

# An Investigation of Predicting Factors of Risk Taking behaviour of Adolescents

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**Abstract**—This study was designed to examine the factors of risk taking behaviour among adolescents or teenagers. The purpose of this study was to analyze the adolescents' perception of risk and their risk-taking behaviour. Adolescents or teenagers (N = 100) residing in India selected for questionnaire survey. It used the LOT-R scale, the cognitive-style inventory scale, the locus of control (LOC) scale, the new personal fable scale (NPFS), and Adolescent exploratory and risk behaviour rating scale (AERRS) to analyze the data collected from the survey. The study had several important findings that life orientation and personal fables factors had a direct effect on risk taking behaviour among adolescents. Moreover, the study finding that locus of control (LOC) and cognitive style factors had not relationship with risk taking behaviour among adolescents.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Risk Taking Factors, Life Orientation, Cognitive Style, Locus of Control, Personal Fable, Family Dysfunction, Social Acceptance, Depression, Risk Behavior, Self-Control.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

We pass through various stages under the process of development, but adolescents are asserted as the most critical stage as there remains an identity confusion regarding whether the person is grown enough to perform different tasks or not. One experiences a number of factors that determine his/her behaviour, some behaviours can be risky. Both internal and external environment plays an important role in the behaviour. Hence, we would be evaluating them.

Adolescence is one of the most challenging developmental periods in a person's life which can either make him optimistic or pessimistic towards life. Individuals biologically and psychologically experience a wide variety of changes in this period. Along with these changes, individuals begin to discover the variety of new emotional or behavioural stimulants of adult life. Biological, psychological, and social environmental changes that occurred in the adolescence process may cause vulnerability to engage in self-destructive or health-compromising behaviours (Matricardi, 2006). Whatever we see develops curiosity and eagerness to do that, those tasks can be risky too. Adolescents see their peer and

elderly people and respond to those risky situations. These self-destructive or health compromising behaviour that initially occur in the adolescence process have long-term effects. There are various factors that determine the response of adolescents to risky situations and their risk taking behaviour such as their orientation towards life is positive or negative, their cognitive style, locus of control and if they are in personal fable or not. Different studies have been done in relation to these factors, but there are very few combined studies (Timol, et al, 2016).

One reason for investigating this topic is to investigate the environments or other factors related to their risk-taking behavior and examine a clearer understanding of why adolescents engage in risk-taking behavior. This study investigates the structural relationship between life orientation, cognitive style, locus of control, personal fable on risk taking behaviour among adolescents in the India. On the basis of past researches or studies, the researcher identified the factors, such as life orientation, cognitive style, locus of control, personal fable effect on self-control and risky behaviour of adolescents.

## 2. RISK TAKING BEHAVIOUR

Risk-taking has been conceptualized differently from the variety of theoretical perspectives. For example, from the decision-making perspective, Irwin & Millstein (1991) defined risk-taking as a volitional behavior whose outcome is uncertain and probably the reason of negative consequences. Similarly, Moore and Gullone (1996, p. 347) defined risk taking behaviour as "behaviour which involves potential negative consequences, but it is balanced in some way by perceived positive consequences". Furthermore, Essau (2004) suggests that risk-taking includes not only maladaptive risk-taking behaviour (e.g., drug use), but also socially acceptable risk behaviours (e.g. participating in a dangerous sport). Besides, involving in socially acceptable risk-taking behaviour include less risk than compared with the maladaptive risk-taking behaviour in terms of their health or long-term effects.

Overviewing the risk-taking behaviour, one can observe that it includes some different groups of behaviour such as traffic-related (e.g. taking speed, driving without license, driving/riding without seat belt, driving when drunk), sex-related (e.g. having sex, sex without condom, sex with someone unknown), substance use-related (e.g. taking crack/cocaine, heroin, sniffing gas or glue), and dangerous sports-related (e.g. diving, skydiving, kayaking, parachuting, bungee-jumping) risk-taking behaviour. Except for these groups of behaviours, there are some other kinds of risk-taking behaviours as well, such as fighting, carrying guns or knife, aggression (Bayar, 1999), walking alone at night, truancy, cheating on an exam, incomplete homework, etc. Most of these behaviours increase in terms of frequency and intensity as the individuals become older in the adolescence period (DiClement, Hansen, & Ponton, 1996). Moreover, individuals engaging in one risk behaviour have an inclination to involve in other risky behaviour (Igra & Irwin, 1996).

