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GLOBAL REPORT ON BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

BRIEF REPORT

scholas

Report of a young participant at an international Scholas experience in Rome:

"This week is creating a new being inside me. I am unveiling things I never imagined, gaining trust in people, despite having been always skeptic. I understand how people can do good to others. And above all, how much joy they can give to people they do not know.

Discrimination, racism and prejudices are so wrong. We shouldn't divide people into categories, because there are no categories. Each one has their own way to be which is shaped by time and experience and this is why it must be respected and admired. Those who judge don't know, they speak from ignorance and superficiality. This way is helping me to grow from every point of view. I respect everyone because, thanks to the way of being "crazy" (fun, bizarre), they have made it all much more beautiful.

I heard a phrase of someone who came from Africa that caught my attention: "union is strength". And above all diversity makes strength."

This research is promoted by Pontifical Foundation Scholas Occurrentes in collaboration with universities participating on Scholas Chairs program. The issues chosen for analysis and intervention acknowledge the voice of younger generations that, through Scholas programs, formulate their own worries and the ones of society.

One of the issues that frequently emerges is Bullying and Cyberbullying, as expression of other concerns such as prejudices, discrimination and hate speech. Scholas, accordingly with its mission of "listening and give voice to youth" and "rebuild the Educational Pact" and considering the relevance of the problem, the lack of global statistics and the need to involve al stakeholders in order to act and apply law, assumes the duty to establish an International Observatory of Youth to focus on this issue.

This report is the first publication of this Observatory, which was born 6 months ago, and it compiles Good Practices and the state of the art worldwide.

The Report aims to:

- Gather data and inform on the development of existing global indicators to measure and monitor this phenomenon;

- Analyze the state of legislation in each country;

- Give visibility and establish networks among Good Practices to enhance actions that can be taken to prevent and solve the problem, at a personal, family, school and public policy level.

- Provide basic orientations on critical actions of research and action.

The report is addressed for the general public, teachers, parents, professionals, educational institutions, organizations, particularly those that operate in the sector of Information and Communication Technology. It is aimed to spread the word and hopes to be useful to prevent and confront the issue. This first report of the Observatory summarizes the research of a few months and thus constitutes the base over which work will follow in order to achieve its goals.

Bullying and cyberbullying affect a considerable number of children and youth, with a high impact on school performance, health and emotional well-being. To understand this phenomenon, we have chosen the approach of Prosociality and the teachings.

Holy Father as expressed in the message to the world of Communications:

" 'We are members one of each other' (Eph 4:25). From social network communities to human communities" *(Pope Francis).*

From this theoretical framework, this investigation analyzes a variety of papers received by Scholas that try to deepen the knowledge of bullying at school, prevention methodology, interventions and acting legislation.

To these aims, we have divided the research in two stages and four areas of work:

FIRST STAGE
(November 2018 to June 2019):

- Design of the theoretical framework (the approach with which we shall analyze the phenomenon). Collection of existing information. Analysis and meta-analysis of the information.

- Design, building and development of instruments to gather the information relevant for the Observatory.

- Acknowledgement of the Good Practices on prevention and intervention (at a personal, family, school, environmental impact and public policy level).

- Networks of organizations, universities, schools and institutions.

SECOND STAGE
(Julio 2019 to March 2020):

- Implementation of the instruments (narrative, questionnaire and assessment form) worldwide.

- Analysis of the information.

- Summary and feedback.

AREAS OF RESEARCH:

1. Analysis: acknowledgement of Good Practices through a Call for Papers. Scholas. Social Platform. Evaluation. Classification. Presentation at webinar.

2. Mapping of world legislation: collection of existing legislation; comparative study; analysis.

3. Public data research: building the State of the Art; collection of the research by international agencies; design of questionnaires; implementation; analysis.

4. Narrative laboratories: design of the methodology; building of the instruments; implementation; data analysis.

From the theoretical framework, based on an approach of **human community**, as expressed by Pope Francis, as well as on **prosociality,** and considering the **voice of the youth**, some indicators can be extrapolated to interpret the good practices at the levels of prevention, confrontation and intervention.

The indicators have been developed according to the languages of **"head, heart and hands"**.

These are the parameters to measure and monitor the phenomenon:

- **The network is used to promote the encounter with the other.** Internet should create a feeling of expectation of a living encounter, that promote attitudes and actions of collaboration, mutual listening, empathy, always open to a sage knowledge.

- **The network is used as a means of inclusion:** it widens horizons towards new cultures, promotes the exchange of knowledge, values heterogeneity, counters the tendencies to exclusion and hate speech. It is used to approach stories of beauty that are physically away from me.

- **Responsible use of language:** risks involving manipulation of information are identifies and managed. Critical thinking and metacognition on the use of words is promoted. Positive words are recovered. Empathy techniques are proposed to acknowledge the negative impact of offenses in the victims.

