



Impact of Teachers' self-compassion on Students' Academic Achievement at Secondary School Level

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Abstract: *This descriptive research paper was to determine the impact of teachers' self-compassion and their impact on students' achievement. The population of this study was teachers and students. Two Districts, Peshawar and Charsadda, were chosen as an accessible population. There were 148 government secondary schools for boys where 1649 teachers were teaching and 37349 students were enrolled, and 105 government secondary schools for girls where 917 teachers were teaching and 37420 students were enrolled. A stratified random sampling technique was used, and a sample of 600 teacher's male and female teachers was selected. Similarly, a sample of 800 students' boys and girls, were selected for the study. Students' achievement scores were obtained from the class IX annual examination 2021 results of BISEP. The data was analyzed through Pearson coefficient of correlation, and regression analysis was used to test of hypothesis. The study found a positive relationship between teachers' self-compassion and students' academic achievement.*

Key Words: Teachers' self-compassion, Secondary schools & Students' Academic Achievement

Background Of the Study

Education is considered a tool for social and economic development. Many schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa face problems like increased government pressure for achievement, insufficient buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of support from parents. The stakeholders are concerned about improving the government schools through students' academic achievement.

Self-compassion is a trainable and multi-faceted capacity which includes mindfulness, self-kindness and common humanity. It promotes cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes of life ([Al-Awamleh, 2020](#)).

Self-compassion is directed inwards, meaning that a person can feel compassion for others. In the same way, that person can feel compassion towards the self, regardless of whether the suffering resulted from his or her own mistakes or from external circumstances.

According to [Neff and Germer \(2017\)](#), self-compassion includes being open to his own hardships and creating an aspiration to relieve the suffering with kindness. It involves an understanding of one's pain, failures, and inadequacies so that it becomes a part of human experiences.

Self-compassion refers to showing kindness towards his own self in life

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experiences, whether negative or positive and serves to improve an individual self-image or not. Self-compassion can be viewed as a response to suffering in life ([Long, 2015](#)).

According to [Iskender and Sakarya \(2009\)](#), self-compassion is the psychological well-being of people and is related to adaptive functioning and mental health welfare which result in better life satisfaction and less depression. Self-compassion makes an individual understand and be kind toward oneself in failure or suffering rather than being self-critical. It enables individuals to perceive their experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than seeing them as isolated incidents. It has a positive association with happiness, optimism, wisdom, curiosity, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Self-compassion provides a buffer against negative self-feelings on painful social occasions. Self-compassion leads people to acknowledge their role without feeling overwhelmed with negative emotions. Self-compassion provides individuals with feelings of kindness, interconnectedness and warmth and enables them to experience fewer negative and more positive emotions.

Self-compassion is an adaptive and healthy attitude towards oneself and occurs both as a state leading and as a feature to better regulation of negative emotions ([Dzwonkowska & Łykus, 2015](#)). Self-compassion refers to compassion turned inward and represents how individuals relate to themselves in instances of apparent failure, inadequacy, or personal suffering ([Neff, 2015](#)).

Self-compassion is a way of relating to oneself with care and concern in the context of personal inadequacies, failures, and difficulties and is predicted by the interaction of caregiving and care-seeking ([Hermanto & Zuroff, 2016](#)). Self-compassion includes accepting that every positive and negative incident is part of human life, and an individual should obtain a certain distance from emotions. People should show kindness toward themselves instead of criticizing others ([Freeman, 2016](#)).

Teachers having self-compassion maintain clear thinking about events and emotions,

and understand the difficulty of the situation, and recognize that others have experienced similar events. According to [Nelson, Hall, Anderson, Birtles, and Hemming \(2017\)](#), self-compassion is as much essential as compassion for others because it provides a basis upon which compassion for others is cultivated.

[Kris \(2019\)](#), self-compassion is an essential means of motivation. Motivation change from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation with the improvement of students' self-compassion and force the students to try new paths by taking risks. It leads to learning goals and is a better academic motivator. There is an association between self-compassion and thinking that intelligence is changeable and responsive to the effort.

[Hajiaziz \(2017\)](#) self-compassion enhances positive emotion, which controls the effect of negative feelings towards one's self and helps people believe that weaknesses do not define them. Self-compassion enables individuals to recognize their suffering and compel them to move beyond that suffering so as to have a more adaptive life by assuming an expression of self-kindness and more awareness.

