

Abstract

Self-esteem has been extensively identified by researchers as major protective factor against development of mental health problems. However, recent research started to criticize this idea and indicated that boosting self-esteem may create other undesirable problems, such as self-serving bias and narcissism. Self-compassion, another new self-concept which enables enhancement of one's well-being without social comparison, seems to be a suitable auxiliary for the shortcomings of self-esteem. The present study attempts to extend the findings of previous research to investigate how self-compassion might provide extra contribution in the understanding of women's mental health issues, over and above that contributed by self-esteem. Specially, mediation models are proposed and compared to provide conceptual and empirical explanations for how self-compassion and self-esteem may protect sociotropy and autonomous women from developing depression and eating disorders. Results of the present study showed that self compassion could provide additional unique variance on sociotropy, autonomy, depression, and eating disorders. In addition, self-compassion was found to exert a stronger mediating effect on the relationship between sociotropy and depression, autonomy and disordered eating attitudes than self-esteem. Applications of self-compassion and the hypothesized mediation models in future psychological interventions were also discussed.