

ABSTRACT

Past literature had suggested that a general sense of self-inadequacy was central to the development of eating pathology among adolescent girls. However, few studies had examined the exact mechanisms of how self-concept deficits contribute to the development of eating disorders. In addition, cultural variations on the efficacy of the self-concept deficit model have not been explored. The present study investigated the role of self-concept deficits in predicting disordered eating behaviours among Hong Kong adolescent girls. In the present study, self-concept deficits were represented by low self-esteem, intense feelings of ineffectiveness and strong fear for negative evaluations. It was hypothesized that girls with such self-concept problems would display more disordered eating behaviours than girls without. In addition, it was postulated that self-concept deficits would moderate the pathways leading to disordered eating. Self-reported questionnaires were administered to a total of 1904 adolescent girls (aged from 11 to 20) to examine their body mass, self-concepts, body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness and eating patterns. Results found that girls with self-concept deficits exhibited more pathological eating behaviours. Further analysis revealed that self-concept deficits moderated the relationship between body mass, body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness in predicting disordered eating. The results showed no cultural difference in the self-concept deficit model of eating disorders and shed light for designing future therapeutic and preventative interventions.