

**SELF-A-C-E OF COMPASSION FOR OTHERS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Compassion is an attitude that focuses on concern, caring, and support as well as a motivation to understand and help others. This study attempted to further understand compassion for others in the context of knowing what the “self” must truly have to affect the manifestation of attitude. Such contention was grounded on the assumption that “No one can give what he or she does not have.” The objective of the paper was attained through deliberate selection and scientifically testing three powerful self-related constructs: (1) Self-Acceptance – involves self-understanding, a realistic, albeit subjective awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses, (2) Self-Compassion – feelings of kindness and caring toward oneself, and (3) Self-Efficacy – the strength of an individual’s belief in his or her own ability to respond and deal with difficult situations. Findings of the study revealed that corresponding levels of self-a-c-e have been found requisites of compassion for others. Personal demographic variables such as age, civil status and educational attainment were also correlated with this attitude. The participants of this study were guidance counselors in the region who as their profession ultimately calls for are undeniably regarded as masters of compassion in the academe.*

**Keywords:** *self-acceptance, compassion, efficacy, counselors*

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of compassion may carry distinctness across religion, philosophy, sociology, and medicine, yet its intellectual history provides the foundations that unify the fundamental philosophical differences of the said disciplines.

In the present study, the same original thoughts pioneering from the Buddhist philosophy which considers the basic nature of human beings to be compassionate; the Christian perspective on compassion as full immersion in the condition of being human; down to the social science demonstrating that compassion is an innate human instinct; and the social psychologists' and sociologists' expansion on Aristotle's requirement for compassion which is seeing oneself as similarly vulnerable to sufferers (as cited in Frost et al., 2006), are trusted in grasping the concept of compassion for others that is believed to be spurred by some self-related constructs.

According to Neff & Pommier (2013), though personal benefits of self-related constructs such as self-acceptance, self-compassion and self-efficacy are well-established, literatures claim that there has been less research that has examined whether they benefit others. Moreover, research has not yet examined whether there is an association between aforesaid personal dispositions and other focused concern such as compassion for humanity.

Besides the scarce, if not, nil research regarding the connections between the variables of interest, the researchers' choice of participants - the Guidance Counselors or School Counselors - are also given emphasis in this study. This group, no one can question, who are more expected to be the vanguard of compassion provided the push to prove the assumption that "No one can give what he or she does not have". If the expectations from these people were true, then it must be essential to establish that their innate compassion for others sharpened by their call to duty which requires certain positive self-attributes such as their self-acceptance; self-compassion; and self-efficacy.

## **Statement of the Problem**

This study attempted to understand participants' self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-efficacy. More specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How do guidance counselors assess themselves in terms of three self-related constructs namely:
  - 1.1. self-acceptance,
  - 1.2. self-compassion, and
  - 1.3. self-efficacy?
2. How do guidance counselors assess themselves in terms of their level of compassion for others?
3. Do the selected profile variables and self-related constructs significantly relate with compassion for others?
4. Which of the selected profile variables and self-related constructs are significant predictors of compassion for others?

## **Conceptual Framework**

In this study, Compassion for Others espouses the definition of compassionate love by Sprecher and Fehr (2005) as an attitude toward other(s), either close others or strangers or all of humanity; containing feelings, cognitions, and behaviors that are focused on caring, concern, tenderness, and an orientation toward supporting, helping, and understanding the other(s), particularly when the other(s) is (are) perceived to be suffering or in need.

Compassion for others as an encompassing construct because it does not only include aspects of related constructs such as empathy and sympathy, but also behavioral dispositions (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005) leads to the exploration of personal qualities that influence the helping professionals' ability to access and operate from a compassionate-mind position (King & Gilbert, 2011).

Three self-related constructs considered in this study which are assumed to help explain how it is possible to manifest compassion for others are Self-Acceptance; Self-Compassion; and Self-Efficacy.

This assumption is derived from a growing body of evidence on the similarities between the ways individuals relate to themselves and others.

Self-Acceptance is steady and unconditional. It is a person's capacity to accept oneself despite one's flaws, failures, and limitations. Starting to accept the self allows one to gradually stop worrying on what others think and become more spontaneous, natural, and authentic. It is the key to intimacy and relationships and enables one to accept others (Lancer, 2011). Self-acceptance was related to acceptance of others (William & Lynn, 2010).

Self-Compassion as defined by Neff (2003) involves being touched by and open to one's own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's suffering and to heal oneself with kindness. It also involves offering nonjudgmental understanding to one's pain, inadequacies, and failures, so that one's experience is seen as part of the larger human experience. Self-compassion tends to enhance feelings of compassion and concern for others. It entails seeing one's own experience considering the common human experiences, acknowledging that suffering, failure, and inadequacies are part of the human condition, and that all people-oneself included are worthy of compassion.

