

Self-Esteem Mediates the Relationship Between Parental Validation and Depression among Chinese College Students



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Abstract

A series of **mediation analysis** were conducted to explore the relationship between parental validation, self-esteem, self-compassion, and depression. Participants included 46 students from China. **Full mediation** was found for **parental invalidation and depression through self-esteem**. There was a significant indirect effect of negative parental validation to depression through self-esteem, $B=0.04$, $p=.001$, 95% CI[0.02, 0.07]. Self-esteem mediated 48% of the relationship between negative parental validation and depression. This poster includes a discussion of limitations, clinical implications, and future research related to the role of parental validation and self-compassion in the development of depression.

Introduction

Parental invalidation

- Proposed to be a driving factor in different psychological conditions, such as BPD (Linehan 1993; Crowell 2009).
- Parental criticism is positively associated with depression, anxiety, shame, sadness, emotion dysregulation, and non-suicidal self injury (Zhu et al, 2022; Holden et al, 2021).
- Internal self-criticism can predict depression (Zhang et al., 2019; Aruta et al., 2021)

Self esteem

- Self esteem and depression are significantly connected—lower self esteem is strongly correlated with higher levels of depression (Gittins & Hunt, 2020)
- Higher self esteem as a protective factor for developing depression in the face of stressful life events (Dentale et al, 2020)

Methods

Participants

- Recruited 46 students from 2 universities in China. Participants were placed in two groups: a Control group (20 min cognitive exercise podcast) and a Self-compassion Intervention group (20 min self-compassion podcast).

Procedure

- Pre-Intervention Survey
- Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) questionnaire sent four times randomly throughout the day for 7 days prior to the intervention to assess baseline levels from Day 1-7.
- Post-Intervention Survey

Methods

Measures

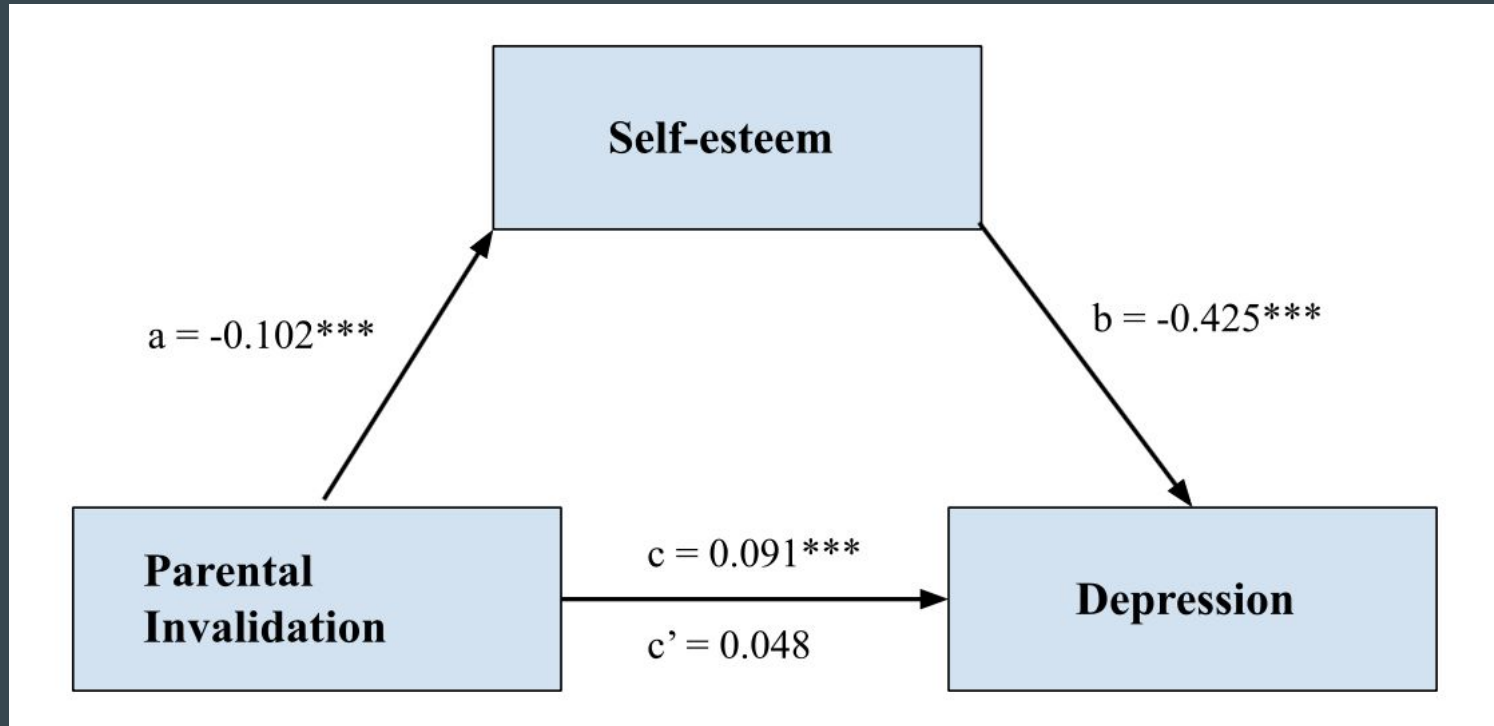
- Surveys included demographic information, the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), General Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and Compassion Scale (CS) to look at overall self-compassion, stress, anxiety, mindfulness, depression, self-esteem, and compassion for others
- The podcasts were originally in English and were translated into Chinese and recorded. The podcast was originally from Dr. Kristin Neff's website <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises>.

