

Article

Family and Youth Formative Communities as Protective Factors Against Addictions Among Adolescents in Poland: A Structured Narrative Review

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Abstract

The article examines the protective role of the family and youth formative communities against substance and behavioral addictions in adolescence. Its aim is to synthesize knowledge of risk and protective factors and to indicate how family and community environments can lower the likelihood of risky behaviors. The first part of the paper presents a multifactorial paradigm for explaining young people's use of psychoactive substances, drawing on data about the situation in Poland. The second part explores the social significance of the family and participation in formative groups, especially religious ones, by referring to the concepts of social capital, normative socialization, and communal rootedness. The third part depicts Scouting and the Light-Life Movement as examples of educational settings that promote a lifestyle grounded in self-discipline, abstinence, and communal responsibility. Overall, the conducted analyses conclude that the protective potential of these environments is not automatic but depends on the quality of relationships, the presence of significant adults, the credibility of norms, and the communities' capacity to respond to young people's experiences amid ongoing secularization and cultural individualization.

Keywords: adolescence; addictions; protective factors; family; formative groups; religiosity; social capital; prevention

1. Introduction

Substance use and behavioral addictions remain important public-health concerns during adolescence, a developmental period marked by increased susceptibility to experimentation, peer influence, and risk-taking. Recent international data confirm the continuing relevance of this problem: the WHO/Europe HBSC report indicates that more than half of 15-year-olds surveyed had experimented with alcohol, while one in five had recently used e-cigarettes (Charrier et al. 2024). ESPAD 2024 findings also show that alcohol, nicotine products, cannabis, and other risky behaviors remain significant issues among European adolescents. In Poland, ESPAD data similarly indicate that alcohol remains the most widely used psychoactive substance among students, while exposure to alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and behavioral risks increases across adolescence (Sierosławski and Sierosławska 2025). This stage involves intense biological, cognitive, and psychosocial change and also brings greater susceptibility to peer influence, experimentation, and testing the limits of



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The article aims to present the family and formative communities as potentially complementary protective factors against addiction in young people. It posits that effective prevention goes beyond limiting the access to substances or issuing prohibitions; instead, it requires building relational environments where young people experience attachment, support, social accountability, meaning, and alternative models of social participation (Borowski 2014).

The text is analytical, synthetic, and review-oriented. It combines a structured narrative review of selected literature with critical analysis and synthesis of the main theoretical and empirical findings. The analytical dimension consists of identifying and interpreting key protective mechanisms described in the literature, while the synthetic dimension consists of integrating these findings into a coherent framework that presents the family and youth formative communities as complementary environments of addiction prevention. It starts by discussing risk and protective factors related to youth addictions, then investigates the social role of the family and participation in formative groups, with particular attention to religious communities. Finally, it presents Scouting and the Light-Life Movement as examples of educational environments that can strengthen attitudes of sobriety and self-control (cf. Jabłońska-Karczmarczyk 2012).

The research gap addressed in this article concerns the insufficient integration of family-based and community-based perspectives in analyses of adolescent addiction prevention in Poland. This article therefore seeks to synthesize these perspectives and to show how family and youth formative communities may jointly contribute to addiction prevention in the specific cultural and social context of contemporary Poland.

2. Youth and Addictions: Risk and Protective Factors

The phenomenon of psychoactive substance use among young people should be interpreted through a multifactorial paradigm. Research indicates that risky behaviors rarely stem from a single cause; instead, they result from the interaction of individual, relational, and social factors. Key risk drivers include impulsivity, sensation seeking, reduced self-control, difficulties regulating emotions, depressive symptoms, behavior problems, and a low perception of the risks associated with substance use (Mazur et al. 2016; Pisarska et al. 2019).

Increasingly, researchers pay attention not only to risk factors but also to protective resources. The literature identifies the most important protective factors as stable family relationships, parental support and monitoring, school achievements, self-regulation skills, constructive peer relationships, rootedness in the local community, and religiosity when it provides tangible social support and normative socialization (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Bobrowski 2008; Belintxon et al. 2020; Nawi et al. 2021). The family environment occupies the central role. Its protective function goes beyond behavioral control and includes the quality of communication, predictable boundaries, emotional closeness, and the sense that the young person is a valued participant in family life. The combination of support and normative consistency increases the likelihood of engaging in constructive activities while reducing the risk of psychoactive substance use (cf. Szczukiewicz 1998).

