



## The Relationship between Nature Connectedness and Self-Compassion among College Students

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### ABSTRACT

The education system largely depends on marks based rather than society value and environment based. Their environment change and society should be connected with their academic performance and curriculum activities to bring out conducive place to live in for better life. In modern technology era, students are immersed in social platforms and multimedia where they are far distance from appreciating the nature. They are indulged in technology world and unable to see the impact of nature in their life. This study investigated the link between nature connectedness and self-compassion in a sample of 250 college students. The sampling method is a simple random sampling technique used in this study, 250 participants and college student samples were used. More than 65 % college students demonstrated moderate level of nature connectedness and self-compassion. The results show that nature connectedness is not related to self-compassion of college students. The study highlighted the importance of building nature connectedness among college students as they demonstrate moderate level and it is the need of an hour to provide training to the college students to develop their self-compassion.

**KEYWORDS:** Nature connectedness, self-compassion, and college student

### INTRODUCTION

The education system largely depends on marks based rather than society value and environment based. Their environment change and society should be connected with their academic performance and curriculum activities to bring out conducive place to live in for better life. In modern technology era, students are immersed in social platforms and multimedia where they are far distance from appreciating the nature. They are indulged in technology world and unable to see the impact of nature in their life. In today's fast-paced and technology-driven world, mental health challenges are increasingly prevalent among college students. The pressures of academic performance and social expectation uncertainties often result in stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Mental health challenges are complex, encompassing both social and emotional well-being, and they affect individuals' abilities to realize their potential and manage life's pressures said to (McMahan 2015). College students face new demands like increased academic workloads and time management pressures, which necessitate the management of psychosocial risks, such as elevated stress, depression, anxiety, and maladaptive thoughts, to thrive. Poor management of these risks can negatively impact academic performance and overall well-being (Beery TH 2014). In this study, a connection with nature can be particularly beneficial for college students who often navigate intense academic pressures and social challenges. Because of its substantial effects on mental health and well-being, the idea of nature connectivity has received a lot of attention in psychology study in recent years. The world has several environmental crises (Falk et al., 2022). It's more important than ever to grasp what can affect our journey toward a sustainable future. So, starting new and creative research projects is more important than ever. For instance, because of its strong links to the well-being of both people (like the findings by Pritchard et al., 2020, in a meta-analysis) and the planet (as shown by Whitburn et al., 2020, in another meta-analysis), nature connectedness is gaining more attention as an important goal in policies around the world (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2022; EEA, 2022; SEI & CEEW, 2022; UNEP, 2021; see Lengies et al., 2023). This shows that new research on nature connectedness should be a key focus. However, new research indicates that studies focusing on ways to boost our connection with nature have slowed down a bit (Sheffield et al., 2022). College students, who frequently deal with several academic pressures and social obstacles, can benefit most from developing a relationship with nature. The consequences of inadequate well-being in emerging adults are extensive, with studies highlighting connections between low self-efficacy, resilience, self-esteem, and mental health issues like stress, anxiety, and depression, particularly among college students, who experience higher rates of emotional distress. The ongoing environmental crisis is marked by persistent shifts in temperature and weather patterns (Dietz 2020). Research has indicated that emotions like empathy and compassion are linked to an increase in pro-environmental actions (Kim 2021) and attitudes (Yan, Z.; Cortese, J. 2023). Additionally, compassion is proposed to act as a mediator between empathic concern and pro-social behavior, which includes environmentally friendly actions. Nature connectedness, defined as a person's emotional and cognitive interaction with nature, is linked to several beneficial mental health outcomes, such as lower stress, happier moods, and higher levels of life satisfaction. Self-compassion is defined as acknowledging one's experiences as a part of the greater human predicament, treating oneself with kindness when one fails or faces challenges, and keeping a balanced perspective on negative emotions. Ration for this

study is Higher levels of self-compassion are linked to better emotional resilience and mental health. Although nature connectedness and self-compassion have been individually linked to positive mental health outcomes, their relationship has not been extensively studied among college students.

