% MDMA and 1% LSD, 85.4% denied having consumed and only 0.9 % of them state that they are not sure.

5. Mental Health:
-Mental health concerns were widespread, with 61.6% expressing worry and 52.6% reporting sleep problems. Activities impacting mental health included sadness (74.1%) and anxiety (54.3%)
-In the multiple-choice question, the interviewees indicate that they have experienced these concerns: 74.1% sadness, 25.4% panic attacks, 21% depression, 54.3% anxiety and 62.9% difficulty to concentrate.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Demographics:

Bosnia and Herzegovina showcased a balanced gender distribution among respondents, with 50% identifying as female and 47% as male, and 3% as non-binary. Urbanization was significant, with 60% residing in urban areas.

Key Findings:

1. Digital and Peer Violence:
   - Bosnian youth exhibited a notable online presence, with 78.5% familiar with cyberbullying, revealing that 55% reported experiencing or witnessing cyberbullying, necessitating urgent attention.
   - Respondents identified prevalent forms of cyberbullying, with hate speech being the most recognized at 64.5%, followed by sexual harassment at 57%. Other recognized forms included online harassment (48%), revenge porn (41%), and blackmailing (38%).
   - Awareness of peer violence was high (95%), with 28% admitting personal experiences, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

2. Discrimination:
   - Discrimination awareness stood at 82%, with 55% reporting personal experiences. Comprehensive strategies are needed to address discrimination, especially related to ethnicity and gender.
   - Grounds for discrimination included religion (32%), nationality (65%), and race (50%), and some recognized gender, appearance, family or tribe, and social status as potential grounds for discrimination among youth.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Key Findings:

3. Substance Consumption:
 - 69.7% of respondents reported not consuming alcohol, 14.3% consume alcohol once every other week, 8.9% consume alcohol every week, while 7.1% consume it more than two days a week.
 - 86.5% of respondents have never used psychoactive substances, and 13.5% have used psychoactive substances. Among those who have used psychoactive substances, 70% reported using marijuana and 30% mentioned using other substances not explicitly listed in the survey.

4. Mental Health:
 - Mental health concerns were common, with 75% expressing worry about their emotions. Sleep problems were reported by a substantial proportion of respondents.
 - Emotional challenges were diverse, with 70% reporting feelings of sadness, 35% experiencing panic, 68% grappling with anxiety, and 48% indicating feelings of depression. Additionally, 60% mentioned difficulties focusing, highlighting the varied emotional struggles individuals face. Moreover, 18% acknowledged experiencing suicidal thoughts or self-harm, emphasizing the urgency of mental health support.

JORDAN

Demographics:

Jordan, situated at the crossroads of the Middle East, provided insights into the experiences of a predominantly 25-30 age group. The demographic distribution revealed a gender imbalance, with 32% identifying as female and 69% as male. Urbanization was prominent, with 70% residing in urban areas.

Key Findings:

1. Digital and peer violence:
-Jordanian youth demonstrated a significant social media presence, with 82.8% familiar with cyberbullying. It is concerning that 62% reported experiencing or witnessing cyberbullying, which requires immediate attention.
-Respondents identified several prevalent forms of cyberbullying. Approximately half acknowledged sexual harassment (47.5%), revenge porn or non-consensual sharing of images (45.5%) and spreading rumours (53.5%). Over half recognized blackmailing (54.5%) and online harassment (42.4%), while an overwhelming majority (71%) cited hate speech as a common type.
-High awareness of peer violence (98%) was coupled with 29% admitting personal experiences. Physical and verbal violence were predominant, calling for targeted interventions.
-Respondents identified several common types of peer violence, with 46% acknowledging physical violence, 89% recognizing verbal violence, and 42% identifying emotional violence. Additionally, 27% cited sexual harassment/abuse, and 33% mentioned cyber violence. Some participants expressed uncertainty or selected all the above, indicating the diverse nature of peer violence as perceived by respondents.

JORDAN

Key Findings:

3. Discrimination:
-Discrimination awareness stood at 86%, with 70% reporting personal experiences. Addressing discrimination on multiple fronts, including gender and ethnicity, requires comprehensive strategies.
-When asked about the grounds for discrimination, respondents identified several factors. Religion, nationality, and race emerged as significant contributors, with 28%, 70%, and 56% respectively. Some respondents added nuanced perspectives, including gender, appearance, family or tribe, and social status.

5. Mental Health:
  - Mental health concerns were prevalent, with 79% expressing worry for their emotions. Sleep problems were reported by a significant proportion of respondents, indicating a need for mental health support systems.
  - A range of emotional challenges was, with 74% reporting feelings of sadness, 31% experiencing panic, 75% grappling with anxiety, and 55% indicating feelings of depression. Additionally, 72% mention difficulties focusing, showcasing the diverse emotional struggles individuals navigate in their daily lives. Moreover, 23% acknowledge experiencing suicidal thoughts or self-harm, underscoring the urgency of mental health support.

TUNISIA

Demographics:

Tunisia presented insights into the experiences of a predominantly 20-25 age group (46%). Gender diversity was evident, with 58.9% identifying as female. 83.6% of participants are residing in urban areas.

Key Findings:

1. Digital and peer violence:
-The survey highlighted that over 50% of Tunisian youth are familiar with cyberbullying. Alarmingly, 50% reported experiencing mood changes due to cyberbullying, indicating the significant impact on mental well-being.
-The survey participants identified blackmailing as the most common type of cyberbullying, with 22.2%, while 13% considered scam, and spreading rumours was perceived as the least prevalent form in Tunisia.
-Peer violence awareness (58.2%) was coupled with nearly half admitting to being victims. Physical and verbal violence were prevalent, necessitating a holistic approach to address the root causes.
-Nearly half of the respondents think that the verbal violence is the most common type, comes after with 15 % believe that emotional intimidation is widely faced.

3. Discrimination:
-Discrimination awareness was high, with 90.9% acknowledging its existence. Personal experiences were reported by 40%, highlighting the need for targeted interventions.
-Among the respondents, 41.1% believe that discrimination based on sexual orientation is the most prevalent, followed by 30.4% for race, 8.9% for religion, and 5.4% for nationality.

TUNISIA

Key Findings:

4. Substance Consumption:
-A majority (82.6%) denied substance use, but alcohol dependency emerged as a concern.
-Among participants who acknowledged using psychoactive substances, 78.7% reported marijuana consumption, 14% mentioned MDMA use, and 7.1% indicated the use of speed.

