

## **Self-compassion in Nursing Practice**

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**Abstract:** Self-compassion emphasize that all people are important and commendable paying little respect to their physical abilities or accomplishment. Self-compassion among the nurses is necessary because they have to pay more attention to the patients for better recovery. The study emphasizes that nurses should become broad minded and motivated, feel soft for others, developing an understanding, adopt the attitude to over-look the bad experiences to provide the compassionate care to the patients. **Purpose:** The present study was conducted for the purpose of clarifying and defining the concept of self-compassion, its components, models, benefits, impact on organization and how to enhance it. **Method:** In this study, the steps of concept analysis were as follows: Select a concept, determine the aims of the concept analysis, identify various definitions of the concept, determine the concept of self-compassion and identify methods for enhancing self-compassion among nurses. All studies between the years 2015 and 2022 were reviewed for the purposes of this concept analysis, PubMed, Google search engines, Ovid, and ProQuest, were scanned and searched using the keywords. **Conclusion:** There is a nascent literature that examines the potential ability of various interventions to raise self-compassion or its components, including mindfulness. More research is needed to develop the construct validity of self-compassion, its component elements and how self-compassion and its various aspects can be fostered and cultivated. It is also important that future research explore ways to measure self-compassion other than self-report and to investigate the mechanisms of change in interventions designed to raise self-compassion.

**Keywords:** *Mindfulness, Nursing, over-identification, Self-compassion.*

### **Introduction**

Self-compassion is a relatively new psychological construct which refers to witnessing one's own suffering in challenging times and attending to that suffering with kindness and a non-judgmental stance while recognizing that suffering is part of the common human experience. While research studies over the past decade have

identified a number of beneficial psychological and even physiological outcomes of self-compassion, little research attention has focused on its origins (Dragan, 2020).

Self-compassion emphasize that all people are important and commendable paying little respect to their physical abilities or

accomplishment. Self-compassion among the nurses is necessary because they have to pay more attention to the patients for better recovery. The study emphasizes that nurses should become broad minded and motivated, feel soft for others, developing an understanding, adopt the attitude to over-look the bad experiences to provide the compassionate care to the patients (Kousar et al, 2017).

### **Purpose**

The present study was conducted for the purpose of clarifying and defining the concept of self-compassion, its components, models, benefits, impact on organization and how to enhance it.

### **Method**

The purpose of concept analysis is to clarify and define the basic elements of a concept. The process allows researchers to distinguish between similarities and differences between concepts. The concept analysis method helps to clarify concepts used in nursing practice that have a broad scope. In this study, the steps of concept analysis were as follows: Select a concept, determine the aims of the analysis, identify various definitions of the concept, determine the components of self-compassion and how to enhance it among nurses.

### **Data Collection**

For purposes of this concept analysis, PubMed, Google search engines, Ovid, and ProQuest, were scanned. These databases were searched for the keywords "Self-compassion its components and models". All studies between the years 2015 and 2022 were reviewed. Inclusion criteria were: written in English and described or studied self-compassion in any setting with any population.

### **Concept of self-compassion**

Self-compassion means being compassionate and kind towards yourself even in the difficult times. Self-compassion involves being supportive, understanding and gentle towards one. It includes giving acceptance to one's shortcomings and providing that warmth and unconditional love to oneself. A person with high self-compassion will not ignore his/her shortcomings rather than he will handle those with confidence and without hurting himself/herself with criticism. It assures a person to be optimistic as far as the negative feelings towards self are concerned. With self-compassion a person is able to handle his/her emotions in such a way that the emotions are neither suppressed nor exaggerated. Self-compassion is all about offering yourself that same help when you, yourself are in trouble, the help that you would offer to your friend when they are in trouble (Manreet, 2019).

