

Comparison of The self-compassion and body image of women from different ethnicities (Azeri, Kurdish, Persian) Urmia city

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to compare the self-compassion and body image of women from different ethnicities (Azeri, Kurdish, Persian) in Urmia city, and in fact, The goal was to create a fundamental understanding of the phenomenon of the subject of research.

Method: This is Causal-comparative research whose statistical population consisted of 342 women selected in 2022. Through a Stratified Sampling method, Statistical populations were chosen based on inclusion criteria and randomly assigned (Stratified random sampling). Data collection tools included a demographic checklist NEF(2003) Self-compassion scale (SCS); Cash et al(1990)Multidimensional Body- Self Relations questionnaire (MSRQ). Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was applied by the SPSS-26 program.

Result: Therefore, according to the results of the present study, There is no significant difference in the level of self-compassion ($F=0.64$ and $P < 0.05$) and body image ($F=0.66$ and $P < 0.05$) among different ethnicities. Based on this basic research, it is suggested that psychosocial variables should be investigated more in future research because a better understanding of them, provides a framework by which we can understand how we identify ourselves, and how we interact in groups and society.

Keywords: self-compassion, body image, ethnicity, women.

Introduction

One of the most important concepts in today's complex world is the concept of mental health and examining psychological factors. Ensuring mental health and preventing the occurrence of mental abnormalities in different groups of society is one of the basic issues of any country, but this is not possible without knowing the current state of mental health of the people in question. Because this kind of knowledge helps researchers to use appropriate methods to eliminate the factors that disturb mental health and use the necessary tools. (Hadavand I, Kushki and Yazdakhasi, 2016). As we know, our country is renowned for its wide ethnic diversity. While about half of the population of this country are Persian speakers, Turks and Kurds make up one-third (34%) and other ethnic groups make up the remaining one-sixth (16%) (Bashiriyeh, 2012). The demographic composition of Iran is such that it is not far from reality to refer to it as a multi-ethnic society. The presence and life of different ethnicities next to each other and within the same geopolitical framework shows the ethnic-cultural diversity of Iranian society (Gershasabi, Fathi Vajargah, Arefi, 2021).

Ethnic identity is a multidimensional construct that reflects a person's identity or feeling of belonging to an ethnic group (Sanchez-Johnsen, Dykema-Engblade, Nava, Rademaker & Xie, 2019). which is usually distinguished from other communities based on a specific name, a common language, some real or imaginary cultural commonalities, and an idea of common ancestors (Hadavand Aval, Koushki, & Yazdkhasti, 2017). Phinney (1992), one of the pioneer researchers regarding ethnic identity, defines it as the subjective feeling of belonging to an ethnic group, which includes exploring one's ethnicity, having knowledge and preference of the ethnic group, and participating in activities related to the group. Moreover, he conceptualizes it as a multidimensional structure that includes: affirmation, belonging, and commitment (ABC); or having positive feelings and a sense of pride and belonging to a certain ethnic group (Tian, McClain, Moore & Lloyd, 2019). Although this construct is distinct from acculturation due to its focus on subjective feelings about one's ethnicity, it is related to the concept of acculturation (Sanchez-Johnsen et al., 2019). In this regard, one of the psychological components related to culture and ethnicity is the body image component.

Body image (BI) is a multidimensional concept that includes people's perceptions, thoughts, behaviors, and positive and negative attitudes about their body and appearance which changes a lot during different stages of a person's life (Burychka, Miragall, Baños, 2021). This term was coined by Paul Schilder (1935), Schilder defined body image as a person's mental representation of his body, which everyone cultivates within himself. The process of body image formation is dynamic and is not only influenced by physical characteristics (for example, body size or shape) or psychological characteristics (for example, perfectionism, low self-esteem) but also under the influence of their socio-cultural context (Cash, 2002; Burychka et al., 2021). According to the socio-cultural theory of body image, how people perceive themselves and how others perceive them is caused by the effects of cultural values (Mousavi, Pourhosein, Zare-Moghaddam, Mousavian & Gomnam, 2016). Schilder proposed a biological-psychological-social approach to body image and emphasized the need to examine its neurological, psychological, and socio-cultural components. Kruger also stated that body image is a representation of identity

that comes from the external and internal experiences of the body (Hosseini & Padhy, 2022). On the other hand, the impact of culture on body image can be derived from the fact that the appearance of each person is an important part of his identity, which is immediately visible in social situations when dealing with others, in other words, the body is the embodiment and crystallization of social conditions of a person. These social conditions determine how a person perceives his physical self and what image he has of his body in his mind (Burychka et al., 2021). Body image is influenced by cultural and social ideals, and how you compare yourself to these ideals affects how you feel about your body and how satisfied you are with it (Khalatbari, Hemmati Sabet & Mohammadi, 2018). This effectiveness can create such sensitivity and concern that it affects all aspects of their lives, prevents them from participating in many social activities, and reduces their self-esteem (Jafari & Nobavehvatan, 2022). On this basis and due to the importance of body image variables, many treatment approaches have been investigated.

