



The Role of Family Support in the Relationship between Risky Behavior and Life Satisfaction

Max S. Brumer, Jeongin Hong, Elisa N. Borg, Cynthia G. Navarrete, & Greg M. Kim-Ju



California State University, Sacramento

INTRODUCTION

- Research has shown that adolescent behavior is heavily influenced by the environment they are raised in. Adolescents with higher levels of emotional, social, and behavior problems typically have parents who display higher levels of psychopathology, parental stress, poor parenting practices, higher levels of parental-adolescent conflict, and lower levels of perceived family support (Kuhn & Laird, 2014). Furthermore, research has indicated that a strong relationship between families and children may deter the use of risky behaviors used by children. Interestingly, children who report having a "great" relationship with both of their parents were at least 1.59 times more likely to avoid using alcohol, tobacco, and having sex (McBride et al., 2005).
- Additionally, high alcohol consumption has been associated with a low quality child-parent relationship as well as low levels of life satisfaction among Chinese adolescents (Chen, Ho, Leung, Wang, & Lam, 2017)
- After adolescence, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been shown to be a significant predictor of happiness across the lifespan. Participants living in wealthier European nations, for example, self-reported higher levels of hedonic happiness (life satisfaction) and Eudaimonic happiness (fulfillment; Morgan, Robinson, & Thompson, 2015).
- Currently, there is little research examining across cultures that vary in GDP alcohol use as a form of risky behavior, family support, and life satisfaction.

THE PRESENT STUDY

- The present study investigated the role of family support in the relationship between risky behavior and life satisfaction among adolescents in four countries in Europe: Germany, Czech Republic, Latvia, and Malta.
- Hypotheses:
 - H_1 : It was expected that alcohol use would significantly predict life satisfaction and family support would mediate this relationship.
 - H_2 : Differences between countries based on GDP were expected.
- A structural equation model was employed to analyze data and test the listed hypotheses.

METHOD

- Participants**
 - Data were utilized from the Health Behaviors in School-Aged Children (HBSC) public-use dataset consisting of adolescents from four European countries based on GDP ($N = 5,240$).
 - A Mahalanobis squared distance technique was used to detect multivariate outliers and 187 participants were removed. Final sample sizes and demographic information are listed below:
 - Germany ($n = 1,695$, $M_{age} = 15.36$, $SD_{age} = .34$, 50.4% female)
 - Czech Republic ($n = 1,399$, $M_{age} = 15.38$, $SD_{age} = .33$, 50.9% female)
 - Latvia ($n = 1,446$, $M_{age} = 15.61$, $SD_{age} = .30$, 57.1% female)
 - Malta ($n = 513$, $M_{age} = 15.70$, $SD_{age} = .28$, 53.4% female)
- Procedures**
 - Data was extracted from 2013-2014 HBSC datasets.
 - SPSS Amos was used to fit five datasets to a structural equation model.
- Measures**
 - Items examining risky behavior, family support, and life satisfaction were used (see Table 1).

RESULTS

Table 1.
Information for subscales used.

Subscale	# of Items	Item Example	α	Higher Scores indicate
Alcohol Use	4	At present, how often do you drink anything alcoholic, such as beer, wine or spirits like....[Add appropriate examples]? Try to include even those times when you only drink a small amount.	.77	Participants partake in risky behavior more often
Family Support	4	My family really tries to help me.	.95	Participants feel more family support
Life Satisfaction	1	Here is a picture of a ladder. The top of the ladder '10' is the best possible life for you and the bottom '0' is the worst possible life for you. In general, where on the ladder do you feel you stand at the moment?	N/A	Participants have higher life satisfaction.

