

Promoting Mental Well-Being Through Self-Compassion: A Program for Undergraduate Nursing Students

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PROBLEM

- **Background & Significance:**
 - Greater pressure for students to progress through difficult nursing curriculum and high-acuity clinical experiences.
 - Increased challenges to students' mental health.
 - Risk for burnout in undergraduate nursing students.
 - Self-compassion behaviors can impact one's ability to provide compassionate patient care.
- **Problem Statement:** Undergraduate nursing students face significant psychological distress due to the combined pressures of rigorous academic expectations and emotionally demanding clinical experiences, which threaten their mental well-being, academic performance, and long-term professional sustainability.
- **PICO:** Does implementing a self-compassion program into an undergraduate nursing curriculum compared to not implementing a self-compassion program impact a nursing student's mental well-being by the end of the student's 15-week semester?
- **Purpose:** The purpose of this Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) project is to implement a self-compassion program designed to enhance mental well-being among undergraduate nursing students.

OBJECTIVES

- Administer the DASS-21, PSS, and SCS surveys to participating undergraduate nursing students during Week 1 and Week 15 of the semester to assess changes in mental well-being and perceived levels of stress.
- Deliver five structured self-compassion educational sessions to participating undergraduate nursing students over the course of the 15-week semester.
- Achieve a measurable increase in self-compassion scores (SCS) and a measurable decrease in stress and psychological distress scores (PSS and DASS-21) by the end of the 15-week intervention period, as demonstrated by pre- and post-intervention comparisons.

INTERVENTIONS

- **Guided** students in designing a personalized student ID badge card with affirming and empowering language.
- **Prompted** students to utilize their ID badge card during high-stress academic or clinical experiences.
- **Facilitated** five online self-paced learning modules every 2-3 weeks.
- **Recommended** reflective writing exercises every 2-3 weeks.
- **Integrated** a brief self-compassion practice into pre-exam preparation routines.