Current data from Poland confirm the scale of the problem. According to the ESPAD 2024 report, alcohol remains the most widely used psychoactive substance among students, and rates of exposure to alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco increase as adolescents move from early to later adolescence (Sierosławski and Sierosławska 2025). Data on behavioral addictions, including gambling, further show that addictive behaviors cannot be reduced solely to alcohol, nicotine, and drugs (Cekiera 2001; Chwaszcz et al. 2018).

Given this evidence, family and youth communities should be regarded not as separate spheres of influence but as complementary elements of a protective system: the family provides primary experiences of attachment and regulation, while community groups expand opportunities for identification, offer alternative life models, and strengthen social competencies (cf. Tokarska 2015). Although the literature identifies a wide range of protective factors, including individual self-regulation, school achievement, constructive peer relationships, community rootedness, and religiosity, this article focuses specifically on two relational environments: the family and youth formative communities. This focus does not imply that other protective factors are irrelevant. Rather, the family and formative communities are treated here as socialization contexts in which several protective mechanisms may operate simultaneously. In the family, these mechanisms include attachment, emotional support, parental monitoring, communication, and normative consistency. In formative communities, they include peer belonging, relationships with significant adults, shared norms, social capital, meaningful participation, and opportunities to practice responsibility. For this reason, the article examines the family and youth formative communities as complementary environments in which individual, relational, and normative protective resources may be strengthened.

3. Methodology

This article adopts the form of a structured narrative and critical literature review. Its purpose is not to conduct a meta-analysis or a full systematic review in the strict PRISMA sense, but to synthesize and interpret selected empirical, theoretical, and pastoral literature concerning the protective role of the family and youth formative communities in the prevention of substance and behavioral addictions among adolescents in Poland.

In response to the methodological requirements associated with review-based studies, the literature search and selection process was organized in a transparent manner, drawing on selected elements of the PRISMA 2020 approach. The review was guided by the following research questions:

1. What family-related factors are identified in the literature as protective against substance and behavioral addictions among adolescents?
2. What role can youth formative communities, including religious and educational groups, play in strengthening protective factors against addictions?
3. Under what relational, normative, and social conditions may the family and formative communities function as complementary environments of prevention?

Although the article concerns prevention and protective factors, the study does not apply the PICO framework in a narrow clinical sense, since the subject is not an intervention study and does not compare the effectiveness of specific therapeutic or medical interventions. Instead, the review uses an adapted PICO framework, more appropriate for qualitative, social, and interpretive studies. The literature search included Polish- and English-language publications related to adolescent addiction prevention, family protective factors, religious socialization, youth communities, Scouting, and the Light-Life Movement. The main sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, book chapters, reports, and selected institutional publications relevant to the Polish context. Particular attention was given to empirical studies, systematic reviews, national reports, and works

directly addressing the relationship between family, community participation, religiosity, and youth risk behaviors.

The literature search was conducted in January–May 2026 using selected academic databases and search platforms, including PubMed/PMC, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, BazHum, CEJSH/CEEOL, and relevant Polish institutional reports. Searches were conducted in English and Polish using combinations of the following terms: “adolescents,” “youth,” “addiction,” “substance use,” “behavioral addictions,” “risk and protective factors,” “family protective factors,” “parental monitoring,” “family communication,” “religiosity and substance use,” “religious socialization,” “youth formative communities,” “social capital,” “Scouting,” “Harcerstwo,” “Light-Life Movement,” and “Ruch Światło-Życie.” The search was supplemented by snowballing, that is, by examining the reference lists of key publications in order to identify additional relevant sources.

Since the article adopts the form of a structured narrative and critical review rather than a full systematic review or meta-analysis, the search was aimed at identifying the most relevant empirical, theoretical, and contextual sources rather than exhaustively mapping all available publications. In the case of Google Scholar, the screening was limited to the most relevant records returned by the search engine. The selection process involved removing duplicates, excluding publications outside the thematic, age-related, contextual, or analytical scope of the article, and retaining sources that contributed substantially to the analysis of family, religiosity, youth formative communities, and addiction prevention in the Polish context.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: publications addressing adolescents or young people; studies or theoretical works concerning addictions, risky behaviors, prevention, or protective factors; publications discussing the family, religiosity, youth communities, social capital, Scouting, or the Light-Life Movement as possible contexts of prevention or formation; sources relevant to the Polish social, cultural, educational, or religious context, supplemented by international literature where appropriate; and publications offering empirical data, theoretical interpretation, or significant conceptual value for the topic of the article.