5. Mental Health:
 - Mental health concerns were prevalent, with 78.1% expressing anxiety. Insomnia was reported by nearly half of the respondents, underlining the need for comprehensive mental health infrastructure.
 - Among respondents, 26.8% reported experiencing depression, 21.4% anxiety, 21.4% sadness, 17.9% difficulty in concentration, 3.6% panic crises, and 1.8% suicidal tendencies.

FOCUS GROUPS

INTRODUCTION TO THE METHODOLOGY FOR FOCUS GROUPS

The Safebook focus groups used a well-established and inclusive methodology, engaging over 350 young participants across seven partner countries in a shared effort to address the pressing issue of peer violence. The methodology was designed to foster open discussion, gather diverse perspectives, and empower young individuals to actively contribute to the creation of solutions. Young people, aged 15-30, from Serbia, Italy, Poland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, and Tunisia actively participated in the focus groups. Used methodology prioritized inclusivity, ensuring representation from different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds to capture a thorough understanding of the challenges related to peer violence. The focus groups were structured as interviews, providing a platform for participants to express their experiences, concerns, and insights related to peer violence. Each focus group was dedicated to a specific aspect of the issue, including peer violence, cyberbullying, discrimination, mental health, and the abuse of psychoactive substances. The methodology encouraged dynamic discussions within the focus groups, enabling participants to identify key challenges, propose solutions, and collaboratively generate recommendations for improvement. This participatory approach ensured that the results reflect the collective insight, experiences, and ambitions of the diverse group of young individuals involved. The engagement of over 350 young people from various cultural backgrounds not only improved the depth of the findings but also highlighted the universality of the challenges surrounding peer violence.
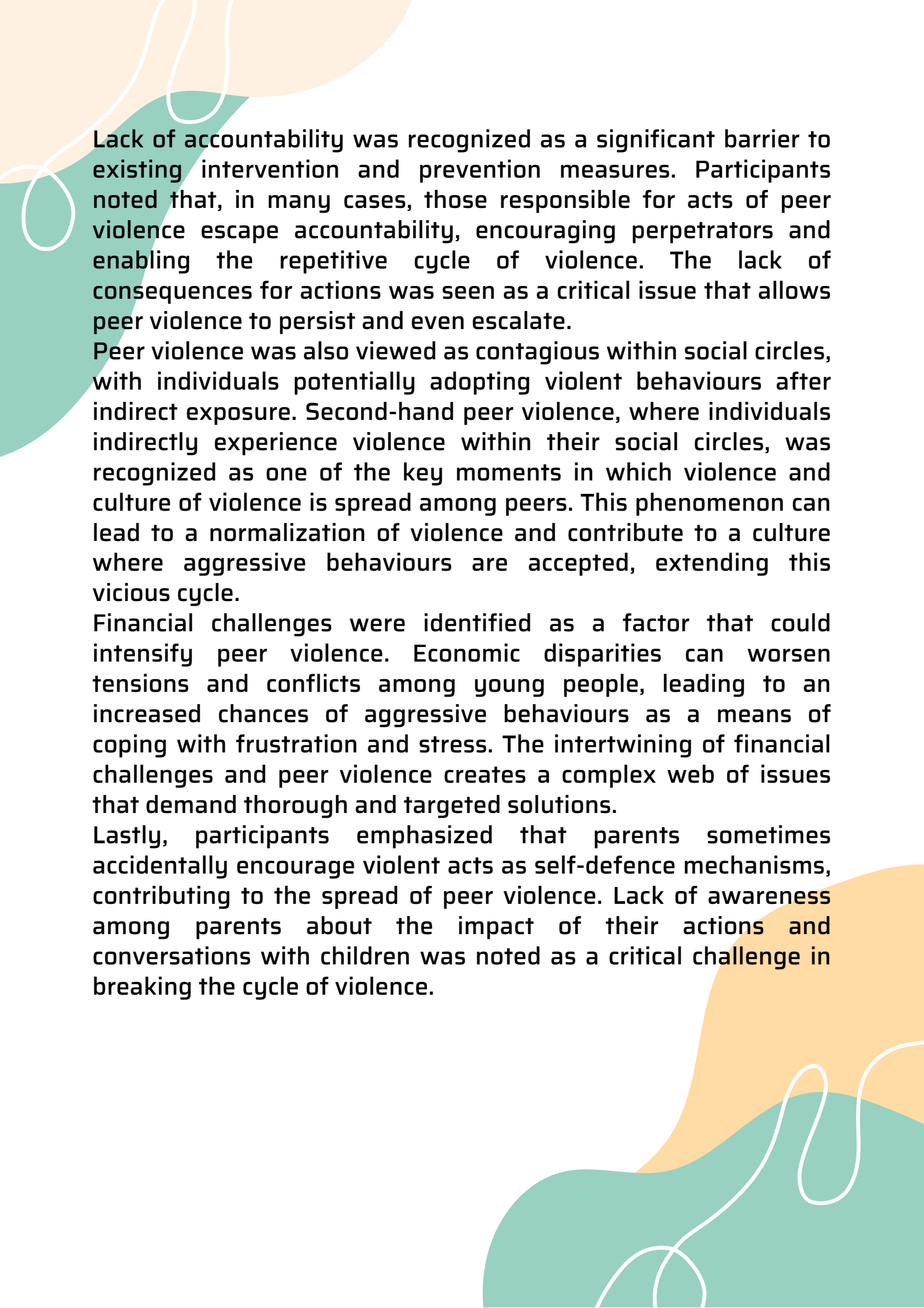
TOPIC OF THE FOCUS GROUP: PEER VIOLENCE

Main Challenges and Problems Identified:

Peer violence, recognized as a universal issue across participating countries, presents concrete and relevant challenge for better position of young individuals. One widespread issue is the subtle and concealed nature of peer violence within social dynamics, often making it difficult to identify and address. This subtlety intensifies the psychological impact on victims, as the concealed nature of the violence may go unnoticed for extended periods.

Participants of the focus groups highlighted manipulation as a frequently used tactic of oppressors, adding layers of complexity to the issue. Manipulation can take various forms, including emotional cruelty and subtle control, making it challenging for both peers and authorities to recognize and intervene. This tactic often leads to prolonged suffering for victims, who may struggle to articulate their experiences.

