SELF-COMPASSION AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate self-compassion and emotional regulation of pre-service teachers in Sagaing University of Education. Quantitative approach was used in this study. A total of 900 pre-service teachers in Sagaing University of Education were used as the sample by using stratified random sampling technique. Self-compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Neff (2003) which consists of 26 items was used to measure the pre-service teachers' self-compassion. It consists of six subscales. And Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ) developed by Garnefski et al., (2001) which consists of 36 items was used to measure emotional regulation of pre-service teachers. It consists of nine subscales. Then, the data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product moment correlation, *t* test, ANOVA and simple linear regression. The results revealed that significant differences were found by gender in both self-compassion and emotional regulation. In self-compassion, males had higher level of self-compassion than females did. In emotional regulation, females had higher level of emotional regulation than males did. The ANOVA result revealed that significant difference was found by grade in self-compassion. By seeing the result, fourth year had the highest level of self-compassion, followed by the fifth year and third year. But no significant difference was found by grade in emotional regulation. According to number of siblings, no significant differences were found in both self-compassion and emotional regulation. After that, there were no significant differences by parents' education level in both self-compassion and emotional regulation. After that, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation result revealed that a positively significant relationship ($r=.511^{**}$) was found between self-compassion and emotional regulation. Finally, it can be concluded that pre-service teachers' self-compassion could influence their emotional regulation. Thus, to be good self-compassion and emotional regulation of pre-service teachers who will become leaders of society, meditation practice and exposure to Buddhist teachings are essential for pre-service teachers.

Keywords: compassion, self-compassion, emotion, emotional regulation

Introduction

University students experience higher levels of psychological distress than the general population, which consequently identifies this population as high-risk for mental health problems (Keel &Pidgeon, 2017). Adolescents believe that their experiences are unique and that others can't possibly understand what they're going through. If adolescents don't succeed in evaluating themselves positively, the inadvertent result may be an increase in negative evaluations of the self. A more effective intervention, therefore, may be to encourage adolescents to counter directly the age-related tendencies that work against self-compassion, by teaching adolescents to be kind and understanding toward themselves, to realize that most teens go through similar problems, and to try to maintain a more balanced awareness of their emotional experiences (Neff, 2003 a).

The construct of self-compassion has emerged in Western psychological and health literatures over the last fifteen years. The roots of this construct lie in Buddhist psychology and philosophy (Neff, 2003 a). Self-compassion has been defined as "being touched by and open to

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one's own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's suffering and to heal oneself with kindness"(Neff, 2003).

Neff et al. (2005) suggested that emotional regulation is a defining characteristic of self-compassion. By giving compassion to oneself, one provides the emotional safety needed to see the self clearly without fear of self-condemnation, allowing the individual to more accurately perceive and rectify maladaptive patterns of thought, feeling and behavior.

There is evidence to suggest that self-compassion positively impacts psychological health by promoting adaptive emotion regulation in times of stress. Self-compassion defuses negative emotional patterns by promoting non-judgmental awareness of one's emotions and orienting oneself to respond to stressful events in a way that is self-supportive. Emotional regulation is defined as an internal process whereby individuals' manipulate their emotional intensity and arousal to cope effectively with stressful stimuli (Neff, 2003a).

So, pre-service teachers' self-compassion and emotional regulation are interdependent, and both are important for all-round development of students. The investigating of self-compassion and emotional regulation of pre-service teachers is necessary and also essential for the psychological development of citizens in all countries. Also, in Myanmar, studying the effect of self-compassion and emotional regulation of pre-service teachers is an inevitable matter for now.

Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate self-compassion and emotional regulation of pre-service teachers.

Research Methodology

Descriptive research design and quantitative survey method were used to investigate self-compassion and emotional regulation of pre-service teachers in Sagaing University of Education.

Sample of the Study

The total number of participants was 900 pre-service teachers (450 males, 450 females) during the academic year of 2018-2019 in Sagaing University of Education (see Table 1).

No.	Grade	Male	Female	Total
1.	Third Year	150	150	300
2.	Fourth Year	150	150	300
3.	Fifth Year	150	150	300
Total		450	450	900

Instrumentation

In this study, Self-compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Neff (2003b) was adapted and used to examine self-compassion of pre-service teachers. Self-compassion originally included 26 items and three sub components self-kindness (five items), common humanity (four items) and mindfulness (four items). Furthermore, the respective counterparts of these sub components are measured, namely self-judgment (five items), isolation (four items) and over-identification (four items). Among them, 13 items were negatively worded items. The instrument is a 4-point

Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree =1 to strongly agree =4 for positive items and vice versa for negative items.

