

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of perceived pubertal timing on depressive symptoms and life satisfaction of grade 7 Hong Kong adolescents. There were 196 boys and 313 girls from three local secondary schools (2 co-educational schools and 1 girls' school). They have to report their perceived pubertal timing compared with their same sex peers, their depressive symptoms and life satisfaction. The results showed that late maturing boys adjusted less well to their pubertal transition than normal maturing boys and all girls generally. For the girls, no difference was found across the different maturation timing. There was also no gender difference in reported depressive symptoms and life satisfaction generally. With consideration of pubertal timing, the late maturing boys reported more adjustment problems than late maturing girls. The pattern found in Western countries that early maturing girls are more maladjusted and boys are better adjusted during puberty cannot be proved. Future research on the mediators such as school context, peer relationships, parental relationships and cultural influences is recommended. With better understandings of the relations between pubertal timing and adolescent adjustments, interventions can be made to promote psychological well-being of the adolescents.