# QUALITY OF CLOSE RELATIONS AND RISK BEHAVIOR OF ADOLESCENTS IN THE SYSTEM OF LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA

ᵃMICHAL ČEREŠNÍK

*Constantine the Philosopher University, Faculty of Education, Department of Pedagogical and School Psychology, Dražovská 4, Post code: 949 74, Nitra, Slovakia email: ᵃmceresnik@ukf.sk*

Abstract: In the paper we present the conclusions of the research about the close relations represented by parents and peers and risk behavior production in adolescent age at Slovak state schools. We introduce the problem on the base of our previous research results, Jessor`s concept of syndrome of risk behavior in adolescence and theories of attachment. Research sample consists of 1011 adolescents in the age 10 - 15 from all regions of Slovakia. As the research methods we used QRB (Questionnaire of Risk Behaviour; Čerešník, 2016) and IPPA-R (Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment – Revised; Greenberg, Armsden, 1987). We assumed that the weak close relations will increase the risk behavior production. The results showed the assumption can be supported, especially in the relation to mother and father.

Keywords: adolescence, close relations, attachment, risk behavior.

## 1 Introduction

The risk behavior in the adolescence is the actual problem of the education and also the health. The adolescence is the period in our lifetime in which we are the most often endangered by the risk of the sudden death because of the unwilling activities (WHO, 1993). We also know the more than half of the adolescence population behaves risky at least one time in their life (Smart et al., 2004).

It is not easy to define the risk behavior. It is very dynamic concept changing in the time. It has many categories as truancy, addictive behavior, premature sexual activities, bullying, delinquent behavior, xenophobia, low level physical activities, squatting etc. (e.g. Miovský, Zapletalová, 2006; Dolejš, 2010; Šírůčková, 2012; Nielsen Sobotková et al., 2014). In many sources these expressions of the risk behavior are considered for the psychopathy or sociopathy. We don`t agree with this categorizations. We consider the risk behavior as the inherent part of the adolescent development which doesn`t have to be pathological (according to our estimations only 1 % is truly pathological). We prefer the theory of Jessor (e.g. Jessor, 1991) who defined the concept of the syndrome of the risk behavior in adolescence (SRB-A) according which the adolescent can behave risky only in concrete area of life and in other areas they behave adequately. It means that the adolescent tests the boundaries of this world to discover what are the rules of willing and unwilling behavior.

But not all of the adolescents are endangered by the threats represented by the risk behavior and the testing of the boundaries of the world. Jessor and his colleagues (e.g. Jessor et al., 2003; Costa, Jessor, Turbin, 2005; Vaszonyi et al., 2008) identified the protective factors divided into individual, family and society groups which can help to avoid the risk behavior in the large amount. Especially we would like to refer to family factors. The authors wrote that the conditions of the middle class, good communication, family support, warm relations, common values leads the behavior which decreases probability of the risk behavior production in adolescence. If we want to simplify this conclusion we can say that the good relations among the adolescent and his/her parents protect the adolescent. They lead to non-risk behavior of the adolescent (e.g. Tomšik, Verešová, 2019). It is in the concordance with the theory of Bowlby or Ainsworth (Bowlby, 1969/2010; Ainsworth et al., 1978) about the attachment.

Some of the newest researches (e.g. Mayerová, 2013; Ďuricová, Hašková, 2016; Čerešníková, Čerešník 2018) show that the quality of relations among the adolescents and their parents are problematic. Their conclusions refer to negative relations and

weak or missing guidance in the upbringing of many (more than 2/3) families in Slovakia. It is totally opposite conditions in the comparison of the willing protective factors mentioned in the text above. The child/adolescent needs the positive relation (parental love) and the marking of the boundaries for the health development. Because the lack of the close positive relations may leads to problems with the responsibility taking, the helplessness, the negative emotionality, the ineffective social strategies, the low self-control and low prosocial orientation (e.g. O`Connor, Zeanah, 2003; Čerešníková, 2015; Tomšik, 2018).

The appearance of the risk behavior significantly increases in the age of approximately 12 years (e.g. Čerešník, Gatial, 2014; Čerešník, Dolejš, 2015). It is also the time where the relations with the parents are perceived by the adolescents as declining and the relations with the peers are perceived as reinforcing (Čerešník, 2019). Hereby we can assume that the weakening of the close relations perceived as important for the adolescents can be the factor which can influence the level of the risk behavior.

## 2 Research sample

The research data were acquired from 1011 lower secondary education pupils in Slovakia, 470 boys and 500 girls in the age from 10 to 15 (41 of them don`t present the data about the sex). Their average age was 12,75 years (standard deviation 1,483). We obtained data in all regions of Slovakia. The representation of the grades was approximately equivalent.

