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**The Role of Self-Compassion in the Relationship Between Adult Attachment and
Disordered Eating**

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Abstract

Introduction: Insecure attachment has been linked to lower self-compassion and greater disordered eating symptoms, and there is growing evidence that self-compassion is a protective factor against eating disorder pathology. The present study examines whether self-compassion mediates the association of close relationship expectancies (attachment anxiety and security) to disordered eating symptoms. **Methods:** Secondary, cross-sectional data from 327 undergraduate psychology students was analysed. Trait attachment, self-compassion, and disordered eating symptoms were self-reported. Mediation analyses were conducted to investigate the mediating effects of self-compassion on disordered eating symptoms. **Results:** Self-compassion partially mediated the association of attachment anxiety to disordered eating, and fully mediated the attachment security to disordered eating relationship. Attachment security uniquely predicted disordered eating outcomes via self-compassion, and among the two attachment dimensions, attachment anxiety had a stronger influence on disordered eating outcomes. **Discussion:** These results indicate that self-compassion may be a useful intervention target for the treatment of sub-clinical or diagnosed eating disorders, and provide evidence that conceptualising attachment security as low levels of attachment insecurity may be insufficient conceptually and psychometrically.

Keywords: attachment anxiety, attachment security, self-compassion, disordered eating symptoms, restrictive eating behaviour

Declarations

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Ethics Statement

This study was reviewed and approved by the University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee (protocol H-2021-0372), and the procedures followed were in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration as revised in 2013. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Acknowledgment Note

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this manuscript has been completed in collaboration with Associate Professor Ross Wilkinson.