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Two is more valid than one, but is six even better? The factor structure of the self-compassion scale (SCS)

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Research has provided a large amount of evidence of the potential of self-compassion – a non-evaluative, interconnected and mindful attitude to oneself – to promote mental health. Self-compassion has been associated with positive attributes such as happiness, optimism, life satisfaction, and social connectedness. In addition, one of the most consistent findings is that self-compassion is inversely related to psychopathology. The vast majority of studies have been conducted using the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), the psychometric validity of which has been recently called into question. The original conceptualization of the SCS as a six-subscale measure that can also be used as a total score on the basis of one hierarchical factor has been disputed. Recent findings concerning the internal structure have been inconsistent and have provided support also for the two-dimensional model, with self-compassion and self-coldness as distinct yet correlated dimensions. Current study examined the factor structure of the Self-Compassion Scale utilizing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and tested six models: one-factor model, an oblique six-factor model, a higher-order model, an oblique two-factor model, a bi-factor model with one general factor and a bi-factor model with two general factors. The results suggested that the six-factor model had a good fit to the data. However, the negative components of the SCS were highly correlated with each other, especially with the over-identification factor. The two-factor model had an acceptable fit, but none of the remaining models tested met the criteria for an adequate solution. Results support the use of either the six subscale scores, or the separate self-compassion- and self-coldness -scores rather than the overall score. A deeper understanding of the internal structure of the SCS is crucial in order to interpret the role of self-compassion in mental health and human flourishing. Future studies should also focus on the neurophysiology of the internal processes related to self-compassion.

Biography

Sonja Kumlander is working on her PhD studies in a well-being for upper secondary education project, which is funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The current study, representing the first psychometric study of the SCS among Finnish adolescents, is her first publication in psychology. Her passion lies in positive psychology, therapeutic interventions in mental health and metallization based treatment. She also holds a master's degree in law from the University of Turku.

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