

ABSTRACT

This study surveyed 238 community-dwelling older adults recruited from two local non-government organizations in Hong Kong (122 older adults with mental illness from the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association and 117 older adults without mental illness from Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council Limited) to examine (1) a mediation model with self-transcendence serving as a mediator in the relationship of death anxiety and peacefulness among older Chinese with and without mental illness; (2) a moderated mediation model on how mental health status and self-compassion attenuate as well as strengthen the development of self-transcendence and affective balance among the older adults.

The model of self-transcendence as mediator between death anxiety and peacefulness fits the data ($CFI = 0.96$, $TLI = 0.95$, $RMSEA = 0.06$). Heightened anxiety towards death was associated with lower transcendence of self-concerns as well as inner peace. Mental health status and self-compassion moderated the mediation relationship. Specifically, self-compassion alleviates the negative effect of death anxiety on peacefulness through self-transcendence. Such conditional indirect effects were both observed among participants with and without mental illness while the strength of alleviating effects were stronger among older adults with mental illness.

This study demonstrated the importance of self-compassion as a positive psychological resource for emotional wellness among older Chinese, especially for individuals with mental illness. Implications for prospective service development to facilitate positive aging experience among older adults with mental illness are discussed.