The Predictive Role of Self-Compassion on Entrapment in Turkish University Students*

El papel predictivo de la autocompasión de atrapamiento en estudiantes universitarios turcos

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the predictive role of self-compassion on entrapment. Participants were 338 university students (185 women, 153 men; M age = 20.5 yr.). In this study, the Self-compassion Scale and the Entrapment Scale were used. The relationships between self-compassion and entrapment were examined using correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. In correlation analysis, self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness factors of self-compassion were found negatively and self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification factors of self-compassion were found positively related to entrapment. According to regression results, entrapment was predicted positively by self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification. Further self-kindness and common humanity predicted entrapment in a negative way. Self-compassion has explained 50% of the variance in entrapment. The results were discussed in the light of the related literature and dependent recommendations to the area were given.
Keywords
Self-compassion; Entrapment; multiple regression analysis

*   Research paper

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Resumen

El propósito de este estudio es examinar el papel predictivo de la auto-compasión sobre el atrapamiento. Los participantes fueron 338 estudiantes universitarios (185 mujeres, 153 hombres;. M edad = 20,5 años). En este estudio, se utilizó la Escala de Auto-compasión y la Escala de Atrapamiento. Las relaciones entre la auto-compasión y atrapamiento fueron examinados utilizando análisis de correlación y análisis de regresión múltiple. En el análisis de correlación, la auto-bondad, la humanidad común, y los factores de la atención plena de la auto-compasión se encontraron negativamente relacionados con el auto-juicio. Se encontró que el aislamiento y la sobre-identificación de factores de auto-compasión se relacionan positivamente con la trampa. De acuerdo con resultados de la regresión, el atrapamiento se predijo positivamente por el auto-juicio, el aislamiento y sobre-identificación. Además la bondad propia y la humanidad común predijeron el atrapamiento de una manera negativa. La auto-compasión explica el 50% de la varianza en la trampa. Los resultados se discuten a la luz de la literatura relacionada y las recomendaciones dependen del área particular.
Palabras clave
Auto-compasión; Atrapamiento; análisis de regresión múltiple

Self-compassion

Self-compassion involves being kind and gentle towards oneself in challenging and distressful times and requires accepting that pain, failure, and inadequacies are part of the human condition (Neff, 2003b; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). It was firstly put forward by Neff (2003a, 2003b) and considered by her as a three-dimensional construct: (a) Self-kindness vs. self-judgment, (b) Awareness of common humanity vs. isolation, and (c) Mindfulness vs. over-identification. The first dimension, self-kindness, means behave kindly and warmth toward oneself in instances of pain or failure rather than being harshly self-critical. When people with self-kindness notice an unfavorable feature of their personality, they use a soft and supportive emotional tone of language towards themselves (Neff, 2009). Awareness of common humanity, the second dimension of self-compassion, refers to seeing one's happy or painful experiences as not personal, but as all human beings'. It is principal to self-compassion and involves recognizing that all humans are imperfect and that they fail (Neff, 2009). Having this kind of awareness, one perceives his/her negative experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than feeling alienated from the society (Neff, 2003a). Mindfulness, the last component of self-compassion, is a pre-conceptual awareness that helps people to accept life's most distressful and painful emotions without being carried away by them (Gunaratana, 1993; Martin, 1997; Neff, 2003a; Nisker, 1998; Rosenberg, 1999). The three dimensions of self-compassion are experienced differently at the phenomenological level but they interact so as to mutually enhance and engender one another (Neff, 2003a). For instance when individuals accept and tolerate their negative and painful experiences and when they are gentle toward themselves, they may avoid denying or suppressing these experiences. And thus, when they are aware that these negative experiences are something that all humans experience, they are not trapped by over-identification (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005).

