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Pathways of resilience: roles of positive psychology in the relationship between resilience and mental health in UK social work students

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Statement of the Problem: As awareness of mental health has been increasing internationally, a need for psychological care for mental health professionals and trainees has been highlighted. UK social work students suffer from high rates of mental health symptoms, and emotional resilience has become a required capacity in recent social work policies. Despite their high shame about mental health symptoms, research on positive psychological approaches to their mental health has been limited. Accordingly, this study aimed to investigate the relationships between mental health symptoms, resilience, self-compassion, motivation, and engagement; identify independent predictors for mental health symptoms, and; examine positive psychological independent predictors as indirect pathways linking mental health symptoms and resilience.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: 116 UK social work students completed five measures about those constructs. Correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and path analyses were conducted in order to address research aims of this study.

Findings: Mental health symptoms were associated with resilience, self-compassion, and engagement. Self-compassion was a negative independent predictor, and intrinsic motivation was a positive independent predictor of mental health symptoms. Path analyses revealed that while the direct effect of resilience on mental health symptoms was not significant, the indirect and total effects were significant; self-compassion was an independent predictor. Additional analyses confirmed that self-compassion directly predicted both mental health symptoms and resilience.

Conclusion & Significance: This is the first ever investigation into the mechanism of how resilience reduces mental health symptoms from positive psychological perspectives in this population. The findings can inform social work educators, practitioners, and researchers of the importance of self-compassion, and can help develop better approaches to the challenging mental health of UK social work students. The research paper is currently under review.

Biography

Yasuhiro Kotera has his expertise in Mental Health and Positive Psychology. As an accredited Counsellor/Psychotherapist, and having worked with various populations internationally, his research areas include occupational mental health, positive psychology for mental health, organisational applications of coaching/ neuro-linguistic programming, and cross-cultural comparison. His Japanese blog, Kokoro no Rikutsu (logic of psyche) that introduces new psychological findings have 2,000 accesses every day. His recent project aims to develop a short psycholinguistic intervention to augment resilience, which would be suited for various workplaces.

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