

Stress and coping techniques in Chinese and New Zealand Youth



RESEARCH

‘Does Brooding Rumination Moderate the Stress to Depression Relationship Similarly for Chinese and New Zealand Adolescents?’

by Associate Professor Paul Jose, Kerstin Kramer, and Yubo Hou (2014)

Published in *The Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 4(1), 114-127.

Background

When under stress, people use a variety of techniques to manage the situation. The effectiveness of a chosen technique can be seen in psychological outcomes, such as depression.

Personality and culture can influence which technique people use to manage stress.

Some people cope with stress by repetitively thinking self-deprecating thoughts about one’s ability to manage distress. This is called brooding rumination.

The Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, studied the relationship between negative thoughts, stress, and depression in New Zealand and Chinese youth to determine if differences in stress triggers, coping techniques, and psychological outcomes exist.

Main research findings

Chinese adolescents report more repetitive, negative thoughts, and depression than New Zealand youth.

Chinese youth report more stress about grades and crowded living conditions, while New Zealand adolescents report more stress about physical appearance and parent conflict.

In both NZ and China, females and older adolescents reported more stress, more repetitive negative thoughts, and more depression than their counterparts.

For adolescents who routinely deal with stress through repetitive negative thoughts, the link between stress and depression is intensified. This relationship begins at an earlier age in New Zealand youth than Chinese youth.

Stress and repetitive, negative thoughts are stronger predictors of depression among New Zealand youth than Chinese.

Relevance of findings to New Zealand

Educational counsellors, teachers, and administrators in multicultural schools need to be trained in culturally sensitive methodologies:

- Chinese youth appear to engage in more emotionally focused coping than New Zealand youth.
- Life stressors for Chinese and New Zealand youth may differ.
- Although not generally adaptive, repetitive self-denigrating thoughts appear to occur more in the Chinese cultural context and become more detrimental in the New Zealand setting.