Factors Related to Risk-taking among Adolescents in Krabi Province

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Abstract
The present study aimed to predict the factors related to risk-taking among adolescents in Krabi Province, Thailand. The participants were 400 grade 8 and 11 students from schools in Krabi Province. The research instruments include questionnaires on perceived parental style, perceived peer norm, risk preference, risky decision making and risk behaviors. The correlations and multiple regression analysis were conducted to analyze the data. The results suggested that gender, perceived parental style, and perceived peer norm were correlated with risk taking among adolescents. Specifically, male tends to be more risk-taking than female, perceived authoritarian parental style and perceived peer norm can predict risk-taking. Perceived peer norm is the most important factor of risk-taking in adolescence. These findings were in accordance with the theory that adolescents tend to have more risky decisions and risk behaviors than adults and peers have strong influence on adolescent’s involvement in risky behavior.

Keywords: Risk Taking, Adolescent, Perceived Peer Norm, Perceived Authoritarian Parental Style

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Introduction

The adolescence is a time of multiple transitions, such as the transition to puberty and transitions involving parent–child relationships, school, peers, and cognitive and emotional abilities (Michael and Ben-Zur, 2007). During adolescence, young individuals are challenged by the ‘storm and stress’ (Arnett, 1999). Adolescents show elevated involvement in an array of risk-taking behaviors, including criminal behavior, unsafe sexual practices, and initiation of alcohol use (Arnett, 1992; Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Steinberg, 2008). Adolescents have more risks than children or adults (Gardner & Steinberg, 2005).

In Thailand, it is evident that adolescents tend to be more risk-taking such as drinking alcohol, smoking, sexual risk behaviors and unprotected sex that causes teenage mothers and violence in school. The National Statistical Office of Thailand surveyed about smoking and drinking behavior among Thai population between 2001 to 2014 and found that adolescents were more likely to smoke and drink alcohol. There were 14.7% of adolescents between ages 14-24 that smoked and the average age of smoking decreased from 16.8 years in 2007 to 15.6 years in 2014. The drinking alcohol behavior among adolescents aged between 15-24 increased from 21.6% in 2001 to 25.2% in 2014. The average age to start drinking was reduced from 17.2 years in 2007 to 16.7 years in 2014. The data from the survey of reproductive health in adolescents and youth in 2012 of the Bureau of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control found that sexual behavior ratio in students had increased. The 5-year statistics from 2008 to 2012 showed that the percentage of male and female students in grade 8 who had sexual intercourse increased from 3.7% and 2.3% respectively in 2008 to 5.3% and 5.1% respectively in 2012, while the percentage of male and female students in the grade 11 who had sexual intercourse increased from 24.1% and 14.7% respectively in 2008 to 24.8% and 20.2% respectively in 2012.

Social norms theory suggests that peers have strong influence on adolescent’s involvement in risky behavior (Berkowitz, 2005). This influence is rooted in the adolescent’s beliefs about the norms that are prevalent among their peers. Social and environmental concepts emphasize the influence of parents, peers, teachers, community, and culture on risk-taking during adolescence as adolescence is also known as a period of growing autonomy and emerging individualization from the family (Igra & Irwin, 1996).

According the risky situation in Thai adolescents and the theoretical concepts, this study focused on studying factors that related to risk taking in adolescent and the purpose of this research was to predict factors related to risk taking in adolescents.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants in the study were 400 grade 8 and grade 11 students. The two-step sampling was used. Participants were asked to complete all the questionnaires that had been tested for the validity and reliability. The study was ethically certified for research in human by the Strategic Wisdom and Research Institute, Srinakharinwirot University.
Measure

There are 5 questionnaires used in the present study as following:

Perceived parenting style questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed from Panthumnavin (1984) parenting style questionnaire. It is the 5-rating scale test ranged from 1-least accurate to 5-most accurate. The questionnaire, divided into 4 parts due to 4 different parenting styles, was examined for the reliability and the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of the permissive, authoritative, abusive, authoritarian parenting styles were .803, .671, .698 and .663 respectively.

Perceived peer norm questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed from Wongwiwat (2005) Perceived Peer Norm Assessment. It is the 7-rating scale ranged from 1-least accurate to 7-most accurate. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for the total questionnaire reliability was .886.

Risk preference assessment

The assessment was created from the related theory and literature review. It is the 5-rating scale ranged from 1-least accurate to 5-most accurate. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for the total assessment reliability was .871.