Emotional regulation was measured by using the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ; Garnefski et al., 2001). The CERQ is a 36-item questionnaire, consisting of nine conceptually distinct subscales, self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, catastrophizing and other-blame. Each subscale has 4 items. The CERQ subscales can be used to calculate overall scores for maladaptive (self-blame, other-blame, rumination, catastrophizing) and adaptive (putting into perspective, positive reappraisal, acceptance and refocus on planning). Items are measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree =1 to strongly agree =4 for adaptive items and vice versa for maladaptive items. Then, the pilot study was done with a sample of 75 third year BEd students in Sagaing University of Education in order to check whether the wording of statements had clarity and was relevant to fifth year students or not. The whole scales of Self-compassion and emotional regulation indicated satisfactory internal consistency with 0.721 and 0.719 respectively. Therefore, these two instruments can be considered as a reliable instrument for the study.

Procedure

The related literature for this study was gathered in many sources such as library, journals, magazines, theses and internet. As a next step, instruments for the study were prepared and assessed by five experts in the field of Educational Psychology. After getting permission from the authority concerned, pilot study was made to validate the research instruments. After making pilot testing, the questionnaire was edited. And then, data collection procedure was begun to assess self-compassion and emotional regulation of pre-service teachers. Finally, the collected data was analyzed, the interpretation of the findings was made and the conclusion was drawn.

Data Analysis and Findings

Findings for Self-compassion of Pre-service Teachers

To know more clearly according to gender, the independent sample *t*test was conducted.

Table 2 The Result of Independent Sample *t*test for Self-compassion by Gender

Variable	Gender	Mean	N	*t*	*df*	*p*	MD
Self-compassion	Male	69.68	450	2.417 *	898	.02	1.00
	Female	68.68	450				

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

According to the result, there was statistically significant difference in self-compassion of pre-service teachers by gender at 0.05 level. This finding is consistent with the past research findings (Azevedo & Matos, 2015; Souza & Hutz, 2016; Feher, 2016) in which that males had higher levels self-compassion than females did. But, this finding is contrary to that of Neff, 2003b ; Iskender, 2009; Bluth and Bluton, 2015; Eker and Kaya, 2018, who reported no significant differences in self-compassion between males and females. Moreover, this result is opposite with the finding of earlier study conducted by Zaw Myo Htet (2017) and May Zun Win (2017) in which self-compassion did not influence by gender. Thus, it can be said that pre-service teachers' self-compassion in Sagaing University of Education was influenced by gender.

It may be due to the fact females report more negative life events. Azeve do and Matos (2015) stated that females are more critical and punitive of themselves, over-identify more with their feelings/thoughts and show a greater tendency to relate their experience to an inadequacy of their self. And then, females were more likely than men to engage in self-judgment, to feel isolated when confronted with painful situations, and to be more over-identified and less mindful of their negative emotions and females were not less likely than males to be kind and gentle to themselves or to see their experiences as part of common humanity (Neff, 2003, cited in Petrocchi et al., 2013).

To obtain more detailed information on grade, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

Table 3 ANOVA Result for Self-compassion of Pre-service Teachers by Grade

Variable		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Self-compassion	Between Groups	439.48	2	219.74	5.736**	.003
	Within Groups	34359.91	897	38.31		
	Total	34799.38	899			

**. The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

ANOVA result showed that there was statistically significant difference in pre-service teachers' self-compassion among grade.

Again, to find which grade had the highest difference, Post Hoc Test was executed by Tukey HSD method.

Table 4 The Result of Post-Hoc Test using Tukey HSD for Self-compassion of Pre-service Teachers by Grade

Variable	Grade (I)	Grade (J)	Mean Difference(I-J)	*p*
Self-compassion	Third Year	Fourth Year	-1.600*	.005
		Fifth Year	-.273	.851
	Fourth Year	Third Year	1.600*	.005
		Fifth Year	1.327*	.024
	Fifth Year	Third Year	.273	.851
		Fourth Year	-1.327*	.024

*.The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Post Hoc Tukey (HSD) Test explored that the mean difference between third year and fourth year was -1.600 and it was statistically significant difference at $p<.05$. And then, the mean difference between fourth year and fifth year was 1.327 and it was statistically significant difference at $p<.05$. By seeing the results, third year had the lowest level of self-compassion, followed by the fifth year and fourth year. A possible explanation for this might be that most participants are college of education and they encounter transitional time before they had formed new strong friendships. Moreover, they move away from their old friends and families and face academic examination performance, anxiety and stressful events. And then, fourth year had the highest level of self- compassion, followed by the fifth year and third year. So, this might be due to the fact that fifth year had to face with the stressful events as they encounter projects, lessons and had to try for getting the qualified and credit. This finding was contrary to that of Bluth and

Bluton (2015) mentioned that no significant differences in self-compassion between high-school males and middle-school males.

