



## Short Communication

## The development and validation of the Lovingkindness-Compassion Scale

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## ABSTRACT

This study was to examine the construct of Lovingkindness-Compassion and to development of the Lovingkindness-Compassion Scale (LCS). Five Buddhist monks were interviewed for a definition of lovingkindness-compassion. Based on their responses, potential items related to the LCS were created. This study analyzed the validity and reliability of the LCS in a sample of 469 university students. The results showed a three-factor structure using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) as well as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA): compassion, lovingkindness, and self-centeredness. Also, the results indicated that the LCS was significantly correlated with self-compassion, compassionate love, social connectedness, empathy and satisfaction with life. This study supported the reliability and validity of the LCS to measure lovingkindness-compassion.

## 1. Introduction

A number of researchers paid attention to compassion as a protective factor of mental health (e.g., Krieger, Altenstein, Baettig, Doerig, & Holtforth, 2013; Mongrain, Chin, & Shapira, 2011). Compassion has been reported to be associated with a number of potential positive outcomes including decreased depression symptoms and rumination (Krieger et al., 2013) and increased well-being (Mongrain et al., 2011). Compassion is not only sensitive feelings toward a person who is suffering, but also motivation to help them (Cho, 2014; Gilbert, 2010; Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010). Researchers tried to define compassion in their studies, but the concepts of compassion were slightly different from each other (see Strauss et al., 2016). Particularly, the Buddhist viewpoints of it have been insufficiently studied.

In the Buddhist perspective, compassion and loving-kindness are parts of the four immeasurable minds (also referred to Brahnaviharas; Buddhaghosa, 2005). Both are inextricably linked to each other and represent almost identical states of mind (Moon, 2012). However, compassion and loving-kindness are slightly different in their concepts; therefore, they need to be understood separately. According to Theravada Buddhist view, loving-kindness (mettā) is a feeling of fondness for oneself and others with warmth (Buddhaghosa, 2005; Cho, 2014) and compassion (karuṇā) involves being sensitive to a person who is suffering and being motivated to help them (Buddhaghosa, 2005; Cho, 2014; Gilbert, 2010; Goetz et al., 2010). In addition, the expression “lovingkindness-compassion” is more than just the sum of each concept.

It is based on the core of Buddhism theory, in which people are connected with the same condition of life and share a universality. Therefore, lovingkindness-compassion is a boundless state of mind rather than an obsession with any specific person or anger with anyone. Even though some researchers have been using the term compassion instead of lovingkindness-compassion, within the Buddhist conceptualization, we defined lovingkindness-compassion as a feeling of being touched by a person's suffering, wanting to help them (compassion), and wishing them to be happy (loving-kindness), which arises from a deep insight that all beings are connected (universality) (Buddhaghosa, 2005; Cho, 2014). From this idea, we expected three factors (loving-kindness, compassion and universality) for lovingkindness-compassion. Given the Buddhist tradition, the aims of this study were to develop a Lovingkindness-Compassion Scale after defining the concepts of lovingkindness-compassion and to examine its validity and reliability. The proposed name for this scale is the “Lovingkindness-Compassion Scale” (LCS).

## 2. Methods

## 2.1. Participants and procedures

The study procedures were approved by the first author's university Institutional Review Board (IRB; YUHS-25-14-017). The Data were collected from 469 university students (338 female, 129 male, 2 unreported), mean age 28.99 years ( $SD = 11.8$ ). They were recruited from

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psychology classes in three cities in South Korea. They voluntarily completed surveys in a classroom setting. The data from a subset of the sample ( $n = 230$ ) was used for the EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis). The data from another subset of the sample ( $n = 239$ ) was used for the CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) and examined the validation and reliability of the LCS.

## 2.2. Measures

### 2.2.1. Lovingkindness Compassion Scale items

From the interview with five specialists in Theravada Buddhism (two monks and three learned priests) and literature, a large pool of preliminary items was created. Those items were examined and discussed by the experts to verify the validity of the content, and finally fifty-five potential items were included in this study. Participants were instructed to indicate how much they agreed with what was stated in each of the items on a scale of 1 (not at all true for me) to 5 (very true for me).

### 2.2.2. Lovingkindness Compassion Scale (LCS)

The 15-item of the LCS was administered with sample2 ( $n = 239$ ).