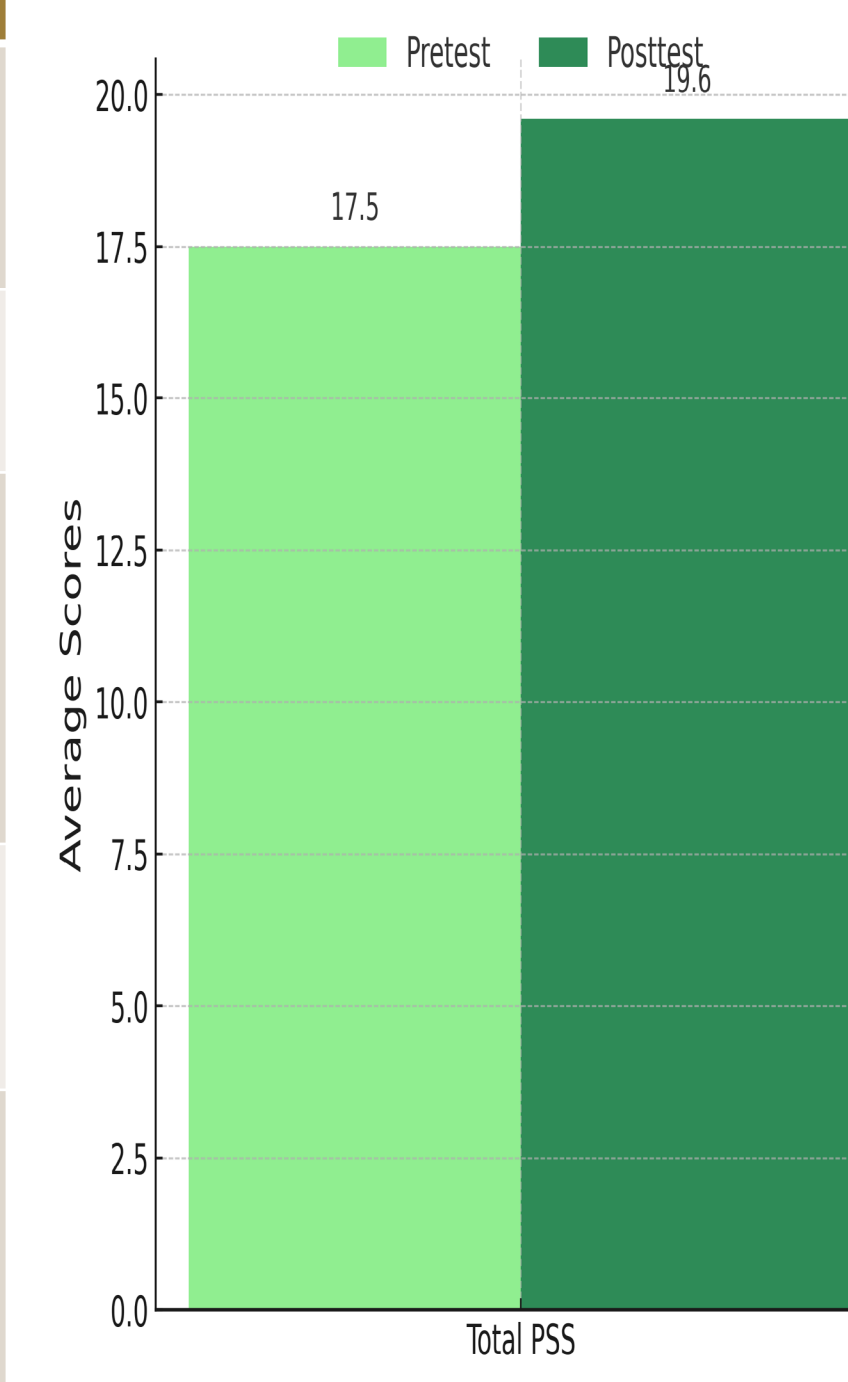
METHODS AND DESIGN

- **Theoretical Frameworks:** Maslow's Humanism Theory of Education; Watson's Theory of Human Caring and Caritas
- **The Iowa Model of Evidence-Based Practice to Promote Quality Care** supported the development and sustainability of the self-compassion program.
- **Population:** Undergraduate students in an Associate Degree in Nursing program, voluntary anonymous participation
- **Duration:** 15-week Spring Semester 2025
- **Pre- and post-intervention surveys:**
 - Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)
 - Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)
 - Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS-21)
- **Qualitative question:** Weekly Reflective questions