Self-compassion is similar to the concept of compassion which refers to the ability to notice and be touched by another's suffering, having the desire to alleviate that suffering, and recognizing that humans are fragile and imperfect, therefore prone to failing and making mistakes. The self-compassion construct has three facets that interact and combine with each other to form a self-compassionate state of mind. These include mindfulness (versus over-identification), self-kindness (versus self-judgment), and common humanity (versus isolation) (Dragan, 2020).

Self-kindness refers to extending kindness and understanding toward oneself, in contrast to judgment and self-criticism. Individuals who practice self-kindness treat their flaws gently and embrace their imperfections rather than being harsh and critical toward themselves. These individuals offer themselves warmth and unconditional

acceptance in the face of personal shortcomings or failures. In addition, individuals who practice self-kindness rather than self-judgment often turn inward in the face of difficult life circumstances to offer themselves soothing and comfort (Schindler, 2021).

Self-kindness entails being loving, gentle, and accepting towards oneself when facing personal limitations (Neff & Knox, 2017). It also involves internal dialogues that are encouraging and comforting instead of self-critical, and it requires active self-soothing in times of distress when facing inadequacies and difficult situations (Neff & Germer, 2017). This is in contrast to self-judgment that involves self-criticism when assessing personal experiences which often leads to feelings of shame, an intensely painful emotion that comes with feeling unworthy or defective and leads to increased feelings of isolation (Dragan, 2020).

Common humanity refers to recognizing that suffering is a part of the human experience. It involves acknowledging that failure and perceived imperfections are common human experiences and that all human beings struggle with feelings such as shame or imperfection, which in turn leads to feeling less isolated as well as recognizing the vulnerability of being human. Common humanity involves understanding that what makes us feel separate is what we actually have in common, which is the opposite of feeling isolated (Neff & Germer, 2017). Lastly, mindfulness is the ability to not over identify with negative thoughts and feelings, but rather view them from a more balanced, aware perspective. Individuals who are mindful neither ignore nor ruminate on suffering, but rather recognize their suffering with

objectivity and perspective (Schindler, 2021).

Dragan (2020) defined mindfulness as the capacity to keep one's attention in the present moment, with awareness of body and mind in relationship with the environment, and be open to one's suffering in difficult times without judgment, denial, or suppression of whatever feelings, thoughts, or sensations arise. By contrast, when encountering difficult situations, individuals typically tend to dismiss difficult feelings and painful sensations which can lead to ineffective coping strategies. The opposite of mindfulness is over-identification which is the tendency to become identified with negative emotions, thoughts, and sensations that arise in difficult situations. When rumination over thoughts, emotions, and sensations occur, individuals tend to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Self-compassion is developed based on the person's environment. If a particular individual is brought up in the supportive, encouraging and loving environment then the self-compassion of the individual would be most probably high. On the other hand if the individual is brought in the rough environment then the individual would be low on self-compassion or would not at all be self-compassionate. This is so because most of his life the individual has faced criticism only (Manreet, 2019).

• **Models of Self compassion:-**

Self-compassion is a form of adaptive self-relating characterized in part by the ability or capacity to treat oneself with the same kindness and compassion as one would treat others in the same situation. There are currently two main models of self-compassion, both emphasizing different aspects of the conceptualization (Biber & Ellis,

2017). Neff (2003) drew on the Buddhist notion of compassion and suggested that self-compassion was a tripartite construct that includes self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. It involves an attitude of kindness and understanding to one's self without judgment, perceiving one's experiences as part of the larger human condition instead of feeling isolated, and being aware of painful experiences and connecting with them in a balanced way without over identifying with them.