Research mostly proved that self-compassion is a strong and significant predictor of psychological health in a variety of domains such as affect, achievement, cognitive patterns, and social connections. In these studies self-compassion was found associated positively with social support (Akın, Kayış, & Satıcı, 2011), social relationship, emotional intelligence, self-determination (Neff, 2003a), psychological well-being (Akın, 2008a), life satisfaction, social relatedness (Neff, 2003b), self-deception (Akın, 2011), reflective and affective wisdom, personal initiative, curiosity and exploration, optimism, positive affect, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness (Baker & McNulty, 2011; Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007), learning-approach goals (Akın, 2008b), and relational-interdependent self construal (Akın & Eroglu, 2013). On the other hand, the other studies have showed that self-compassion is negatively related to loneliness (Akın, 2010b), automatic thoughts (Akın, 2012), performance-approach/avoidance goals (Akın, 2008b), interpersonal cognitive distortions (Akın, 2010a), internet addiction (Iskender & Akın, 2011), submissive behavior (Akın, 2009), depression, anxiety, rumination, thought suppression (Neff, 2003b), social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation (Werner et al., 2012), and neuroticism (Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Entrapment

Entrapment was originally developed within the context of social rank theory (Gilbert & Allan, 1998; Gilbert, Allan, Brough, Melley, & Miles, 2002; Taylor, Wood, Gooding, & Tarrier, 2010) and defined as a desire to escape from the present situation, tied with the belief that all escape routes are blocked (Gilbert & Allan, 1998; Taylor, Wood, Gooding, Johnson, & Tarrier, 2009). If people feel that the control of their social resources is impossible, submissive behaviour is not enough, and/or external or internal support is not available, the feelings of entrapment are inevitable (Gilbert et al., 2002). The sense of entrapment can be triggered, enhanced, and maintained not only external context but also by internal processes, such as intrusive, unwanted thoughts and ruminations (Gilbert & Allan, 1998; Carvalho et al., 2013). For

example, ruminating on the sense of defeat may act as an internal alert of down-rank attack that makes an individual feel increasingly defeated. This rumination may happen in spite of the fact that an individual successfully escaped from an entrapping external condition because of feelings of failure, which may cause a feeling of internal entrapment (Trachsel, Krieger, Gilbert, & Grosse Holtforth, 2010; Carvalho et al., 2013).

Concept of entrapment is recognized as an important process in psychopathology (Taylor, Gooding, Wood, & Tarrier, 2011) and as a major predictor of suicide (O'Connor, 2003; Williams, 1997; Williams, Crane, Barnhofer, & Duggan, 2005) and suicidal ideation (Taylor, Gooding et al., 2010). Studies demonstrated that entrapment is associated positively with submissive behavior (Carvalho et al., 2013; Gilbert & Allan, 1998; Gilbert et al., 2002), stress (Gilbert et al., 2002), depression (Carvalho et al., 2013; Kendler, Hettema, Butera, Gardner, & Prescott, 2003; Sturman & Mongrain 2008; Taylor et al., 2011), anhedonic depression, anxious symptoms (Gilbert et al., 2002), hopelessness (Taylor, Wood et al., 2010; Taylor, Gooding et al., 2010), parental stress, and parent-child dysfunctional interaction (Willner & Goldstein, 2001). On the other hand entrapment was found negatively related to social comparison (Carvalho et al., 2013; Gilbert & Allan, 1998; Gilbert et al., 2002),

The Present Study

Although increasing number of research conducted with the self-compassion is encouraging, yet, no empirical research has examined whether self-compassion predicts sense of entrapment. The goal of this study, therefore, is to investigate the predictive role of the self-compassion on sense of entrapment. Self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, adaptive dimension of self-compassion, involve turning compassion inward and taking a compassionate perspective toward oneself. These dimensions also, require being aware of both positive and negative emotions and feelings in a balanced way, they moderate reactions to distressing situations, and buffer people against the influence

of negative self-feelings and failure experiences (Leary, Tate, Adams, Allen, & Hancock, 2007). In contrary, sense of entrapment is related to intrusive and irritating thoughts and ruminations (Gilbert & Allan, 1998). People with sense of entrapment also lack of self-control and these characteristics show that they do not approach to themselves in a balanced manner. Entrapment also has been found to relate submissive behavior, stress, depression, anxious symptoms, whereas self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness have been found inversely related to these variables. These findings show self-compassion to be related to adaptive functioning, particularly in the face of failures life stress (Leary et al., 2007) and entrapment to be related to maladaptive functioning. Based on the above relationships of self-compassion and sense of entrapment, it was hypothesized that self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness would be associated negatively with entrapment. It was also hypothesized that self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification would be related positively to entrapment.