### ***Need for the study***

Studies have shown links between low self-efficacy, resilience, and self-esteem, and mental health conditions like stress, anxiety, and depression, especially among college students who are more likely to experience emotional distress. There are only few studies related to psychological and environmental factors. **Giulia Ballarotto et, al (2025)** found that Self-compassion and compassion were identified as partial mediators in the relationship between empathy with nature and pro-environmental behaviors. This suggests that individuals who empathize with nature are more likely to develop compassion, which in turn promotes sustainable actions. The study was developed by **Anomi et, al (2024)** In the study suggests that integrating mindfulness curricula can effectively improve socio-emotional well-being among post-secondary students. By reducing perfectionism, stress, and anxiety and by enhancing self-compassion and social connectedness. **Naomi Wu (2022)** revealed medium to large effect sizes, indicating medium to strong correlations and relationships between connectedness to nature and well-being. These results elaborated on prior research on this domain and cultivated a foundation for further. **Dorthe Djernis et, al (2021)**: Self-compassion increased post-intervention, but effect sizes were small and not significant. At follow-up, changes in stress were not significant, however, self-compassion increased for both interventions with medium-sized effects. For the intervention groups, medium- to large-sized positive effects on trait mindfulness after a behavioral task were found post-intervention, and small to medium-sized effects in self-reported mindfulness were seen at follow-up. Connectedness to Nature was the only outcome measure with an incremental effect in nature, exceeding the control with a medium-sized effect at follow-up. **Emily Kroshus et, al. (2020)** Students reported moderate rises in depression and anxiety from the summer before college through the spring, showing considerable variability among individuals and no distinct trends based on demographic groups. Additionally, self-compassion emerged as the most significant and reliable factor in facilitating successful transitions. Chronic stressors were highly predictive of adverse outcomes, and self-compassion and coping skills did not mitigate their effects. Lastly, those most prone to encountering chronic stressors throughout the academic year included women, sexual minority individuals, and first-generation students.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

- To identify the mean level of nature connectedness among college students.
- To identify the mean level of self-compassion among college students.
- To find the relationship between nature connectedness and self-compassion among college students.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

- There is a significant difference in the mean level of nature connectedness among college students.
- There is a significant difference in the mean level of self-compassion among college students.
- There is no significant relationship between nature connectedness and self-compassion among college students.

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION**

### **NATURE CONNECTEDNESS**

In this study, nature connectedness is defined as an Individual's emotional, cognitive, and experimental relationship with the natural environment. It encompasses feelings of belonging, appreciation, and engagement with nature.

### **SELF COMPASSION**

In this study, self-compassion is defined as an individual's ability to be kind and understanding toward themselves during times of failure, suffering, or perceived inadequacy.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a quantitative approach using a Survey, which is a simple random sampling technique.

### **Sample**

In this present study, 250 college student samples were used under the age of 18 to 25 years old in Karaikudi.

### **Tools for the study**

**Nature Connectedness Scale (NCS):** Mayer and Frantz (2004), assess individuals' emotional and cognitive connections to nature. Used by 14 teams, it aids in research, team-building, and evaluating nature-based interventions. The validated questionnaire includes 14 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating a stronger connection to nature or score reflect a stronger sense of connection to the nature world. Recent studies show that long-term international experiences enhance global identity and nature connectedness, promoting pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors.

**Self-compassion scale (SCS):** The Short Form Self-Compassion Scale (SCS-SF) (Raes et al., 2011) is a 12-item version designed to simplify the longer self-compassion scale, making it easier for researchers to gather data from those who may find the full version daunting. It assesses self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = rarely, 5 = almost always). Total self-compassion scores are calculated by summing item scores, with higher totals indicating greater self-compassion. A recent study suggests that self-compassion relates to adult attachment to oneself, particularly in the absence of self-criticism during distress, linked to secure caregiving experiences.