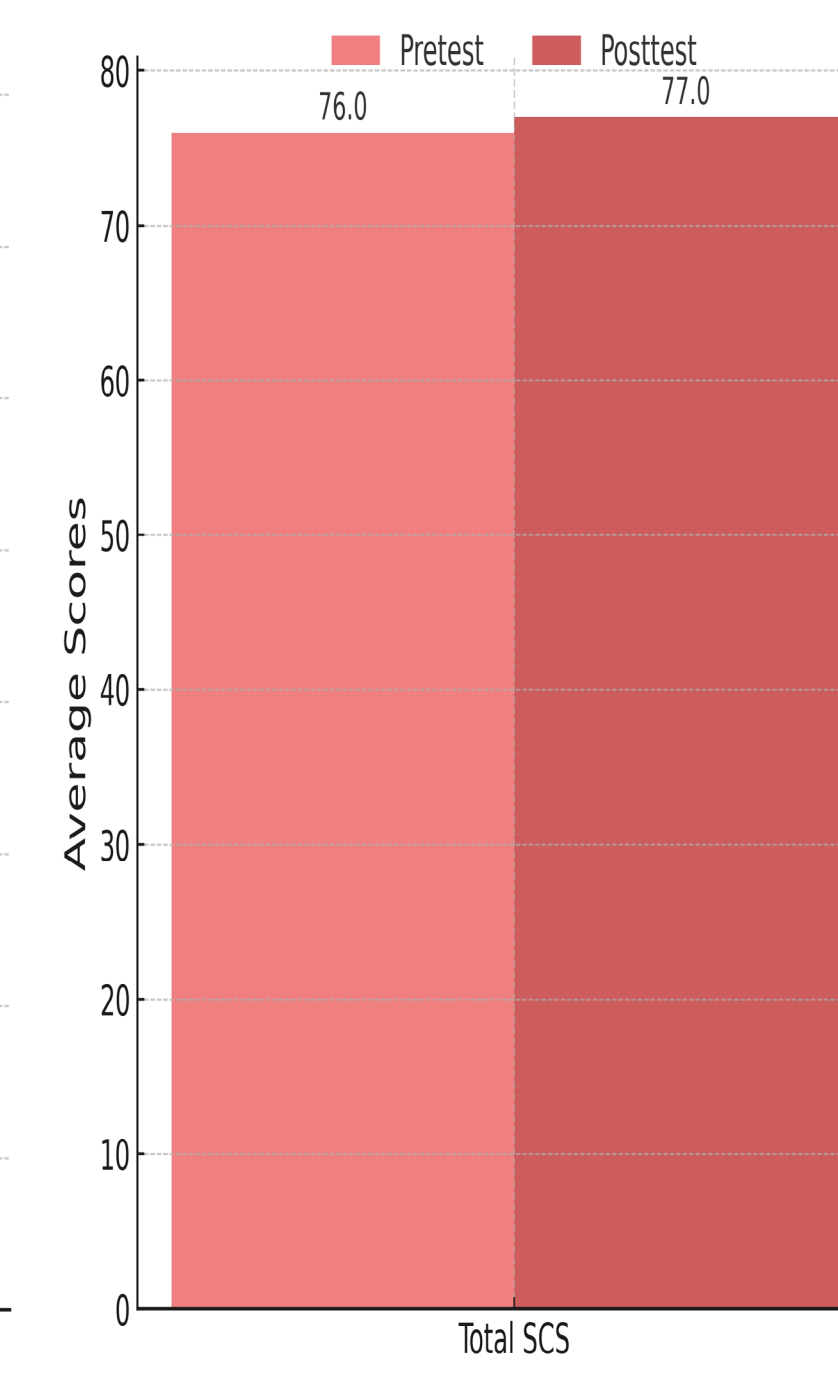
LEARNING MODULES

Module Title	Objective(s)	Exercises
Module 1: Introduction	Orient to self-compassion practices Educate about mindfulness techniques	Body scan Soothing touch Mindful handwashing
Module 2: Focusing & Awareness	Increase self-awareness Learn to respond effectively to others	Meditation Pause Practice Breathing exercises
Module 3: Stress & Coping	Focus on emotional regulation Discuss time management strategies Identify techniques for stress reduction	Here and now stone Self-compassion break Loving Kindness Phrases
Module 4: Problem-solving & Decision-making	Respond without being overwhelmed Foster ability to tolerate difficult emotions	Journaling Sitting meditation Mindful movement
Module 5: Future Plans	Create a practice plan for self Generate motivation to provide compassionate care to others	Core Values Practice gratitude Loving kindness meditation

