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Original research paper

## **CONTROL LESS, TRUST MORE: PARENTING AND EXTERNALISING PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENTS\***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Previous research recognises poor parental monitoring, negative parental upbringing practices and insecure attachment as risk factors of great importance for understanding externalising problems in adolescence. The aim of the research is to understand the role that affective attachment to parents plays in the interpretation of the relationship between parental monitoring and upbringing practices with externalising problems of adolescents. A total of 507 adolescents (209 males and 298 females), aged between 15 to 18 filled the questionnaires. Through the use of structural equation modelling, trust in parents is revealed as important mediator with systematic effect that deserves further attention. It is found that trust in parents, especially in mothers, is a more potent mediator for explaining the link between positive parenting and parental monitoring with aggressive behaviour than with rule-breaking behaviour. Results are discussed in the light of the importance of parent-adolescent relationship for externalising problems in adolescence.

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#### **Key words:**

parenting, parental monitoring, attachment to parents, externalising problems, adolescents.

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## ■ INTRODUCTION

Within the theoretical framework of developmental psychopathology, difficulties in adolescent adjustment are summarised in two broad categories: externalising problems (under control) and internalising problems (over-controlled) (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Among predictors of externalising problems in adolescence, those related to parent-adolescent relationship have drawn great attention of researchers worldwide. For example, recent meta-analysis point to following factors: parental monitoring, severe punishment, attachment to parents, psychological control, parental warmth, parental rejection, behavioural control, psychological control, autonomy granting, authoritative, and permissive parenting (Hoeve *et al.*, 2009; Hoeve *et al.*, 2012; Pinquard, 2017). Researchers often examine the connection between externalising problems and constructs such as: parental monitoring (e.g. Finkenauer, Engels & Baumeister, 2005; Laird & LaFleur, 2016); attachment to parents (Tambelli, Laghi, Odoriso & Notari, 2012; Vries, Hoeve, Stam & Accecher, 2016), parental practice (Fite, Colder, Lochman & Wells, 2006; Frick, Christian & Wootton, 1999), etc.

For decades, research has indicated that poor parental monitoring and supervision are highly related to adolescent adjustment (Lopez-Tamayo, Robinson, Lambert, Jasson & Lalongo, 2016; Keijsers, 2016). Nevertheless, researchers disagree about the significance of the term “parental monitoring”. A systematic review of studies examining the impact of poor parental control on delinquency found a stronger effect on those who operationalised it as parents’ knowledge of where, with whom and how their children spend their spare time in comparison to those where it was operationalised as self-examination of adolescents or as the establishment of rules (Flanagan, Auty & Farrington, 2019). Various measures of externalising and internalising problems correlated more strongly with parental knowledge than with control or solicitation (Stattin, Kerr & Tilton-Weaver, 2010). Researcher suggests that monitoring is a complex process and involves parental actions that provide context conducive to adolescent disclosure (e.g. Finkenauer, Engels & Baumeister, 2005). Positive and negative educational practices seem relevant to the interpretation of parental control as a process. Parental monitoring should involve the assessment of parental and adolescent behaviour; identification of the patterns of parental and adolescent behaviour in cycles; evaluation of parental characteristics that contribute to parent-adolescent interactions; evaluation of the adolescent’s characteristics that contribute to parent-adolescent interactions and consideration of the interconnectedness of the family context, peers, school, and community (Hayes, Hudson & Matthews, 2003). The results of the research indicate that adequate parental supervision affects good parent-child relationships and other family processes. (Borawski, Ievers-Landis, Lovegreen & Trapl, 2003; Kerr, Stattin & Trost, 1999; Kerr & Stattin, 2000). According to Hirsch’s Theory of Social

Bonds, social bonding shapes parent-child relationships, peer relationships, and the relationship between the individual and society. (Hirschi, 1969). Social bonding provides a source of indirect control that parents have over their children especially when they are not physically present. Parental psychological presence can therefore make adolescents think twice before “breaking the rule” (Kerr, Stattin & Burk, 2010). If relationship quality were important for understanding the link of monitoring with externalising problems (e.g. Kerr & Stattin, 2000), one would expect that conflict would be destructive to parental monitoring and positively related to externalising problems (e.g. Ary, Duncan, Duncan & Hops, 1999; Buist *et al.*, 2017).

