

INVESTIGATION OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' SELF COMPASSION LEVELS IN TERMS OF AGE, GENDER, PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS, FAMILY INCOME LEVEL AND BRANCH VARIABLES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate whether the prospective teachers' self compassion levels differ according to some variables such as gender, branch, family income level, and perception of success and also the relation of their self compassion with age. In the frame of this basic aim, in the study, survey method is used which is generally used for finding out current conditions. The sample consists of 260 students of 2010-2011 educational year's spring term at the departments of Elementary Science, Music, Art, Early Childhood Education and Primary Teaching Education in Fatih Education Faculty of Karadeniz Technical University. As data collection tools, in addition to personal information form, Self Compassion Scale that is adapted to Turkish by Akın and his colleagues (2007) are used. For data analysis SPSS 16.00 program is used. Independent t-test and one-way ANOVA are used in order to find out whether the teachers' self-compassion levels differ according to their gender, family income level, perception of success, and the university departments they study, in other words their branches and their relation with age. In order to find out which groups result in difference, Post Hoc analysis is done and Bonferroni test is used for this Post Hoc analysis. The results of analyses show that teachers' family income levels and their perception of success cause significant difference on their self-compassion levels. However, no significant difference is found between the teachers' self compassion levels and their gender, age and branches. The findings are discussed in the light of literature.

Keywords: Self-compassion, prospective teachers.

INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of factors that affect the qualifications of education context. While some of these factors are directly related with school, some of them indirectly affect the context. There are some studies done for explaining the aspects of our character that affects our working environment in some ways but not affect it directly. Some concepts that are formed in recent years try to evaluate these characteristics. One of these concepts is self-compassion concept which is developed by Kristin Neff in 2003. The compassion concept deals with people's pains and their relationship with other people. Here, the forgotten concept is the person himself. The concept of self-compassion fills this gap. Self-compassion deals with the affection that people show themselves (Neff 2003a, 2003b). The feature of this concept that make it different from others is its being related with directly

human himself. Studies are done on the concept of compassion but these studies are about the compassion that people show to other people (Wispe, 1991). However, self-compassion explores the concepts such as their tenderness toward themselves, personal judgements, and concepts that directly related with being in good mood (Neff, 2003a, 2003b). Researches reveal that the individuals who have high levels of self-compassion are optimistic, psychologically good, extrovert, happy, curious and merciful (Neff et al., 2007a, 2007b), have self esteem (Neff et al., 2005), self-acceptance and life satisfaction; on the other hand they have less problems such as neurotic perfectionism, depression and anxiety compared to people whose self-compassion levels are low (Neff, 2003b; Neff, 2003b; Terry & Leary, 2011). Moreover, it is proved that people who have high levels of self-compassion use emotion-focused coping strategies more while they enact less avoidance behaviours (Neff et al., 2005); feel less sadness and when they face with negative events they can accept their roles as they are (Leary et al., 2007). According to Hallis-Walker and Colosimo (2001) self-compassion teaches us to recover ourselves when we come across with difficulties. In the light of these findings, it can be said that when the people who have high self-compassion levels become teachers, they have tolerance also in classroom. It is possible to see the reality of tolerance's importance within the education environment in most of the researches. According to the results of some studies, characteristics such as tolerance, cheerfulness and having emotional balance are among the characteristics of ideal teacher (Çetin, 2001).

The main aim of this study is to determine the prospective teachers' levels of self-compassion and to find out whether their moods and perspectives of life are positive or not according to their gender, branches, family income levels, age and perception of success.

Method

The sample of this study is 260 students studying early childhood education, music, art, science and primary teaching education in Karadeniz Technical University whose ages are between 18 and 27.

The personal information form that is developed by the researchers is used for determining some demographic information. On this form there are questions about age, gender, perception of success, family income level and branches of the students attended in survey. Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) is developed by Neff (2003b) for the aim of measuring individuals' self-compassions. This scale that is composed of 26 items, measures 6 sub factors. It is a five point likert-type scale that the teachers' answers are as (1) Never (2) Seldom (3) Often (4) Usually and (5) Always. The scale's standard alpha coefficient is .77 for its internal consistency reliability. The scale's adaption to Turkish is made in 2007(Akın, Akın, ve Abacı, 2007).

The data is analyzed using SPSS 16.00 program. Firstly data are described using descriptive statistic techniques and then inferential statistic techniques are used which are t-test, F test and correlation techniques.

Findings and Implications

Relationship between prospective teachers' self-compassion levels and ages

Table 1. ANOVA results related to prospective teachers' self-compassion levels according to age variable

	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between group	794.203	8	99.275	.920	.501
Within group	27095.781	251	107.951		
Total	27889.985	259			

Table 1. shows that according to one-way ANOVA there is no significant difference between the prospective teachers' self-compassion levels and their age ($F(8, 251)=.920$; $p>.05$). When the mean values are considered, it is seen that mean value of prospective teachers' self-compassion levels who are in 27-year-old group is the highest ($M=99.00$); whereas the mean value of prospective teachers' self-compassion levels who are in 24-year-old group is the lowest ($M=88.83$).

