

Doctoral dissertation (abstract)

Studies on self-compassion among Japanese welfare professionals

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Abstract

Chapter 1: Review of research on Welfare Professionals

Previous research on welfare professionals has mainly focused on negative aspects of the profession, such as burnout, turnover intentions, and occupational stress. Conventional research focusing on negative influences on welfare professionals' health cannot fully explain their mental and physical health. Identifying and promoting welfare professionals' positive psychological factors is crucial for ensuring that they maintain and improve their physical and mental health and conduct their duties with energy and enthusiasm.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background of Self-Compassion Research and Overview of Empirical Studies

This study investigated self-compassion, which psychology studies have recently focused on as a variable that maintains and improves welfare professionals' well-being and enhances their performance. This chapter reviewed current research on self-compassion and welfare professionals and highlighted the lack of studies on Japanese welfare professionals' self-compassion.

Chapter 3: Purpose and the structure of this study

Knowledge of self-compassion in Japanese welfare professionals is essential. The author designed this study to investigate self-compassion among welfare professionals and associated factors. The study (1) positioned self-compassion within welfare professionals' Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R Model) and examined its relationship with other concepts within the model; (2) developed a scale to assess welfare professionals' self-compassion for their clients; (3) investigated the relationship between welfare professionals' self-compassion and their compassion for their clients and identified the impact of compassion on welfare professionals, and (4) developed an intervention plan to increase welfare professionals' self-compassion.

Chapter 4: Applying the JD-R Model to welfare professionals (Study 1)

Study 1 examined the influence of self-compassion on burnout and work engagement based on the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R Model) by positioning self-compassion as a personal resource within this model. The author used structural equation modeling to evaluate the model. The results indicated that the model had a satisfactory fit to self-compassion as an individual resource. Furthermore, self-compassion had a positive effect on work engagement and a negative impact on burnout. These findings suggest that increasing welfare professionals' self-compassion could prevent burnout and promote work engagement.

Chapter 5: Developing and validating the Compassionate Practice Scale for Japanese Welfare

Professionals (Study 2)

Study 2 developed a new tool—the Compassion Practice Scale for Japanese Welfare Professionals (CPWP) - to assess welfare professionals' compassion for their clients. The results of exploratory factor analysis revealed five subfactors. The CPWP showed a strong correlation with caring for others and a moderate association with work engagement and other-directed responses (Cronbach's $a = 0.96$). In addition, the CPWP had a moderate correlation with work engagement and other-directed responses and a weak correlation with self-compassion. These findings suggest that the CPWP has excellent internal consistency and validity, demonstrating its suitability for assessing welfare professionals' compassionate practices with clients.

Chapter 6: Welfare professionals' compassion for clients focusing on occupational well-being (Study 3)

Study 3 investigated factors associated with CPWP developed in Study 2. The previous study indicated that healthcare professionals' high self-compassion was associated with increased compassion for their patients. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between self-compassion and CPWP among Japanese welfare professionals. There is insufficient knowledge of positive psychological factors' effect on welfare professionals. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between occupational well-being and job performance. The results showed that self-compassion was positively correlated with CPWP and occupational well-being and negatively correlated with secondary symptoms, including psychological distress and psychiatric and physical symptoms.

Chapter 7: Interventions to improve self-compassion among welfare professionals.

Chapter 7 describes developing a new intervention program to increase the self-compassion of young Japanese welfare professionals based on a review of previous self-compassion interventions. The program consisted of six 90-minute sessions to accommodate young welfare professionals' busy schedules. The program consisted of three key topics: (1) psychoeducation, including examining welfare professionals' challenging circumstances and instructions on occupational stress; (2) practical learning that included loving-kindness meditation; and (3) supplementary learning with homework to facilitate applying session material to participants' daily lives.

Chapter 8: General discussions

Chapter 8 presents a comprehensive discussion that includes the study's objectives, a summary of its empirical findings, and a discussion of its implications, limitations, prospects, and conclusions. This study is significant for (1) increasing our understanding of welfare professionals' positive psychological factors; (2) expanding knowledge of Japanese welfare professionals' self-compassion;

(3) Demonstrating that welfare professionals' self-compassion can increase their compassion for clients, and (4) proposing an intervention program for improving self-compassion in young welfare professionals, who have a high turnover rate. In addition, the study indicated the need to conduct future research in different welfare fields. The study also revealed the need for longitudinal studies. Welfare professionals aim to enhance their clients' well-being through daily work, alleviate their distress, and provide compassion. This study suggests that welfare professionals' directing these activities at the self will ultimately benefit their clients.