

# Parental Monitoring and Risk-Taking Levels of Adolescents

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## Dear Editor

Risky behaviors occur in most parts of society and no part of society is safe from the unfortunate consequences of health-threatening behaviors. However, some social groups, including teenagers, are at greater risk. Many victims of risky behaviors in the future will be among today's teenagers (1).

About 1.2 billion people, or 1 out of every 6 of the world's population, are adolescents aged 10 to 19. Consumption of alcohol or tobacco, lack of physical activity, unprotected sex, or exposure to violence can endanger not only their current health but also their health in adulthood and even the health of the future of their children.

The high-risk behaviors of youth and adolescence mainly fall into six categories: smoking, drug addiction and abuse, unhealthy sexual behaviors, physical inactivity, unhealthy nutrition, and behaviors related to injuries and accidents. Risk-taking and inconsistent behaviors are a concern for parents, psychologists, schools, police, and institutions in charge of social affairs. The costs of these risky behaviors are very heavy and sometimes irreparable. Research showed an increase in risky behaviors during adolescence. All of these factors have increased researchers' attention towards protective factors against high-risk behaviors and their focus on adolescence (2).

The family includes the deepest psychological and social bonds. Its health leads to the comprehensive health of the individual and society (3). The family is the first and most important institution in human history and civilization. It is the place where a person learns the ways of collective life and understanding and compatibility

with others. Therefore, the failure to provide the above conditions for children is the source of many slips that cause an emotional vacuum and possibly cause problems in the future.

One of the important roles of family on high-risk behaviors is the parenting or educational methods of the parents. It has important consequences in the social adjustment of adolescents (4). Among family factors, parental supervision is known as one of the main determinants of the occurrence of unhealthy and antisocial behaviors in adolescents and also is the main factor in adolescents' tendency towards high-risk behaviors (3).

Romero and Ruiz believed that parental supervision means that parents know where their teenagers are, who they are with, what they are doing, and how they spend most of their time when they are not with their parents (5). In other words, parental supervision can be defined as the level of parents' awareness and follow-up of the places where their children are and also the actions they perform (5).

There is a direct relationship between the amount of parental supervision and care and the reduction of children's problems. In fact, the level of parental supervision is an important protective factor for children's external behavioral problems. Parental monitoring of children is associated with a reduction in the risk of smoking and alcohol consumption, physical conflict, drugs, unsafe sex, dropping out of school, and fewer academic problems. The absence and non-presence of parents or one of them exert its effect through insufficient supervision due to the absence of parents; adolescents from single-parent families are more likely to engage in risky and delinquent behaviors

than adolescents from families where both parents are present.

Lee and Tsang's research in China showed that the prevalence of high-risk behaviors such as suicide, smoking, sexual contact before the age of 13, and physical inactivity is higher in students with parents with a low level of education (6).

Overall, parental supervision can have a protective effect in reducing and preventing high-risk behaviors in adolescents.

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