

SOFIA UNIVERSITY
ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI



Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Faculty of Philosophy

Department of General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology

**SUMMARY of the
DISSERTATION WORK submitted
For Doctor of Philosophy degree,
Scientific discipline 3.2 Psychology**

**ROLE OF COMPASSION TO SELF AND OTHERS FOR CAREER
SUCCESS AND LIFE SATISFACTION**

Maria Petrova Vassileva

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. Irina Zinovieva, Dr. Sc.

Sofia, 2024

The dissertation „Role of compassion to self and others for career success and life satisfaction“ consists of 208 pages, out of which 179 pages are main text and 29 pages are literature. 38 tables and one figure are used throughout the text. The literature includes 362 titles, among which are titles in English and Bulgarian.

Six publications in English are made on the topic of the dissertation in scientific journals. There are 4 participations in international conferences, as well as in 2 scientific projects.

The author has achieved 57.5 points, exceeding the minimum national requirements.

Scientific committee:

Prof. Sonia Metodieva Karabeliova, PhD, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Assoc. Prof. Daniel Ljudmilov Petrov, DSc., Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Prof. Elena Atanasova Boradjieva, PhD, Veliko Tarnovo University “St. St. Kiril I Metodii”

Prof. Ergyul Tair Tejeb, PhD, IPHS, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Assoc. Prof. Miglena Krasteva Krasteva-Ivanova, DSc., Varna Free University
“Chetnorizets Hrabar”

The defense of the dissertation will take place on 06.06.2024 at 3 pm in Hall 63 of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” at open meeting of the selected scientific committee. The materials related to the defense are at disposal in the office of major “Psychology”, Faculty of Philosophy, room 60, floor 3, South Wing, Rectorate of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” as well as on the website of the university at www.uni-sofia.bg.

CONTENTS of the DISSERTATION

INTRODUCTION	p.4
Chapter I THEORETICAL OVERVIEW	p.6
1.1. Compassion constructs	p.6
1.1.1. Definitions of compassion	p.6
1.1.2. Compassion as a process	p.10
1.1.3. Self-compassion	p.15
1.1.4. Origins of compassion	p.20
1.1.5. Compassion and attachment	p.26
1.1.6. Flow of compassion and self-compassion	p.32
1.1.7. Compassion and emotional regulation	p.44
1.2. Compassion, personality and the Self	p.51
1.2.1. Compassion and personality organization	p.51
1.2.2. Compassion and personality traits	p.52
1.2.3. Compassion and self-esteem	p.55
1.2.4. Compassion and culture	p.60
1.3. Compassion and well-being/life satisfaction	p.65
1.3.1. Approaches to well-being	p.65
1.3.2. Compassion and subjective well-being	p.67
1.3.3. Compassion and objective well-being	p.77
1.3.4. Self-compassion and well-being	p.81
1.4. Compassion and career success	p.83
1.4.1. Definitions of career success	p.84
1.4.2. Career success and personality	p.90
1.4.3. Career success and life satisfaction	p.96
1.4.4. Career success and compassion	p.100
Chapter II EMPIRICAL STUDY – DESIGN AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	p.112
2.1. Research goals and tasks	p.112
2.2. Hypotheses	p.113
2.3. Theoretical model	p.115

2.4. <i>Instruments</i>	<i>p.120</i>
2.5. <i>Methodology</i>	<i>p.122</i>
2.6. <i>Procedure</i>	<i>p.123</i>
2.7. <i>Sample</i>	<i>p.124</i>
2.8. <i>Scales and their psychometric characteristics</i>	<i>p.124</i>
Chapter III RESULTS AND GENERAL DISCUSSION	<i>p.133</i>
3.1. <i>Differences in compassion constructs based on demographic variables</i>	<i>p.133</i>
3.2. <i>Link between compassions and personality constructs</i>	<i>p.148</i>
3.3. <i>Link between compassions and life satisfaction</i>	<i>p.155</i>
3.4. <i>Predictive ability of compassions for life satisfaction</i>	<i>p.157</i>
3.5. <i>Link between compassions and career success</i>	<i>p.157</i>
3.6. <i>Predictive ability of compassions for objective career success</i>	<i>p.159</i>
3.7. <i>Predictive ability of compassions for subjective career success</i>	<i>p.159</i>
3.8. <i>Inter-correlations between compassion constructs</i>	<i>p.160</i>
3.9. <i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>p.162</i>
3.10. <i>General discussion and interpretation of results</i>	<i>p.166</i>
CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS	<i>p.178</i>
LITERATURE	<i>p.180</i>

INTRODUCTION

Compassion has been central in most religious and spiritual traditions and has been object of scientific inquiry since the time of Aristotle. It has engaged the minds of scientists from various domains and has been increasingly becoming a focus in our society as there have been calls for compassion becoming a cornerstone in education, in the justice system, in the workplace and in society overall. Compassion and self-compassion have been researched mostly in isolated manner and no direct investigation has been conducted on their role for individual career success. The dissertation aims at exploring in a more integrated way the role that various compassion constructs play for life satisfaction and career success and thus at making a meaningful contribution to psychological research and practice. Further, having reviewed the main scientific psychological journals in Bulgaria, we have concluded that research devoted to the relationship between compassion constructs on one hand and life satisfaction/career success is also lacking in Bulgarian context.

GOALS

More specifically, the dissertation has the following goals:

- To investigate the links between compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion and self-compassion) and life satisfaction.
- To investigate the links between compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion and self-compassion) and career success (objective and subjective).
- To investigate whether compassions may be predictors of career success (objective and subjective) and life satisfaction.
- To investigate the links between personality traits and compassions, and whether certain personality traits can be predictors of compassions.
- To investigate the links between Self and compassions, and whether certain aspects of the Self can be predictors of compassions.
- To investigate whether there is a difference in compassions according to different demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, social status, level in hierarchy, Internet usage)
- To contribute to a more integrated look over the life-career domain where a research gap exists. Compassion to others and self-compassion have been investigated mostly as

independent from each other, whereas the relation between compassion and career success has not been directly the object of scientific investigation.

STRUCTURE

The dissertation is structured in three chapters. It starts with a short introduction. Chapter I is devoted to a theoretical overview of existing research on compassion, self-compassion, life satisfaction and career success. This includes definitions of constructs, the process of compassion, origins, flow as well as link to attachment and emotional regulation. A substantial part of the overview is devoted to compassion constructs and their link to personality and the Self, incl. personality traits and self-esteem. Another important part of the theoretical overview is devoted to existing research on the role that compassion to others and self-compassion play for individual well-being and career success. Finally, after having presented the existing research on the topic and the various constructs, Chapter II presents the empirical study and its design, incl. hypotheses, theoretical model, instruments, methodology, procedure, sample and scales with psychometric characteristics. Chapter III describes the results of the various analyses employed in order to answer the research questions and to examine the hypotheses and concludes with a summary, general discussion and interpretation of the results. Finally, conclusions and limitations to the work are presented, followed by a list of the literature cited as part of the dissertation.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

The theoretical overview clarifies existing constructs and summarizes existing research on the topic in order to position the topic within the field of research and to outline the scope of the dissertation. The theoretical overview also presents the challenges, esp. with lack of unification of construct definitions as well as the complex links that exist between compassion/self-compassion and psychological constructs in different life domains (esp. well-being and career).

Currently, there is no agreement on the definition of compassion in scientific research. Compassion has been viewed by various researchers as emotion, motivation or multidimensional construct. We believe that there is sufficient support for the view that compassion is multidimensional construct, encompassing cognitive, emotional and motivational components, which is also the leading understanding of compassion in contemporary research. Appraisals play key role in the process of compassion depending on a) the relevancy to the Self or one's goals; b)

the deservingness of suffering; c) the availability of coping resources. Empathy is regarded as a first stage of response to another person's suffering, the second stage could lead to transforming empathy into either of two outcomes: compassionate engagement or distress (Klimecki & Singer, 2017).

Self-compassion is another important concept, most commonly viewed as compassion "directed to self" (Neff, 2003a). The relationship between compassion and self-compassion to others "is not completely straightforward" (Neff & Germer, 2017). Since compassion is grounded in relationships with others, attachment patterns as well as emotional regulation are crucial for the flow of compassion. Attitudes to compassion also have an impact on individual differences in the flow of compassion and self-compassion. In that regard fear of compassion can be broken down into three subtypes depending on direction: fear of compassion from others, fear of compassion to others and fear of compassion to Self (Gilbert et al, 2011).

The origins of compassion and self-compassion can be traced to both parental and temperamental influences. Research exists on the relationship between empathy and the Big5 personality traits. In a study by Nettle et al (2007) a strong correlation was reported between agreeableness and Empathy quotient ($r=0.75$), and between extraversion and Empathy quotient ($r=0.37$).

