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**EFFECTIVENESS OF A SCHOOL
PREVENTION STRATEGY
ON RISK BEHAVIOR BY YOUTH – HIGH SCHOOL
IN CZĘSTOCHOWA, POLAND**

A doctoral dissertation written under the scientific supervision
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Abstract

School-based prevention of risky behaviors in adolescents continues to attract the interest of researchers, teachers, and educators. The need for preventive interventions at school has become increasingly relevant due to the increasing prevalence of behavioral disorders in youth. An in-depth analysis of the scientific literature and empirical research on risky behaviors and methods of prevention reveals a considerable interest in these issues. Some preventive interventions seem ineffective and therefore require ongoing modification due to the changing dynamics of risky behaviors in adolescents.

The theoretical aim of the present research was to analyze the educational and preventive interventions used in the schools studied and to verify their effectiveness. The cognitive aim of the research was to explore the risky behaviors observed in youth from secondary schools in Częstochowa, Poland, and to diagnose the preventive interventions undertaken by these entities. The cognitive aim was addressed more specifically by identification of the knowledge adolescents have about risky behaviors, with a particular focus on knowledge about the determinants and consequences of risky behaviors. To verify the effectiveness of preventive interventions, the focus was on the assessment of the effectiveness of the interventions carried out by the teaching staff and the effectiveness of prevention in the opinion of the adolescents studied. The practical aim of the dissertation was to develop, based on the obtained results, the guidelines, and recommendations for the people

implementing school-based prevention strategies (teachers, educators, pedagogues) concerning activities aimed to increase their effectiveness. The research conducted by the Ph.D. candidate and included in the dissertation was aimed at analyzing the needs of schools in terms of prevention of risky behaviors in secondary schools in Częstochowa, Poland, with particular emphasis on the effectiveness of preventive activities.

The submitted dissertation consists of seven chapters. The first and second chapters constitute the theoretical part, which analyzes the literature on risky behaviors and their impact on the psychosocial development of youth and prevention strategies in schools, taking into account the axiological activities for education and prevention. The third chapter discusses the methodological basis of the research and presents the aim of the dissertation, research problems and hypotheses, variables and indicators, and research methods, techniques, and tools. The fourth chapter provides information on the dynamics of risky behaviors occurring among secondary school students in Częstochowa. The prevalence, student knowledge, and determinants of risky behaviors were analyzed. The chapter presents the research on the effect of gender, age, place of residence, and family structure of the adolescents studied on the type and prevalence of risk behaviors. The fifth chapter contains empirical material on school-based strategies for the prevention of risky behaviors and their effectiveness as observed in the schools studied. The analysis included the legal and organizational basis of prevention, the diagnosis of students' needs, the education, and prevention programs in the schools, and the level of teaching educational and preventive content by teachers, educators, and other professionals. The sixth chapter deals with content related to the effectiveness of preventive activities as perceived by teachers and school educators. The analysis concerned determinants of the effectiveness of preventive activities in the opinion of teachers and educators, evaluation of school-based education and prevention programs, and statistical analysis of the effectiveness of the implementation of prevention strategies depending on age, experience, and job seniority of teachers. The seventh chapter contains material on the effectiveness of preventive activities carried out in the institutions studied in the opinion of adolescents. Students' knowledge of prevention strategies implemented in the schools studied was analyzed. Furthermore, students' expectations of preventive activities and the assessment of the effectiveness of prevention strategies were verified. The dissertation ends with the contents concerning hypothesis verification and conclusions of the research. The dissertation also provides recommendations for revisions and improvements in strategies for the prevention of risky behaviors conducted in secondary schools.