

**Isabelle Hajek
Class of 2021
Psychology**

**Analyzing the Cross-National Health Behavior in School Aged Children Survey to Examine
the Relationship between Quality of Parent and Peer Relationships on Deviance as it
Differs by Nation**

**Mentor: Kendell L. Coker, Ph.D., J.D.
Psychology**

Adolescence is a period of development which is impacted by family and interpersonal relationships. Overall, current research on the associations between parents, peers, and deviant behavior reveals that parents are a protective influence whereas peers increase the risk of deviant behavior. In this paper, we explored cross-national variations in the relationship between the quality of parental and peer relationships and certain deviant behaviors. Data were drawn from the Health Behavior in School-aged Children (N = 214,080; ages: 11-15 years-old; collection years: 2013-2014). Twelve relationship survey items were selected, and their responses were summed into three independent variables (family communication, family support, and friend relationship) and six dependent variables regarding alcohol use, cannabis use, and aggression. Multinomial regression was used to run comparisons across eight geographic regions (Western Asia, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, British Isles, North America). Gender was introduced as a moderating variable. The findings revealed that better family communication was a potent predictor of increased risk of alcohol use, cannabis use, and aggression deviant behaviors whereas higher levels of family emotional support decreased the odds. These findings were quite consistent across all regions with some minor variations. The impact of friend relationships on deviance varied by both region and gender. Across regions friend relationships increased the odds of alcohol use in the last 30 days. However, in Western Asia and Southern Europe gender was found to be a moderator such that females were less likely than males to use alcohol more days than not in the past 30 days as their friend relationships grew stronger. In Southern and Western Europe, stronger reported friend relationships were associated with increased days of cannabis use. Higher levels of reported friend relationships were associated with decreased odds of fighting for female youth in comparison to male youth living in Western Asia, Northern Europe, Western Europe, and the British Isles. There were no significant differences found between friend relationships and fighting among youth living in Eastern Europe and North America. Lastly, stronger friend relationships were significantly associated with lower levels of bullying behavior only for youth who lived in Eastern, Northern, and Southern Europe and gender did not moderate the relationship. Overall, the results suggest that the emotional component of familial relationships has a stronger impact on deterring youth substance use and aggression than solely their communication patterns. This carries implications for parenting styles and developmental theories. Stronger peer relationships appear to have differential impact on male versus female youth. Although this finding, in and of itself, is known in the literature, the fact that these differential effects varied so much by region is a surprising finding. The findings suggest that there are implications of gender socialization in adolescent externalizing behaviors that should be further explored with the understanding and acknowledgement of gender socialization differences across cultures.