

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of violence exposure among the secondary students in Hong Kong and the association between these chronic experiences of exposing to violence and participants' mental health. Four indices of mental health were used: aggressive behavior, anxiety/depression, delinquent behavior and feeling of unsafe. It was found that increased exposure was related to more behavioral and emotional problems. But, aggressive and delinquent behavior were found to have a stronger correlation with violence exposure than anxiety/depression and feeling of unsafe. Being exposed to violence happening on acquaintances was associated with more behavioral and emotional problems than to violence happening on strangers. Exposure through different modalities has different associations with the behavioral and emotional measures. While being victimized was associated with more behavioral and emotional problems, exposure to media violence tend to have a weaker correlation with the dependent measures. Effect of witness on anxiety and depression tended to interact with gender: witness was not related with anxiety and depression for females while positive relationship was found for males. It was concluded that the relationship between violence exposure and psychological functioning is not a simple nor direct one.