Self-Efficacy beliefs according to social cognitive theory (Schunk & Pajares, 2009) provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment. These self-perceptions touch virtually every aspect of people's lives among which are the life choices they make. Self-efficacy, or feelings of being capable regarding given competencies may significantly influence how one performs within the context of his/her chosen career (e.g., guidance counselor or school counselor) (Curry, 2007). Further, in the social interaction, individuals may realize that pleasing manners and physical attractiveness are essential for attracting the attention of others, which is the first step toward building long-lasting relationships (Schunk & Pajares, 2009).

In general, the aforesaid self-related constructs in relation to compassion for others is recapitulated by Martin Luther King who

wrote:

Perhaps our capacity to stay present to our own difficult experiences helps us to stay present to the difficult experiences of others. Or perhaps our capacity to stand back and see our self-critical thoughts as thoughts and not necessarily truth, is the same skill as our capacity to stand back from our automatic stereotypes and judgments about others. Perhaps learning to accept our own failings teaches us that we are all fallible. Or perhaps we acquire deeper knowing that we are not, after all, ever separate from others, that we are all “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study used the descriptive survey method to document the self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-efficacy of guidance counselors.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants of this study were 180 guidance counselors of region 02, Ages 20-62, and are BS–Ph.D. Degree Holders employed for the School Year 2015- 2016. Purposive sampling technique generated a total of 180 guidance counselors from region 02 who responded during the data collection period.

### **Instrumentation**

Self-Acceptance Test by Holden (n.d.) was used to measure the extent of self-acceptance. It is composed of 10 statements that represents how one accepts himself/herself. Each statement is valued from 1 to 5 (not true of me; rarely true of me; sometimes true of me; mostly true of me; very true of me).

Self-Compassion Scale by Neff (2003) was used to calculate the

level of self-compassion. It is a 26-item test that is focused in knowing how an individual typically acts towards himself/herself in difficult times. Each statement is rated using the scale 1 or almost never; 2 or occasionally; 3 or about half of the time; 4 or often; and 5 or almost always.

General Self-Efficacy Scale is a ten-item scale by Wagner as cited in Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1995) which was used to assess the strength of an individual's belief in his or her own ability to respond to novel or difficult situations. Each item has a four-choice response from "Not all true" which scores 1 to "exactly true" which scores 4.

Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale by Sprecher and Fehr (2005) was used to measure compassionate love for humanity. It is a 21-item measure that is answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 7 (very true of me).

### **Data Analysis**

Means and standard deviations were applied in knowing the participants' levels of self-acceptance; self-compassion; self-efficacy; as well as compassion for others. Regression analysis was employed in ascertaining the relationship of profile variables and self-related constructs to compassion for others.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The three self-related constructs that the participants have assessed themselves in, their mean scores reveal that they exhibit "high" level of self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-efficacy. This result insinuates that the participants who are guidance counselors should have the essential reputations of their profession. Knowing their important role in helping students survive diverse and difficult concerns and other problems which is irrefutably a burdensome responsibility, their self-revealed superiority shows not only their readiness but also their solidity towards performing their duty.

Illuminating each of the self-related constructs, setting off with

Self-Acceptance, it can be supposed that the guidance counselors had reached the deep realization that “they are what they seek” and which means being just truly happy with what and who they are. Having a “high” level of self-acceptance enables one to give oneself fully and freely to the world because being favored is not sought and being rejected is acceptable. Exhibiting this nature leads to the supposition that the participants do exude the confidence basic in handling their respective student clientele.

Meanwhile, self-compassion as defined by Neff (2003) involves being touched by and open to one’s own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one’s suffering and to heal oneself with kindness. It also involves offering nonjudgmental understanding to one’s pain, inadequacies, and failures so that one’s experience is seen as part of the larger human experience. The participants possessing high level of self-compassion conveys that they are inclined to be more lenient and kinder toward themselves, hence, it is expressed with gentleness, tenderness, and generosity of spirit (Lancer, 2011). Ultimately, compassion for themselves means that they desire well-being for themselves.

A high level of self-efficacy means more likely to challenge oneself with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated (Kirk, 2013). It further means putting forth a high degree of effort to meet one’s commitments and attribute failure to things which are in their control. Holding this attitude, the participants may be able to rebound from setbacks and more willing to experiment with new ideas or techniques. They have the confidence that they will be able to successfully solve problems (Bandura, 1994). As an effect, success in their performance of work can be easily attained.

Holding a high level of compassion for others renders the participants’ remarkable ability of responding emotionally coupled with their authentic desire when perceiving others to need help. This supposition is endorsed by Seppala et al. (2013) in her definition of compassion as not only requiring emphatic response and an altruistic behavior but similarly to those earlier described.

Expounding on the meaning of a soaring compassion for others, Lee's (2007) depictions of being compassionate are accepted in this study. Being compassionate as he stated means being generous in terms of time and effort to those who lack needs – basic or psychological ones and whose lives truly can be improved. Being compassionate means letting actions be guided by love – in the sense of recognizing and appreciating the unique characteristics of everything and everyone. Being compassionate means practicing patience by imparting a gentle reply when persons being met are tired, stressed, frustrated, afraid, or worn down from the demands of life. Compassion is responsible in taking all mitigating factors into account before reacting.