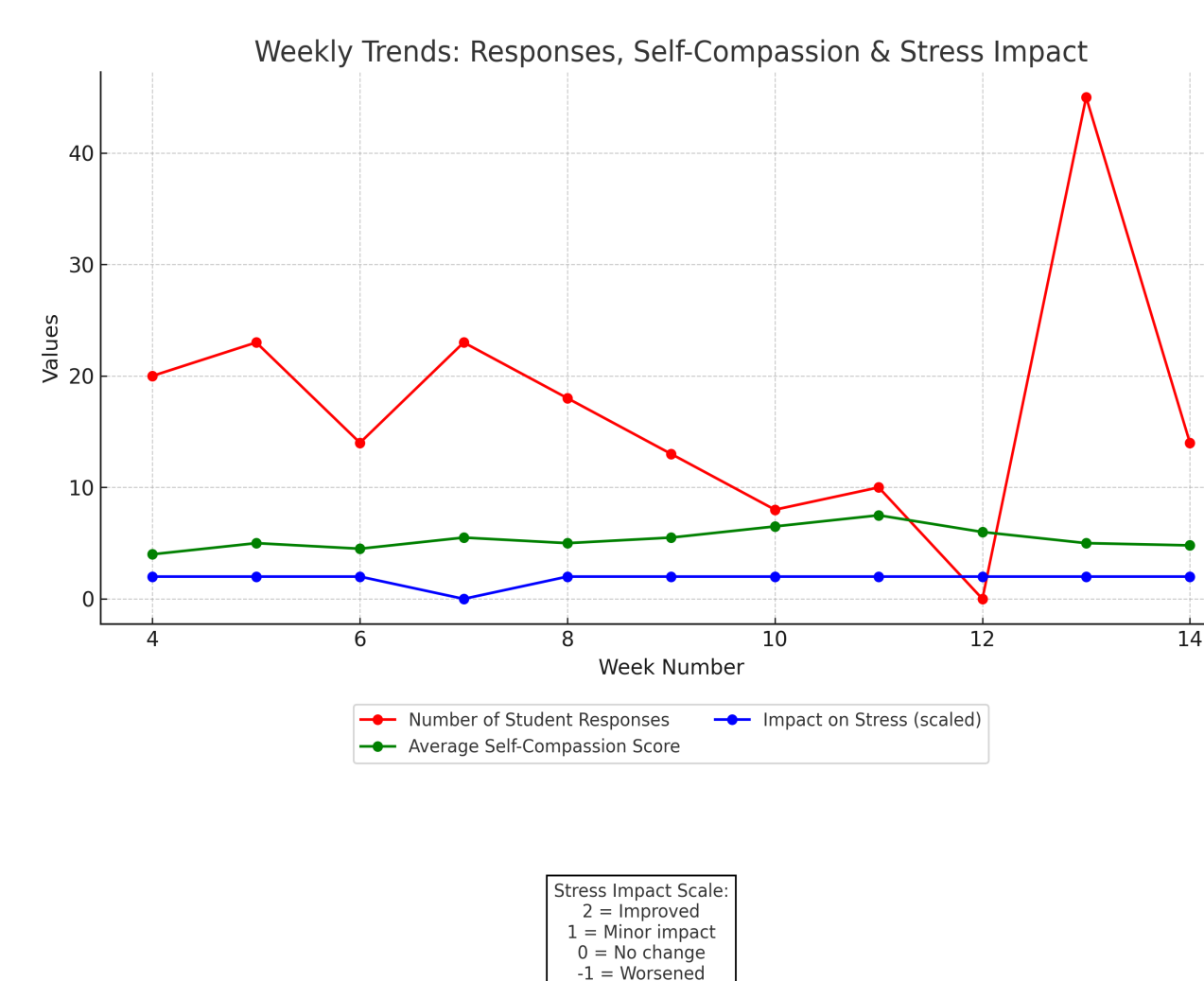
PSS Pretest vs. Posttest Scores



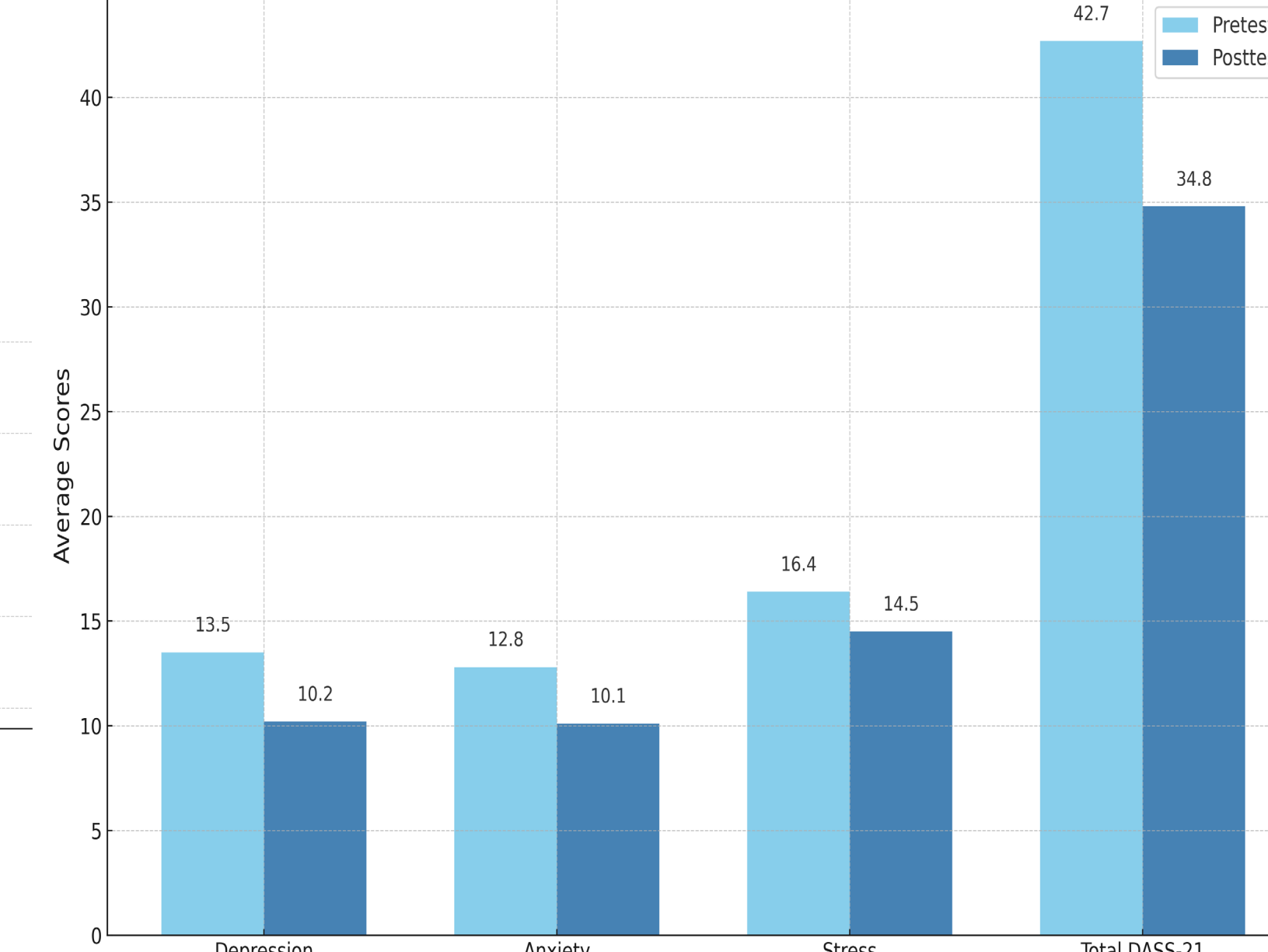
SCS Pretest vs. Posttest Scores



WEEKLY TRENDS: RESPONSES, SELF-COMPASSION & STRESS IMPACT



DASS-21 Pretest vs. Posttest Scores



OUTCOMES

- N=80 pretest surveys, n= 47 posttest surveys.
- **Independent samples t-test** via SPSS, $t(101.05) = 0.88$, $p = .191$. Although the difference was not statistically significant, the lower posttest mean may indicate a clinically meaningful trend toward reduced depression, anxiety, and stress.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Theme	Description
Varied Self-Compassion Levels	Self-ratings ranged from 0 to 10 and fluctuated with academic and personal stressors.
Common Techniques Used	Strategies included mindfulness, rest, exercise, journaling, and positive self-talk.
Barriers to Self-Compassion	Time constraints, guilt for taking breaks, and overwhelming workload limited engagement.
Impact on Stress	When practiced, techniques helped reduce stress; lack of use contributed to burnout.
Increased Awareness and Motivation	Students acknowledged inconsistent practice and expressed intent to improve.

- **Cost-benefit (CB):** CB ration=17.45. Every \$1 invested, intervention yields \$17.45 in return. Self-compassion program implementation= \$1,410, estimated benefit=\$24,600

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Introduce the self-compassion program during the first semester of undergraduate nursing education to promote early adoption of well-being practices.
- Expand implementation to include both associate and baccalaureate nursing programs to broaden impact across educational levels.
- Equip faculty with targeted training on delivering and supporting self-compassion interventions within the curriculum.
- Evaluate program outcomes using standardized pre- and post-intervention measures to assess effects on academic performance, mental well-being, and student retention.

References:

