The Role of Self-compassion and Self-criticism on Eating Symptomatology

Fidan Turk & Ines Mendes, Royal Holloway University of London

Introduction

- There is now growing literature addressing eating psychopathology and its risk and protective factors.
- Self-compassion is treating oneself with kindness and care when confronted with personal inadequacies and failures.¹
- Self-criticism is associated with negative evaluation of oneself; extremely focuses on achievement.²

Studies suggest :

- The low self-compassion is strong predictor of eating symptoms^{3,4} and poor well-being.⁵
- Whereas self-criticism is related to higher eating disorder symptomatology.^{6,7}
- The aim:* to explore the relationship between eating symptoms, self-criticism and self-compassion, well-being in non-clinical sample and to inform prevention methods and treatments.

Methods

- Sample:** A community sample of 195 adults.
- Measures:** Eating disorder symptoms, self-compassion, self-criticism, and well-being.
- Design:** Cross-sectional data analysed by using SPSS.
- Analysis:** Pearson correlation, Hierarchical regression analysis, 2 way ANOVA.

Hypothesis

Results

- Eating symptoms and self-criticism have a unique relationship, after controlling for self-compassion

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Eating Symptoms

Variable	β	t	sr ²	R	R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				.32	.10	.09
Self-compassion	-.32	-4.61*	-.32			
Step 2				.44	.19	.18
Self-compassion	.00	.02	.00			
Self-criticism	.44	4.62*	.32			

Note. $N = 195$; * $p < .001$

- Well-being, self-compassion and self-criticism have unique relationship, after controlling for eating symptoms

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Well-being

Variable	β	t	sr ²	R	R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				.34	.12	.11
Eating symptoms	.34	5.01*	.34			
Step 2				.73	.53	.52
Eating symptoms	.07	1.20	.06			
Self-compassion	-.44	-6.13*	-.30			
Self-criticism	.31	4.04*	.20			

Note. $N = 195$; * $p < .001$

- Eating symptoms had the main effect $F(1, 190) = 6.17$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, as those who had clinical eating symptoms ($M = 1.8$, $SD = 0.6$) showed poorer well-being than those who did not ($M = 1.5$, $SD = 0.6$).
- The analysis did not reveal a main effect of gender.
- There was also no significant interaction between eating symptoms and gender $F(1, 190) = .11$, $p = .74$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$.

Figure 1. Shows mean of well-being scores based on gender and eating symptoms

Discussion

- Self-criticism strongly and independently predicts eating pathology.
- Therapists should take the well-being of individuals suffering from eating pathology into consideration during the treatment process.
- Preliminary evidence on the importance of self-criticism and self-compassion on the well-being of the general population.

Limitations

- Cross-sectional research design.
- Most of the participants had a higher level of education.
- The questionnaire did not distinguish between categories of eating disorders.

Implications

- Importance of assessing self-criticism in addition to the usual treatment processes for eating disorders.
- Enhancing individuals' self-compassion and target self-criticism, in addition to reduction of eating pathology to promote well-being in the treatment process.

References

- Neff, K. D. (2003a). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and identity*, 2(2), 85-101.
- Shahar, G., Henrich, C. C., Blatt, S. J., Ryan, R., & Little, T. D. (2003). Interpersonal relatedness, self-definition, and their motivational orientation during adolescence: A theoretical and empirical integration. *Developmental psychology*, 39(3), 470.
- Kelly, A. C., Vimalakanthan, K., & Carter, J. C. (2014). Understanding the roles of self-esteem, self-compassion, and fear of self-compassion in eating disorder pathology: An examination of female students and eating disorder patients. *Eating behaviors*, 15(3), 388-391.
- Kelly, A. C., Carter, J. C., Zuroff, D. C., & Borairi, S. (2013). Self-compassion and fear of self-compassion interact to predict response to eating disorders treatment: A preliminary investigation. *Psychotherapy Research*, 23(3), 252-264.
- Góngora, V. C. (2014). Satisfaction with life, well-being, and meaning in life as protective factors of eating disorder symptoms and body dissatisfaction in adolescents. *Eating disorders*, 22(5), 435-449.
- Kelly, A. C., & Carter, J. C. (2015). Self-compassion training for binge eating disorder: A pilot randomized controlled trial. *Psychology and psychotherapy: Theory, research and practice*, 88(3), 285-303.
- Dunkley, D. M., Masheb, R. M., & Grilo, C. M. (2010). Childhood maltreatment, depressive symptoms, and body dissatisfaction in patients with binge eating disorder: The mediating role of self-criticism. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 43(3), 274-281.