Having those sense of compassion for others and in correspondence with the present finding, it is prudent to say that the counselor participants are eligible with the needed qualities of their work in which compassion is among the foremost. As Todd and Chehaib (2019) had coined, school counselors must enjoy helping people. They need compassion and empathy to understand problems and work with people in stressful situations. Counselors should always be looking for ways to help and know how to intervene in a crisis with sensitivity.

### **Result of Regression Analysis on Predictors of Compassion for Others**

The succeeding data provide an account of the models that were attempted to be estimated in the study. Using the Stepwise method of the Multiple Linear Regression, SPSS was able to generate a model having self-compassion variable entered. None of the profile variables such as age, civil status and highest educational attainment was included. The same holds true to the two self-related constructs which are self-acceptance and self-efficacy.

As to the strength of relationship between self-compassion, the independent variable; and compassion for others, the dependent variable in the model – the value of R is 0.214 indicating a weak relationship. The value of R Square which is 0.046 conveys that self-compassion accounts for 4.6% of the variation in compassion for others. This value further implies that there are other variables which



also have an influence on compassion for others since 95.4% (100%-4.6%) of the variation in compassion for others can't be explained by the model.

The F-Statistic which is 8.521 for the model has a significance level of less than 0.005. This highly significant result tells that the correlation between self-compassion and compassion for others is not equal to zero in the population. It also means that overall, the regression model predicts compassion for others significantly well.

As to the coefficients model, the coefficient of 0.386 for the self-compassion variable means that participants' level of compassion for others is predicted to increase by 0.386 for every increase in their level of self-compassion. This is confirmed by the t-test in the Coefficients table where the t-statistics for the predictor variable is significant, p-value of .004 is less than 0.05.

Results of the present study effectively proved its supposition that innate compassion for others or "compassionate instinct" (Keltner, as cited in Observer, 2013) depends on several equally innate abilities of the self (Cole-King & Gilbert, 2011). It sustains the "compassionate mind" approach by Paul Gilbert which builds on the basic idea that specific abilities and skills go into developing compassion.

The postulated self-related constructs which are self-acceptance; self-compassion; and self-efficacy were implied in the first of the human capacity for compassion's two different psychologies as suggested by Gilbert: on the one hand for awareness and engagement, on the other for skilled intervention in action.

Self-compassion as the variable found in the study to have a statistically significant relationship with compassion for others evidently exposes that to be compassionate to others require a compassionate setting on the part of the giver. In here, self-compassion must be seen in action. This impression is also clearly interpreted by Wiklund Gustin & Wagner (2012) claiming that compassion is facilitated by self-compassion. Self-compassion and compassion for others appear to be closely linked to each other as self-compassion makes it easier to

understand and deal with the suffering of others. Their study further revealed that the development of a compassionate self and the ability to be sensitive, non-judgmental, and respectful towards oneself contribute to a compassionate stance towards others.

It is also worthwhile to stress how level of self-compassion influences compassion for others. As the results have revealed, the participants having a high level of self-compassion are therefore inclined to manifest high level of compassion for others. As Neff and Pommier (2013) had described, because self-compassion involves turning compassion inward, taking a compassionate perspective toward oneself in the same way that compassion is typically offered to others, it is expected that people with higher levels of self-compassion would also evidence greater perspective taking capacities. While Crocker and Canevello (as cited in Neff & Pommier, 2013) researched on self-compassion among relationship partners, their finding also made known that individuals who scored high in self-compassion tended to have more compassionate goals, meaning they tended to provide social support and encourage interpersonal trust with partners. In addition, the research of Longe et al. (as cited by Neff & Pommier, 2013) about instructing individuals to be more self-compassionate was associated with neuronal activity like what occurs when feelings of empathy for others are evoked suggested that the tendency to respond to suffering with caring concern is a general process applied to both oneself and others, so self-compassion and other-focused concern like compassion for others go hand in hand.

## **CONCLUSION**

The 180 Guidance Counselors of Region 02, Philippines, have high levels of self-acceptance, self-compassion, self-efficacy, and compassion for others; hence, embody the virtue of being effective agents in the Guidance and Counseling Profession. Self-compassion is a major factor towards compassion for others. The participants held the essential reputation of their profession.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That school administrators should give priority to the continuing program for education and professional development for licensed counselors; and seminar-workshops, trainings, and conventions for non-licensed Guidance Staff.

That school administrators need to consider the needs of counselors and Guidance Staff to realistically further their effectiveness towards others in the helping profession.

A specific action is likewise addressed to the school administrators to consider and exert more efforts to implement the salary upgrading and standardization among counselors, the law has been approved, yet, remained unimplemented. Such recommendation if considered will have a favorable impact on the self-fulfillment of the counselors themselves, thus, become more efficient.

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