### 3. LIFE ORIENTATION

An individual can have either a positive orientation (optimism) or negative orientation (pessimism) towards life. Robinson and Worell (2002, p. 198) viewed optimism as a person's explanatory style. Worell, Stilwell, Oakley and Robbinson (1999, p. 799) claimed that each person has a style of seeing causes and will usually apply it to their current situation. An optimistic person will explain bad events in a circumscribed way, with external, unstable and specific causes; whereas pessimistic persons will explain unfavourable events as internal, stable and global. Pessimism is associated with and leads to the incurring of negative outcomes, while optimism is associated with and leads to the securing of positive outcomes (Williams & Riels, 2001, p. 12). When confronted with misfortune, optimistic learners believe that failure is not their fault and that, with enough persistence and motivation, the circumstances will be overcome. Pessimists give up more easily, think that bad events will last a long time and believe the worst about people around them. They are less likely to persevere, and they exhibit higher rates of stress, depression and anxiety (O'Gorman & Baxter, 2000, p. 536). Pessimism is defined in this research as a psychological dimension which represents a bias in perceptions and expatiations in favour of negative features in life (Day, Kane & Roberts, 2003, p. 461).

### 4. COGNITIVE STYLE

Cognitive style is an individual's preferred way of gathering, processing and evaluating data. It influences how we scan our environments for information, how we organise and interpret it, and how we integrate our interpretations into mental models and subjective theories that guide our behaviour. Witkin, Moore, Goodenough and Cox (1977) defined cognitive style as individual differences in the way people perceive, think, solve problems, learn and relate to others. Messick (1984)

defined cognitive style as consistent individual differences in ways of organising and processing information and experience. Taken together, a cognitive style refers to individual differences in a perception of environment stimuli and the organisation and use of information. It influences how people look at their environment for information, and how they use these interpretations for guiding their actions (Hayes & Allinson, 1998).

### 5. LOCUS OF CONTROL

Locus of control is a theory used in personality psychology that refers to causation as perceived by individuals in response to personal outcomes or other events. This construct was first used by Rotter (1966) to predict behaviour by measuring the extent to which an individual believes that events or outcomes in his/her life was controlled by internal (i.e., their own actions) or external (e.g., fate, luck, powerful others, political institutions) forces. A person who views events in his/her life as being within his/her control is considered to have an internal locus of control. A person who views events in his/her life as being out of his/her own control, occurring as a result of fate, luck or powerful others were considered to have an external locus of control. It is then, a person's subjective locus of control that affects how he or she behaves. Rotter (1966) also believed that the locus of control may change as a person's life circumstances change.

### 6. PERSONAL FABLE

Personal fable is the tendency for adolescents believe they are so unique that no one else can understand their problems or ever have their experiences. This reflects adolescent's over-differentiation of feelings: this belief, of being special and not subject to the natural laws that pertain to others, is what is called the personal fable. It is a story, we tell about ourselves, but it isn't true" (Elkind, 1978, p. 131). Personal fable is characterized by the inability to imagine the self as the same as others, resulting in extreme individuation. As an outcome of personal fable ideation, individuals emphasize differences instead of similarities between themselves and others. For adolescents who experience high levels of PF, it is easy to ignore warnings in health promotion messages regardless of source because they feel unique, not at risk, or believe health promotion messages do not apply them. This separation or differentiation process is taken to an extreme in adolescence when feelings of uniqueness are so high that personal morality is questioned. This impairs adolescent's judgement in critical situations because it provides a false sense of power (Blos, 1962) or invincibility.

### 7. METHODOLOGY

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to "identifies of predicting factors of risk taking behaviour of adolescents".

## 8. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The following is the main objective of this study that will be accomplished in this investigation is:

- To find out the predicting factors of risk taking behaviour among adolescents.
- To see life orientation as a predictor of risk taking behaviour.
- To see cognitive style as a predictor of risk taking behaviour.
- To see locus of control as a predictor of risk taking behaviour.
- To see personal fable as a predictor of risk taking behaviour.

## 9. HYPOTHESIS

The main hypothesis of this study is Life orientation, cognitive style, locus of control, and personal fable would be significant impacts on the adolescents risk taking behaviour.

