




# Comparison of the Effects of Help-Seeking Training and Self-Compassion Training on Social Competence, Achievement Motivation, and Academic Resilience

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The aim of the present study was to compare the effects of help-seeking training and self-compassion training on students' social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience.

**Methods and Materials:** The present study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest and follow-up, along with a control group. The statistical population of this study included all female high school students in Sabzevar during the 2021-2022 academic year (350 individuals). The sample consisted of 45 students selected through purposive sampling and randomly assigned to three groups: help-seeking training (n=15), self-compassion training (n=15), and control group (n=15). Data were collected using the Social Competence Questionnaire (Felner, 1990), Achievement Motivation Questionnaire (Hermans, 1970), and Academic Resilience Questionnaire (Martin & Marsh, 2008). The help-seeking sessions followed the Nelson-Lee Gall model (1981) and were conducted in 10 weekly 90-minute sessions. The self-compassion training sessions were based on Gilbert's model (2009) and also conducted in 10 weekly 90-minute sessions. Data analysis was performed using repeated measures ANOVA and SPSS-26 software.

**Findings:** Results indicated that both help-seeking training and self-compassion training were effective in improving social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience ( $P < 0.01$ ). Additionally, these results showed that self-compassion training was more effective than help-seeking training in enhancing social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience ( $P < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusion:** It can be concluded that help-seeking training and self-compassion training are effective in improving social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience.

**Keywords:** *Help-seeking, Self-compassion, Social competence, Achievement motivation, Academic resilience.*

## 1. Introduction

Academic success is one of the most significant concerns of educational systems in all societies. The academic achievement of students in any society indicates the success of the educational system in achieving its goals and addressing individual needs (Ferrer et al., 2022). Various factors in the process of students' academic activities can influence academic performance, leading them to exhibit higher academic achievement. One such factor is social competence (Persich et al., 2019). Social competence refers to possessing the knowledge, skills, and abilities that elevate an individual above the average social level. Every person's life has both individual and social aspects that are intertwined and mutually influential, making it impossible to separate them. One cannot be successful in social life while failing in personal life (Santos Rego et al., 2021). Social competence is the ability to respond appropriately and flexibly in social situations and accurately assess one's social standing, formed based on past social interactions (Kimeto, 2021). Social competence encompasses an individual's abilities to establish and maintain effective and positive relationships with family and others, including self-regulation skills, social cognition skills, and positive communication behaviors. It is the ability to meet interpersonal needs in a manner acceptable to society (Singh et al., 2020).

Achievement motivation is a critical factor influencing individuals' inclination toward studying and learning, emphasizing the role of goals in students' success and failure. This factor plays a fundamental role in learning, driving behaviors that lead to better and more effective learning (Krou et al., 2021). Achievement motivation is the desire or enthusiasm to attain success and engage in activities where success depends on personal effort and ability (Ferriz-Valero et al., 2020). Results indicate that self-regulated learning strategies effectively enhance the academic achievement motivation of students with learning disorders (Gumasing & Castro, 2023). Achievement motivation is especially crucial for scholars and academic students, providing the necessary drive to complete tasks successfully, reach goals, or achieve a certain level of competence in their work, ultimately leading to successful learning and academic progress (Sabanal et al., 2023). Therefore, motivation explains the reasons behind individuals' behaviors and why they act in a particular way. Motivated behavior is characterized by energy, direction, and persistence (Abdelrahman, 2020).

Improving the quality of education is so important that it has attracted the attention of many psychologists to solve students' learning problems, leading to transformations in this field. One concept that emerged from these transformations in psychology is academic resilience (Thomas & Allen, 2021). Resilience means the ability to recover quickly from problems, obstacles, and depression. Academic resilience refers to a student's ability to overcome difficulties, obstacles, and challenges commonly encountered in everyday academic life (Granziera et al., 2022). Academic resilience reflects academic resilience within the framework of positive psychology, focusing on positive processes in academic life and enhancing students' mental health (Datu & Yang, 2021). From this perspective, resilience refers to students' ability to overcome typical academic life challenges such as low grades, exam pressure, difficult assignments, negative teacher-student feedback, competition, and loss of motivation (Bostwick et al., 2022). Martin and Marsh (2006) showed that academic resilience significantly predicts enjoyment of school, class attendance, self-esteem, reduced school absenteeism, completion of assignments, and positive academic goals, indicating a passion for education (Martin & Marsh, 2006).

