

Trends and Factors for Risky Behavior among Adolescents

Rohila, Nikita (School: Stuttgart High School)

Broadly speaking, adolescence is a stage during human growth and development when the brain is not fully developed and matured. As a result, there are times of poor judgments that may result in impulsive, risky behaviors among adolescents. Common examples include unintentional violence and injuries, tobacco use, underage drinking, and reckless driving. Research has revealed that several of these behaviors may be attributed to unusual hormonal swings. However, scientific studies have also shown that an adolescent's own understanding, judgments, and social environments could play a significant role in making rational and sensible choices. Currently, we lack clear scientific knowledge on the behavioral understanding of adolescents. Thus, my research project focused on investigating trends and factors in adolescents' risk-taking behaviors and decision-making skills on a daily basis. A survey was conducted on 94 high school adolescents aged 14 to 18 years. Chi-square statistical analysis was applied to the collected data using JMP software and inferences were formed. The results revealed three significant contributing factors for risky behavior among adolescents: unhealthy amounts of smartphone and social media usage for leisure, sleep deprivation, and bullying victimization. A noteworthy trend for stress was found to be common among adolescents who displayed a potential for risky behavior in the study. The findings of this project provide significant insights towards a better understanding of patterns in adolescents' behavior and will help in future cognitive psychological research projects, raise adolescents' awareness to reduce risky behaviors, and help strengthen adolescents' rational judgments and behaviors.

Awards Won:

National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health & the Friends of NIDA: Third Award of \$1,000