The abuse of power within social groups emerged as a toxic environment in which peer violence thrives, contributing to the continuation of harmful behaviours among young generations. This abuse often manifests as physical violence, verbal harassment, or emotional manipulation. The consequences of abuse are severe, leaving victims traumatized and disempowered. Furthermore, the abuse of power was identified as a significant factor contributing to the recurring nature of peer violence, where victims may become perpetrators in later interactions.

The long-term effects of peer violence on victims were a major concern among participants of focus groups. Trauma was identified as a common outcome, affecting victims emotionally, socially, and psychologically. The potential for victims to repeat the cycle of violence by becoming aggressors themselves was highlighted, underscoring the urgency of breaking this cycle through effective interventions.

Lack of accountability was recognized as a significant barrier to existing intervention and prevention measures. Participants noted that, in many cases, those responsible for acts of peer violence escape accountability, encouraging perpetrators and enabling the repetitive cycle of violence. The lack of consequences for actions was seen as a critical issue that allows peer violence to persist and even escalate.

Peer violence was also viewed as contagious within social circles, with individuals potentially adopting violent behaviours after indirect exposure. Second-hand peer violence, where individuals indirectly experience violence within their social circles, was recognized as one of the key moments in which violence and culture of violence is spread among peers. This phenomenon can lead to a normalization of violence and contribute to a culture where aggressive behaviours are accepted, extending this vicious cycle.

Financial challenges were identified as a factor that could intensify peer violence. Economic disparities can worsen tensions and conflicts among young people, leading to an increased chances of aggressive behaviours as a means of coping with frustration and stress. The intertwining of financial challenges and peer violence creates a complex web of issues that demand thorough and targeted solutions.

Lastly, participants emphasized that parents sometimes accidentally encourage violent acts as self-defence mechanisms, contributing to the spread of peer violence. Lack of awareness among parents about the impact of their actions and conversations with children was noted as a critical challenge in breaking the cycle of violence.

Suggestions and Solutions Proposed:

1. Comprehensive Educational Programs within formal education systems:
-Develop and implement comprehensive educational programs addressing the abuse of power, manipulation, and the cyclical nature of violence.
-Integrate lessons on empathy, conflict resolution, and responsible use of power into school curricula, emphasizing real-life scenarios and consequences.
-Educate and train educators and teachers to be able to implement this program.
-Secure institutional and financial support of the relevant institutions.

2. Accountability Mechanisms:
-Establish transparent and forceful mechanisms for holding perpetrators accountable for their actions, including legal consequences and compensation.
-Conduct national-wide evaluation of existing disciplinary measures and use results for their improvement and adjustment. This should be done across all sectors, including experts in public policy, psychology, law enforcement, social welfare, educational institutions, governmental bodies and other relevant stakeholders.
-Implement school-based disciplinary measures and peer intervention programs, emphasizing the importance of consequences for actions.

Safe and Confidential Reporting Channels:
-Create easily accessible, safe, and confidential reporting channels for victims to share their experiences, ensuring protection from retaliation.
-Develop community-wide campaigns to promote awareness about reporting mechanisms and the importance of intervention.

4.Training and Support for Adults:
-Implement training programs for educators, parents, and other responsible adults on recognizing signs of peer violence.
-Provide support and resources for these adults to effectively intervene and support victims.
-Foster a collaborative network where adults can share insights and strategies for addressing peer violence in diverse settings.

5. Support and Counselling Services:
-Develop and enhance support and counselling services specifically tailored for victims of peer violence, addressing the psychological and emotional impact.
-Establish safe spaces where individuals can seek help, guidance, and emotional support, fostering a sense of community.

6. Multidimensional Approach:
-Establish an accountability system that involves all stakeholders, including schools, communities, and governmental institutions, to tackle financial challenges as contributors to peer violence.
-Create a system for prevention or prompt intervention in peer violence situations, incorporating community-based initiatives to break the cycle of violence.
-Implement comprehensive educational programs in schools that focus on fostering empathy, conflict resolution, and the responsible use of power.
-Develop and promote extracurricular activities that encourage positive peer interactions and provide a platform for open discussions about violence, mental health, and interpersonal relationships.

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7. Empowerment through Education and Diversity Exposure:
- Expand efforts to expose children to diversity through intercultural lessons, films, plays, songs, books, and cartoons, addressing stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination in our societies.
- Implement intercultural programs in preschools and kindergartens to promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures, emphasizing respect and empathy.

8. Mandatory Mental Health Check-ups:
- Introduce and normalize mandatory mental health check-ups during annual examinations for young people, emphasizing the relations between mental well-being and aggressive behaviours.
- Extend mental health reviews to those seeking employment after education, with a focus on addressing financial stressors and coping mechanisms.
- Collaborate with mental health professionals to develop personalized support plans for individuals identified with mental health challenges during check-ups.
- Establish accessible mental health services in all cities to provide ongoing support for emotional well-being, ensuring that individuals have easy access to resources and counselling.
- Promote mental health education in schools and workplaces, reducing stigma and fostering a culture of open communication about emotional well-being.
- Advocate for policies that prioritize mental health support in educational and professional environments, creating environments that prioritize the well-being of young individuals health, and interpersonal relationships.

