

# Risk Preference Mediates The Relationship Between Adolescent Self-Esteem and Problem Gambling: A Cross-National Comparison

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# The Research Project

- Problem Gambling and Social Media: Social Psychological Study on Youth Behavior in Online Gambling Communities (funded by The Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies (2017-))
  - Principal investigator: Professor Atte Oksanen
  - Researchers: Markus Kaakinen, Iina Savolainen, Anu Sirola
  - The project analyzes problem gambling, other problematic behaviors, and social media use of youth from a social psychological perspective.
- Data:
  - **Finland:** A socio-demographically balanced *YouGamble* -survey given to 15-25 -year old Finnish respondents (N = 1,200). Collected during spring 2017.
  - **United States:** A socio-demographically balanced *YouGamble* -survey given to 15-25 -year old American respondents (N = 1,212). Collected during spring 2018.
  - **South Korea:** A socio-demographically balanced *YouGamble* -survey given to 15-25 -year old South Korean respondents (N = 1,192). Collected during spring 2018.
  - **Spain:** A socio-demographically balanced *YouGamble* -survey given to 15-25 -year old South Korean respondents (N = 1,212). Collected during spring 2019.

# Introduction: Why study youth gambling?

- Youth gambling is a major health concern
- Those who experience severe gambling related problems start gambling earlier
- Gambling usually occurs with other health risk behaviours such as tobacco, alcohol, drugs and mental health problems
- What about protective attributes?

# Research questions

- What is the direct effect of self-esteem to gambling problems?
- What is the indirect effect of self-esteem through risk preference on problem gambling?

# Self-Esteem & Risk preference

- Self-esteem is an individual's **emotional relation towards the self**
- Correlates well with subjective outcomes
- Showed as a protective attribute against gambling problems
- Debate: Does it have effects on behavioural outcomes?
- Risk preference can be defined as the **tendency to participate in behaviours that are rewarding and involve potential for loss**
- The general risk taking question is the best all-round predictor of risky behaviour
- If the focus is on favourable outcomes of risky situations it increases the willingness to take risks

# Self-esteem → Risk Preference

- Self-affirmation theory: High **self-esteem is a reserve of positive self-views** that can be used as a buffer to restore overall self-esteem from bad personal decision making.
- **High self-esteem individuals are less risk-averse** because of the ability to disregard their poor decision making
- **High self-esteem is related to optimism** and makes individuals focus on positive outcomes associated with risk which leads to increased risk taking.

# Self-esteem → Risk Preference → PG

- Problem gamblers are **overly optimistic** and have a **distorted weighting of winning probabilities** related to gambling
- Optimists tend **remember more good than bad outcomes** of risky situations that leads to increased risk taking
- **Problem gamblers are systematically more risk taking**
- Individuals with **higher PG (SOGS) scores are more willing to take risks** and less responsive towards changes in probability.

# Data

- This study analyzed survey data from four countries; **Finland** (N=1200), **USA** (N=1212), **South Korea** (N=1192) and **Spain** (N=1212).
- Respondents were young individuals **aged 15 to 25**.
- The samples were set to mimic the countries populations in respect of gender, age and geographical area structure.



