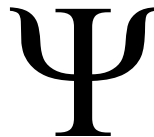




DET PSYKOLOGISKE FAKULTET



Parental monitoring, involvement and school absence

HOVEDOPPGAVE

profesjonsstudiet i psykologi

Hilde Anette Lysne Mathisen

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Forord

Skolefravær har vært et mye omtalt tema de siste årene. Kunnskap om skolefravær, og hvordan man kan forebygge og redusere dette er viktig for å kunne bidra til positiv utvikling hos ungdom. Å redusere skolefravær kan ha positive ringvirkninger for fysisk og psykisk helse, samt for fremtidig utdanning og yrkesliv. Derfor mener jeg det er sentralt at psykologer har kunnskap om skolefravær og bakenforliggende faktorer. I denne oppgaven har grafer og tabeller er plassert i teksten selv om dette avviker fra APA-standard, med hensyn til oppgavens lesbarhet.

Arbeidet med denne oppgaven startet i januar 2017. En idé ble til en problemstilling som til slutt ble til denne oppgaven. På veien har jeg fått helt formidabel god hjelp og veiledning av mine to veiledere Kristin Gärtner Askeland og Torbjørn Torsheim. Torbjørn, takk for din solide kunnskap og helt nødvendige veiledning, spesielt, i den metodiske delen av denne oppgaven. Kristin, takk for at du åpnet muligheten for at jeg kunne skrive denne oppgaven! Takk for at du har bistått med søknad om bruk av datamateriale, til tilgang på skriveplass ved Norce Research, og med solide tilbakemeldinger under hele prosessen. Dette er jeg veldig takknemlig for! Ikke minst, har Kristin introdusert meg for forskningsgruppen «Barn i Bergen». Takk for at dere har tatt meg så godt imot, og kommet med så gode innspill!

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Abstract

Background: School absence represents a serious problem in adolescents' development, as it may lead to severe consequences. Being absent from school is associated with social, psychological and health problems, and is the most important predictor of school dropout. A great deal of research across professional disciplines have strived to identify the factors that influence school absence, in order to expand the understanding of the problem, and for the purpose of developing effective interventions. The current study examined whether the parenting practices parental monitoring and involvement was associated with school absence in a sample of Norwegian adolescents.

Methods: Data was collected from the youth@Hordaland-survey, distributed by the Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare, RKBU Vest in 2012. The current study was based on 1257 parental respondents and adolescents registry data on school absence. The instruments on parental monitoring and involvement relied on self-reports. Socioeconomic status and parental warmth was included as control variables.

Results: When studied continuously, school absence was significantly associated with risk of receiving less parental monitoring and involvement. When investigated categorically, parental monitoring was found to be significantly lower for adolescents with normal levels of school absence (3-15% absent), whereas adolescents with high levels (>15% absent) of school absence were at risk of receiving less parental involvement compared to adolescents with low levels of school absence (<3% absent). These findings could not be explained by levels of socioeconomic status nor warmth in the youth-parent relationship.

Sammendrag

Bakgrunn: Skolefravær er et utbredt og alvorlig problem som kan påvirke ungdommers utvikling, da det kan lede til psykiske helseproblemer og skolefravall.

Forskning på tvers av faglige disipliner har forsøkt identifisere påvirkningsfaktorer, for å kunne øke sin kunnskap og forståelse rundt dette, samt for å utvikle effektive intervensjoner for å forebygge og redusere skolefravær. Denne studien undersøker om foreldrepraksisene foreldremonitorering og involvering i skolen kan påvirke skolefravær i et utvalg av norske ungdommer.

Metode: Denne studien bygger på data fra Ung@Hordaland-undersøkelsen som Regionalt kompetansesenter for barn og unges psykiske helse, RKBU Vest utførte i 2012. Utvalget består av 1257 foreldrerespondenter, og ungdommers fraværdata fra Hordaland Fylkeskommune. Instrumentene som måler foreldremonitorering og involvering var basert på selvrappport, og var opprinnelig en del av et mer omfattende spørreskjema. Sosioøkonomisk status og varme i relasjonen mellom foreldre og ungdommer ble inkludert som kontrollvariabler.

Resultater: Når skolefravær ble studert som en kontinuerlig variabel fant en sammenhenger mellom mer fravær og mindre foreldremonitorering og involvering. Når skolefravær ble studert kategorisk, i form av grupper med ulike nivåer av fravær, fant en at gruppen ungdommer med normale nivåer av fravær (3-15% fravær) hadde risiko for å motta signifikant mindre foreldremonitorering enn gruppen med lavt fravær (<3% fravær). I tillegg fant man at ungdommer med høyt fravær (>15% fravær) hadde risiko for å ha foreldre som involverte seg i signifikant mindre grad i skolen. Hverken sosioøkonomisk status eller varme i relasjonen mellom ungdom og foreldre kunne forklare funnene.

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Background

School absence has for long been a topic of interest in fields extending from criminology, psychology, educational and health domains. Kearney (2008a, p.1) states that school absence is considered a critical "public health issue for mental health professionals, physicians and educators". High levels of school absence tend to be related to decline in educational outcomes (Attwood & Croll, 2006) as lack of attendance leads students to miss out on material and important sources of learning that has consequences for later academic achievement (Lamdin, 1996). High levels of school absence are also the most prominent predictor of high school dropout (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Kearneys 2008a). Dropping out of high school can have economic and social consequences for the individuals involved, their families, community and society by generating a greater risk of unemployment compared to those who complete high school (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). Dropping out of high school prior to completion, may can affect economic and social well-being throughout adulthood (Rumberger, 1987). The potential long term consequences of higher levels of school absence makes it an important topic to investigate.

There is a bidirectional relation between school absence and somatic and psychiatric illness. School absence is a complex problem as it may be explained by, but can also put adolescents at risk of development of psychological, physical and social problems (Weitzmann et.al., 1982), by being associated with health risk behaviors (Eaton, Brener, & Kann, 2008) and delinquency (Garry, 1996).

It is therefore of great importance to explore the social, behavioral and psychological factors that influence absence and attendance in high school. Research that identify such influential factors may in turn contribute to development of interventions aimed at reducing school absence in high school. Such interventions could contribute to prevent dropout and the negative psychological, social and economic consequences involved. Both individual and

environmental factors seem to be influence school absence (Kearney, 2008b). However, psychological interventions targeting school absence have been criticized for a narrow focus exclusively on individual factors (Kearney, 2008b). This critique implies that interventions should involve contextual factors as well. When studying factors beyond individual characteristics, familial influence and parenting practices has been under the scope of interest (Kearney, 2008b). Spera (2005) indicated that parental involvement and monitoring, could be a way for parents to facilitate their children's academic achievement. Research and interventions aimed at reducing school absence could therefore benefit from including family factors (Kearney, 2008b).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the relation between parental involvement and monitoring, and school absence among a sample of Norwegian adolescents. Further, the purpose is to investigate whether higher levels of parental monitoring and involvement are associated with lower levels of school absence among adolescence and function as a protective factor in adolescent development.

Theoretical background

School absence

School absence "refers to excusable or inexcusable absences from elementary or secondary school (...)" (Kearney, 2008a, p.1). School absence is a broad and general construct, which includes concepts such as truancy, school refusal and school withdrawal. Excusable school absence typically refers to absence due to illness or injury and can include permission from parents or school officials, while inexcusable school absence refers to absence motivated by the adolescent him or herself (Kearney, 2008a). Inexcusable school absence includes both school refusal and truancy (Kearney, 2008a). School refusal is

generally associated with anxiety-based reasons of school absence (Kearney, 2008a), while truancy is associated with more deliberate unexcused school absence and lack of parental knowledge about the behavior (Fremont, 2003).

