

Self-harm, shame and borderline features in adolescents: The mediating role of self-compassion

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INTRODUCTION

Borderline features can be identified in adolescents (Chanen, 2012). Some studies suggest an association between shame and Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) (Rüsch et al., 2007) and self-harm (Nock et al., 2006). Self-compassion is an “antidote” for a critical, punitive and judgmental attitude towards the self (Neff, 2003).

This study aimed to explore the mediator effect of self-compassion in the relationship between self-harm and borderline features and between shame and borderline features in adolescents.

METHODS

The sample was composed of 432 adolescents (60.4% females), with the mean age of 15.35 ($SD = 1.47$), attending elementary and high school. Participants completed self-report questionnaires, and data were analyzed through SPSS (version 22) and PROCESS Macro.

Measures:

- Borderline Personality Features Scale for Children (BPFS-C; Sharp et al., 2014; Carreiras et al., 2020). $\alpha = .87$
- Self-Compassion Scale for Adolescents (SCS; Neff, 2003; Cunha et al., 2016). $\alpha = .85$
- Impulse, Self-harm and Suicide Ideation Questionnaire for Adolescents (ISSIQ-A; Carvalho et al., 2015). $\alpha = .79$
- External and Internal Shame Scale for adolescents (EISS-A; Cunha et al., 2021). $\alpha = .91$

RESULTS

The mediation model ($F = 74.89$; $p < .01$) explained **26%** of variance of borderline features. This means that an affectionate attitude towards oneself in the face of difficult situations has a potentially positive effect on this model.

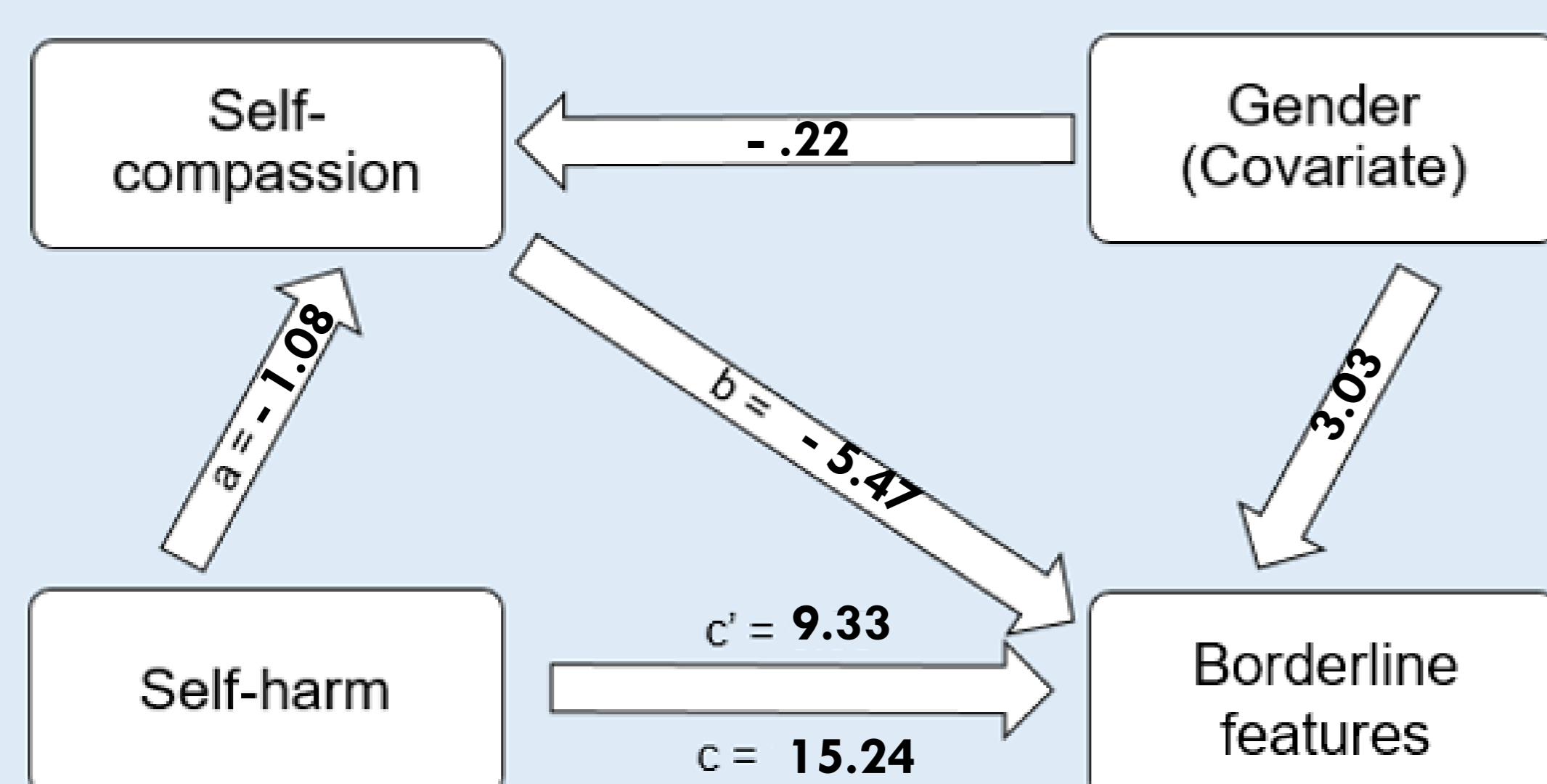


Figure 1. The mediating effect of self-compassion on the relationship between self-harm and borderline features, controlling the gender. The values are not standardized.