Self-compassion has been linked to self-esteem in several studies (Leary et al, 2007; Neff & Vonk, 2009). According to Neff and Vonk (2009) self-compassion and self-esteem reflect different ways of thinking and feeling about oneself. Self-esteem is a reflection of the overall feeling of self-worth and therefore has impact on the individual psychological functioning (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). Since self-esteem may be affected not only by one's own evaluations of Self, but also by "perceived evaluations of others" (Cooley, 1964, cited in Neff & Vonk, 2009, p. 24), self-esteem can fluctuate. Neff (2003a) has advanced the notion of self-compassion as an attitude towards the Self that is not contingent on self-worth or on particular outcomes, which notion reflects a major difference between self-compassion and self-esteem.

Further, the theoretical review elaborates in detail on the relationships between compassion constructs and well-being. Both giving and receiving compassion have been associated with improved mental health, positive affect and higher levels of happiness (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005; Mongrain et al, 2011). Studies by Boyatzis and Smith (2006) also confirm the presence of positive association between compassion (expressed in caring relationships) and health (expressed as lower blood pressure and better immunity). Further, evidence exists that both giving

compassion (Stellar, Cohen, Oveis & Keltner, 2015) and receiving compassion (Mercer et al, 2016) are associated with better health outcomes as measure of objective well-being. Similar results are reported for self-compassion with inverse correlation to various symptoms of psychopathology such as depression, anxiety, self-criticism, rumination (Neff, 2003a; Macbeth & Gumley, 2012).

Finally, the theoretical overview presents definitions of career success and existing research on the relationships between career success and compassion constructs. Objective career success refers to success that can be measured directly by an objective party and is independent of the individual's assessment. The indicators for objective career success most widely used are pay, pay increase, number of promotions (ascendancy), employability, CEO proximity levels, career status and job performance. Subjective career success on the other hand is shaped by the unique perceptions and experiences of the person to his career (Hughes, 1958, cited in Heslin, 2005). The most widely used proxies of subjective career success are job satisfaction and career satisfaction in relation to the individual's expectations and goals. Job satisfaction mirrors the attitude of a person towards a particular job, whereas career satisfaction is a more global evaluation of a person's overall career up to date and future career prospects. Objective and subjective career success are interrelated and moderately correlated (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007). Sometimes objective career success can lead to subjective success (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Nicholson & de Waal Andrews, 2005). However, it can also cause depression, as well as personal and professional alienation (Burke, 1999, cited in Heslin, 2005). Thus, objective career success is not a sufficient condition for subjective career success. Evidence exists that happiness, measured in terms of frequency of high positive affect, is positively linked to career success and often is antecedent of career success (Walsh, Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2018).

Research devoted explicitly to the relationships between compassion and career success is extremely scarce. Given the multi-faceted nature of the concepts and the multitude of definitions of both compassion and career success, this is both promising and challenging at the same time. Since career and its success are usually viewed within organizations, extant research on the topic is limited to compassion in the workplace, with emphasis on compassion from the point of view of the organization. Very little research exists on the topics of compassion from the point of view of the individual and its implications for career success. Existing research is focused on compassion as leadership trait (Basran et al, 2019), on compassion and organizational culture (Dutton et al, 2006),

on compassion and job performance (Ko & Choi, 2019), on compassion and organizational commitment (Lilius et al, 2008), on compassion as organizational capability (Dutton et al, 2007).

As we have previously outlined through the existing research on the topic of our dissertation, complex but reliable links exist between compassion, self-compassion and well-being. Ideas rooted in developmental psychology such as the origin and cultivation of compassion and self-compassion have far-reaching implications for relationships and well-being in general. Common patterns are present in compassionate relationships between parents and children, patients and doctors, in romantic relationships and various other contexts. Little explored have been the relationships of the above constructs with regard to career success. Adding this dimension to the research would enable building that “overarching perspective” across the lifespan (Shaver et al, 2016).

EMPIRICAL STUDY – DESIGN AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are placed for the purpose of our research based on the presented literature review:

a) Hypotheses related to the link between compassions and life satisfaction

- Compassion to others/helpfulness correlates positively to life satisfaction.
- Self-compassion correlates positively to life satisfaction.
- Fear of compassion to others correlates to life satisfaction.
- Compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) predict life satisfaction.

b) Hypotheses linked to the link between compassions and objective career success

- Compassion to others/Helpfulness is negatively linked to objective career success.
- Self-compassion is positively linked to objective career success.
- Fear of compassion to others is positively linked to objective career success.
- Compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) predict objective career success.

c) Hypotheses linked to the link between compassions and subjective career success

- Compassion to others/Helpfulness is positively linked to subjective career success.

- Fear of compassion to others is positively linked to subjective career success.
- Self-compassion is positively linked to subjective career success.
- Compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) predict subjective career success.

d) **Hypotheses linked to the link between compassions and Self/personality**

- An association exists between compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) and personality traits.
- An association exists between compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) and self-liking.
- An association exists between compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) and self-competence.

e) **Hypotheses linked to the link between compassions and demographic variables**

- Compassion to others/Helpfulness will be higher in women than in men
- Self-compassion/Fear of compassion to others will be higher in men than in women
- Higher social status/education/level in hierarchy is linked to higher self-compassion and lower compassion to others/helpfulness

Theoretical model

Taking into account the literature review as well as the goals of the research, a theoretical model is proposed. The theoretical model consists of six groups of variables:

- 1) Compassion constructs – here we include self-compassion, compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion to others.
- 2) Personality traits – here are included the Big5 personality traits according to the model developed by McCrae and Costa (1999): agreeableness, extroversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness to experience.
- 3) Self-esteem – here we include the two-dimensional self-esteem proposed by the model of Tafari and Swann (1995), which include self-liking and self-competence.
- 4) Career Success – here we include variables reflecting objective as well as subjective career success.
- 5) Satisfaction with Life – here we include the model developed by Diener et al (1985).

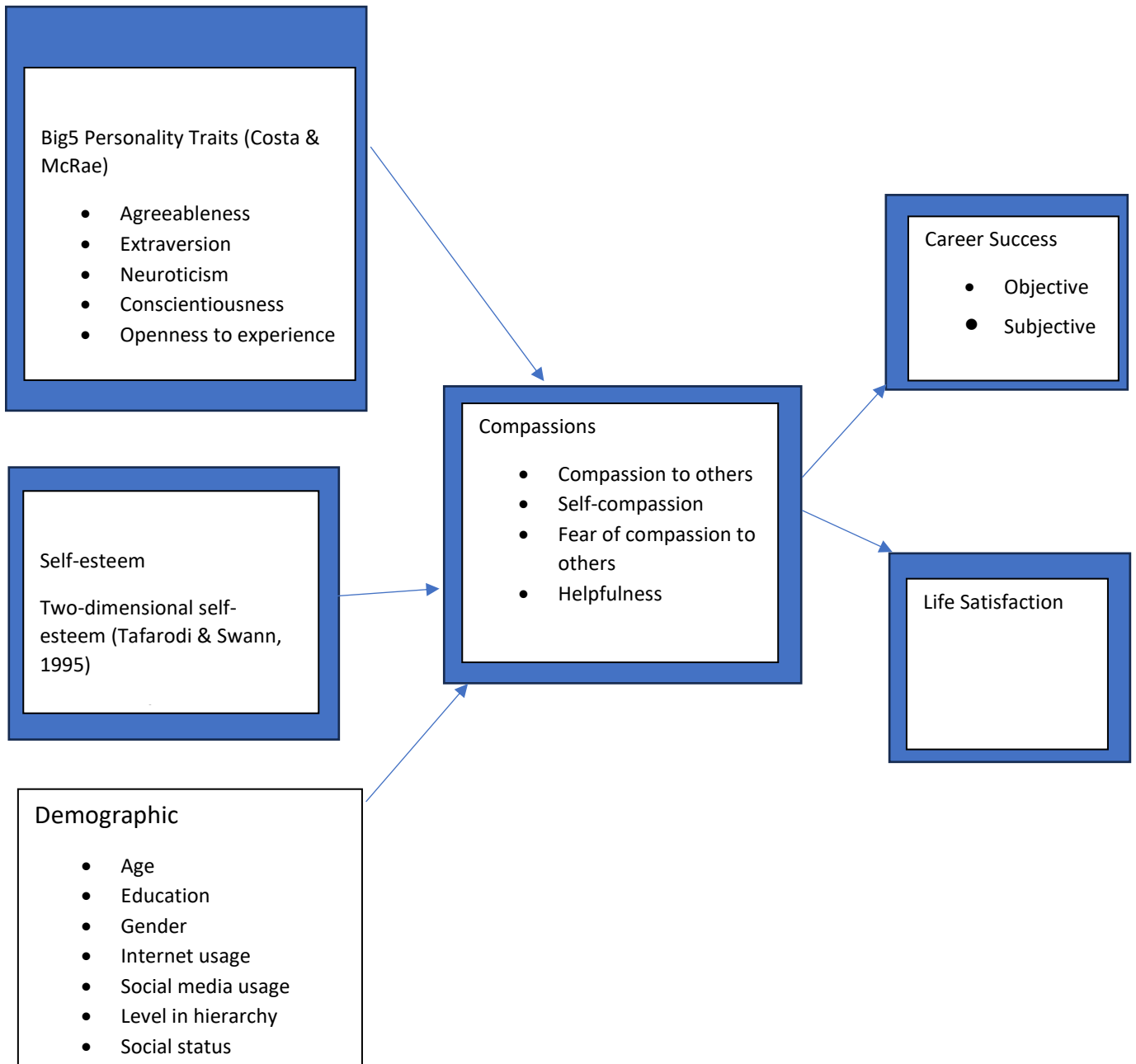
- 6) Demographic Variables – here we include age, gender, education, social status, level in hierarchy, Internet usage, social network usage.