Not too many research papers pay attention to the relationship of parental monitoring and parenting practice, attachment to parents with adolescent externalising problem behaviour (Bosmans, Braet, Van Leeuwen & Beyers, 2006; Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005; Gallarin & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012; Laird & Marrero, 2010; Muris, Meesters & van den Berg, 2003). Prior research indicates that the strength of the relationship between parental monitoring and externalising problems, mediated by attachment to parents, was weaker in the older group of adolescents (Bosmans *et al.*, 2006), or completely missing (Gallarin & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012). On the other hand, the strength of the link between attachment to parents and parental practice was equally important across all examined age groups (10–18) (Bosmans *et al.*, 2006). However, recent meta-analytical studies point to a strong link between parenting and externalising problems (Pinquart, 2017), and parental monitoring and externalising problems in the sample of adolescents (Flanagan, Auty & Farrington, 2019). Murris, Meesters & van der Berg (2003) did not reveal mediating effect of attachment to parents in relation to parental practice and externalising problems. Researchers recognise that the level of emotional cohesion across families generally remains unchanged during adolescence regardless of changes that are observed in other domains of the parent-child relationship. (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). The different roles of affective attachment to mother and father in relation to adolescent adjustment problems are also discerned. It has been found that trust in mothers mediated the link between child self-disclosure, solicitation and other relevant parental monitoring strategies with rule-breaking behaviour (Laird & Marrero, 2010). Stronger associations of maternal parenting with externalising problems than paternal parenting might be explained by the fact that the children may be more influenced by the caregiver who is most involved in their lives (Pinquart, 2017). Nevertheless, researchers suggest that fathering and mothering influence children in similar ways (Fagan, Day, Lamb & Cabrera, 2014), and recommend that combined effects of secure attachments to mother and to father best predict the child’s development (Pinquart, 2017). Research findings suggest differences in the way affective attachment to father and mother mediates parental monitoring and upbringing processes with rule-breaking and violent behaviours (Gallarin & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012; van der Vorst, Engels, Mees & Deković, 2006).

The results of the factor analysis have previously suggested that different role of attachment to mothers and fathers related to externalising problems (Kovačević-Lepojević, Ilić, Maljković, Kovačević & Ilijić, 2020). Hirschi's widely recognised social bonding theory (1969) involves attachment to parents as one of the key elements of social bond (in addition to commitment, involvement in conventional social roles and belief in conventional moral values of society). The aim of the current research is to test the mediation role of attachment to parents in relation to parental monitoring and parental practice with externalising problems on the Serbian sample. In line with previous findings, we hypothesise that the link between parental monitoring and parental practice with externalising problems will at least partially explain the connection between parental monitoring and parenting practices with externalising problems. Moreover, it is expected to clarify the specific role of attachment to mothers and fathers related to externalising problems. Finally, we aim to examine the differences between aggressive and rule-breaking behaviour in relation to parental monitoring and parental practice and attachment to parents.

## ■ METHOD

### *Participants and procedures*

The research was conducted during the second term of the 2013/14 school year. Research participants were students of six Belgrade secondary schools, and they were chosen by random selection from one class in each grade (from the first to the fourth grade). The sample included 507 students of both sexes, aged from fifteen to eighteen. Students' average age was 16.69 (SD = 1,119), with 97 (19.1%) fifteen-year-olds, 130 (25.6%) sixteen-year-olds, 115 (22.7%) seventeen-year-olds and 165 (32.5%) eighteen-year-olds. There is a relative gender equality with 209 (41.2%) male students and 298 (58.8%) female students. This survey was a part of doctoral thesis at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER). As it was recommended by FASPER, participating schools conducted their internal procedures which were necessary for obtaining data from students (e.g. approval of parental council).

Taking into account all high schools and vocational secondary schools in Belgrade, a simple random technique was used to select the sample, selecting three high schools and three secondary vocational schools. The principals of each school were contacted and informed about research goals, and the approval request was sent. When principals agreed, researchers informed students about research goals and gave the information on collecting procedure and data confidentiality. None

of the students refused to participate in the study. Participation was voluntarily and anonymous. Data were collected by the questionnaire during one school class.

### *Instruments*

**Externalising problems.** For the assessment of externalising problems, a part of instrumentarium for assessing the emotional, social and behavioural problems in children and adolescents the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment – ASEBA, Youth Self-Report – YSR (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) was used. Prevalence and forms of externalising problems were studied on the basis of the Scale of Aggressive Behaviour (17 items) (item example: “I fight a lot”) and the Scale of Rule-Breaking Behaviour (16 items) (item example: “I drink alcohol”). The coefficients of Cronbach’s alpha for the Scale of Aggressive Behaviour (.837) and for the Scale of Rule-Breaking Behaviour (.824) reflect a good internal consistency and correspond to the findings of other researchers (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). The scales are three-grade Likert-type scales where respondents give their answers by choosing one of the replies offered, starting from 0 – false, through 1 – partly true and 3 – true. The total score of externalising problems and the scores on the Scale of Aggressive Behaviour and the Scale of Rule-Breaking Behaviour have been obtained by the addition of answers, higher scores implying larger share of externalising behaviour problems. The instrument was implemented in Serbia with the sample of adolescents displaying typical development and the ones with intellectual disabilities (Banković & Đorđević, 2014).