It seems that the various definition of concepts related to school absence differ between theoretical perspectives (Kearney, 2008b) and are often defined on the basis of factors causing the absence. Similarly, the perspectives differ in their emphasis on influential factors. Cases of school absence are usually a result of multiple influences and reasons (Reid, 2005). In the current study a broad and atheoretical definition of school absence has been chosen. For further exploration, categorizations have been made in regards to quantity of absence. In line with Kearneys (2008b) criteria for problematic absence – school absence which exceeds 15% of school days is labeled high levels of absence and is considered problematic. This group is likely to include various causes of absence, but regardless of motivation and causes it is associated with severe consequences (Eaton, Brenner & Kann, 2008) and generates a need for interventions.

Interventions aimed at reducing or preventing school absence should be formed on the basis of influential factors identified through empirical research. Empirical evidence suggests that both individual and contextual factors are usually concurrently influencing problematic school absence, with evidence from psychological, social/criminal justice and educational approaches (Reid, 2005; Kearney, 2008b). In keeping with this, influential factors are often linked and sometimes accumulate over time (Kearney, 2008b). A comprehensive interdisciplinary model of school absence has been outlined on the basis of these findings. This model comprises distal and proximal factors related to school absence, including key child, parent, family, school, peer and community factors (Kearney, 2008b). This model allows for interventions on different levels of influence, such as focusing on both adolescents' characteristics and on parental variables and familial functioning.

Influential socialization agents. There has been a call for research on both familial and other contextual influences when studying school absence and adolescent development in general. Parents and school represents two major socialization agents in which adolescent development occur (Parke & Buriel, 2008). In Bronfenbrenner (1986, p.1) earliest works it is suggested that families and "linkages to major settings such as school, work, neighborhoods and communities, and public policies" must be taken into account when studying individual development. The system theory presents four different sources of influence: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and chronosystems which represents increasingly broader contexts of influence on individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Microsystems includes close relations such as in families (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Several ways to examine the effects of processes occurring in microsystems have been offered, such as the effects of parenting styles and parental practices on the individual adolescent. When studying school absence, mesosystems are also a relevant component as it entails interconnections between instances such as families and school.

Family and classrooms processes has a fellow influence on childrens' development (Epstein, 1983). This is e.g. illustrated by that children from homes with capacities of greater communication and decision-making had better grades in their first year of high school (Epstein, 1983). The latter serves as an example of such interconnections. Exosystems are referring to external processes that influence interactions in the mesosystems such as between schools and families (Bronfenbrener, 1986). Such external processes concerns parents work, neighborhood and social network which in turn affects the microsystemts (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Bronfenbrenner offers a useful framework in the current study. The system theory provides ways of understanding familial influence on adolescent development with emphasis on school adjustment. The current study efforts to expand the focus on individual factors

when studying school outcomes in adolescents by including parenting as a potential influential factor. The following sections examines the effects of parenting on school absence and school outcomes.

Parenting adolescents

Adolescence is often defined as the period between puberty and legal adulthood (Costello, Copeland & Angold, 2011). It is often described as a period of changes in biological, cognitive, psychological and social aspects of development (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). These changes alter the relationship between adolescents and parents, and adolescents often spend significantly more time alone and with peers (Larson & Richards, 1991). The sample in the present study includes parental reports, from parents of adolescents aged 16-18 years, which is often labeled middle to late adolescence. For the vast majority of this group, age 16 to 18 years involve the emergence of several independence processes in relation to social life and education (Steinberg, 1990). These independence processes can be understood as expressions of increasing autonomy, where parents are usually involved, but to varying degrees (Steinberg, 1990). The increase in autonomy, and consecutive decline in parental practices might be one of the most salient relational changes that occur in the parent-child relationship (Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

This change is a gradual process, where the relation is changing from an asymmetrical interaction where children are born dependent of their parents, to a gradually more equal position in the relation as the adolescents' develops (Collins, 1995). The amount of parental practices is therefore expected to be generally less for high school students compared to younger children (Seyfried & Chung, 2002). Research on adolescent parenting often focus on the impact of specific parental practices or the emotional style in which parenting is carried out – labeled parenting styles (Spera, 2005). The impact of different parenting styles and

parenting practices is often measured through how well adolescents adjust in their social life (Steinberg, Elmen & Mounts, 1989) and education (Steinberg et.al, 1992).

Parenting styles. The majority of research on parenting in psychology the last decade has derived from Baumrinds theory of parenting styles (Spera, 2005). Subsequently, a great deal of research demonstrates different life outcomes predicted by different parenting styles (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Baumrinds theory distinguishes between authoritarian, permissive, neglectful and authoritative parenting based on characteristics of caregivers' behavior (Baumrind, 1971). These parenting styles have to some extent, been able to predict different life outcomes in children, with special emphasis on psychosocial development (Darling, 1999).

The authoritative parenting style is associated with the most favorable outcomes (Steinberg & Morris, 2011). Authoritative parents are warm but firm, which implies behavioral dimensions of both demandingness and responsiveness (Baumrind, 1971). Authoritative parenting has been linked to positive developmental outcomes in children such as psychosocial maturity, social advantages and greater academic outcomes, compared to their peers whose parents has been classified permissive, authoritarian or indifferent (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Findings in research on adolescent outcomes are corresponding. When Baumrinds typology has been applied to examine adolescents' academic performance in high school, authoritative parenting is associated with higher grades in school compared to those having authoritarian or permissive parents (Dornbusch et.al., 1987). Further, higher grades are correlated with increased likelihood of high school completion (Allensworth & Easton, 2007). It is therefore plausible to assume that an authoritative parenting style might be linked to lowered school absence. Several explanations of the linkage between parenting styles and school outcomes in general have been offered. The framework of parenting styles offers a

way of understanding the emotional circumstances where specific parenting practices and behaviors are being carried out (Spera, 2005).

Steinberg and colleagues (1992) proposed that the linkage between an authoritative parenting style and favorable school outcomes, such as engagement in school and higher-grade point average, could be explained by parental practices such as involvement and encouragement. Their path model outlined that authoritative parenting generates greater parental involvement, which was expected to affect school performance and engagement in the student. They found that specific involvement behaviors such as monitoring student progress - accounts for both school engagement and progress. Their model describes these effects as a bidirectional process, where e.g. parental involvement was found to be far more effective when carried out in an authoritative home (Steinberg et.al., 1992).

Parenting practices. "Parenting practices are behaviors defined by specific content and socialization goals" (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p.492). In keeping with this, parents' socialization goals may facilitate specific behaviors (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Research on parenting practices in adolescence is often concerned with predictive value for risky and maladaptive behaviors among adolescents' (Borawski et.al., 2003). At the same time, researchers have addressed the identification of protective factors that foster positive development in adolescents.

Parental monitoring. Parental monitoring represents one of the parenting practices that have been investigated in the current study. Parental monitoring refers to "parenting behavior that includes attention to and tracking of the child's whereabouts, activities and adaptations" (Dishon & McMahon, 1998, p.61). Parental monitoring is a parenting practice that seems to be relevant from infancy to adolescence, with changing methods and topics of interest (Dishon & McMahon, 1998). Parental monitoring have been identified as a preventive factor for delinquency, anti-social behavior and substance use (Dishon & McMahon, 1998).