Students encounter various problems during their academic careers that they cannot solve alone and may sometimes feel ineffective in addressing them (Blakeslee et al., 2023). In such situations, some students may seek help from others to solve their academic problems or improve their academic performance through additional study and effort. Many studies emphasize the effective and appropriate use of others as a problem-solving and learning method (Banasova et al., 2023). Help-seeking strategies can be effective in this context. This educational strategy holds a special place as it elucidates the achievement of educational goals in academic performance, academic motivation, and managing stressful educational situations, while also bringing new theoretical and practical challenges (Moloisane-Ledwaba, 2022). Help-seeking is considered a learning strategy that allows students to identify their learning problems and academic stress (Fullmer et al., 2021). Help-seeking strategies can lead to significant positive changes in solving academic problems. Equipping learners with help-seeking strategies can yield beneficial results in all academic situations, resulting from increased efficacy and control over stress resources (Davies et al., 2022).

Today, in the broad field of psychology, many therapeutic methods exist to enhance social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience, including Compassion-

Focused Therapy (CFT). The concept of self-compassion intervention was introduced to psychology by Neff (2003, 2016), representing a positive and constructive inner dialogue that reduces self-blame, rumination, and inner conflict while fostering inner peace and realistic perspectives on assigned tasks (Sinclair et al., 2021). While Neff (2003) introduced the concept of self-compassion to psychology (Neff, 2003), Gilbert (2009), inspired by cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques, developmental psychology, social psychology, neuroscience, and Buddhist philosophy, introduced self-compassion training as a third-wave therapeutic approach (Gilbert, 2009). Gilbert (2009) believes that self-compassion training is a multifaceted model encompassing emotional, cognitive, and motivational aspects, based on three systems: threat and self-protection, drive and excitement, and soothing and satisfaction, with the ultimate goal of nurturing a compassionate mind (Gilbert, 2009).

Given that help-seeking training and self-compassion training are among the psychological variables influencing the learning process in students, the present study is crucial in filling this research gap and providing necessary knowledge in this area. This study aims to enhance the existing knowledge by examining whether there is a difference between help-seeking training and self-compassion training in terms of their impact on social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience among female high school students in Sabzevar.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This applied research employed a quasi-experimental design with pretest-posttest and follow-up, along with a control group. The statistical population consisted of all female high school students in Sabzevar during the 2021-2022 academic year (350 individuals). The sample included 45 female high school students selected through purposive and convenient sampling and randomly assigned to three groups (two experimental groups and one control group). They were randomly assigned to the self-compassion training group and the control group. After the sessions, both groups completed the research questionnaires again. Using G-Power software and based on an effect size of 0.25, alpha of 0.05, and power of 0.80 in two groups, the minimum sample size required was 14 participants per group, totaling 28 participants. Considering the potential dropout based on previous studies, a dropout rate of 2 participants per group

was anticipated, making the total sample size 30 participants (15 in the experimental group and 15 in the control group). The control group did not receive any training.

Selection criteria for the study included female high school students, willingness to participate, absence of serious medical conditions, no major psychiatric disorders, and no substance dependence. Exclusion criteria included psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, failure to answer all questionnaire items, and more than two session absences.

Initially, volunteers for the study were identified, and 45 participants were randomly selected. An introductory session explained the research conditions and objectives. Ethical considerations were addressed, informing participants that participation was voluntary, they could withdraw at any time, and their information would remain confidential. After obtaining written consent, participants were assessed using research tools. Random assignment and matching were performed, placing subjects in two experimental and one control group. Posttests were administered after the sessions, and a follow-up test was conducted two months later.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Social Competence

This questionnaire was developed and standardized by Perandin (2006) based on Felner's four-dimensional model (1990). It includes four dimensions: behavioral skills, cognitive skills, emotional skills, and motivational orientations. Each item has seven options: strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, neutral, somewhat disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree, requiring respondents to select the option that best reflects their feelings and opinions. The questionnaire, designed for adolescents, contains 47 items. Its reliability and validity were tested in Tehran on 50 participants. Internal consistency and subscale reliability were assessed using Cronbach's alpha. In a study by Piri et al. (2011), the questionnaire's content, face, and criterion validity were deemed suitable, with Cronbach's alpha above 0.70 (Khalajzadeh & Hashemi, 2019; Safari et al., 2021; Veisiy et al., 2021). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was 0.78.