- **Positive impact in identity building:** activities that stimulate creativity and a direct contact with real situations are promoted in order to achieve social transformation with an adequate emotional education that doesn't avoid direct contact with emotions online and offline. Digital literacy: the proposal aims at informing and training gathering the stakeholders of the educational community, especially at an inter-generational and inter-cultural level.

- **Training at school:** change is encouraged in the teaching methods and a
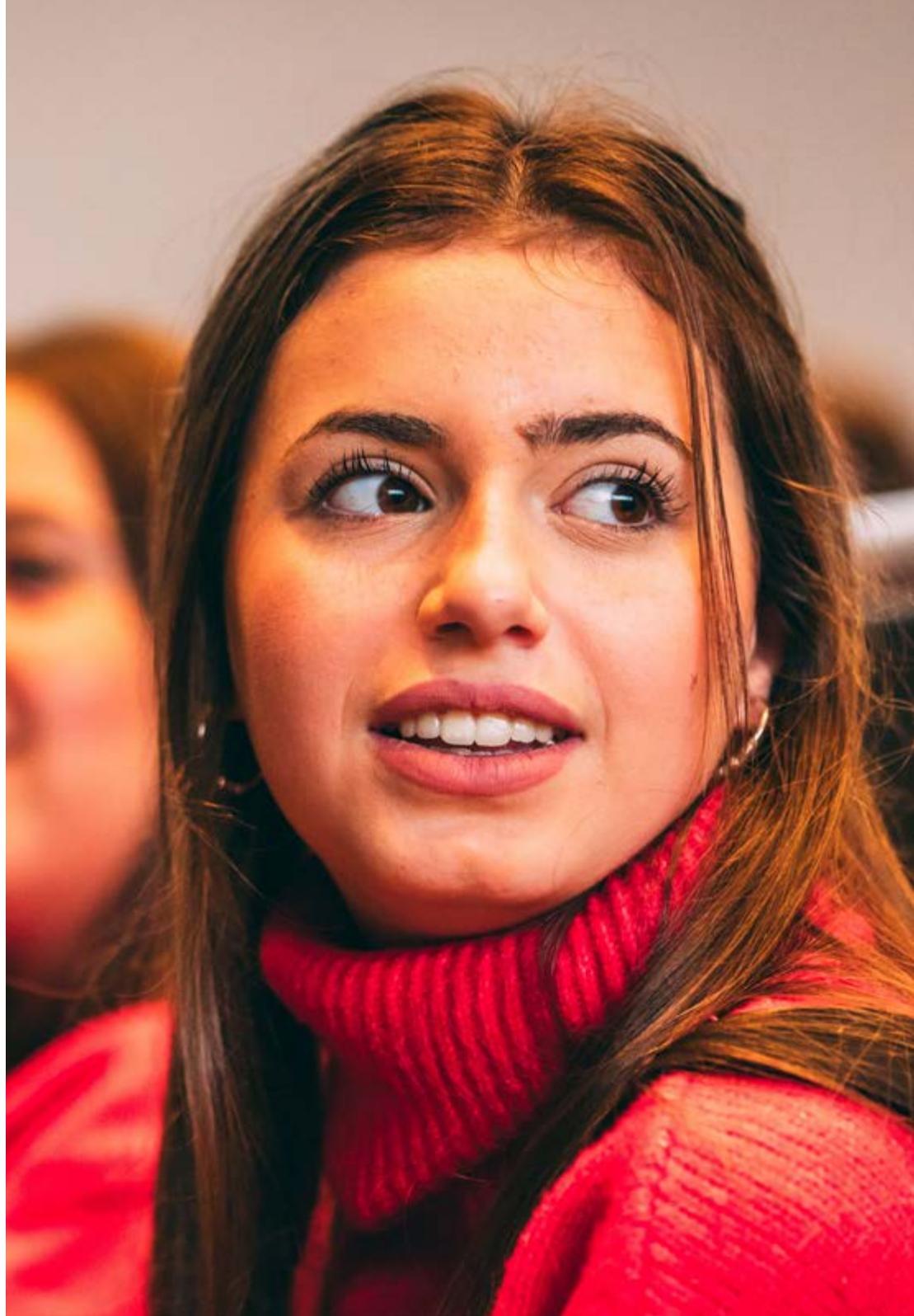
horizontal school organization, promoting a prosocial environment that stimulates the students positively.

- **Context and social environment:** actions of preventions are promoted to acknowledge, know and act to overthrow denial, simplification or ignorance of the population on this phenomenon. Laws of prevention and management of cases are promoted. Formalization of an educational pact among all the stakeholders, as well as promotion of a dialogue between all of them. A healthy digital culture is acknowledged.

- **Digital citizenship:** critical and reflexive thinking on the use of digital tools is promoted. Diverse kinds of virtual suffering are known and acknowledged (cyberbullying, online defamation, bullying, isolation, photo sessions, videoposting, happy slapping, sexting, sextorsion, cybersuicide, revenge porn, etc.) Safe spaces to navigate internet are proposed to enhance the social responsibility sense in the use of the web.