Risky decision-making assessment

This assessment was based on Gardner and Steinberg’s study (2005). The items were sample situations with 4-rating scale ranged from 1-certainly decide to do to 4-certainly decide not to do. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for the total assessment reliability was .841.

Risk behavior assessment in adolescent

The assessment was created from the related theory and literature review. It is the 5-rating scale ranged from 1-least accurate to 5-most accurate. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for the total assessment reliability was .911.

Data analysis

Pearson Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis methods were utilized for the data analysis.
Results

Table 1 correlation matrix variables in the analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Risk taking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.445***</td>
<td>-.135*</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>.336***</td>
<td>.417***</td>
<td>-.529***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.074</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.347***</td>
<td>.342***</td>
<td>-.348***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perceived permissive parenting style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.621***</td>
<td>-.164**</td>
<td>-.185**</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perceived authoritative parenting style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.136*</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Perceived abusive parenting style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.705***</td>
<td>-.331***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Perceived authoritarian parenting style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.356***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Perceived Peer Norm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

The correlation coefficient analysis between the set of independent variables and the dependent variable revealed that risk taking is correlated with gender, perceived permissive parenting style, perceived abusive parenting style, perceived authoritarian parenting style and perceived peer norm with the following value: .445, -.135, .336, .417, and -.529 respectively, which were statistically significant at level .05 and .001. Evidentially, the risk taking correlation coefficient with perceived peer norm was -.529 which was the strongest and negative relationship. There was also positive relationship between risk taking and other variables: gender, perceived authoritarian parenting style, and perceived abusive parenting style with the following value: .445, .417, and .336 respectively.

Table 2 Multiple Regression Analysis in predicting risk taking in adolescent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>(β)</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant value</td>
<td>-.419</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>-1.887</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.483</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>4.017***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived authoritarian parenting style</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>3.244**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Peer Norm</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.372</td>
<td>-6.018***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

The multiple regression analysis found that gender, perceived parenting style and perceived peer norm could predict risk taking in adolescent. The results suggested that male was more risk taking than female (b = .483). Perceived authoritarian parenting
style could most predict risk taking ($b = .066$). Also, perceived peer norm had strong influence on risk taking in adolescent ($b = -.021$).

According to Table 2, the regression coefficient of perceived peer norm was the highest ($\beta = .372$), followed by male gender ($\beta = .247$) and perceived authoritarian parenting style ($\beta = .200$). The R Square value of risk taking in adolescent equaled .390, implied that the three dependent variables had 39% predictive accuracy on risk taking.

The diagram of male gender, perceived authoritarian parenting style and perceived peer norm as predictors of risk taking in adolescent was shown in Figure 1, based on the followed predicting equation:

Predicted Risk taking = -.419 + .483*** (male) + .066*** (Perceived authoritarian parenting style) -.021*** (Perceived Peer Norm)

![Diagram of predictors of risk taking](image)

Note: The effect value in the diagram was the regression coefficient value.

*** $p < .001$

Figure 1: Diagram of predictors of risk taking

**Conclusion and Discussion**

This study found that male adolescents were significantly more risk taking than female. The result also suggested that the perceived authoritarian parenting style was associated with a higher risk behavior, in agreement with Nikken and de Graaf (2013) who found the restrictive parental mediation contributes to sexual experimentation among female adolescent. The result of the present study also provided support for the recent argument of family scholars that disaggregated the effect of parental monitoring from information solicited from children. Consistent with their approach, excessive monitoring and control during adolescence might not be able to protect children from participation in deviant behavior (Kerret et al., 2010). Similar to other studies, the present study found that permissive and authoritative parenting style can reduced risky behaviors in adolescents.
In addition, this research also found that perceived peer norm affected risk taking in adolescent. In other words, adolescent who gained negative score were influenced more by norms from their peers. This finding was in concordance with Gardner & Steinberg (2005) that conducted the experimental research about peer influence on risk taking, risk preference, and risky decision making in adolescence and adulthood. They found that adolescents took more risks as they focused more on the satisfaction than the following results of risky behavior, and made riskier decisions when they were in peer groups than when they were alone and peer had stronger influence on risk taking and risky decision making among adolescents and youths than adults. This research also supports the study of Michael and Ben-Zur (2007) as they investigated the relationship between social and affective factors and the risk-taking behavior of adolescents aged 16 to 18 years. They concluded that risk behavior among the male adolescents was related mainly towards peer group influences, while female adolescents were related towards relationships with parents.
References


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