The exclusion criteria were as follows: publications focused exclusively on adult addiction without reference to adolescence or youth development; clinical or medical studies that did not address social, family, educational, or community-related factors; opinion texts without academic or analytical value; publications unrelated to prevention, protective factors, or formative environments; and duplicate or marginally relevant sources.

The selected literature was analyzed thematically. The analysis focused on identifying recurring categories relevant to the article’s main problem: family bonds, parental support and monitoring, communication, normative consistency, social capital, religiosity, intergenerational relationships, peer belonging, self-discipline, abstinence, and communal responsibility. These categories were then synthesized into three analytical areas: the family as the primary protective environment, youth formative communities as complementary spaces of socialization, and Scouting and the Light-Life Movement as concrete examples of formative environments promoting sobriety, responsibility, and resilience.

4. Family as the Primary Protective Environment

The family remains the first and most enduring setting for socialization, where adolescents learn emotional regulation, how to recognize boundaries, and how to cope with tension and frustration. From the perspective of addiction prevention, the family’s role extends across everyday interactions: the quality of bonds, the predictability of norms, communication style, emotional support, and the degree of parental interest in the young person’s life. The literature consistently shows that a family’s protective potential is highest

when closeness is combined with clear expectations and appropriate monitoring (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Bobrowski 2008; Kielar-Turska and Duplaga 2020; Nawi et al. 2021).

Polish studies emphasize the particular importance of family communication. Findings indicate that ease of conversation with parents, a felt sense of support, and strong family relationships are associated with lower levels of risky behavior and better adolescent health outcomes (Tabak 2008). Everyday shared practices, such as regular family meals, further reinforce bonds, predictability, and security, and thus indirectly reduce vulnerability to problem behaviors. In this way, families protect not only through prohibitions or sanctions but by creating environments in which young people feel noticed, heard, and jointly responsible. The protective role of the family should also be understood in developmental and relational terms. During adolescence, the family remains an important space in which young people learn how to interpret emotions, cope with frustration, negotiate autonomy, and distinguish between freedom and harmful forms of dependence. Parental monitoring is most effective when it is embedded in a relationship of trust and emotional availability, rather than reduced to external control. Similarly, family norms have greater preventive value when they are communicated consistently, modeled by adults, and connected with the adolescent's sense of dignity, responsibility, and belonging. Everyday family practices, such as shared conversations, meals, responsibilities, rituals, and the presence of adults attentive to changes in the young person's behavior, may strengthen predictability and security. In this sense, the family protects not only by limiting access to risky behaviors, but also by offering emotional stability, meaningful bonds, and a credible normative framework.

The English-language literature reaches similar conclusions. Studies find that family cohesion, attachment to parents, and appropriate behavioral monitoring lower the risk of problematic substance use and can lessen the negative consequences of earlier alcohol or drug experiences (Kopak et al. 2012). Research on so-called family assets links parental warmth and monitoring with greater youth participation in constructive activities and lower psychoactive substance use (Belintxon et al. 2020). More recent longitudinal studies also confirm that parental support and engagement reduce the likelihood of substance initiation at developmentally sensitive moments, such as the transition from primary to secondary school (Fisher et al. 2025).

At the same time, simplifications should be avoided. A family's protective effect does not follow automatically from the mere presence of parents or the household's formal integrity. Studies show that relationship quality, consistency in parenting, modeled behavior, and the absence of violence, chaos, or adult substance misuse matter more than family structure alone (Mazur et al. 2016; Skowrońska-Pućka 2024). In practice, a family becomes a genuine protective factor when it simultaneously offers connection, norms, presence, and support. For this reason, the family should not be treated as mere backdrop for formative communities but as the fundamental level of protection that those communities can complement and strengthen.

5. Participation of Youth in Formative Groups—Social Dimension

Youth participation in formative groups can be understood through the lenses of social capital, normative socialization, and community rootedness. From this perspective, a formative group is more than a space for religious or ideological practice; it is an environment where young people develop relational skills, receive recognition, learn cooperation, and internalize norms that discourage self-destructive behavior. In this article, social capital is understood as the set of relational resources available to young people through durable networks of family, peer, intergenerational, and community ties. This understanding draws partly on Bourdieu's view of social capital as resources linked to membership in a durable network, but it is also used in a broader sociological sense, referring to trust, reciprocity, sup-

port, shared norms, and access to meaningful relationships within a community. Normative socialization, in turn, refers to the process through which adolescents internalize values, expectations, behavioral models, and moral boundaries through repeated participation in family and community practices (Pekala 2025).

