

Prevalence and Associated Factors of Alexithymia among Chinese adolescents

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Abstract

As alexithymia (“no words for emotion”) is well researched in western countries, data, particularly from Asian countries, regarding the prevalence of alexithymia in adolescents are relatively limited. We conducted a study to examine the prevalence and the associated factors of alexithymia among Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong. We used the Toronto Alexithymia Scale for measuring alexithymia, the Family Environment Scale for family emotional expressiveness, the Parental Acceptance and Rejection Questionnaire for measuring participants’ perceptions of maternal warmth and control and the Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale for depression. Based on the results from 1,606 Chinese adolescent participants, about 36% of adolescents were classified as alexithymic. Adolescents with lower family emotional expressiveness and depression were more likely to report alexithymia. The association of alexithymia with diminished family emotional expressiveness underscores the relevance of targeting adolescents with low family emotional expressiveness, and depressive symptoms to increase their capacity to identify and communicate emotions to improve their psychological well-being. The results also point to the urgency of promoting social-emotional learning among young children which can be beneficial for their future development and well-being.

Biography

Catalina Ng, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor and Assistant Head (Teaching) at The Education University of Hong Kong. She is concurrently an Associate Professor (Honorary) of the Department of Clinical, Education and Health Psychology at the University College London (UCL), U.K. Her main research interest lies in mental health. She also studies alexithymia, workplace bullying and autism spectrum disorder. Presently, she is a Review Editor of the Public Mental Health Section of two leading academic journals (i.e., *Frontiers in Psychology* and *Frontiers in Public Health*) and Guest Editor of a special issue of the journal *Education Sciences*.

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