The definition and operationalization of monitoring has been discussed. Stattin and Kerr (2000) postulates that the view of parenting has been altered from a “top-down” perspective, to a more interactive approach. A more interactive view recognizes the adolescent children as having a more active role in the developmental process, and in the relation (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). In other words, this view is in line with the process of developing an increasingly more symmetrical relationship (Collins, 1995), which also acknowledges the adolescents’ contribution. Parenting then becomes a bidirectional process of cooperation and reciprocity (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Such view of parenting has implications for defining and measuring parental monitoring in research. Kerr and Stattin (2000) proposes that parents’ attempt to monitor their childrens' activities is only effective in combination with their childrens’ willingness to reveal information about their lives and whereabouts. For adolescents it is hypothesized that the willingness to disclose can be influenced by numerous factors, one of these being common attitudes with their peers (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Parental monitoring is suggested to measure the actual information parents possess about their adolescent children, not the way in which this information is being retrieved (Kerr & Stattin, 2000).

This growing body of research on parental monitoring suggest that one should include aspects of the adolescent-parent relationship, that facilitates the adolescents’ willingness to share information about their lives (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). One essential aspect seems to be a trusting adolescent-parent relation (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Parental monitoring is a parenting practice that is proposed to be dynamically interrelated to the quality of the relationship (Dishion & McMahon, 1998).

Fletcher and colleagues (2004) suggest that parental warmth is one of such key elements, facilitating an environment where child disclosure takes place. In keeping with this, child disclosure will then increase the amount of information parents’ possess about their

children (Kerr, Stattin & Burk, 2010). Parental warmth has been observed to be consistently associated with increasing levels of adolescent willingness to disclose information (Fletcher, Steinberg & Williams-Wheeler, 2004). Parental warmth as a key element is in line with Baumrind's theory of authoritative parenting, where parental warmth is one of the crucial dimensions (Baumrind, 1971).

Parental involvement. Parental involvement is the other specific parental practice of interest in the current study. Parental involvement is a broad construct, which leads to operationalization and definitions to vary across research (Fan & Chen, 2001). Anderson & Minke (2008) emphasizes that parental involvement must be understood as a multidimensional construct. Parental involvement entails multiple components such as parental engagement, communication between parents and teachers, parents' attitudes toward schooling, and engagement in homework (Fan & Chen, 2001).

In the current study, parental involvement can be understood as parental participation in educational processes – a definition deriving from Epstein's extensive work in educational research (Epstein, 2001). This definition could be labeled as "overall parental involvement", as the definition does not focus on specific components of the construct (Jeynes, 2007). Parental involvement can occur in two social contexts: at home and at school (Chung & Seyfried, 2002). The current study is focusing on home-based involvement initiated by parents, that is unfolding in parent-adolescent interactions. When parents actively participate in educational processes, they express positive attitudes towards school and education (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). These attitudes could in turn influence the adolescents' attitudes as they might form attitudes and which generates certain behaviors based on observation of a model, in line with Bandura's model theory (1974;1997).

Parental monitoring, involvement and school absence

As suggested in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1986), one can expect that individual development is influenced by several systems and socialization agents, and the interactions between them. Within micro and mesosystems, it seems plausible to infer that parental practices may be an important predictor of school related outcomes, and therefore strongly affect individual adolescent development. A great deal of research has focused on the influence of parenting on school outcomes, although relatively few studies have focused specifically on parenting practices and school absence. However, when school outcomes have been studied more broadly, family characteristics such as lack of parental involvement and monitoring of student attendance has been highlighted and may represent significant risk factors for school absence (Kearney, 2008b). In the interdisciplinary model, parental risk factor for problematic school absence includes several aspects of parenting. These aspects concern lack of parental involvement, low expectations of school and problematic parenting styles such as authoritarian or neglectful parenting (Kearney, 2008b).

In line with this, one can assume that higher levels of parental monitoring and involvement represents a protective factor for school outcomes. The presence of parental involvement is identified as a key factor of student attendance in the interdisciplinary model (Kearney, 2008b). In line with this, previous findings indicated that parental involvement is especially crucial for behavioral outcomes such as truancy, above the observed effects for cognitive outcomes (McNeal, 1999). Another study found no direct effect between parental involvement and achievements in high school, but found that parental involvement in educational processes positively influences time spend on homework, which in turn is associated with school achievement (Keith et.al., 1986).

With respect to parental monitoring, lack of parental monitoring is associated with maladjustment indicators such as being absent from school (Fröjd, Kaltiala-Heino, & Rimpelä, 2007) and externalizing problems (Barber, Olsen & Shagle, 1994). Correspondingly, high levels of parental monitoring during the years of high school has been associated with a variety of adjustment indicators, one of them being school functioning (Jacobson & Crocket, 2000), and adolescents' academic achievements (Spera, 2005).

One study found that parental monitoring was associated with lower levels of truancy (Astone & McInahan, 1991). In keeping with this, Studsrød & Bru (2009) found that parental monitoring was positively related to motivation for continued education, and negatively related to truancy and drop out among students who simultaneously reported high levels of parental support. The latter indicates that characteristics of the parent-adolescent relationship is relevant to include when studying parental monitoring.

Aim

The current study examined the association between parental monitoring and involvement and school absence in high school among a sample of Norwegian adolescents. Given previous findings, it was expected that parenting practices had the potential to influence adolescent school outcomes. The current hypothesis is that higher levels of parental involvement and monitoring are associated with lower levels of school absence, and hence function as a protective factor for adolescent development.

As noted, previous research has proposed that high levels of parental monitoring might be explained or influenced by qualities in the adolescent-parent relationship (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). On the basis of this assumption, parental warmth in the relation between the parent and the adolescent was included when testing the hypothesis. In addition, parental socioeconomic status (SES) operationalized as parents' educational level was accounted for as parental

educational level has been observed to influence levels of school absence (Daraganova, Mullan & Edwards, 2014).

Methods

Data material and procedure

The present study is based on parent reports from the youth@hordaland-survey. It was conducted as a part of the longitudinal population based “Bergen Child Study”, distributed by the Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare, RKBU Vest. The reports from youth@hordaland-survey were collected in 2012 as a part of the fourth wave of the study. All adolescents born between 1993-1995 and residing in Hordaland county at the time of the survey were invited to participate. The survey was collected web based and informed consent was obtained in conjunction with participation. The adolescent participants consented to the linkage between their and their parents' responses, and to the use of administrative data of school absence for the purpose of research. The "Bergen Child Study" was approved by the regional ethics committee in Western Norway. All collected information has been treated anonymously.