Relationship between prospective teachers' self-compassion levels and their department (branches)

Table 2. ANOVA results related to prospective teachers' self-compassion levels according to branch variable

	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between group	575.926	4	143.982	1.344	.254
Within Group	27314.058	255	107.114		
Total	27889.985	259			

Table 2. shows that according to one-way ANOVA there is no significant difference between the prospective teachers' self-compassion levels and their branches ($F(4, 255)=1.344$; $p>.05$). When the mean values are considered, it is seen that mean value of prospective teachers' self-compassion levels who are studying art education department is the highest ($M=95.03$); whereas the mean value of prospective teachers' self-compassion levels who are studying primary teaching education is the lowest ($M=90.92$).

3.3. Relationship between prospective teachers' self-compassion levels and their gender

Table 3. T-test results related to prospective teachers' self-compassion levels according to gender variable

Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Male	73	92.178	11.940	258	.165	.869
Female	187	91.941	9.733			

When Table 3. is analyzed, it is seen that mean value of female prospective teachers' self-compassion levels is 92.17 whereas the mean value of male prospective teachers' self-compassion levels is 91.73. According to the t-test results, gender variable cause no significant difference between the self-compassion levels of prospective teachers [$t(258)=.165$; $p>0.05$].

Relationship between prospective teachers' self-compassion levels and their perception of success

Table 4 ANOVA results related to prospective teachers' self-compassion levels according to perception of success

	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between group	1389.422	2	694.706	6.737	.001
Within Group	26500.572	257	103.115		
Total	27889.985	259			

Table 4. shows that according to one-way ANOVA there is significant difference between the prospective teachers' self-compassion levels and their perception of success ($F(2, 257)=6.737$; $p<.05$). For finding out the source of significant difference, Bonferroni test results are used. This test results indicate that the prospective teachers who describe themselves as 'successful' have significantly high self-compassion levels compared to the teachers who describe themselves as 'has medium-level success' or 'unsuccessful'.

Ralationship between prospective teachers' self-compassion levels and their family income levels

Table 5. ANOVA results related to prospective teachers' self-compassion levels according to family income level

	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between group	669.474	2	334.737	3.160	.044
Within Group	27220.511	257	105.916		
Total	27889.985	259			

Table 5. shows that according to one-way ANOVA there is significant difference between the prospective teachers' self-compassion levels and their family income levels ($F(2, 257)=3.160$; $p<.05$). For finding out the source of significant difference, Bonferroni test results are used. This test results indicate that the prospective teachers whose family

income levels are high have significantly high self-compassion levels compared to the teachers whose family income levels are medium.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study show that gender variable has no significant effect on prospective teachers' self-compassion levels. In literature some studies find out that females has lower self-compassion levels than males (Neff, 2003b; Neff, 2009); some find out that there is no significant difference between gender and self-compassion levels (Neff, 2007a; Neff, 2007b; Neff, 2008; İskender, 2009; Zabelina ve Robinson, 2010); some of them on the other hand find out that there is no significant difference between female and male adolescents' self-compassion levels; however male adults' self-compassion levels significantly higher than female adults' self compassion levels (Neff and McGhee, 2010). The result of this study which indicates that there is no difference between female and male prospective teachers' self-compassion levels make us think that there is also no difference between female and male teachers' attitudes towards students.

Another result of this study shows that age variable has no relation with self-compassion total score and its sub factors. Neff (2003a) states that because adolescence is one of the periods that egocentrism is in the highest level, self-compassion level is in the lowest level during this period; so he defends the idea that self compassion level has relation with the age variable. Studies that are done on this issue confirm that self-compassion levels increase with the age (Neff, 2009). However this argument cannot be confirmed by this study's result. In this study it is proved that self-compassion is not dependent on age variable so it can be inferred that young or old teachers has no advantages or disadvantages for developing their self-compassions.

In the study it is seen that Music prospective teachers have the highest level of self-compassion and then the level of Art prospective teachers' self-compassion comes as a second. However, other branches have no significant effect on self-compassion levels. The high self-compassion levels of Art and Music teachers make us think that the nature of art that enables people to listen to themselves also affects the students' self-compassions studying on those departments in a positive way.

When the family income levels of prospective teachers are analyzed, it is seen that the relationship between family income levels and self-compassion levels of prospective teachers are significant and there is a positive correlation. This result contradicts with some studies' results that indicate there is no significant relation between family income level and self-compassion level (Neff, 2009). In this study it is found out that when family income levels increase, the self-compassion levels increase, too. This situation makes us think that the positive relation is because families whose income levels are high can raise their children in better environments.

The other variable perception of success is found out to have significant effect on self-compassion levels. Teachers whose perceptions of success are high; self-compassion levels

are high, too. With this result it can be said that there is a possibility that prospective teachers who are compassionate towards themselves can be effective in solving their inner world problems, can focus their energy on being successful and this possibility can be used as an opportunity.

Another result of the study shows that there is no significant difference between female and male prospective teachers' self-compassion levels. Because of this, for further researches that aim to enhance the self-compassion levels of teachers, there is no need to take precautions for gender differences. Besides, as the self-compassion levels of teachers whose branches are art and music are high, it can be suggested for further researches aiming to improve self-compassion that they can focus on solutions that give weight to art. When the positive relation between teachers' perception of success and self-compassion levels is considered, it can be suggested that people who have high-levels of self-compassion should be selected as prospective teachers or self-compassions of prospective teachers should be improved.

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