

Relationship between Peer Victimization and Depression over 1 Year in Hong Kong Adolescents and the Role of Age, Parental Support and Peer Support

Abstract

Peer victimization has emerged as a prevalent world-wide social phenomenon among youth that has called for concerns from various stakeholders, given its well-established associations with negative mental and social outcomes, including depression, anxiety, behavioral problems and suicidal ideation. Studies on the specific longitudinal relationship between peer victimization and depression among Hong Kong adolescents are lacking. This study examined, through auto-regressive cross-lagged panel model, the longitudinal relationship between peer victimization and depression in a community sample of 302 Hong Kong high school students over a course of one year. In addition, the moderating role of age, parental support and peer support were also examined. Results showed no significant longitudinal relationship between peer victimization and depression; however, peer victimization and depression were found to be stable across the one-year time span. The relationship between peer victimization and depression over time may be more short-term than expected, and it would be apt for further studies to adopt a shorter time lag of months or weeks rather than year(s) to elucidate the relationship. Age was not shown to have a moderating effect, although this could have been attributed to the insufficient sample size of each age group across the sample. Neither parental nor peer support was found to have the expected protective effect. Future studies employing a support scale measuring a wider spectrum of support are required before any plausible conclusion could be drawn regarding the role of parental and peer support in the longitudinal relationship between peer victimization and depression in youth.