Next, to obtain more detailed information on the differences of self-compassion in terms of number of siblings, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

Table 5 ANOVA Result for Self-compassion of Pre-service Teachers by Number of Siblings

Variable		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Self-compassion	Between Groups	112.495	4	28.124	.726	.58
	Within Groups	34686.887	895	38.756		
	Total	34799.382	899			

The result indicated that there were no significant differences in pre-service teachers' self-compassion by number of siblings. This finding is congruent with the past research (Eker & Kaya, 2018). From that point, it can be obviously identified that number of siblings did not effect on pre-service teachers' self-compassion. However, it was found that the mean scores of self-compassion of pre-service teachers with five siblings and above had the highest among the other number of siblings. According to Thanyalak (2017), this might be due to the fact that their siblings were the members of their families and could help them when they had to deal with difficulties in life by giving them some advices, the information and the social support.

To obtain more detailed information on father's education level, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

Table 6 ANOVA Result for Self-compassion of Pre-service Teachers by Father's Education Level

Variable		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Self-compassion	Between Groups	120.72	3	40.241	1.04	.374
	Within Groups	34678.66	896	38.704		
	Total	34799.38	899			

ANOVA result showed that there were no significant differences in self-compassion with respect to father's education level. This finding was agreed with the result of May Zun Win (2017). It can be assumed that self-compassion of pre-service teachers did not depend on father's education level.

To obtain more detail information for self-compassion by mother's education level, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

Table 7 ANOVA Result for Self-compassion of Pre-service Teachers by Mother's Education Level

Variable		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Self-compassion	Between Groups	131.548	3	43.849	1.13	.34
	Within Groups	34667.83	896	38.692		
	Total	34799.38	899			

The result indicated that there were no significant differences in self-compassion by mother's education level. This finding was agreed with the result of May Zun Win (2017). Therefore, it can be said that mother's education level did not effect on pre- service teachers' self-compassion.

4.2 Findings for Emotional Regulation of Pre-service Teachers

To know more clearly, the independent sample *t* test was conducted.

Table 8 The Result of Independent Sample *t* test for Emotional Regulation by Gender

Variable	Gender	Mean	N	*t*	*df*	*p*	MD
Self-compassion	Male	101.19	450	-2.56**	899	.01	-1.12
	Female	102.30	450				

**. The mean difference is significant at the .01 level.

According to the result, there was statistically significant difference in emotional regulation of pre-service teachers by gender at 0.01 level. It can be interpreted that females had higher levels of emotional regulation than males. This finding is consistent with the past research (Martin & Dahlen, 2005) . However, this finding is contray with the previous research findings (Yokus et al., 2013: Esmaeilinasab et al., 2016). This might be due to the fact that females are constrained by their traditional norms and regulations. Therefore, they don't have the chance to freely open their emotions in their satisfactory ways. This is why, females can regualte their emotions and can adjust to normal than males.

To obtain more detailed information on grade, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

Table 9 ANOVA Result for Emotional Regulation of Pre-service Teachers by Grade

Variable		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Emotional Regulation	Between Groups	152.28	2	76.138	1.79	.167
	Within Groups	38093.47	897	42.47		
	Total	38245.75	899			

ANOVA result indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in pre- service teachers' emotional regulation among grade. It can be assumed that pre-service teachers' emotional regulation do not depend on grade. This finding is contrary to that of Yokus et al., (2013) which mentioned that there was a statistically significant difference in emotional regulation with respect to grade. A possible explanation for this might be that they were about the same age, the same University life and the same professional goal.

In order to know clearly in terms of number of siblings, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was investigated.

Table 10 ANOVA Result for Emotional Regulation of Pre-service Teachers According to Number of Siblings

Variable		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Emotional Regulation	Between Groups	68.349	4	17.087	.401	.808
	Within Groups	38177.397	895	42.656		
	Total	38245.746	899			

ANOVA result showed that there was no statistically significant difference in pre- service teachers' emotional regulation according to number of siblings. Yokus et al., (2013) found that in catastrophizing sub-dimension, pre-service music teachers' emotional regulation showed a difference at the level of .05 and statistically significant difference was no found in terms of other dimensions.

To obtain more detailed information on father's education level, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

Table 11 ANOVA Result for Emotional Regulation of Pre-service Teachers by Father's Education Level

Variable		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Emotional Regulation	Between Groups	322.77	3	107.591	2.542	.06
	Within Groups	37922.97	896	42.325		
	Total	38245.75	899			

ANOVA result revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in pre-service teachers' emotional regulation according to father's education level.