Research indicates that religiosity can protect against psychoactive substance use, especially when it is tied to a future orientation, social support, and genuine community embedding (Holmes and Kim-Spoon 2017). Thus, the value of religious communities lies not merely in professed beliefs but in participation in relationships and practices that create networks of reciprocity, social control, and support.

The literature further emphasizes that religious and formative organizations foster intergenerational ties, connect youth with caring adults outside the family, and broaden access to developmental resources (Radu and Angi 2023). From the addiction-prevention standpoint, this matters because the number and quality of protective relationships affect young people's ability to manage crises without resorting to addictive behaviors.

Formative groups can also offer an alternative to socialization models centered mainly on consumption, entertainment, and superficial forms of affiliation. Their potential does not lie in prohibitions alone but in proposing a competing model of social participation that provides meaning, belonging, and agency (Derewenda 2018). This potential, however, is not automatic: its effectiveness depends on the quality of relationships within the group, the credibility of leaders, genuine youth agency, and the group's ability to combine normative expectations with experiences of acceptance and personal development. Analytically, the crucial factor is therefore not mere membership but the type of communal experience the group cultivates.

In the Polish context, secularization processes stress the importance of this issue. CBOS data and the Youth 2021 report document a marked decline in institutional religiosity and religious practice among younger cohorts, alongside low formal affiliation with religious organizations. As a result, religious communities are no longer mass phenomena. Precisely for that reason, however, they can function as chosen environments with high integrative potential—provided they respond to young people's lived experiences (Grabowska 2021; Boguszewski 2022; Feliksiak and Omyła-Rudzka 2022; Zellma et al. 2022).

6. Faith-Based and Value-Oriented Formative Communities: Two Polish Examples

The two examples discussed below are selected because they represent Polish formative communities in which religious, moral, and value-oriented education play an important role. The Light-Life Movement is explicitly a Catholic faith-based organization, while Scouting in Poland has historically combined civic, moral, spiritual, and in many contexts Christian-inspired formation. For this reason, the case studies should be read primarily as examples of faith-based or value-oriented formative environments rather than as a representative overview of all possible youth organizations in Poland.

The argument for the protective role of formative communities becomes more compelling when grounded in concrete educational models. In Poland, Scouting and the Light-Life Movement are particularly noteworthy. Though they differ in origin and religious profile, both share an integrated approach to education, emphasize self-discipline and small-group work, foster relationships with experienced leaders, and promote lifestyles free from addiction. These examples are not presented as empirical proof that participation in Scouting or the Light-Life Movement directly reduces addiction risk. Rather, they serve as illustrative cases of formative environments in which mechanisms identified in the literature—belonging, adult mentorship, shared norms, structured activity, self-discipline, and responsibility—may be observed in a concrete Polish context.

6.1. Scouting as Environment of Self-Discipline and Communal Responsibility

Scouting was founded in England in 1909 at the initiative of General [Baden-Powell \(2014\)](#), with the goal of developing individual capacities as fully and harmoniously as possible for life in and service to the society. Initially aimed at boys (and later expanded to include girls), Scouting offered an alternative to the educational systems of its time, emphasizing adventure, contact with nature, upbringing in harmony with the natural world, and play ([Giczela 2023](#)). Scouting began as an organization explicitly focused on courageous upbringing of youth, preparing them for service to God and Country, but as the author himself writes in *Scouting for Boys* ([Baden-Powell 2014](#)), it also stressed readiness to serve one another, personal responsibility, self-care, the ability to cope in difficult field conditions, and respect for higher values. Built on these values and principles, the movement developed rapidly and Baden-Powell's model spread worldwide.

Scouting reached Poland in 1911 through Andrzej Małkowski ([Hajduk 2015](#)). The Polish variety differed not only in its independence-related aims but also in its emphasis on a new style of life free from servitude. Moral requirements, including abstinence from nicotine and alcohol, were strictly observed and became central to the movement's ethos. The Scout Law for example, declares that a scout is pure in thought, speech, and action, does not smoke or drink, thinks before speaking, and cares for the purity and beauty of language. A scout cares for their health, resists addictions, rejects drugs, and helps others overcome dependencies. Abstinence is presented as part of caring for one's health, strengthening the spirit, and mastering personal weaknesses; matters of sexuality are taught to be treated seriously and responsibly ([Palamer-Kabacińska 2021](#)).