The parent population was 203172 pupils visiting the 5th-9th grade of the elementary state school in the school year 2017/2018 (ÚIAP, 2018).

## 3 Methods

In our research we used two methods. Questionnaire of Risk Behavior (QRB) is the method developed by Čerešník (2016). The form we used is modified. It consists of 38 items which are derived from the clinical indicators of the risk behavior. They are divided into seven subscales: (1) family relations and rituals, (2) school and friendship, (3) addictive behavior, (4) delinquent behavior, (5) bullying, (6) eating habits and activities. There is also the possibility to calculate the total score of the risk behavior. Participants evaluate the items through Likert scale with various possibilities of the answers.

IPPA-R (Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment – Revised) is a method originally developed by Greenberg & Armsden(1987). In present revised version it consists of 75 items. They are divided into three scales of 25 items. They map the level of attachment to the mother, the father and the peers. The task of the participants is to evaluate the items through the five degree Likert scale from "never true" to "always true" answers. Each scale (attachment to mother, attachment to father, attachment to peers) has three subscales which characterise the level of the trust, communication and alienation

We formulated following statistical hypotheses:

H1: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to mother will behave fewer risky in the area of the family relations and rituals.
H2: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to mother will behave fewer risky in the area of the school and friendship.
H3: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to mother will behave fewer risky in the area of the addictive behavior.
H4: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to mother will behave fewer risky in the area of the delinquent behavior.
H5: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to mother will behave fewer risky in the area of the bullying.

H6: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to mother will behave fewer risky in the area of the eating habits and activities.

H7: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to mother will produce lower level of the risk behavior.

H8: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to father will behave fewer risky in the area of the family relations and rituals.

H9: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to father will behave fewer risky in the area of the school and friendship.

H10: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to father will behave fewer risky in the area of the addictive behavior.

H11: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to father will behave fewer risky in the area of the delinquent behavior.

H12: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to father will behave fewer risky in the area of the bullying.

H13: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to father will behave fewer risky in the area of the eating habits and activities.

H14: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to father will produce lower level of the risk behavior.

H15: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to peers will behave fewer risky in the area of the family relations and rituals.

H16: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to peers will behave fewer risky in the area of the school and friendship.

H17: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to peers will behave fewer risky in the area of the addictive behavior.

H18: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to peers will behave fewer risky in the area of the delinquent behavior.

H19: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to peers will behave fewer risky in the area of the bullying.

H20: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to peers will behave fewer risky in the area of the eating habits and activities.

H21: We assume that the adolescents with strong attachment to peers will produce lower level of the risk behavior.

**4 Results**

The obtained data were analysed in the SPSS 20.0 programme. We used the ANOVA test to compare the research subgroups. The standard level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was accepted.

We compared three research subgroups: (1) subgroup with weak attachment, (2) subgroup with average attachment, (3) subgroup with strong attachment. These three subgroups were created on the base of the descriptive values of the attachment score obtained by IPPA-R. We used the average mean and standard deviation to create these subgroups. We used the following formula: AM ± SD. The first subgroup scored below the value AM – SD. The second subgroup scored between the value AM – SD and AM + SD. The third subgroup scored over the value AM + SD. This procedure was realized separately for the mother, the father and the peers.

The results of the analysis are presented in the tables 1-3 and figures 1-4.

*Table 1 Comparison of risk behavior according to level of the attachment to mother*

| attachment_to mother | | FRR | SF | AB | DB | BUL | EHA | RB |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| weak | N | 123 | 130 | 124 | 130 | 130 | 126 | 109 |
| | M | 7,06 | 4,46 | 8,27 | 5,95 | 6,69 | 10,60 | 42,39 |
| | SEM | ,264 | ,140 | ,456 | ,460 | ,481 | ,315 | 1,400 |
| | SD | 2,929 | 1,595 | 5,082 | 5,249 | 5,480 | 3,535 | 14,612 |
| average | N | 654 | 674 | 634 | 671 | 664 | 663 | 552 |
| | M | 4,45 | 3,67 | 6,48 | 3,31 | 3,97 | 8,88 | 30,50 |
| | SEM | ,106 | ,056 | ,173 | ,142 | ,177 | ,138 | ,556 |
| | SD | 2,716 | 1,449 | 4,353 | 3,679 | 4,569 | 3,545 | 13,068 |
| strong | N | 69 | 72 | 66 | 72 | 72 | 72 | 62 |
| | M | 2,61 | 2,93 | 5,14 | 1,28 | 2,49 | 7,56 | 21,97 |
| | SEM | ,234 | ,172 | ,463 | ,197 | ,407 | ,418 | 1,250 |
| | SD | 1,942 | 1,457 | 3,762 | 1,672 | 3,452 | 3,544 | 9,846 |
| F | | 70,621 | 27,194 | 12,678 | 39,276 | 24,487 | 19,225 | 55,876 |
| p | | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 |