To obtain more detail information for emotional regulation by mother's education level, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

Table 12 ANOVA Result for Emotional Regulation of Pre-service Teachers by Mother's Education Level

Variable		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Emotional	Between Groups	76.721	3	25.574	.60	.615
Regulation	Within Groups	38169.03	896	42.599		
	Total	38245.75	899			

The result indicated that there were no significant differences in emotional regulation by mother's education level. Therefore, it can be said that mother's education level did not effect on pre-service teachers' emotional regulation.

4.3 The Relationship Between Self-compassion and Emotional Regulation of Pre- service Teachers

The correlations among self-compassion variables and emotional regulation were expressed in Table 13.

Table 13 Correlations for Self-compassion Variables and Emotional Regulation (N=900)

Variable	Emotional Regulation Total
Self-kindness	.283**
Self-judgment	.254**
Common humanity	.350**
Isolation	.283**
Mindfulness	.396**
Over-identification	.287**
Emotional Regulation Total	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 13 showed that emotional regulation was significantly correlated in moderate positive relationships with common humanity (r = .350, *p*< .01) and mindfulness (r = .396, *p*< .01). Then, emotional regulation was significantly correlated in low positive relationships with self-kindness (r = .283, *p*<.01), with self-judgment (r =.254, *p*< .01), with isolation (r = .283, *p*< .01), and with over-identification (r = .287, *p*< .01). The sub components of self-compassion were significantly correlated with emotional regulation.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were conducted to examine the relationship between self-compassion and emotional regulation of pre-service teachers. And then, the results were shown in Table 14.

Table 14 Relationship between Self-compassion and Emotional Regulation of Pre- service Teachers

	Emotional Regulation
Self-compassion	.511**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the results, there was a high association between self-compassion and emotional regulation because the correlation coefficient was statistically significant (r = 0.511, *p*<0.01). A significant positive relationship was found between self-compassion and emotional regulation, where higher scores of self-compassion were associated with higher scores of emotional regulation. This finding is congruent with the past research (Keel &Pidgeon, 2017).

Table 15 Result of Linear Regression on Self-compassion and Emotional Regulation

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	***t***	***p***
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	64.70	2.09		30.97	.00
SCTotal	.54	.03	.511	17.81	.00

a. Dependent Variable: Emotional Regulation

From this Table 15, it was found that the predictor self-compassion significantly predicted emotional regulation. Therefore, the model can be described as the following equation.

$$\mathbf{ER = 64.698 + 0.54\ SC}$$

Where,

ER = Emotional Regulation and

SC = Self-compassion.

Table 16 The Model Summary for Components of Self-compassion and Emotional Regulation

Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	.511[a]	.261	.260	5.610

a.Predictors: (Constant), SK, SJ, CH, IS, MF, OV.

The standardized beta coefficient indicated that self-compassion variables significantly predicted emotional regulation. The multiple coefficient (**R**) = .55 and the adjusted **R** square was

.30. Based on the result, 26 % of emotional regulation could be predicted on self-compassion. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the higher self- compassion pre-service teachers have, the more they possess better emotional regulation.

Discussion and Recommendation

Meditation practice andexposure to Buddhist teachings might be a useful means of achieving greater mental health for women (and men) who are suffering from a lack of self-compassion. According to Neff (2003b), a more effective intervention may be to encourage adolescents to counter directly the age-related tendencies that work against self-compassion, by teaching adolescents to be kind and understanding toward themselves, to realize that most teens go throughsimilar problems, and to try to maintain a more balanced awareness of their emotional experiences.

In a study of self-compassion in classroom settings, for instance, we found that self- compassion was positively associated with mastery goals for learning and negatively associated with performance goals (Neff, 2009).

According to Neff and Germer (2013), the MSC program effectively teaches individuals how to become more compassionate toward themselves. The more MSC participants practiced formal meditation, the more they increased their self-compassion levels. By wrapping emotional pain in the warm embrace of self-compassion, suffering is ameliorated and wellbeing is enhanced, allowing for healthier functioning in daily life.

Moreover, teaching co-curricular subjects such as physical education, industrial arts/ domestic science, agriculture, fine arts and music make students mindful and then this performance looks like meditation.

Limitations

This sample is not necessarily representative to all pre-service teachers in Myanmar. Although the cross-sectional design of this study does not allow us to draw conclusions about causal associations, the results of our model suggest this association.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are a number of interventions that exist to foster self-compassion, such as Mindful Self-Compassion, and Compassion Focused Therapy. The use of self-compassion as a mental health intervention should be explored in future research. Furthermore, given the impact of self-compassion on emotion regulation, future research is warranted in examining these relations in other psychological disorders that are associated with difficulty in emotion regulation.

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