



<http://www.eab.org.tr>

Available online at:

[http://www.eab.org.tr/public/ijer/2/3/ahmet\\_akin.pdf](http://www.eab.org.tr/public/ijer/2/3/ahmet_akin.pdf)



<http://ijer.eab.org.tr>

Educational Research Association  
The International Journal of  
Educational Researchers 2011, 2 (3) : 25-33  
ISSN: 1308-9501

## SELF-COMPASSION AND SELF-DECEPTION (ÖZ-DUYARLIK VE ÖZ-ALDATMA)

**Doç. Dr. Ahmet AKIN**  
*Sakarya Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi  
Psikolojik Danışmanlık ve Rehberlik ABD*

---

**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationships between self-compassion and self-deception. Participants were 544 university students from Sakarya University, Turkey, who completed the Self-compassion Scale and the Self-deception Scale. Results demonstrated that self-kindness, awareness of common humanity, and mindfulness positively and self-judgment, common humanity, and isolation negatively related to self-deception. Results from structural equation modeling showed that the model fitted well ( $\chi^2 = 38.88$ ,  $df = 19$ ,  $p = .0046$ ,  $GFI = .98$ ,  $AGFI = .97$ ,  $CFI = .99$ ,  $NFI = .98$ ,  $RFI = .98$ ,  $IFI = .99$ ,  $RMSEA = .044$ , and  $SRMR = .045$ ). According to this model self-deception was predicted positively by self-kindness, awareness of common humanity, and mindfulness and negatively by self-judgment, common humanity, and isolation. Results were discussed in the light of literature.

**Keywords:** *self-compassion, self-deception, structural equation modeling*

**Özet:** Bu araştırmada öz-duyarlık ile öz-aldatma arasındaki ilişkiler incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemini Sakarya Üniversitesi'nde öğrenim gören 544 üniversite öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada Öz-duyarlık Ölçeği ile İki Boyutlu Sosyal İstenirlik Ölçeği'nin Öz-aldatma alt Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Bulgular öz-sevecenlik, paylaşımların bilincinde olma ve bilinçliliğin öz-aldatma ile pozitif, öz-yargılama, izolasyon ve aşırı özdeşleşmenin ise negatif ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir ( $\chi^2 = 38.88$ ,  $df = 19$ ,  $p = .0046$ ,  $GFI = .98$ ,  $AGFI = .97$ ,  $CFI = .99$ ,  $NFI = .98$ ,  $RFI = .98$ ,  $IFI = .99$ ,  $RMSEA = .044$ , and  $SRMR = .045$ ). Yapısal eşitlik modelinden elde edilen bulgular, modelin iyi uyum verdiğini göstermiştir. Path analizi sonuçları öz-aldatmanın öz-sevecenlik, paylaşımların bilincinde olma ve bilinçlilik tarafından pozitif, öz-yargılama, izolasyon ve aşırı özdeşleşme tarafından ise negatif yordandığını ortaya koymuştur.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *öz-duyarlık, öz-aldatma, yapısal eşitlik modeli*

---

Self-compassion can be defined as individual's being discerning and gentle toward himself when faced with suffering caused by his own feelings, unprejudiced against his inadequacy and accepting that his negative life experiences are inevitable part of human life (Neff, 2003a). Neff (2003a, b) has proposed that self-compassion involves three main components: Self-kindness versus self-judgment, a sense of common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification. Although these three components of self-compassion are conceptually distinct and are experienced differently at the phenomenological level, they interact to mutually enhance and engender one another.

Self-kindness refers to the tendency to be caring and understanding with oneself rather than being harshly critical or judgmental. Self-compassion entails not being self-critical when one's expectations are not met and not being harmful to individual's ego in order to make achievements. Instead, self-compassion suggests the individual should encourage his/her ego gently and patiently to change behaviors (Neff, 2003a). Awareness of common humanity, the second dimension of self-compassion, is seeing one's happy or painful experiences as not personal, but as all human beings'. The sense of common humanity principal to self-compassion involves recognizing that all humans are imperfect, make mistakes, and engage in unhealthy behaviors. Self-compassion connects one's own flawed condition to the shared human condition, so that features of the self are considered from a broad, inclusive perspective (Neff, 2009). Having this kind of awareness, one perceives these experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than feeling isolated and alienated from the society and harshly criticizing oneself for failure and suffering experiences (Neff, 2003a). This awareness emphasizes one's relatedness to all other humans and to another individual (Kirkpatrick, 2005).

