The Relationship between Self-Compassion, Perceived Social Support, and Self-esteem with Women's Borderline Personality Symptoms: Mediating Role of Aloneness and Hopelessness

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between self-compassion, perceived social support, and Self-esteem with borderline personality symptoms mediated by aloneness and hopelessness. The research method was descriptive-correlational which was done through structural equation modeling. The study population consisted of women in Isfahan city, 262 of whom were selected by available sampling and were assessed with self-compassion, perceived social support, self-esteem, Borderline Personality Symptoms, Feeling of loneliness and Beck's hopelessness scales. The results showed that there is a negative relationship between social support and self-esteem with borderline personality symptoms. Findings indicated that compassion effects of borderline personality through feelings of aloneness. Also, social support and self-esteem affected the symptoms of borderline personality through feelings of aloneness and hopelessness. The findings of the present study, in addition to practical implications, has provide a useful framework for identifying the components that affect the formation and development of borderline personality disorder in women.

Keywords: Aloneness, Borderline Personality, hopelessness, perceived social support, self-compassion

Introduction

Among personality disorders, borderline personality disorder (BPD) with a high rate of association with other mental disorders (Garland, Miller, 2020) is the main focus of research designed to understand the causes, symptoms, and therapeutic interventions to reduce the pain and suffering of these disorders (Loess, 2019) and is one of the most common and debilitating psychological conditions characterized by a persistent pattern of irritability, emotional dysfunction, interpersonal problems, and unstable identities (Dhaliwal, et al., 2020). It is associated with serious costs and consequences of the disease (Kramer et al., 2020) including self-harm and increased risk of suicide (Kverme et al., 2019).

Recently, theorists have attempted to assign a diverse set of symptoms associated with BPD to categories that may provide insight into the disorder. A new part of the research is to examine the role that self-compassion plays among these composite structures. Patients with BPD, also, have lower levels of self-esteem compared to healthy individuals (Park, 2017). People with BPD have troubled interpersonal relationships, are highly dependent on others, and not only need the support, security, and encouragement of others to maintain mental and behavioral balance, but are also very vulnerable to separation from supportive resources. They are always afraid of abandonment and are afraid of the signs of loss. These individuals are particularly vulnerable to experiences of social exclusion (Keng,

Tan, 2018). Intolerance of loneliness and hopelessness are central features of people with BPD (Vardy et al., 2019) which can contribute to the psychological pathology of this disorder (Winsper, 2018). Reducing role diversity in social life with impaired interpersonal communication is especially important for experiencing loneliness in BPD. These people report more loneliness than normal people. These patients are highly anticipated and demanding in interpersonal relationships and therefore prone to experience severe emotional frustration in confronting with rejection or loss (Preston, 2006). According to the theoretical and research principles mentioned, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-compassion, perceived social support, and self-esteem with borderline personality symptoms mediated by aloneness and hopelessness.

Method

The research method was descriptive-correlation which was done in the form of structural equation modeling design. The statistical population of the study included women in Isfahan, which 300 people were selected using available sampling method and based on inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria were female gender, age range 20 to 45 years, no severe and chronic psychological and physical disorders. Participants were evaluated with self-compassion, perceived social support, self-esteem, Borderline Personality Symptoms, Feeling of loneliness and Beck's hopelessness scales. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and Amos software version 23.

Result

The age range of the study participants was from 22 to 45 years with a mean age of 31.74 ± 4.95. The level of education of the participants were from high school to master's degree. According to the results, the correlation of self-compassion with loneliness and borderline personality symptoms was positive and significant ($p \leq 0.05$). While the correlation coefficient between self-compassion and hopelessness was not significant ($p > 0.05$). In addition, the correlation coefficients between social support and self-esteem with feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, and borderline personality traits were negative and significant ($p \leq 0.05$), table 1.