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TOPIC OF THE FOCUS GROUP: CYBERBULLYING
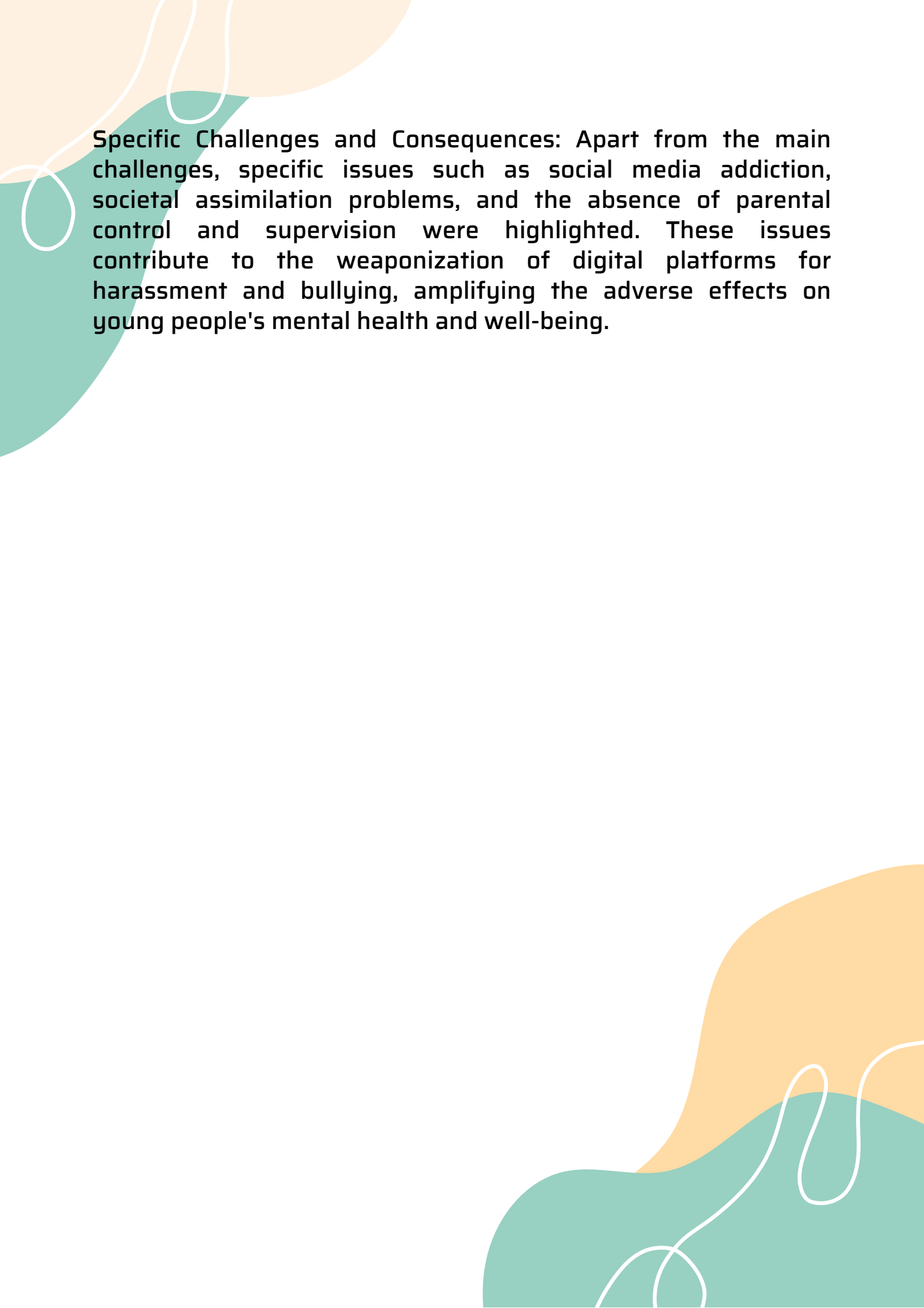
Main Challenges and Problems Identified:

Lack of Acknowledgment and Downplaying of Severity: One predominant challenge highlighted by participants was the perceived lack of acknowledgment regarding the harm inflicted on individuals subjected to cyberbullying. This lack of recognition not only downplays the seriousness of cyberbullying but also hinders efforts to address it effectively. Victims may feel neglected and unsupported, exacerbating the psychological toll of the experience.

Psychological and Emotional Harm: The focus groups participants highlighted the severe psychological and emotional harm suffered by victims of cyberbullying. The constant expose to the hurtful comments, threats, and harassment can lead to profound feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and emotional vulnerability. This, in turn, can fuel a detrimental cycle of abuse, affecting the overall well-being and mental health of young individuals.

Ignorance about Consequences and Societal Impact: A significant challenge identified was the widespread ignorance about the consequences of cyberbullying, both among the public and authorities. This lack of awareness extends to the broader societal impact of cyberbullying, including conflicts within society and potential loss of talented individuals in creative communities.

Insufficient Regulations and Legal Gray Area: The focus groups participants stressed the fundamental issue of insufficient regulations and laws governing the online world, creating a legal gray area for cyberbullying to thrive. The absence of strict legal measures makes it challenging for authorities to take effective action against cyberbullies, leaving victims vulnerable to continued harm.

Specific Challenges and Consequences: Apart from the main challenges, specific issues such as social media addiction, societal assimilation problems, and the absence of parental control and supervision were highlighted. These issues contribute to the weaponization of digital platforms for harassment and bullying, amplifying the adverse effects on young people's mental health and well-being.

Suggestions and Solutions Proposed:

In response to these challenges, participants proposed a range of solutions, including the development of a robust support system, institutional changes, educational initiatives, and awareness campaigns.

1.Multidimensional Support System:
-Establish Online Psychosocial Support Services: Create accessible online platforms offering free consultations and mental health support, manned by qualified psychologists and therapists.
-Promote Offline Support Systems: Encourage the establishment of offline support networks within schools, communities, and families to provide holistic assistance to victims.

2.Institutional Changes:
-Review and Strengthen Legal Frameworks: Advocate for a review of existing legal frameworks to ensure strict measures against cyberbullying, holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.
-Collaborate for Cross-Sectoral Solutions: Facilitate collaboration between social networks, governmental bodies, NGOs, and educational institutions to implement collective measures against cyberbullying.

3.Educational Initiatives:
-Integrate Cyberbullying Education: Embed comprehensive lessons on online ethics, cyberbullying prevention, and responsible internet use into school curricula.
-Parental Education Programs: Develop programs to educate parents about cyberbullying, its causes, and effective preventive measures to ensure a supportive home environment.

4.Digital Literacy Programs:
-Implement digital literacy programs within school curricula to equip young individuals with the skills to critically evaluate and navigate online content.
-Collaborate with technology companies to develop age-appropriate resources that educate users about the responsible use of digital platforms and the potential consequences of cyberbullying.

5.Anonymous Reporting Mechanism:
-Establish an anonymous reporting system for cyberbullying incidents, allowing victims and witnesses to report without fear of retaliation.
-Promote the use of this reporting mechanism through educational campaigns to ensure its accessibility and encourage active participation in creating a safer online environment.

6.Mental Health First Aid Training:
-Provide mental health first aid training to teachers, parents, and community members to enable them to recognize signs of distress in young individuals.
-Foster a network of mental health first aid responders within schools and communities, creating a supportive environment for those affected by cyberbullying.

