



Self-Compassion and Well-Being of College Counselors

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Abstract

Understanding the self-compassion and psychological well-being of College Counselors is essential in gaining valuable insights into improving their working conditions and mental support system. In this premise, this descriptive study sought to determine the level of self-compassion and psychological well-being of College Counselors in a highly urbanized City in Central Negros for the School Year 2022-2023. Data needed for the study was collected from 62 respondents using three standardized instruments: the Self-Compassion Scale and the Psychological Well-being (PWB) Scale. The results showed a moderate level of self-compassion and a high psychological well-being among college counselors. The data showed no significant difference in their level of self-compassion when grouped by length of service, civil status, family income, educational attainment, and nature of the job. Finally, the same data set showed no significant difference in their psychological well-being when grouped according to length of service, civil status, and family income. In contrast, the Educational Attainment and nature of the job significantly affect the counselors' level of psychological well-being. These findings call for an intervention plan to address noted gaps and further empower college counselors to support students' mental health and academic success.

Keywords: Psychology, self-compassion, well-being, Negros Occidental, Philippines

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

According to a study by Aruta (2022), being self-compassionate in the face of pain means seeing oneself with love and without bias. It also entails realizing that everyone experiences personal suffering and inadequacies. Higher psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and improved mental health outcomes such as fewer instances of depression, self-evaluative anxiety, rumination, and negative affect are all experienced by self-compassionate persons.

Living an excellent life and being psychologically well-adjusted go hand in hand with feeling good and doing one's job well. Psychological well-being is compromised when negative emotions are extreme or at a high level and impair an individual's ability to function daily (Mahomed et al., 2020). Psychological well-being highlights a better interpretation of well-being; it is defined as someone who is free from negative feelings, feeling happy, being positive about oneself and past experiences, and striving to develop one's potential fully. Individuals with high psychological well-being are able to accept themselves and their past lives well, function optimally, build positive relationships with other individuals, and be loving and friendly (Amat et al., 2021).

There have been a lot of existing studies regarding self-compassion and the psychological well-being of counselors individually: Exploring How School Counselors Practice Self-Compassion by Todd et al. (2017) and Coping Strategies and Psychological Well-Being of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Schools by Mahomed et al. (2019). It is so regrettable to witness competent guidance counselors leave an honorable profession for reasons and problems that can be addressed with proper effort and intervention. Thus, it is high time that the self-compassion and psychological well-being of guidance counselors be paid more attention to, and the problems that debilitate must be adequately researched and analyzed. This study aimed to create research and evidence-based interventions to improve well-being and maintain work satisfaction among guidance counselors. Moreover, the recommended output of the study will be a basis for an intervention plan for the implementation of programs.

Current State of Knowledge

Self-compassion practice is a simple and effective way to model and practice self-care. Having compassion for oneself allows counselors to develop the emotional capabilities and skills needed to show compassion towards others. Engaging in a practice of self-compassion is a simple and effective tool for personal and professional



enhancement, growth, insight, and an overall better quality of life. It adds to our humanness, enriches our experience of ourselves and our experience of others, and adds a level of connection and depth. Therefore, it makes sense to include self-compassion practices in counselor education preparation and training (Nelson et al., 2017).

According to Mahomed et al. (2020), psychological well-being is about living a good life and combining feeling good and functioning effectively. In addition, sustainable well-being does not require individuals to feel good all the time; painful emotional experiences such as frustration, failure, or sadness are a normal part of life, and individuals need to be able to manage negative or painful emotions in order to maintain long-term well-being. Psychological well-being is compromised when negative emotions are extreme or at a high level and impair an individual's ability to function daily. Good feelings incorporate positive emotions of happiness and contentment, as well as interest, engagement, confidence, and love. The concept of effectively functioning individuals involves the development of an individual's potential, the ability to control one's life, and a sense of purpose, such as working toward goals and developing positive relationships.