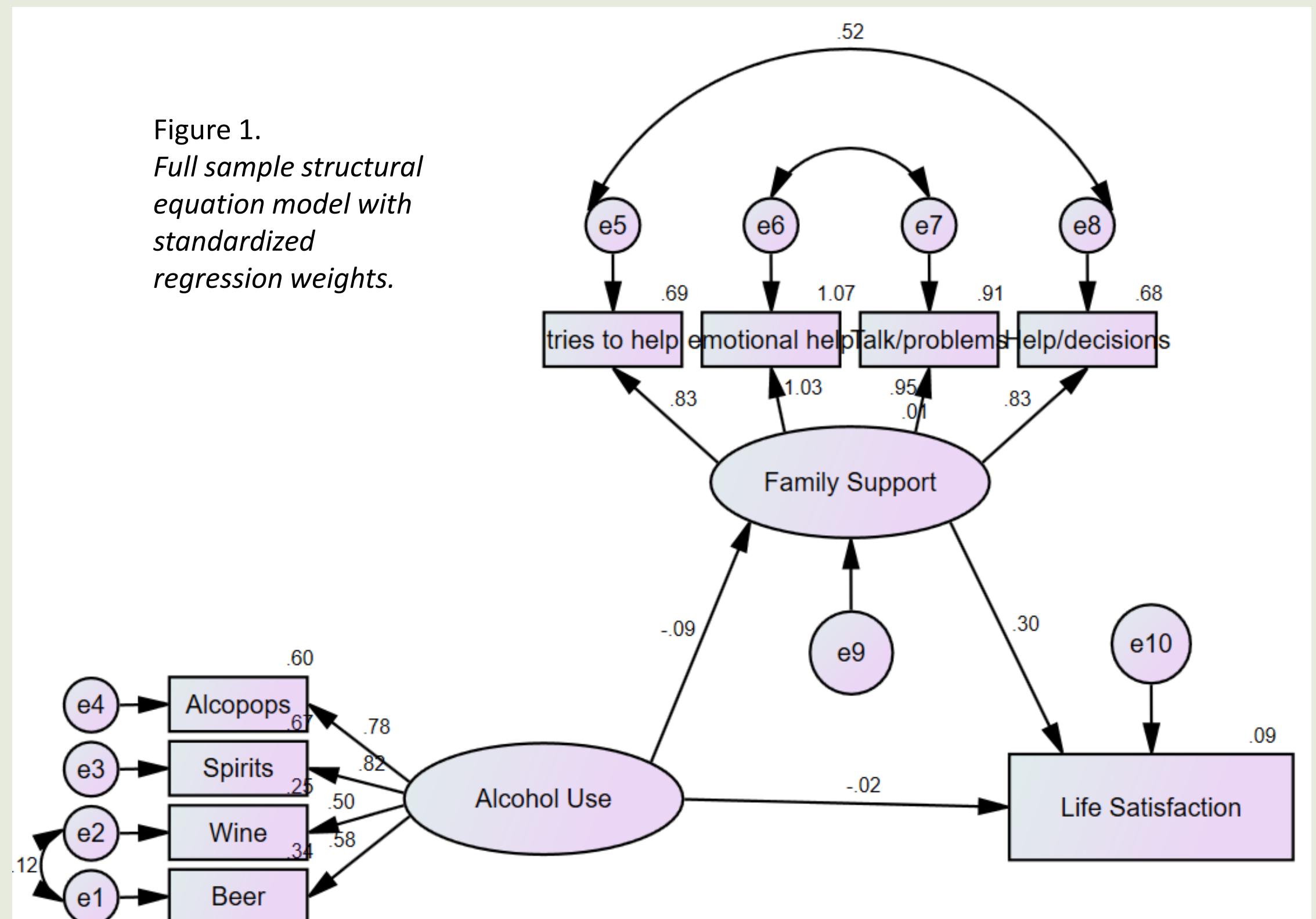
Mediating Models

- Full model: partial mediation occurred with over half of the variance being mediated through family support. The model showed excellent goodness-of-fit as shown by the chi-square = 202.903, $N = 5,053$, $df = 22$, $p < .001$; GFI = .99; TLI = .99; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .04).
- Germany: Like the full model, over half of the relationship from alcohol use to life satisfaction was mediated through family support. Again, the model showed excellent goodness-of-fit (chi-square = 96.239, $N = 1,695$, $df = 22$, $p < .001$; GFI = .99; TLI = .99; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .05). Furthermore, Germany had the largest decrease in the beta weight from alcohol use to life satisfaction in the mediated model compared to the unmediated model.
- Latvia: Over 20% of the variance was mediated through family support, supporting partial mediation. Similar model fit was found for Latvia compared to the other nations (chi-square = 80.905, $N = 1,446$, $df = 22$, $p < .001$; GFI = .99; TLI = .99; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .04).
- Non-Mediating models**
 - Both the Czech Republic and Malta did not experience mediation; however, both yielded similar model-fit to the mediating models.

Table 2.
Standardized regression weight and mediation results for each structural equation model.

Model Sample (n)	Full Model IV → DV	Full Model IV → M	Full Model M → DV	Un-mediated IV → DV	Freedman-Schatzkin (df)	Aroian	% Mediated
Full Sample (5,053)	-.019	-.087*	.303*	-.045*	-16.55 (5,051)*	-5.60*	58.6%
Germany (1,695)	-.035	-.125*	.380*	-.082*	-11.95 (1,693)*	-4.47*	57.9%
Czech Republic (1,399)	.048	-.144*	.413*	-.011	-13.25 (1,397)*	-4.39*	—
Latvia (1,446)	-.066*	-.096*	.177*	-.083*	-5.01 (1,444)*	-3.06*	20.5%
Malta (513)	.095*	-.143*	.509*	.065	-8.51 (511)	-2.81*	—

Note. IV = Alcohol Use. DV = Life Satisfaction. M = Family Support. * $p < .05$.



DISCUSSION

- The present study examined the unique relationship between alcohol use as a form of risky behavior and life satisfaction with family support moderating the relationship.
- Results of the structural equation models fully support hypothesis two and partially support hypothesis one.