7.Peer Support Programs:
-Introduce peer support programs within schools, where older students or trained peers offer guidance, advice, and companionship to those experiencing cyberbullying.
-Facilitate the establishment of online forums or groups where young people can share their experiences, seek advice, and receive support from their peers.

8.Awareness Campaigns:

-Public Awareness Initiatives: Launch targeted campaigns to raise public awareness about the pervasive impact of cyberbullying, encouraging collective responsibility in countering and preventing it.

-Promote Positive Online Culture: Foster a culture of respect, empathy, and support online through campaigns that encourage positive online behaviours.

TOPIC OF THE FOCUS GROUP: DISCRIMINATION

Main Challenges and Problems Identified:
Belonging to Sensitive Groups: The discrimination faced by national minorities, individuals of different sexual orientations, various religious groups, people of specific races, and those with disabilities creates a general environment for exclusion. This not only hold back their ability to fully participate in societal activities but also results in a deep marginalization.
Consequences:
-Deterioration of mental health: Individuals belonging to sensitive groups often grapple with amplified levels of insecurity, anxiety, eating disorders, depression, and even suicidal thoughts.
-Physical appearance concerns: Discrimination influences a change in personal style and may lead to self-harm as individuals attempt to conform to societal norms.
Social and Material Status: Discrimination based on social and material status results in a lack of equal opportunities for young individuals. Systemic inequalities hinder educational and career advancement, maintaining the cycles of disadvantage.
Consequences:
-Unequal access to opportunities: Many young individuals find themselves restricted by systemic inequalities, hindering their personal and professional growth.
-Social exclusion: Discrimination often leads to the exclusion of certain groups from societal participation, impacting their overall well-being.

Conflict of Opinion: Disparities in opinions, particularly when met with discrimination, create an environment where diverse voices are suppressed. This can lead to increased tension and the suppression of innovative thinking among young individuals.

Consequences:
-Undermining creativity and innovation: The suppression of diverse opinions stifles innovative thinking among young people, holding back progress and social development.
-Damaging impact on self-esteem: Constant belittlement or dismissive attitudes toward young individuals can have a harmful impact on their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Stereotypes: Discrimination perpetuates harmful stereotypes related to gender, age, physical appearance, and interests. This perpetuation contributes to biased perceptions and reinforces societal expectations.
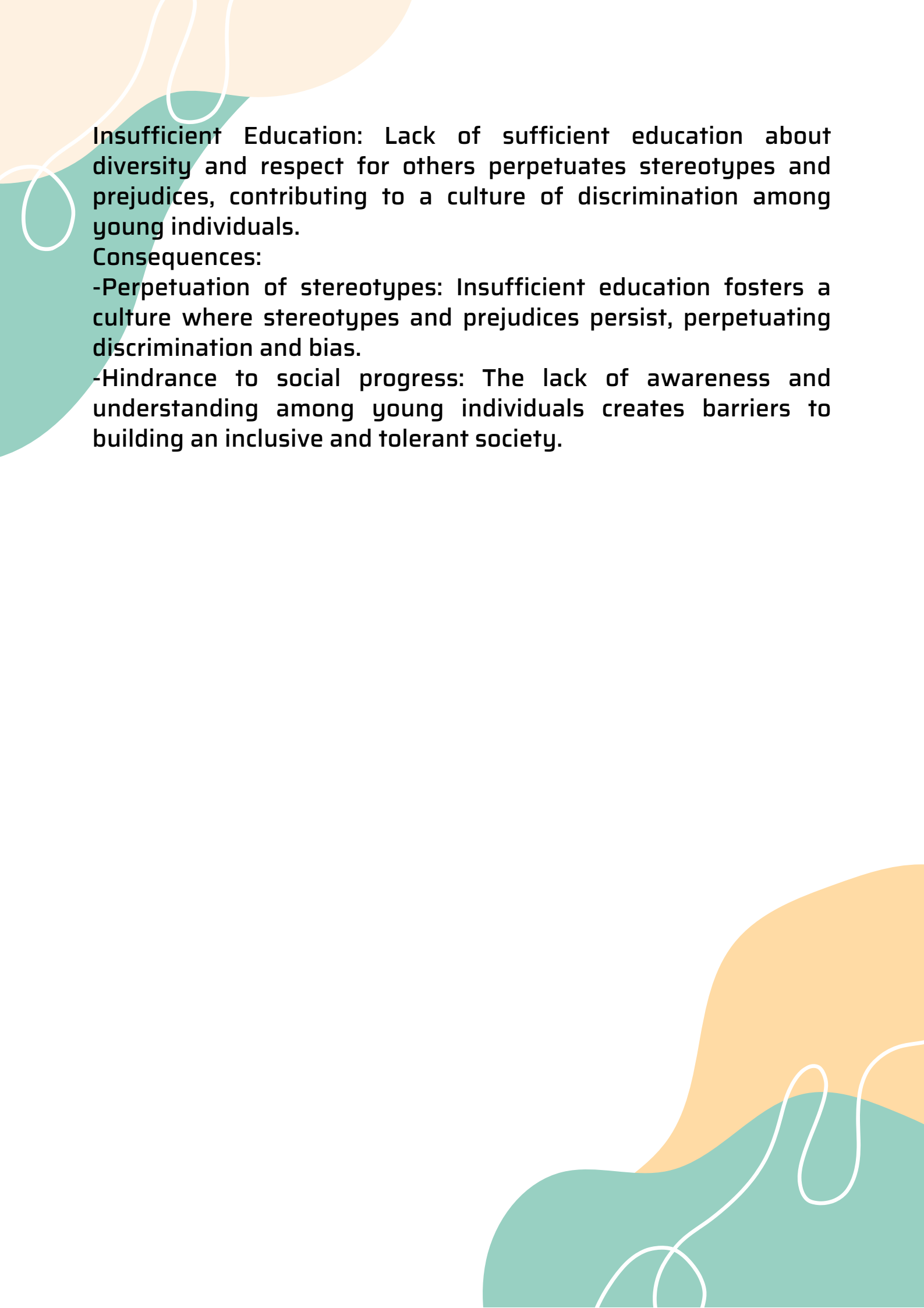Consequences:
-Reinforcement of biased perceptions: Discrimination fosters a climate of ignorance and misunderstanding, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and biases.
-Negative impact on mental health: Discrimination based on stereotypes contributes to feelings of inadequacy and lowers self-esteem among young individuals.
Popularity: Discrimination based on popularity further marginalizes individuals who may not conform to conventional societal expectations of popularity. This exclusionary practice affects their mental well-being and social integration and it is one of the main basis for discrimination among young people in schools.
Consequences:
-Social exclusion: Discrimination based on popularity leads to social exclusion and marginalization, impacting the overall well-being of young individuals.
-Negative mental health outcomes: Individuals subjected to discrimination based on popularity often experience anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.