Chehaib and Todd (2019) explored that one way to conceptualize self-compassion is a change in how one sees oneself when facing uncomfortable situations on an emotional, mental, or bodily level. Self-compassion entails acknowledging and accepting one's pain, just as compassion entails having a keen awareness of the suffering of another. For people in helping professions, like professional school counselors, who are naturally exposed to the emotional suffering of the students they assist, self-compassion is especially crucial. As a result, practicing self-compassion can be seen as a construct for protection. It consists of three interconnected primary components: self-kindness, common human experience, and mindfulness.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Social Mentality Theory (SMT) was developed to think about how different aspects of our minds are activated in different patterns to create different types of relationships (Gilbert 1989, 1995, 2007). SMT suggested that individuals co-create social, reciprocating roles for caring, cooperating, competing, and sexuality. Each role requires the activation and organization of different components of the mind. Thus, when caring for others, we are emotionally moved by the needs and feelings of others, are motivated to care, and try to work out how best to care. Threat-focused emotions and desires to threaten or harm the one we are caring for are usually turned off. Social Mentality Theory is anchored to the study because the number one value a counselor must possess is to be compassionate of others, especially with their clients, and it is given that you cannot be compassionate with other people if you do not develop and practice it within yourself. Counselors who understand the importance of self-care and also prioritize self-compassionate behaviors found that they can manage job-related stressors and have a satisfactory experience in their work environment. As a result, they stay in their position for a long period despite the demand and qualification to work for themselves to become a registered guidance counselor, where professionalization takes too much time and money, but is very evident in the "one big fight" of counselors that they are not well compensated because of the low wage offer in private and even public schools. This is just one of the subtle ways that demonstrates how a school counselor's self-compassionate perspective can support how they find meaning in their work and their clients, even amid difficulties.

Psychological Well-Being (PWB), according to Ryff et al. (2002), is a theory of positive psychological functioning that focuses on the human capacity to develop, function effectively, and flourish. Theoretical beliefs about what constitutes PWB are derived from the philosophical and psychological writings of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. For Maslow, human behavior was characterized by movement toward self-actualization and, simultaneously, limited by more basic processes such as physiological and safety needs. Actualization is attainable only if basic needs are met. Rogers shared the perspective that self-actualization is an inherent possibility and posited that certain interpersonal conditions, such as empathy, respect, and genuineness, facilitate movement toward self-actualization. School counselors are an inseparable component of education in school. School counselors' guidance and counseling services should be comprehensive for all students. Psychological well-being theory is connected to the study because in carrying out counselors' duty, they need to have good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose, and the ability to manage stress. Given that counselors' work environment is bombarded with burnout, instability, and work stress, that is why counselors must make a habit of checking in on themselves. Counselor wellness and impairment are continuing, from well to stressed to distressed to impaired; it is critical that counselors continually monitor where they are in such process and address any early signs of stress so that they do not move further down the action. They are instruments of healing. If they do not keep their instrument tuned, they will not be useful in promoting wellness to others.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to determine the self-compassion and psychological well-being of College Counselors in a highly urbanized City in Central Negros for the School Year 2022-2023. More specifically, it aimed to determine 1) the level of self-compassion of College Counselors, 2) the level of psychological well-being of College Counselors, 3)



the level of self-compassion of College Counselors when grouped according to the length of service, civil status, Family income, Educational Attainment, and nature of job; 4) the level of psychological well-being of College Counselors when grouped according to the aforementioned variables; 5) the significant difference in the level of self-compassion of College Counselors when grouped according to the aforementioned variables; 6) the significant difference in the level of psychological well-being of College Counselors when grouped according to the aforementioned variables.

Research Methodology:

This section presents the research design, locale of the study, respondents of the study, data gathering instrument, validity, and reliability of the research instrument, data gathering procedure, analytical schemes, and statistical tools.

Research Design

This study made use of the descriptive-comparative quantitative research design in determining the level of self-compassion and psychological well-being of Counselors in the Colleges and Universities in highly urbanized Cities in Central Negros during the School Year 2022-2023. Descriptive research design attempts to determine, describe, or identify characteristics within the field of investigation (Dudovskiy, 2017). This research design is most appropriate for this study as it aids in elaborating the data gathered as a basis for making sound analyses and interpretations.

Study Respondents

Respondents were identified using the purposive sampling technique, a non-probability sample that is selected based on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (N=62).

Instruments

Standardized test instruments were used in this study. Self-Compassion Scale was utilized to determine the respondents' level of self-compassion, and the Psychological Well-being (PWB) Scale was used to determine the respondents' level of psychological well-being. The survey questionnaire is composed of three main parts. Part 1 gathered information on the profile of the respondents in terms of length of service, civil status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and nature of the job. In contrast, Part 2 is composed of 18 questions, and Part 3 is composed of 42 questions to collect data on the sources of self-compassion and psychological well-being of counselors.

