

**ABSTRACT**

The present study investigate the unique effect of peer support on the recovery of people with mental illness in Hong Kong, accounting for other elements that have been found to be important to the recovery process. *Objectives* The first purpose was to investigate the size of peer network. The second purpose was to investigate the qualitative aspects of peer support. The third purpose was to investigate the individual contribution of peer support components on recovery, accounting for 4%. *Method* One hundred twenty-three mental health consumers were recruited from community-based psychiatric rehabilitation centers. *Results* Peer network size of people with mental illness was small in general with a mean of 3.71 ( $SD = 5.40$ ). The types of peer support included assistance-related (guidance and reliable alliance), nonassistance-related (reassurance of worth) support and affection (attachment). In particular, the assistance-related type of peer support contributed the most to existential need of recovery, in addition to service empowerment, hope and psychiatric symptoms. *Conclusion* This study highlighted the importance of peer support with people with mental illness in recovery.

*Keywords:* peer support; social support; recovery; empowerment; hope; respect; mental illness