

## Long abstract – Monographic section

YOUNG PEOPLE BEYOND STEREOTYPES

*Edited by Carlo Buzzi*

### *Youth well-being: beyond the need for health*

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Youth culture, habits, and beliefs are undergoing constant evolution. Structural and social transformations, such as overconfidence in new technologies, changes in family patterns, processes of globalization, and immigration, are just a few reasons for this incredible evolution that has led and will continue to lead to new cultural expressions and, consequently, transformations in lifestyles, ways of thinking, and approaching the future. New behavioral norms and health practices present new challenges for the well-being of today's youth.

Literature identifies and analyzes various factors influencing youth well-being, including the widespread availability of the internet and massive use of social media. While young people have access to vast amounts of information and resources that can contribute to their development and well-being, this also exposes them to negative content and misinformation. Excessive and problematic use of technology has been associated with a higher prevalence of physical and mental health issues such as obesity, insomnia, digital addictions, and depressive syndromes. Strong social pressures and stress derived from achieving popularity, academic and work performance in what is precisely termed the "performance culture" are factors that can undermine health choices and, consequently, the mental health of young people. The 2022 data from the latest Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) report provide important information about the health status of young people in the school and social context. HBSC is an international multicenter study conducted in collaboration with the WHO, involving 51 countries worldwide. The survey is conducted every four years, targeting students aged 11-13-15 years, and in the last edition, also 17 years.

Methodologically, introducing gender as a key to understand dependencies and in data analysis was determined by the awareness of the importance of gender differences in the manifestation and coping with dependency behaviors. Scientific studies have highlighted that dependencies may manifest differently based on gender. Gender differences are often influenced by socio-cultural and contextual factors. An in-depth understanding of the underlying causes of gender differences and a sensitive approach to cultural and social nuances that may influence these differences are fundamental requirements to decode the health needs of young people, identifying the best policies and actions to implement. In summary, the results indicate that the use of cannabis, alcohol, or gambling experiences decrease in males while remaining stable or even slightly increasing in females.

Assuming that cultural norms can influence access to health resources, services, and care facilities, shaping attitudes towards prevention and care, it is necessary to develop cultural and educational work on the well-being and health of young people, paying attention to their language and reported needs. Youth cultures subject to rapid changes and continuous evolutions challenge

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preventive policies, which often lag behind, trying to understand ongoing phenomena when they have already passed. Going beyond emergencies and the logic of projects responding to emerged needs, supporting programs that foster an educational culture focused on prevention is more than ever the right choice. In conclusion, the integration of cultural and gender elements into preventive and health promotion programs would ensure a more inclusive, equitable, and effective approach to promoting healthy and conscious life choices. The life skills-oriented approach, which aims to develop cross-cutting skills, provides adolescents with concrete tools to address the challenges of modern life, promoting their empowerment and resilience.

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