**Parental monitoring.** The Scale of Parental Monitoring (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000) was used for the assessment of parental monitoring. The Scale of Parental Monitoring consists of four subscales titled: Parental Knowledge, Child Disclosure, Parental Solicitation and Parental Control. Nine items on the Parental Knowledge Subscale measure parents’ awareness of the activities, movements and friends of adolescents. For example, “Do your parents know how you spend your free time?” The five items on the Child Disclosure Subscale measure spontaneous reporting of their activities, movements, and friends. For example, “Do you tell your parents about your friends? (e.g. what they think and feel about different things)”. Five questions on the Parental Solicitation Subscale measure encouraging adolescents to communicate their activities, movements and friends outside the family. For example, “How often in the past month did your parents ask you how you spent your free time?” The six items of the Parental Control Subscale measure the ways in which parents controlled adolescents’ free time. For example, “Do you have to ask your parents for permission to go out at night at weekends?”. The Parental Monitoring Scale is a five-point Likert-type scale, with respondents answering by choosing one of the given answers from 1 – never, 2 – rarely, 3 – sometimes, 4 – often, to 5 – almost always. Scores on the subscales: Parental Knowledge, Child Disclosure,

Parental Solicitation and Parental Control are obtained by summing the answers, with higher scores on the subscales implying a greater representation of these aspects of parental monitoring. The coefficients of reliability, according to the results obtained by studying the Subscales of Parental Monitoring, are mainly deemed to be good or acceptable, the coefficients of reliability for Subscale of Parental Knowledge being 0.849, Subscale of Parental Control being .832, Subscale of Child Disclosure being .746, except for Subscale of Parental Solicitation whose reliability is considered questionable, given the obtained value of .676. These reliability coefficients are in line with the results of other researchers (Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

**Attachment to parents.** The Inventory of Parents and Peer Attachment, IPPA) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), namely, the section for assessing the affective attachment to mother and father according to the last changes made by the author (Greenberg & Armsden, 2009), was used for assessing the affective attachment. It contains twenty-five items grouped in three subscales titled: Trust, Communication and Alienation. The Subscale of Trust measures the level of mutual understanding and respect and consists of ten items, for example: “My mother respects my feelings” or “My father understands me”. The Communication Subscale measures the quality of mutual communication and contains nine items, for example: “My mother helps me understand myself better” or “My father notices when I am upset about something”. The Alienation Subscale measures feelings of anger and mutual alienation and contains six items, for example, “I get easily upset in the presence of my mother” or “I’m angry with my father.” The Inventory of Parents and Peer Attachment is a five-point Likert-type scale, with respondents answering by choosing one of the suggested answers from 1 – never, 2 – rarely, 3 – sometimes, 4 – often, to 5 – almost always. Respondents provide answers that specifically assess affective attachment to mother and father. Scores on the subscales are obtained by summing the answers, with higher scores on the Trust Subscale implying a higher degree of trust between the adolescent and mother/father, the Communication Subscale better communication between the adolescent and mother/father and the Alienation Subscale a higher degree of alienation between the adolescent and mother/ father. As it was found in literature, revised version of the Inventory of Parents Attachment used in this research paper, except for the Subscale of Alienation from Mother, has good reliability parameters (Pace, Martini & Zavattini, 2011). Coefficients of Cronbach’s alpha for subscales: Trust in Father (.913), Trust in Mother (.886), Communication with Mother (.840), Communication with Father (.879) show good reliability, with acceptable reliability of Alienation of Father (.749) and suspicious reliability of Alienation of Mother (.699). That is in line with the results of average Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for attachment to mother (.87) and attachment to father (.89) given by the author of the instrument (Greenberg & Armsden, 2009).

**Positive and negative parental practices.** The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ) measures five parenting dimensions that are relevant for aetiology and treatment of externalising problems, the version intended for six- to eighteen-year-old children (Frick, 1991). It contains 42 items grouped in five subscales in a following way: Parental Involvement, Positive Parenting, Poor Monitoring/Supervision, Inconsistent Discipline and Corporal Punishment. The Parental Involvement Subscale contains ten items that measure parental involvement in a variety of leisure activities that adolescents engage in, such as “My mother helps me with homework” or “I help plan family activities.” The Positive Parenting Subscale contains six items that measure the encouragement of positive adolescent behaviour, for example, “Parents praise me when I do something good” or “Parents tell me they love it when I help them with household chores.” The Poor Monitoring/Supervision Subscale consists of ten items that indicate a lack of monitoring and supervision by parents, for example “Parents are so busy that they forget where I am and what I do” or “It happens that I do not leave a message to my parents or inform them otherwise where I am going.” The Inconsistent Discipline Subscale contains six items that measure inconsistencies in parents’ actions, for example, “Parents threaten to punish me and then fail to do so” or “The punishment I receive from my parents depends on their mood.” The Corporal Punishment Subscale includes three items that represent forms of corporal punishment such as “Parents slap me when I do something bad” or “Parents punish me by hitting me with a belt, a stick or other objects when I do something bad.” The APQ is a five-point Likert-type questionnaire, where respondents choose one of the given answers from 1 – never, 2 – rarely, 3 – sometimes, 4 – often, to 5 – almost always. Scores for each subscale are obtained by summarising the answers. The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (Frick, Christian & Wootton, 1999) has a weaker internal consistency compared to other scales, but it remains within the limits of acceptability and in accordance with the findings of other researchers. For the subscales: Positive Parenting of .809 and Parental Involvement of .792 the value of Cronbach’s alpha indicates good, i.e., acceptable reliability. However, the coefficients measured for subscales: Corporal Punishment .662 and Poor Monitoring/Supervision .688, indicate suspicious reliability given that the Inconsistent Discipline Subscale has a poor reliability (.523).