Method

Participants

Participants were 338 university students (185 women, 153 men) enrolled in various undergraduate programs at Sakarya University Faculty of Education, Turkey. These programs were Turkish education ($n = 74$), mathematics education ($n = 68$), science education ($n = 75$), social science education ($n = 50$), and primary school education ($n = 71$). Of the participants, 90 were first-year students, 106 were second-year students, 74 were third- year students, and 68 were fourth-year student. Their ages ranged from 17 to 27 years old ($M = 20.48$, *SD* $= 1.03$) and GPA scores ranged from 1.86 to 3.7.

Measures

Self-compassion Scale. Self-compassion was measured by using Self-compassion Scale (Neff, 2003b). Turkish adaptation of this scale had been done by

Akın, Akın, and Abacı (2007). Self-compassion Scale is a 26-item self-report measurement and consists of six sub-scales; self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Language validity findings indicated that correlations between Turkish and English forms were 0.94, 0.94, 0.87, 0.89, 0.92, and 0.94 for six subscales, respectively. Results of confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the model was well fit. The goodness of fit index values of the model were RMSEA = 0.056, NFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.97, IFI = 0.97, RFI = 0.94, GFI = 0.91, and SRMR = 0.059. The internal consistency coefficients were 0.77, 0.72, 0.72, 0.8, 0.74, and 0.74 and the test-retest reliability coefficients were 0.69, 0.59, 0.66, 0.6 0.69, and 0.56, for six subscales, respectively.

Entrapment Scale. Entrapment was measured using the Turkish version of the Entrapment Scale (Gilbert & Allan, 1998). Turkish adaptation of this scale was done by Akın, Uysal and Akın (2012). The Entrapment Scale is a 16-item self-report inventory (e. g., I am in a situation I feel trapped in) and consists of two sub-scales: internal entrapment and external entrapment. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). All answers given will be totaled to indicate the level of entrapment, with a high number indicating a greater incidence of entrapment. Results of confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the two-dimensional entrapment model was well fit to Turkish population (x^2 = 175.34, df = 100, RMSEA = 0.046, NFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99, RFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.94, and SRMR = .035). Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients of the scale were 0.84 for external entrapment subscale and 0.87 for internal entrapment subscale. The overall internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.92.

Procedure

Permission for participation of students was obtained from related chief departments and students voluntarily participated in research. Completion of the scales was anonymous and there was a guarantee of confidentiality. The scales were administered to the students in groups in the classrooms. The measures were counterbalanced in administration. Prior to administration of measures, all participants were told about purposes of the study.

Statistical Analysis

In this research, multiple linear regression analysis and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to investigate the relationships between self-compassion and entrapment. The variables which were entered in multiple regression analysis were measured by summing the items of each scale. These analyses were carried out via SPSS 11.5.

Results

Descriptive Data and Inter-Correlations

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, inter-correlations, and internal consistency coefficients of the variables used.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and correlations among the variables. Self-kindness (r = –0.43, p < 0.01), common humanity (r = –0.34, p < 0.01), and mindfulness (r = –0.37, p < 0.01) were found negatively and self-judgment (r = 0.59, p < 0.01), isolation (r = 0.57, p < 0.01), and over-identification (r = 0.61, p < 0.01) were found positively associated with entrapment. There were also significant correlations between dimensions of self-compassion.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Before applying regression, assumptions of multiple regression were checked. The data were examined for normality by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated normality of distributions of test scores for all tests in the current study. Outliers are cases that have data values that are very different from the data values for the majority of cases in the data set. Outliers were investi-