This mediation ($F = 123.40$; $p < .01$) explains **46%** of borderline features. Gender had a non-significant effect on self-compassion. Self-compassion seems to have a positive mediating role in the relationship between feelings of inferiority and borderline features.

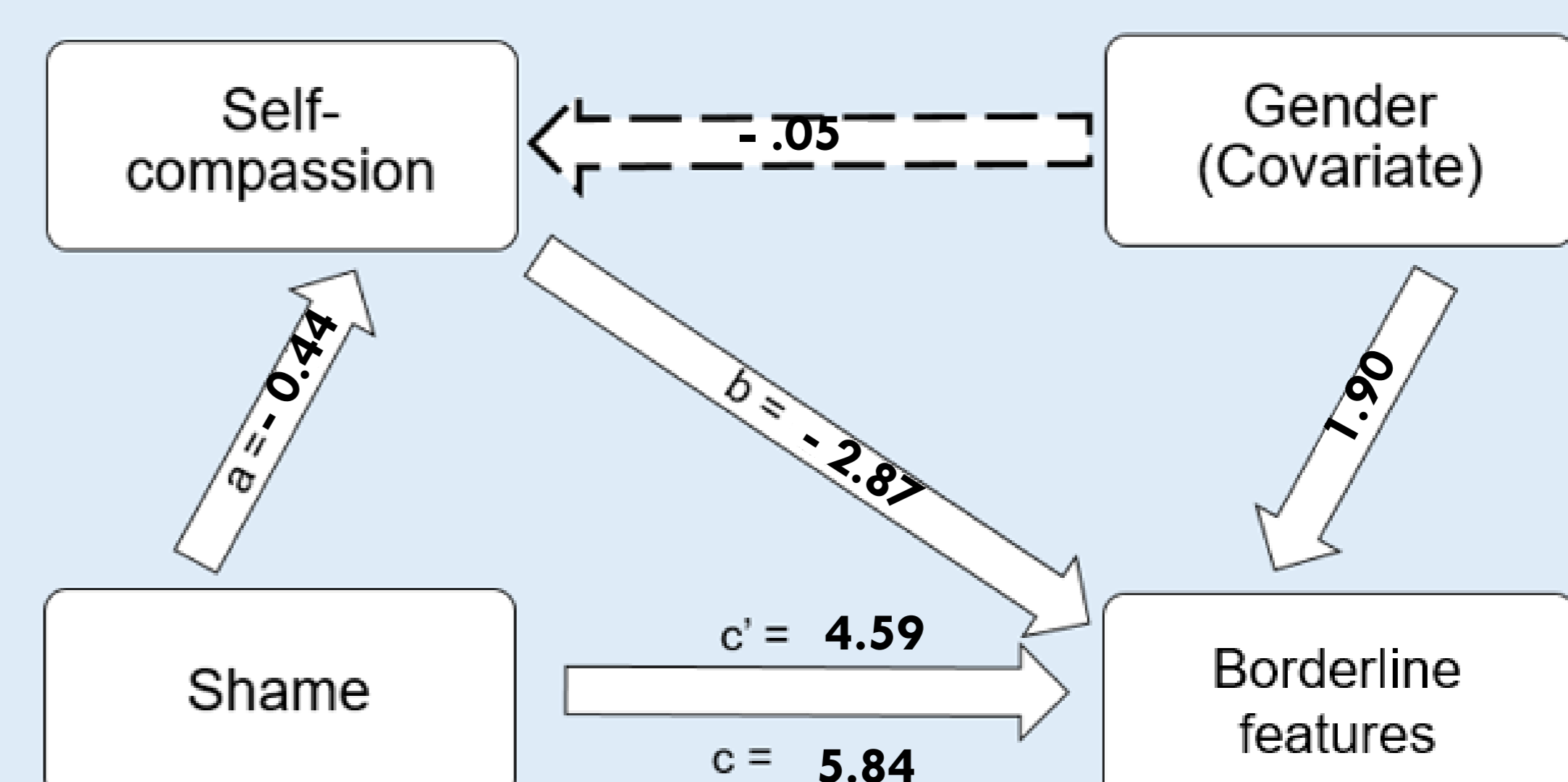


Figure 2. The mediating effect of self-compassion on the relationship between shame and borderline features, controlling the gender. The gender variable had a non-significant effect on self-compassion. The values presented are not standardized.

CONCLUSIONS

This study presents innovative data in understanding the role of self-compassion in borderline features in adolescents, given other explored variables such as self-harm and shame (external and internal). It seems relevant that these data confirmed the association between self-harm behaviors, shame and borderline traits in adolescents. These results seem to point to the possible positive effect of self-compassion on borderline features in adolescents, in the presence of self-harm and shame behavior.

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