

# The relationship between self-esteem, impulsivity and risky behaviour among fourteen-year-old students in the Czech Republic

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**Introduction**

Adolescence is referred to as a bridge between childhood and adulthood. This developmental stage in which the individuals occurred is characterized by changes in the biological, psychological, social and spiritual area. However, risky behaviour is related to adolescence and can have a negative impact on someone who is on the threshold of adulthood.

Risky behaviour was defined with three basic areas - the use of legal and illegal substances, delinquency and bullying. The main objective of the research was to determine how these risky activities are affected by personal characteristics. Two studied personality variables were defined - self-esteem and impulsivity. Self-esteem can be, in other words, described as the emotional aspect of our self. Rosenberg (1965 in Mruk, 2006) defines self-esteem as a feeling, which relates to our own values.

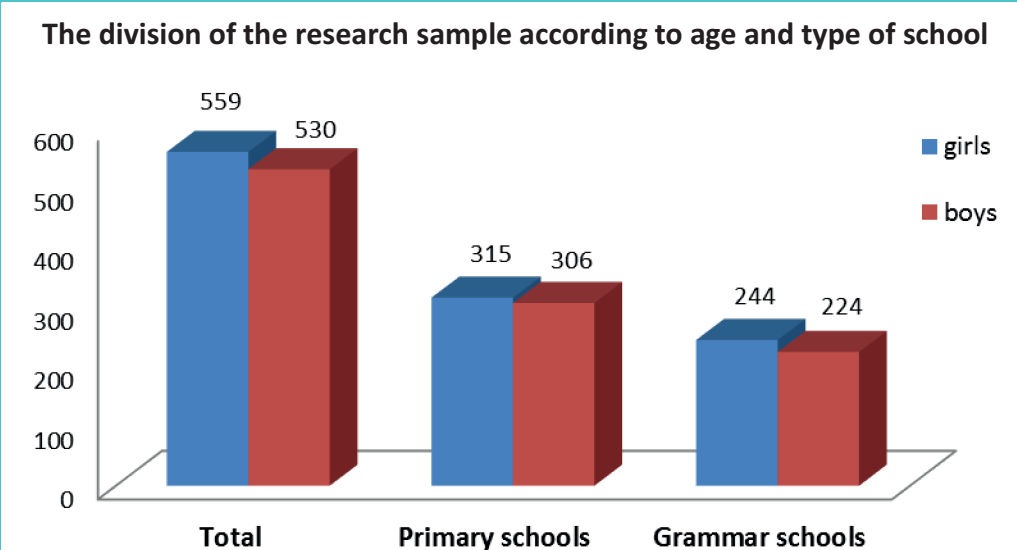
The second examined variable - impulsivity, can be described as behaviour with little or no reflection before an activity and behaviour with a lack of consideration of the consequences. Risk taking or absence of reflection also define impulsivity (APA, 2007).

Risky behaviour is behaviour that increases the growth of social, psychological, medical, developmental, physiological and other risks of individuals, their surroundings and the society (Dolejš, 2010). The abuse, delinquency and bullying were three basic areas of risk that we observed with using the screening tool. The occurrence of risky behaviour among adolescents.



**The research sample**

- 1089 fourteen-year-old individuals
- 559 girls, 530 boys
- Pupils of primary schools or grammar schools
- Respondents from all regions of the Czech Republic
- 1.4% of the total population



**Methods**

Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSS, Rosenberg, 1965, Blatný, Osecká, 1994) assesses the overall relationship to each other. In the scale, two factors can be defined - self-esteem (an assertion of positive statements about themselves) and self-deprecation (denying of negative statements about yourself) (Stolin, 1987 in Blatný, Osecká, 1994). Each factor fills five questions, the method contains 10 items in total.

The scale of personality traits in adolescents ŠORA (Dolejš, Skopal, 2013) focuses on personality traits associated with risky behaviour (anxiety, impulsivity, surgency, prudence). Data from only one factor focussing on impulsivity were used for the research. This factor fills 24 questions in total and 14 questions in the shortened version.

The occurrence of risky behaviour in adolescents VRCHA (Dolejš, Skopal, 2013) is a tool that is used to detect the prevalence of risky activities. Three basic factors can be identified - abuse, delinquency, bullying. The tool consists of 18 items.



