

Self-compassion and the performer's environment: A winning combo for wellbeing in the performing arts and artistic sports



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International Symposium on Performance Science, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Performers (i.e., artists and athletes) seek to acquire a strong mindset to face the challenges associated with their activity. Unfortunately, this mental toughness can sometimes foster conditions in which personal resources, such as overcoming obstacles or perseverance, are so highly valued that athletes may be less likely or unwilling to seek help for mental health issues (Gucciardi, Hanton, & Fleming, 2017). A new concept, **self-compassion**, has been studied and highlighted to complement this mental toughness (Neff, 2003). Self-compassion is characterized by three components: self-compassion, common humanity and mindfulness. The development of self-compassionate skills has been shown to have benefits for personal performance and wellbeing (Baltzell, Röthlin & Kenttä, 2020). The development of personal coping skills often depends on one's environment and not only on oneself (Frentz, McHugh & Mosewich, 2020). The performer's **social environment** (i.e., peers, parents, *coaches*) has a role to play in their personal development (Ingstrup, Mosewich & Holt, 2017). The use of a mixed method will help answer these questions:

How is self-compassion perceived and defined by performers and coaches?

What role does the social environment play in the development of these skills?

How performers could develop self-compassionate skills ?

OBJECTIVES

This study aims at :

- Exploring the concept of self-compassion within *performers*
- Studying the links between self-compassion and *performers'* social environment
- Creating guidelines for coaching and supporting the development of these skills

MIXED METHOD

QUALITATIVE DATA

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Participants

- Between 25 and 30 *performers*
- Aged 14 to 25 years
- Activities: classical music, ballet, artistic sports (rhythmic gymnastics, figure skating)
- French-speaking part of Switzerland

Procedure

The data is collected by conducting a semi-structured interview with each *performer*.

- Initial instruction: Tell me about your classes/trainings with your coach/teacher and how you deal with/talk to yourself during practice.

Then, two dimensions are explored:

- a) Relationship to oneself, self-compassion
- b) Roles of meaningful people around and relationships with those people

The *performers* are also confronted with quotes to which they must react and a last question is asked on how they would like to receive help to develop their self-compassionate skills.

Data analysis: Thematic analysis according to *Grounded Theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

GROUP FOCUS

Participants

- Three focus groups including, in total, 15 to 20 *coaches* (teachers, trainers, ballet masters)
- Activities taught: classical music, ballet, artistic sports (rhythmic gymnastics, figure skating)
- French-speaking part of Switzerland
- Not the *coaches* of the interviewed' performers

Procedure

The focus groups will bring together *coaches* from different disciplines (i.e., one focus group = 2 dance teachers, 2 music teachers and 2 artistic sports' *coaches*).

During the focus groups, different vignettes, created from the interviews, will be presented to the *coaches*, from which they will react:

- a) Performers' negative and positive attitudes towards themselves
- b) A coach-performer situation hindering the development of self-compassion
- c) A coach-performer situation promoting self-compassion

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Participants

- Approximately 250 *performers* (classical music, classical dance, artistic sports), aged between 14 and 25, practicing in the French-speaking part of Switzerland

Online or paper questionnaires

Self-compassion scale (Neff, 2003a)



Interpersonal Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ) (Rocchi, Pelletier & Desmarais, 2016)

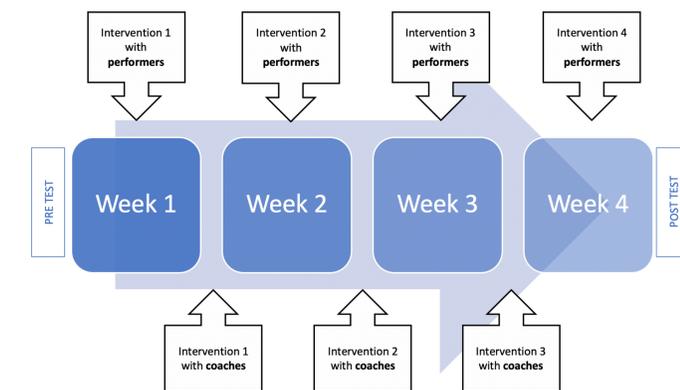
Mental Health Continuum (Doré, O'Loughlin, Sabiston & Fournier, 2017).

Data analysis

The data will be analyzed using SPSS statistical software.

APPLIED INTERVENTION

Based on the results of the qualitative and quantitative studies, an intervention program of approximately 4 to 6 weeks will be created and offered to a sample of performers, coaches and/or parents. This program will be proposed by a certified sport psychologist.



Results of previous research will help create the program (Kuchar et al., 2020; Flegar, 2021; Röthlin & Leiggener, 2021).

EXPECTED RESULTS AND POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS

The expected results, thanks to data from mixed methods, are :

- An insight into what self-compassion is for these *performers*
- A clarification of the role of the social environment in the development of self-compassionate skills
- The prevalence of self-compassion in these populations
- Guidelines on how to accompany performers in developing self-compassionate skills

*References are available upon request (celine.kosirnik@unil.ch)