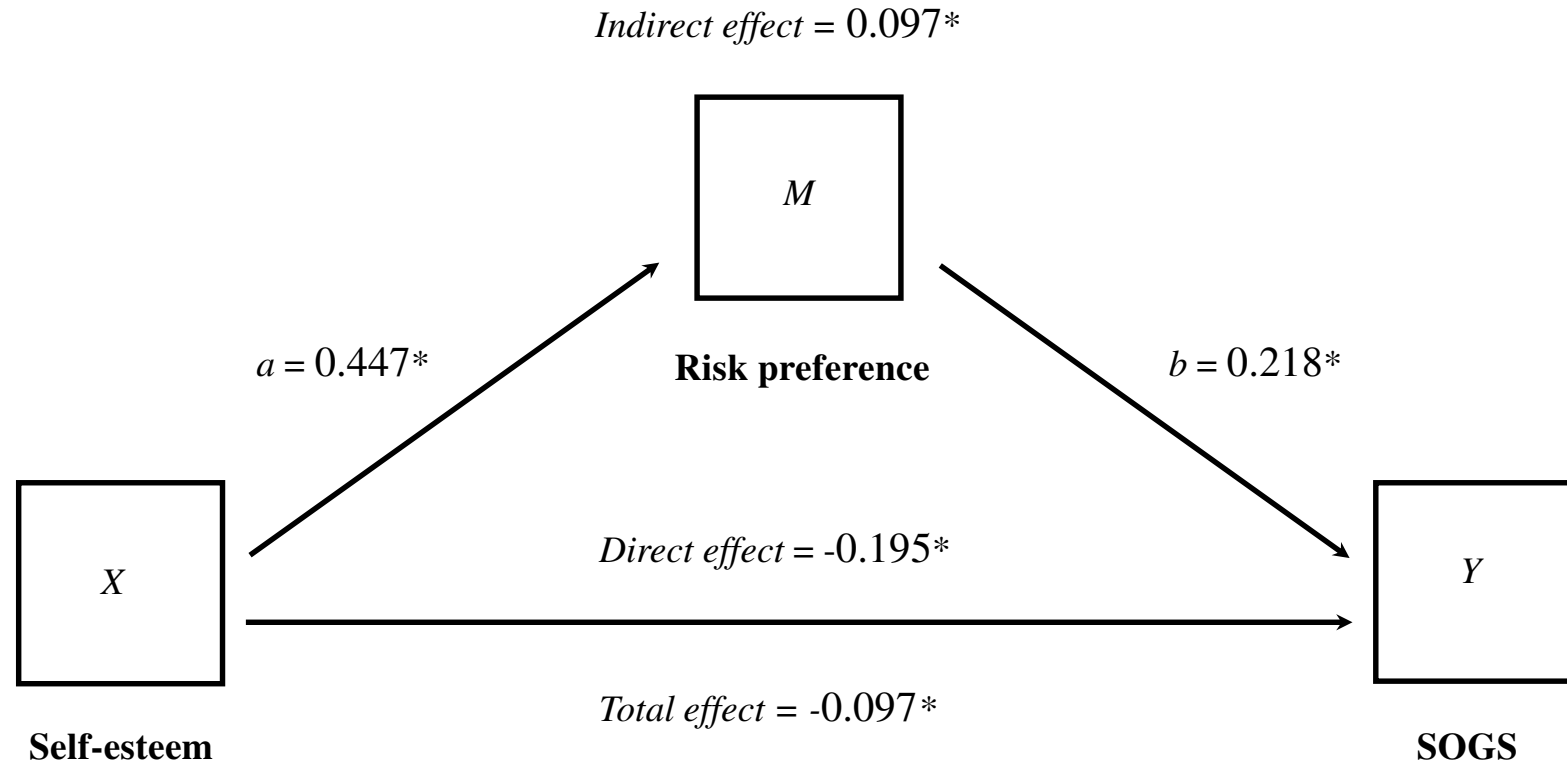
# Analysis

- Linear regression-based path analysis e.g. **Mediation analysis** with bootstrap estimation for indirect effects.

Variables:

