

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RISK FACTORS AND PROBLEM
BEHAVIORS IN ADOLESCENCE: AN APPROACH TO IDENTIFY A LATENT
GENERAL RISK AND A LATENT GENERAL PROBLEM BEHAVIOR FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

This investigation addressed adolescents' problem behaviors such as school failure, violence, and substance use along with casual sex by identifying a general risk factor and a general problem behavior factor. In this study the data were derived from a nationally representative dataset, commonly called ADD Health dataset. The participants were 6504 adolescents in grades 7 through 12. Testing three research questions and one research hypothesis, the existences of the general risk factor and the general problem behavior factor were supported. In addition, the hypothesized model that describes the influence of the general risk factor on the general problem behavior factor was supported, indicating a strong close relationship between these two latent factors. Lastly, the hypothesized model was tested with multiple group analyses for gender, grade-level and ethnic/racial groups. The interlinked nature of the risk statuses, shared and unique variances of individual problem behaviors, and the implications of the study to prevention and intervention programs are discussed.