Components of self-compassion

According to [Neff \(2015\)](#), self-compassion has three components that represent compassionate or uncompassionate behaviour and include;

Self-kindness versus self-judgment

Self-kindness involves comforting oneself during times of distress and refers to being gentle, supportive, and understanding toward oneself. In self-kindness, the self is offered warmth and acceptance instead of harshly judging oneself for personal shortcomings. According to [Iskender and Sakarya \(2009\)](#), self-kindness is a reaction to understanding and kindness to oneself while experiencing negative actions.

According to [Long \(2015\)](#), self-kindness indicates an attitude of kindness towards oneself. People assume an accepting and kind attitude towards other individuals' experiences

of pain by feeling compassion for other people rather than putting the blame on other people for their wrongdoings. Self-kindness means to take a similar attitude towards him/herself by knowing the factors leading to suffering. Instead, an individual might admonish himself during failure while performing a great task. This self-judgment of an individual is an opposing aspect of self-kindness.

Sense of common humanity versus isolation

Common humanity involves understanding that life is imperfect and humans make mistakes and fail. The person takes a broader perspective of personal shortcomings and difficulties instead of feeling that he/she is the only one who has failed or is suffering.

[Long \(2015\)](#) stated that common humanity differentiates self-compassion from self-esteem. Painful feelings of suffering may only be distant by having an attitude that these experiences are with every individual in life rather than feel isolated in suffering; individuals may observe a sense of link with other individuals if they can recall that every person experiences hardships just like they have. Common humanity is an interrelated sense of self which offers a strong sense of self-acceptance and positive self-affect. According to [Iskender and Sakarya \(2009\)](#), common humanity is associated with viewing an individual's life as a part of the human experience and realizing that every individual goes through hard times.

According to [Neff \(2021\)](#), being "human" means that everyone is imperfect, vulnerable and mortal. Due to this belief, self-compassion recognizes that an individual's suffering and personal inadequacy are part of the shared experience that all people go through.

Self-compassion is rooted in the sense of interrelation rather than isolation. The biggest problem with harsh self-judgment is that it makes an individual feel separated from other people. When people are unsuccessful or feel inadequate, they illogically think that everyone is fine and only me who is suffering. Such a

feeling creates a startling sense of loneliness and isolation that further intensifies our pain. ([Braehler & Neff, 2020](#))

Mindfulness versus over-identification

Mindfulness involves being aware of one's experience of suffering with clarity, without being caught up in negative aspects of one's life experience.

Ways to improve Self-Compassion

[Kris \(2019\)](#) self-compassionate is a learning skill and can be taught by parents and teachers. Self-compassion is a treatment of yourself with kindness and reminding yourself that your work progress is like all humans. We all know how to help others, and we should treat ourselves in the same manner.

[Kris \(2019\)](#) has reported on Neff the following points to develop self-compassion

Supportive Feedback

Parents need to model self-compassion in the language which they use with children. If their children get fewer grades, make them think that there is some weakness that needs to be improved Instead of criticizing them. They should be provided helpful and supportive feedback.

Model Compassionate Self-Talk

Individuals should model how they deal with challenges. When you make a mistake, discuss it with your children and ask them that it makes no difference to make a mistake. Compassionate self-talk promotes preventability of mistakes, common humanity and our ability to jump back and keep going.

Be a Friend to Yourself

If a person wants to make self-compassion a concrete idea for children, He should tell them to compare how they treat themselves with how they treat a friend. Self-compassion is experienced when individuals treat themselves with the same kindness with which they treat a good friend.

Calm the Nervous System

When students do something wrong, their heart starts beating, and their breathing gets shallower, and this makes it difficult to feel calm in this situation; students should be taught to practise self-compassion by putting their hand on their heart and taking deep breaths.

[Kris \(2019\)](#), teaching self-compassion is important for educators but challenging. Children feel very bad about themselves, and their ability that they feel compassion for themselves might be reduced. Children do not know how to adopt compassion from other individuals. In these conditions, teachers should renovate some ways related to attachment.

The communication behaviour of teachers also plays a role in improving self-compassion. [Long \(2015\)](#) has argued that self-compassion might be positively related to adaptive communication behaviour like help-seeking, communication out of the classroom and question-asking of the students. Ask questions could be a vulnerable exercise for students, for it shows the levels of understanding of the students in front of classmates. Students with self-compassion feel warm towards themselves, irrespective of the outcomes of their task, and feel attached to other individuals in a difficult situation.

