

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between peer victimization and social anxiety in secondary school students in Hong Kong ($N = 175$). Interpersonal sensitivity was considered as a factor which might exacerbate this relationship. On the other hand, social support was considered to have a protective effect. Age was assumed to moderate the relationship between the form of support and its effect on social anxiety, as research has suggested younger adolescents may be more responsive to parental guidance, whereas older students may prefer to seek support from a close friend. The Revised Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBVQ; Olweus, 1996) was used to delineate self-reported victims and non-victims. Mixed support was found for the hypotheses. No evidence was found of a relationship between peer victimization and social anxiety. The correlation between interpersonal sensitivity and social anxiety was significant, but not in the hypothesized direction. Both self-reported victims and non-victims with higher interpersonal sensitivity were in fact significantly less socially anxious. Furthermore, in a multiple regression analysis, age was not shown to moderate the effect of social support on social anxiety. However, social support did significantly protect against social anxiety in peer victimized students implicating the roles of parents, teachers and care-givers in supporting adolescents' positive adjustment throughout the formative years of puberty.

Keywords: Adolescence, victimization, maladjustment, protective effects, social support.