#### 2.2.2. Achievement Motivation

This questionnaire consists of 29 incomplete sentences, with completion options provided. Higher scores indicate higher achievement motivation. Each response is scored

between 1 and 4. Twelve items (1, 4, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 20, 23, 27, 28, 29) are negatively worded, scored 1 to 4 for options a to d, respectively. Seventeen items (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26) are positively worded, scored 4 to 1 for options a to d, respectively. The total score ranges from 29 to 116. Hermans validated the content using previous research on achievement motivation and calculated item correlations with achievement-oriented behaviors, ranging from 0.57 to 0.30. Reliability was assessed using test-retest and Cronbach's alpha, yielding 0.84 and 0.82, respectively, after three weeks (Ahmadi et al., 2020). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was 0.79.

### 2.2.3. Academic Resilience

Developed by Martin and Marsh (2008), this questionnaire includes six items rated on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, scored 5 to 1, respectively. Higher scores indicate greater resilience, with total scores ranging from 6 to 30. Previous studies confirmed its validity, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 reported by Martin and Marsh. In Karimi Gharotmani's (2012) study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.87, with criterion validity (0.56) established through correlation with the Academic Engagement Questionnaire (Hayat & Dehsorkhi, 2021). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.77.

## 2.3. Intervention

### 2.3.1. Help-Seeking Training

This intervention aims to enhance students' ability to seek help effectively by focusing on understanding the nature of help-seeking, recognizing its necessity, identifying available resources, diagnosing problems, building self-confidence, understanding help-seeking strategies, practicing questioning techniques, and refining role specialization and comprehension skills. The training consists of ten structured sessions, each targeting specific aspects of help-seeking behavior (Banasova et al., 2023; Blakeslee et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2022; Fullmer et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2024; Moloisane-Ledwaba, 2022).

#### Session 1: Definition and Nature of Help-Seeking

In this session, participants are introduced to the concept of help-seeking, its definition, and its significance. The discussion focuses on how help-seeking is a crucial skill for academic and personal growth, breaking down misconceptions about seeking help as a sign of weakness.

#### Session 2: Recognizing the Necessity of Help-Seeking

This session emphasizes the importance of help-seeking in overcoming academic and personal challenges. Participants learn to recognize situations where seeking help is essential and beneficial. The necessity of timely and appropriate help-seeking is discussed to prevent problems from escalating.

#### Session 3: Identifying Available Resources

Participants are taught to identify and utilize available resources effectively. This includes understanding the social networks and support systems around them, such as teachers, peers, family, and community resources. Emphasis is placed on recognizing the right sources of help for different issues.

#### Session 4: Problem Diagnosis

In this session, participants learn how to analyze and diagnose the problems they face. The focus is on developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills to accurately identify the nature and scope of their issues before seeking help.

#### Session 5: Self-Confidence and Overcoming Negative Perceptions

This session aims to boost participants' self-confidence and help them overcome negative perceptions about seeking help. Strategies for self-empowerment and building a positive self-image are discussed, encouraging participants to view help-seeking as a proactive and positive step.

#### Session 6: Understanding Help-Seeking

Participants are introduced to various help-seeking signals and behaviors. The session explores how to effectively communicate the need for help and the importance of clear and direct communication in obtaining the necessary support.

#### Session 7: Exploring Help-Seeking Strategies

This session covers different strategies for seeking help. Participants learn about various approaches and techniques, such as direct requests, indirect hints, and collaborative problem-solving, and how to choose the appropriate strategy based on the situation.

#### Session 8: Practicing Questioning Techniques

The focus of this session is on developing effective questioning skills. Participants practice asking clear, concise, and purposeful questions to gather the information they need and facilitate better understanding and support from others.

