

The Relationship Between Self Compassion and Emotional Intelligence for University Students

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Received 2014-05-03; Revised 2014-05-31; Accepted 2014-06-16

ABSTRACT

The purposes of the present study were: (1) To adapt an Arabic version of self-compassion scale and (2) to examine the relationship between self-compassion and emotional intelligence for university students and (3) to explore the differences in self-compassion according to demographic variables. To check the first purpose, study one was run, data was collected from two samples; the first sample consisted of 272 undergraduate students (47% males and 53% females) from Assiut University in Egypt, their ages ($M = 19.79$ years and $SD = 0.73$), the second sample consisted of 373 undergraduate students (52% males and 48% females) from King Khalid University (KKU) in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, their ages ($M = 19.96$ years and $SD = 0.70$). To check the second purpose, study two was run, data was collected from 185 undergraduate students (52% males and 48% females) from KKU, their ages ($M = 21.82$ years and $SD = 1.05$). The present study used the Arabic version of self-compassion scale and Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire to check the purposes. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and item-total correlations, used to check the psychometric properties of the Arabic version self-compassion scale, Person correlations used to examine the relationship between self-compassion and emotional intelligence and ANOVA was run to explore the differences in self-compassion according to demographic variables. Results indicated that: (1) Arabic version self-compassion scale has good psychometric properties, (2) significant positive correlation was found between self-compassion and Emotional Intelligence, (3) Women reported significantly lower than men in mindfulness, over-identification, higher than men in overall self-compassion scores, self-judgment and isolation and no significant differences were found between males and females in Self-Kindness and Common Humanity. Also results showed that accommodation place or studying specialization had no significant affect in self-compassion.

Keywords: Self Compassion, Emotional Intelligence and University Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Self-compassion starts with assumption that all humans are valuable and worthy regardless of their physical characteristic or achievement (Orsillo and Roemer, 2011).

Neff (2003b) explains self-compassion as composed of three main components; self-kindness (self-understanding rather than harsh judgment or self-criticism), a sense of common humanity (viewing oneself as a part of the larger human experiences rather than isolated) and mindfulness (accepting painful emotions and thought while not overidentifying with them) (Cormier *et al.*, 2013).

Breines and Chan (2012) found that Self-compassion lead to better performance through its effect on self improvement motivation so it enhance motivation.

Adams and Leary (2007) found that Self-compassion promote health-related behavior. It enhance well-being for example it helps people feel a greater sense interpersonal connection (Gilbert and Irons, 2005). Researchers found that there were a good relationship between self-compassion and less anxiety and depression (Neff, 2009).

Emotional intelligence is an ability of the individual to be aware of personal emotions and to identify, assess and control the emotions of oneself, of others and of groups. It

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is also the skill of understanding what trigger or event is causing the emotion (Stanley and Konrath, 2012).

Petrides and Furnham (2003) highlight four elements that are important to emotional intelligence; well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability. First factor is well-being reflect a generalized sense of well-being, extending from the past achievements to future expectations. person feels positive, happy and fulfilled. Self control is a second factor which means an individual has healthy degree of control over his urges and desires. He is good at regulating external pressures and stress. Third factor is emotionality individual with high scores on emotionality is touch with his own and other peoples feeling. He can perceive and express emotions and use these to develop close relationships with others. The last factor is sociability which focuses on the individual as an agent in social contexts, that means an individual with high scores is better at social interaction, good listeners (Stough *et al.*, 2009).

Self-Compassion is very important to our life, it helps people deal with life struggles. It can help us stop blaming ourselves for things over which we have no control. It can provide social support and encourage interpersonal trust (Crocker and Canevello, 2008). Also it opens the door to self-healing. Many researchers assume that self-compassion is an important part of psychotherapy.

Goleman (1998) pointed out five elements for emotional intelligence: Self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy and social skills. Self-awareness examines how an emotional person can affect his performance and being self confident. A motivated person seeks out achievement, ability to take the initiative and optimism. Self-regulation person can control his stress by being more positive. An empathetic person behaves openly and honestly and being culturally aware. He is good at recognizing the feelings of others. Social skills people with strong social skills are typically team players, they have good communication with others. They help others to develop and success (Serrat, 2010).

Research has shown that self-compassion and emotional intelligence have a positive association (Neff, 2003a).

