

DO PARENTS-CHILD PROCESSES MEDIATE THE ROLE OF SELF-ESTEEM ON HEALTH RISKY BEHAVIOURS AMONG YOUNG SLOVAK ADOLESCENTS?

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1 Background

Many studies from the past decade have focused on the role of self-esteem in relation to health-related behavior, whether it is a health enhancing or health-endangering behavior. Additionally, self-esteem has been shown to be associated with initiation and continuation of the use of tobacco and cannabis¹.

The role of self-esteem in alcohol use among adolescents is not clear. On one hand, it is known that positive self-esteem may function as a buffer against deviant behaviour by facilitating better psychological adjustment². On the other hand, here are some inconsistent results from studies showing both abstainers and high/ excessive users having higher levels of self-esteem³. However, self-esteem should be seen not only as a single factor but also in the framework of a multidimensional theory, considering its connection with other factors as well. Positive self-esteem could be seen as an essential feature of mental health and also as a protective factor in the field of health and social behavior. In contrast, negative self-esteem could play an important role in the development of a range of mental disorders and social problems, such as depression, anxiety, violence, high risk behaviors and substance use⁴.

Undoubtedly, family is one of the most significant contexts that determine the development of children and adolescents. Such construct as a values, norms and attitudes are formed in the family environment and may further shape the basics of behavior. Many studies⁵ have found that living in a single-parent family or families where one of the parent is not active on parenting processes increases the risk of adolescent cigarette and alcohol use.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore whether parental processes mediate the effect of self-esteem on risky behaviour.

2 Sample and methods

Participants were recruited from the national project VEGA focused on parental processes in context of health risky behaviour of adolescents. This analyses is based on data from 581 (51.1% males; mean age = 13.5; SD = 0.65) students from 12 basic school from Slovakia.

Self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale RSES (Rosenberg, 1965). The 10 items of the RSES assess a person's overall evaluation of his/her worthiness as a human being (Rosenberg, 1979). Responses range on a 4-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Global self-esteem factor can then be calculated, with the sum score ranging from 10 to 40. A higher score indicates higher self-esteem. Cronbach's alpha for global self-esteem was 0.76.

Regarding **parental processes** (child disclosure – 5 items, parental solicitation – 5 items, parental knowledge – 7 items, parental monitoring – 5 items) respondents were asked (using 5 point scale) how they perceived the parenting processes from parents. The higher score indicates the higher level of parental process. Cronbach's alpha for parental processes varied from 0.51 to 0.61.

Regarding **alcohol use** students were asked: (1) if they used alcohol during last 30 days (no / yes); 2 if they have been ever drunk (yes/no).