Scouting's appeal lies in the opportunity to belong to a group that provides peer acceptance, friendship, and a defined social position with associated duties and privileges. This process is accompanied by the development of moral values that form within the community. Attitudes that undermine bonds among individuals and disrupt the group are rejected. Collective upbringing in a team prepares young people for life in the family, society, and nation ([Marszałek 2022](#)).

The core aim of the Scout educational system is to stimulate the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual development of girls and boys. In the physical domain, the program emphasizes ongoing care for health and fitness through sport, good hygiene, resisting and combating addictions, and overcoming personal weaknesses and fears—all aimed at maintaining balance between body and spirit. In the intellectual domain, key elements include acquiring knowledge, developing and refining thinking skills, pursuing self-education, making informed choices, understanding the surrounding world, fostering a creative outlook, discovering and honing personal talents, and awakening curiosity, imagination, and sensitivity. In the social domain, emphasis is placed on building respect for others, their dignity, freedom, and beliefs, and developing the skills required to live in a community grounded in dialogue and a commitment to solidarity. Social development also prepares young people for responsible participation in family and civic life, realized through building brotherhood and friendship, serving others, fostering civic attitudes, and engaging with culture.

Spiritual development is expressed in a continual striving for deeper understanding and in an increasing orientation of life around a defined system of values. Love, hope, truth, goodness, freedom, justice, tolerance, and friendship constitute the scout value system, which is grounded in Christian principles. Spiritual growth is achieved by fulfilling obligations to oneself and others and by orienting one's life toward what lies beyond the immediately perceived world.

Scouting advances these goals through patrol and troop work, earning skills and ranks, shared trips and camps that provide opportunities to test oneself and learn responsibility.

Organizing free time and upholding high ethical and moral standards, including expectations of abstinence, create opportunities to strengthen self-discipline, build confidence in one's abilities, and foster personal maturity. As young people broaden their experiences and become more resourceful, they gain satisfaction from engagement in social and religious life, which in turn reduces the risk of turning to psychoactive substances.

The effectiveness of the Scouting educational method rests on a model figure, a patrol leader or instructor. This person is usually neither a commander nor a teacher, but is treated like an older brother who, by example, shows how to live Scouting values and demonstrates that following the Scout Law and practicing abstinence can be a source of joy and optimism (Sikorski 2001).

From an addiction-prevention perspective, it matters that Scouting ties abstinence norms to everyday communal practice: outdoor activity, service, and learning responsibility. Scouting's protective potential does not arise solely from the formal provisions of the Scout Law, but from the entire system of influences: working in patrols and troops, earning proficiency badges, shared trips and camps, and the presence of a leader who serves as a credible role model. In this sense, abstinence is not merely a negative norm but part of a wider formative project that includes self-control, care for one's health, responsibility for others, and the willingness to take on effort. Seen this way, Scouting builds a community that strengthens resilience. It offers young people belonging, peer recognition, structured activity, and clear expectations, resources that the literature often associates with a lower likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors (Palamer-Kabacińska 2021).

6.2. *Light-Life Movement as a Model of Religious Formation Toward Freedom*

The Light-Life Movement is largely organized around small groups. Its founder, Fr. Franciszek Blachnicki, adopted a system of integral education from Scouting: older peers caring for younger ones, the concept of small groups led by an animator, encouragement of youth activity, contact with nature, rites and ceremonies, and the idea of service to others (Kowalski 2002). Blachnicki (1986) proposed a personalist model of youth education aimed at integration and human maturity. At the First National Congress of Leaders of the Movement (Poland) in 1973, the Movement's basic tasks were defined: to form a new human being, free from any form of enslavement, who strives daily to live out the Gospel and thereby grows toward Christian maturity. This maturity is understood as a holistic reality that includes a person's relationship with God.

Formation in the Movement involves participation in weekly meetings in small groups as well as 15-day retreats during the summer holidays called oases. In response to Pope John Paul II's call to Poles to "oppose everything that degrades human dignity" (see: Blachnicki 1999, p. 37), the Crusade for the Liberation of Man (CLM) was established within the Movement in 1979. The CLM is an action program that seeks to overcome what threatens human dignity and corrodes healthy social customs. It promotes a lifestyle grounded in truth, love, and freedom as a way to resist addictions that undermine a person and prevent them from realizing their developmental potential.