Study sample

A total number of 10 220 adolescents participated in the youth@hordaland-survey. Of these 8988 approved to use of the linkage between their responses on the survey and registered school absence data. Parents of adolescents who participated in the youth@hordaland-survey were invited to participate. A total number of 1782 parents agreed to participation. An inclusion criterion for the present study was completion of question sections regarding parental involvement and monitoring, as these variables are the main area of interest. The available sample of parents in the current study consisted of 1252 parents. Of these respondents, 613 of the parents had sons participating in the study, while 639 had

daughters. Socioeconomic status was included as descriptive control variables and were measured by mothers and fathers educational level. Descriptive characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the present sample

Characteristics	(N = 1252)	%
Adolescents		
Gender		
Female	639	51
Male	613	49
Age	$M = 17,2 (SD=0,81)$	
Parental education		
Maternal education		
Primary school	54	4
Vocational studies	222	18
General studies	196	16
Higher education	755	62
Paternal education		
Primary school	95	8
Vocational studies	348	30
General studies	100	8
Higher education	635	54

Instruments

The school absence data were collected from the official register of Hordaland County Council. Parental monitoring and involvement were measured by using a self-report questionnaire. The three instruments aiming to measure respectively 1) Parental monitoring 2) Parental involvement and 3) Youth-parent relationship were originally parts of a more comprehensive questionnaire, which also measured other variables related to parenting and characteristics of the family. The instruments originated from the “Tracking opportunities

and problems in childhood and adolescence” (TOPP) study and was employed as a part of the sixth wave of the study in 2006. The TOPP study is a longitudinal study with first wave of the study distributed in 1992 by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (Norwegian Institute of Public Health, 2016).

The instrument measuring parental monitoring is the parental version of the “Parental monitoring scale”, which originally consisted of both a parental and a youth-version. The parental monitoring scale was originally developed by Silverberg and Small (1991). It was later evaluated by Stanton et.al (2000) who found an internal consistency of .78 (Cronbachs Alpha) for the parent version.

Measurement approaches

"School absence" was collected from the official registries of Hordaland county council and was reported in number of days and school hours students had been absent from school during the last semester. The school absence data were summed up from number of days and school hours, to number of days. One continuous variable entailing number of days absent, and one ordinal variable were generated. The ordinal variable entailed three different levels: 1) students who were absent less than 3% of the days during one semester, labeled "low level of absence" ($N=686$), 2) students who were absent 3-15% of the days during one semester, labeled "normal level of absence" ($N=519$) and 3) students who were absent 15% or more of the days during one semester, labeled "high level of absence" ($N=47$). The cut off between normal and high absence was $>15\%$, which was determined on the basis of Kearney's criteria for problematic absence (Kearney, 2008b) and previous studies of school absence in adolescence (Askeland, 2015; Ingul, 2012). This cut off is also in line with the previous national school absence limit in Norwegian high schools (The directorate of Education, "Utdanningsdirektoratet", 2016).

"Parental monitoring" was measured through six questions, using a four-point Likert scale with the alternatives: (1) "Know very little"; (2) "Know some"; (3) "Know a lot"; (4) "Know everything". The six questions were introduced by: "It can be hard to keep track of the adolescent's activities. These questions are concerned with what you as a parent, know about your adolescent's activities", followed by the questions: (1) "Who your adolescent is with?"; (2) "Where he/she is during leisure time?"; (3) "How your adolescent is spending her/his money?"; (4) "Where your adolescent goes, right after school?"; (5) "Where your adolescent is during the day and evening in weekends?"; (6) "About problems/difficulties your adolescent has at school?".

"Parental involvement" was measured through five questions using a three-point Likert scale with the alternatives: (1) "Incorrect"; (2) "Partly correct"; (3) "Correct". The questions were introduced with the headline: "How involved are you usually in her/his school work?", followed by the five statements: (1) "I am very interested in the school work of my son/daughter"; (2) "I often help her/him with school work"; (3) "I encourage him/her to pursue higher education"; (4) "I often praise him/her for the school work"; (5) "I seldom speak about school with her/him". Prior to analysis, the latter item concerning parental involvement was reversed, as it was negatively designed.

"Youth-parent relationship" was measured through fifteen questions by using a five-point Likert scale with the alternatives: 1) "Nearly always"; 2) "Often"; 3) "Sometimes"; 4) "Seldom" 5) "Almost never". The question section was introduced by "How is your relation to your adolescent these days? Tick off the alternative that suits you best". This introduction was followed by fifteen statements, one of which was included in the current study. This item was considered especially relevant as it explicitly addresses warmth in the relationship between parent and the adolescent, and were formulated as following; "The adolescent and I have a warm and loving relationship".

Statistical procedure

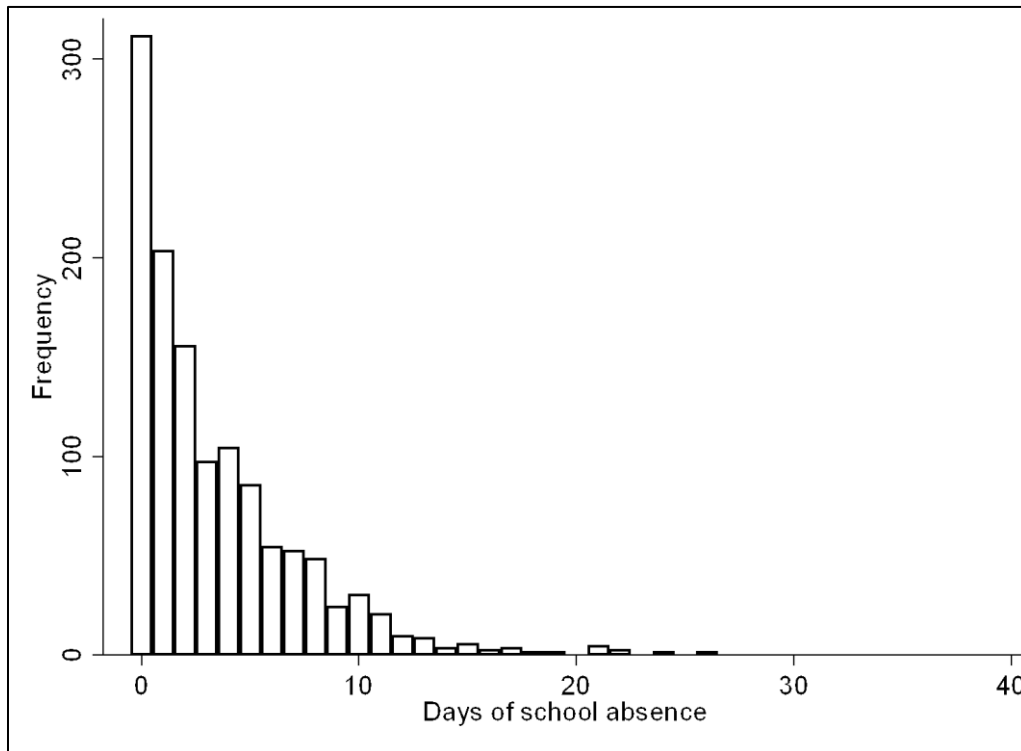
All statistical analyses were conducted using STATA 15.0 for Windows. The statistical level of significance in the current study was $p < 0.05$. Due to differences in the scales of the instruments measuring parental monitoring and involvement, the means of the variables were standardized prior to analysis.

The present sample with parent reports was smaller than the total sample of adolescent respondents in the youth@hordaland-survey. A comparison of absence in the two samples was therefore employed. The mean days of absence in the present sample with parent reports and the total sample without parent information was compared by conducting a Mann-Whitney test, due to observations of the distributions deviating from normality. In order to compare the sample distributions between the two samples on school absence as a categorical variable, which entailed three levels of school absence – a Pearson's Chi Square test was employed.

