



## COMPASSION CHARACTER IN MULTITHEORY PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** This study aims to describe the concept of compassion character which was analyzed based on the perspective theory by Krstin D. Neff, Paul Gilbert, and Elisha Goldstein. This analysis was intended to produce a synthesis formula that comprehensively includes definition, essence, aspect, and indicators of compassion character. This study applied for a literature review with a descriptive analysis technique. The function of this analysis result is as the basis for designing instruments to measure the compassion character more comprehensively and following the Indonesian context.

**Keywords:** compassion character

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## INTRODUCTION

The word “character” comes from the Greek “charassein” which means to engrave or painting, drawing. It is like someone who paints on paper, carves stone or metal, and interpreted as a special characteristic to give a view that the character is a pattern of behavior that is individual and someone's moral circumstance. (Ryan and Karen, 1999: 5).

Character is a personal trait that is relatively stable in individuals which become the basis for high standards skills of values and norms. Individual behavior indicators which reflect the character are piety, self-control, patience, discipline, hard work and tenacious, responsible and honesty, defend the truth, propriety, politeness, obedience to the rules, loyal, democratic, togetherness, deliberation and cooperation, tolerant, orderly, peaceful and non-violent,

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frugal and consistent. These character indicators are contained in the Pancasila noble values as the basis of our country (Prayitno and Khaidir, 2011).

Sudrajat (2011) explains that good character relates to knowing the good, love the good, and act the good. A person who has character will know what is good and what is not good, he will understand the meaning of goodness so that he loves best and will act the good.

The meaning of compassion in the Big Indonesian Dictionary (Ministry of National Education, 2002: 394, and 789) is circumlocution. The definition of the word "love" means feelings of affection or love or love to ...), while the word "affection" means compassion. Therefore, determining the definition of the word compassion should be simultaneous, not separate between love and affection.

The meaning of compassion does not have an ending but compassion is a nature that should be realized towards others throughout life in this world, of course, in Islamic corridors (Wibowo 2008). Following the Prophet's utterance "Man laa yarhaminnaasa laa yarhamhullaah" which means whoever does not love other humans, Allah will not love him. (H.R. Turmudzi). Based on this utterance, it can be concluded that Islam taught that the importance of compassion towards friends, relatives, and their own families, as well as the surrounding environment.

God creates human with compassion so that they also have compassion in themselves. Humans have the nature of nature to have compassion and be able to feel the pain experienced by people around them. Compassion is very closely related to various traits such as warmth, harmony, gentleness, and security based on experiences in early life (Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2005).

Compassion is the basic need of every human being. Maslow in his Hierarchy theory says that there are 5 basic human needs or basic human needs. They are physiological needs, security needs, needs for affection, needs for self-esteem, and self-actualization needs. (Maslow's, 1970).

In the Buddhist faith, love is also called *metta*. The development of love is directed for our self, others, or even all creatures. Love is formulated as the desire to be happy for all creatures without exception (Wowor, 2005). Besides, Dhammasugiri (2004) explains that *Metta* is a sense of brotherhood, friendship, and sacrifice which encourages good desire and sees other creatures like himself.

Compassion is a trait that has been implanted in humans by God Almighty as His creation. Humans who have a good nature, character, and personality will have compassion character for themselves. According to Neff, compassion character is self-compassion which means a form of healthy self-acceptance (Neff, 2003).

Compassion character will give strength to humans with the love which is needed by themselves to get happiness and free from suffering. Compassion character can also help humans not to fall into worse conditions when experiencing an undesirable situation. Leary, Tate, Adams, and Allen (2006) investigate that compassion character is associated with emotional balance rather than self-esteem when individuals have embarrassing situations, receive non-intrusive interpersonal feedback, or remember negative life events in the past.

Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi (in Neff, 2011) stated that individuals who have a compassionate character show psychological strengths relates to positive psychological developments such as happiness, optimism, wisdom, curiosity, exploration motivation, personal initiative, and positive emotions.

The benefits of compassion character for humans certainly also need to be investigated whether there are negative impacts such as reduced motivation, passivity in the individual self, or even over-forgiving and indulging in certain situations. However, Hidayati's research (2018) shows that people who have a high-level compassion character will have high targets for themselves, but do not torture themselves when they are less successful in achieving these targets. Therefore, having a compassionate character on someone's self will help him to achieve health and prosperity in his life. Besides, Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi (in Neff, 2011) state that individuals who have a compassionate character show psychological strengths relate to the development of positive psychology such as happiness, optimism, wisdom, curiosity, exploration motivation, personal initiative, and positive emotions.

Humans need a compassionate character in any condition, not only when they are in severe conditions. Neff and Vonk's (2009) found that compassion character has a unique role in positive emotions such as a sense of coherence and feeling of worthy and acceptable.

Neff (2011) explains that compassion character is the most powerful medium for dealing with difficult situations and emotions so that individuals avoid destructive emotions naturally, negative information gives danger

signals for the brain so that it will automatically produce fight-or-flight responses such as survive or run away. Various benefits and the important role of compassion character in this aspect of life make formulating an understanding of the concept of compassion character. This formulation will be based on the analysis of several theories which have been explained to find synthesis as a comprehensive definition that includes the essence, aspects, and indicators of compassion character.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Description About comparative matrices of compassion character theory can be seen in table 1.

## **METHOD**

This study applied a literature review approach with a descriptive analysis technique based on the sources of self-awareness theory. The theories of compassion character are limited to three theories by different experts. Each expert has a different background in terms of time and compassion character views.