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), by Dr. Kristin D. Neff, is an 18-item multiple-choice self-report inventory that measures the respondents' self-compassion level. Each item has five possible answer choices: Almost Never = 1, Occasionally = 2, About Half the time = 3, Fairly Often = 4, and Almost Always = 5. The values for each item are summed, yielding an overall or total score for all 18 items that can range between 0 and 90 points. A total score of 1.00 – 2.33 is interpreted as a "Low" level of self-compassion; 2.34 – 3.67 as a "Moderate" level of self-compassion; and 3.68 – 5.00 as a "High" level of self-compassion. Psychological Well-being Scale," developed by psychologist Dr. Carol D. Ryff, is a 42-item multiple-choice self-report inventory that measures the respondents' psychological well-being level. Each item has six possible answer choices: Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Neutral = 4, Agree = 5 and Strongly Agree = 6. The values for each item are summed, yielding an overall or total score for all 42 items that can range between 0 and 252 points. A total score of 42.00 – 77.00 is interpreted as "Extremely Low" level of psychological well-being; 77.01 – 112.00 as "Very low" level of psychological well-being; and 112.01 – 147.00 as "Low" level of psychological well-being; 147.01 – 182.00 as "High" level of psychological well-being; 182.01 – 217.00 as "Very High" level of psychological well-being; 217.01 – 252.00 as "Extremely High" level of psychological well-being.

Data Gathering Procedure

In gathering the desired data, the researcher requested permission from the authors of the standardized tests, Dr. Kristin D. Neff and Dr. Carol D. Ryff. A letter asking permission to use the test. The researcher also wrote a letter to the Office of the President of the Philippine Guidance Counselors Association - Negros Occidental Guidance Counselors Association (PGCA-NOGCA) to conduct a survey of the targeted respondents in the Colleges and Universities in highly urbanized Cities in Central Negros. The researcher used the paper and pen method during the survey. Upon completion, the survey questionnaires were retrieved for encoding and tabulation. Moreover, the gathered data were also computed using Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Procedures for Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment



Objectives no. 1, 2, 3, and 4 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean & standard deviation as statistical tools to determine the level of self-compassion and psychological well-being of respondents and when they are grouped according to the length of service, civil status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and nature of the job. Objectives no. 5 and 6 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine the significant difference in the level of self-compassion and psychological well-being of respondents when they are grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables.

Ethical Considerations

This research paper strived to minimize the risk of harm to its target respondents by assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses and protecting their anonymity throughout the entire research process. No information that discloses the respondent's identity was released and published without their consent. At the onset, the researcher assured the respondents of their right to withdraw from their research participation if necessary.

Results and Discussions

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered to carry out the predetermined objectives of this study.

Table 1
Level of Self-Compassion of College Counselors

Area	Mean	Interpretation
Level of Self-Compassion of Counselors		
1. When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.	2.31	Low Self-Compassion
2. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality that I do not like.	3.97	High Self-Compassion
3. When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.	4.27	High Self-Compassion
4. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.	2.31	Low Self-Compassion
5. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.	4.03	High Self-Compassion
6. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.	4.35	High Self-Compassion
7. When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance.	4.11	High Self-Compassion
8. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.	2.37	Moderate Self-Compassion
9. When I'm feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.	2.31	Low Self-Compassion
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.	3.56	Moderate Self-Compassion
11. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.	2.35	Moderate Self-Compassion
12. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.	2.29	Low Self-Compassion



Overall Mean

3.19

**Moderate
Compassion**

Self-

Results show that the respondents' level of self-compassion is 3.19 interpreted as moderate self-compassion. This implies that even though the result indicated that counselors' level of self-compassion is only moderate, counselors still positively impacted their ability to provide compassionate and effective counseling that influenced the counselors' therapeutic approach, self-care practices, and the quality of the therapeutic relationship, ultimately benefiting the well-being and progress of the clients. Instead of harshly judging themselves for perceived shortcomings or mistakes, counselors still approached themselves with kindness, understanding, and self-acceptance, allowing them to focus on personal growth and learning experiences rather than being immobilized by self-criticism.