The relationships between the variables are visually represented by arrows in the theoretical model:

- 1) Between personality constructs and compassion constructs
- 2) Between self-esteem and compassion constructs
- 3) Between demographic variables and compassion constructs
- 4) Between compassion constructs and life satisfaction
- 5) Between compassion constructs and career success

The relationships above have been subject to research to varying degrees. The theoretical model places compassion constructs in the center of our research. Compassions on individual level are viewed as related to and resulting from personality (Big5 personality traits and self-esteem) and demographic influences. Life satisfaction and career success (objective and subjective) are presented as associated and predicted by compassion constructs. Of course, life satisfaction and career success can be influenced and predicted by other variables and factors, however it is beyond the scope of the current dissertation to build a complete model of life satisfaction and career success. Rather, the central research question is the role that compassions play in life satisfaction and career success.

Theoretical Model



Instruments

In order to conduct the research according to the goals set above and in line with the hypotheses, we have compiled a questionnaire containing the following scales:

Compassion to others

The Compassion to others instrument is comprised of 10 self-report questions with answers on a Likert scale 1-7. For the purpose of the current research the author selected 8 questions from the Compassion Scale developed by Pommier, Neff and Toth-Kiraly (2019). These 8 questions correspond to 2 factors of the original subscales named Kindness and Mindfulness. A sample question is “If I see someone going through a difficult time, I try to be caring toward that person.” The original scale contains 16 questions and has a Cronbach alpha ranging between 0.77 and 0.90.

In addition to the 8 questions above, 2 questions were added from the Compassionate Love Scale developed by Sprecher and Fehr (2005), also on a 7-point Likert scale. These self-report questions measure attitude to significant others in times of need, and compassionate love as it differs from empathy. A sample question is “I feel happy when I see that loved ones are happy.” (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005). The original 21-item scale on a 6-point Likert scale showed high reliability with 0.95 Cronbach alpha (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005).

Self-Compassion Short form

The Self-Compassion Short form scale consists of 12 self-report items on a 1-7 Likert scale, which measure the attitude to the Self in times of difficulty (Raes et al, 2011). A sample question is “When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.” The original scale contains 6 factors of 2 items each.

Fear of Compassion to others

The Fear of Compassion scale consists of 10 self-report items on a Likert scale 1-10, measuring the attitude of respondents towards providing kindness and compassion to others (Gilbert et al, 2011). A sample question is “People will take advantage of me if they see me as too compassionate”. For the sake of consistency, a 1-7 Likert scale was used. The scale does not break down into factors.

Helpfulness

The Helpfulness Scale is composed by the author by using 9 items on a 1-7 Likert scale. The author added this scale in order to measure the action side of compassion in addition to the theoretical perception of compassion to others. The action side of compassion is insufficiently

reflected in any of the compassion scales under review in terms of tendency to help, even at the cost of own convenience. On the other hand, compassion differs from empathy in that additional action step, reflecting motivation for help to alleviate suffering. Therefore, items measuring the willingness to provide help and sacrifice in terms of time and convenience were developed. A sample question is “I usually take time to help colleagues even if it has negative effect on my career.” We believe that compassion to others therefore is fully accounted for by adding the helpfulness dimension which measures the motivation to act as the element distinguishing empathy from compassion.

Life Satisfaction

The scale consists of 5 self-report statements regarding the current state of life of the respondents (Diener et al. 1985). The life satisfaction scale has already been adapted for Bulgaria.

Objective Career Success

The objective career success scale is composed by the author and measures the self-rated perception towards objective career success. It contains nine items on a scale of 1-7, seven of which were created by the author in order to capture the objective side of career success. A sample question is “I enjoy considerable prestige and recognition associated with my career.” One question is cited by Li et al (2014): “I could easily obtain a comparable job with another employer“. One question is cited by Gattiker and Larwood (1986): ”I am drawing a high income compared to my peers.”

Subjective Career Success

The subjective career success scale measures the self-rated perception towards subjective career success (Greenhaus et al, 1990). It contains 5 items on a scale of 1-7 (in the original they are measured at 1-5). A sample question is “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals. “

Personality Traits Scale according to the “Big five” model (MINI IPIP - Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006)

The Big 5 Personality Traits Scale contains 20 items based on the McRae and Costa (1999) model and is adapted to the Bulgarian conditions by Karabeliova et al (2016).

Self-Liking & Self-Competence

The self-liking and self-competence Scale consists of 16 items on a 1-7 Likert scale. It is designed to measure global self-esteem and its two facets by Tafari and Swann (1995, 2001). The scale has been adapted for use in Bulgaria by Караиванова (2016).

Demographic Questions – 11 items

The questions include items on age, gender, education, years of professional experience, level in hierarchy, family status, number of kids, Internet and social media usage.

Methodology

A battery of tests containing the above questionnaires was created in order to validate the theoretical model and the hypotheses of the present dissertation.

For the instruments that have not been adapted to Bulgarian conditions (Self-compassion Scale Short Form, Compassion Scale, Fear of Compassion Scale, Career Satisfaction) a translation from English to Bulgarian and reverse translation Bulgarian to English was performed. Afterwards the best translations were selected for each item.

For the instruments that were composed by the author (Helpfulness and Objective Career success scales) a review of existing scales was performed, followed by analysis of perceived meaning of constructs. To that end, 69 interviews on the topics of compassion and career success among psychology students at Sofia University were used to complement the analysis and provide direction for envisioned questions. Finally, upon construction of the scales, exploratory factor analysis was conducted, as well as Cronbach's alphas and correlation analysis with other established scales (Compassion to others and Subjective career success).

In order to verify the hypotheses above, several statistical procedures were conducted:

- Verification of the factor structure of the scales in SPSS by using exploratory factor analysis using the method of principal components with Varimax rotation. The number of factors were determined by using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria as well as by considering theoretical consistency and meaningful interpretation.
- Verification of the internal consistency and reliability by calculating Cronbach Alpha.
- Validation of relationships between the variables and hypothesis testing was done via correlation analysis (linear correlation using Pearson coefficients).

- Multifactor linear regressions were used to investigate whether compassion and self-compassion can be predictors of objective and subjective career success and life satisfaction. Regressions were also used to determine whether personality constructs can be used to predict compassion variables under investigation.
- T-test and 2-way ANOVA were used to determine differences in demographic variables.

Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed in the period March – May 2023 on a voluntary basis in the social networks. A total of 320 respondents completed the questionnaire, which was loaded on Google Forms. The actual items were prefaced by a paragraph describing the scientific nature of the study, as well as the anonymous and confidential treatment of the data. Afterwards, the respondents had the option to agree and to continue with the questions. The questionnaire contained 112 items. The first 97 combine items from the following scales in non-consecutive order: Compassion to others, Helpfulness, Fear of Compassion to others, Self-compassion short form, Self-Liking and Self-Competence, Big5 Personality Traits, Life Satisfaction. Objective and Subjective Career Success. The remaining items include 11 demographic questions and 4 open questions. The purpose of the open questions is to capture additional qualitative depth to the data, if participants were willing to spend extra time on them. The items are presented to the respondents in randomized manner and not consecutively so that conditioned and socially desired responding is minimized.

Data processing and analysis was performed in SPSS. The reversed items were recoded.