Insufficient Education: Lack of sufficient education about diversity and respect for others perpetuates stereotypes and prejudices, contributing to a culture of discrimination among young individuals.

Consequences:

-Perpetuation of stereotypes: Insufficient education fosters a culture where stereotypes and prejudices persist, perpetuating discrimination and bias.

-Hindrance to social progress: The lack of awareness and understanding among young individuals creates barriers to building an inclusive and tolerant society.

Suggestions and Solutions Proposed:

1.Education and Awareness:
-Introduce intercultural lessons in school curricula to foster understanding and appreciation of different cultures.
-Implement mandatory mental health check-ups during key educational milestones and employment transitions.
-Develop comprehensive educational programs addressing discrimination, its consequences, and methods to combat it.

2.Online Safety Measures:
-Collaborate with social networks to regulate and control content, ensuring a safer online environment for young people.
-Establish anonymous reporting mechanisms for online discrimination incidents, encouraging active participation in creating a safer online space.

3.Anti-Discrimination Policies:
-Advocate for anti-discrimination education in curricula, emphasizing real-life scenarios and consequences.
-Draft and implement specific laws that enable the prevention of discrimination, ensuring serious and thorough treatment of cases.
-Conduct national-wide evaluations of existing disciplinary measures across sectors and use results for improvement.

4.Support Systems:
-Develop and enhance support and counselling services specifically tailored for victims of discrimination.
-Establish offline support networks within schools, communities, and families to provide holistic assistance to victims.
-Promote positive online culture through targeted campaigns, fostering a culture of respect, empathy, and support online.

Suggestions and Solutions Proposed:

5.Awareness Campaigns:
-Targeted Initiatives: Launch awareness campaigns that target different demographic groups and engage both small and large audiences. These campaigns can leverage various media platforms to maximize their reach.
-Ongoing Events: Organize periodic events, forums, or seminars that promote tolerance, diversity, and equality. Encourage participation from diverse communities to foster understanding.

6.Cultural Exposure and Diversity Education:
-Intercultural Lessons: Implement intercultural lessons in educational programs, incorporating films, plays, songs, books, and cartoons that promote diversity and challenge stereotypes.
-Preschool Programs: Introduce intercultural programs in preschools and kindergartens to install an understanding and appreciation of different cultures from an early age.

7.Community Engagement:
-Online Reporting Mechanism: Establish an anonymous reporting system for incidents of discrimination, ensuring victims and witnesses can report without fear of retaliation.
-Community-wide Campaigns: Develop campaigns that promote awareness about reporting mechanisms and the importance of intervention. Encourage active participation to create a safer environment.

TOPIC OF THE FOCUS GROUP: MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE
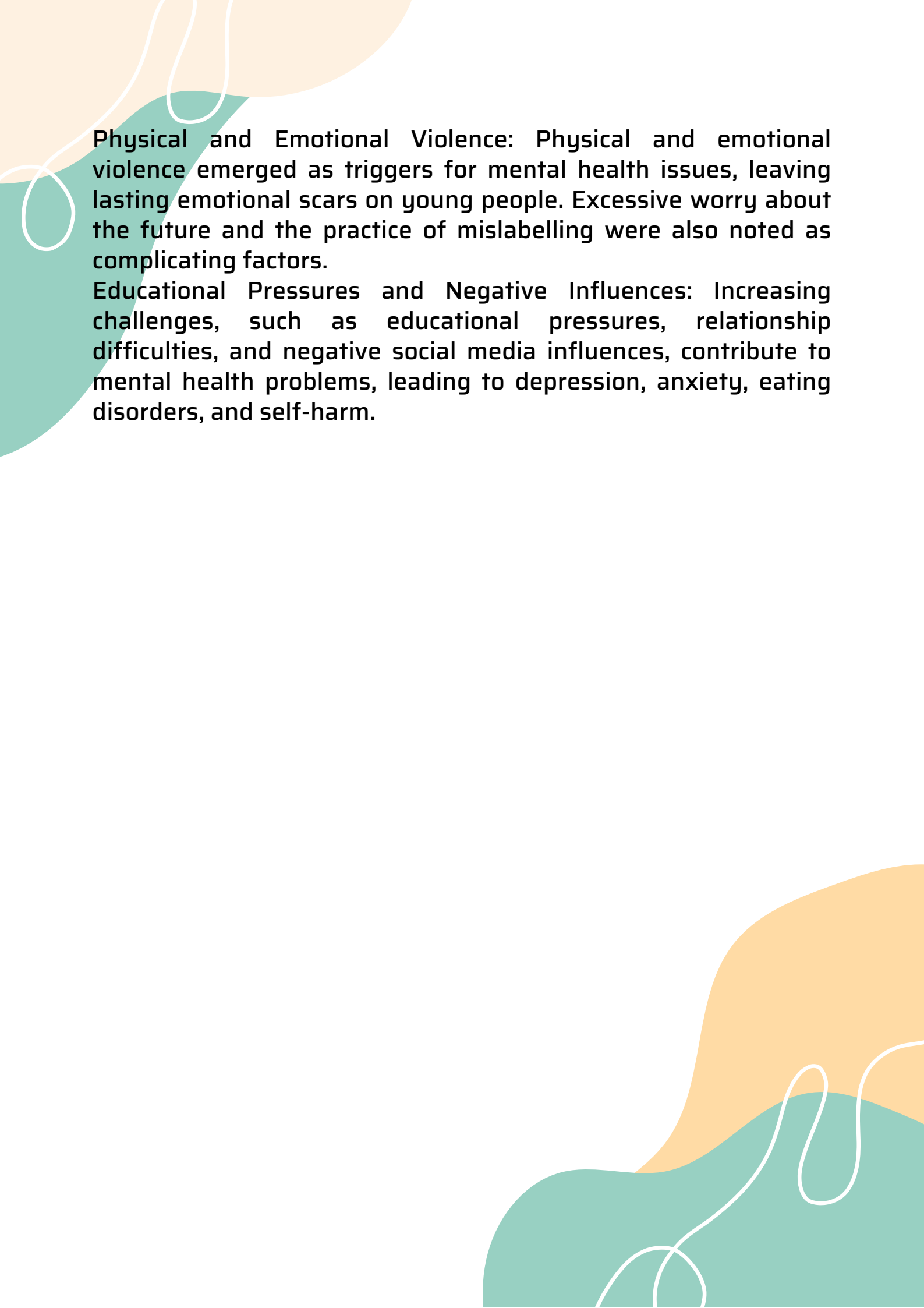
Main Challenges and Problems Identified:
Lack of Psychological Support: The general absence of accessible and widespread mental health resources emerged as a significant concern among participants. Young individuals facing various mental health issues expressed feelings of being lost due to the absence of professional support and guidance, increasing their struggles. The lack of accessible emotional and psychological support was identified as a significant issue, leading many young people to struggle in silence due to a dearth of resources and understanding, exacerbating their conditions.
Identity Issues: Identity challenges, covering aspects such as gender, sexual orientation, and personal values, were identified as prominent contributors to mental well-being issues among youth. The difficulties of navigating one's identity in a rapidly changing world were acknowledged as sources of confusion and emotional unrest.
Social Isolation: Social isolation, fuelled by the pressures of modern life, societal expectations, and the contradictory nature of digital connectivity, was highlighted as another substantial problem. Many young individuals find themselves detached from social connections and support systems, intensifying mental health issues.
Family Conflicts: Family conflicts were recognized as contributors to mental health issues, causing stress and emotional unrest for many young individuals. The absence of safe spaces for emotional expression was seen as a barrier to seeking help and finding support.
Wars and Political Conflicts:In regions with ongoing wars and political conflicts, these situations were identified as significant stressors leading to trauma and mental health challenges. The social stigma surrounding mental illnesses in these contexts further keep individuals from seeking help.

