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Too little or too much? A short-term longitudinal study of youth's own economic resources and risk behaviours

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This study examined socioeconomic differences in risk behaviours according to youth-oriented measures of economic resources. Using a representative sample of Swedish adolescents (n=3,801, 50% females), the associations that two aspects of youth's own economy shared with smoking, drinking and conduct problems were examined. Data was based on population register and self-report information when participants were in grades 8 (T1 aged 14-15) and 9 (T2 aged 15-16). Missing activities due to financial constraints and having a cash margin were each associated with concurrent risk behaviours. Missing activities predicted a greater likelihood of conduct problems and having a cash margin predicted an increased likelihood of drinking one-year later. The effects of family income and education were not mediated by missing activities or having a cash margin. The results demonstrate that youth-oriented conceptualisations of economic resources identify gradients in risk behaviours that are distinct from family socioeconomic status. In addition, youth's experiences of relative versus absolute economic resources have different implications for drinking, smoking and conduct problems.

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