Mindfulness, the third component of self-compassion, is a pre-conceptual awareness that allows individual to accept life's most stressful and painful emotions without being carried away by them (Gunaratana, 1993; Martin, 1997; Neff, 2003a; Nisker, 1998; Rosenberg, 1999). Mindfulness is a state of balanced awareness that one's feelings and thoughts are observed without avoiding or trying to change them, without exaggeration and prejudice. When individuals accept and tolerate their distress and pain, when they are gentle and kind toward themselves, they avoid suppressing their emotions and thoughts. Thus, when they are aware that distress and pain are something all humans experience, they are not trapped by over-identification. Therefore, self-compassion functions as an adaptive strategy for emotion-organizing through decreasing negative emotions but creating more positive emotions of kindness and relatedness (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005).

Studies have demonstrated that self-compassion is negatively associated with self-criticism, depression, anxiety, rumination, thought suppression (Neff, 2003a), interpersonal cognitive distortions (Akin, 2010a), loneliness (Akin, 2010b), performance-approach/avoidance goals (Akin, 2008a), submissive behavior (Akin, 2009), and positively associated with social relationship, emotional

intelligence, self-determination (Neff, 2003a), learning-approach goals (Akin, 2008a), psychological well-being (Akin, 2008b), academic success (Conway, 2007), and social identity (Williams, 2005). In addition, it has been found out that although self-compassion is significantly related to self-esteem, it is not associated with narcissism (Neff, 2003a).

Self-deception is an unintentional propensity to portray oneself in a favorable light, manifested in positively biased but honestly believed self-descriptions. Research has demonstrated that individuals high in self-deception tend to be well adjusted, ignore minor criticisms, and have high confidence in themselves (Paulhus, 1991). In the case of self-deception, people provide an overly positive view of themselves because they lack the self-sight necessary to provide a realistic self-description. Researches (Dunning, Meyerowitz, & Holzberg; 1989; Greenwald, 1980; Ross, 1989) suggest that self-deception plays a role not only in one's perception of the present self, but also in the perception of the past and future selves. One reason this finding is important is because there is evidence to suggest that those who expect positive outcomes are more likely to set higher goals for themselves. Furthermore, they are more likely to pursue those goals more vigorously even in the face of setbacks (Bandura, 1989). Similarly, Taylor and Brown (1988), in an integration of the literature, conclude that self deception promotes psychological adjustment as well as "higher motivation, greater persistence, more effective performance, and ultimately, greater success" (p. 199).

### *The Present Study*

Because researches on self-compassion are relatively new, studies that examine the relationships between self-compassion and psychological variables such as self-deception, are needed. The aim of this research is to investigate the relationships between self-compassion and self-deception. In this research it was hypothesized that, self-kindness, awareness of common humanity, and mindfulness will be related positively and self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification negatively to self-deception.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

Participants were 544 university students enrolled in various undergraduate programs at the Sakarya University, Turkey. 183 of the participants (34%) were males and 361 (66%) were females. A large majority of the students (73%) were between 17 and 21 years of age, mean 20.5 years.

### ***Measures***

*Self-compassion Scale.* Self-compassion was measured by using Self-compassion Scale (Neff, 2003b). Turkish adaptation of this scale had been done by Akin, Akin, and Abacı (2007). Self-compassion Scale is a 26-item self-report measurement and consists of six sub-scales; self-kindness, self-judgment, awareness of common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-

identification. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The internal consistency coefficients of six subscales were .77, .72, .72, .80, .74, and .74, respectively. The test-retest reliability coefficients were .69, .59, .66, .60, .69, and .56.

*Self-deception Subscale of Two Dimensional Social Desirability Scale.* This subscale (Akın, 2010c) contains 13 Likert-type items and the participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale (e.g., “I am very confident of my judgments”). Alpha reliability of this scale was .95 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was .79.

## Results

### *Descriptive data and intercorrelations*

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for the variables used in the analyses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations of the variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Self-deception	—						
2. Self-kindness	.45**	—					
3. Self-judgment	-.27**	-.51**	—				
4. Common Humanity	.24**	.51**	-.28	—			
5. Isolation	-.33**	-.44**	.65**	-.25**	—		
6. Mindfulness	.45**	.71**	-.42**	.47**	-.40**	—	
7. Over-identification	-.36**	-.45**	.63**	-.18**	.63**	-.52**	—
Means	44,36	15,97	12,38	12,96	9,69	13,70	10,30
Standard deviation	6,03	4,27	4,34	3,46	3,46	3,41	3,82

\*\*p< .01

As can be seen in Table 1, self-kindness ( $r=.45$ ), awareness of common humanity ( $r=.24$ ), and mindfulness ( $r=.45$ ) were positively related to self-deception. On the other hand self-judgment ( $r=-.27$ ), isolation ( $r=-.33$ ), and over-identification ( $r=-.36$ ) were negatively associated with self-deception.