### *Statistical procedure*

Data were analysed with a SPSS and AMOS statistical software. Correlation analysis was used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between all examined variables. Pearson’s linear correlation coefficient was used as a measure of correlation. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used for testing the relations between parental monitoring (as exogenous variables) and externalising problems (endogenous variables) with the mediation of attachment to mother and father. Overall

fit of the model was assessed using  $\chi^2$ , the relative/normed  $\chi^2$  to degrees of freedom (df) ratio, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Normed-Fit Index (NFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI). According to the standards, a model fit the data if  $\chi^2$  is non-significant, but it is known that significance of  $\chi^2$  increases with sample size, number of variables and their correlation (Lazarević, 2008). Maximum Likelihood Estimation was used.

## ■ RESULTS

### *Descriptive statistics and intercorrelation of examined measures*

**Table 1:** Descriptive characteristics and internal consistency of examined measures

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	A
Aggressive Behaviour	507	0	28	7.66	5.20	.837
Rule-Breaking Behaviour	507	0	26	5.18	4.45	.824
Parental Knowledge	507	8	25	3.876	.705	.849
Child Disclosure	507	7	25	3.504	.821	.746
Parental Solicitation	507	8	25	3.692	.735	.676
Parental Monitoring	507	5	25	3.202	1.006	.832
Trust in Mother	507	10	50	4.284	.665	.886
Communication Mother	507	12	45	3.766	.815	.840
Alienation Mother	507	6	27	2.073	.744	.699
Trust in Father	507	10	50	4.034	.858	.913
Communication Father	507	9	45	3.269	.963	.879
Alienation Father	507	6	28	2.320	.858	.749
Parental Involvement	507	12	50	3.252	.710	.792
Positive Parenting	507	6	30	3.623	.860	.809
Poor Monitoring/Supervision	507	10	43	2.626	.615	.688
Inconsistent Parenting	507	6	28	2.602	.757	.523
Corporal Punishment	507	3	15	1.798	.730	.662

Table 2: Intercorrelation of examined measures

	EP	AB	RBB	PK	CS	PS	PC	TM	CM	AM	TF	CF	AF	PI	PP	PM	IP
AB	.928**																
RBB	.883**	.659**															
PK	-.437**	-.303**	-.515**														
CS	-.391**	-.263**	-.471**	.673**													
PS	-.171**	-.099*	-.232**	.473**	.529**												
PC	-.159**	-.067	-.234**	.321**	.233**	.300**											
TM	-.395**	-.305**	-.420**	.498**	.478**	.358**	.029										
CM	-.301**	-.212**	-.347**	.539**	.600**	.473**	.203**	.735**									
AM	.396**	.341**	.387**	-.418**	-.448**	-.300**	-.018	-.696**	-.618**								
TF	-.391**	-.322**	-.407**	.401**	.367**	.298**	.093*	.460**	.349**	-.378**							
KF	-.333**	-.289**	-.316**	.408**	.381**	.330**	.157**	.382**	.451**	-.358**	.778**						
AF	.350**	.330**	.313**	-.304**	-.291**	-.183**	-.021	-.371**	-.292**	.529**	-.692**	-.653**					
PI	-.218**	-.131**	-.277**	.487**	.539**	.524**	.231**	.508**	.611**	-.421**	.224**	.299**	-.167**				

PP	-.224**	-.151**	-.268**	.375**	.370**	.377**	.173**	.397**	.404**	-.280**	.357**	.375**	-.263**	.561**
PM	.427**	.323**	.475**	-.492**	-.391**	-.250**	-.458**	-.274**	-.323**	.321**	-.280**	-.267**	.226**	-.235**
IP	.275**	.226**	.269**	-.253**	-.248**	-.128**	-.075	-.276**	-.209**	.289**	-.228**	-.235**	.222**	-.060
CP	.294**	.278**	.267**	-.146**	-.152**	-.102*	.207**	-.326**	-.157**	.317**	-.335**	-.275**	.334**	-.082
														-.148**
														.099*
														-.213**

Note. EP – Externalising Problems; AB – Aggressive Behaviour; RBB – Rule-breaking Behaviour; PK – Parental Knowledge; CD – Child Disclosure; PK – Parental Knowledge; PS – Parental Solicitation; PC – Parental Control; TM – Trust in Mother; CM – Communication with Mother; AM – Alienation Mother; TF – Trust in Father; CF – Communication with Father; AF – Alienation Father; PI – Parental Involvement; PP – Positive Parenting; PM – Poor Monitoring/Supervision; IP – Inconsistent Parenting; CP – Corporal Punishment.