A Spearman correlation analysis was performed to illustrate intercorrelations between the variables of interest in the current study, including demographic variables. The continuous school absence variable was assumed to be properly analyzed as a count variable, as it measures number of days absent from school in a limited period of time (one semester). The distribution of school absence in the current sample was skewed and revealed a high frequency of students registered with zero days of school absence. The distribution of school absence is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1

Distribution of School absence in the current sample



Due to these observations, a Zero-inflated Poisson (ZIP) regression analysis was conducted. The ZIP-analysis was conducted in a sequence of models. In the first model, the assumed predictors for school absence, parental involvement and monitoring were analyzed. Subsequently demographic variables were included in the model. Finally, the item of warmth in the youth-parent relationship was also included in the ZIP-analysis, to control for its potential explaining effects on parenting practices. A Vuong-test was conducted to examine whether the ZIP-analysis is beneficial compared to a standard Poisson model.

Multinomial logistic regression was performed to examine associations between the parental variables and different levels of the ordinal school absence variable. "Low level of absence" (<3% days of school absence) served as reference group due to the distribution of absence in the sample (See Figure 1). The analysis was conducted in a gradual manner. First,

the associations between school absence and parental involvement and monitoring were analyzed separately. Subsequently the variables were included in the same analysis, eventually also with the item of parental warmth, to observe the independent effects of the variables when combined.

Results

When comparing the current sample which included parent reports, with the total sample of adolescent respondents, a visual inspection of the distributions of school absence revealed a fairly similar distribution. This distribution entailed a high frequency of adolescents with zero days of school absence in both samples. Mean days of school absence was significantly lower ($M=3.56$, $SD = 4.327$, $p <.001$) in the current sample with parent reports compared to the total sample of adolescent respondents in the youth@hordaland-survey ($M=4.59$, $SD = 5.612$, $p <.001$). The chi square test ($\chi^2 = 42.12$) revealed significant differences ($p. <.001$) in the proportion of adolescents with low, normal and high absence in the two samples (See Table 2).

Table 2

Distributions of different levels of school absence: current sample with parent reports and total sample of adolescent respondents in the youth@Hordaland-survey

Levels of school absence	Current sample with parent reports		Total sample of adolescents	
	($N=1252$)	%	($N=6955$)	%
Low levels	686	54,8	3232	46,4
Normal levels	519	41,5	3227	46,3
High levels	47	3,8	496	7,12

Note. Low = <3%, normal = 3-15% and, high >15% of days absent from school.

The Spearman correlational analysis is presented in Table 3. The correlational analysis revealed that the three parenting practices monitoring, involvement and warmth are weakly to moderately correlated with each other. All parenting practices were weakly negatively

correlated with school absence, but only significant for parental monitoring. Between parental involvement and respectively maternal and paternal education, a weak positive correlation was found.

Table 3

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between school absence, demographic variables parental involvement, monitoring and warmth

	School absence	Monitoring	Involvement	Warmth	Gender	Maternal Educational level
Monitoring	-0.08*					
Involvement	-0.06	0.25**				
Warmth	-0.03	0.41**	0.23**			
Gender	-0.08*	-0.08**	-0.14**	-0.08*		
Maternal educational level	0.07*	0.01	0.15**	-0.03	-0.01	
Paternal educational level	-0.01	-0.06	0.12**	0.02	-0.05	0.36**

Note. p.0.01**, p.0.05*, r_s = Spearmans rank correlational coefficient.

Results from the Zero-inflated Poisson regression analysis are presented in Table 4. As the value of the Risk Ratio-coefficient (RR) resulted in values below 1, this indicates that increased levels of parental monitoring and involvement is associated with lowered risk of school absence.

Table 4

Zero-inflated Poisson model: Parental monitoring and involvement

	Unadjusted		Adjusted for SES		Adjusted for warmth	
	RR [95%CI]	P	RR [95%CI]	P	RR [95%CI]	p
Monitoring	.94 [.92-.97]	<.001	.94 [.91-.97]	<.001	.95 [.92-.99]	<.001
Involvement	.92 [.89-.94]	<.001	.92 [.89-.95]	<.001	.89 [.86-.93]	<.001

Note. RR = Risk Ratio. CI = Confidence interval

The results from the count portion of the model revealed that both parental monitoring $RR=.94$, 95% CI [.92-.97] and parental involvement $RR=.92$, 95% CI [.89-.95] were associated with lowered levels of school absence ($p<.001$). The observed effect remained stable and significant ($p<.001$) when demographic variables were taken into account, both of parental monitoring ($RR=.94$, 95% CI [.91-.97]) and parental involvement ($RR=.92$, 95% CI [.89-.95]). Interestingly, when parental warmth was included in the analysis, the effects of parental involvement increased ($RR=.89$, 95% CI [.86-.93]), whereas the effects of parental monitoring decreased ($RR=.95$, 95%CI [.92-.99]), both significant ($p<.001$). The results from the Vuong test was significant for the overall model ($p<.001$), suggesting that the model is the preferred option compared to a standard Poisson model.

Table 5

Multinomial logistic regression: monitoring, involvement and warmth

	School absence			
	Normal absence		High absence	
	RR [95%CI]	<i>p</i>	RR [95%CI]	<i>p</i>
Monitoring	.81 [.73-.92]	.001	.73 [.54-.98]	.037
Adjusted for involvement	.82 [.73-.93]	.001	.80 [.59-1.08]	.152
Adjusted for warmth	.86 [.75-.99]	.034	.81 [.58-1.14]	.232
Involvement	.94 [.84-1.05]	.328	.66 [.50-.89]	.006
Adjusted for monitoring	.99 [.88-1.11]	.855	.70 [.52-.95]	.021
Adjusted for warmth	.98 [.86-1.13]	.855	.66 [.47-.91]	.012
Warmth				
Adjusted for monitoring and involvement	.98 [.83-1.17]	.865	1.16 [.76-1.78]	.491

Note. RR = Risk Ratio. CI = Confidence interval. Base outcome = lower levels of school absence (<3% absent).

Results from the multinomial logistic regression is listed in table 5. When investigating differences between adolescents with low compared to normal and high levels of

absence, adolescence with normal levels of school absence received lower levels of parental monitoring ($RR=.81$, 95% CI [.73-.92], $p=.001$). This effect remained significant when combined with parental involvement ($RR=.82$, 95% CI [.73-.93], $p=.001$), and when additionally combined with parental warmth ($RR=.86$, 95% CI [.75-.99], $p=.034$). Within the group of adolescents with high levels of school absence, adolescents received less parental monitoring compared to adolescents with lower levels of school absence, ($RR=.73$, 95% CI [.54-.98], $p=.037$), although this effect did not remain significant when combined with parental involvement and warmth.

The strongest effect was found for parental involvement in the group of adolescents with high levels of school absence. Compared to their peers with low levels of school absence, they were more likely to receive lower levels of parental involvement, ($RR=.66$, 95% CI [.50-.89], $p=.006$). The observed effect remained significant when combined with parental monitoring, ($RR=.70$, 95% CI [.52-.95], $p=.021$) and with parental warmth, ($RR=.66$, 95% CI [.47-.91], $p=.012$). Interestingly, the effect of parental involvement seemed specific for the high level group as we did not find a significant difference in parental involvement between adolescents with low and normal levels of absence.