Self-compassion can also be associated with reduced communication apprehension levels of the learners. Students who practice high levels of communication apprehension might feel isolated, highly self-critical and avoid situations that need communication. Self-compassion makes students feel that all individuals are hardly perfect in their communication with others and reduce their anxiety [Long \(2015\)](#).

Research about Self-compassion and achievement

[Long \(2015\)](#), self-compassion is positively related to a range of positive leanings, like mastery achievement goals, perceptions of students about their academic competency, and

their longing to develop after a failure. It is related to students' perceived competency and self-efficacy. Student views about their abilities and skills to produce promising results play a significant role in their effort, persistence and willingness to approach academic activities.

[Iskender and Sakarya \(2009\)](#) found no significant gender differences in self-compassion, control belief and self-efficacy for learning. Mindfulness was associated positively with controlling belief and self-efficacy learning and was negatively associated with isolation and self-judgment. Self-compassion was found to be negatively associated with performance goals, race-based rejection sensitivity and avoidance-oriented strategies but was positively related with mastery goals, social identity strength and emotion-focused coping strategies.

Dzwonkowska and Łykus (2015) found that self-compassion towards oneself was positively related to positive dimensions of affective functioning. Individuals with more self-compassion had a high level of emotional intelligence; they better recognize their feelings, manage better with their own and feel more satisfaction in life.

[Hajjaziz \(2017\)](#) showed that self-compassion negatively correlated with academic procrastination. Self-compassion was found to have a negative influence on the participant's anxiety and no strong influence on shame.

Statement of the problem

Education is considered a tool for social and economic development. Many schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa face problems like increased government pressure for achievement, insufficient buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of support from parents. The stakeholders are concerned about improving the government schools through students' academic achievement.

Teacher attitude and self-compassion are internal states that arouse, maintain, and direct their instruction, thus playing an important role in learning and achievement. These constructs

are an area of discussion and debate for researchers, and understanding new approaches are vital in the changing demands of society. It is, therefore, essential to understanding teachers' self-compassion and how much it is related to their student's achievement.

There is a lack of information about certain teachers' characteristics like attitude, credibility and self-compassion, and the influence of factors on students' achievement in the country. The study, therefore, focused on the impact of teachers' self-compassion on Students' Academic Achievement at the Secondary School Level.

Objectives

To ascertain the impact of teachers' self-compassion on students' academic achievement.

Hypotheses

H₀. There is no impact of teachers' self-compassion on students' academic achievement.

Significance of the study

There is an increased interest in determining what qualities of teachers increase the achievement of school students, and such research is important for educational improvement at schools. The study would help the teachers to comprehend, improve their self-compassion understanding and how to improve students' achievement. Such information will result in improved school effectiveness and would provide valuable data for stakeholders for improving teacher quality. It is, thus, a

meaningful study for achieving excellence in learning. This study will provide a context to understand teachers' self-compassion. The study is added to the existing research about the impact of teacher self-compassion on academic achievement at the secondary school level.

Methods and Procedure

It was a descriptive study and used a quantitative approach to achieve its objectives. Descriptive research describes the way things are, while correlational research attempts to determine whether and to what degree a relationship exists between variables (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). The study was descriptive-correlational as it described and correlated various research variables. The researcher attempted to explain the phenomena by collecting data which were then analyzed and correlated through various statistical methods.

Population and Sample

The population of the study was teachers and students enrolled in Govt. secondary schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The province was subdivided into administrative divisions, which are further subdivided into districts, tehsils, union councils, and village or neighbourhood councils. There were seven Divisions and 34 Districts, including seven Districts of the newly merged areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The researcher then divided the sample on a ratio and proportion basis into urban and rural contexts.

Table 1. Statistics

	Teachers			Students		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Male	132	188	320	153	247	400
Female	175	105	280	229	171	400
Grand total			600			800

The above statistics showed that a total of 600 teachers were selected, of which 320 were male

teachers consisting of 132 urban and 188 rural teachers. Similarly, 280 female teachers were

selected, consisting of 175 urban and 105 rural teachers. Furthermore, a total of 800 students were selected, of which 400 were girl students (229 urban and 171 rural), and 400 boy students (153 urban and 247 rural) were randomly selected.