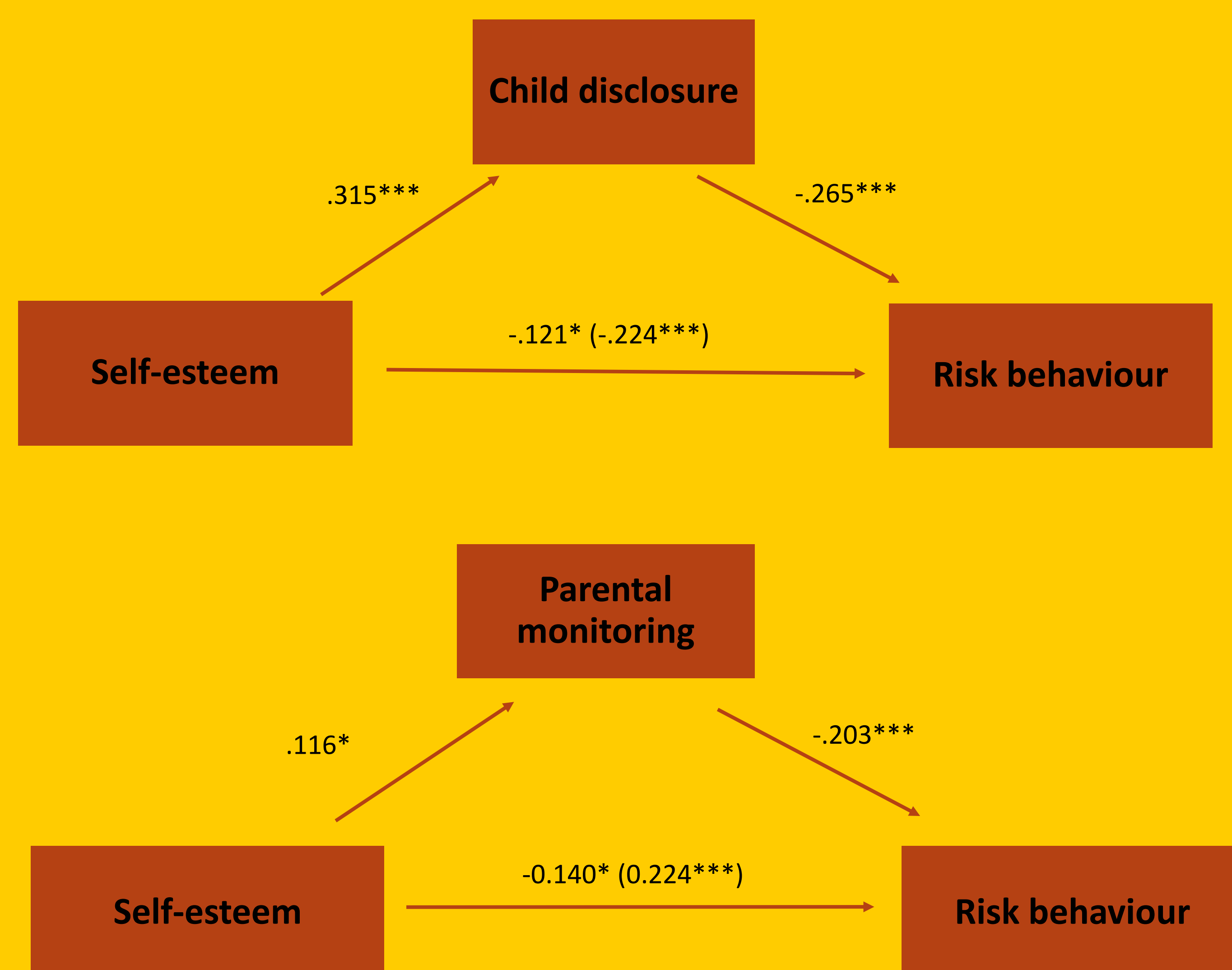
Regarding **cigarette use** students were asked: if they smoked cigarette during last 30 days (yes/no). By combining all three variables, a single – behavioural risk index variable was created where higher score indicates higher level of risk behaviour.

Multiple regression analyses by using a PROCESS procedure for SPSS (Hayes, 2012) to examine whether the relationship between independent variable (self-esteem) and dependent variable (risk behaviour index) is mediated through parental processes (mediator). Model was adjusted for gender.

3 Results

In general, the adolescents in sample scored low in behaviour risk index with no gender differences. Only about 4% of adolescents reported smoking in last 30 days and being drunk at least once. Regarding alcohol use in last 30 days, 20% of adolescents reported such behaviour. Regression analyses showed negative relationship between self-esteem and risk behaviour ($B = -.224$; $t = -3.66$, $p = .001$) as those adolescents with higher self-esteem scored low regarding risk behaviour but only among girls. Similarly, all explored parental processes except parental solicitation were negatively associated with risk behaviour of girls and boys.

Further analyse showed that child disclosure and parental monitoring partially mediated the role of self-esteem on risk behaviour as the effect of self-esteem decreased after adding disclosure ($B = -.121^* / -.224^{***}$) and monitoring into model ($B = -.140^* / -.224^{***}$).



4 Conclusion

The results of this study point to pessimistic perception of economic situation among Slovak young adults. Those students which perceived the chance of employment negatively were more likely to have a plan to leave the home country after university studies. On the other side, students which perceived economical situation optimistically are less likely to have a plan to leave a home country. However, these significant associations can be explained by others variables. Specifically, the desire for change fully mediated the associations between perceived economic situation and plan to leave home country. Similarly, the normative beliefs towards migration partially mediated perceived economic situation and plan to leave home country. Surprisingly, dimension of rootedness – family/home, did not play any significant role in mediation. Our results suggest that traditional conception of migration reasons may not describe this behavior correctly. Beside obvious economic factors young people may have a plan to leave a country due to specific personality domains as desire for change or sensation seeking or they may be strongly influenced by other people and their attitudes toward migration (normative beliefs).

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