Legend: N = frequency, M = mean, SEM = standard error of the mean, SD = standard deviation, F = value of ANOVA test, p = significance; FRR = family relations and rituals, SF = school and friendship, AB = addictive behavior, DB = delinquent behavior, BUL = bullying, EHA = eating habits and activities, RB = total score of risk behavior

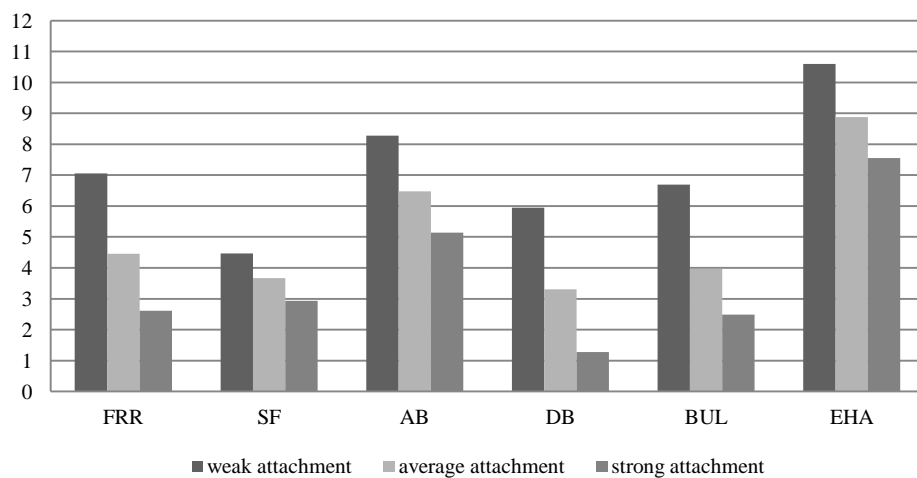*Table 2 Comparison of risk behavior according to level of the attachment to father*

| attachment_to father | | FRR | SF | AB | DB | BUL | EHA | RB |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| weak | N | 130 | 137 | 127 | 137 | 134 | 133 | 109 |
| | M | 7,02 | 4,25 | 8,24 | 5,12 | 5,86 | 10,16 | 40,19 |
| | SEM | ,239 | ,135 | ,482 | ,412 | ,498 | ,331 | 1,410 |
| | SD | 2,726 | 1,575 | 5,436 | 4,819 | 5,766 | 3,814 | 14,720 |
| average | N | 510 | 518 | 489 | 520 | 513 | 513 | 437 |
| | M | 4,28 | 3,64 | 6,19 | 3,18 | 4,01 | 8,94 | 29,93 |
| | SEM | ,115 | ,062 | ,176 | ,155 | ,193 | ,156 | ,587 |
| | SD | 2,593 | 1,410 | 3,888 | 3,538 | 4,365 | 3,535 | 12,276 |
| strong | N | 114 | 118 | 111 | 117 | 116 | 115 | 99 |
| | M | 3,01 | 3,14 | 4,95 | 2,15 | 2,97 | 7,57 | 24,18 |
| | SEM | ,221 | ,152 | ,287 | ,288 | ,378 | ,296 | 1,105 |
| | SD | 2,359 | 1,653 | 3,021 | 3,116 | 4,071 | 3,179 | 10,993 |
| F | | 82,581 | 18,279 | 20,423 | 21,862 | 13,326 | 16,591 | 45,422 |
| p | | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 | < ,001 |

Legend: N = frequency, M = mean, SEM = standard error of the mean, SD = standard deviation, F = value of ANOVA test, p = significance; FRR = family relations and rituals, SF = school and friendship, AB = addictive behavior, DB = delinquent behavior, BUL = bullying, EHA = eating habits and activities, RB = total score of risk behavior