Physical and Emotional Violence: Physical and emotional violence emerged as triggers for mental health issues, leaving lasting emotional scars on young people. Excessive worry about the future and the practice of mislabelling were also noted as complicating factors.

Educational Pressures and Negative Influences: Increasing challenges, such as educational pressures, relationship difficulties, and negative social media influences, contribute to mental health problems, leading to depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and self-harm.

Solutions and Recommendations:

1.Government Intervention for Psychological Support:
A crucial suggestion emphasized the need for government intervention to ensure psychological support is readily available to all. Recognizing the lack of accessible mental health resources, this proposal aims to break down barriers hindering young people from seeking necessary help.

2.Promoting Self-Acceptance and Confidence:
Participants underscored the importance of promoting self-acceptance and self-confidence, particularly in the face of identity challenges. Empowering young individuals to embrace their authentic selves and take pride in their unique identities was seen as pivotal for improving mental well-being.

3.Involving Youth in Support and Educational Activities:
To combat social isolation, participants proposed involving young people more in support and educational activities. Creating opportunities for engagement that foster connections, provide support, and offer education on mental health was highlighted as vital for breaking down walls of isolation and building a sense of community.

4.Raising Awareness and Reducing Stigma:
Emphasizing the need to raise awareness and educate people about the importance of mental health, participants highlighted the role of promoting a greater understanding of mental illnesses to reduce stigma and encourage individuals to seek help without fear of judgment.

5.Effective Conflict Resolution:
Efforts to ensure effective conflict resolution in regions plagued by wars and political conflicts were recommended to reduce the stress and trauma associated with such environments.

6.Acceptance of Individuals with Mental Illnesses:
The importance of accepting individuals with mental illnesses and disorders in the community was underlined. This acceptance can foster a sense of belonging and reduce isolation among those facing mental health challenges.

In summary, addressing mental health challenges among young people requires a complex approach that includes education, awareness, access to support, and the creation of a supportive and accepting environment. The proposed solutions aim to break down barriers and provide individuals with the resources and understanding needed to manage their mental health effectively.

TOPIC OF THE FOCUS GROUP: ABUSE OF PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

Main Challenges and Problems Identified:

