

The Role of Emotion Dysregulation and Habitual Negative Self-Thinking on the Relationship
Between Child Abuse and Non-Suicidal Self-Injury Among Chinese Adolescents

by

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Abstract

Previous literature has demonstrated a strong relationship between child abuse and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI). The purpose of present study is to investigate the role of emotion dysregulation and habitual negative self-thinking in this association. Adolescent participants from two secondary schools in Hong Kong ($N = 1167$, Female = 662) completed scales on emotion dysregulation, habitual negative self-thinking, child abuse and NSSI. Results showed that about 25% and 45% of sampled participants experienced physical and emotional abuse, respectively. Both genders are equally likely to experience physical abuse and emotional abuse and perceive damage from such sufferings. Among participants with NSSI engagement, males suffered significantly more from physical abuse than females. Approximately 17% of sampled participants engaged in NSSI in the past year. Participants with NSSI engagement differed significantly from those without in terms of physical/emotional abuse, emotion dysregulation, and habitual negative self-thinking. Linear regression test demonstrated partial mediating effects of emotion dysregulation and habitual negative self-thinking on the pathway from child physical/emotional abuse to NSSI engagement. In terms of emotion dysregulation, results are consistent with previous theoretical models and studies concerning the roles of emotion dysregulation on NSSI development. This study also showed that negative self-thinking as a mental habit, regardless of its specific content, may influence NSSI engagement. Limitations of the current study are reviewed and suggestions for future studies were made.

Keywords: non-suicidal self-injury, emotion dysregulation, habitual negative self-thinking, child abuse