Sample

The sample consists of 320 respondents. The breakdown by age, education and gender is given in tables 1, 2 and 3 below:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by gender:

Gender	Number	%
Female	261	81,5
Male	59	18,5
<i>Total</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by age:

Age	Women	Men	Total	%
under 18	7	3	10	3,4
18 - 25	55	6	61	19,0
25 - 30	23	7	30	9,3
31 - 35	25	7	32	10
36 - 40	31	6	37	11,5
40 - 50	73	17	90	28,1
над 50	47	13	60	18,7
Total	261	59	320	100

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by education

Education level	Women	Men	Total	%
8th Grade		1	1	0,04
High School	67	24	91	28,4
Bachelor	71	14	85	26,5
Master	108	13	121	37,8
PhD	15	7	22	6,9
Total	261	59	320	100

Scales and their psychometric characteristics

Psychometric characteristics of the Compassion to others Scale

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is very good at 0.830 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is statistically significant at 0.000. The factor analysis reveals 2 factors explaining 53% of the variance, with Cronbach Alpha of 0.829. We have decided to retain just the 1st factor in the subsequent analysis and comparisons, which explains 40,9% of the variance, by taking into account the flattening shape of the Scree plot of the Eigenvalues (without items 5 and 6, which are part of the scale by Sprecher and Fehr (2005)).

Table 5: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for the Compassion to others Scale

Factor	Number of items	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha of original scale
1	8	45.78	7.23	0.831	0.77 – 0.90 (Pommier, Neff & Toth-Kiraly, 2019)
2	2	13.33	1.27	0.599	0.95 (Sprecher & Fehr, 1995)

Psychometric characteristics of the Self-Compassion Short Form Scale

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure at 0.782 demonstrates good sample adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at 0.000. The factor analysis using the principal component method reveals 3 factors, which together explain more than 50% of the variance, however the items constituting each factor do not have clear and distinct structure with factors overlapping and one item being contained in more than one factor. The correlations between many items are quite low and the communalities range between 0.3 and 0.58. Therefore, due to the lack of clear internal structure we have decided to use the entire scale for further comparisons and analysis, without breaking it down into factors. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.728.

Table 6: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for the Self-Compassion Short Form Scale

Factor	Number of items	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha of original scale
Self-Compassion Scale	12	51.42	10.27	0.728	0.86

Psychometric characteristics of the Fear of Compassion to others Scale (Gilbert)

The principal component analysis revealed a very good level of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy at 0.858 and statistically significant Bartlett's test of sphericity at 0.000. Two factors explaining more than 55% of the variance are present. The first factor (items

1,4,5,6,8,9) is centered around vulnerability and being taken advantage of and the second factor (items 2,3,7,10) is focused on withholding compassion to convey proper discipline and a sense of responsibility. Due to the clear internal structure, we have decided to retain the 2 factors above in the subsequent analysis and comparisons and to name them Compassion vulnerability and Compassion avoidance. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.828.

Table 7: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for the Fear of Compassion to others Scale

Factor	Number of items	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha of original scale
Compassion Vulnerability	6	25.30	8.77	0.868	n/a
Compassion avoidance	4	19.43	4.69	0.588	n/a
Fear of Compassion to others – Total	10	44.73	11.48	0.828	0.78 – 0.84

Psychometric characteristics of the Helpfulness Scale

The principal component analysis reveals two meaning cores which overlap and explain more than 50% of the variance. Due to the absence of clear internal structure and low correlations between items, we have decided to use the scale in its entirety without breaking it down into distinct factors. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is good at 0.772 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at 0.000. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.771. As this scale is composed by the author, we cannot refer to existing Cronback alpha.

Table 9: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for the Helpfulness Scale

Factor	Number of items	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha of original scale
Helpfulness Scale	9	43.30	8.24	0.771	n/a

Psychometric characteristics of the Satisfaction with Life Scale

The principal component analysis reveals that all five items load onto one component that explains 57% of the variance. Therefore, we have decided to retain the original five items and use them as a single factor in the subsequent analysis. The Satisfaction with Life scale reveals good internal consistency: KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy is very good at 0.813 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at 0.000. The communalities among the five items are high and range between 0.377 and 0.767. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.789.

Table 10: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for the Satisfaction with Life Scale

Factor	Number of items	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha of original scale
Satisfaction with Life Scale	5	24.46	6.03	0.789	0.87

Psychometric characteristics of the Objective Career Success Scale

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is very good at 0.802 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at 0.000. The communalities among the nine items are quite high in the range 0.515 and 0.812. The factor analysis (principal component method) reveals 3 meaning cores which complement the meaning of the scale. The first component explains 25 % of the variance with 4 items related to professional recognition and prestige. The second one explains 20% of the variance and contains 3 items related to reemployment and job offers. The third one explains 16% of the variance and is related to earnings. The correlations among individual items are not as high and the components not homogenous. For the purpose of better comparisons and greater dispersion we have decided to retain the original scale in its entirety without breaking it down into factors. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.782. As this scale is composed by the author, we cannot refer to existing Cronback alpha.

Table 11: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for the Objective Career Success Scale

Factor	Number of items	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha of original scale
Objective Career Success Scale	9	39.9	8.83	0.782	n/a

Psychometric characteristics of the Subjective Career Success Scale

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy is very good at 0.863 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at 0.000. The principal component analysis reveals high communalities among the five items ranging between 0.538 to 0.8. The principal component analysis reveals that all five items load onto one component which explains 68% of the variance. Therefore, we will retain and use all five items as per the original scale in the subsequent analysis. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.883.

Table 12: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for the Subjective Career Success Scale

Factor	Number of items	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha of original scale
Subjective Career Success	5	23.23	6.69	0.883	0.88

Psychometric characteristics of the Personality Traits Scale according to the "Big Five" model (MINI IPIP - Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006)

The scale breaks down into 5 factors, which will be used in the subsequent analysis: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism. The scale has been extensively researched and validated.

The Cronbach's alphas range between 0.655 and 0.711 and are likely to be lower due to the small number of items in each factor, therefore are acceptable.

Psychometric characteristics of the Self-Liking / Self-Competence Scale

The scale breaks down into 2 factors: Self-Liking and Self-competence, which will be used in the subsequent analysis (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995) as they have been extensively researched and validated.

Table 13: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for the Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale

Factor	Number of items	Mean	St. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha of original scale
Self-Liking	8	38.05	9.38	0.838	0.92
Self-Competence	8	35.03	6.96	0.682	0.85
Scale Total	16	73.08	14.81	0.857	

RESULTS AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

Differences in compassion constructs based on demographic variables

Differences in compassion constructs according to gender

The results of the independent samples T-test show that the only statistically significant differences are observed for compassion to others, where women report on average higher levels of compassion to others (46.56) compared to men (42.28).

Differences in compassion levels according to age

We conducted one-way ANOVA to compare differences in compassion constructs among different age groups. The results are summarized in the table 16 below which shows that the only statistically significant differences are observed for self-compassion, where the age groups 18-25 and 36-40 expose lower self-compassion levels compared to the groups 26-30, 31-35, 46-50 and 50+. The highest self-compassion levels are reported for the age group 50+.

Table 16: One-way ANOVA for differences among age groups for the compassion variables, $df=318$

Variable	Age	Mean	St. Deviation	Min	Max	F	Sig
Self-compassion	18-25	48,5738	10,93383	27,00	81,00	4.435	0.001
	26-30	54,4667	11,22415	36,00	77,00		
	31-35	53,5000	10,22016	36,00	80,00		
	36-40	48,4595	8,96473	27,00	69,00		
	46-50	53,6444	10,20169	30,00	78,00		
	50+	54,9286	8,70669	35,00	77,00		

Differences in compassion levels according to level in hierarchy

The distribution of respondents according to the level of hierarchy is as follows: Employee (208) , Independent Contractor (46) , Manager (46) , Directors and Senior Executives (20). One-Way ANOVA reveals statistically significant differences in the mean values for compassion to others. The highest values for compassion to others are present for employees and independent contractors, whereas the lowest are reported by managers and directors/senior executives. Upon further investigation using post-hoc multiple comparisons (Sidak method) we were able to attribute that the difference in compassion to others is significant for groups of employees versus managers, thus confirming that employees have on average higher compassion to others than managers,

Table 23: One-way ANOVA for differences according to level in hierarchy for the compassion variables, $df=318$

Variable	Level in Hierarchy	Mean	St. Deviation	Min	Max	F	Sig
Self-compassion	Employee	51,6442	10,48663	27,00	81,00	1.840	0.140
	Independent contractor	52,9130	9,82022	30,00	77,00		
	Manager	53,5435	10,37670	27,00	80,00		

	<i>Directors & Senior Executives</i>	56,8000	7,76361	41,00	77,00		
Compassion to others	<i>Employee</i>	46,7115	6,58819	26,00	56,00	4.118	0.007
	<i>Independent Contractor</i>	45,0870	8,36614	10,00	56,00		
	<i>Manager</i>	42,9348	8,01222	25,00	56,00		
	<i>Directors & Senior Executives</i>	44,1500	7,40750	27,00	55,00		
Helpfulness	<i>Employee</i>	45,7404	8,35446	19,00	63,00	1.727	0.161
	<i>Independent Contractor</i>	42,5652	8,65808	14,00	59,00		
	<i>Manager</i>	44,6957	9,37578	15,00	61,00		
	<i>Director & Senior Executives</i>	44,8500	10.20977	30,00	62,00		

Link between compassions and personality constructs

Link between compassions and personality traits according to the Big5 model

Correlation analysis was performed to identify links between personality traits according to the Big5 model and compassion variables.

