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Exploring co-production of accessible digital mental health tools in collaboration with young people from marginalised backgrounds:

A Scoping Review

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BACKGROUND

Despite evidence that digital mental health supports can improve young people's access to mental health care, guidance on the most appropriate co-production processes for engaging youth in designing and evaluating these technologies is lacking. User input is critical in digital mental health solutions, particularly for marginalised young people who are often excluded from co-production processes.

This study sought to explore the extant literature on co-production processes with marginalised youth in digital mental health supports, ranging from mental health promotion to targeted interventions. A scoping review was chosen to map and summarise the evidence and identify knowledge gaps.

RESULTS

Design (n=8) and overall evaluation of the co-design process (n=5) were the primary study foci, with qualitative (n=10) and mixed methods (n=7) dominating the study designs. Most studies utilised human support with a digital component (n=16), while a small number (n=5) used a digital only approach

Promotion/ primary prevention was the most prominent study focus (n=16) while five studies addressed targeted interventions. Common study areas included mental wellbeing (n=8), coping/resilience and help-seeking (n=3), followed by interventions addressing stress (n=2), depression (n=2) and anxiety (n=2), but also substance abuse, trauma, and suicide.

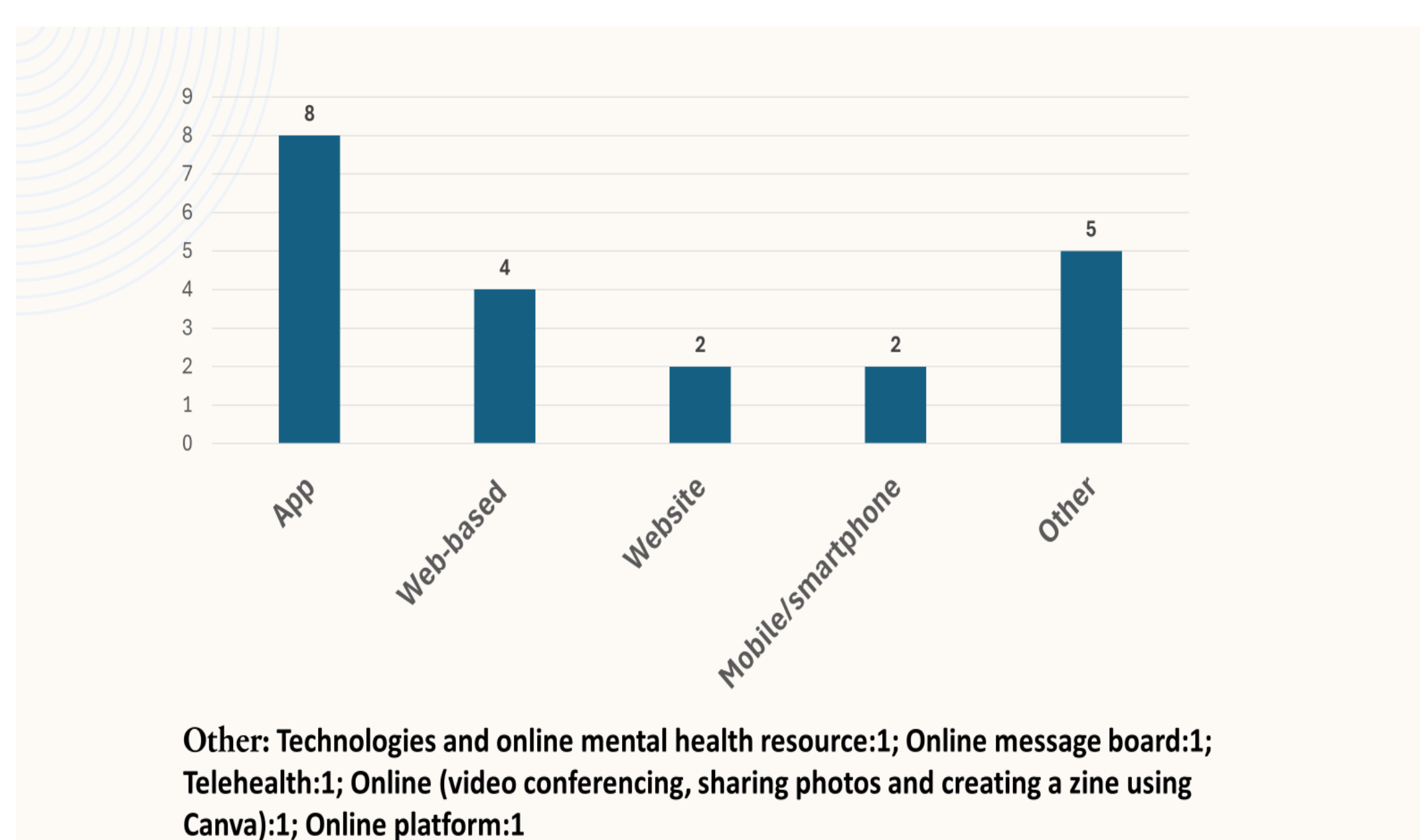


Figure 1: Type of Digital Component or Approach

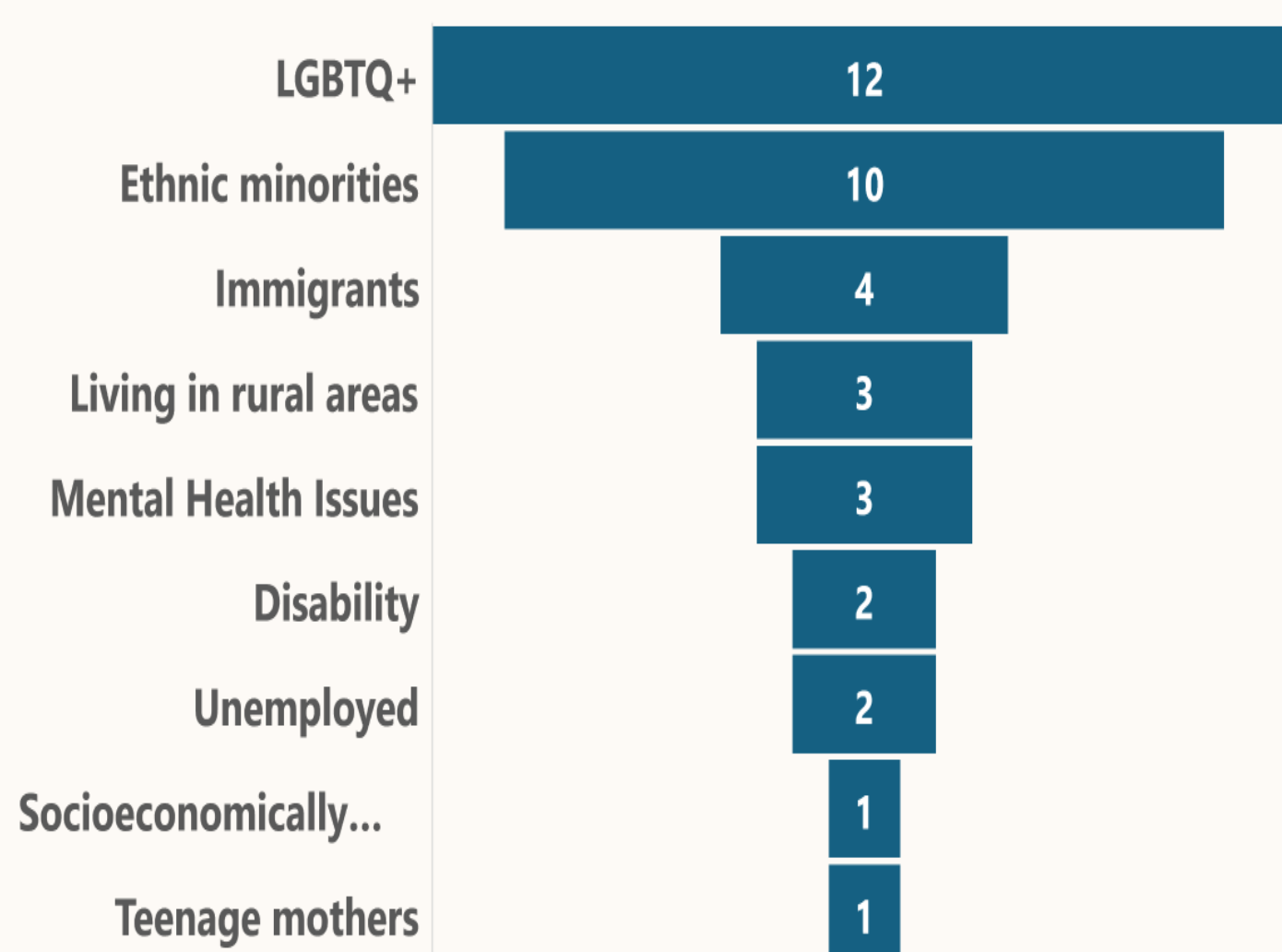


Figure 2: Marginalised Groups included

Eight studies recruited participants through social media, while six recruited through health care settings, schools/universities (n=5) or community partners (n=3).

In terms of marginalised youth, studies mostly comprised LGBTQ+ (n=12) and ethnic minorities (n=11). Sample sizes averaged 745 in quantitative studies to 22 for qualitative studies.

METHODS

A scoping review methodology was used to explore co-production processes with marginalised youth in digital mental health supports.

The search spanned 12 databases, including studies from 2021 onwards, focused on co-production with young people aged 16-25 in different stages of designing and assessing digital mental health technologies, especially those who are marginalised. After the screening process, 21 studies were included in the review



Key takeaways

- **Design and overall evaluation** of co-design processes through **qualitative** or **mixed methods** were most common.
- Many **marginalised groups not included** (e.g. young people with disability, rurally isolated, unemployed/out of education and immigrants).
- **Focus on promotion/primary prevention**, but not much on mental health conditions/targeted interventions

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IMPLICATION

advancing the inclusion of marginalised youth in the co-production of digital mental health supports and ensuring more effective use of digital technologies in youth mental health services