### *Structural equation modeling*

The structural model was examined via structural equation modeling (SEM), employing LISREL 8.54 (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1996). Figure 1 presents the results of SEM analysis, using maximum likelihood estimations. The model demonstrated excellent fit ( $\chi^2 = 38.88$ ,  $df = 19$ ,  $P = .0046$ ,  $GFI = .98$ ,  $AGFI = .97$ ,  $CFI = .99$ ,  $NFI = .98$ ,  $RFI = .98$ ,  $IFI = .99$ ,  $RMSEA = .044$ , and  $SRMR = .045$ ), and also accounted for 68% of the self-deception variances.

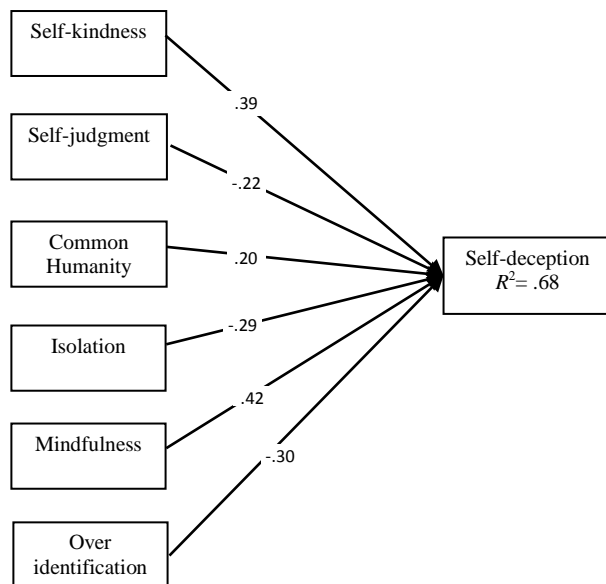


Figure 1  
Path analysis between self-compassion and self-deception

The standardized coefficients in Figure 1 clearly showed that self-deception is predicted positively by self-kindness (.39), awareness of common humanity (.20), and mindfulness (.42) and negatively by self-judgment (-.22), isolation (-.29), and over-identification (-.30).

### Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the relationships between self-compassion and self-deception. Findings have demonstrated that there are significant relationships between dimensions of self-compassion and self-deception. Also the goodness of fit indexes of the path model indicated that the model was acceptable and that correlations among measures were explained by the model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). As hypothesized, the models proved that self-kindness, awareness of common humanity, and mindfulness, positive dimensions of self-compassion, predicted self-deception positively. On the other hand self-deception is predicted by self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification, negative dimensions of self-compassion, in a negative way.

Self-kindness, common-humanity, and mindfulness represents that, in the event of bad life-experiences, individual's approach toward himself is warm, gentle, and kind. Certainly, a key feature of self-compassion is that individuals do not harshly judge and criticize themselves when they notice something about themselves they don't like and self-criticism is known to be an important predictor of anxiety and depression (Neff, 2009). Moreover, since self-compassionate individuals recognize when they are suffering, but when doing so they provide

themselves feelings of warmth, kindness, and interconnectedness with the rest of humanity (Neff, 2009), they can experience more positive and less negative emotions.

In contrary self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification dimensions of self-compassion means that individual attributes him/herself for making errors and unsuccessful life experiences, intensively identify him/herself with negative feelings when faced failure, being swept up in and carried away by the story-line of one's own pain (Neff, 2003b). Also they involve individual's self-critical, negative self-assessment, and being seized by emotions when they experience a stressful and painful event and they were found correlated positively with anxiety, depression, self-criticism, neuroticism, rumination, thought suppression, and neurotic perfectionism (Neff, 2003a, b; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007; Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Therefore these dimensions of self-compassion are maladaptive.

Research on the relationship between self-deception and psychological well-being suggest that there is a link between the tendency to self-enhance and a variety of positive outcomes including adjustment (Taylor & Brown, 1988), optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985), and a sense of general capability (Holden & Fekken, 1989). Further significant correlations have been reported between self-deception and good mental health (Linden, Paulhus, & Dobson, 1986) and self-esteem (Paulhus & Reid, 1991). In contrary, lack of self-deceptive positivity has been linked to negative outcomes such as depression (e.g., Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). Evidence also suggests that those individuals who have a more balanced view of themselves have low self-esteem and/or are moderately depressed (e.g., Coyne & Gotlib, 1983). When thought in this context, the correlations found in this research are seems reasonable.