Members of the CLM contribute to shaping new social practices by undertaking abstinence (temporary or total) from all forms of alcoholic beverages, thereby resisting the social pressure to drink. They promote celebrating family and social events without alcohol, which fosters the experience of freedom, helps free individuals from fear and a widespread pressure to consume alcohol (Abstynenckie "Credo" Krucjaty Wyzwolenia Człowieka 1999). Total abstinence functions as a preventive measure, especially for children and adolescents who often struggle to resist peer pressure. Abstinence contributes to forming people capable of sacrifice, cultivates responsibility for oneself and others, and is especially important during adolescence, when the shift from guided upbringing to self-formation takes place (see:

Abstynenckie “Credo” Krucjaty Wyzwolenia Człowieka 1999; Kowalski 2002). From the perspective of addiction prevention, it is crucial that the Movement goes beyond doctrinal instruction and cultivates a lived lifestyle practiced within the community. As emphasized, the CLM has particular preventive significance, particularly during adolescence, when young people are highly susceptible to peer pressure and are only beginning to learn self-direction (Szczukiewicz 1998). The protective potential of the Light-Life Movement stems from the combination of several elements: intense communal experience, presence of significant adults and older peers, coherent language of values, and practices that give abstinence a positive, meaningful role rather than a purely prohibitive one. As a result, the community can strengthen both normative behavioral control and internal motivation to pursue health-promoting actions (Blachnicki 1999).

7. Discussion

The presented analyses propose that preventing addiction during adolescence requires a multi-level approach that considers the young person’s individual resources and the quality of their family relationships, as well as their immediate environments. Family and youth formative communities should not be treated as competing spheres of influence but as complementary socialization settings that can reinforce each other’s protective potential (Ługowska 2008). The family remains the primary site for forming bonds, norms, and styles of emotional regulation, while formative communities expand opportunities for social identification, offer alternative models of participation, and build peer-intergenerational support networks (Borowski 2014).

The literature makes clear that the family’s protective role goes beyond simply controlling adolescent behavior. Far more significant are the quality of relationships, consistent communication, predictable boundaries, and the emotional availability of parents. In other words, a family’s effectiveness as a protective factor depends less on its formal structure than on its capacity to create an environment where the young person simultaneously experiences support, recognition, and clear normative guidance. This point matters in research on religion and upbringing because it cautions against reducing the family’s protective value to declared religiosity or institutional affiliation alone (Koprowicz et al. 2018).

The analyses also show that the protective potential of formative communities does not automatically follow from mere participation in a religious or educational organization. Rather, their safeguarding role depends on the quality of relationships within the group, the presence of credible adult leaders, meaningful participation of young people in community life, and the community’s capacity to offer socially attractive, meaningful alternatives to hedonistic and consumerist models. A community therefore protects not by simply issuing prohibitions, but by providing young people with experiences of belonging, responsibility, meaning, and purpose. This matters for addiction prevention because risky behaviors often emerge not only where norms are absent but also where bonds are weakened, a sense of agency is low, and resources for coping with stress are limited (Ciepliński 2010; Dakowicz 2012).

At this point, the specific nature of religious formative groups becomes important. Their role should not be reduced to doctrinal transmission or behavioral discipline. The studies cited in this article suggest it is more accurate to regard them as environments of social capital where a young person gains access to relationships, norms, practices, and narratives that support integral development. From this perspective, religiosity can be protective not as a mere declared worldview alone but as part of a broader socialization process that strengthens future orientation, self-regulation, moral reflection, and rootedness in community (Dudziak 2014).

At the same time, the subject literature urges that we consider the protective potential of family and formative communities in the context of cultural change. Secularization

processes, growing individualization of life courses, and declining youth participation in religious organizations mean that formative environments are losing their status as obvious, ubiquitous reference points. That does not necessarily reduce their importance. On the contrary, one can argue that as institutional forms of religiosity weaken, formative communities become more selective but also more intense in their influence. Their contemporary significance lies less in mass reach and more in their capacity to create enduring, meaningful relationships and chosen environments where young people can develop a coherent identity (Szczukiewicz 1998).