### 2.2.3. Compassionate Love Scale (CLS)

The CLS was developed by Sprecher and Fehr (2005) and it has two versions (one measures the compassionate love toward close others and the other measures the compassionate mind toward all humankind). In this study, the latter (targeting strangers and humanity) was used (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

### 2.2.4. Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

The SCS (Neff, 2003) was used to measure self-compassion. It was composed of 26 items and 6 subscales: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

### 2.2.5. Social Connectedness Scale-revised (SCS-R)

The SCS-R was a revised version of the social connectedness and social assurance scale (Lee & Robbins, 1995). It was composed of 20 items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.93$ ) and employed to measure the social connection in relationships (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001).

### 2.2.6. Basic Empathy Scale (BES)

The BES was developed for assessing the empathic ability in adolescents (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). It was composed of 20 items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.84$ ) with two subscales (affective empathy, cognitive empathy).

### 2.2.7. Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)

The SWLS (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) was used in this study to measure the degree of overall life satisfaction. The SWLS was composed of 5 items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.90$ ).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Before conducting the EFA, eighteen items were selected to conduct the EFA by some criteria (Safren, Turk, & Heimberg, 1998). The value of the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and Bartlett was suitable for the factor analysis ( $0.80, p < 0.001$ ). An oblique rotation was investigated to identify the factor structure (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In light of the criteria (Kim, Kim, & Hong, 2009) and the possible interpretations of the items, it was decided that the three-factor model was adequate in this study.

Those items with loadings  $> 0.30$  and having a cross loading  $> 0.10$  were selected (Um & Cho, 2005). Three items (13, 35, 40) did not

meet these criteria and were excluded. Several items (7, 25, 34) did not meet these criteria, but were retained because the authors unanimously considered that removing them would reduce the content validity of the scale in light of conceptualization. In addition, item (34) with a cross loading was selected as factor2 according to the authors' consensus. As a result, a total of fifteen items were included in the LCS. According to the concept of loving-kindness and compassion, the three factors were labeled as compassion, lovingkindness and self-centeredness.

### 3.2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

All the data from sample2 was analyzed by the CFA using AMOS 18 to confirm the factor structure of the LCS. First, the missing values were estimated by the EM algorithm, which is the same as that used in the EFA. Then the CFA was conducted. As a result, the three-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 151.6, df = 85$ ) was a suitable fit (TLI = 0.915, CFI = 0.931, RMSEA = 0.057).

### 3.3. Validity

We examined the correlation of the scores on the LCS with those of other related scales to investigate its concurrent and convergent validity. The SCS ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.001$ ) and CLS ( $r = 0.63, p < 0.001$ ), which were developed to measure compassion, have moderate correlation with the LCS.

The LCS was significantly correlated with BES ( $r = 0.36, p < 0.001$ ) and SWLS ( $r = 0.47, p < 0.001$ ). Specifically, lovingkindness, which is a subscale of the LCS, was significantly correlated with SCS-R ( $r = 0.57, p < 0.001$ ), BES ( $r = 0.21, p < 0.01$ ), and SWLS ( $r = 0.58, p < 0.001$ ). Compassion was positively correlated with SCS-R ( $r = 0.37, p < 0.001$ ), BES ( $r = 0.41, p < 0.001$ ), and SWLS ( $r = 0.32, p < 0.001$ ). Self-centeredness had negative correlation with SCS-R ( $r = -0.49, p < 0.001$ ), BES ( $r = -0.26, p < 0.001$ ), and SWLS ( $r = -0.24, p < 0.001$ ).

### 3.4. Internal consistency and test-retest reliability

The LCS demonstrated suitable internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha for the 15-item LCS was 0.85. Each factor demonstrated suitable internal consistency as well: compassion 0.78, self-centeredness 0.72, and lovingkindness 0.75. The test-retest reliability of the LCS was examined over a 3-week interval and was 0.79.

## 4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop a lovingkindness compassion scale based on the Buddhist perspective and to examine its validity and reliability. The results indicated that the current 15 items of the LCS with three factors (compassion, loving-kindness and self-centeredness) are reliable and valid. Also, the results showed that the internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the LCS were adequate. It suggested that the LCS is a relatively stable configuration concept over time.

The contribution of this work is developing the LCS in terms of Buddhism. Our definition of lovingkindness-compassion reflects the Buddhist view on considering the connection with each other. As predicted, lovingkindness and compassion were included in the LCS. This result is consistent with the Buddhist view on lovingkindness-compassion (Buddhaghosa, 2005; Cho, 2014; Mesan, Kim, Cha, Lee, & Park, 2015). As well, previous studies suggested that practicing lovingkindness and compassion meditation raised social connectedness (Boellinghaus, Jones, & Hutton, 2013; Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008; Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008) and enhanced the neural systems thought to be important for empathy and compassion (Mascaro, Darcher, Negi, & Raison, 2015).

However, universality was not included in the LCS. Instead of

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