- *Link between compassions and agreeableness*

Very strong correlations are observed between agreeableness on one hand and compassion to others ($r=0.685$, $p<0.01$) and helpfulness ($r=0.442$, $p<0.01$) on the other hand. This suggests that individuals who are more agreeable are also more likely to extend compassion to others and to help them. The results are significant for both relationships above.

In terms of fears of compassion to others, for both factors Compassion vulnerability and Compassion avoidance the relationship to agreeableness is negative with high significance levels at $p<0.01$. The strength of the relationship is moderate with $r=-0.246$ for Compassion

Vulnerability and $r=-2.15$ for Compassion avoidance. This allows us to assert that people with higher agreeableness on average are also less likely to experience fears of compassion to others.

- *Link between compassions and extraversion*

The correlation between self-compassion and extraversion is weak ($r=0.157$, $p<0.01$). The correlation between extraversion and compassion to others is non-significant and extremely weak ($r=0.018$). The only other significant association is between extraversion and Compassion vulnerability, with weak strength ($r=-0.125$, $p<0.05$).

- *Link between compassions and neuroticism*

Self-compassion is inversely related to neuroticism according to our research findings. The relationship is significant with $p<0.01$ and $r=-0.588$. This means that the more self-compassionate an individual is, the less neurotic he/she is likely to be. A weak relationship is reported for compassion to others and neuroticism ($r=0.114$, $p<0.05$). The link between neuroticism and helpfulness is extremely weak and non-significant. In terms of Fear of compassion to others there is a weak relationship between Compassion vulnerability and neuroticism ($r=0.213$, $p<0.01$).

- *Link between compassions and conscientiousness*

The relationships between compassion constructs and conscientiousness are weak and most of them do not pass adequate significance levels. Only self-compassion reports significant relationship to conscientiousness ($r=0.137$, $p<0.05$), as well as Compassion avoidance ($r=0.112$, $p<0.05$). This means that individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness also report higher levels of self-compassion and are less likely to extend compassion due to considerations involving discipline, deservingness, and punishments for wrongdoings. This finding seems logical considering the strong discipline being a hallmark of the conscientious personality.

- *Link between compassions and openness to experience*

Openness to experience (also intellect/imagination) as a personality trait is significantly linked to self-compassion ($r=0.152$, $p<0.01$) and Compassion vulnerability with $r=-0.194$, $p<0.01$. These results suggest that the more an individual is open to experiences, the more self-compassionate that person is likely to be, and the less fear of compassion to others one feels, especially in terms of feeling vulnerable when extending compassion.

Link between compassions and self-liking/self-competence according to the model for Two-dimensional self-esteem

Correlation analysis was performed to identify links between two-dimensional self-esteem and compassion variables.

Self-liking is very strongly correlated to self-compassion ($r=0.7$, $p<0.01$). This is logical as self-compassion reflects an attitude to the Self, especially in times of difficulty (Neff, 2003a). Interestingly, Compassion vulnerability is inversely correlated to self-liking ($r=-0.121$, $p<0,05$) and positively correlated to Compassion avoidance with $r=0.219$, $p<0.01$. The more fearful one is to expressing compassion due to vulnerability considerations (Compassion Vulnerability), the less self-liking is reported. The more one tends to withhold compassion (Compassion avoidance), the more self-liking is reported. The above finding may be in line with the concept of the Self being in alignment with any incongruence leading to lower self-liking (Swann, 1997). The relationships between self-liking and compassion to others/helpfulness are both very weak and insignificant, which means that self-liking is not significantly linked to these constructs.

Self-competence reports a medium strong relation to self-compassion ($r=0.382$, $p<0.01$). weak correlation to helpfulness ($r=-0.129$, $p<0.05$) and to compassion avoidance ($r=0.186$, $p<0.05$). Thus, people who are more self-competent on average are also more self-compassionate, more willing to help and more inclined to withhold compassion, if needed.

Predictive abilities of personality constructs for self-compassion

The adjusted R^2 of 0.527 shows that 52,7% of the changes in self-compassion can be explained by the regression model:

$$\text{Self-compassion} = 39.862 + 0.677 \times \text{Self-Liking} - 0.170 \times \text{Self-Competence} - 0.479 \times \text{neuroticism}$$

Predictive ability of personality constructs for compassion to others

The adjusted R^2 of 0.468 shows that 46.8% of the changes in compassion to others can be explained by the regression model:

$$\text{Compassion to others} = 19.572 + 1.19 \times \text{agreeableness}$$

Self-liking and self-competence were not identified as significant predictors for compassion to others.

Predictive ability of personality constructs for helpfulness

The F value of 42 (Sig 0.000) demonstrates that the model predicts helpfulness with significantly higher reliability than the average. The adjusted R² of 0.205 shows that 20,5% of the changes in helpfulness can be explained by the above regression model with agreeableness being the independent variable. As a result, the equation derived from the regression model above is:

$$\text{Helpfulness} = 19.615 + 0.919 \times \text{agreeableness} + 0.150 \times \text{self-competence}$$

Predictive ability of personality constructs for fear of compassion

Predictive ability of personality constructs for Compassion Vulnerability

The adjusted R² of 0.125 shows that 12.5% of the changes in compassion vulnerability can be explained by the regression model:

$$\text{Compassion Vulnerability} = 35.984 - 0.537 \times \text{agreeableness} + 0.379 \times \text{neuroticism} - 0.216 \times \text{openness}$$

Neither self-liking nor self-competence were found to be significant predictors of compassion vulnerability.

Predictive ability of personality constructs for Compassion avoidance

The adjusted R² of 0.099 shows that 9.9% of the changes in compassion avoidance can be explained by the regression model:

$$\text{Compassion avoidance} = 16.049 + 0.160 \times \text{self-liking} - 0.239 \times \text{agreeableness} + 0.167 \times \text{neuroticism}$$

Link between compassions and life satisfaction

Correlation analysis was conducted in order to analyze the link between compassions and life satisfaction, The correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction is significant (r=0.433, p<0.01). Interestingly, the correlation between Compassion Vulnerability is negative (r=-0.144, p<0.01), whereas the correlation to Compassion avoidance is positive (r=0.114, p<0.05).

Overall, the correlation results above suggest that the respondents with positive attitude to the Self in terms of self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness, measured by the Self-compassion scale are also more likely to experience higher life satisfaction. In terms of

Compassion vulnerability, we can conclude that respondents who possess higher fear of being taken advantage of when providing compassion are also less likely to experience satisfaction with life, however the relationship is weak. On the other hand, respondents who tend to withhold compassion due to belief that compassion is conditional upon proper discipline and punishment for wrongdoings (compassion avoidance) are slightly more likely to experience life satisfaction.

Predictive ability of compassions for life satisfaction

The adjusted R² of 0.442 shows that 44.2% of the changes in life satisfaction can be forecasted by the above regression model:

$$\text{Life satisfaction} = 8.395 + 0.126 \times \text{self-compassion} + 0.087 \times \text{helpfulness}$$

Link between compassions and career success

Correlation analysis was conducted in order to analyze the link between compassions and career success. The results are summarized in table 35.

Table 35: Pearson coefficients for correlations between career success and compassion variables, 2-tailed, N=320

Variables	Objective Career Success	Subjective Career Success
Self-compassion	0.216**	0.351**
Compassion to others	-0.042	0.002
Helpfulness	0.075	0.078
Compassion Vulnerability	-0.054	-0.031
Compassion avoidance	0.192**	0.125*

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Link between compassions and objective career success

Self-compassion is positively correlated to objective career success ($r=0.216$, $p < 0.01$). This means that individuals with higher levels of self-compassion also report higher objective career success.

Link between compassions and subjective career success

Self-compassion is positively correlated to subjective career success ($r=0.351$, $p<0.01$). This means that individuals with higher levels of self-compassion also report higher subjective career success.

Predictive ability of compassions for objective career success

The adjusted R^2 of 0.087 shows that 8.7 % of the changes in objective career success can be forecasted by the regression model:

Objective career success = 23.053 + 0.182 x self-compassion - 0.159 x compassion to others + 0.182 x helpfulness + 0.331 x compassion avoidance.

Predictive ability of compassions for subjective career success

The adjusted R^2 of 0.120 shows that 12% of the changes in subjective career success can be forecasted by the regression model:

Subjective career success = 11.235 + 0.229 x self-compassion

Hypotheses

Below we will review the hypotheses established early on in the research and interpret them in light of results obtained through the empirical study.

Hypotheseses related to the link between compassions and life satisfaction

- Compassion to others/helpfulness correlate positively to life satisfaction.

