



Adolescents' perceptions of connectedness to parents; parental knowledge and time:



The association with adolescent emotional health concerns and the presence of risky behaviours

R. Hendrickx, S. Denny, J. Sheridan, S. Ameratunga, P. Bullen, T. Teevale

Department of Paediatrics, Child and Youth Health, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Auckland

Background

The present study tests the hypothesis that adolescents who report greater parental connectedness, parental knowledge of their activities, and perceived adequacy of time with their parents will be associated with the presence of fewer risky behaviours and display less emotional health concerns than adolescents who report these relationships less positively.

Method

Using multinomial regression, this study examined adolescent reports of connectedness to parents, parents knowledge of their whereabouts' and perceived time with their parents and the relationship with their emotional health concerns and risky behaviours. Latent class analyses were used to depict groups of adolescents based on the presence of risky behaviours and emotional health concerns.

Sample

Data were from a representative population sample of 9107 students from 96 New Zealand secondary schools that completed a comprehensive health and wellbeing questionnaire in 2007. The survey was carried out using Internet tablets and no keyboard data entry; questions and answers were heard through headphones and answers were made by touching the screen.

Results

As shown in Figure 1, four groups were identified using latent class analysis. The healthy group was the largest group (79.6%) and was characterised by low levels of risk behaviours and emotional health concerns. The next largest group (11%) was labelled the 'risky' group. Adolescents within the risky group displayed high levels of risk behaviour coupled with reasonably low levels of emotional health concerns. The distressed group (5.6%) was comprised of adolescents with high levels of emotional health concerns as well as low levels of engagement in risky behaviours. The mixed group (3.6%) was characterised by high levels of both risky behaviour and emotional health concerns.

Results seen in Figure 2-4 showed that adolescents who reported stronger connection to their parents and high levels of parental knowledge of their whereabouts were less likely to be engaging in risky behaviour or have emotional health concerns than adolescents who reported weaker parental connection and parental knowledge. Of note parental connection appeared to be more important in protecting students from being in the distressed or mixed group while parental knowledge was more important in protecting students from being in the risky or mixed groups.

Figure 2. Association between parental connection, parental knowledge, and the probability of being in the distressed group

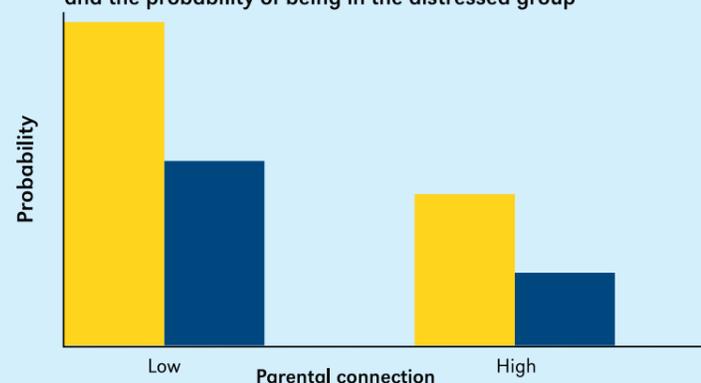


Figure 3. Association between parental connection, parental knowledge, and the probability of being in the risky group

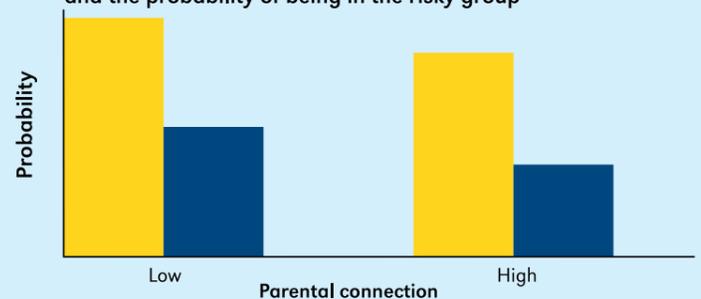
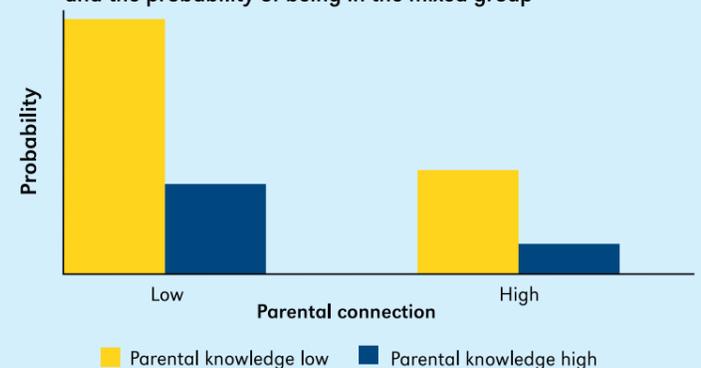


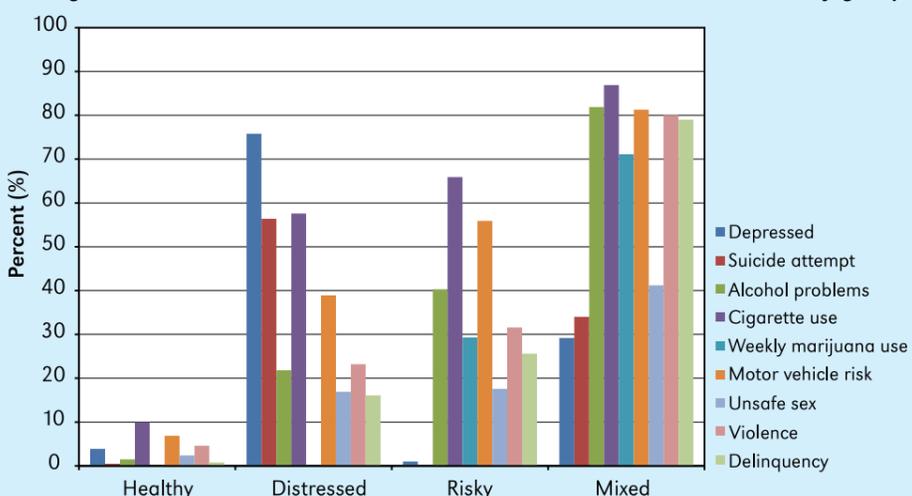
Figure 4. Association between parental connection, parental knowledge, and the probability of being in the mixed group



Conclusion

Parents need to be aware of the importance of warm and supportive relationships with their adolescents, especially relationships that foster communication about their activities and whereabouts.

Figure 1. Prevalence of emotional health concerns and risk behaviours by group



Acknowledgements

The Youth'07 survey was funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand, the Department of Labour, Families Commission, Accident Compensation Corporation of New Zealand, Sport and Recreation New Zealand, the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, and the Ministries of Youth Development, Justice and Health.

Contact

Rachael Hendrickx | Email: rsmi147@auckland.ac.nz