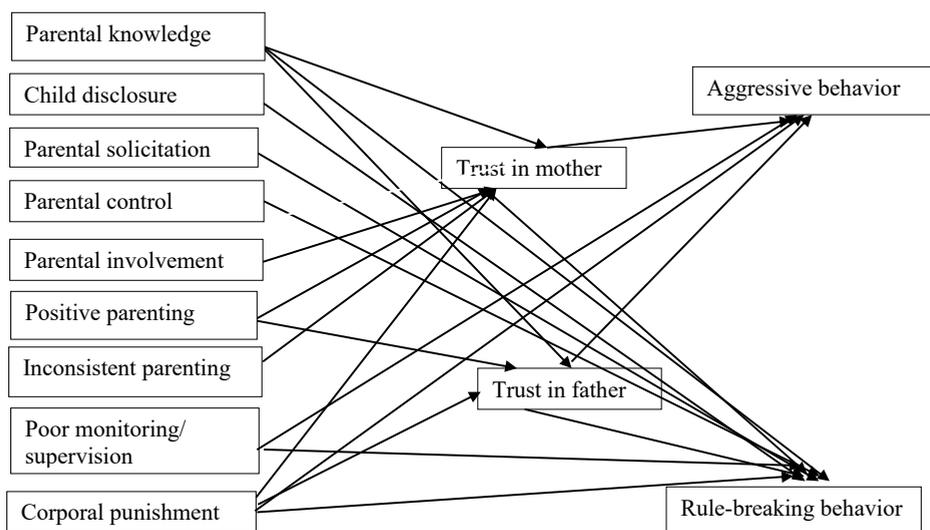
p > .05, \*\* p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01

It could be noticed that parental monitoring subscales are most strongly correlated with the attachment to parents construct. All aspects of parental monitoring except parental control correlate with trust, communication, and alienation from mother and father. Additionally, parental monitoring subscales positively correlate with positive parental practice. Externalising problems negatively correlate with all aspects of parental monitoring, positive aspects of attachment to parents (trust in mother/father and communication with mother/father) and positive parental practice (parental involvement and positive parenting). Positive correlation of externalising problems with alienation from the mother/father and negative parental practice such as poor monitoring/supervision, inconsistent discipline and corporal punishment are recognised.

*Attachment to parents as a mediator of the link between parental monitoring, positive and negative parental practice and externalising problems*

After modelling ( $\chi^2 = 7,59$ ;  $df = 4$ ,  $p > .05$ ; NFI = 1; TLI = .97; CFI = 1; RMSEA = .04 (.20 to .59) direct and indirect paths from parental monitoring and positive and negative parental practice to aggressive and rule-breaking behaviour, it could be noticed that we obtained a model that is too complicated for the interpretation, because all variables are in correlation. At first, we eliminated all insignificant parameters ( $\chi^2 = 104.8$ ;  $df = 51$ ,  $p < .05$ ; NFI = .98; TLI = .97; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .05), then finally all insignificant mediators related to externalising problems ( $\chi^2 = 42.47$ ;  $df = 23$ ,  $p < .05$ ; NFI = .98; TLI = .97; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .04, 90% CI [.020 – .059]). Intercorrelations between focal predictors were included and tested in the original, and kept in the final model, as well. The final structural model is shown in Figure 1. Path coefficients are given in Table 3. Indirect effects are tested and given in Table 4.

The structural model revealed several interesting findings about the relations between the examined measures. The mediators that are directly and negatively related to aggressive and rule-breaking behaviour are: trust in mother and trust in father. Their effects are weak but deserve further attention. Trust in mother fully mediates the relations of parental involvement and inconsistent parenting with rule-breaking behaviour; and parental control, positive parenting, parental involvement and inconsistent parenting with aggressive behaviour. Trust in mother and trust in father fully mediate relation between positive parenting and rule-breaking behaviour; and parental knowledge with aggressive behaviour. Trust in mother and trust in father partially mediate the link between parental knowledge and rule-breaking behaviour and corporal punishment with rule-breaking behaviour and with aggressive behaviour. Trust in mother partially mediate the link between parental control and rule-breaking behaviour. Expectedly, all paths from parental monitoring scales to rule-breaking behaviour were negative except parental solicitation. Corporal punishment and poor monitoring/supervision were positively related to criterion variables.



**Figure 1:** Trust in mother and trust in father as a mediator of the link between parental monitoring and aggressive behaviour and rule-breaking behaviour

Path coefficients of the final structural model in which role of trust in mother and father as mediators of association between parental monitoring, positive and negative parental practice and aggressive behaviour and rule-breaking behaviour were tested (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Standard and Standardised regression weights for final model

