The Role of Attachment Dimensions in Body Appreciation and Self-Improvement Motivation with the Mediating Role of Self-Compassion among Students

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Introduction

Students' physical and mental health and identifying the predictors of these variables are among the essential duties of families and educational systems. In the present study, body appreciation as accepting, respecting, and having a favorable opinion of one's own body, as well as rejecting unrealistic body ideals portrayed by the media, and self-improvement motivation as the motivation to enhance one's knowledge, education, personality, and status by making conscious efforts were considered target variables. Research has revealed that attachment quality has short-term and long-term effects on health-related variables during the life span. In addition, self-compassion as a factor under the positive psychology paradigm affects physical and mental aspects of everyone's health. Hence, the goal of the present study was to investigate the mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between attachment dimensions (avoidance and anxiety) with body appreciation and self-improvement motivation.

Method

This study was a descriptive (correlational) one. The sample group included 394 bachelor's students (240 females and 154 males) of Yazd University in the academic year of 2018-19, who were selected by multi-

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stage cluster sampling. The participants fulfilled the Revised Adult Attachment Scale, Body Appreciation Scale, Self-Compassion Scale, and Self-Improvement Motivation Scale. The validity and reliability of the scales were confirmed. Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling with SPSS 24 and Amos 24. A bootstrap test with 95 percent confidence intervals was also used to check the indirect effects and mediating roles. Finally, various fitness indices were applied to check the consistency between the data and the conceptual framework.

Results

The final structural model had acceptable fitness indices. Regarding direct effects, the results revealed that the anxiety dimension of attachment predicted self-compassion and body appreciation negatively and significantly. The avoidance dimension only predicted self-improvement motivation positively. In addition, self-compassion predicted both body appreciation and self-improvement motivation positively. Finally, the results showed the mediating role of self-compassion in the relationship between attachment anxiety with body appreciation and self-improvement motivation. Therefore, the indirect effect of anxiety on both target variables through self-compassion was significant.

Conclusion

In sum, we can conclude that by teaching concepts and strategies of self-compassion and informing families about insecure attachment styles, the motivation for self-improvement and body appreciation can somewhat increase in college students. The result has been discussed in more detail using theoretical bases in the paper.

Keywords: Attachment dimensions, body appreciation, self-improvement motivation, self-compassion