*Table 3 Comparison of risk behavior according to level of the attachment to peers*

| attachment_to peers | | FRR | SF | AB | DB | BUL | EHA | RB |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| weak | N | 140 | 141 | 139 | 143 | 140 | 140 | 121 |
| | M | 5,27 | 4,13 | 6,99 | 4,78 | 6,62 | 9,99 | 36,94 |
| | SEM | ,268 | ,123 | ,440 | ,387 | ,495 | ,290 | 1,359 |
| | SD | 3,166 | 1,465 | 5,191 | 4,632 | 5,861 | 3,434 | 14,948 |
| average | N | 529 | 550 | 522 | 545 | 537 | 539 | 459 |
| | M | 4,76 | 3,77 | 6,57 | 3,38 | 3,90 | 8,96 | 31,20 |
| | SEM | ,120 | ,064 | ,187 | ,153 | ,190 | ,152 | ,603 |
| | SD | 2,760 | 1,491 | 4,278 | 3,573 | 4,405 | 3,531 | 12,911 |
| strong | N | 151 | 160 | 145 | 159 | 160 | 158 | 128 |
| | M | 4,29 | 3,34 | 6,61 | 3,14 | 3,63 | 8,85 | 29,91 |
| | SEM | ,252 | ,127 | ,354 | ,348 | ,351 | ,305 | 1,348 |
| | SD | 3,093 | 1,606 | 4,261 | 4,389 | 4,441 | 3,829 | 15,251 |
| F | | 4,161 | 10,407 | ,480 | 8,408 | 20,839 | 5,146 | 10,109 |
| p | | ,016 | < ,001 | ,619 | < ,001 | < ,001 | ,006 | < ,001 |

Legend: N = frequency, M = mean, SEM = standard error of the mean, SD = standard deviation, F = value of ANOVA test, p = significance; FRR = family relations and rituals, SF = school and friendship, AB = addictive behavior, DB = delinquent behavior, BUL = bullying, EHA = eating habits and activities, RB = total score of risk behavior
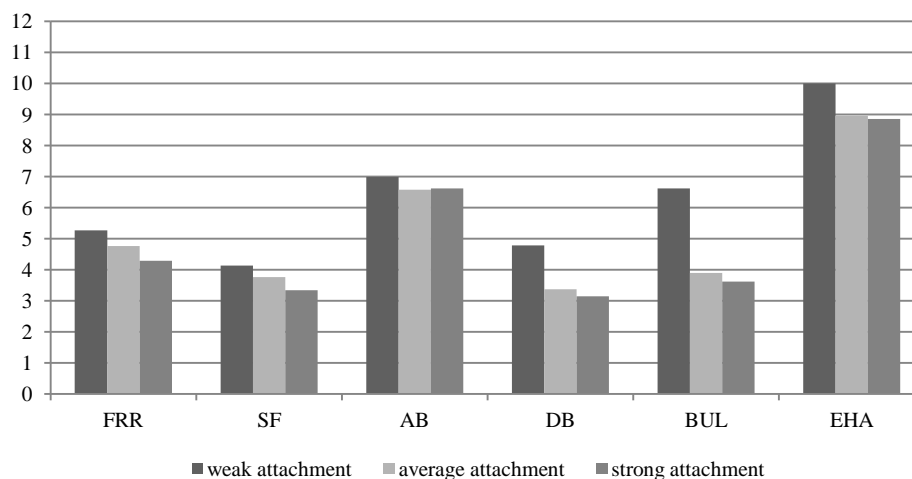


Legend: FRR = family relations and rituals, SF = school and friendship, AB = addictive behavior, DB = delinquent behavior, BUL = bullying, EHA = eating habits and activities

*Figure 1 Subscales of risk behavior according to level of the attachment to mother*
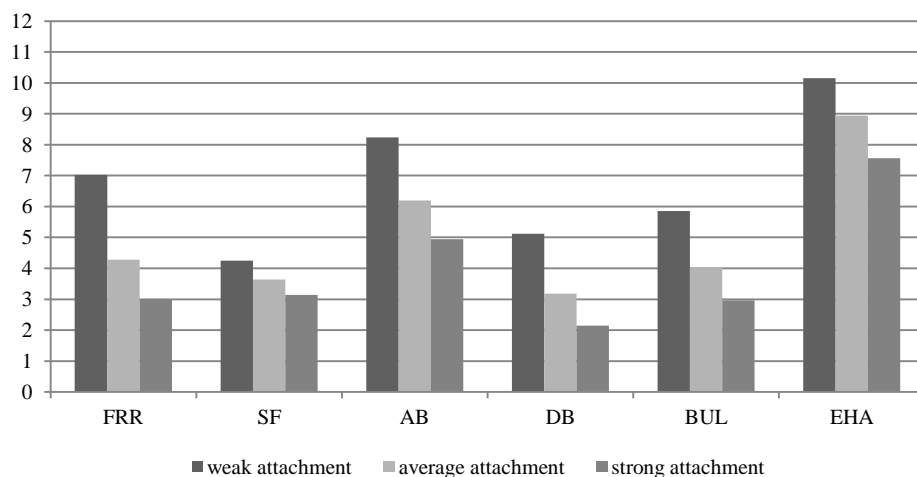


