

Abstract

Impulsivity has long been implicated in the development of non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) among adolescents. However, different studies used different constructs of impulsivity to study NSSI, therefore leading to mixed findings. The present study compared the predictive utility of different measures of impulsivity on NSSI. The moderating effect of Distress tolerance on the relationship between impulsivity and NSSI was also examined. Participants were 6834 Chinese adolescents from six high schools in Hong Kong. Subjects completed self-report questionnaires assessing NSSI, three different impulsivity measures (i.e. Behavioral impulsivity, Urgency, Premeditation) and Distress tolerance. Urgency and Premeditation were significantly correlated with NSSI behavior. However, multiple regression analyses revealed that Behavioral Impulsivity was the only significant unique predictor of NSSI. Gender differences were observed; female adolescents were significantly more likely to engage in NSSI, and had significantly higher scores on Urgency and Distress tolerance, whereas male adolescents had significantly higher scores in Premeditation. Distress tolerance was a stronger moderator of the relationship between Behavioral Impulsivity and NSSI for female adolescents, as compared to males. Conceptual and Clinical implications are discussed.

Keywords: non-suicidal self-injury, impulsivity, behavioral impulsivity