Self-compassion is related to wisdom and emotional intelligence also to great personal initiative (Neff, 2003a; Neff *et al.*, 2007; Germer and Siegel, 2012) and with better emotional coping skills (Neff *et al.*, 2005).

The different studies refers that emotional intelligence has an effect in some domains of daily life such as: Physical health and mental, social functioning and academic performance (Mayer *et al.*, 2008; 2002; O'Boyle *et al.*, 2010).

Jaeger (2003) found that there is a strong relationship between emotional intelligence academic performance.

Parker *et al.* (2004) found a strong association between academic success and several dimensions of emotional intelligence.

Harrod and Scheer (2005) found no significant differences between EI scores and age, location of residence and household income, but they found significant differences between emotional intelligence scores of women and men. That women score somewhat are higher of emotional intelligence.

Researcher indicated that females have higher scores in emotional intelligence than males (Hales, 2013; Ciarrochi *et al.*, 2005; Van Rooy *et al.*, 2006). Whereas, some found that men have higher scores on emotional intelligence than women (Petrides and Furnham, 2000).

Yelkikalan *et al.* (2012) studied the emotional intelligence levels of university students, they found relationship between the faculties the students are attending to and emotional intelligence, students attending to the Faculties of Fine Arts and Science and Letters have higher emotional intelligence in terms of sociability than students of Economics and Administrative Sciences and Tourism.

Emotional intelligence is more critical than one's cognitive intelligence in attaining success in lives and careers. Emotional intelligence can profoundly impact our choices (Slack, 2012).

There are many instruments that can assess Emotional Intelligence such as Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS) and Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT).

Researchers found a positive correlation between self-compassion and positive psychological strengths such as happiness, wisdom, emotional intelligence (Heffernan *et al.*, 2010; Hollis-Walker and Colosimo, 2011).

Although there are numerous researches on Self-Compassion and emotional intelligence, but there are no researches examined the self compassion and emotional intelligence in Arabic studies. So the main objectives of the present study were to: (1) Adapt and test the validity and the reliability of the Arabic version of Self-Compassion Scale, (2) examine the relationship between self compassion and emotional intelligence for university students. The sample of this study was selected from university students in King Khalid University (KKU) in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Assiut University in Egypt.

This study hypothesized that: (1) There is a significant positive relationship between self compassion and emotional intelligence for university students. (2)

Self compassion is affected by some demographic variables (such as: Gender differences, accommodation place and studying specialization).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Study1

This study aimed to adapting the Arabic version of self compassion scale and to ensure of validity and reliability of it and to use it in the next Arabic native speakers studies.

2.2. Method

2.2.1. Participants

Data was collected from two samples; the first sample consisted of 272 undergraduate students (128 males; 144 females) from The New Valley Faculty of Education and The Faculty of physical Education, Assiut University in Egypt, whose ages were between 18 and 22 years with mean 19.79 years and standard deviation 0.73. Second sample consisted of 373 undergraduate students (193 males; 180 females) from: The Faculty of Education, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Humanities, for males and The Arts and Education Faculties and Faculty of Sciences; for females, King Khalid University (KKU) in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, their ages were between 18.53 and 22.08 years with mean 19.96 and standard deviation 0.7, while meeting in groups of no more than 20 students.

2.3. Measures

The study used Self Compassion Scale (SCS). The SCS was published by Neff (2003a) and it is only tool found for this concept based on a review of the literature. This scale assesses the characteristics of the self-compassion construct. SCS was based on Neff's work on construct of self compassion. It is a 26-item scale which is composed of six subscales: Self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness and over-identification. The Responses to items are given on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = almost never to 5 = almost always (1-5) to evaluate how often participants act in the manner stated in each of the items.

Neff (2003a) found that SCS had an internal consistency of 0.92; it also had test-retest reliability of 0.93 using 3-weeks interval. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis revealed loading of the 26 items on the six factors.

2.4. Procedures

Study 1 involved translation of the SCS into Arabic by the authors. In the second phase, three professors who are fluent in English from the Department of English of KKU were asked to check the translation equivalence of the scale. In the third phase, three professors from the Department of Educational Psychology of KKU were asked to revise the SCS into Arabic. Then, the authors modify the suitable changing to reach the final version of SCS. Thereafter, the first author distributed the SCS to the two Egyptian and Saudi samples to response to it. Then, responses of two samples were analyzed using: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), internal consistency coefficients and Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the goodness of the psychometric characteristics of SCS.