			B	$\beta$	SE	CR	P	Label
TM	<---	PK	.27	.28	.40	.07	***	par_1
TF	<---	PK	.28	.28	.41	.07	***	par_2
TM	<---	PC	-.13	-.13	.35	-.04	***	par_6
TM	<---	PI	.33	.34	.41	.08	***	par_8
TM	<---	PP	.94	.96	.40	0.02	.19	par_9
TF	<---	PP	.21	.21	.41	.05	***	par_10
TM	<---	ID	-.13	-.13	.34	0.00	***	par_13
TM	<---	FP	-.19	-.19	.37	-.05	***	par_14
TF	<---	CP	-.27	-.26	.39	-.07	***	par_15
RBB	<---	RK	-.14	-.14	.43	-.03	.01	par_3
RBB	<---	CD	-.15	-.15	.40	-.04	***	par_4
RBB	<---	PS	.07	.72	.35	.02	.43	par_5
RBB	<---	PC	-.09	-.91	.34	-.03	.10	par_7
AGG	<---	PM	.23	.23	.41	.06	***	par_11
RBB	<---	PM	.23	.24	0.40	.06	***	par_12
AGG	<---	CP	.18	.17	.45	.04	***	par_16
RBB	<---	CP	.14	.14	.39	.04	***	par_17

AGG	<---	TM	-.12	-.12	.47	-.03	.10	par_19
RBB	<---	TM	-.13	-.13	.42	-.03	.03	par_20
RBB	<---	TF	-.14	-.14	.40	-.03	***	par_21
AGG	<---	TF	-.15	-.15	.47	-.03	.02	par_54

Model fit:  $\chi^2 = 42.47$ ;  $df = 23$ ,  $p < .05$ ; NFI = .98; TLI = .97; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .04, 90% CI [.020 - .059]

Note. B – unstandardised regression coefficient; SE(B) – standard error;  $\beta$  – standardised regression coefficient; CR – critical ratio.

AB – Aggressive Behaviour; RBB – Rule-breaking Behaviour; PK – Parental Knowledge; CD – Child Disclosure; PK – Parental Knowledge; PS – Parental Solicitation; PC – Parental Control; TM – Trust in Mother; CM – Communication with Mother; AM – Alienation Mother; TF – Trust in Father; CF – Communication with Father; AF – Alienation Father; PI – Parental Involvement; PP – Positive Parenting; PM- Poor Monitoring/Supervision; IP – Inconsistent Parenting; CP – Corporal Punishment.

**Table 4:** Standardised and Standard Indirect effects

		<b>B</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>
ID		.00	.00
CP		.00	.00
PP		.00	.00
PI		.00	.00
PC		.00	.00
PK	TM	.00	.00
TM		.00	.00
CD		.00	.00
TF		.00	.00
PM		.00	.00
PS		.00	.00
ID		.00	.00
CP		.00	.00
PP		.00	.00
PI		.00	.00
PC		.00	.00
PK	TF	.00	.00
TM		.00	.00
CD		.00	.00
TF		.00	.00
PM		.00	.00
PS		.00	.00

ID		.17	.17
CP		.62	.61
PP		-.41	-.42
PI		-.42	-.44
PC		.16	.17
PK	RBB	-.73	-.75
TM		.00	.00
CD		.00	.00
TF		.00	.00
PM		.00	.00
PS		.00	.00
ID		.16	.16
CP		.64	.61
PP		-.42	-.42
PI		-.40	-.41
PC		.16	.16
PK	AGG	-.74	-.74
TM		.00	.00
CD		.00	.00
TF		.00	.00
PM		.00	.00
PS		.00	.00

*Note.* B – unstandardised regression coefficient;  $\beta$  – standardised regression coefficient  
 AB – Aggressive Behaviour; RBB – Rule-breaking Behaviour; PK – Parental Knowledge; CD – Child Disclosure; PK – Parental Knowledge; PS – Parental Solicitation; PC – Parental Control; TM – Trust in Mother; CM – Communication with Mother; AM – Alienation Mother; TF – Trust in Father; CF – Communication with Father; AF – Alienation Father; PI – Parental Involvement; PP – Positive Parenting; PM- Poor Monitoring/Supervision; IP – Inconsistent Parenting; CP – Corporal Punishment.

## ■ DISCUSSION

The present research examined the links between parental monitoring and practice with externalising problems mediated by attachment to mother and attachment to father in a sample of Belgrade high school students. Main findings show that trust in mother and father only partially mediate the association of parental monitoring and rule-breaking behaviour, and fully mediate the link between positive parenting practice and rule-breaking behaviour and positive parenting practice and parental knowledge with aggressive behaviour. Trust in mother mediated the relationship of positive parenting practice with externalising problems, which is in line with the assumption that they spend more time in daily interactions with their adolescents than fathers do. The sources of parental knowledge were only directly related to rule-breaking behaviour and were not related to aggressive behaviour. It is found that attachment to parents is a more important mediator for understanding the link of parental monitoring with aggressive, than rule-breaking behaviour.