#### References

- Abramson, L. Y., Seligman, M. E., & Teasdale, J. D. (1978). Learned helplessness in humans: Critique and reformulation. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 87*, 49–74.
- Akin, A. (2010a). Self-compassion and interpersonal cognitive distortions. *Hacettepe University Journal of Education, 39*, 1–9.
- Akın, A. (2010b). Self-compassion and loneliness. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences (IOJES), 2*(3), 702-718.
- Akın, A. (2010c). İki Boyutlu Sosyal İstenirlik Ölçeğinin geliştirilmesi ve psikometrik özelliklerinin araştırılması. *Gazi Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 30*(3), 771-784.
- Akın, A. (2009). Self-compassion and submissive behavior. *Education and Science, 34*(152), 138–147.

- Akın, A. (2008a). Self-compassion and achievement goals: A structural equation modeling approach. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 31, 1–15.
- Akın, A. (2008b). Scales of Psychological well-being: A study of validity and reliability. *Educational Science: Theory & Practice*, 8(3), 721–750.
- Akın, Ü., Akın, A., & Abacı, R. (2007). Öz-duyarlık Ölçeği: Geçerlik ve güvenirlik çalışması. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 33, 1-10.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Regulation of cognitive processes through perceived self-efficacy. *Developmental Psychology*, 25, 729-735.
- Conway, D. G. (2007). *The role of internal resources in academic achievement: Exploring the meaning of self-compassion in the adaptive functioning of low-income college students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, PA, USA.
- Coyne, J. C., & Gotlib, I. H. (1983). The role of cognition in depression: A critical appraisal. *Psychological Bulletin*, 94, 472–505.
- Dunning, D., Meyerowitz, J. A., & Holzberg, A. D. (1989). Ambiguity and self-evaluation: The role of idiosyncratic trait definitions in self-serving assessments of ability. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 57, 1082-1090.
- Greenwald, A. G. (1980). The totalitarian ego: Fabrication and revision of personal history. *American Psychologist*, 35, 603-618.
- Gunaratana, V. H. (1993). *Sati. In mindfulness in plain English*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Holden, R. R., & Fekken, G. C. (1989). Three common social desirability scales: Friends, acquaintances, or strangers? *Journal of Research in Personality*, 23, 180–191.
- Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structural analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 6, 1–55.
- Jöreskog, K. G., & Sorbom, D. (1996). *LISREL 8 reference guide*. Lincolnwood, IL: Scientific Software International.
- Kirkpatrick, K. L. (2005). *Enhancing self-compassion using a Gestalt two-chair intervention*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.
- Linden, W., Paulhus, D. L., & Dobson, K. S. (1986). Effects of response styles on the report of psychological and somatic distress. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 54, 309–313.
- Martin, J. R. (1997). Mindfulness: A proposed common factor. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 7, 291–312.

- Neff, K. D. (2009). Self-Compassion. In M. R. Leary & R. H. Hoyle (Eds.). *Handbook of individual differences in social behavior* (pp. 561-573). Guilford Press.
- Neff, K. D. (2003a). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2(2), 85–102.
- Neff, K. D. (2003b). The development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2(3), 223–250.
- Neff, K. D., Hsieh, Y., & Dejjitterat, K. (2005). Self-compassion, achievement goals, and coping with academic failure. *Self and Identity*, 4, 263–287.
- Neff, K. D., Kirkpatrick, K., & Rude, S. S. (2007). Self-compassion and its link to adaptive psychological functioning. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41, 139–154.
- Neff, K. D., Rude, S. S., & Kirkpatrick, K. (2007). An examination of self-compassion in relation to positive psychological functioning and personality traits. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41, 908–916.
- Nisker, W. (1998). Mindfulness: The opposable thumb of consciousness (Chapter 3). In *Buddha's nature: A practical guide to discovering your place in the cosmos* (pp. 26–30). New York: Bantam Books.
- Paulhus, D. L. (1991). Measurement and control of response bias. In J. P. Robinson, P. R. Shaver, & L. S. Wrightsman (Eds.), *Measures of personality and social psychology attitudes* (pp. 17-59). New York: Academic Press.
- Paulhus, D. L., & Reid, D. B. (1991). Enhancement and denial in socially desirable responding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 307–317.
- Rosenberg, L. (1999). Breathing with the body (Chapter 1). In *Breath by breath: The liberating practice of insight meditation* (pp. 10-39). Boston: Shambala.
- Ross, M. (1989). Relation of implicit theories to the construction of personal histories. *Psychological Review*, 96, 341-357.
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 4, 219–247.
- Taylor, S. E., & Brown, J. D. (1988). Illusion and well-being: A social-psychological perspective on mental health. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103, 193-210.
- Williams, J. G. (2005). *Forewarning: A tool to disrupt stereotype threat effects*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, TX, USA.