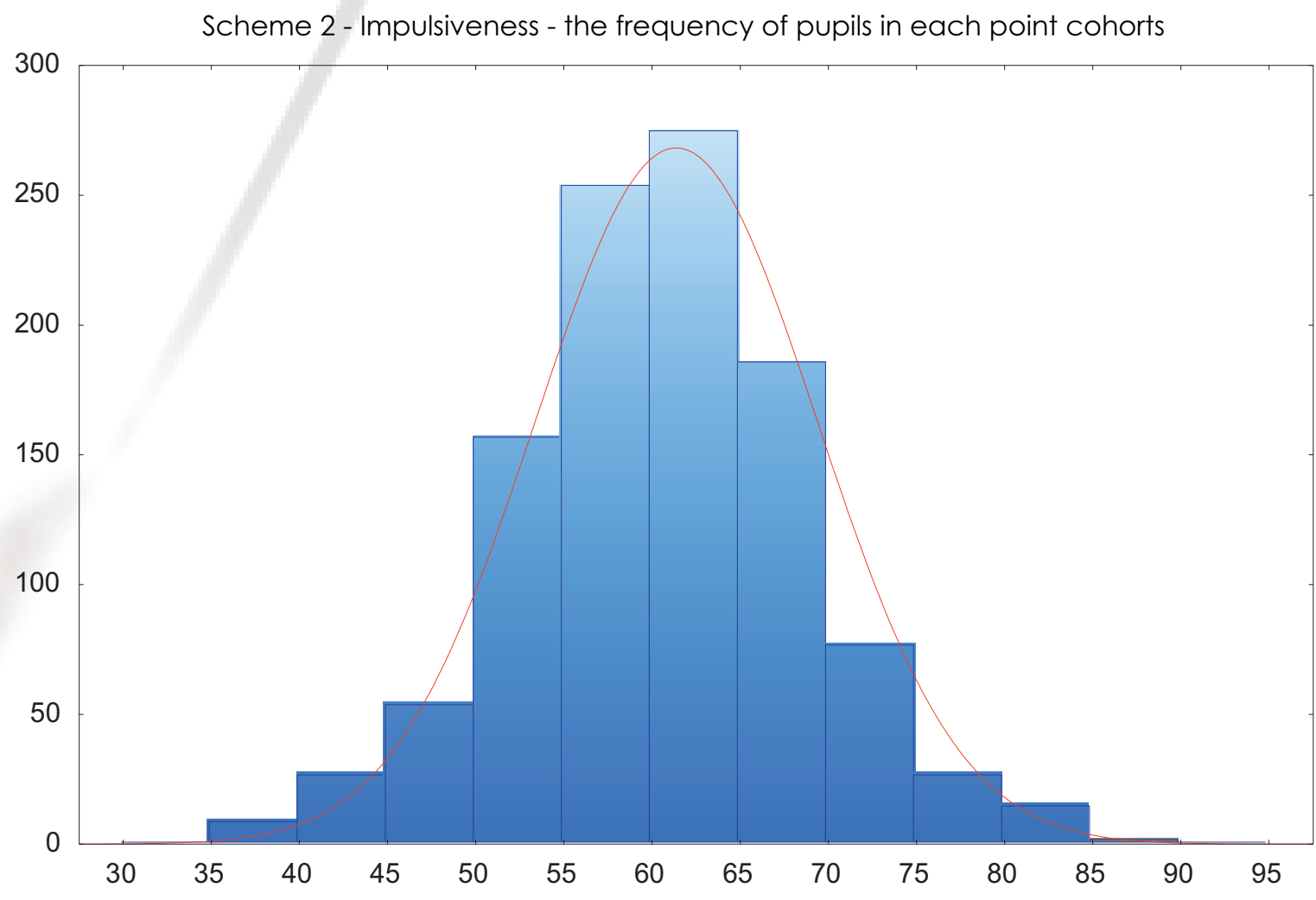