2.5. Results

The KMO and BTS were applied to ensure that the characteristics of the data set were fitting for factor analysis. For Egyptian sample, KMO analysis yielded an index of 0.576 and BTS 1885.673, $p < 0.001$. For Saudi sample, KMO analysis yielded an index of 0.708 and BTS 2213.659, $p < 0.001$. The KMO and BTS results of two samples indicated that the data satisfied the psychometric criteria for factor analysis to be performed. Then, in order to determine the factor structure of the SCS, CFA was employed for two samples. For Egyptian sample, factor loadings of the subscales were as follows: For self-kindness, 0.47-0.59; for self-judgment, 0.40-0.55; for common humanity, 0.37-0.57; for isolation, 0.41-0.64; for mindfulness, 0.46-0.60; for over-identification, 0.42-0.71 and for Saudi sample, for self-kindness, 0.58-0.78; for self-judgment, 0.43-0.74; for common humanity, 0.45-0.77; for isolation, 0.46-0.72; for mindfulness, 0.44-0.64; for over-identification, 0.43-0.62 (**Table 1**). Six factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1 emerged from analyses of the SCS. For Egyptian sample, Eigenvalues for the first factor were 3.344 (12.86%), for the second factor 3.185 (12.251%), for the third factor 1.895 (7.29%), for the fourth factor 1.703 (6.550%), for the fifth factor 1.567 (6.028%) and for the sixth factor 1.430 (5.502%). For Saudi sample, Eigenvalues for the first factor were 3.827 (14.719%), for the second factor 3.478 (13.378%), for the third factor 1.707 (6.565%), for the fourth factor 1.425 (5.480%), for the fifth factor 1.260 (4.846%) and for the sixth factor 1.186 (4.562%). So, the authors ensure of factor analysis of SCS.

Table 1. Results of factor loadings and item-total correlations of SCS

Item number	Egyptian sample		Saudi sample	
	Factor loadings	Item-total correlations	Factor loadings	Item-total correlations
1	0.55	0.326**	0.43	0.198**
2	0.71	0.524**	0.43	0.463**
3	0.56	0.215**	0.57	0.296**
4	0.41	0.281**	0.72	0.374**
5	0.51	0.354**	0.65	0.226**
6	0.62	0.388**	0.43	0.454**
7	0.37	0.261**	0.77	0.313**
8	0.48	0.315**	0.67	0.355**
9	0.48	0.351**	0.50	0.486**
10	0.42	0.150*	0.74	0.393**
11	0.50	0.420**	0.74	0.520**
12	0.47	0.288**	0.77	0.293**
13	0.64	0.501**	0.58	0.468**
14	0.46	0.354**	0.64	0.340**
15	0.57	0.360**	0.45	0.139**
16	0.40	0.284**	0.44	0.454**
17	0.46	0.365**	0.52	0.470**
18	0.56	0.291**	0.52	0.301**
19	0.59	0.417**	0.78	0.388**
20	0.42	0.310**	0.62	0.311**
21	0.47	0.327**	0.65	0.438**
22	0.60	0.266**	0.44	0.306**
23	0.47	0.381**	0.67	0.175**
24	0.63	0.154*	0.51	0.115*
25	0.55	0.442**	0.46	0.446**
26	0.54	0.197**	0.58	0.137**

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 2. Factor-total correlations of SCS

	Egyptian sample	Saudi sample
F1	0.552**	0.414**
F2	0.644**	0.657**
F3	0.382**	0.436**
F4	0.467**	0.487**
F5	0.509**	0.614**
F6	0.569**	0.517**

**p<0.01

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for SCS

	Egyptian sample	Saudi sample
Self-kindness	0.527**	0.519**
Self-judgment	0.326**	0.552**
Common humanity	0.544**	0.520**
Isolation	0.336**	0.281**
Mindfulness	0.553**	0.542**
Over-identification	0.428**	0.445**
Self-compassion ^a	0.467**	0.393**

^aTotal score **p<0.01

For Egyptian sample, item-total correlations ranged from 0.150 to 0.524 for 26 items and from

0.115 to 0.520 for Saudi sample (**Table 1**). Moreover, factor-total correlations ranged from 0.382 to 0.644 for Egyptian sample and from 0.414 to .657 for Saudi sample (**Table 2**). Cronbach's alpha coefficient, for the overall scale, was 0.467 and ranged from 0.326 to 0.552 for the subscales for Egyptian sample and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall scale was 0.393 and ranged from 0.281 to 0.552 for the subscales for Saudi sample (**Table 3**).