Results

- **Full mediation** was found for parental invalidation and depression through self esteem. There was a significant indirect effect of negative parental validation to depression through self esteem, $B=0.04$, $p=.001$, 95% CI[0.02, 0.07]. Self esteem mediated 48% of the relationship between negative parental validation and depression. **When accounting for the mediating role of self esteem, the direct effect from negative parental validation and depression was not significant**, $B=0.05$, $p=.069$, 95% CI[-0.004, 0.10], indicating a full mediation
- **Partial mediation** was found for positive parental validation and depression through self-esteem. There was a significant indirect effect of positive parental validation to child depression through self esteem, $B=-0.04$, $p=.037$, 95% CI[-0.08, -0.00]. Self esteem mediated 37% of the relationship between positive parental validation and child depression. **When accounting for the mediating role of self esteem, the direct effect from positive parental validation and child depression remained significant**, $B=-0.07$, $p=.048$, 95% CI[-0.14, 0.00], indicating a partial mediation

Figure 1

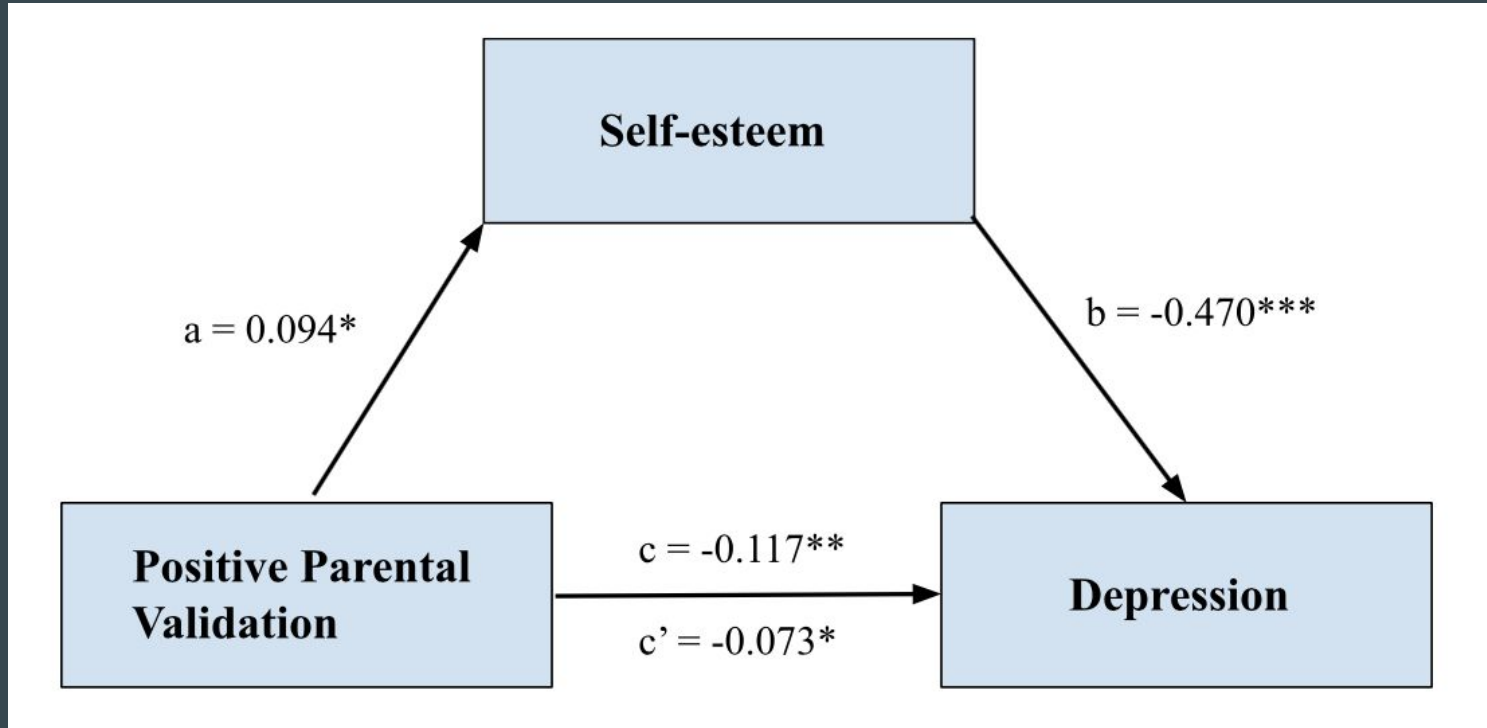
Mediation Analysis Paths with Unstandardized Estimates



*Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$*

Figure 2

Mediation Analysis Paths with Unstandardized Estimates



*Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$*

Conclusion

- Parental interaction can determine vulnerability to depression
 - Children with positively validating parents have higher self-esteem, which serves as a protective factor against depression
 - Children with negatively validating parents have lower self-esteem, and are more vulnerable to depression
- Importance of teaching parents how to interact with their children in a validating manner
- Interventions that increase validation & target children's self esteem
- Future directions—impact of other validating adult presences in their lives, friendships, sibling relationships

Thank you for your time!

If you're interested in learning more we would love to connect with you!

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