Table 1: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient between research variables

	feelings of loneliness	Hopelessness	borderline personality symptoms
Self-compassion	.219**	.099*	.318**
Social support	.538**	.417**	.252**
Self-esteem	.546**	-.656**	.597**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Based on the results, the model had a good fit and the general structure of the tested relationships were confirmed through the obtained data. According to the findings, all the direct relationships examined in the conceptual model were confirmed except for the direct effect of compassion on hopelessness (t ≥1.96; P ≤0.05). Findings indicated a positive and direct effect of self-compassion on loneliness and borderline personality symptoms; the direct and positive effect of hopelessness and loneliness on borderline personality symptoms; and the direct and negative impact of social support and self-esteem on loneliness, hopelessness, and borderline personality traits. Also, all the coefficients of indirect effect except the indirect effect of self-compassion on borderline personality traits with the mediating role of hopelessness were significant (t≥1.96; P≤0.05). Findings suggested that self-compassion affected borderline personality traits through feelings of loneliness. Social support and self-esteem also affected borderline personality traits through feelings of loneliness and hopelessness. The results of this study showed that self-compassion, social support and self-esteem were both directly and indirectly related to the symptoms of borderline personality disorder by affecting the feeling of loneliness. Figure 1 shows the results of modeling structural equations using the maximum likelihood method.
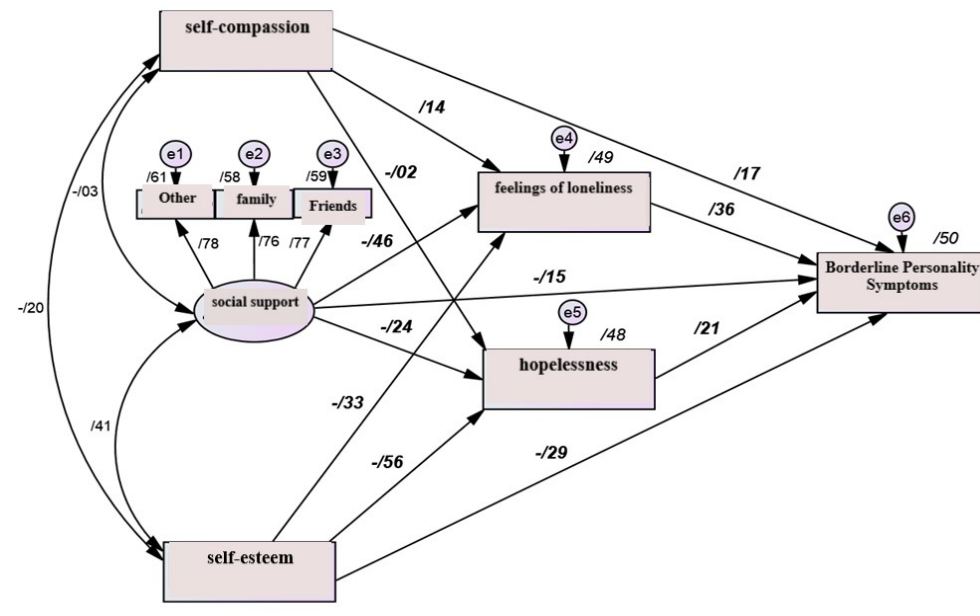

Figure 1: Results of structural equation modeling using the maximum likelihood method

Conclusion

The findings of the present study, in addition to practical implications, had provide a useful framework for identifying the components that affected the formation and development of borderline personality disorder in women. Among the limitations of the research, we can mention the type of research which was correlation and limits the generalizations, interpretations and etiological documents of the studied variables. The use of self-reporting tools was also always influenced by two intervening variables: positive self-presentation and carelessness of individuals in their judgments. Also, this research was conducted only in the city of Isfahan and on healthy women, and the necessary precautions should be taken in generalizing the findings to other populations, age ranges and environments. Therefore, it is suggested that in order to conduct research with higher generalization power, researchers, while lifting the limitations of the present study, to examine the separate role of each of the research variables in borderline personality disorder.

Acknowledgment

Conflicts of Interest

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