2.6. Discussion

Our findings indicated that Arabic version of self-compassion scale had an internal consistency (in two samples).

In order to demonstrate validity of the Arabic version of self-compassion scale, the construct validity was assessed by performing factor analysis, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Also we used Cronbach's alpha to check the reliability of the tool. The results of Study1 reconfirmed the factor structure of the Arabic version of self-compassion scale. Results also demonstrated that the self compassion scale had good

validity and reliability indicators. Thus, the psychometric properties of the scale appear sound.

2.7. Study 2

This study aimed to examine the relationship between self compassion and emotional intelligence and explore the differences in SC according to demographic variables; gender, accommodation place and studying specialization.

2.8. Method

2.8.1. Participants

Participants included 185 undergraduate students (97 males; 88 females), their ages were between 19.44 and 24.50 years with mean 21.82 years and standard deviation 1.05 and they were randomly selected from: The Faculty of Education and Faculty of science for males and from The Arts and Education Faculties and Faculty of Sciences for females, KKU in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Participants filled out Arabic version of SCS, while meeting in groups of no more than 20.

2.9. Measures

Self compassion scale items (Neff, 2003a). Participants were administered Arabic version of SCS that had been previously generated in study 1. Participants were asked to indicate how often they acted in the manner stated in each of the items on a scale of 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always).

The authors reviewed several researches in literature and of instruments available that measures emotional intelligence. Then, they designed a tool to test the trait of emotional intelligence among university students. EIQ is positive 35-item assesses the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others. It consisted of five subscales: Self awareness, managing self emotions, self motivation, empathy with others and interaction and managing other's emotions. Every subscale contained 7 items. The Responses to items are given on a 3-point scale ranging from 1 = rarely to 3 = always (1-3) to evaluate how often participants act in the manner stated in each of the items. Factor-total correlations of EIQ subscales ranged from 0.477 to 0.687, moreover, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall scale was 0.61 and ranged from 0.44 to 0.64 for subscales and also the authors ensured that all 35 items had loading on their factors by using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis.

2.10. Procedures

Study 2 involved applying SCS and EIQ for 185 undergraduate students in KKU. Then, examine the hypotheses, by calculating Person's correlation coefficients to determine the relationship between SC and EI using and ANOVA to explore the differences in SC according to demographic variables.

3. RESULTS

In order to examine the relationship between self compassion and emotional intelligence, Person correlation was run. As expected, it was found that the overall self compassion scores, as well as its scores on the six subscales had a significantly positive correlation with the emotional intelligence scores (**Table 4**), $r = 0.493$, $p < 0.01$ for overall SCS, $r = 0.335$, $p < 0.01$ for Self-Kindness, $r = 0.174$, $p < 0.05$ for Self-Judgment, $r = 0.394$, $p < 0.01$ for Common Humanity, $r = 0.359$, $p < 0.01$ for Isolation, $r = 0.509$, $p < 0.01$ for Mindfulness and $r = 0.169$, $p < 0.05$ for Over-identification.

ANOVA analysis was run to explore the differences in SC according to demographic variables.

As showed in **Table 5**, women had significantly lower than men in mindfulness [$F(1,183) = 31.61$, $p < 0.001$], moreover, over-identification [$F(1,183) = 5.515$, $p < 0.05$], furthermore, it was found that women reported significantly higher levels than men in: Overall self-compassion scores $F(1,183) = 4.386$, $p < 0.05$, self-judgment, $F(1,183) = 21.173$, $p < 0.001$ and isolation, $F(1,183) = 17.092$, $p < 0.001$, no significant differences were found between males and females in Self-Kindness and Common Humanity.

Besides, there was an interaction between gender and studying specialization only in Self-Judgment [$F(3,181) = 5.546$, $p < 0.05$]. Interestingly, no significant differences were found in SC according to accommodation place or studying specialization. Also, there were no significant differences of interaction between the three demographic variables in SC.