#### Session 9: Role Specialization

Participants learn about the specialization of roles in the help-seeking process. This session emphasizes understanding the roles of helpers and help-seekers, and how



to effectively navigate these roles to achieve the desired outcomes.

#### Session 10: Reviewing Comprehension Skills

In the final session, participants review their understanding and application of help-seeking skills. The session includes activities to assess comprehension and retention of the skills learned, ensuring participants are well-prepared to implement these strategies in real-life situations.

### 2.3.2. *Self-Compassion Training*

This intervention is designed to foster self-compassion in students through understanding self-compassion principles, recognizing self-critical behaviors, accepting mistakes, enduring difficult situations, appreciating oneself, creating positive feelings, understanding compassionate behaviors, recognizing conflicting emotions, self-acceptance, and applying learned concepts in daily life. The training includes ten sessions, each focusing on different aspects of self-compassion (Ensanimehr et al., 2022; Gates et al., 2022; Gilbert, 2009; Hosseini Motlagh et al., 2022; Khalajzadeh & Hashemi, 2019; Neff, 2003; Safari et al., 2021).

#### Session 1: Introduction to Self-Compassion Principles

Participants are introduced to the fundamental principles of self-compassion and the overall therapy approach. This session establishes a connection and familiarizes participants with the concepts of self-compassion and empathy. The session includes a rhythmic breathing exercise for relaxation as a homework practice.

#### Session 2: Recognizing Self-Critical Behaviors

This session educates participants about self-critical behaviors and their types. Participants are encouraged to explore their personalities as critics or compassion-givers, understand the causes and consequences of self-criticism, and learn strategies to reduce it. Homework involves responding to questions about self-reaction patterns.

#### Session 3: Accepting Mistakes and Forgiving Oneself

Participants learn to accept their mistakes without judgment, understand why mistakes happen, and recognize the disadvantages and consequences of not forgiving oneself. Strategies for self-forgiveness during errors are provided. The homework involves maintaining a journal of daily mistakes.

#### Session 4: Enduring Difficult Situations

This session teaches mindfulness and related skills, including body scanning and breathing exercises, to help participants endure and overcome challenges. Acceptance of failures and understanding that others also face difficulties

are emphasized. Daily self-compassion notes are assigned as homework.

#### Session 5: Self-Appreciation

Participants learn the value of self-worth, the disadvantages of low self-esteem, and methods to boost self-esteem. They practice self-appreciation by listing ten positive qualities about themselves as a homework exercise.

#### Session 6: Creating Positive Feelings

This session focuses on creating compassionate images and relaxation through mental imagery (e.g., colors, places, compassionate features). Participants learn various styles and methods of expressing compassion and integrating them into daily life. Mental imagery exercises are assigned for practice.

#### Session 7: Understanding Compassionate Behaviors

Participants explore the concepts of compassion, including wisdom, attention, logical thinking, warmth, support, and kindness. They learn self-compassion traits such as motivation, sensitivity, empathy, and kindness. Writing affectionate statements to oneself is assigned as homework.

#### Session 8: Recognizing Conflicting Emotions

This session involves teaching participants about the internal dialogue between three defined selves and establishing connections between different aspects of their being. The Gestalt empty chair technique is practiced to heighten awareness of conflicting thoughts and feelings.

#### Session 9: Self-Acceptance

Participants learn to write a compassionate letter to themselves, a practice aimed at fostering self-acceptance. Homework involves writing such letters, helping participants internalize compassion and self-understanding.

#### Session 10: Reviewing Learned Concepts

In the final session, participants review and receive feedback on the principles taught throughout the training. The session includes a summary of the past lessons and revisiting previous exercises to reinforce the application of self-compassion strategies in everyday life.

### 2.4. *Data analysis*

Data were analyzed using SPSS-26 software, employing descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (mixed two-factor repeated measures ANOVA and Bonferroni post hoc tests).