Data Collection Instrument

This scale was developed by [Neff \(2003\)](#) and contained 24 items. It utilizes a 5-point Likert scale ranging from almost never=1 to almost always=5 and measures self-Kindness, Common Humanity, Self-Judgment, Isolation,

Mindfulness, and Over-identified aspects of teacher self compassion.

Data Analysis

Pearson correlation (r) and regression were used to test the hypothesis. Data were analyzed using computer programs like SPSS and Excel.

Histogram with Normality Curves of the Data

Histogram with Normality curve of data on teacher Self-compassion scale

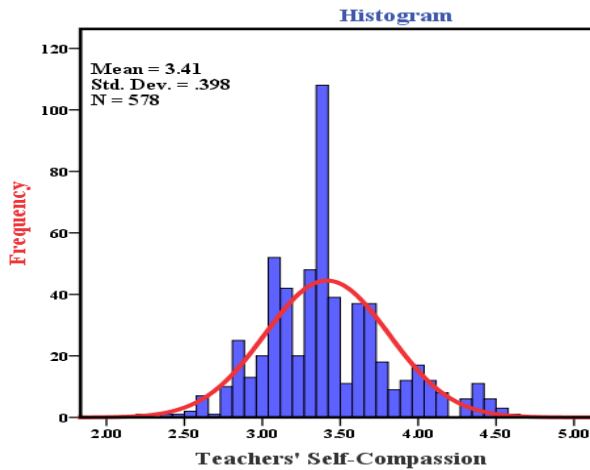


Figure 1:

The above chart displays a histogram with a normal curve on it since the majority of the responses for the Teachers' Self-compassion lie under the normal bell-shaped curve, which shows that the data on Teachers' Self-compassion is normal (normally distributed).

Hypothesis

H₀2. There is no impact of teachers' self-compassion on students' academic achievement.

This hypothesis was relevant to the second objective of the study, which was to assess the impact of teachers' self-compassion on students' academic achievement.

Table 2. The linear relationship between teachers' self-compassion on students' academic achievement (N=578)

	Students' Academic Score	Sig.
Teachers' Self-Compassion	.785	.000
Sig. = .000 < .05		

Table 2 shows that there is a strong positive and statistically significant linear relationship between teachers' self-compassion and students' academic scores ($r = 0.785$, $\text{Sig.} =$

$.000 < .05$). It means that, for every 1 unit (100%) increase in teachers' self-compassion, students' score increases by .785unit (78.5%).

Table 3. Linear Regression statistics for teachers' self-compassion on students' academic achievement (N=578)

	Model Summary			ANOVA			Coefficient		
	R	R ²	df1	df2	F	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.
Teachers' Self-compassion	.785 ^a	.616	1	576	924.426	.000 ^a	.785	30.404	.000

Sig. = .000 < .05
 Predictors: (Constant), Teacher Self-Compassion
 Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Score

Table 3 shows that the Teachers' Self-compassion statistically significantly and strongly predicts the students' Academic Scores ($R=0.785$, $F(1,576)=924.426$, $p=.000 < .05$) and explains a 61.6% of the variation ($R^2=0.616$) in it. Also, the Teachers' Self-

compassion statistically significantly and strong positively contributes to the students' Academic Scores (Beta = 0.785, $t=30.404$, $\text{sig.} = .000 < .05$). It means that, for every 1 unit (100%) increase in teachers' self-compassion, students' score increases by 0.785unit (78.5%).

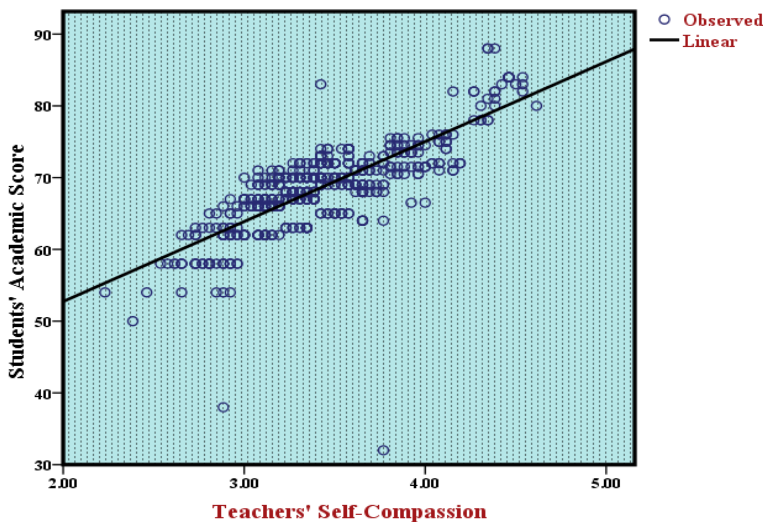


Figure 2: Scatter plot with Regression line (Fitness line) of teacher self-compassion on students' academic achievement