Table 4. Relationship between self-compassion and emotional intelligence (n = 185)

	Person correlation
Self-kindness	0.335**
Self-judgment	0.174*
Common humanity	0.394**
Isolation	0.359**
Mindfulness	0.509**
Over-identification	0.169*
Self-compassion ^a	0.493**

^aTotal score * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 5. Means and stander deviation for overall SCS and its subscales, sorted by demographic variables

	Gender		Accommodation place		Studying specialization	
	Males (n = 97)	Females (n = 88)	Rural (n = 75)	City (n = 110)	Scientific (n = 77)	Literary (n = 108)
SK	16.62(±2.89)	17.69(±3.72)	17.19(±3.01)	17.09(±3.57)	16.47(±2.9)	17.58(±3.58)
SJ	12.27(±4.35)	18.10(±4.15)	12.89(±4.44)	16.51(±5.11)	12.13(±5.04)	17.12(±4.14)
CH	12.19(±3.25)	14.53(±3.52)	13.08(±3.03)	13.46(±3.91)	12.36(±3.36)	13.97(±3.59)
I	9.35(±2.71)	14.67(±3.91)	10.48(±3.9)	12.83(±4.25)	9.40(±3.18)	13.65(±4.06)
M	16.20(±3.65)	10.13(±2.44)	14.69(±4.14)	12.36(±4.27)	16.26(±3.99)	11.20(±3.26)
OI	12.13(±3.25)	10.03(±3.01)	11.63(±3.27)	10.8(±3.3)	12.32(±3.02)	10.29(±3.24)
SC ^a	78.75(±7.11)	85.16(±8.59)	79.96(±7.74)	83.06(±8.73)	78.97(±7.1)	83.82(±8.80)

SK = Self-Kindness, SJ = Self-Judgment, CH = Common Humanity, I = Isolation, M = Mindfulness, OI = Over-Identification, SC^a = Total Score of Self-Compassion

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between self compassion and emotional intelligence.

Results suggest that self compassion scores were significantly positive correlation with the emotional intelligence scores. These findings are consistent with (Neff, 2003a; Neff *et al.*, 2007; Germer and Siegel, 2012).

Gender differences have been observed in the current study women had lower than men in mindfulness and over-identification, but they were significantly higher than men in: Overall self-compassion scores self-judgment and isolation, furthermore, no significant differences were observed between males and women in term of Self-Kindness and Common Humanity. Several researches indicated that women scored higher in emotional intelligence (Harrod and Scheer, 2005; Hales, 2013; Ciarrochi *et al.*, 2005). Others reported that men higher on EI than women (Petrides and Furnham 2000).

EI researchers found that there was no sex differences of emotional intelligence, the difference was only in social sciences where women were higher than man (Sanchez-Ruiz *et al.*, 2010).

Our result revealed that no significant differences were found in SC according to accommodation place or studying specialization. These findings are consistent with Harrod and Scheer (2005). Although there has been some research conclude that fine Arts and Science and Letters students have higher emotional intelligence in terms of sociability than students of Economics and Administrative Sciences and Tourism (Yelkikalan *et al.* (2012).

5. CONCLUSION

In the current study, the focus was on: (1) Adapting an Arabic version of self compassion scale for Arabic samples. This objective was accomplished; the scale has proven to be an effective instrument for measuring self

compassion in Arabic samples. (2) Examining the relationship between self compassion and emotional intelligence of university students. The study found a significant positive relationship between the two variables. (3) Searching the affect of demographic variables (gender differences, accommodation place and studying specialization) in self-compassion. The study found that the gender had an affect, in contrary; it found that accommodation place and studying specialization had no effect.

5.1. Recommendations

The current study recommends that: (1) The Future research should consider larger samples that are tested more carefully the emotional intelligence and self compassion according to different demographic variables in Arabic studies. (2) The current study recommends to consider self compassion as a counseling technique to improve positive psychological characteristics such as emotional intelligence and to reduce other negative psychological characteristics. (3) The field needs to study the relationship between self compassion and emotional intelligence among clinical and non-clinical samples.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers in this study are greatly indebted to: (1) Dr. Fathy El-dabaa, assistant professor at Sohag University, for his cooperation in revising the Arabic version of SCS. (2) The Students whose responded to the tools of the project.

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