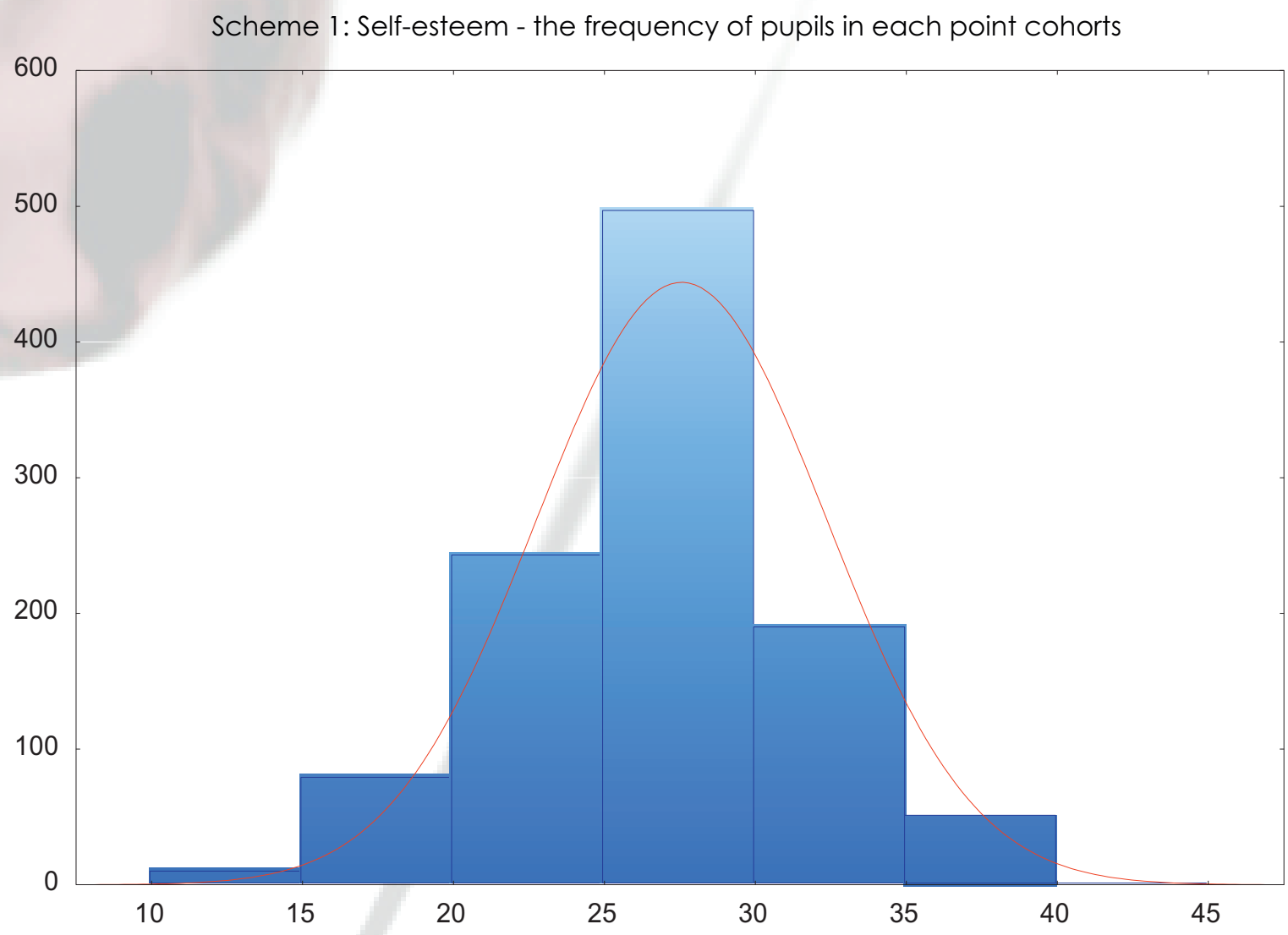
**Discussion**