### 3. Findings and Results

The descriptive findings of this study include statistical indicators such as mean, standard deviation, and the number

of sample subjects, as well as frequency and percentage tables for all the variables studied in this research, presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Research Variables in Experimental and Control Groups*

Variable	Group	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Follow-up Mean (SD)
Social Competence	Help-seeking Training	188.26 (44.17)	220.06 (55.98)	216.32 (51.24)
	Self-compassion Training	190.33 (48.35)	243.86 (62.27)	232.30 (71.38)
	Control	189.00 (40.01)	188.60 (39.71)	187.30 (39.39)
Achievement Motivation	Help-seeking Training	78.40 (18.78)	84.93 (20.26)	82.80 (19.54)
	Self-compassion Training	76.20 (17.64)	89.87 (19.90)	90.86 (18.06)
	Control	79.00 (16.37)	78.06 (17.49)	77.24 (17.43)
Academic Resilience	Help-seeking Training	24.40 (4.61)	29.93 (6.77)	30.00 (6.91)
	Self-compassion Training	23.46 (4.99)	35.46 (5.86)	35.20 (5.70)
	Control	24.80 (4.62)	24.93 (4.90)	24.38 (4.76)

To examine the significance of differences in social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience scores among the help-seeking training, self-compassion training, and control groups, repeated measures ANOVA was used. Before conducting the repeated measures ANOVA, the assumptions were checked using the M Box, Mauchly's sphericity, and Levene's tests. Since the M Box test was not significant for any research variable, the homogeneity of covariance matrices assumption was met.

Additionally, the non-significance of the Levene's test for any variable indicated that the assumption of equal variances between groups was satisfied, and the error variance of the dependent variable was equal across all groups. Finally, the results of Mauchly's sphericity test showed that this test was also not significant for the research variables, thus the assumption of sphericity was met (Mauchly's  $W = 0.81$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 2**

*Results of Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)*

Effect	Test Name	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Eta Squared
Time	Pillai's Trace	0.86	88.95	2	42	0.001	0.86
	Wilks' Lambda	0.13	88.95	2	42	0.001	0.86
	Hotelling's Trace	6.58	88.95	2	42	0.001	0.86
	Roy's Largest Root	6.58	88.95	2	42	0.001	0.86
Time*Group	Pillai's Trace	0.67	28.43	2	42	0.001	0.67
	Wilks' Lambda	0.32	28.43	2	42	0.001	0.67
	Hotelling's Trace	2.10	28.43	2	42	0.001	0.67
	Roy's Largest Root	2.10	28.43	2	42	0.001	0.67

As shown in Table 2, the significance levels of all tests were significant at the 0.0001 level, indicating that the mean scores for the help-seeking training, self-compassion training, and control groups differ significantly in terms of improving social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience. Notably, Wilks' Lambda test with a

value of 0.32 and  $F = 28.43$  indicates a significant difference in the effectiveness of help-seeking training and self-compassion training on improving social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience between the experimental and control groups at the 0.0001 level.

**Table 3**

*Repeated Measures ANOVA for Comparing Pre-test, Post-test, and Follow-up Scores of Social Competence, Achievement Motivation, and Academic Resilience in Experimental and Control Groups*

Scale	Source of Effect	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Social Competence	Time	25.62	2	12.81	70.48	0.001	0.71
	Time*Group	12.86	2	6.43	35.39	0.001	0.55
	Group	124.40	1	124.40	49.86	0.001	0.51
Achievement Motivation	Time	170.60	1.45	117.57	175.61	0.001	0.86
	Time*Group	116.86	1.45	80.54	120.30	0.001	0.81
	Group	211.60	1	211.60	3.53	0.07	0.11
Academic Resilience	Time	87.62	2	43.81	164.78	0.001	0.85
	Time*Group	37.48	2	18.74	70.50	0.001	0.71
	Group	113.61	1	113.61	65.25	0.001	0.63

The results in Table 3 indicate that the ANOVA for within-group (time) and between-group factors is significant. These results suggest that, considering the effect of the group, the effect of time alone is also significant.

Additionally, the interaction between group and time is significant. Thus, the main hypothesis is confirmed. Bonferroni post hoc test was used for pairwise comparison of groups.