- Differences were seen between all nations and the full sample. Family support most effectively mediates the relationship between alcohol use and life satisfaction in the German sample followed by Latvia. One possible explanation for this is that Germany and Latvia have the two highest scores of individualism (Hofstede Insights, 2017). This contrasts with prior research indicating that collectivistic cultures place more weight on harmony and family compared to individualistic cultures (Shockley et al., 2017). However, one study did find no significant differences in family support between collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Arevalo, So, & McNaughton-Cassill, 2016).
- Additionally, alcohol was not a strong predictor of life satisfaction even though it was statistically significant for Germany and Latvia. This could be explained by cultural factors that normalize alcohol consumption (such as Oktoberfest in Germany).
- Implications of the current research shows that programs aiming to improve the life satisfaction of adolescents who partake in risky behaviors may want to focus on family support especially in Germany and Latvia.

Limitations and Future Directions

- The current study utilizes a sample of four European nations and, therefore, cannot be generalized outside of Europe. However, the current research study does provide insight on differences across European nations of varying economic status. Future research may expand to determine if this relationship is found across continents.
- The four nations in this study all rank relatively high on individualism (though Germany and Latvia rank higher) and, therefore, do not provide information on more collectivistic cultures. Future research may aim to examine a nations' individualism-collectivism scale as a covariate with GDP.
- Lastly, alcohol use has been shown to be a subset of risky adolescent behavior; however, future research may aim to examine the effect of other risky behaviors (such as drug use and unhealthy sex) in place of alcohol use. Furthermore, researchers may want to examine all three unhealthy behaviors in conjunction and determine if family support still mediates the relationship.

Conclusion

- The current study examined the mediating role of family support on the relationship between alcohol use and life satisfaction in a European and adolescent sample, with results of the structural equation model suggesting that family support partially mediates the relationship in Germany and Latvia but not in the Czech Republic and Malta.

Contact Information

Presented at the 2019 Western Psychological Association Conference at Pasadena, CA.
For additional information, please contact Max Brumer at maxbrumer@csus.edu