The given findings support the differences in the relationship between parental monitoring and educational practices of parents with aggressive and rule-breaking behaviour, as previous research has shown, too. (Cutrín, Maneiro & López-Romero, 2020). Prior research indicates that high parental control could be harmful for adolescents when it is not accompanied by trust and disclosure as indicators of a positive relationship with parents (Melotti, Poti, Giancesini & Brighi, 2018). The results are in line with the Hirschi's Social Control Theory of Delinquency (1969) that explains behavioural problems by the disruption or lack of social bonding between adolescents and their parents. The authors point out that high parental control threatens the sense of personal control in adolescents, and that any gain in preventing behavioural problems is nullified by the development of internalising problems. (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). It can be said that this finding was partially confirmed in the present study. For example, increasing parental control was related to a decrease in trust in mothers and to an increase in aggressive behaviour. These findings are in line with the results of longitudinal study that show that more parental control provokes aggressive behaviour, and less parental knowledge indicates rule-breaking behaviour (Cutrín, Maneiro & López-Romero, 2020). The reason why some of the previous studies could not detect parental control prediction effect might lay in the type of the criterion variable. Researchers more often opted to measure delinquency as behaviour that in itself measures a high level of structured behavioural problems that are not inherently aggressive. (Keijsers, 2010; Kerr, Stattin & Burk, 2010; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Luyckx & Goossens, 2006). With the lack of parent-adolescent affective relationship, parental control could be perceived as provocative for coercive hostile cycles (Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsey, 1993). As expected, and in line with most research studies and coercive

theory, direct links between negative parenting practices and aggressive behaviour have been observed (Bender *et al.*, 2007; van der Vorst, Engels, Mees & Deković, 2006). However, there is evidence about mediation of attachment to parents in relationship of negative parenting practice and aggressive behaviour, as it was partially found in the present study (Bosmans *et al.*, 2006; Gallarin & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012). Positive parental practice seems to be only indirectly related to aggressive behaviour, especially by attachment to mother, which is in line with previous research evidence about positive parenting and affection relationship stability (Bosmans *et al.*, 2006; Madigan, Moran, Schuegnel, Pederso & Otten, 2007). Mothers seems to be traditionally more involved in parenting children in Serbian society (Zuković, Ninković & Krstić, 2015). Another explanation might be related with the different roles of mothers and fathers in adolescents' socialisation, meaning that affective relationships with mothers are more related to prosocial behaviour toward family, while affective relationships with fathers are more associated with prosocial behaviour toward friends (Padilla-Walker, Nielson & Day, 2016). It is important to note that trust in mothers and fathers fully mediate parental knowledge and aggressive behaviour. However, no source of parental knowledge is found to be related to aggressive behaviour. Aggressive behaviour differs from rule-breaking behaviour, meaning that it is mostly overt and is more noticeable by parents and the social environment (e.g. other parent, teachers, neighbours). In the context of reactive parenting, it is expected that the relationship between parents and adolescents changes from the onset of symptoms, for example decrease in the resources, attention, trust (de Haan, Prinzie & Deković, 2012; Fanti, Henrich, Brookmeyer & Kuperminc, 2008; Laird & Marrero, 2010).

Poor parental monitoring/supervision was only directly and positively related to externalising problems which could be explained by the great similarity with rule-breaking behaviour items (Stanger, Dumenci, Kamon & Burstein, 2004). Another possible explanation lies in reactive parenting, which can also refer to the positive attitudes of parenting and externalising problems. (Fite *et al.*, 2006; Kirwil, 2009; Muñoz, Pakalniskiene & Frick, 2011). On the other hand, it might be that parents' active efforts to gather information about their adolescents may have unfavourable impact on their development. Researchers also find that parental solicitation predicted higher level of problem behaviour (Keijsers, Frijns, Branje & Meeus, 2009; Kerr, Stattin & Burk, 2010). It might be that adolescents are striving for increasing levels of autonomy and parental solicitation may be viewed as intrusive by the youth (Criss *et al.*, 2015; Gaertner *et al.*, 2010). Influential research in the relevant field considers self-disclosure to be one of the most important sources of parental knowledge and strongly and consistently linked to rule-breaking problem behaviour and delinquency (Keijsers, 2010; Kerr, Stattin & Burk, 2010; Kerr, Stattin & Trost, 1999; Laird & LaFleur, 2016; van der

Vorst *et al.*, 2006). Research results suggest that passive strategies for obtaining information about their children's lives are more effective than active strategies. In order to understand the reciprocal links between self-disclosure and behavioural problems in adolescents, the authors introduced a study of the construct concerning secrecy, which turned out to be the only longitudinal predictor of externalising problems. (Frijns, Keijsers, Branje & Meeus, 2010). It seems that the information management is very important for understanding parent-child relationship with the tendency of differentiating self-disclosure, lying, keeping secrets.

The revealed contribution of adolescents' trust in their parents, as a very important mediating variable, fits into the conceptual framework of social control theories (Hirschi, 1969; Nye, 1958, according to Wells, 2010). Trust in parents can be considered an expression of affective identification (love and respect in the parent-child relationship), intimacy of communication (familiarity with the child's worries and problems) as an expression of parental knowledge, as conceived in this research, and supervision (psychological presence of parents in risk situations) is defined as parental control. The three mentioned elements, according to the theory of social bonding, represent the basis of the construct of attachment to parents in a broader sense (Hirschi, 1969). Therefore, the development of secure affective relationships from childhood to adolescence and adequate parental monitoring in adolescence are the way for the internalisation of values and the prevention of externalising problems. Namely, it can be said that the parent-child relationship, which is represented in trust in parents in this research, largely depends on how certain aspects of parental monitoring and parental practice will affect occurrence of aggressive and rule-breaking behaviour.