## 10. PARTICIPANT

For this, a total of 100 orphans from different destinations was selected to collect data. Moreover, data of 100 participants (12-18 age group) were included and analyzed in this research. The average age of the sample was 16.55 years and 50% (n=50) were males and half (n=50) were females. The sample of orphans was selected from some of the orphanages like Surman Sanstha, Jaipur, Shri Hindu anathashram Jaipur, Juvinail Justice Board, Jaipur and Aashita foundation, Jaipur. The sample of children living with parents was collected from Poddar Senior Secondary School, Jaipur and Banasthali Vidyapith. After being informed about the purpose and procedures of this research, all participants consented to attend the study and no direct compensation was provided for randomly selected participation.

## 11. TOOL USED

In this research, the following are the measures used:

1. The Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) developed by Scheier, Carver & Brooks in 1994, consists of 10 coded items was used, scored by five- point likert scale, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The internal reliability of the questionnaire is 0.78 and the validity is good.
2. The cognitive-style inventory developed by Lorna P. Martin in 1983. It is a 40 item scale was used. It has face validity and reliability.

3. The locus of control scale (LOC) developed by Nowiki and Strickland in 1973. It is a 40 item scale was used. Its reliability is 0.71 and the validity is 0.61.
4. The new personal fable scale (NPFS) was developed by D. K. Lapsley, in 1991 that was used 46 item scale. The internal reliability is 0.70 and validity is good.
5. Adolescent exploratory and risk behaviour rating scale (AERRS) was developed by Gullone et al., (2000) was used. It has face validity and reliability.

## 12. PROCEDURE

The researcher conducted the research by having permission to collect data from the above mentioned institution. After the grant of permission, the questionnaires were given to the participants that included questions about factors, and risk taking behaviour. Participants were given the instructions before handing over the questionnaires. They were informed to answer all the statements. The omission was not allowed. After collection of the data, statistical analysis was done as per the need of the research study. All the tests were administered in one go by each participant in the presence of the researcher so that problem regarding the language or responding issues could be solved on the spot (Reniers, et al, 2016).

## 13. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The following statistical techniques have been applied to analyze the primary data to fulfill the objectives.

- a) Mean:
- b) SD:
- c) Correlation

## 14. RESULTS

Table 1 show the mean, standard deviation (SD), and correlations between variables at a statistical significance level of 0.05.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statics of the total sample (100) on means, standard deviation and correlation test that used to evaluate the relationship between variables.**

VARIABLES	MEAN	SD	Risk taking behaviour	Life orientation	Personal fable	Locus of control	Cognitive style
Risk taking behaviour	54.21	10.5	1				
Life orientation	21.23	4.15	0.31**	1			
Personal fable	6.89	3.12	0.038*	0.320**	1		

Locus of control	16.79	1.69	-0.051	-0.148	-0.101	1	
Cognitive style	7.16	3.47	-0.03	.392**	-0.041	-0.126	1

## 15. DISCUSSION

Table 1 gives a glance about the correlation between risk taking behaviour and other variables: life orientation, locus of control, personal fable and cognitive style. Table 1 also gives the mean and standard deviation of the variables: risk taking behaviour, life orientation, locus of control, personal fable and cognitive style. As given in the table the mean for risk taking behaviour in the sample is 54.21 that means the more than average score and this score is deviating by 10.5 in both the directions. The average score for life orientation is 21.23 deviating in both directions by 4.15. The personal fable mean score is 6.89 deviating in both directions by 3.12. Similarly, the mean score for locus of control came to be 16.79 that is deviating by 1.69 in both the directions. And, the average score for cognitive style is 7.16 deviating by 3.47 in both directions (Karaman, 2013). In addition, correlation values indicated the relationship between the variables and risk taking behaviour. The risk taking behaviour reveals a positive relationship with life orientation ( $r = 0.31$ ) and personal fables ( $r = 0.03$ ). It states that risk taking behaviour has insignificant negative correlation with locus of control ( $r = -0.051$ ) and cognitive style ( $r = -0.03$ ).

## 16. CONCLUSION

This research main aim was to measure the relationship between risk taking behaviour and other factors, such as life orientation, locus of control, personal fable and cognitive style. This study discovered that the majority of participants scored relatively average scores on the life orientation and personal fable. Finally, a medium level positive relation was found between life orientation and personal fable factors and risk taking behaviour. Scores of locus of control and risk behavior were not correlated, thus no relationship between a person's locus of control and the amount of participation in risk behavior can be confirmed. Insignificant relationship was found between cognitive style and risk-taking behavior, with impulsive tending to take more risks on one measure and less on another. Life orientation, and personal fable would only be significant impacts on the adolescents risk taking behaviour.

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