Legend: FRR = family relations and rituals, SF = school and friendship, AB = addictive behavior, DB = delinquent behavior, BUL = bullying, EHA = eating habits and activities

*Figure 2 Subscales of risk behavior according to level of the attachment to father*

Legend: FRR = family relations and rituals, SF = school and friendship, AB = addictive behavior, DB = delinquent behavior, BUL = bullying, EHA = eating habits and activities

*Figure 3 Subscales of risk behavior according to level of the attachment to peers*
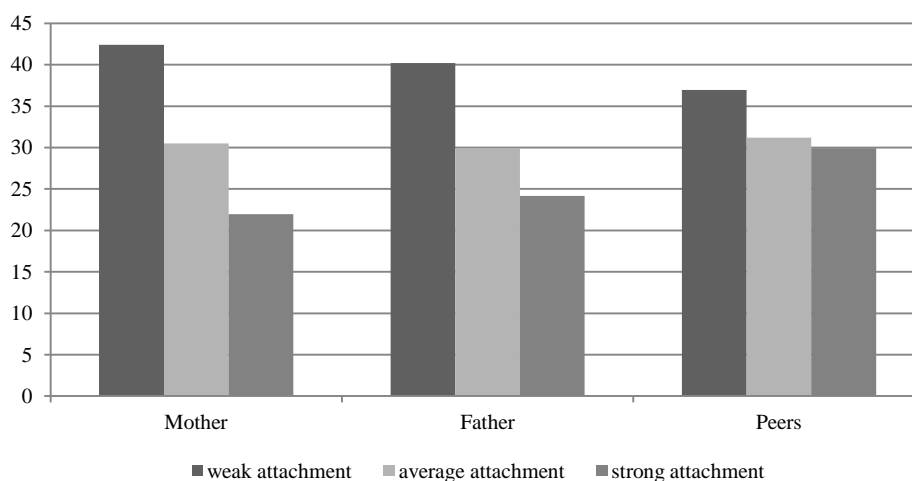


*Figure 4 Total score of risk behavior according to level of the attachment to peers*

We can formulate these conclusions:

- Attachment to mother significantly influences the risk behavior production. In all categories of the risk behavior we can identify the decrease of the values in the relation to quality of the attachment (table 1). F-values range from 12, 678 to 70,621. All results were significant at level α ≤ 0,001. In the comparison of the subgroup with weak attachment and strong attachment we observed the most massive decrease of the risk behavior (subgroup with strong attachment scored lower) in the category of family relations and rituals, bullying (both 63%) and delinquent behavior (79 %) (figure 1). The score of the total risk behavior was lower by 49 % (figure 4).

- Attachment to father significantly influences the risk behavior production. In all categories of the risk behavior we can identify the decrease of the values in the relation to quality of the attachment (table 2). F-values range from 13, 326 to 82,581. All results were significant at level α ≤ 0,001. In the comparison of the subgroup with weak attachment and strong attachment we observed the most massive decrease of the risk behavior (subgroup with strong attachment scored lower) in the category of family relations and rituals, and delinquent behavior (both 58 %)

(figure 2). The score of the total risk behavior was lower by 38 % (figure 4).

- Attachment to peers significantly influences the risk behavior production except the category addictive behavior (nonsignificant result). In all other categories of the risk behavior we can identify the decrease of the values in the relation to quality of the attachment (table 3). F-values range from 4,161 to 20,839. All results were significant at level at least α ≤ 0,05. In the comparison of the subgroup with weak attachment and strong attachment we observed the most massive decrease of the risk behavior (subgroup with strong attachment scored lower) in the category of delinquent behavior (35 %) and bullying (45 %) (figure 3). The score of the total risk behavior was lower by 19 % (figure 4).

**5 Discussion**

As the results showed, we can support all formulated statistical hypotheses except the hypothesis 17. The attachment to the mother seems to be the most influencing relation. It influences the expressions of the risk behavior in all categories, especially the family relations and rituals, bullying and delinquent behavior.

The attachment to father is also the important factor. It influences the expressions of the risk behavior in all categories, especially the family relations and rituals, and delinquent behavior. The attachment to peers is the weakest factor to the relation with risk behavior. The differences among the subgroups are the smallest. But these relations influence mainly the delinquent behavior and bullying. In the category of the addictive behavior the attachment to peers is not the protective factor.

Résumé: The research results showed that close relations with parents are strong factors influencing the risk behavior production. The close relation with the peers doesn`t have this impact.

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