

## **Abstract**

Extant literatures suggest that non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) functions to avoid or escape from a subjective unbearable mental pain engendered by heightened emotional reactivity and poor distress tolerance. However, no studies have examined whether this unbearable internal state could actually be the fundamental core that links emotional reactivity and/or distress tolerance to NSSI. Therefore, a new construct, psychache (i.e. unbearable psychological pain) was introduced in this study to comprehend NSSI. The present study examines the role of emotional reactivity, distress tolerance and psychache in the development of NSSI among Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong. Specifically, an integrated model which postulated emotional reactivity and/or distress tolerance enhanced NSSI through psychache was evaluated. Self-report questionnaires, with measures assessing emotional reactivity, distress tolerance, psychache and NSSI, were administered to 3589 (52.2% female) Chinese adolescents. Results of structural equation modeling supported the hypothesized mediating role of psychache, which partially explained the mechanism linking emotional reactivity and distress tolerance to NSSI. Adolescents with high emotional reactivity and poor distress tolerance were prone to experience greater psychache, which subsequently led to the engagement of NSSI. Clinical implications of these findings and future research directions were discussed.

*Keywords:* Non-suicidal self-injury, emotional reactivity, distress tolerance, psychache, mediation