Discussion

Summary of results

The aim of the current study was to investigate the association between parental monitoring, involvement, and school absence. The hypothesis was that higher levels of parental monitoring and involvement were associated with lower school absence in a sample of Norwegian adolescents. In sum, the current findings suggested that levels of parental monitoring and involvement were related to adolescent's levels of school absence in high school in a sample of Norwegian adolescents. When school absence was investigated continuously, we found that increase in school absence was associated with less parental

monitoring and involvement. The observed associations did not decline when controlled for parents' socioeconomic status, or levels of warmth in the relationship.

Concerning different levels of school absence, parents of adolescents with normal levels of school absence reported significantly less parental monitoring compared to their counterparts with low levels of school absence. For adolescents with high levels of school absence, levels of parental involvement were significantly reduced compared to adolescents with low levels of school absence.

Understanding the results

Parental monitoring and school absence. When investigated both continuously and categorically, parental monitoring was observed to be associated with less school absence. In the categorical investigation, adolescents with normal levels of school absence were at risk of receiving less parental monitoring compared to their peers with low levels of school absence.

Parental monitoring and warmth. A moderate correlation between parental monitoring and warmth was found, which could be expected due to previous research (Fletcher et.al, 2004). Surprisingly, the linkage between parental monitoring and school absence remained significant and did not change notably when controlling for parental warmth in the youth-parent relationship. This observation somewhat differs from previous findings (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Fletcher, Steinberg & Williams-Wheeler, 2004; Dishion & MacMahon, 1998) which taken together suggest that warmth in a trusting relationship between adolescents and parents can lead to child disclosure, and hence generate parental knowledge. In this context, parental knowledge is assumed to equal the concept of parental monitoring as it is the amount of information, not the way it is retrieved that is being measured (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). It is highlighted that parental warmth is associated with increasing levels of parental monitoring and the adolescents' willingness to disclose information (Fletcher, Steinberg & Williams-Wheeler, 2004). When studied specifically on

school outcomes, high levels of parental monitoring together with high levels of warmth have been observed negatively associated with school trouble, or negative behavior at school (Lowe & Dotterer, 2013) which contradicts the current findings.

However, there are alternative ways of understanding the somewhat surprising results. One suggestion stem from evidence finding parental monitoring and parental support or warmth to contribute to adolescent functioning and outcomes in independent and unique ways (Bean, Barber & Crane, 2006). This could imply that parental monitoring and warmth are affecting different outcomes in the adolescents' lives. The latter might serve as a possible explanation of our results, as school absence was the only dependent variable measured. Broadening the scope by measuring different adolescent school outcomes could have given opportunities to explore such hypothesis further. Another possible explanation is that our findings are influenced by correlations between the parenting practices. The parenting practices were weakly to moderately correlated which makes it difficult to examine isolated effects.

Parental monitoring and normal levels of school absence. As the significant effect of parental monitoring was found for the group with normal levels, and not the high-level group when investigated categorically, one can assume that presence of parental monitoring is a general protective factor. These results are supported by previous findings. Parental monitoring allows parents to gain knowledge about their adolescents' whereabouts (Jacobson & Crocket, 2000) which enable parents to know whether the adolescent attends school or not. The conceptualization of parental monitoring has been questioned, as it is the knowledge, not the way parents collect information that is being measured (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Duckworth & DeJung (1989) held that parenting practices' effectiveness on school absence is dependent on parental knowledge about the adolescent's behavior.

Parental involvement and school absence. When investigated both continuously and categorically, adolescents with more school absence were at risk of receiving significantly lower levels of parental involvement. In regards to different levels of school absence, parental involvement was reported significantly lower for adolescents with high levels of absence. Interestingly, the effect of parental involvement could not be explained by parental socioeconomic status (SES), as could be expected given previous research (Daraganova, Mullan & Edwards, 2014).

SES and parental involvement. The fact that SES did not account for the relation between parental involvement and school absence somewhat contradicts previous findings. Numerous studies have highlighted the effects of SES as a facilitator of parental involvement and even as a direct predictor of various school outcomes (Portes & Macleod, 1996; Jeynes, 2005; Jeynes, 2007). A direct effect between higher economic resources and educational behavior such as attendance has also been illustrated (Nash, 2002; Henry, 2007).

It has been suggested that the effect of parental involvement on reducing truancy, is far more effective for students with high parental SES (McNeal, 2001). We only included parental education as indicators of SES, which in previous studies has been found to be one of the most prominent predictors of adolescents' achievement (Hoff, Laursen & Tardiff, 2002). It is commonly believed that parents with high SES are more likely to get involved in their children's education, which in turn enhances adolescents' school outcomes (Coleman, 1991; Yan, 1999). In line with this, a positive and significant correlation between SES and parental involvement was found in the current study. Nevertheless, when the relationship with school absence was investigated – the effect of parental involvement did not decline when adjusting for SES.

White (1982) suggested that when parental income, occupation and education is used as predictions of their children's academic attainment, it is only weakly correlated. It might be

that broader factors such as family structure and other factors influencing social capital (Coleman, 1991) and family stressors (Forehand et.al., 1991) should be included when investigating parental involvement and school absence. Inclusions of broader factors of influence are in line with Bronfenbrenners system theory, which highlights the importance of multiple socialization agents when studying individual development and outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Parental involvement and high levels of school absence. The significant relationship between high levels of school absence and less parental involvement, indicates that adolescents with high levels of absence are at risk of receiving less involvement in education compared to their peers with low levels of absence. These findings are consistent with identification of lack of parental involvement as a key risk factor for high and problematic absence in school (Kearney, 2008b). The multidimensional nature of parental involvement as a construct (Anderson & Minke, 2008) makes it difficult to compare the current results with previous research. Additionally, relatively few studies have focused specifically on home-based parent-initiated involvement in high school. Studsrød & Bru (2009) uses the term parental interest in school work. This study might be considered comparable with the current results, as it contains overlapping items with the instrument used in the current study. They found that parental interest in school work had a negative relationship with truancy (Studsrød & Bru, 2009). Generally, a negative relationship between parental involvement and behavioral problems in school, and correspondingly a positive relation with favorable school outcomes have been found (McNeal, 1999) which supports the current results.

Parenting practices and school absence

The current results illustrates the importance of parenting practices when studying adolescent development and life outcomes. Both parental involvement and monitoring are specific parenting behaviors, which allow parents to pay attention and gain information about

their adolescent children's behavior. The fact that each of the parenting practices were significantly associated with respectively normal or high levels of school absence is an interesting finding. Perhaps parental involvement appears as the most salient factor for high levels of absence as the instrument explicitly requests involvement in school. The parental monitoring scale is more general in its form and it is possible that it assesses a more general protective influence on adolescents in different arenas in life, not specifically on school outcomes.

The current results serve as an indicator that parents still influence adolescent school outcomes, despite the expected decline of parenting practices in the adolescent years (Seyfried & Chung, 2002). As the adolescent years involve independence processes and establishment of autonomy (Steinberg & Silk, 2002), the present findings might indicate that parents play an important guiding function in this process.

In keeping with this, another study based on the youth@hordaland-survey highlighted that a greater proportion of adolescents who reported "living alone/with friends" had high levels of school absence compared to adolescents who reported "living with family" (Askeland et.al, 2015). These differences imply that parents still have an important regulatory role in their adolescents' school behavior. In addition, living with family or parents/caregivers is also a salient prerequisite for parental involvement and monitoring to take place.

