

Abstract

The present study explored the relationships between dispositional optimism and other psychosocial variables among Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong. Measures of dispositional optimism, locus of control, extraversion, neuroticism, parenting styles and perceived dispositional optimism of parents were administered to a sample of 754 secondary school students. Results indicated that dispositional optimism was significantly and moderately associated with locus of control, extraversion, neuroticism and perceived optimism of parents. Participants with different level of dispositional optimism were classified into the low, average and high optimism groups for comparison. Finding indicated that the high optimism group was the most extraverted, least neurotic, had the most internality in locus of control, perceived parents as warmest and most optimistic. Path model analysis suggested that two models of optimism and other psychosocial variables were equally fit. Both models found that negative affectivity, as indexed by high neuroticism and low extraversion, directly predicted pessimism and external locus of control. Positive parental characteristics also predicted optimistic attitude and internal locus of control directly. The most interesting finding is that under the influence of negative affectivity, the sign of the beta weight between the path of optimism and locus of control was opposite to the bivariate correlation between the two constructs, suggesting the existence of a suppressing effect from negative affectivity. Theory of learned helplessness in depression was used to explain this finding. Implications for future research direction were discussed.