This dimensional model of self-compassion proposes that self-compassion exists on a spectrum from high to low (Neff, 2016). The self-Compassion Scale developed by Neff (2003) and its shortened version Self-Compassion Scale—Short Form as developed by (Raes et al, 2011) is the most prevalent standardized measure of self-compassion. The measure received some criticism regarding psychometric validity (Lopez et al, 2015). Recently, SCSs single-factor and six-factor structure, it composed of three positive and three opposing negative components that are interconnected and was supported (Neff, 2016). A recent review reported that the long version was more psychometrically robust than the shortened version (Strauss et al, 2016). Gilbert's model of compassion was developed from social mentalities theory, evolutionary theory, and attachment theory and proposes three evolved emotion systems, threat, drive, and soothing, that interact and regulate one another. The threat system is designed for threat detection and activation of survival mechanisms for protection. The drive system is associated with rewarding stimuli such as food, shelter, and sexual opportunities. Finally, self-compassionate behaviors are part of the soothing system, which is linked to

the evolved attachment system. Early development characterized by inadequate care or stressful or threatening environments can result in an underdeveloped self-soothing system and a hyper-aroused threat system. Moreover, he stated that compassion is a prosocial motivational system, designed to regulate negative effect by being attuned to suffering in self and others and commitment to alleviate it through feelings of warmth and safeness. Also, he proposed that some individuals, particularly those high in self-criticism, can find self-compassion challenging and can be fearful of it (Gilbert, 2018).

• **Benefits of self-compassion: -**

The central benefits of self-compassion have been linked to the adaptive coping strategies, stress management techniques that individuals high in self-compassion are able to utilize, as well as the ability to self-regulate and experience and balance a healthy range of both positive and negative emotions. Specifically, self-compassion is related to lower levels of defensiveness, reduction of self-blame that interferes with self-regulation, greater emotional energy and resources to devote to self-care, more positive cognitive processes, less avoidant behaviors, and greater healthy self-regulation. As an extension of this association with adaptive coping and self-regulation, self-compassionate individuals may be more likely to engage in a health-promoting lifestyle. However, further research investigating the role of self-compassion in physical health and wellness is needed (Holden et al, 2021).

Self-compassion has been associated with numerous beneficial outcomes. Self-compassion has been linked to both physical and mental health through its negative association with neurotic perfectionism, depression, and

trait anxiety, as well as its protective influence against inflammation induced by stress. Other self-benefits related to self-compassion include higher satisfaction with life and general well-being, higher self-esteem, greater levels of intrinsic motivation, and higher mastery goals. Even though self-compassion focuses mainly on the self, it nevertheless is associated with numerous interpersonal benefits as well. Studies that inspected brain activity found that higher self-compassion resulted in increased activity in areas related to perspective taking, thus being indicative of higher empathy. Other studies have also linked self-compassion to self-reported perspective taking, more forgiveness, and less issue with attachment anxiety (Feher, 2016).

Research suggests that when any relationship breaks and if the person is self-compassionate, then he will be easily able to get rid of the breakup pain. It is also observed that self-compassionate people are not much afraid about the failures that they may face about in their life. This is because they are confident from their inner side and they know that they will be able to face the difficult situations in their life. They never stop trying their best in every field. The level of hope is very much in them. Self-compassion is also linked with forgiveness, being empathetic towards others and also understanding the viewpoints of others (Manreet, 2019).

Compassion for others has been linked to benefits for both the self, and the person at the receiving end of compassionate behavior. With regards to the self-compassion is associated with higher personal wisdom, higher self-esteem, more self-awareness, the feeling of being closer to other individuals, general good feelings, as well as expectations of positive mood. Compassion for others also leads to

positive interpersonal behavior. It has been associated with higher empathetic feelings, more social support and volunteering behavior demonstrated, being more helpful, as well as a greater chance of treating the other person with politeness, dignity, and respect. In broader terms, compassionate behavior is theorized to improve relationships both at the level of organizations, as well as improving society as a whole (Feher, 2016).

• **Impact of self compassion on organization:-**

Compassion observed in organizations appears to foster collective positive outcomes in terms of higher levels of shared positive emotion such as pride and gratefulness, greater collective commitment, and lower turnover rates (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021). Compassion shown by co-workers facilitated improved emotional connections at work and increased employees' performance. A longitudinal study of public service sector employees who received compassionate feelings (e.g., affection, generosity, caring, tenderness) from their supervisors, showed a greater service-oriented performance of compassionate behavior towards clients supporting contention that exhibiting compassion could be a crucial aspect of productivity in organizations (Eldor, 2018). Research on self-compassion has shown increased performance and benefits in overcoming mental barriers, aversive thoughts, fear of failure, and negative emotions (Neff & Knox, 2017). Other studies have reported positive associations of self-compassion to goal mastery and achievement goals, again better performance (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021).