Correlation analysis revealed that the correlation to life satisfaction is extremely weak ($r=0.029$, $p<0.05$). Due to the extremely low effect the hypothesis could not be confirmed.

- Self-compassion correlates positively to life satisfaction.

The hypothesis that self-compassion correlates positively to life satisfaction was confirmed with $r=0.433$, $p<0,05$. This finding is in sync with existing research (Neff, 2003b; Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2007). The more self-compassionate one is, the higher his/her life satisfaction.

- Fear of compassion to others correlates to life satisfaction.

The hypothesis regarding the link between fear of compassion to others and life satisfaction is also validated. Compassion vulnerability is negatively correlated to life satisfaction with $r=-0.144^{**}$, whereas Compassion avoidance is positively correlated to life satisfaction with $r=0.114^*$. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed that fear of compassion to others is correlated to life satisfaction, with weak strength of the effect, The two facets of fear of compassion expose opposite directions. Hence, individuals more inclined to Compassion vulnerability are less inclined to experience life satisfaction. Perhaps in their case the desire to extend compassion interferes with the fear of being taken advantage of, resulting in decrease in life satisfaction. On the contrary, individuals with more pronounced Compassion avoidance in terms of fear of compassion to others are more inclined to experience life satisfaction. Perhaps those individuals are more in alignment between their perception of compassion according to values and actions.

- Compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) predict life satisfaction.

The hypothesis that compassion constructs predict life satisfaction was partially confirmed. The regression model displayed an adj. R^2 of 0.442 with significant beta for self-compassion (0.126) and helpfulness predictors for life satisfaction.

Hypotheses related to the link between compassions and objective career success

- Compassion to others/Helpfulness is negatively linked to objective career success.

The hypothesis above could not be confirmed due to insignificant results. Thus, we can conclude that compassion to others/helpfulness are not linked to objective career success based on our sample.

- Self-compassion is positively linked to objective career success.

The results confirm the hypothesis that self-compassion is positively linked to objective career success ($r=0.216^{**}$). The effect is moderate and significant. Hence, the more self-compassionate an individual, the more likely he/she is to experience objective career success.

- Fear of compassion to others is positively linked to objective career success.

The hypothesis that fear of compassion to others is positively linked to objective career success was partially confirmed for the Compassion avoidance facet with $r=0.192^{**}$. Hence, individuals who are more prone to withhold compassion are more likely to experience objective career success.

- Compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) predict objective career success.

The hypothesis is not confirmed due to very low strength of the effect (adj. $R^2=0.087$).

Hypotheses linked to the link between compassions and subjective career success

- Compassion to others/Helpfulness is positively linked to subjective career success.

Both compassion to others and helpfulness turned out to be insignificantly correlated to subjective career success, thus the hypothesis could not be confirmed.

- Self-compassion is positively linked to subjective career success.

The above hypothesis was confirmed with positive correlation of 0.351**, thus self-compassion is positively linked to subjective career success.

- Fear of compassion to others is positively linked to subjective career success.

The hypothesis that fear of compassion to others is positively linked to subjective career success was partially confirmed for the Compassion avoidance facet with $r=0.125^*$.

- Compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) predict subjective career success.

The hypothesis above was partially confirmed with self-compassion being significant positive predictor of subjective career success, explaining 12 % of the changes in subjective career success.

Hypotheses related to the link between compassions and Self/personality

- An association exists between compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) and personality traits.

The hypothesis is partially confirmed as outlined below:

Self-compassion was found to be significantly correlated to extraversion (0.157*), neuroticism (-0.588**), conscientiousness (0.137*) and openness (0.152**).

Compassion to others was significantly correlated to agreeableness (0.685**), and neuroticism (0.114*), Helpfulness was significantly correlated to agreeableness (0.442**).

Fear of compassion to others (Compassion vulnerability) was found to be significantly correlated to agreeableness (-0.246**), extraversion (-0.125*), neuroticism (0.213**), and openness (-0.194**).

Fear of compassion to others (Compassion avoidance) was found to be significantly correlated to agreeableness (-0.215**) and conscientiousness (0.112*).

Thus, the results show that self-compassion and fear of compassion to others are significantly correlated to four out of five personality traits. Compassion to others and fear of compassion to others (Compassion avoidance) are correlated to two out of five personality traits, whereas helpfulness is correlated to only one personality trait. Despite lacking significant correlations for all traits and all compassion constructs, the above findings are sufficient to lend partial support to the hypothesis that association exists between compassion constructs and personality traits.

- An association exists between compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) and self-liking.

The above hypothesis was confirmed for self-compassion($r=0.7^{**}$) and fear of compassion to others (both facets), which exposed significant correlations to self-liking.

- An association exists between compassions (compassion to others, helpfulness, fear of compassion, self-compassion) and self-competence.

The above hypothesis was partially confirmed for self-compassion($r=0.382^{**}$), helpfulness ($r=0.129^{*}$) and Compassion avoidance ($r=0.186^{**}$), which exposed significant correlations to self-liking.

Hypotheses linked to the link between compassions and demographic variables

- Compassion to others/Helpfulness will be higher in women than in men
The hypothesis was confirmed for compassion to others only.
- Self-compassion/Fear of compassion to others will be higher in men than in women
The hypothesis was not confirmed. No significant differences were found between men and women.
- Higher income/education/level in hierarchy is linked to higher self-compassion and lower compassion to others/helpfulness

The hypothesis was only partially confirmed, in the portion related to compassion to others according to income and level in hierarchy. The groups with very high income had relatively less compassion to others than groups with average income, which is in line with existing research on differences in empathy by social class (Stellar et al, 2012). Further, differences in hierarchy were

found to be associated with significantly different levels of compassion to others, but not with self-compassion. Post-hoc multiple comparisons we were able to attribute that the difference in compassion to others is significant for groups of employees versus managers, thus confirming that employees have on average higher compassion to others than managers, Education level was not found to be a differentiating factor for neither self-compassion nor compassion to others, however it was significant for compassion avoidance with lower levels of compassion avoidance at higher levels of education such as Masters and Doctorate.

General discussion and interpretation of results

Following up on the empirical study and its results, we are going to summarize the most important findings.

First of all, consistent connections are observed between self-compassion and both life satisfaction and subjective and objective career success. The relationship is the strongest for self-compassion and life satisfaction ($r=0.433$), followed by self-compassion and subjective career success ($r=0.351$) and by self-compassion and objective career success ($r=0.216$). The first relationship is consistent with existing research as self-compassion is linked positively with optimism and happiness (Neff, 2003b; Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2007). On the other hand, via the established positive association between life satisfaction and job satisfaction (Tait, Padgett and Baldwin, 1989; Bowling, Eschleman & Wang, 2011), we raised the hypothesis that career success and compassion constructs are correlated.

The role that self-compassion plays for life outcomes becomes even more prominent when we consider the next important finding, namely that self-compassion partakes consistently and significantly in the regression models obtained for all three variables: life satisfaction, subjective and objective career success.

There are several reasons why individuals who score higher on self-compassion are more likely to experience career success. First, the role of self-compassion for career success can be placed within the context of studies conducted on coping with academic failure and self-improvement motivation. Neff, Hseih and Dejithirat (2005) demonstrated that self-compassion contributed to perseverance when faced with academic challenges and failure. Similarly, one can argue that people with higher self-compassion are better equipped to face professional challenges and persevere towards career success in the workplace. Thanks to the absence of self-criticism and

self-judgment, self-compassionate individuals are better poised for career satisfaction and growth by approaching various setbacks as opportunities and by capitalizing on overcoming the challenges rather than on self-blame, rumination, self-pity etc. Second, since self-compassion is also associated with lower level of self-criticism (Neff, 2003b; Leary et al, 2007), it can help sustain motivation towards high standards of performance (Neff, 2003b) and towards taking more responsibility in case of negative events, including in the professional domain (Leary et al, 2007). The workplace is a dynamic area, subject to competitive, legal and all kinds of other pressures. Therefore, being able to respond to challenges is crucial for maintaining job performance and motivation.

As we noted earlier, significant links were established between self-compassion and career success/life satisfaction in terms of positive correlations as well as prediction power. These findings can be interpreted at the backdrop of research on self-esteem. We found strong correlation between self-compassion and self-liking ($r=0.7^{**}$) and moderate correlation between self-compassion and self-competence ($r=0.382^{**}$), with both self-liking and self-competence being facets of self-esteem. In research by Neff and Vonk (2009) self-compassion and self-esteem were similarly correlated ($r=0.68$), as well as in previous research by Neff (2003a) at $r=0.59$. We did not explore directly the link between self-esteem and career success, which is established in research by Abele (2009) showing that higher self-efficacy at graduation was linked to higher career satisfaction 7 years later. On the other hand, Liao (2021) reports positive correlation between self-compassion and self-efficacy ($r=0.35$). Therefore, it is possible that the link between self-compassion and self-efficacy enables the path to career success.

