

Abstract

The present study aimed at investigating the mediating role of compassion between identification with all humanity (IWAH) and public stigma towards people with mental illness, controlling for mental health knowledge. Using a cross-sectional questionnaire design, 216 university students have completed measures on warmth towards others (i.e. the composite of negative qualities in compassion), coldness towards others (i.e. the composite of positive qualities in compassion), IWAH, public stigma towards people with mental illness, and mental health knowledge. Results showed that IWAH was directly associated with public stigma. The relationship between IWAH and public stigma could be mediated by coldness towards others, but not warmth towards others. Moreover, mental health knowledge showed very weak correlation with public stigma. With positive and negative qualities in compassion demonstrating weak correlation and differential mediating effects, this study showed that positive and negative qualities in compassion may be distinct variables.