

Smoking, Bullying, and Being Bullied among Secondary School Students: Their Associations with Attachment Styles

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Abstract : Risk behaviours among secondary school students are common and show an increasing trend over the years. Existing attachment styles between the students and their parents influence the psychosocial development of this group of population hence contributing to the adoption of risk behaviours. The aim of this study was to determine the associations between three risk behaviours; smoking, bullying and being bullied among secondary school students and their styles of attachment to parents in a district in Malaysia. Using multistage simple random sampling, a cross-sectional study was designed with the level of significance, α set at 0.05. The validated self-administered Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and Youth Risk Behaviours Surveillance Questionnaire focusing on smoking and bullying were utilized. Secondary school students aged 13 to 17 years old from ten schools in the district of Hulu Langat, Malaysia were sampled. Prevalence of smoking was 15.8%, bullying 8.5% and being bully victims 19.0%. It was found that male gender was a significant risk factor for smoking ($p < 0.001$), while being Chinese (OR=0.156, 95%CI=0.029-0.837, $p=0.030$) and having married parents (OR=0.490, 95%CI=0.302-0.796, $p=0.490$) are protective against smoking. Students with insecure attachment to mothers (OR=1.650, 95%CI=1.018-2.675, $p=0.042$) and fathers (OR=2.039, 95%CI=1.285-3.234, $p=0.002$) are at 1.6 and 2 times risk respectively to smoke compared to those with secure attachment. The odds of male students bullying is almost twice than that for female students (OR=2.017, 95%CI=1.416-2.873, $p < 0.001$), and the odds of being bullied is 1.5 times higher for male students (OR=1.519, 95%CI=1.183-1.950, $p=0.001$). Those who are insecurely attached to fathers are at 1.8 times higher risk to be bullies (OR=1.867, 95%CI=1.272-2.740, $p < 0.001$) and 1.5 times higher risk to be bullied (OR=1.546, 95%CI=1.026-2.329, $p=0.037$). In conclusion, insecure attachment shows a strong association with smoking, bullying and being bullied among secondary school students in Malaysia.

Keywords : attachment styles, bullied, bullying, insecure attachment, risk behaviours, smoking and attachment

Conference Title : ICCAP 2017 : International Conference on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : May 28-29, 2017