Figure No. 2 shows that the regression line is increasing and just passed through in between of circles' cloud of observed data, meaning that

the teachers' self-compassion moderately and positively predicts the students' academic scores, with the exception of two outliers.

Furthermore, the circles' cloud data major portion lies at the mean and extends towards the right.

Analysis of the Pearson correlation revealed that teachers' self-compassion has a statistically significant and strong positive linear relationship with students' academic scores. Similarly, the analysis of linear regression revealed that teachers' self-compassion statistically significantly strongly predicated and positively contributed to the students' academic scores. So from the analysis of Pearson correlation and linear regression, teachers' self-compassion has a positive impact on their students' academic scores.

Therefore, null hypothesis 2 has been rejected, and it has been recognized that teachers' self-compassion has a positive impact on their students' academic scores.

Findings

The analysis of the data of items regarding Teachers' Self-compassion revealed that the majority of teachers considered that when times were really difficult, they tended to be tough on themselves, and when something upsets them, they tried to keep their emotions in balance. When they were down, they reminded themselves that there were lots of other people in the world feeling like them, and when things were going badly, they saw the difficulties as part of life that everyone went through. Self-compassion and students' academic score ($r = 0.785$, $\text{Sig.} = .000 < .05$). It means that, for every 1 unit (100%) increase in teachers' self-compassion, students' score increases by .785unit (78.5%).

The Teachers' Self-compassion statistically significantly and strongly predicts the students' Academic Score ($R=0.785$, $F(1,576)=924.426$, $p=.000<.05$) and explains a 61.6% of the variation ($R^2=0.616$) in it. Also, the Teachers' Self-compassion statistically significantly and strong positively contributes to the students' Academic Scores ($\text{Beta} = 0.785$, $t=30.404$, $\text{sig.}=.000<.05$). It means that, for every 1 unit (100%) increase in teachers' self-

compassion, students' score increases by 0.785unit (78.5%).

The regression line is increasing and just passed through in between of circles' cloud of observed data, meaning that the teachers' self-compassion moderately and positively predicts the students' academic scores, with the exception of two outliers. Furthermore, the circles' cloud data major portion lies at the mean and extends towards the right.

Conclusions

The conclusion of this research paper was concluded that the majority of the respondents were in agreement side to the Teachers' Self-compassion. Some gender and urban-rural differences were found, with female teachers showing a high level of self-compassion than Male teachers while rural teachers had high Self-compassion than urban teachers. It was concluded that teachers' self-compassion had a positive impact on their students' academic scores.

Discussion

The study found a positive relationship between teachers' self-compassion and students' academic achievement. The finding is in line with [Madita and Widayari \(2019\)](#) and [Iskender and Sakarya \(2009\)](#), who found a positive relationship between teachers' self-compassion and students' academic achievement. The finding is in contrast with [Maccabi, Eamoraphan and Vapiso \(2017\)](#), who reported no significant difference between students' self-compassion and students' academic achievement.

Recommendations

Female teachers showed a high level of self-compassion than male teachers, and rural teachers had high self-compassion than urban teachers. It is recommended that teachers should be informed not to blow any painful incidents out of proportion, should understand that everyone has inadequacies and no one is perfect, and should not feel cool-hearted when they experience suffering.

Limitations of the Study

The research study was limited to government boys' and girls' high schools in districts Peshawar and district Charsadda of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and it was possible that schools in other districts and provinces might have a different school environment that might affect the development of teachers and student attitudes.

In this study, the researcher used a multistage random sampling technique that might be less precise sometimes than simple random sampling. It is another limitation of the study in the sense that multistage sampling cuts out a portion of the population, and thus, the findings can never be 100 per cent representative of the whole population. Although this sampling technique focuses on the within-group variance, some data is lost in the sense that not everyone is counted.

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