As parenting practices appear to be an influential factor for school absence, an investigation of explaining mechanisms might increase the understanding of why this is the case. Explaining mechanisms for the current findings can be numerous. One approach to deepening the understanding is to investigate the underlying effects of the associations and the intentions that motivate the specific parenting behaviors.

Explaining mechanisms

The essence of both parental involvement and monitoring can be said to be generating parental knowledge about the adolescents' behavior in school and their daily life outside of school. Such knowledge might serve as a potential underlying mechanism, as adolescents' awareness of such knowledge generates expectations of different consequences of their behavior (Dishon & Macmahon, 1998). This in line with reinforcement theory, originally formulated by Skinner (1945). On the contrary one can assume that lack of parental knowledge about school behavior, minimizes the adolescents' beliefs about consequences which in turn might lower the adolescents' threshold of being absent from school.

Direction of the findings. When looking for explaining mechanisms, it is important to acknowledge the uncertainty regarding the direction of the findings as the survey and school absence data were collected concurrently. It is therefore difficult to predict whether more school absence among adolescents lead to less parenting practices, or if less parenting practices leads to more school absence. It could be that higher levels of the parenting practices protects adolescents from school absence, and less parenting practices places adolescents at risk of employing high levels of school absence.

Dishion, Nelson & Kavanagh (2003) identified a tendency of parents of high-risk adolescents to gradually disengage more, compared to typically developing adolescents. Additionally, a longitudinal study found that parental knowledge seemed to lower the risk of future delinquent behavior (Laird et.al, 2003). Delinquent behavior problems were associated with reductions in knowledge (Laird et.al., 2003), which implies that parents might decrease their monitoring activities when problem behaviors increase (Dishion, Nelson & Kavanagh, 2003). Alternatively, they suggest that it might be more difficult for parents to monitor or to gain such information from adolescents engaged in delinquent behaviors (Laird et.al, 2003).

The latter is consistent with our results, as higher levels of school absence was associated with lower levels of parenting practices and most likely thus less parental knowledge.

Intentions behind parenting behaviors. In order to understand the association between parental monitoring, involvement and school absence, it is important to look for the reasons why parents carry out different practices. Intentions may be dependent on the behavior of the adolescent. One reason could be to reduce or to prevent unwanted behavior. Alternatively, parents might monitor or obtain information about their children simply driven by interest and care in the adolescent life. Studsrød & Bru (2009) made important distinctions between different levels of parental monitoring. They argue that exaggerated levels of monitoring labeled overprotection could have a negative impact on the adolescent, rather than enhancing school outcomes (Amatea & Sherrard, 1995). As the current results suggest that more parental monitoring was associated with less school absence, it can be assumed that appropriate levels of monitoring were carried out and therefore had a positive impact on the adolescent's school behavior. If this is the case, it might imply that other explaining mechanisms than just reducing unwanted behavior is involved. One possible reason is that parents monitor their children in order to achieve certain goals and aspirations they hold for them (Spera, 2005). Such goals are dependent and formed on the basis of characteristics and resources of the parents. If education and attendance is valued by parents, it is natural to assume that they will monitor and follow up school behaviors more closely.

The need for broader inclusion of parental variables. As noted, neither parental warmth nor socioeconomic status could explain the current findings in respect to parental monitoring, involvement and school absence. This could highlight a need for a broader inclusion of characteristics of the youth-parent relationship. A broader approach could involve a typological approach as outlined previously. Baumrind's typological approach includes both dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness (Baumrind, 1991). Demandingness refers

to "the demands parents make on their children to become integrated into the family and the society" (Spera, 2005 p.135), while responsiveness includes the way in and degree in which parents are sensitive, warm and supportive of their children (Baumrind, 1991).

In keeping with this, our findings can be examined in the framework of the contextual model (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). This model recognizes parenting styles as a context, as an underlying factor that helps explain the effectiveness of different parenting practices on school outcomes (Spera, 2005). The model explains this linkage by the socialization goals parents value for their children (Spera, 2005). Such goals can include parental expectations of education goals, which in turn might facilitate different parental practices that leads to different adolescent school outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Parenting styles, here represents a context where parental socialization goals and parental practices are being emphasized and acquired (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

The notion of parenting style as a moderator of the effectiveness of specific parenting practices, implies the combinations of parenting styles and practices to result in different school related outcomes (Spera, 2005). Research generally predict the most favorable outcomes of an authoritative parenting style (Spera, 2005). In combination, it is found that an involvement behavior such as helping with homework, is more efficient when practiced in an authoritative home (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Motivation as underlying effect. Finally, another alternative explaining mechanism in respect to the effect of parental involvement on school outcomes, is that involvement activities might foster and promote the adolescents' school motivation (Gonzales, 2002). Parental expressions of positive attitudes towards school might increase the adolescents' perceived control and competence (Gonzales, 2002). Moreover, parents who engage and show interest in schooling, might serve as an important role model for their adolescent children. Modeling theory (Bandura, 1974) offers a useful framework in this context.

Modeling is especially effective when the models are perceived similar to the self and when the person and model have a shared history. This makes parents salient and powerful models for adolescents (Hoover-Dempsey et.al., 2001). In line with this, Hysing et.al (2017) found that parental work absence was significantly related to adolescents' school absence, in a study based on the youth@hordaland-survey. Further, parent behavior played a crucial modelling role in relation to illness and disability behavior among the adolescents (Hysing et.al., 2017).

Banduras (1977) other central concept self-efficacy, may also influence parental practices effect on adolescents' school outcomes. In developmental psychology, self-efficacy is sometimes labeled parental efficacy, which refers to “the extent to which parents believed that they could influence the context in which their adolescents were growing” (Shumow & Lomax, 2002, p.128). Both parental monitoring and involvement is found to be predicted by parental efficacy among parents of adolescents. Shumow and Lomax (2002) postulates that parental involvement and monitoring appears as behavioral expressions of parents' beliefs about their influence in the adolescents' lives.

Alternatively, other explaining mechanisms so far unidentified might be involved. As parenting practices unfold in the interaction between parents and adolescents, it is certain that the adolescent's behavior and development represents an influence on both parental monitoring and involvement.

Implications for interventions

The current findings suggest that interventions with the purpose of reducing or preventing school absence could benefit from including parents. Efforts to improve adolescents' attendance in school has been the aim of a great deal of interventions across disciplines (Kearney, 2008b). So far, the majority of interventions aimed at reducing school absence are school based (Maynard et.al, 2013) which in most cases does not include parents. Efforts to identify causes of school absence so far include both individual, family and

community factors (Kearney, 2008a). The importance of including parents was highlighted in an intervention study, where it was found that parental involvement in children's treatment was associated with higher school attendance (Heyne et.al, 2002).

Inclusion of parents enables a partnership between schools and families, and such partnership can reduce school absence through specific involvement activities (Epstein & Sheldon, 2004). Activities such as communication with families and celebrating good attendance with families and students, reduced school absence from one year to the next (Epstein & Sheldon, 2004). In accordance, the communication between schools and families, might generate higher parental involvement (Epstein, 2001) and when parents are informed about absence, e.g. by telephone of school officials, absence seems to decline (Helm & Burkett, 1989). The latter is consistent with parental knowledge as an explaining and underlying mechanism for the effect of parenting practices on school outcomes.

In other words, schools that provide information about attendance to parents, also contribute to parental monitoring and involvement to be practiced. Keeping parents updated and informed of their adolescents' attendance, may allow parents to monitor and be involved in their adolescent children's education more effectively (Epstein & Sheldon, 2004).