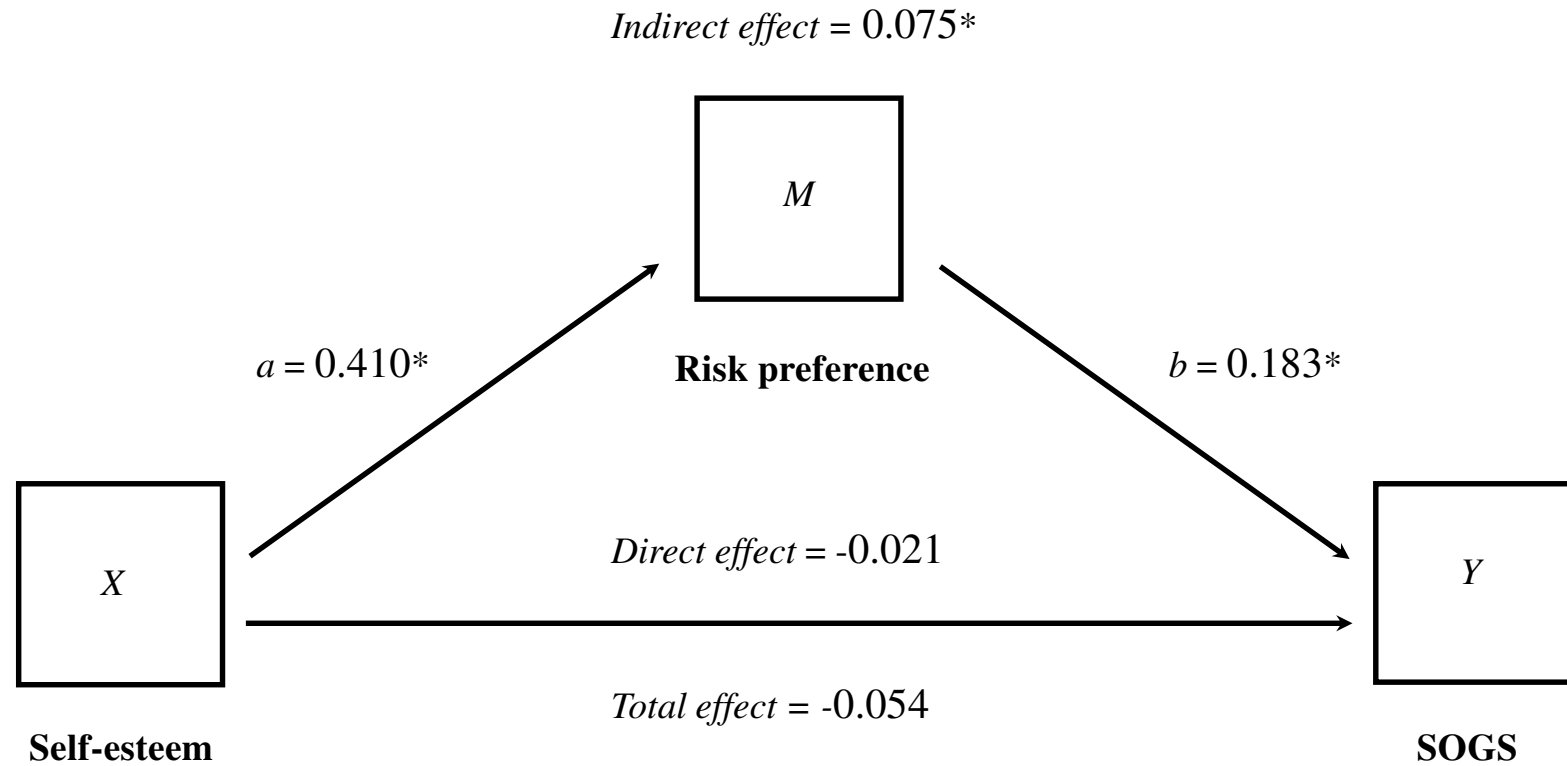
- **The Single-Item Self-Esteem Scale** (“How well this following sentence describes you? I have a good self-esteem.” 1–10 scale)
- **General risk question** (“Would you describe yourself as a person who enjoys taking risks?” 1–10 scale)
- **SOGS** (It measures one’s gambling behavior from the past 12 months and the score ranges from 0 to 20 while higher number indicates more severe gambling problems)