One of the emerging approaches to managing concerns related to body dissatisfaction and body image is self-compassion, which means being aware of and understanding one's suffering as part of the human experience, and being kind to oneself, especially when faced with Personal failures (Neff, 2003, Mifsud, Pehlivan, Fam, et al., 2021). Self-compassion includes the interaction between three facets: 1. Self-kindness versus self-judgment (i.e. the tendency to have insight into self-care versus harmful judgments about oneself), 2. Common humanity versus Isolation (understanding that all humans may fail at some point and should not cut off their relationships with others because of this failure), 3. Mindfulness versus Over-identification (Neff, 2003, Jansen, Zayed, Kittsteiner, 2021). These facets are not independent; they interact to facilitate each other. For example, the mental distance achieved through mindfulness allows for less self-criticism and less separateness from human experiences, thus engendering self-kindness and common humanity. Alternatively, self-kindness can encourage a non-judgemental awareness of thoughts and feelings to maintain mindfulness. Acknowledging that suffering happens to all people also facilitates the interconnectedness of common humanity. Self-compassion allows people to acknowledge, approach, and heal their pain. These facets may be especially pertinent to addressing body image concerns. Specifically, the ability to acknowledge that one is experiencing body image distress, acknowledge that others have also felt this way, and respond with kindness to oneself without a need to change the experience may serve as a powerful intervention. In the past decade, there has been increased research showing an inverse relationship between self-compassion and body dissatisfaction. Most of the research has been cross-sectional or correlational (Pinto et al., 2014., Gobin, McComb & Mills, 2022). In this regard, short-term self-compassion interventions (one-week, three-week, and 6-week mindfulness programs) have shown that these interventions have reduced dissatisfaction with body image, reduced self-judgment, and increased body understanding and acceptance (Gobin et al., 2022). Also, based on other extensive research in this field, the level of self-compassion is directly related to their body image. In Fan, Gao, Nazari, and Griffiths's (2022) latest study, they found that treatment programs designed to promote self-compassion were effective in reducing the risk of suicidal thoughts among adolescents with body dissatisfaction. Mahon and Hevey (2022) also stated in their research that self-compassion has the

potential to improve adolescent body image perception. Furthermore, a systematic review of 28 other studies found that self-compassion can be a potential shield for the consequences of body-related disorders and eating disorders (Braun, Park & Gorin, 2016). The present study seeks to compare whether having a different ethnicity (Kurdish, Persian, Azeri) creates a difference in the level of women's self-compassion and body image in Urmia city.

Methods

This study was Causal-comparative research. The statistical population consisted of 342 women living in Urmia city in 2021, selected Through a Stratified random sampling method. First, we entered the participants in a telegram group and collected information by providing the link to the questionnaires online. It should be noted that to comply with ethical considerations, the questionnaires were provided to the respondents without the requirement to mention their names. over and above that, the following instruments were used to collect the data:

Demographic Information Questionnaire: It includes a question about the participants' ethnicity.

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS): This 26-item scale was developed by Neff (2003) to measure self-compassion and consists of six subscales of self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification in a 5-point Likert scale, which ranges from seldom(1) to almost always(5). about scoring, some items and subscales are inverse, and a higher score means more self-compassion. The psychometric properties of the scale have been confirmed in various studies. The correlation coefficient of the six factors (i.e., self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification) was 0.77, 0.72, 0.72, 0.80, 0.74, and 0.74, respectively (Neff, 2003). The self-compassion scale shows strong evidence regarding reliability and internal consistency (above 0.90) (Neff, 2003). In this regard, Akin (2010) reported the reliability coefficients of six subscales from 0.66 to 0.87, which indicates the internal consistency of the instrument, The factor analysis of this tool using principal component analysis and varimax rotation explains a total of 75.11 percent of the variance of the scale. however, the SCS has good internal consistency and a near-perfect correlation with the long SCS. In the present study, the internal consistency of this questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.91.

Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire: The MBSRQ is a self-report inventory developed by Thomas Cash (2000) and consists of 46 items and six subscales: Appearance Orientation (AO), Appearance Evaluation (AE), Overweight Preoccupation (OP), Body Areas Satisfaction Scale (BASS), and Self-Classified Weight (SCW) (Cash, 2000). The respondents provided answers on the Likert scale containing the following possibilities: from 1 ("I strongly disagree") to 5 ("I strongly agree"). The respondents, when making a self-report, assessed the level of their relationship with their bodies. High scores on this measure indicate increased dissatisfaction with general body image. Cash has reported the internal consistency of the subscales between 0.79 and 0.94. This scale

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was confirmed in different studies, for example in Iran, Sadeghi, Gharraee, Fata & Mazhari (2007) reported that the retest reliability of the subscales was between 0.69 and 0.89. The reliability of the Persian version of the MBSRQ was also confirmed by a Cronbach's alpha of the total scale of 0.83.

Results

We had a population of 342 people, which included 3 groups with special classifications (Persian speakers, Azeri speakers, and Kurdish speakers). The groups were heterogeneous and the highest percentage and frequency was related to the Kurdish ethnicity, which accounts for 46.6%, followed by the Azeri ethnicity, which accounts for 43.6%, and finally, the Persian ethnicity, which accounts for approximately 10%.

Table 1. The mean and the standard deviation of self-compassion and body image variables (n=342)

variable	Number	Mean	standard deviation
Self-compassion	342	3.13	0.38
Body image	342	3.63	0.41

Table 2. normal distribution of scores (normality) using skewness and kurtosis test

variable	Subscale	Mean	standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self-compassion	self-kindness	3.21	0.82	0.079	0.68-
	self-judgment	3.06	1.27	0.07	0.42
	common humanity	3.17	0.72	0.09	0.15-
	Isolation	3.02	0.97	0.11-	0.37-
	Mindfulness	3.34	0.81	0.14-	0.50-

	over-identification	2.96	0.64	0.009	0.02-
Body image	assessment of appearance status	3.80	0.70	0.50-	0.03
	tendency to appearance	3.82	0.57	0.54-	0.26
	proportionality assessment	3.87	0.81	0.37-	0.45-
	tendency to proportion	3.57	0.62	0.27-	0.40-
	preoccupation with overweight	2.90	0.79	0.26-	0.05
	satisfaction with body areas	3.76	0.68	0.33-	0.05-

As a general guideline, a skewness value between -1 and $+1$ is considered excellent, The skewness and kurtosis indices of the variables and their components are approximately between ± 1 , which indicates that the distribution of the variables is favorable in terms of normality and that the necessary conditions exist for using parametric tests to analyze the research hypothesis.

Table3. variance analysis of self-compassion and body image variables based on different ethnicities (n=342)

Variable	Source	sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean squares	F	Sig
Self-compassion	inter-group variance	0.130	2	0.065	0.43	0.64
	intra-group variance	48.87	327	0.149	-	-
	Total	49.007	329	-	-	-
Body image	inter-group variance	0.141	2	0.070	0.40	0.66
	intra-group variance	51.80	297	0.147	-	-
	total	51.94	299	-	-	-

According to Table 3, It can be concluded that there was no significant difference in the level of self-compassion and body image among Persian, Kurdish & Azeri speakers. Therefore, the null hypothesis is variables and it indicates that the variables of self-compassion and body image do not have a significant difference in terms of having different ethnicity.

Discussion

This study aimed to compare the variables of self-compassion and body image among women with different ethnic identities. The results of the present study showed that there is NOT a significant difference between the level of self-compassion and body image of women simply because of having a different ethnicity and growing up in a different culture. For further analysis, we first examined research related to ethnicity and nationality. Amirkafi & Hajiani (2013) and Karevani & Ghafarinasab (2020) In their research found that there is an interaction between national identity and ethnic identity (in Iran) And Ghasemi, Khorshidi & Heidari (2013) also found the positive attitude of Iranian people towards national identity and the relationship between ethnic and national identity. The results of this research can better interpret the rejected hypothesis of the current research because the lack of significant differences between the different ethnicities of the statistical population is due to the predominance of the national identity of Iranian ethnic groups. However, in the most recent research on the relationship between ethnicity and body image, Cakici, Mercan & Nazligul (2021) in research evaluated and

