

Effects of self-compassion on general and social life satisfaction among lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals

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Background and objectives: Proximal minority stressors (e.g., internalized homonegativity) have been shown as risk factors of poor mental health among lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals. It is important to identify effective intrapersonal strategies that help LGB individuals to cope with the stressors. Self-compassion is theorized as a useful emotion regulation strategy when individuals encounter adversities. Being self-compassionate allows individuals to bring awareness to their emotions and approach their painful or distressing feelings with kindness, understanding, and a sense of shared humanity. This study investigated the effects of self-compassion on different aspects of LGB identity and life satisfaction. Methods: A sample of 505 LGB individuals (55.8% male) was recruited through Internet- and venue-based sampling. They had a mean age of 23.48 years (S.D. = 6.97). They completed an anonymous online survey in on self-compassion, LGB identity (i.e., internalized homonegativity, acceptance concern, and identity affirmation), as well as general and social life satisfaction.

Results: Results of structural equation modeling showed that the hypothesized model had an acceptable model fit, $\chi^2(443) = 1155.92$, $p < .001$, CFI = .92, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .07. Self-warmth was associated with higher level of identity affirmation and lower level of acceptance concern. Self-coldness was negatively associated with identity affirmation, and positively associated with acceptance concern and internalized homonegativity. Identity affirmation was positively related to general and social life satisfaction. Acceptance concern was related better social life satisfaction. The model explained 35.1% variance of general life satisfaction and 36.7% variance of social life satisfaction.

Discussion and conclusion: Our findings inform the application of self-compassion as a coping strategy for stigma management among LGB individuals. Inducing self-warmth and alleviating self-coldness in the face of negative life events such as sexual stigma have the potential to promote positive feelings towards their sexual identity and enhance life satisfaction. Future research may consider using experimental design or daily diary study to further understand the interactions between self-compassion and dimensions of LGB identity experience on well-being.