Public data reported in the State of the Art come mainly from 3 international agencies: UNESCO, Microsoft and ITU (International Telecommunication Union).

Most of the available statistics on **relevance of cyberbullying** come from surveys implemented in industrialized countries and lack information in complete regions such as Africa, Middle East and Eastern Europe. The portion of children and teenagers affected by cyberbullying varies from 5% to 21%.

A poll from the United States presents the most alarming proportions. It indicates that 33.8% of respondents reported having been a victim of cyberbullying at some point of his or her life; 16.9% reports having suffered cyberbullying during the last 30 days. Regarding transgressors, 11.5% admitted having cyberbullied at some point to their lives and 6% reported having done it in the last 30 days.

Studies regarding age mostly show that youth suffer a greater risk of cyberviolence than adults and this is because they have higher levels of online interactions and are therefore more exposed to intimidation and

social and academic loss. Even with limited data, evidence suggests that physical aggression and bullying may decrease as age increases, but cyberbullying may rise at the same time. Three national polls from the United States show that the most usual ways of bullying at school, including verbal abuse, theft, threatening, difamation and social isolation, tend to diminish with age and bullying diminishes almost a 50% between 14 and 18 years old, while cyberbullying decreases at a slower pace, from 17% to 13%.

Even though boys are at a higher risk of digital transgression than girls, the latter are more likely to lose confidence online as well as offline and they suffer health problems such as stress and sleep disorders. Girls are also more likely to report being victims of cyberbullying combined with bullying at school. 23% of the youth self-identified as **homosexual** reported suffering cyberbullying and bullying at school, compared with 9% self-identified as **heterosexual.**

Many children and teenagers that report **suffering online** bullying also experience other ways of **bullying at school offline.**

Frequently, the children and teenagers are more vulnerable and need more support when they are **less likely to report incidents or seek help.** Reasons not to tell anyone or to denounce violence and bullying include lack of trust in adults, especially teachers, fear for repercussions or retaliation, guilt, shame or confusion, concern that the situation will not be consider seriously or not knowing where to seek help.

Children and teenagers frequently believe that adults, including teachers, do not see bullying, even though it may happen in front of them. When the perpetrators are the teachers, denouncing violence or abuse is particularly hard.

Educational effects over victims of school violence and bullying are significant. Violence and bullying by teachers and other students may cause that children and teenagers fear going to school as well as affect their capability to focus during classes or participate in school

activities. Consequences include absenteeism to classes, avoid school activities o premature school drop. This also has an impact in academic performance and future scholar and employment expectations. Children and teenagers that suffered bullying are more likely to experience interpersonal difficulties, feelings of depression, loneliness, anxiety, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts or attempts of suicide. School violence and bullying at school also have an **impact in mental and emotional health** of both perpetrators and victims.

Legislation over national security is a key element of the global response to violence and bullying. Laws help to send a clear message to society to condemn violence and are the base of a culture of respect for the rights of children. It is fundamental to ensure the enforcement of the laws that protect children and teenagers of violence and bullying. Lack of legislation and inadequate public policies to implement existing laws is a key challenge.

Some countries, like Italy, England, Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Corea, India, Japan, Philippines, Singapore, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Australia, New Zealand, United States and Canada have specific legislation regarding bullying and intimidation online, while some regions like Africa, Middle East and Eastern Europe lack this kind of legislation.

Based on this first state of art, we can identify some hints for the following research of the Observatory. **Some gaps found:** there is a need to reach a **definition of cyberbullying** that include its 4 features (repetition, harm, intention and imbalance of power) revisited according to the specifics and the current dimension of the phenomenon; to incorporate **research methodologies** other than questionnaires, that focus in descriptive narrative of the issues that youth face in the cyberspace, particularly the election of a relevant method of research with an **approach focused on youth**, meaning an active participation of youth in the research as protagonists and not as object; higher funding for **research in countries of Latin America, Middle East and Africa; assessing the correlation between exposition to violent contents online and offline; the role of those who encourage and spectators;**

deepen research on factors to prevent and protect; online aggression and incentive for cyberbullying; research on academic failure and cyberbullying; **the phenomenon of cyberbullying against teachers;** correlation between teaching methodology and bullying at school; comparative studies on **antisocial and prosocial behavior online**, as well as **correlation between different types of activities (sports, arts, social) and time spent online according to age**; search of good practices in environmental prevention and the **impact of public policies;** emerging challenges of **Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and robotics.**

Internet and social networks extended the concept of sharing and participation. Cyberspace is a network of collective intelligence that grows as everyone participates. Prosocial use of the web is based on the idea that you need to give in order to receive. As in any network, structure is built with the contribution of each part. The network can, given an adequate education, promote attitudes of psychological closeness, empathy, attention, service, solidarity and help. The network grants access to a global stage, including those who are far away, and allows building a more fraternal world. This is the power of the network. We make a call to an educational pact among all the stakeholders so that this vision will not remain a Utopia.

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