

# Self-Compassion and Subjective Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Resilience and Hope

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## Introduction

In recent years, self-compassion has become popular in the western world, attributable partly to movements in positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) as well as to a growing interest in the contemplative traditions of the East (e.g., Neff, 2003). Self-compassion is a positive self-attitude that includes showing feelings of caring and kindness towards oneself and taking an understanding, nonjudgmental attitude towards one's inadequacies and failures (Neff, 2003a). As a positive self-attitude, self-compassion has a positive effect on subjective well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003) by increasing positive emotions (Neff, Kirkpatrick & Rude, 2007), improving our optimism (Neff, 2009), developing empathy and forgiveness (Neff & Pommier, 2012) and preventing isolation among people (Neff & Germer, 2011).

In the present study, we investigated the relationship between self-compassion and subjective well-being, specifically testing for the multiple mediator effects of resilience and hope on this relationship. Resilience and hope are seen as potential variables that may explain how self-compassion acts on subjective well-being (see Fig. 1)

**Fig. 1** Hypothesized multiple mediation pathways between self-compassion and subjective well-being



## Methods

Data were collected from students of two Turkish universities through self-report scales. In total, 332 students participated. However, incomplete or missing responses reduced this final sample to 295 comprising of 179 (61%) females and 116 (39%) males. The age range of the participants was 19-34 years, with a mean of 21.31 ( $SD=2.17$ ). The majority of participants (89.49%) reported being in the medium range while the rest were equally divided between those in the low and high range.

Data were collected via questionnaire survey using several scales. These are the Self Compassion Scale, the Resilience Scale for Adults, the Dispositional Hope Scale, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule and the Satisfaction with Life Scale.

## Results

The result of the study founded that self-compassion was positively correlated with resilience, hope and subjective well-being ( $r=.323, p<.001; r=.395, p<.001; r=.390, p<.001$ ). Resilience and hope were positively correlated with subjective well-being as well ( $r=.461, p<.001; r=.466, p<.001$ ). In addition, resilience was positively correlated with hope ( $r=.477, p<.001$ ) (see in Table 1).

**Table 1**  
Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of measures

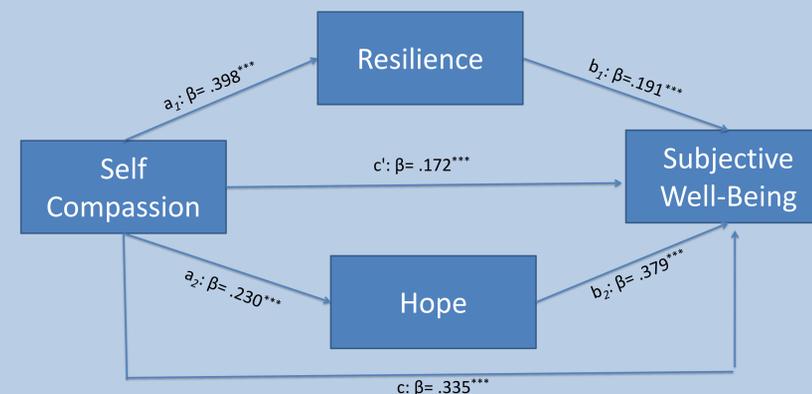
	1	2	3	4
1. Self Compassion				
2. Resilience	.323***			
3. Hope	.395***	.447***		
4. Subjective Well-being	.390***	.461***	.466***	
Means	74.70	123.99	47.20	21.67
SD	14.84	18.28	8.64	12.77

\*\*\* $p<.001$

Mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS developed by Hayes (2013). According to the findings of the analysis, self-compassion positively predicted resilience ( $\alpha_1: \beta=.398, SE=.068, t(295)=5.841, p<.001$ ) and resilience positively predicted subjective well-being ( $b_1: \beta=.191, SE=.039, t(295)=4.917, p<.001$ ). In addition, self-compassion positively predicted hope ( $\alpha_2: \beta=.230, SE=.031, t(295)=7.363, p<.001$ ) and similarly hope positively predicted subjective well-being ( $b_2: \beta=.379, SE=.085, t(295)=4.480, p<.001$ ). That is, an increase in self-compassion leads, in parallel, to increases in resilience and hope, and subsequently in subjective well-being.

To investigate the indirect effect of these mediators, 5000 bootstrapping resamples at bias-corrected 95% confidence was used. The indirect effect of self-compassion on subjective well-being through resilience was significant ( $a_1b_1: \beta=.076, SE=.022, 95\% CI=.039 \text{ to } .122$ ). Similarly, the indirect effect of self-compassion on subjective well-being through hope was also significant ( $a_2b_2: \beta=.087, SE=.026, 95\% CI=.041 \text{ to } .144$ ) (see in Fig. 2).

**Fig. 2** A statistical diagram of the parallel multiple mediator models for the subjective well-being.



## Discussion

The study found that self-compassion and subjective well-being are positively related each other. The results supported the previous findings that self-compassion has a positive effect on subjective well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003). More importantly, the findings of the study found resilience and hope to be partial mediators between self-compassion and subjective well-being. That is, self-compassion affects subjective well-being through resilience and hope.

In the literature, self-compassion has been found to be positively related to resilience (Bluth, Mullarkey & Lathren, 2018). Individuals with high levels of self-compassion believe that every person experiences suffering or adversity as a result of being human. Hence, when faced with misfortune and distress, they see this as being a part of their human nature rather than as an inability, a failure, or punishment (Neff, 2003a), which enables them to behave kindly and be compassionate to themselves (Neff, 2003b). Doing so gives them the motivation to stand strong against life's adversity, or in other words, be resilient. By being resilient, they are able to overcome difficulties more easily, which will decrease negative affect and increase subjective well-being (e.g., Chen, 2016).

The findings of the study also found that self-compassion affects subjective well-being through hope. Self-compassion increases people's awareness of their ability and capacity. Because they evaluate their capacity and ability correctly, they are able to establish their goals in terms of their reality and capabilities (Neff, 2015), which increases their possibility to achieve their goals and, hence, increases their beliefs of attaining future goals. In other words, this increases their hope. The study showed that self-compassion is positively related to hope (Yang, Zhang & Kou, 2016). Carrying hope and to achieve the goals decrease negative emotion and increase positive emotion. Hence, it also increases life satisfaction. In other words, it increases the level of their subjective well-being.

## Limitations and Future Directions

We acknowledged several limitations in carrying out the study. The study was cross-sectional and correlational in nature, thus, preventing us from making causal inferences. In addition, self-report measures were used, making the study susceptible to common method variance.

Despite these limitations, however, the study reinforced past findings that there is a relationship between self-compassion and subjective well-being. Aside from hope and resilience, there might be some other mediator variables explaining the relationship between self-compassion.

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