The results of the research suggest that interventions in the direction of improving parental monitoring should primarily include maintaining/improving the parent-child relationship. Trainings should be extremely individualised, adapted to the characteristics of a particular family and its members. Families differ in terms of the resources they have at their disposal, the business policies of their companies, parents' attitudes about the need for supervision and other. On the one hand, parents may feel insecure about parental practice, not knowing how to put themselves in situations that require a reaction. On the other hand, they may be too self-centred, not realising that their reaction is needed. Motivation to improve parental monitoring is an important prerequisite for starting an intervention. Parental management programmes should include interventions that improve parent-child communication, listening skills, positive parental actions and more. Practical examples of how to position oneself in certain situations can be helpful. The parent should learn how to deal with a certain risky situation in which their child finds themselves, without spoiling the relationship with them. In this regard, parents must be aware of possible developmental problems and specific recommendations for overcoming them.

Evaluation studies of parental interventions show that significant progress can be made in prevention and reducing externalising problems in adolescents (Kazdin, 1997; Woolfenden, Williams & Peat, 2002). A review of the most effective programmes modalities for parents shows that their application is limited to preadolescent and early adolescent age (Stakić, 2016). Parent-Child Interaction Therapy and Positive Parenting Programme conceptually corresponds to current findings and show moderate to significant effects in reducing externalising problems in childhood and early adolescence (Thomas & Zimmer-Gembeck 2007).

## ■ CONCLUSION, LIMITATION AND FURTHER DIRECTIONS

These results, therefore, raise the question if the parental monitoring and practice variables (alone) can act to prevent externalising problem behaviour in adolescence. Adolescents' trust in their parents has been found to play an important role in preventing aggressive behaviour, and to a lesser extent, rule-breaking behaviour. Research studies indicate earlier development of aggressive behaviour comparing to rule-breaking behaviour (Cutrín, Maneiro & López-Romero, 2020; Hyde, Burt, Shaw, Donnellan & Forbes, 2015), so that might be a reason for ruining parental capacities for proper reaction to aggressive behaviour. As it was noticed in previous research, it could be concluded that even parental monitoring and attachment to parents separately have a great impact on externalising problems in adolescents, their mutual relationship linked to externalising problems is weaker than it was expected (e. g. Rankin & Wells, 1990). However, even trust in mother and father as mediators are not too strong, their impact is stable and deserves further attention. Parental knowledge appears to have great potential in mediating the impact of parental supervision and parenting practices on externalising problems in adolescence (e.g. Criss *et al.*, 2015). When planning preventive interventions, the focus should be on improving parents' knowledge with an emphasis on developing trust between children and parents. Parents should maintain a strong psychological presence with their children and should teach them to disclose their activities to them.

Limitation of this study is that the measures on parental monitoring and parental practice were applied to any caregivers (mother or father or both), making it impossible to deduce maternal and paternal independent monitoring practices. Quite often, parental practice is not separately examined for each parent, as in this study. Examining variations in parenting practice would help push the boundaries in understanding their impact on the manifestation of externalising problems in

adolescence (Boele, Denissen, Moopen & Keijsers, 2019). In relation to the aforesaid, future research should include parental perception, too, as it would give more precise insight in the process of parental monitoring. The design of the study makes it impossible to interpret changes in parenting practice over time since the assessment of perception was done at one point. Also, in order to achieve a more complete insight into the impact of parenting practice on child development, it is necessary, in addition to problems in adjustment, to explore relationships with positive developmental outcomes, not just maladjustment, with the special consideration how different social contexts interact (Smetana, 2017).

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## МЕНЬШЕ КОНТРОЛЯ, БОЛЬШЕ ДОВЕРИЯ: РОДИТЕЛЬСТВО И ЭКСТЕРНАЛИЗОВАННЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ ПОДРОСТКОВ

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*Аннотация.* Плохой родительский контроль, негативные воспитательные образцы и приёмы, а также ненадёжная привязанность к родителям считаются факторами риска при проявлении экстернализованных проблем в подростковом возрасте. Целью исследования является изучение роли, которую аффективная привязанность к родителям играет в толковании отношений родительского контроля и воспитательных приёмов родителей с экстернализованными проблемами в подростковом возрасте. В исследовании приняли участие 507 подростков (209 мужского пола и 298 женского пола) в возрасте от 15 до 18 лет. Структурным моделированием выявлено, что доверие к родителям осуществляет систематический посреднический эффект. Было обнаружено, что доверие к родителям, особенно к матери, является лучшим медиатором для объяснения связи позитивных приёмов воспитания и родительского контроля с агрессивным поведением, чем с поведением, нарушающим правил. Результаты были интерпретированы в контексте значимости родительско-детских отношений и экстернализованных проблем в подростковом возрасте.

*Ключевые слова:* родительство, родительский контроль, аффективная привязанность к родителям, экстернализованные проблемы, подростки.