The first theory is Kristin D. Neff's theory about compassion character in the 2003s. The second is Paul Gilbert's theory in the 2005s. The third is Elisha Goldstein's theory in 2015.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The three theories of compassion character which was analyzed in this study are as follows:

1. Kristin D. Neff (2003). Compassion character is one's awareness of others' pain and not avoiding it but trying to bring out the good in himself to alleviate the suffering of that person.
2. Gilbert & Irons (2005). Compassion character is a feeling of forgiveness, empathy, sensitivity, warmth, and patience for all aspects of self include all actions, feelings, thoughts, and impulses.
3. Elisha Goldstein (2015). Compassion character is the ability of the brain to work as an antidepressant by controlling oneself both thought and feeling to obtain happiness.

**Table. 1 Comparative Matrices Of Compassion Character Theory**

No.	Dimension	References			Synthetic
		Kristin D. Neff (2003)	Paul Gilbert (2005)	Elisha Goldstein (2015)	
1.	Definition/Limitation of definition	Compassion character is one's awareness of others' pain and not avoiding it but trying to bring out the good in himself to alleviate the suffering of that person.	Compassion character is a feeling of forgiveness, empathy, sensitivity, warmth, and patience for all aspects of self include all actions, feelings, thoughts, and impulses	Compassion character is the ability of the brain to work as an antidepressant by controlling oneself both thought and feeling to obtain happiness	Compassion character is the kindness of oneself and receive the difficulties and suffering experienced by others and receive one's failures in his life that can be used as a lesson in life to obtain happiness.
2.	Essence	Failure is a life experience	Empathy is a form of compassion	Happiness is the work result of the brain	Compassion is the key to happiness
3.	Aspects	<b>Psychomotor</b> 1. Demonstrating self-kindness 2. Instilling humanity 3. Paying attention to the environment	<b>Affective</b> 1. Self-pity 2. Controlling emotion 3. Forgiving	<b>Cognitive</b> Understanding every problem Rethinking bad habits Changing the way of thinking  <b>Affective</b> Cultivating a sense of compassion  <b>Psychomotor</b> Determining life goals Doing life goals Getting used to being a better person	<b>Cognitive</b> Understanding every problem Rethinking bad habits Changing the way of thinking  <b>Afektif</b> 4. Forgiving self 5. Controlling emotion 6. Forgiving  <b>Psychomotor</b> 7. Demonstrating self-kindness 8. Instilling humanity 9. Paying attention to the environment
4.	Indicator of aspects	a.1. Having forgiveness a.2. Sympathy a.3. Togetherness b.1. Recognizing that failure, problems, and stress are a normal part of human life b.2. Strengthen ownership and social identity c.1. Understanding someone's weaknesses or painful emotions c.2. Empathy c.3. Self-compassion	a.1. The empathy of all problems a.2. Having love b.1. Feeling connection b.2. Acceptance of treatment c.1. Be sensitive to circumstances c.2. Forgiving c.3. Openness c.4. The desire to relieve suffering.	a1. Understanding every problem a.2 Rethinking bad habits a.3 Changing the way of thinking  b. 1. Empathy b. 2. Forgiving  c.1. Determining life goals c.2. Doing life goals c.3. Getting used to being a better person	10. Understanding self and problem 11. Mercy 12. Patience 13. Forgiving 14. Sense of humanity 15. More attention

In detail, a comparison of each theory will be presented in table 1. Based on the three theories that have been explained in table 1, the concept of compassion character is obtained. If analyzed further, it can be seen that each theory is complementary to the other. So, the synthetic process concludes a comprehensive definition which is "Compassion character is the kindness of oneself and receive the difficulties and suffering experienced by others and receive one's failures in his life that can be used as a lesson in life to obtain happiness.

This compassion character is still relatively new in research. Kristin Neff, PhD widely recognized as one of the world's foremost experts on compassion character, operationally became the first person who determines and measure construction for more than a decade. Besides, he has developed an eight-week program to teach compassion skill in everyday life which he did with his colleague Dr Chris Germer, which was known as Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC). According to Neff, to avoid oneself guilt and depression, an individual needs to have a compassionate character in himself and considers failure as a life experience so that he can gain spirit and be able to continue his life without feeling guilt and sin.

Paul Raymond Gilbert is a British clinical psychologist. Gilbert is the founder of therapy that focuses on compassion (CFT), training in loving minds (CMT) and books authors such as *The Compassionate Mind: A New Approach to Life's Challenges and Overcoming Depression*. Gilbert argues that empathy is a form of compassion. By having compassion, someone can overcome his depression.

Elisha Goldstein, PhD is a clinical psychologist in private practice in West Los Angeles. Dr Goldstein, who comes from a family of psychologists, advocates that mental health comes from an approach that looks at all aspects of the self-such as physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual. As a licensed Psychologist, she teaches awareness-based programs on her own and through LA Insight. Lately, she has been researching compassion to obtain happiness.

Based on the results of the discussion about the views and backgrounds of each character in 3 theories, it can be synthesized that self-awareness is one's ability through authentic evaluation of self-capacity, and recognizing oneself as an individual in the environment to be able to control actions. From

the results of this analysis and synthesis, the essence of compassion character can also be formulated namely compassion is the key to happiness.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the discussion, it can be concluded that the compassion character is one's ability through authentic evaluation of one's capacity and recognizing oneself as an individual in the environment to be able to control actions. The essence of consciousness is the ability to recognize and control oneself. Aspects of self-awareness include the mind (cognitive) to understand every problem, to rethink bad habits, to change the way of thinking, feeling (affective) to forgive oneself, to control emotions, to forgive and actions (psychomotor) shows self-goodness, instilling humanity attitude, caring for the environment.

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