A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Self-Compassion in Adolescents Across Gender

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Abstract : Self-compassion encourages one to accept oneself, reduce self-criticism and self-judgment, and see one's shortcomings and setbacks in a balanced view. Adolescent self-compassion is a crucial protective factor against mental illness. It is, however, affected by gender. Given the scarcity of self-compassion scales for adolescents, the current study evaluates the Self-Compassion Scale for Youth (SCS-Y) in a large cross-cultural sample and investigates how the subscales of SCS-Y relate to the dimensions of depressive symptoms across gender. Through the internet-based Qualtrics, a total of 2881 teenagers aged 12 to 18 years were recruited from Hong Kong (HK), China, and the United Kingdom. A Multiple Indicator Multiple Cause (MIMIC) model was used to evaluate measurement invariance of the SCS-Y, and differential item functioning (DIF) was checked across gender. Upon the establishment of the best model, a multigroup structural equation model (SEM) was built between factors of SCS-Y and Multidimensional depression assessment scale (MDAS) which assesses four dimensions of depressive symptoms (emotional, cognitive, somatic and interpersonal). The SCS-Y was shown to have good reliability and validity. The MIMIC model produced a good model fit for a hypothetical six-factor model (CFI = 0.980; TLI = 0.974; RMSEA = 0.038) and no item was flagged for DIF across gender. A gender difference was observed between SCS-Y factors and depression dimensions. Conclusions: The SCS-Y exhibits good psychometric characteristics, including measurement invariance across gender. The study also highlights the gender difference between self-compassion factors and depression dimensions.

Keywords : self compassion, gender, depression, structural equation modelling, MIMIC model

Conference Title : ICCPE 2022 : International Conference on Cultural Psychology and Emotions

Conference Location : Prague, Czechia

Conference Dates : September 08-09, 2022