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Alphas, and Inter-Correlations of the Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Self-kindness	β						
2. Self-judgment	-0.43**	β					
3. Common humanity	0.55**	-0.27**	β				
4. Isolation	-0.32**	0.59**	-0.21**	β			
5. Mindfulness	0.69**	-0.37**	0.50**	-0.27**	β		
6. Over-identification	-0.37**	0.62**	-0.27**	0.63**	-0.39**	β	
7. Entrapment	-0.43**	0.59**	-0.34**	0.57**	-0.37*	0.61**	β
Mean	15.2	12.75	11.2	11.43	12.2	11.17	39.4
Standard deviation	4.23	4.62	3.53	3.98	3.77	3.88	18.62
Alpha	0.66	0.73	0.86	0.75	0.73	0.73	0.8

**p<0.01.
Source: own work

gated using Mahalanobis distance. A case is outlier if the probability associated with its D^2 is 0.001 or less (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Based on this criterion, eleven data were labeled as outliers and they were deleted. Multi-collinearity was checked by the variance inflation factors (VIF). All the VIF values were less than 10 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), which indicated that there was no multi-collinearity.

Multiple regression analysis was performed in which the dependent variable was entrapment and the independent variables were dimensions of self-compassion (Table 2). As many of those predic-

Table 2

Summary of Forward Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for Variable Predicting Entrapment

Variables	B	Standart Error of B	β	t
Step 1				
Over-identification	2.912	0.208	0.607	14.014*
Step 2				
Over-identification	1.888	0.248	0.394	7.617*
Self-judgment	1.399	0.208	0.347	6.714*
Step 3				
Over-identification	1.44	0.268	0.3	5.384*
Self-judgment	1.113	0.216	0.276	5.144*
Isolation	1.014	0.256	0.217	3.963*
Step 4				
Over-identification	1.319	0.264	0.275	4.986*
Self-judgment	0.909	0.219	0.225	4.148*
Isolation	0.98	0.251	0.209	3.901*
Self-kindness	-0.726	0.193	-0.165	-3.763*
Step 5				
Over-identification	1.285	0.264	0.268	4.875*
Self-judgment	0.906	0.218	0.225	4.158*
Isolation	0.982	0.25	0.21	3.927*
Self-kindness	-0.507	0.22	-0.115	-2.31*
Common humanity	-0.504	0.246	-0.096	-2.048*

Source: own work

tor variables were dependent on each other, forward stepwise procedure, which includes one new explanatory variable at each step, specifically the most associated with the dependent variable while being, at the same time, independent of the explanatory variables already included in the model. The criteria to include the variables from the regression model were: criterion probability-of-F-to enter β 0.05.

According to the results of multiple regression analysis, summarized in Table 2, over-identification entered the equation first, accounting for 36% of the variance in predicting entrapment ($R^2 = 0.37$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.37$, $F(1, 336) = 196.396$, $p < 0.01$). Self-judgment entered on the second step accounting for an additional 7% variance ($R^2 = 0.44$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.07$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.44$, $F(2, 335) = 133.623$, $p < 0.01$). Isolation entered on the third step accounting for an additional 3% variance ($R^2 = 0.47$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.46$, $F(3, 334) = 98.227$, $p < 0.01$). Self-kindness entered on the fourth step accounting for an additional 2% variance ($R^2 = 0.49$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.48$, $F(4, 333) = 80.115$, $p < 0.01$). Common humanity entered last, accounting for an additional 1% variance ($R^2 = 0.5$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.49$, $F(5, 332) = 65.546$, $p < 0.01$). Despite the initial regression design included mindfulness, common humanity, self-kindness, over-identification, isolation, and self-judgment as independent variables, the last regression models involved over-identification, self-judgment, isolation, self-kindness, and common humanity as predictors of entrapment and accounted for 50% of the variance. The standardized beta coefficients indicated the relative influence of the variables in last model with over-identification ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), self-judgment ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$), self-kindness ($\beta = -0.12$, $p < 0.01$), isolation ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$), and common humanity ($\beta = -0.1$, $p < 0.01$) all significantly influencing entrapment and over-identification was strongest predictor.

Discussion

The purpose of the present research was to examine the predictive role of self-compassion on entrapment and significant relationships were found. To our knowledge, this is the first study investigating the relationships between these two variables. As expected, self-kindness and common humanity, adaptive dimensions of self-compassion, predicted entrapment negatively. However mindfulness did not emerge as a significant predictor in the regression model.

