

A Structural Model of Compassionate Love for Humanity Based on Narcissistic Status: The Mediating Role of Self-Differentiation

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E d i t o r

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R e v i e w e r s

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph beginning “Compassionate love is conceptually related to, but distinct from, self-compassion,” the manuscript correctly acknowledges the distinction between the two constructs; however, the theoretical mechanism connecting self-compassion literature to compassionate love for humanity remains somewhat indirect. The authors should explicitly explain why evidence concerning self-compassion is expected to inform a model whose outcome is other-directed compassionate love. The discussion should identify the shared mechanisms, such as reduced defensive self-focus, emotional regulation, common humanity, and non-overidentification, while also emphasizing that evidence concerning self-compassion cannot automatically be generalized to compassion directed toward others.

The Introduction states that “Narcissism is one construct that may be particularly relevant to these processes,” but the theoretical rationale for positioning narcissistic status as the exogenous predictor should be developed more rigorously. The manuscript should specify whether the proposed association is grounded primarily in deficits in empathy, entitlement, self-esteem regulation, interpersonal exploitation, rejection sensitivity, identity disturbance, or emotion dysregulation. These mechanisms are currently dispersed across several paragraphs. A more integrated theoretical framework explaining why both

grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are expected to relate to compassionate love would substantially strengthen the conceptual model.

The manuscript should reconsider the treatment of missing data described in the sentence “Missing values were replaced using the median of the corresponding variable.” Median substitution is a relatively crude approach that can reduce variance, attenuate correlations, and distort standard errors, particularly in SEM. The authors should report the overall percentage of missingness, examine the pattern and mechanism of missing data, and preferably use a more defensible method such as full-information maximum likelihood or multiple imputation. If median substitution is retained, its rationale and potential statistical consequences should be acknowledged as a limitation.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph describing grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, the sentence “Grandiose narcissism is generally characterized by entitlement, superiority, self-enhancement, dominance, and exploitativeness, whereas vulnerable narcissism involves insecurity, shame, hypersensitivity to criticism, unstable self-worth, and heightened emotional reactivity” is theoretically useful, but the manuscript should explain why both dimensions are treated as components of “narcissistic status” rather than as separate predictors with potentially different mechanisms. Given the distinct phenomenology of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, the authors should justify whether they conceptualize narcissistic status as an overarching latent construct, two correlated dimensions, or two independent observed predictors.

The Introduction proposes that self-differentiation may act as a mediator, yet the causal ordering requires stronger theoretical justification. In the sentence “Self-differentiation may provide an explanatory bridge between narcissistic tendencies and compassionate love for humanity,” the manuscript assumes that narcissistic characteristics precede or influence self-differentiation. However, Bowenian theory generally conceptualizes differentiation as a relatively enduring developmental characteristic emerging from family and relational processes. The authors should therefore justify why the model specifies narcissism → self-differentiation → compassionate love rather than self-differentiation → narcissism → compassionate love, or acknowledge that the proposed direction is theoretically specified but cannot be causally demonstrated by cross-sectional data.

In the Methods section, the sentence “The present study employed a descriptive, cross-sectional correlational design using structural equation modeling” is accurate, but the manuscript should explicitly distinguish between the research design and the statistical modeling strategy. SEM does not transform a cross-sectional correlational design into a causal design. The authors should ensure that terms such as “effect,” particularly in the Findings and Discussion, are used cautiously or replaced with “association,” “path coefficient,” or “structural relationship” unless the directional language is clearly described as model-based rather than causal.

In the participant description, the manuscript states that “A total of 300 students were recruited using purposive and convenience sampling procedures.” This requires clarification because purposive sampling and convenience sampling are distinct strategies. The source materials also appear to alternate between these terms. The authors should identify the actual recruitment procedure precisely, explain how eligibility criteria were operationalized, describe the number of universities involved, and report whether recruitment occurred primarily in person, online, or through a combination of both. This information is necessary for evaluating selection bias and sample representativeness.

The demographic results report a mean participant age of 32.20 years despite the sample being described broadly as university students. This is plausible, particularly if graduate students and employed adult learners were included, but the age distribution deserves further scrutiny. The authors should verify the accuracy of the reported mean and standard deviation and, if correct, briefly explain the relatively high mean age for a student sample. Reporting the median and perhaps age categories would also help readers understand whether the distribution reflects a substantial proportion of mature students.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.