# Results: Finland



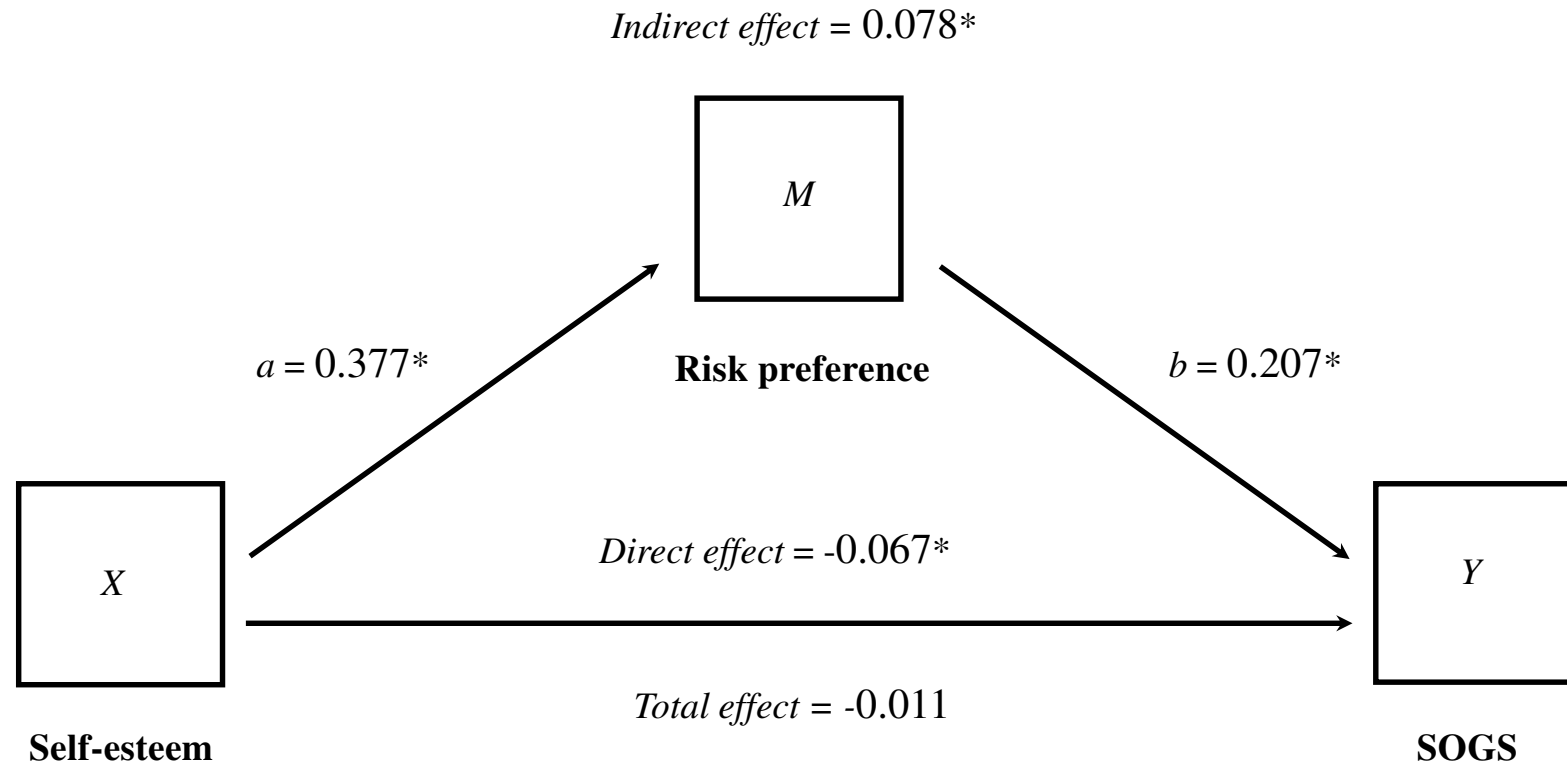
**Graph 1.** Results from Finland (N=1200). \*= significant at 95% level

