

Risk Behaviour, Classroom Behaviour, and Social Status in European Adolescents

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Why do adolescents engage in risk behaviour?

- Some evidence suggests that adolescents engage in risk behaviour to gain mature status among their peers, which in turn might be related to popularity (Moffitt, 1993)
- Most studies so far took into account only single behaviours, or single facets of social status
- Goal was to more comprehensively examine relations between risk behaviour and social status
- Current study included two special characteristics:
 1. **European** sample of **late adolescents** (cf. Mayeux et al., 2008)
 2. **Comprehensive assessment and analysis** of risk behaviour and social status, using latent variable models for increased validity (cf. Prinstein et al., 2011)

Method

- Risk behaviour engagement: Self-report questionnaires
 - Tobacco use, alcohol use, marijuana use, sexual intercourse
- Social status: Peer-nominated within classrooms
 - "Who do you like most?" "Who is most popular?"
 - "Who do you like least?" "Who is least popular?"
- Related constructs for validation
 - Prosocial and antisocial classroom behaviour
 - Positive characteristics (e.g., sportiness)

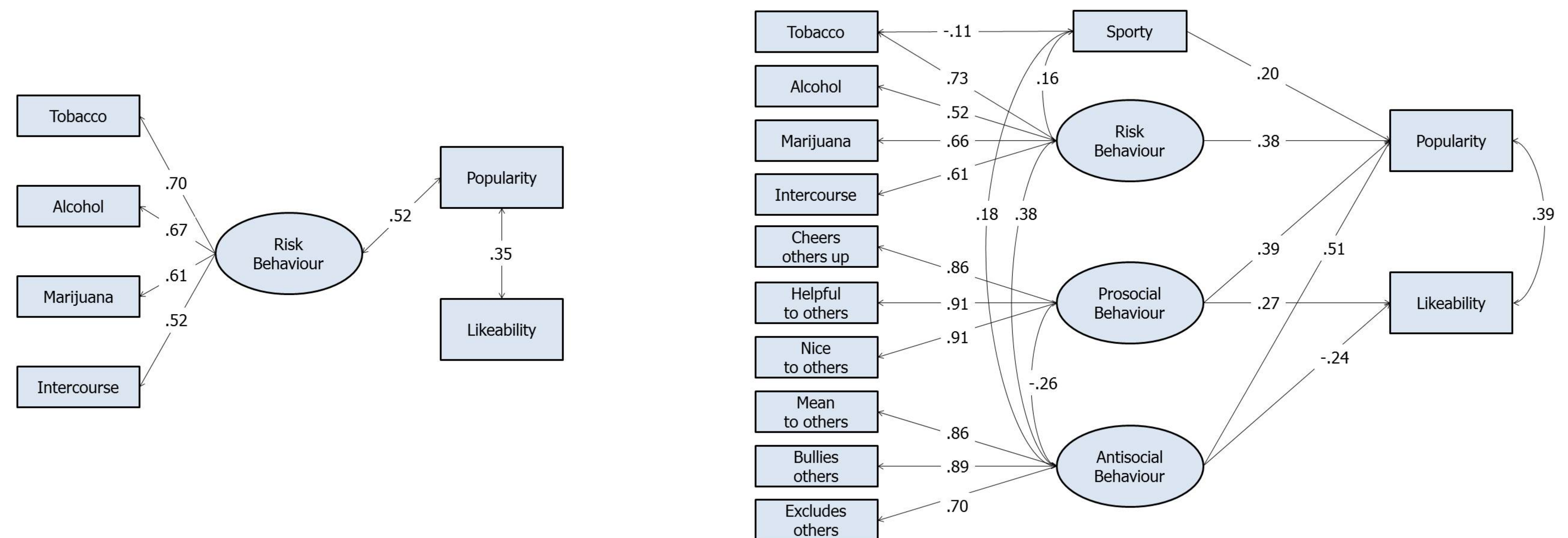


Sample characteristics

$N = 408$ (50% girls)
 $M_{age} = 16.95$, $SD = .81$
20 higher secondary school classes
(10th & 11th grade)
from Austria and the Netherlands

Results

Relations between main study variables only (left) and taking into account validation constructs (right)



Note. All parameters significant. Full standardised solution.

Basic model (left): $\chi^2_9 = 12.62$, $p = .181$, RMSEA = .031, CFI = .989, SRMR = .033

Validation model (right): $\chi^2_{56} = 149.73$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .064, CFI = .958, SRMR = .042

Discussion

- In Europe, risk behaviour in late adolescence is related to increased popularity, but not to likeability
- Should interventions tackle motives related to mature status?
- More research on motives for engagement in risk behaviour is needed



References

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