Table 2

Level of Psychological Well-Being of College Counselors

Level of Psychological Well-Being of Counselors	Overall Mean	Interpretation
	159.13	High Level

Results show that the respondents' level of psychological well-being is 159.13, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being. This implies that the psychological well-being of counselors contributed to their personal fulfillment and job satisfaction. Counselors experience positive emotions, a sense of purpose, and a deep connection to their work, giving them joy and satisfaction in their profession. That, in turn, positively impacts their motivation, commitment, and longevity in the field of counseling. Even though the findings demonstrated the high psychological well-being of counselors, higher educational institutions still need to cultivate psychological well-being interventions regularly so that counselors can always manage various students' issues in schools as well as maintain psychological well-being in terms of personnel and professionals.

Level of Self-Compassion of College Counselors when grouped according to Length of Service, Civil Status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and Nature of Job

Table 3

Variable	Category	Overall Mean	Interpretation
Length of Service	Shorter	3.16	Moderate Level
	Longer	3.25	Moderate Level
Civil Status	Single	3.15	Moderate Level
	Married	3.25	Moderate Level
Family income	Lower	3.14	Moderate Level
	Higher	3.23	Moderate Level
Educational Attainment	Lower	3.14	Moderate Level
	Higher	3.23	Moderate Level
Nature of Job	Guidance Associate	3.13	Moderate Level



Guidance Counselor

3.25

Moderate Level

Table 3 shows the analysis of the level of self-compassion of College Counselors according to the length of service, civil status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and nature of the job. When grouped according to the length of service, the shorter has a mean of 3.16, interpreted as a moderate level of self-compassion, and the longer has a mean of 3.25, interpreted as a moderate level of self-compassion. When grouped according to civil status, the single has a mean of 3.15, interpreted as a moderate level of self-compassion, and the married has a mean of 3.25, interpreted as a moderate level of self-compassion. When grouped according to Family income, the lower has a mean of 3.14, interpreted as moderate level of self-compassion, and the higher has a mean of 3.23, interpreted as moderate level of self-compassion. When grouped according to Educational Attainment, the lower has a mean of 3.14, interpreted as a moderate level of self-compassion, and the higher has a mean of 3.23, interpreted as a moderate level of self-compassion. Lastly, when grouped according to the nature of the job, the guidance associate has a mean of 3.13, interpreted as a moderate level of self-compassion, and the guidance counselor has a mean of 3.25, interpreted as a moderate level of self-compassion.

Level of Psychological Well-Being of College Counselors when grouped according to Length of Service, Civil Status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and Nature of Job

Table 4

Level of Psychological Well-Being of College Counselors: According to the Variables above

Variable	Category	Overall Mean	Interpretation
Length of Service	Shorter	158.07	High Level
	Longer	161.35	High Level
Civil Status	Single	157.08	High Level
	Married	162.38	High Level
Family income	Lower	156.41	High Level
	Higher	161.52	High Level
Educational Attainment	Lower	155.82	High Level
	Higher	161.85	High Level
Nature of Job	Guidance Associate	156.00	High Level
	Guidance Counselor	162.93	High Level

Table 4 shows the analysis of the psychological well-being of College Counselors according to the length of service, civil status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and nature of the job. When grouped according to the length of service, the shorter has a mean of 158.07, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being, and the longer has a mean of 161.35, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being. When grouped according to civil status, the single has a mean of 157.08, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being, and the married has a mean of 162.38, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being. When grouped according to Family income, the lower has a mean of 156.41, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being, and the higher has a mean of 161.52, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being. When grouped according to Educational Attainment, the lower has a mean of 155.82, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being, and the higher has a mean of 161.85, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being. Lastly, when grouped according to the nature of the job, the guidance associate has a mean of 156.00, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being, and the guidance counselor has a mean of 162.93, interpreted as a high level of psychological well-being.