Lack of Knowledge About Substance Risks: Many young people lack proper education about the effects and risks of drugs and alcohol, leading to unconscious health risks associated with substance abuse. The absence of comprehensive information contributes to a lack of awareness about the potential harms, both physical and psychological.
Consequences:
-Increased likelihood of accidental overdose or health complications due to ignorance about usage.
-Higher sensibility to the development of substance-related disorders due to uninformed experimentation.
Peer Pressure and Desire for Acceptance: Peer group pressure and a desire for acceptance can lead youth to experiment with substances to fit in with others, showcasing the powerful influence of peers on substance abuse. The need for social acceptance often outweighs the understanding of potential consequences.
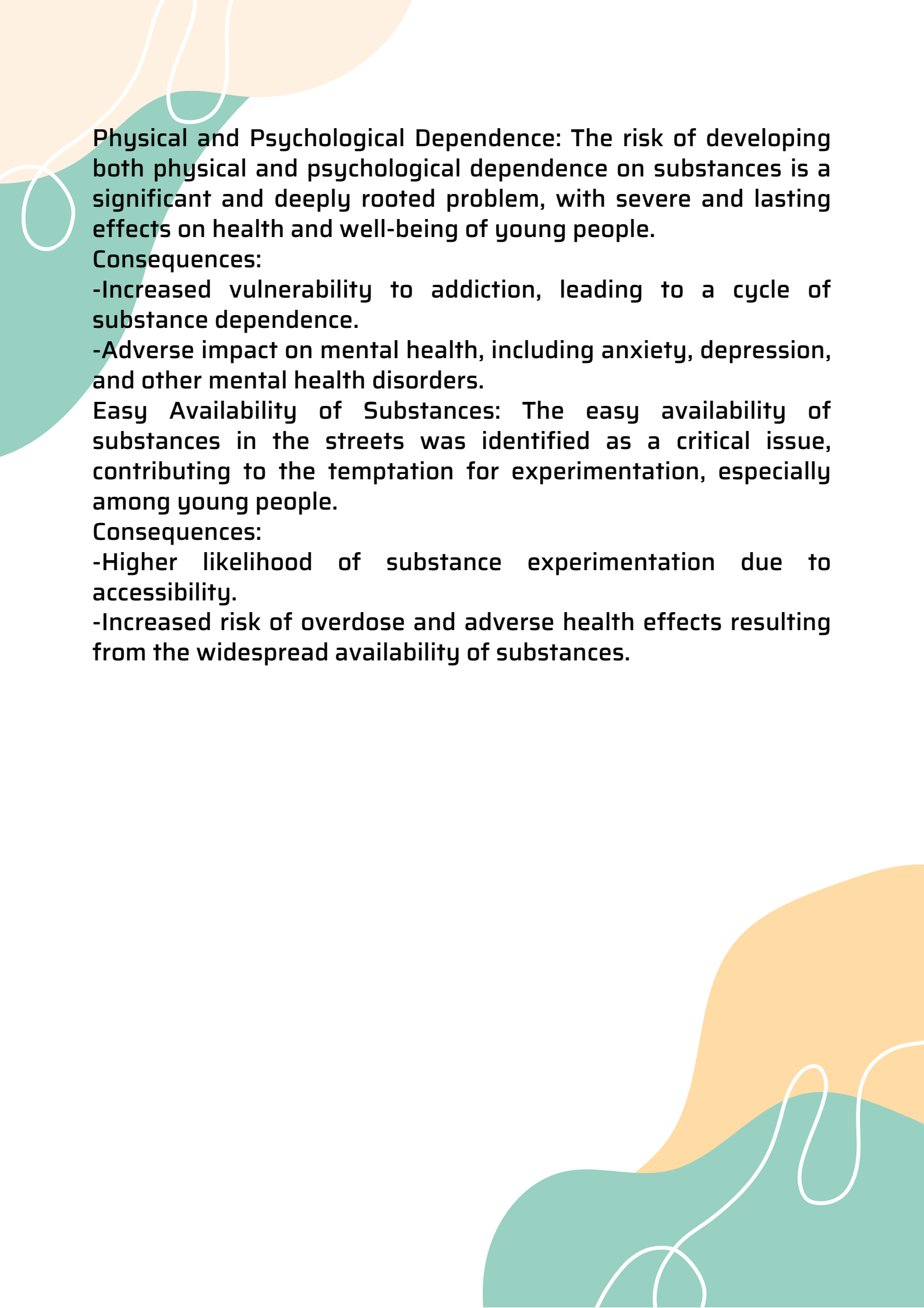Consequences:
-Increased likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours to conform to peer expectations.
-Higher chances of developing substance use disorders because of peer-driven experimentation.
Lack of Available Leisure Alternatives: The absence of available leisure alternatives may encourage experimentation with substances, as young people seek ways to spend their time actively. Limited recreational options contribute to the allure of substance use as a form of entertainment.
Consequences:
-Increased vulnerability to substance abuse due to a lack of alternative, engaging activities.
-Escalation of substance use as a default leisure activity, leading to potential addiction.

Physical and Psychological Dependence: The risk of developing both physical and psychological dependence on substances is a significant and deeply rooted problem, with severe and lasting effects on health and well-being of young people.

Consequences:

-Increased vulnerability to addiction, leading to a cycle of substance dependence.

-Adverse impact on mental health, including anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders.

Easy Availability of Substances: The easy availability of substances in the streets was identified as a critical issue, contributing to the temptation for experimentation, especially among young people.

Consequences:

-Higher likelihood of substance experimentation due to accessibility.

-Increased risk of overdose and adverse health effects resulting from the widespread availability of substances.

Solutions and Recommendations:

1.Informative Seminars and Workshops:
Addressing ignorance, participants recommended informative seminars and workshops to raise awareness about the potential physical and psychological harms of substance abuse. Equipping individuals, especially young people, with this knowledge can aid in making informed decisions.

2.Building Self-Confidence and Resilience:
Recognizing the influential role of peers, participants emphasized the importance of building self-confidence and resilience among young individuals. Strengthening the ability to resist negative peer pressure was seen as instrumental in combating substance abuse.

3.Increased Police Presence:
Participants suggested increasing police presence as a pragmatic solution to the problem of easy substance availability. Heightened law enforcement efforts can discourage illicit substance trade and reduce accessibility.

4.Investment in Rehabilitation Centres:
To address physical and psychological dependence, participants recommended investing in quality rehabilitation centres that offer complete treatment and support for individuals struggling with substance abuse. These centres can provide medical, psychological, and social assistance.

5.Awareness Campaigns for Education:
Awareness campaigns were proposed to educate young people about the consequences and risks associated with substance abuse. Increasing knowledge about potential harm was seen as a tool to combat desire for experimentation.

Solutions and Recommendations:

6.Parental Involvement and Legal Supervision:
Strengthening parental involvement and legal supervision was recommended as a preventive measure to address substance abuse among young people. Clear boundaries, monitoring online activities, and providing guidance and support were highlighted.

7.Promoting Healthier Coping Mechanisms:
Encouraging healthier coping mechanisms as alternatives to substance use emerged as a crucial strategy. Activities providing emotional support and stress relief were promoted as preventive measures and ways to address substance abuse.

3.Establishment of Support Groups:
Participants suggested establishing support groups, similar to organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), to provide a peer support network for those seeking recovery.

In summary, addressing substance abuse among young people requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, prevention, treatment, and support. The proposed solutions aim to tackle the root causes of substance abuse and provide individuals with the tools and resources needed to lead healthier, substance-free lives.

Club for Youth Empowerment 018 (KOM 018), Serbia implements KA2 CBY project "Safebook for safe youth" in cooperation with Beyond Borders – Italy, Idea for Life – Poland, Youth Center "Perspektiva" – Albania, Red Cross Novo Sarajevo – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan Youth Innovation Forum – Jordan and Euro-Med EVE in Tunisia. The project idea is focused on the safety of young people, especially affected by COVID-19 pandemic. "Safebook for safe youth" project aims at promotion of safety culture among young people through newly developed manual "Safebook" for youth work in the field of youth safety. The manual was produced through Strategic partnership in the field of youth in 2021 by the applicant Club for Youth Empowerment 018 (KOM 018) together with Beyond Borders – Italy, and partners from Croatia and North Macedonia and is recognized as a good practice project by Erasmus + Program. Project will equip youth workers and educators with new educational tools in the field of youth safety focusing on 5 segments: peer violence, cyber bullying, abuse of psychoactive substances, discrimination and mental health in time of COVID-19. Project is implemented in the period 01.01.2023 – 31.12.2024 and is co-financed by the European Union.

Co-funded by
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SAFEBOOK
FOR SAFE YOUTH