Assessing the Impact of Social Factors on the Mental Health of Chinese at Risk Adolescents in Hong Kong

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Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship of family, peer and school factors on the mental health of Chinese male and female at risk adolescents and secondary school students in Hong Kong. Questionnaire surveys based on various standardized assessment scales were conducted with 398 (183 female and 215 male) Chinese at risk adolescents and 320 (160 female and 160 male) Chinese secondary school students between 12 and 18 years of age in Hong Kong. Compared to secondary school students, at risk adolescents had poorer relations with parents, more negative family and peer influence, a more negative school environment, and poorer social functioning. Findings also revealed that female participants had more somatic symptoms, anxiety, and depression compared to males. The importance of environmental factors on the mental health of Chinese adolescents supports previous research in Western countries. Implications for intervention and prevention were discussed from a cross-cultural perspective.

Adolescents are at a period of biological and psychosocial development which puts them at risk of developing physical and psychological problems. Theorists have long speculated and studied the risk and protective factors associated with the development of behavioural, health and psychological problems in adolescence in Western countries. Jessor (1992) proposed a psychosocial framework for understanding adolescent risk behaviours and health outcomes. This model includes the following five interrelated domains of risk and protective factors: biology/genetics, social environment, perceived environment, personality and behaviour. Some of these risk factors include negative family influence, family and peer conflicts, poverty, low self-esteem and poor academic achievement. Conversely, some of the protective factors include
GENDER ROLE STRESS AND BURNOUT IN CHINESE HUMAN SERVICE PROFESSIONALS IN HONG KONG

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Three hundred and seventy-four Chinese human service professionals were surveyed to examine the associations between burnout and gender role stress. Gender role stress refers to people's gender-based cognitive appraisal of specific situations that are role dystonic and stressful. Results showed that gender role stress was the best predictor for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, while professional type was the best predictor for personal accomplishment. Masculine gender role stress was related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization for both male and female professionals, whereas feminine gender role stress was related to similar burnout dimensions for male professionals only. Gender role stress and burnout associations were found only in gender-typed professions of police officers and nurses, but not in a nongender-typed profession of secondary school teacher. Among the three groups, nurses experienced a higher level of gender role stress and lack of personal accomplishment than police officers and teachers.

KEY WORDS: gender role stress, burnout, gender-typed professions, human services profession, chinese.

Studies on stress and coping have noted that people's gender role socialization affects their cognitive appraisal of situations and subsequent coping behavior. Eisler and his colleagues (Eisler & Blalock, 1991; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987; Gillespie & Eisler, 1992) argued that individuals would appraise the stressfulness of situations in a gender-determined manner. For example, men may experience stress when they have difficulties living up to male imperatives and/or find themselves in situations that require feminine behavior (Eisler, Skidmore, & Ward, 1988). Similarly, women will experience stress when they are unable to meet the female imperatives and/or compel to perform in situations that call for masculine traits (Gillespie & Eisler, 1992). Eisler and his colleagues coined the term gender role stress to refer to people's gender-based cognitive appraisal of specific situations that are role dystonic and stressful. It is a construct distinct from global self-perceptions of socially desirable gender traits. Eisler and Blalock (1991) further noted that individuals experiencing gender role stress will tend to adopt dysfunctional coping behavior and are vulnerable to certain health risks. Tang and Lau (1995) have extended the gender role stress construct to Chinese samples. Their