

## **Destructive Groups: The Impact on Adolescent Mental Health and Social Integration**

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**Abstract :** This study explores the influence of destructive groups on the mental health and social integration of high school students in Loznica, Serbia. Despite increasing concerns, there is a significant lack of research on the impact of these groups on adolescents in this region. This qualitative study aims to fill this gap by examining the prevalence of destructive groups, their psychological effects on students, and their broader social implications. Data were collected through surveys and in-depth interviews with high school students, educators, and mental health professionals. The study focuses on key mental health indicators, such as anxiety, depression, and identity formation, alongside social factors, including peer relationships and community engagement. Additionally, it defines coping mechanisms and supporting strategies employed by students affected by these groups. The findings reveal substantial psychological and social challenges faced by students exposed to destructive groups, including increased levels of anxiety and depression, disrupted identity development, and impaired social integration. Insights into the personal experiences of these students provide a detailed understanding of the groups' impact, underscoring the need for targeted interventions. This research offers evidence-based recommendations for educators, mental health practitioners, and policymakers. It emphasizes the importance of developing effective educational programs and support services to enhance the well-being of high school advocates for proactive measures to protect adolescent mental health and promote healthy social values within educational and community settings.

**Keywords :** adolescents, mental health, destructive groups, social integration, qualitative study, high school students, Serbia

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