In interpreting the results of the present findings, several plausible explanations exist. First, self-kindness and common humanity, adaptive dimensions of self-compassion, allow people to cope with numerous challenging and distressful life events by behaving themselves with care and not allowing themselves to be swept up by strong negative emotions (Neff, 2003a). Moreover, because these individuals approach themselves with kindness when they are suffering, they can experience more positive and less negative emotions, suggesting that self-compassion provides the emotional safety needed to see the self clearly. Self-kindness and common humanity also protect people both when they are personally responsible for the negative experiences and when these experiences are beyond their control (Leary et al., 2007) and thus people with self-kindness and common humanity can easily deal with the adverse effects of an array of negative experiences. In addition people with self-kindness and common humanity don't rely on illusions or defensiveness, have a clear perception of their characteristics, both good and bad, and recognize rather than deny their shortcomings, while remaining gentle and understanding toward themselves. Therefore they are less likely to have a sense of entrapment and self-kindness and common humanity can lessen feelings of entrapment.

Second people who high in self-kindness and common humanity have been shown to possess many of the psychological strengths such as psychological well-being (Akın, 2008a), autonomy, competence (Neff, 2003a), life satisfaction, optimism, positive affect, extraversion, and agreeableness (Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Also self-kindness and common humanity dimensions have been found associated with higher levels of brain activation in the left prefrontal cortex, a region associated with happiness and optimism (Lutz,

Greischar, Rawlings, Ricard, & Davidson, 2004) and they help to maintain optimistic expectations about the future (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994). In contrary entrapment was mainly related to hopelessness (Taylor, Wood et al., 2010; Taylor, Gooding et al., 2010) as well as other psychological symptoms such as stress (Gilbert et al., 2002), anhedonic depression, anxious symptoms (Gilbert et al., 2002), submissive behavior (Carvalho et al., 2013; Gilbert & Allan, 1998; Gilbert et al., 2002), depression (Carvalho et al., 2013; Kendler et al., 2003; Sturman & Mongrain 2008; Taylor et al., 2011), and dysfunctional interaction (Willner & Goldstein, 2001). Thus the inverse associations between self-kindness and common humanity and entrapment are not surprising.

On the other hand as anticipated results of the present study showed that self-judgment, isolation and over-identification -maladaptive dimensions of self-compassion- predicted entrapment positively. Individuals who have higher level of self-judgment, isolation and over-identification feel ashamed from their failures (Neff, 2003a), reject their own emotions and thoughts, ruminate on their defects (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007), and become identified with and carried away by painful experiences (Neff & Vonk, 2009). These people are vulnerable to experience more negative emotions such as irritability, hostility, or distress (Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007), so they often are exposed to psychological problems (Nolen- Hoeksema, 1991), and they feel isolated from the rest of humanity, thereby increasing feelings of interconnectedness. Therefore people with self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification cannot remedy their negative feelings and transform them into positive feelings and these dimensions of self-compassion are maladaptive.

Likewise people with the sense of entrapment perceive that the control of their social resources is impossible and external or internal support is not available (Gilbert et al., 2002). The increased negative mood, feelings of helplessness, and unwanted thoughts and ruminations may then cause people with entrapment feel of self-blame and isolation from others (Sinclair & Wallston 1999), which is

similar to feelings of people with self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification. This situation may explain the positive relationships between self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification and entrapment.

There are several limitations of this study that should be taken into account when evaluating the findings. First, participants were university students and replication of this study for targeting other populations should be made in order to generate a more solid relationship among the constructs examined in this study, because generalization of the results is somewhat limited. Second, as correlational statistics were utilized, no definitive statements can be made about causality. And third the data reported here for self-compassion and entrapment is limited to self-reported data and did not include any observations of behavior.

Consequently, the present research provides important information about the predictors of entrapment. An increment in self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification will increase entrapment. Therefore encouraging the development of self-compassion should be useful individuals by helping them to counter destructive tendencies and deal with their negative emotions with greater clarity and equanimity (Neff, 2003a). Clearly, however, more research needs to be done to understand how self-compassion is linked to functioning.

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