It is also worth noting that the presented analyses are synthetic and review-based, rather than empirical. Consequently, the article does not support causal claims linking belonging to families of particular characteristics or engagement in formative communities to levels of addiction risk. The literature points instead to an interdependent set of factors that may strengthen or weaken one another depending on social, cultural, and biographical context. For this reason, the role of religiosity and communality should be interpreted cautiously: not as universal, automatic protective measures but as resources whose significance is revealed under specific relational and institutional conditions (cf. Polkowski and Włodarczyk-Kaziród 2025).

To advance understanding in this area, future research should prioritize methodological plurality and comparative designs. Mixed-methods designs that combine quantitative and qualitative approaches would be particularly beneficial. Quantitative studies could better capture associations between the quality of family relationships, community participation, and the frequency of risky behaviors, while qualitative perspective would help explain how young people themselves interpret their experiences of family, religion, community, and abstinence. In addition, comparing religious and nonreligious formative groups would further clarify which elements are uniquely religious and which stem more broadly from the quality of communal ties and support structures.

8. Conclusions

The literature review suggests that the family remains the primary protective environment against addiction during adolescence. This role is grounded chiefly in the quality of bonds, coherence of norms, communication, emotional support, and parental monitoring. These factors do not eliminate the risk of problematic behavior entirely, but they significantly reduce the likelihood of initiating and consolidating behaviors related to psychoactive substance use and other compulsive behaviors.

A second key finding is that youth formative communities can play a significant complementary role to the family. Their protective potential derives from their ability to create environments of belonging and responsibility, fostering relationships with peers and significant adults, and offering alternative ways to spend time and build identity. Particularly valuable are those communities that pair an axiological dimension with real experiences of acceptance, shared participation, and personal growth.

Third, protection against addiction cannot be reduced to prohibition or control. Both family and formative communities are most effective when they nurture the development of self-regulation, future orientation, a sense of meaning, and the capacity to form lasting relationships. In this respect, addiction prevention is not merely a set of preventive measures but a part of a broader educational process toward maturity.

Fourth, contemporary cultural changes, especially secularization and the deinstitutionalization of religion, alter the conditions in which formative communities operate, but do not nullify their importance. In Poland these environments currently reach smaller groups than in past decades, yet they can retain strong qualitative significance as spaces of intensive socialization and value transmission. Their impact appears greater when they

respond to the real experiences of young people rather than relying solely on models of inherited religiosity (cf. Kotlińska et al. 2026). In the Polish context, it is important to distinguish between cultural identity, religious affiliation, and lived religiosity. Although Polish national culture has historically been strongly connected with Catholicism, these dimensions should not be treated as identical. Cultural identity may provide young people with a sense of continuity, belonging, and symbolic rootedness, even when it is not accompanied by regular religious practice. Religious affiliation, in turn, may indicate formal or inherited belonging to a religious tradition, but does not automatically translate into protective influence. Lived religiosity becomes relevant for addiction prevention when it is connected with meaningful relationships, participation in community practices, internalized values, and credible models of responsibility and self-control. This distinction is especially important in the context of secularization, where young people may still draw on cultural or moral resources shaped by religious tradition while remaining distant from institutional forms of religion. Therefore, the protective role of religion in Poland should be analyzed not as a homogeneous cultural fact, but as a differentiated set of identity, relational, and normative resources.

Finally, the most promising model of adolescent addiction prevention rests on coordinated action across multiple protective environments rather than isolated interventions. The family provides the foundations of bonds and norms, while formative communities develop, strengthen, and extend those foundations. Integrating these two spheres increases the chances of fostering sobriety, responsibility, and resilience in young people facing pressures to engage in risky behaviors.

9. Limitations

The article has several limitations. It does not present original empirical data and does not observe behavioral changes among adolescents participating in family- or community-based formative environments. Therefore, it cannot determine causal relationships between family characteristics, community participation, and the level of addiction risk. Since this is a structured narrative and critical review rather than a full systematic review or meta-analysis, it does not provide statistical aggregation of results. Its aim is more limited: to synthesize and interpret existing literature in order to identify possible protective mechanisms and formulate an analytical framework for future empirical research. Future studies should verify these mechanisms through longitudinal, comparative, or mixed-methods designs, including comparison groups of adolescents participating and not participating in formative communities, as well as quantitative indicators of risky behaviors and qualitative data on young people's lived experiences of family, religion, community, and abstinence.

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