In the research literature, specific parenting interventions to reduce school absence has received little attention. However, Kearney & Hugelshofer (2000) suggests that parenting strategies to reduce delinquency might be applicable to reduce school absence as well. Such strategies could include increased monitoring and knowledge and positive reinforcement of behavior (Bank, Patterson & Reid, 1987). The idea that parenting strategies aimed at reducing delinquent behaviors somewhat might extend to reducing school absence in a broader population, makes multisystemic therapy (MST) relevant to include. MST has been shown to improve adolescents school attendance through favorable changes in family relations and functioning (Henggeler, et.al, 1999). MST has been developed on the basis of risk and

protective factors for behavioral problems in adolescence (Henggeler, et.al, 1999). MST differs from more traditional parenting and family therapeutic programs, due to the emphasis on different systems affecting the adolescent behavior (Henggeler, et.al, 1999). The MST approach builds, partly, upon the framework of Bronfenbrenner previously reviewed. This implies emphasis on different systems such as families, peers and schools, and the interconnections between them (Henggeler, Melton & Smith, 1999).

Even though the current study strived to identify more universal protective factors, and implications for interventions for the entire population of adolescents – important principles can be collected and employed from clinical groups such as adolescents' with delinquent behavior problems. Overall, such approaches highlight the importance and relevance of parenting practices when intervening to reduce school absence.

Methodological strengths and limitations

Sample considerations. When the current and the total sample of respondents in the youth@Hordaland-survey were compared, the sample with parent reports had significantly lower levels of school absence than the total sample. This difference was also observed with regards to different levels of absence, as 3,8 % of adolescents in the sample with parent reports had high levels of absence compared to 7,1 % of adolescents in the total sample.

It is plausible to assume that adolescents with parental respondents, may come from families with higher SES as responding to the survey requires time and resources'. E.g. Hesseldenz (1976) suggested that respondents to surveys had generally higher education and greater income than non-respondents based on comparisons to state income tax records.

However, when demographic characteristics of the sample with parent reports and the total sample of respondents in the youth@Hordaland-survey were compared, only small differences in sociodemographic characteristics appeared regarding socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age and gender (Nilsen, submitted). On the basis of this comparison, it might be that

the results in the current study could have been found in the total sample as well. Further, the survey was conducted in Hordaland county which is considered generally representative of Norway on key parameters, in regards to both sociodemographic factors and health (Skogen et.al, 2014).

Alternatively, it might be that the two samples differ on characteristics so far unidentified. One option is that merely responding to the survey might indicate an involvement in itself. Some evidence suggests that the primary determinant of responding versus not responding to a survey is interest of the topic of the research (Alreck & Settle, 1985). In line with this, there were generally high scores of both parental monitoring and involvement in the current sample. This might suggest that parents who responded to the survey are generally interested in the topics that were asked regarding their adolescent child.

Methodological strenghts. A major advantage in the current study was that data on school absence was collected from the official school registry, which rules out any self-report or social desirability bias in the measurement of school absence. In addition, the survey was population based and the total sample size was large.

The items regarding parental monitoring originated from the parent version of parental monitoring scale developed by Silverberg & Small (1991) which has been shown to have solid internal consistency (Stanton et.al, 2000). Further, parents answered the questions regarding parenting practices themselves, which might be considered more reliable than responding on behalf of others. Additionally, parental education was used as an indicator of SES and might be more reliable compared to more subjective measures of a person's experience of one's own socioeconomic situation.

Methodological limitations. The present study relied solely on parent reports of monitoring and involvement. The recognition of parenting as a bidirectional process between parents and adolescents (Collins, 1995) makes adolescents' responses an important

contribution to include. The parental monitoring scale has a youth-version (Silverberg & Small, 1991) which was not included as an instrument in the questionnaire. Including this scale could have strengthened the current results by shedding light on the adolescents' experience of the parenting practices. If adolescents' responses were included when measuring parenting practices, the proportion of adolescent providing and parents requesting information could be measured (Sartor & Youniss, 2002).

A general limitation is that the measures of parenting practices relied on self-report. This might bias the responses by a social-desirability effect, as parents might have responded according to what they perceive to be desirable behavior as a parent rather than actual behavior towards their adolescent child. Here again, including adolescents' responses could have contributed to control for such biases. Still, both parental monitoring and involvement were measured by asking the parents themselves which decreases the risk of inaccurate responses when participants are being asked on behalf of others.

Additionally, as data was collected concurrently, it is difficult to state something about the directions of the findings. This makes it difficult to make causal inferences, and also to make predictions based on our results. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, it is hard to differentiate whether parenting practices can be labeled a protective factor, or whether less parenting practices are a risk factor for school absence. However, regardless of this limitation of the study design, we have highlighted the importance of examining parenting practices when studying school absence in high school.

A specific limitation concerns measurement of warmth in the youth-parent relationship where only one item was included. The item explicitly asked for warmth in the youth-parent relationship, and was therefore considered to be especially relevant. It can be questioned whether one item grasps the complexity of the concept parental warmth. In addition, other and broader parental factors could be involved as well. A broader inclusion of parental aspects

could have entailed a typological approach to parenting. E.g. research on parenting style as a moderator of parenting practices effectiveness with respect to school outcomes (Spera, 2005) provides reasons for adopting a broader approach of parenting when studying specific practices.

Another aspect concerning the parenting practices was that the three variables were weakly to moderately correlated (see Table 3). This might have made it difficult to examine more isolated effects when analyzed. This was e.g. illustrated when the effect of parental monitoring declined when combined with parental involvement and warmth for the high-level group. This may be caused by a superior effect of parental involvement or the small sample size in the high level-group which leads to decrease in statistical power.

The smaller sample size in the current study compared to the total sample of respondents in the youth@hordaland-survey, must be taken into account when understanding the current results as it led to a decrease in statistical power. Further, the group of adolescents with high levels of school absence consisted of only 47 adolescents, which is a considerably small number. This is an important consideration as several predictors were included in the model. It is not unlikely that the estimates for the high absence group and parental monitoring, might represent a power problem.

A drawback both for the current and the total sample of respondents in youth@Hordaland, is that the survey was conducted during school hours. Generally, non-respondents have been found to have increased likelihood of absenteeism (when studied in organizations) compared to respondents (John, 1994). School absence might therefore be underestimated in the current study. Adolescent who were absent at the time of the survey, did receive an invitation by e-mail and could complete the survey at their own convenience during the data-collection period. Still, it is natural to assume that being absent from school may have decrease the likelihood of participation.

Conclusions

The main finding from the current study is that the parenting practices monitoring and involvement are associated with school absence in a sample of Norwegian parents and adolescents. Both parental involvement and monitoring was significantly related to lowered risk of school absence. This highlights the importance of including parental factors when investigating the causes of and factors influencing school absence, as well as when developing psychological interventions. As school absence is the main predictor of drop out, the present findings concerning parental monitoring and involvement should be taken into account when developing interventions, and when mapping factors influencing school absence.

The current results also establish a need for extensive research exploring the nature and underlying mechanisms of parenting practices such as parenting style. This could include investigation of the specific behaviors in involvement and monitoring activities that influence school absence in order to develop effective interventions. Efforts should be made to study the potential long-term effects of parenting practices on school outcomes and psychosocial adjustment indicators through a longitudinal approach.

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