Comparative Analysis in the Level of Self-Compassion of College Counselors when grouped according to Length of Service, Civil Status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and Nature of Job

Table 5

Difference in the Level of Self-Compassion of College Counselors when Grouped according to the Aforementioned Variables



Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Length of Service	Shorter	42	30.30	369.500	0.445		Not Significant
	Longer	20	34.03				
Civil Status	Single	38	29.78	390.500	0.342		Not Significant
	Married	24	34.23				
Family income	Lower	29	28.83	401.000	0.272	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	33	33.85				
Educational Attainment	Lower	28	29.18	411.000	0.356		Not Significant
	Higher	34	33.41				
Nature of Job	Guidance Associate	34	29.13	395.500	0.253		Not Significant
	Guidance Counselor	28	34.38				

Table 5 shows the comparative analysis of the level of self-compassion of College Counselors according to the length of service, civil status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and nature of the job. When grouped according to length of service, the shorter has a mean of 30.30, and the longer has a mean of 34.03. The p-value is 0.445 and is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant." When grouped according to civil status, the single has a mean of 29.78, and the married has a mean of 34.23. The p-value is 0.342 and is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant." When grouped according to Family income, the lower group has a mean of 28.83, and the higher group has a mean of 33.85. The p-value is 0.272 and is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant." When grouped according to Educational Attainment, the lower group has a mean of 29.18, and the higher group has a mean of 33.41. The p-value is 0.356 and is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant." Lastly, when grouped according to the nature of the job, the guidance associate has a mean of 29.13, and the guidance counselor has a mean of 34.38. The p-value is 0.253 and is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant."

Comparative Analysis in the Level of Psychological Well-Being of College Counselors when Grouped according to Length of Service, Civil Status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and Nature of Job

Table 6

Difference in the Level of Psychological Well-Being of College Counselors when grouped according to the Aforementioned Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Length of Service	Shorter	42	29.44	333.500	0.192		Not Significant
	Longer	20	35.83				
Civil Status	Single	38	29.47	379.000	0.265		Not Significant
	Married	24	34.71				
Family income	Lower	29	30.10	438.000	0.567	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	33	32.73				
Educational Attainment	Lower	28	25.70	313.500	0.021		Significant
	Higher	34	36.28				
Nature of Job	Guidance Associate	34	26.31	299.500	0.012		Significant
	Guidance Counselor	28	37.80				

Table 6 shows the comparative analysis of the level of resilience of College Counselors according to the length of service, civil status, Family Income, Educational Attainment, and nature of the job. When grouped according to



length of service, the shorter has a mean of 29.44, and the longer has a mean of 35.83. The p-value is 0.192 and is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant." When grouped according to civil status, the single has a mean of 29.47, and the married has a mean of 34.71. The p-value is 0.265 and is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant." When grouped according to Family income, the lower group has a mean of 30.10, and the higher group has a mean of 32.73. The p-value is 0.567 and is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "not significant." When grouped according to Educational Attainment, the lower group has a mean of 25.70, and the higher group has a mean of 36.28. The p-value is 0.021 and is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant." Lastly, when grouped according to the nature of the job, the guidance associate has a mean of 26.31, and the guidance counselor has a mean of 37.80. The p-value is 0.012 and is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, interpreted as "significant."

Conclusion

In general, guidance counselors comprise a population that is considered individuals who may possess self-compassion and psychological well-being. Since guidance counselors and other professionals frequently deal with various difficulties and emotional demands at work, these crucial attributes cause a Moderate Level of Self-Compassion. Regardless of the length of service, civil status, family income, educational attainment, and nature of the job, counselors experience mild levels of self-compassion. In the long run, counselors were better equipped to handle the emotional demands of their profession effectively, manage their own emotions, and handle the emotional challenges of their students, maintaining a sense of balance and composure that have caused them a High Level of Psychological Well-being. Regardless of the length of service, civil status, and Family income, counselors experience High Psychological Well-being.

It's crucial to acknowledge that not every guidance counselor will exhibit self-compassion and psychological well-being to the same extent; these characteristics are often emphasized and encouraged within the field. This study calls for guidance counselors to be generally encouraged to utilize professional development programs, supervision, and self-care activities in order to support them in developing the traits mentioned above through establishing a culture of positivity and support at the school that places a high priority on the welfare of counselors, establishing and preserving relationships with other counselors inside and outside the institution, encouraging a feeling of camaraderie among the guidance department's staff members by holding frequent team meetings, group projects, or social events, developing comprehensive well-being programs tailored explicitly for counselors, ensuring necessary resources, support, and work conditions of counselors that promote resilience and psychological well-being through educating them about vicarious trauma, compassion, fatigue, and provide strategies to mitigate their impact. Research findings contribute to the development of best practices and guidelines in promoting counselor self-compassion and psychological well-being and probing the relationships between the major variables of the study through further studies in the future.

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