Raising self-compassion is in sync with self-verification theory (Swann, 1997). According to Swann (1997) people rely on self-view for understanding reaction of others and for guiding behaviour. In that sense self-esteem interventions may have limited impact and may not result in career success compared to self-compassion interventions. In this regard, it may be relevant that self-esteem is reported to consistently predict self-compassion, but not the reverse (Donald et al, 2017). Further investigation on the concepts and their cause and effect as well as moderating power may be quite insightful.

When we consider balancing self-compassion with compassion to others, it is important to note the results obtained for compassion to others. Existing research reports a positive link between compassion to others and psychological well-being (Cosley et al, 2011) as well as between compassion to others and positive affect (Klimecki et al, 2012). Based on the research

findings above, we expected that compassion to others will show positive links to life satisfaction and career success. Existing research reports on the positive association between life satisfaction and job satisfaction (Tait, Padgett and Baldwin, 1989; Bowling, Eschleman & Wang, 2011). However, in our sample, the correlation between compassion to others/helpfulness and life satisfaction/career success was either extremely low or insignificant, therefore we could not validate similar associations or predictors. These results were unexpected given previous research supporting the existence of a positive relationship between extending compassion to others and happiness (Mongrain et al. 2011, Jazaieri et al, 2014).

Possible reasons behind this lack of association between compassion to others and life satisfaction/career success could be:

- Differences in sociocultural context, quality of the sample and different understanding of meaning and expression of compassion to others. In addition, the understanding of compassion and its expression may be different in Bulgaria, as well as the predominant self-construal.
- The phenomenon of “compassion collapse” may explain some of the differences. Compassion-related variables have been on the decline, while self-image variables have been on the rise in the US (Zarins & Konrath, 2017). Western society has placed individual achievement and competition at the core of its values. Even though suffering in organizations can be costly (Frost, 2004), compassion is little acknowledged and appreciated in organizations (Eisler, 2002; Kahn, 1993). A significant reason for this undervaluing of compassion is the notion that acting on the spur of human emotions is an unprofessional sign of weakness (Solomon, 1998), as well as incompatible and even counterproductive for the goals of corporations.
- Emotional regulation may also explain the lack of association between compassion/helpfulness and career success. Cameron and Payne (2011) found that compassion was absent when people were asked to regulate their emotions, which may be the daily routine of majority of people at work, in order to comply with professionalism and company standards, rules and regulations. Therefore, it is possible that compassion is absent in very regulated work environments, especially when it is not a skill, required for the job. It may be quite insightful therefore to explore in depth the relation between authenticity, compassion and career success.

Similar to the results for compassion to others are the results for helpfulness as the more active aspect of compassion. Helpfulness had insignificant correlations to life satisfaction, objective and subjective career success.

On one hand, teamwork and personal interaction with clients/employees are necessary for many career fields. This is in line with research by Ng and Feldman (2014) showing that low agreeableness was negatively linked to subjective career success at $r=-0.15$, especially in light of the positive link between agreeableness and compassion to others/helpfulness in our sample. Ng and Feldman (2014) explain the negative correlation with forfeited opportunities to build social network at work due to the lower agreeableness, which in turn results in lower career satisfaction. It is possible however that compassion is perceived as key to career success only in certain types of professional domains (healthcare, therapy, education, customer service) and irrelevant in other fields where expert skills and competitiveness prevail. Therefore, other more specialized professional domains may be possible areas of further research in terms of compassion to others/helpfulness.

Third, some encouraging findings are reported regarding the fear of compassion to others. Fears of compassion are relatively novel constructs, introduced by Gilbert et al (2011), therefore the findings below contribute in significant way to the existing body of knowledge. Fears of compassion have been subject to research with negatives links reported to a variety of well-being constructs. Fear of receiving compassion from others is linked to anxiety, stress, depression and self-criticism (Gilbert et al, 2012; Hermanto et al, 2016). Fear of extending compassion to others is linked to avoiding attachment style and pursuing of self-interest (Gilbert et al, 2012). Fear of self-compassion is linked to higher level of self-criticism (Gilbert et al, 2012). In the validation of the scales to measure fear of compassion to others Gilbert et al (2011) confirm a single factor structure. In our data however, we found justified reasons to analyze fear of compassion in its two facets, which are reflection of two distinct factors obtained as a result of exploratory factor analysis. The ensuing facets are Compassion vulnerability and Compassion avoidance, reflecting two diverse meaning cores. Compassion vulnerability reflects the position of fear of compassion to others, pertaining to the fear of being exploited unfairly or beyond reasonable expectations when extending compassion to others. Compassion avoidance reflects the fear of compassion to others as it pertains to the conscious withholding of compassion due to adherence to principles of justice and ownership of consequences for previous actions.

The above associations between compassion avoidance and career success may be interpreted in light of research showing that fear of extending compassion to others is linked to pursuing of self-interest (Gilbert et al, 2012), which could be quite beneficial for individual career success, esp. within competitive goal-oriented settings that are typical of the contemporary professional landscape. Another possible explanation may be a potential link between career success and conscientiousness as personality trait. As Compassion avoidance reflects the sense of ownership of consequences for previous actions, it may be the case that it also promotes conscientiousness, which is characterized by desire to follow rules and take responsibility for the results obtained at the workplace. We did not investigate in detail the links between personality traits and career success in our sample as it goes beyond the scope of the dissertation, however conscientiousness is found to be a predictor of subjective career success in terms of job satisfaction (Judge et al, 1999). In our sample, conscientiousness and compassion avoidance were weakly correlated ($r=0.112^*$).

The empirical study conducted above enabled us to draw interesting conclusions regarding the associations between compassion and personality constructs, which was one of our research questions. The results are diverse which is to be expected given the level of differentiation of personality constructs such as the Big5 personality traits and two-dimensional self-esteem.

When we explore the results obtained by compassion construct, three compassion constructs come to the foreground with the consistent relationship they exhibit to both Big5 personality traits as well as self-esteem, namely self-compassion and the two facets of the fear of compassion to others. Self-compassion is very strongly correlated to self-liking ($r=0.7^{**}$) and neuroticism ($r=-0.588^{**}$), moderately correlated to self-competence ($r=0.382^{**}$) and weakly correlated to extraversion ($r = 0.157^{**}$), openness ($r=0.152^{**}$) and conscientiousness ($r=0.137^*$). This means that self-compassion underlies some of the basic characteristics shared across different personality traits.

Compassion to others is strongly significantly linked to agreeableness ($r=0.685^{**}$) whereas the helpfulness variable is moderately linked to agreeableness ($r=0.442^{**}$). These results are consistent with existing research on empathy showing positive correlation between empathy and agreeableness (Nettle et al, 2007 - $r=0.75$, Melchers et al, 2016 - $r = 0.469$) as well as research confirming agreeableness as predictor of empathy in adolescents (Shiota et al, 2006) and prosocial behaviour (Graziano et al, 2007). Indeed, we agree with Graziano et al (2007) that a possible

mechanism explaining the association above is that people high in agreeableness find it easier to shift attention to others.

Robins et al (2001) report that 34% of self-esteem variance was accounted for by Big5 traits. Emotional stability, extraversion and conscientiousness were the hallmarks of high self-esteem individuals, and agreeableness and openness to a lesser extent.

Furthermore, it is quite meaningful that in our sample compassion vulnerability exposes significant correlations to almost all personality traits, with exception of conscientiousness. On the other hand, compassion avoidance reveals significant correlations with two personality traits: with agreeableness ($r=-0.215^{**}$) and with conscientiousness ($r=0.112^*$). Finally, compassion avoidance exhibits moderate correlations to both facets of self-esteem, and compassion vulnerability has negative correlation to self-liking of $r=-0.121^*$. To sum up, compassion avoidance and compassion vulnerability appear as important variables underlying the associations under research, hence analyzing the two facets above may be more meaningful than the more traditional measure of fear of compassion to others.

The importance of personality constructs is further underscored when examining the predictive abilities of Big5 personality traits and self-esteem for each compassion construct. Without going in detail in each regression model, all five compassion constructs under investigation are significantly predicted by self-liking, self-competence, neuroticism, agreeableness and openness, in various combinations. This means that the diverse combinations of the above personality constructs and aspects of the Self determine to a large extent the individual combination of compassion constructs. This finding could have important practical implications for individual retrospection, analysis, therapy, development and self-improvement.

Last, but not least, T-tests and one-way ANOVA have enabled us to conclude that compassion constructs are differentiated according to demographic characteristics. Older age, more professional experience and presence of children were all factors differentiating towards higher levels of self-compassion. Our study found that women have statistically significant advantage in compassion to others (46 vs. 42). This finding is in line with existing research by Eisenberg and Lennon (1983) reporting that women are more empathetic to others and more self-critical. Neff (2003b) and Yarnell and Neff (2013) report that women are significantly less self-compassionate than men, however we did not find statistically significant differences between the two groups in our sample, which may also be related to the different sociocultural composition of the sample.