The research was realized within the project "The analysis of psycho-diagnostic tools identifying the personality traits associated with risky behaviour of adolescents."

The study results showed that the RSS method has high reliability (Cronbach .90). Similarly, high values have other researches carried out on a sample of adolescents. Vaculik (2000) mentions Cronbach's alpha .81. With a focus on personal characteristics in relation to the gender we see that girls have lower self-esteem than boys. These results correspond with the findings of the authors of previous studies (Robins, Trzesniewski, 2005, Blatný, Osecká, 1997). The difference in impulsivity between the sexes was not found. Both scales measuring personality characteristics have normal frequency in each point cohorts, which can be seen in Scheme 1 and 2.

The most common risky activities that fourteen-year-olds show include drinking alcoholic beverages in the past 30 days (58%), falsifying the parents' signature (38%) and intentional self-harm at some time during their lives (30%). More results of the examined risky activities and their distribution in the population are presented in Table 1.

In Table 2 represents the results of the analysis, which shows the relationship between self-esteem and risky behaviour ( $r = -.20^{**}$ ), especially a significant negative correlation has been found with bullying ( $r = -.31^{**}$ ). Previous researches indicate that impulsivity has statistically significant relationship with risky behaviour (Woicik, Stewart, Pihl, Conrod, 2009, Skopal, 2012), and this fact is proved by our obtained values too ( $r = .43^{***}$ ). A more detailed description of our results can be seen in Table 3. A significant negative correlation ( $r = -.29^{***}$ ) was also found among the examined personality variables (impulsivity, self-esteem). see table 4. On the basis of the received results it is possible to say that certain personality characteristics are related to signs of risky behaviour.



Tab. 1: Prevalence of risky activities of fourteen-year-old students				
Factor	Items of VRCHA methods	No	Yes	Expression of occurrence of individual risky activities in the basic
Abuse	Drinking alcoholic beverages (last 30 days)	58 %	42 %	32364
	Cigarette smoking, use of marijuana, hashish (life)	83 %	17 %	13593
	Smoking cigarettes (last 30 days)	82 %	18 %	13737
	Sexual intercourse (life)	93 %	7 %	5754
	Smoking more than 5 cigarettes (day)	95 %	5 %	3596
	Drunkenness associated with trouble walking, speaking, vomiting, amnesia (last 30 days)	94 %	6 %	4531
Delinquency	Misuse of drugs (life)	87 %	13 %	9925
	Have you ever falsified your parents' signature? (life)	62 %	38 %	29559
	Stealing money from parents / other people (life)	84 %	16 %	12802
	Truancy (life)	88 %	12 %	9278
	Stealing some things (life)	71 %	29 %	22439
	Damage of the property of another person's	82 %	18 %	14312
Bullying	Problems with the police because of some activity	91 %	9 %	7048
	Shoplifting (life)	85 %	15 %	11507
	Intentional physical harm (life)	70 %	30 %	23302
	A victim of coarse and vulgar insults from classmates (last 30 days)	80 %	20 %	15391
	Harm or ridicule on the Internet (last 30 days)	92 %	8 %	6545
	Injury by classmates (last 30 days)	89 %	11 %	8702

Tab. 2: The results of the RSS and VRCHA methods analysis			
	Self-esteem RSS	Self-deprecation RSS	Overall score RSS
Abuse VRCHA	-.11**	.11**	-.12**
Delinquency VRCHA	-.05	.06*	-.07*
Bullying VRCHA	-.27**	.28**	-.31**
Total score VRCHA	-.17**	.18**	-.20**

Note: \* - Significant at 0.05; \*\* - Significant at 0.01.

Tab. 3: Results of the relationship analysis between the factor of impulsivity of ŠORA method and VRCHA method				
	Impulsivity ŠORA	Abuse VRCHA	Delinquency VRCHA	Bullying VRCHA
Abuse VRCHA	.37***	-	-	-
Delinquency VRCHA	.38***	.40***	-	-
Bullying VRCHA	.25***	.30***	.20***	-
Total score VRCHA	.46***	.81***	.78***	.58***

Note: \*\*\* - significant at 0.001.

Tab. 4: Results of the analysis between RSS and the factor of impulsivity in the method ŠORA			
	Impulsivity ŠORA	Total score RSS	Self-deprecation RSS
Total score RSS	-.29***	-	-
Self-deprecation RSS	.31***	.91***	-
Self-respect RSS	-.20***	.87***	.60***

Note: \*\*\* - significant at 0.001.

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