systematically reviewed the studies related to the relationship between these two variables (ethnicity and body image) and for this purpose, a total of 795 studies whose findings showed that there was no indication showing body image difference in different ethnicities. In another study, Blostein, Assari, and Caldwell (2017) examined the relationship between different ethnicity and body image among African-American and black Caribbean people and concluded that ethnic diversity in the relationship between dissatisfaction with body image and Binge eating may result from intra-racial cultural differences in body image between African Americans and Caribbean Blacks because these two groups have lived in different geographies and this may have led to the formation of different definitions, norms, and expectations of body size. In another study, Ricciardelli, McCabe, Williams & Thompson (2007) examined body image concerns among men from different cultural groups, the results of their research did not show significant differences, and they concluded that there is no consistent pattern to interpret the nature of body image concerns in different cultural groups. Watson, Lewis & Moody(2019) Also, in their research, brought attention to the significant relationship between women's body image, race, gender, and nationality, but they did not specifically address the issue of different ethnicities in a single nationality and its impact on psychological components. Regarding the effect of ethnicity on the variable of self-compassion, different kinds of research have been carried out. In a cross-cultural study conducted on a statistical population of 4,124 people, Montero, Kuyken, Crane, Gu, Baer, et al. (2018) examined the scale of self-compassion in cultural contexts and different countries. The results showed the difference in the level of self-compassion in different cultures and countries. However, the research on similar cultures, such as the cultures of Asian countries with each other and European countries with each other, showed no difference in the level of self-compassion of populations that are culturally similar and close. It is for this reason that the use of compassionate intervention approaches in different geographies also has different methods. In this regard, in another study, Kariyavasam et al. (2022) conducted a cross-cultural study of compassion in the people of Britain and Sri Lanka (South Asia) and concluded that although society plays a central role in shaping a person's self-compassionate experiences, cultural factors and Social specifics must be considered when implementing compassionate Western approaches to non-Western environments. To explain more of the findings It can be said that the lack of significant difference in self-compassion and body image of women with different ethnicities can be caused by the attitude of Iranian people towards their nationality and ethnicity. Based on the studies conducted on the relationship between ethnic identity and national identity, we relied on the social interaction theory of scholars such as Mead, MacMall, Simmons, Stryko, Cooley, and Glasser, Based on this approach, activists in a social system cannot be indifferent to different identities around them, and in the natural conditions of society, people get acquainted with various models, patterns and cultural identities and through socialization processes, which is affected by political power, media, natural and geographical factors, they have gradually internalized that dominant cultural identity, and consider themselves committed to and belonging to a universal principle. This shows the interaction and relationship between the two sides of nationality and ethnicity. In this regard, the absence of a significant difference in this hypothesis

confirms the fact that although the participants of our research had different ethnicities because they all have a subset of the Iranian national identity and culture, a significant difference in terms of psychological factors among them was not observed. On the other hand, we examined and compared the variables most closely related to culture, self-compassion, and body image. The role of these cultural values can be either protective for some or risk factors for others (Aldalur & Schooler,2019). For example, in the research (Watson, Lewis, and Moody, 2019, Azizmohammadi 2013), white women had a greater fear of obesity, a more pronounced desire to be thin, more concerned about diet, and mental preoccupations of being overweight and awareness of weight fluctuations affected them more than black women. All this is due to culture. It has been a protective culture for black people regarding the normality of high weight and of course a risk factor culture for white people regarding the abnormality of overweight and obesity. For this reason, researchers have a strong interest in further research on body image among different cultural groups to identify the influence of these factors individually and collectively on body image, as this may contribute to the understanding, prevention, and treatment of related concerns that contribute to body image and related disorders among culturally diverse populations. On the other hand, regarding the effect of ethnicity on the level of self-compassion, studies have also shown that cultural values and practices may affect the underlying structure of self-compassion, because some cultures view the category of self-compassion with a positive view, and in others, it is evaluated negatively. The amount of self-compassion varies depending on whether their culture tends to view self-compassion as positive or negative(Montero et al.,2018; Zamani & Mohammadi, 2014). Although self-compassion exercises for all cultures and people around the world can reduce distress and increase psychological well-being (Kariyavasam et al.,2022; Barfi et al., 2015). However, measuring the amount and manifestation of self-compassion depends on the dominant values hidden in the cultural background of that society. For example, the Buddhist culture, as the origin of the construction and expansion of this structure, is the culture of the East, it is strongly mixed with spiritual meaning and thoughts, and the concept of compassion is one of the derivatives of spiritual culture. It seems that self-compassion in Eastern cultures is more integrated with the traditions and social customs of the people than in Western cultures. In addition, in Eastern traditions, attention to the suffering of others and empathetic support have been given more attention, and on this basis, it can be claimed that self-compassion in Eastern cultures has a different meaning and interpretation than in Western cultures. As Montero (2018) showed in his research on the difference in self-compassion between Asian countries and European countries

Conclusion

According to the results of this research, having a different ethnicity cannot create a difference in the level of self-compassion and body image of people, and the selected social factor had no significant effect on the psychological factors of the present research. However, this finding can have different results for different nationalities. This study, like other studies, was faced with limitations such as a lack of knowledge and information about the ethnic status of mental factors, We hope that our research will be a foundation

for more extensive research. It is suggested that in the next research, subjects such as other psychological factors related to the sociocultural environment be considered in the subjects.

Disclosure Statements

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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