An Exploration of the Construct Validity of Self-Compassion

Claire Jones

Supervised by: Dr. Anke Karl, Senior Lecturer, University of Exeter DClinPsy.

Research Contacts/Discussants: Professor Willem Kuyken, Professor of Clinical Psychology, Co-Founder of the Mood Disorders Centre at the University of Exeter.

Research Setting: University of Exeter

Target Journal: Behaviour Research and Therapy

Word Count: 7,999 for manuscript and 2,656 for appendices.

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctorate in Clinical and Community Psychology

University of Exeter University

Statement of academic probity and professional practice:

I certify that all material in this assignment / assessment which is not my own work has been identified and properly attributed. I have conducted the work in line with the BPS DCP Professional Practice Guidelines.
Abstract

Self-compassion is receiving increasing interest from psychologists and researchers due to its potential role in wellbeing and mental health however, self-compassion as a unique construct has not been validated. This research utilised pilot studies in order to develop an operational definition of self-compassion, separate from other similar constructs. A multi-trait multi-method approach to construct validation was utilised to assess self-compassion’s discriminant and convergent validity in relation to the constructs of self-esteem and compassion for others in a community sample of 307. Self-compassion was then evaluated for its role in mental health and wellbeing when assessed against the two comparison constructs. Results demonstrated discriminant validity to both comparison constructs but convergent validity only in regards to self-esteem, providing partial support for the construct validity of self-compassion. As hypothesised support was found for self-compassion as a unique predictor in regards to wellbeing, but its role could not be determined for mental health. The results are discussed in terms self-compassion’s functional relationships with comparison constructs and therapeutic utility. Recommendations for the direction of future research are discussed.

Keywords: Self-compassion, construct validity, compassion, self-esteem, wellbeing, mental health.

Highlights: >An operational definition of self-compassion was developed and explored> A MTMM approach found partial support for construct validation> Results indicated a distinction between self-compassion and compassion for others> Self-compassion was found to have a significant unique association with wellbeing.
# Table of Contents

Journal Copy of Instructions for Authors pp. 3  
Abstract pp. 8  
Introduction pp. 9  
Study 1: Method and Results pp. 14  
Study 2: Method and Results pp. 17  
Discussion pp. 40  
References pp. 48  

Appendices:  
   - Appendix A: Extended Introduction pp. 56  
   - Appendix B: Focus Group pp. 57  
   - Appendix C: Analysis of Existing Data pp. 61  
   - Appendix D: Development of Definition and Items pp. 68  
   - Appendix E: Standardised Measures pp. 69  
   - Appendix F: Expanded Methodology pp. 70  
   - Appendix G: Expanded Results pp. 72  
   - Appendix H: Ethics Documentation pp. 73  
   - Appendix I: Survey pp. 74  
   - Appendix J: Dissemination Statement pp. 96  

List of Tables and Figures:  
   - Table 1: Participant Demographics pp. 21  
   - Table 2: Indicators pp. 28  
   - Table 3: CT-C(M-1) Models pp. 31  
   - Table 4: CT-C(M-1) Categorical Models pp. 32  
   - Table 5: MTMM Matrix pp. 35  
   - Table 6: Correlations Co-efficients pp. 38  
   - Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis pp. 39  
   - Figure 1: CT-C(M-1) Model pp. 25