

September 2010

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Title: Prevalence of depressive symptoms with profile characteristics among secondary school students in Hong Kong: A cross-sectional quantitative study

ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, major depressive disorder (MDD) has been acknowledged widely in secondary school students. It is important to measure depressive symptoms in pubertal stage since depressive episodes are likely to develop into MDD.

The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of depressive symptoms with profile characteristics among secondary school students in Hong Kong and the objectives were (1) to investigate the prevalence of depressive symptoms among secondary school students in Hong Kong; (2) to investigate the association between the prevalence of depressive symptoms and gender among secondary school students in Hong Kong; (3) to investigate the relationship between the depressive symptoms and age among secondary school students in Hong Kong; (4) to investigate the relationship between the depressive symptoms and form among secondary school students in Hong Kong; (5) to investigate the relationship between the depressive symptoms and perceived academic performance among secondary school students in Hong Kong; and (6) to investigate the relationship between the depressive symptoms and social support among secondary school students in Hong Kong.

This study was a cross-sectional and quantitative design. By convenient sampling, 908 secondary school students were invited to complete a survey with demographic information, the Cantonese version Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) and the Chinese version of Social Support Questionnaire-Short Form (SSQ6). SPSS for MS Windows Release 17.0 was used in the data analysis.

The overall prevalence of depressive symptoms among secondary school students in Hong Kong was 57.3%, according to the CESD cut-off of 16. The prevalence of depressive symptoms among female students was 3.5% higher than male students. However, there was no association between gender and the present of depressive symptoms ($\chi^2=0.788$, $p>0.05$). The degree of depressive symptoms increased with age and form ($r=0.120$, $p<0.05$ and $r_s=0.163$, $p<0.001$ respectively) but it decreased when the degree of satisfaction of perceived academic performance increased ($r_s=0.303$, $p<0.001$). On the other hand, the degree of depressive symptoms decreased when subject felt more satisfactory on social support satisfaction ($r=-0.153$, $p<0.001$). However, there was not a statistically significant relationship between depressive symptoms and social support network ($r=-0.060$, $p>0.05$).

The frequency of students with depressive symptoms in secondary school was relatively high in our study, reaching one half (57.3%). This indicated that there was a need for depression-related health education programs targeting those at higher risk such as students who studied in higher form, felt unsatisfactory on perceived academic performance, experienced poor social support satisfaction etc. Moreover, student counseling services, which offering mental health assistance, could be provided for secondary school students.