Contributions

The positive relationships of self-compassion to objective and subjective career success are contribution to existing research since these associations have not been empirically established yet, moreover so because their effects are of medium strength and therefore pose substantial promise for practitioners.

As presented earlier, some of the relationships under research have been established already. The strong correlation ($r=0.433$) between self-compassion and life satisfaction is in sync with previous research. Self-compassion is linked to happiness and coping with negative life events. (Leary et al, 2007; Neff, 2003b; Neff, Rude and Kirkpatrick, 2007). Self-compassion is linked to positive affect (Lopez et al, 2018). Negative relationship exists between self-compassion and anxiety, depression, self-criticism. (Neff, 2003a). From this point of view, our study validates and expands on the existing studies by incorporating objective and subjective career success, as no earlier study has explored the relationship between self-compassion and career success. In addition, our study validates correlations between self-compassion and life satisfaction within Bulgarian context.

It is noteworthy that our finding that compassion to others is higher with employees (46) compared to managers (42) may hold some important clues regarding the absence of significant correlations of compassion to others/helpfulness with life satisfaction/career success. This finding seems to complement findings, for example that people with lower social status have higher compassion to others (Stellar et al, 2012). In a way, hierarchy in the workplace is the corresponding image of social structure in life in general, therefore this finding is in sync with research on social class and compassion. In fact, our analysis also confirmed the finding that individuals with lower income (minimal and average salary) have higher compassion to others than those ones with very high income. It is also possible that individuals with higher income are also the ones standing higher in the professional hierarchy. Research exists showing that within workplace the largest role is played by coworkers, with coworker satisfaction exhibiting stronger correlation to life satisfaction than supervisor satisfaction (Bowling, Eschleman & Wang, 2010). This may also be a reason why at lower levels in the hierarchy employees have more compassion to others than at higher levels. Further, lower socioeconomic contexts have been found to promote more interdependence (Snibbe & Marcus, 2005). This conclusion should be also valid within the workplace, where at same levels of hierarchy, e.g. between employees, interdependence is easier

than between individuals from different hierarchical levels. Delving deeper into the interactions and flow of compassion/self-compassion between different levels in the hierarchy may be an interesting avenue of further research, especially by considering whether compassion to others flows upward or laterally or downward, and its link to life satisfaction and career success.

Another important contribution is our analysis of fear of compassion and its two facets in relation to career success, life satisfaction and personality constructs. The two facets we suggest (compassion vulnerability and compassion avoidance) reflect two meaning cores and different relationships to the above constructs. Compassion avoidance revealed a weak positive, whereas compassion vulnerability a weak negative correlation to life satisfaction, Compassion avoidance was significantly positively correlated to both objective and subjective career success. Moreover, compassion avoidance also was significant predictor of objective career success.

Compassion avoidance was determined to play more significant role for the life outcomes under research, as it had significant correlations (albeit weak in strength) to both types of career success, in addition to being a significant predictor in the regression model for objective career success. We believe that the analysis through the two facets is meaningful and contributes in important way to the existing body of knowledge. Fear of compassion to others was explored as a single factor in existing studies despite the diverging meaning cores. The polarity is obvious in the correlation we found to life satisfaction in which compassion vulnerability exposed weak positive correlation whereas compassion avoidance a weak negative correlation. In that sense, further research particularly on the constructs of fear of compassion and their facets would be quite promising.

Agreeableness exhibits very strong and significant positive correlation to compassion to others ($r=0.685^{**}$) and to helpfulness ($r=0.442^{**}$), which is in line with existing research on the link between prosocial motivation and agreeableness (Graziano et al, 2007). On the other hand, compassion vulnerability and compassion avoidance are both negatively correlated to agreeableness with a low strength ($r=-.246^{**}$, $r=-.215^{**}$). It is expected that individuals who possess any or both of the facets of fear of compassion may be less willing to extend compassion or provide help, thus are being perceived as less agreeable. To our knowledge, the correlation between the fear of compassion scales and Big5 traits has been explored (Volk, Mehr, & Mills 2023) but adding the two different facets in the analysis is a contribution of our research to the literature.

Further contributions are the adaptation of three questionnaires for Bulgarian conditions (Self-compassion short form, Compassion to others and Fear of compassion to others) as well as the development of two new scales (Helpfulness and Objective Career success).

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

Interest towards the concepts of compassion and self-compassion has been on the rise in psychological science but is usually centered on either compassion or self-compassion as a standalone construct. Compassion has long been recognized as a fundamental element of medicine, education and other areas of social life since humans are inherently wired for compassionate love and caring. Research exists also on the many benefits of compassion and self-compassion in terms of mental health, anxiety and depression. From this point of view the current work is a step towards building a more holistic view of compassion and self-compassion by incorporating meaningful life outcomes such as life satisfaction and career success.

The results of the empirical study allow us to answer the research questions set at the outset and to establish the viability of the hypotheses raised in association with the research questions. A positive relationship of self-compassion to objective and subjective career success, which is contribution to existing literature on the topic. Further, self-compassion was also found to be a significant predictor of both objective and subjective career success. Our intention is that this research will aid in research and practice of a wide range of situations such as parenting, relationships, achieving well-being and career success. Applying interventions aimed at balancing self-compassion may be more relevant for career success than self-esteem interventions.

The present research is prone to various limitations, inherent to psychological research. First, collection of data over the social networks assumes that real individuals fill out the questionnaires, and that they take the questionnaires seriously. Second, self-reporting implies subjectivity. Third, the current study is cross-sectional in design and measures the respondents' perceptions at a specific point in time (without causality) and does not take into account changes in compassion constructs on an individual level over time, which could be a field for future research in developmental psychology. Another limitation to consider is that intercorrelations exist between compassion constructs. It may be useful to investigate the interaction and flow between the various compassion constructs in the future.

Publications:

Vassileva, M. (2023). Compassion, self-compassion and emotional regulation. *Annual of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Philosophy, Psychology*, vol. 113, 2023, 44-57.

<https://www.ceeol.com/search/journal-detail?id=2875>

Vassileva, M. & Zinovieva, I. (2023). Origins of compassion and self-compassion. *Приложна психология – възможности и перспективи. Сборник доклади*. Варна: Изд-во на Варненски свободен университет, 322-336.

Vassileva, M. (2023). Psychological Aspects of Self-Compassion. *В: 30 години специалност психология. Годишник за студенти, докторанти и научни ръководители*, том 3/2, Изд-во на Великотърновския университет „Св. св. Кирил и Методий“, с. 85- 96.

Vassileva, M. (2022). Compassion and self-compassion in light of self-awareness and authenticity. *Докторантски четения, Сборник с доклади, СУ „Климент Охридски“ (in print)*

Vassileva, M., Zinovieva, I. (2022). Compassion and self-compassion – implications for well-being. *Annual of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Philosophy, Psychology*, vol 112, 2022, 5 – 34.

Vassileva, M. (2021). Psychological aspects of compassion. *Докторантски четения, Сборник доклади, Философски факултет, СУ „Климент Охридски*, 251 – 270.

Participation in conferences:

Vassileva, M. & Zinovieva, I. „Origins of compassion and self-compassion”, 15 p. International Conference, Varna Free University, Jun 2023

Vassileva, M, “Psychological aspects of self-compassion”, 8 p., International Conference, Veliko Tarnovo University, April 2023

Vassileva, M. “Compassion and self-compassion in light of self-awareness and authenticity”, *Докторантски четения, Септември 2022, СУ „Климент Охридски“*

Vassileva, M. “Psychological aspects of compassion”, *Докторантски четения, Септември 2021, СУ „Климент Охридски“*

Participation in projects

Participation in scientific project:

Member of scientific team, project „Moral and prosocial behaviours: compassion and helping“, Supervisor: Prof. Dr. sc. Irina Zinovieva - Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University “Kliment Ohridski”, contract. 80-10-32/20.04.2023 г.

Participation in scientific project:

Member of scientific team, project of Sofia University „Market for innovations and technology transfer (SUMMIT)“, 3.4. Scientific research with potential for innovation or transfer of knowledge/intellectual property – „Indicators for forecasting behaviour in the virtual social networks“, Prof. Dr. sc. Irina Zinovieva - Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University “Kliment Ohridski”, contract 70-123-477 / 27.6.2023 г.

Participation in accreditation of PhD Programs (track 3.2 Psychology) at Bulgarian Institutions of Higher Education

- Member of expert team for accreditation of PhD Program „General Psychology“ at New Bulgarian University, 2023
- Member of expert team for accreditation of PhD Programs „Positive Psychology“ and „Social Psychology“ at Plovdiv University, 2023