# Results: USA



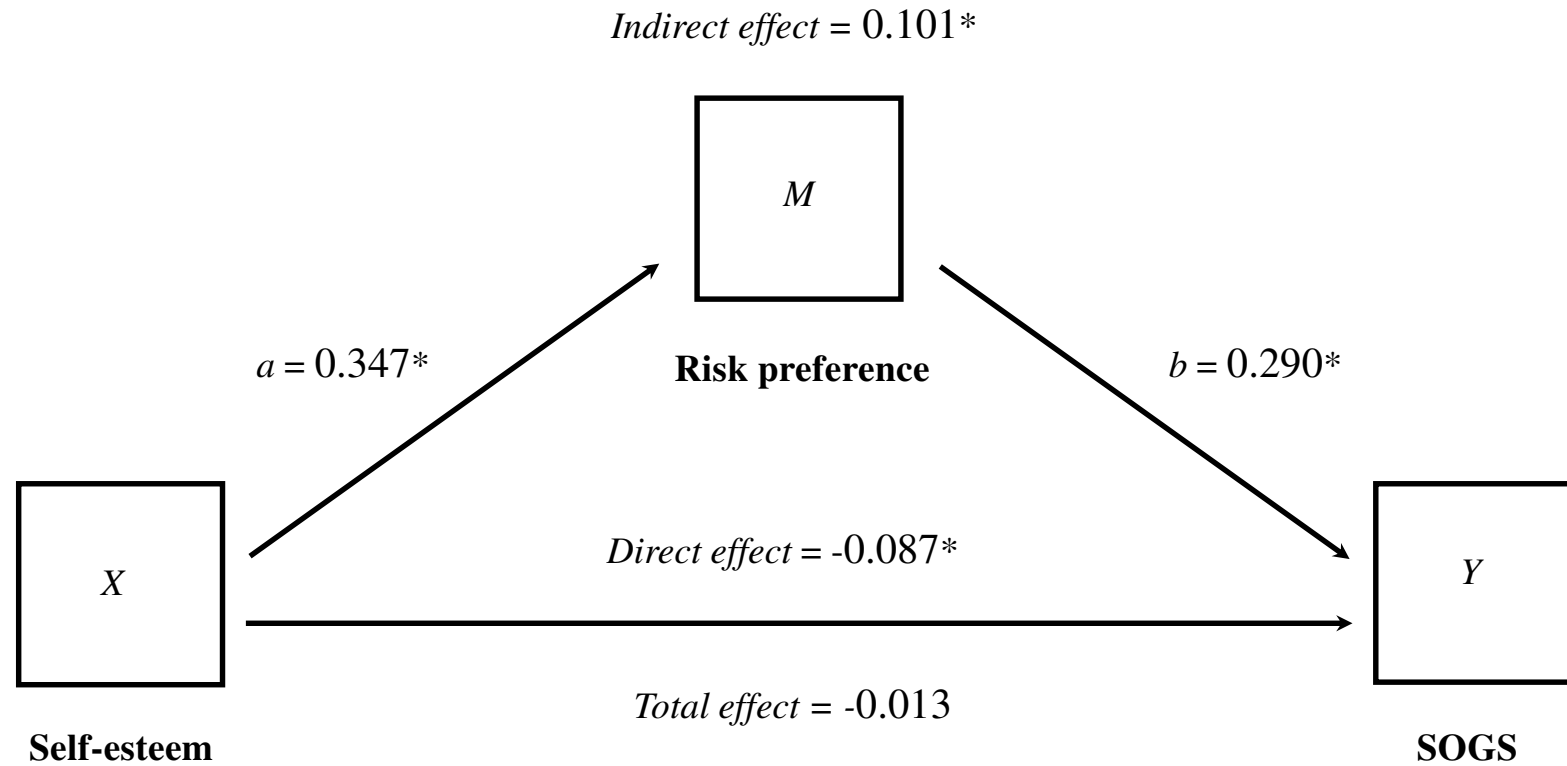
**Graph 2.** Results from USA (N=1212). \*= significant at 95% level

# Results: South-Korea



**Graph 3.** Results from South-Korea (N=1192). \*= significant at 95% level

# Results: Spain



**Graph 4.** Results from Spain (N=1212). \*= significant at 95% level

# Discussion/Conclusions

- The findings showed that the effect of risk preference mediates the relationship between self-esteem and problem gambling in the countries of interest
- Risk preference is a predictor of gambling problems
- Role of self-esteem in gambling problems requires more research if its role as a protective attribute is to be maintained
- Self-esteem correlates with self-control

# Selected references

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Thank you