• **Enhancing self-compassion: -**

According to (Neff & Germer, 2017), a person is most likely to develop self-compassion if he is into some nurturing environment where there is some openness and encouragements resulting in higher chances of building trust with each other and some strong connections promoting well-being and self-compassion in people. In a way self-compassion involves realizing and accepting the flaws of self and believing that the imperfections of the person make him perfect. There are different ways to improve and increase the self-compassion. One should concentrate on self while talking and knowing whether it differs according to the change in people or situations or it remains the same. Once the person learns this self- reflection process then it becomes easier for the person to find his faults and mistakes. Then once the mistakes are known to the individual then he can work upon them and will definitely learn something beneficial from these mistakes. Development or the improvement of self compassion is slow and gradual process in which the person only works upon his personality and ultimately wants to make his inner side stronger, acknowledging his/her strengths and weaknesses.

When a person tries to understand oneself and offer some support to self which is sometimes seen, then it is often considered that a person is having pity on self. But this is just a myth. In fact self- compassion involves not blaming yourself for those mistakes that you have not done. It allows the person to stop criticizing self for something wrong that has happened. It involves ignoring the feelings of frustration, failure and disappointment. People high on self-compassion are more likely to have higher standards or they are able to maintain their standards. As the compassion for self is important, in the

same the compassion for others is equally important. For this one should understand the genuine sufferings of the people (Manreet, 2019).

**Conclusion**

A conducive work environment plays a vital role in stimulating employees' job satisfaction and engagement, especially in the health-care industry which is plagued with incessant strike actions because of the poor work environment. Such a physical and emotional surrounding defines the working conditions, employee rights, employee voice, and safe conditions of work, cooperative team members and friendly supervisor among others. This concept analysis provides a clearer direction for future research in nurses' work environment.

Overall, there is a growing body of research that asserts that self-compassion is a construct that is distinct from other self-themes and is associated with psychological health. There is also a nascent literature that examines the potential ability of various interventions to raise self-compassion or its components, including mindfulness. As research on self-compassion and interventions for self-compassion are at early stages of development, more research is needed to develop the construct validity of self-compassion, its component elements, how these are associated with various aspects of distress and well-being, and how self-compassion and its various aspects can be fostered, cultivated, and raised in treatment. Future research will need to more carefully consider the various aspects of self-compassion and how they may differentially predict well-being or be cultivated. Future research should also employ other methodologies than correlational analysis (including experience sampling and experimental studies) to determine the directionality

of the relationship between self-compassion and psychological health. Moreover, future research will need to sample from diverse populations to determine if the correlations between self-compassion and health and distress can be generalized to other populations. It is also important that future research explore ways to measure self-compassion other than self-report and to investigate the mechanisms of change in interventions designed to raise self-compassion.

### **Implications for Practice**

- This study suggests that yoga might be a method to increase mindfulness and self-compassion nurses.
- Yoga-based approaches should be adopted as part of nursing education to increase mindfulness.
- Nursing education must realize the value of self-compassion and integrate educational interventions in the curriculum that foster its development.
- The hospital administrator should enhance the focus on the importance of self-compassion for the nurses. They should facilitate and encourage the nurses so that they feel well and self-compassion and emotionally stable as well.
- Nurses should attend workshops and training programs about self-compassion to promote their emotional balance.
- Further research on a larger sample across different governorate is needed to generalize the results.
- Additional research in the area of yoga and nursing is highly recommended to enhance emotional stability.
- Further research is also needed to find new methods for improving self-compassion.

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