## PROCEDURE

### Data Collection Procedure

Participants were connected to a Google form, and they filled out the questions on this form and took the online survey method, which includes the nature connectedness scale with 14 items and the self-compassion scale with 12 items, in addition to self-reported academic performance and demographic data.

### Data Analysis

Analysis of the data to assess the levels of nature connectedness among the students and prepare a report that summarizes the findings and their implications. Please respond to each question based on how you usually feel. There are no right or wrong answers. Use the following scale to honestly express what you are currently experiencing by writing your response next to each question.

## RESULT

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics – Mean, Median, Mode, SD**

| Variables            | No of sample | Mean  | Median | Mode | SD   | SKEW  | KURT    |
|----------------------|--------------|-------|--------|------|------|-------|---------|
| NATURE CONNECTEDNESS | 250          | 40.28 | 41     | 42   | 5.55 | -0.29 | 0.76765 |
| SELF-COMPASSION      |              | 38.88 | 38     | 36   | 5.00 | 0.003 | 0.75177 |

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistical data concerning the association between nature connectedness and self-compassion. The analysis reveals that for nature connectedness, the mean score is 40.28, with a median of 41 and a mode of 42. The standard deviation (SD) is calculated at 5.55, with a skewness of -0.29, indicating a slight leftward distribution, and a kurtosis of 0.76765, suggesting a distribution that is relatively normal with a slight peak. In contrast, for self-compassion, the mean is 38.88, the median is 38, and the mode is 36. The standard deviation (SD) for self-compassion is 5.00, with a skewness of 0.003, reflecting a symmetrical distribution, and a kurtosis of 0.75177, which indicates a normal distribution with moderate peak characteristics.

**Table 2: level of nature connectedness and self-compassion**

| variables            | No of sample | High |     | Moderate |     | Low |     |
|----------------------|--------------|------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-----|
|                      |              | N    | %   | N        | %   | N   | %   |
| Nature connectedness | 250          | 36   | 14% | 170      | 68% | 44  | 18% |
| Self-compassion      |              | 44   | 18% | 183      | 73% | 23  | 9%  |

Table 2, the level of nature connectedness and self-compassion among 250 participants nature connectedness is high in 36 participants (14%), moderate in 170 participants (68%), and low in 44 participants (18%). In self-compassion was high in 44 participants (18%), moderate in 183 participants (73%), and low in 23 participants (9%). The majority of participants demonstrated a moderate level of both nature connectedness (68%) and self-compassion (73%).

**Table 3: correlation between nature connectedness and mental self-compassion.**

| Variables            | Correlation |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Nature connectedness | r=0.040     |
| Self-compassion      |             |

Table 3 reveals a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.040$  between nature connectedness and self-compassion among college students, with no significant correlation ( $p > 0.05$ ). This suggests that individuals' emotional and cognitive ties with nature yield only a very weak positive association with self-compassion. Although there may be an indication that self-compassion could rise alongside nature connectedness, the relationship remains too weak to be regarded as statistically significant.

### Finding

The study's findings indicated no significant relationship between nature connectedness and self-compassion among college students, as evidenced by a correlation coefficient  $r=0.040$ . This suggests that the degree of emotional or cognitive connection to nature does not exert a measurable influence on the self-compassion levels of college students.

### DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

This study investigated the relationship between nature connectedness and self-compassion among college students. The descriptive analysis revealed that most participants displayed moderate levels of both characteristics. However, the correlation analysis indicated no significant relationship ( $r = 0.040$ ) between the two variables, as the result was not statistically significant.

### Conclusion

This study should be interpreted with a conclusion due to several limitations. First, because this study is a Survey method, the results only indicate the correlation between connection to nature and self-compassion among college students. However, a correlation does not infer a connection to nature causes self-compassion, nor does it independently infer a connection to nature and self-compassion. Self-compassion may cause a low connection to nature and higher self-compassion. Thus, we can conclude that the extent of one's connection to nature does not notably influence their capacity for self-compassion.

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