**Table 4**

*Bonferroni Post Hoc Test Results for Comparing Social Competence, Achievement Motivation, and Academic Resilience*

Variable	Group (I)	Group (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Social Competence	Help-seeking	Self-compassion	-23.80	0.001
		Control	31.46	0.001
	Self-compassion	Control	55.26	0.001
Achievement Motivation	Help-seeking	Self-compassion	-4.94	0.001
		Control	6.87	0.001
	Self-compassion	Control	11.81	0.001
Academic Resilience	Help-seeking	Self-compassion	-5.53	0.001
		Control	5.00	0.001
	Self-compassion	Control	10.53	0.001

The results in Table 4 indicate that the scores for social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience in the help-seeking training and self-compassion training groups are higher in the post-test phase than in the control group. In other words, both help-seeking training and self-compassion training effectively improved social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience. Additionally, these results show that social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience were higher in the self-compassion training group than in the help-seeking training group.

competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience were higher in the self-compassion training group than in the help-seeking training group. These results align with the prior studies (Davies et al., 2022; Ensanimehr et al., 2022; Gilbert, 2009; Li et al., 2024; Miller et al., 2024).

Self-compassion training can significantly impact female students' social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience. This type of training helps students be kinder to themselves, trust themselves, and face academic challenges more constructively. Self-compassion training can help students feel more comfortable in social settings. It reduces negative reactions to failures and criticisms, encouraging them to seek ways to improve and progress (Gates et al., 2022). Self-compassion training can increase students' motivation to achieve their academic goals. By learning to be self-compassionate, they can move past negative experiences and look to the future with a positive outlook. This training helps students effectively cope with

**4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings indicate that both help-seeking training and self-compassion training effectively improved social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience. Furthermore, these results suggest that social

academic failures and challenges, turning failures into learning opportunities, thereby increasing their likelihood of persistence and success in their academic journey.

Compassion-based education and therapy teach individuals to expand kindness, self-understanding, and avoid excessive self-criticism and negative judgments about themselves and their situations. This training fosters self-compassion and acceptance of life's challenges, enhancing interpersonal relationships, self-regulation skills, and efforts to maintain psychological balance (Fute et al., 2022). Increased feelings of intimacy resulting from compassion training boost others' support, self-esteem, and the pursuit of a purposeful life. Individuals with high self-compassion are kinder to themselves and others, seek to understand life events, and compassion-based therapy facilitates positive feedback, handling neutral feedback, and fostering a warm attitude, enhancing emotional connections and social engagement (Matos et al., 2022).

Overall, self-compassion training can help female students increase their social competence, achievement motivation, and academic resilience, leading to greater success in educational and social environments. These trainings can be integrated into personal development and support programs in schools to help students reach their full potential.

Help-seeking training focuses on teaching students how to request help and support from others when needed. This training can help students develop problem-solving skills, build stronger relationships, and increase resilience against challenges. Self-compassion training focuses on practicing self-compassion and kindness. This training can help students boost their self-esteem, combat self-criticism, and cope with stress and anxiety. Research has shown that both help-seeking and self-compassion training can significantly benefit students. For example, one study found that students who participated in help-seeking training had better problem-solving skills and were less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Another study found that students who participated in self-compassion training had higher self-esteem and coped more effectively with stress.

## 5. Limitations & Suggestions

The use of non-random sampling was the most significant limitation of this study. Using questionnaires, which are self-report tools, may introduce response biases. Another limitation of this study was its focus on female high school students in Sabzevar, making it necessary to exercise caution

when generalizing the results to female high school students in other regions and cities. The quasi-experimental design does not possess the advantages of true experimental designs. The presence of unwanted variables often threatens the internal and external validity of research. Although controlling and eliminating such factors in behavioral research is impossible, the researcher aimed to predict and identify these factors as much as possible.

It is recommended that future research use random sampling methods for better generalizability of the results. Researchers should conduct this study on female high school students in other cities and compare the results with the current study to discuss generalizability and effectiveness with more precision and confidence. Considering that the present study is quantitative, it is suggested that future research adopt a qualitative approach (grounded theory based on semi-structured interviews). Additionally, researchers should examine the effectiveness of help-seeking and self-compassion training methods on students of different academic levels, stratified by gender. Given the gender differences in most characteristics, the results may vary, allowing for the design and implementation of tailored programs for each group (male and female).

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

## Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed in this article.

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