



Criminal Behaviour Tendencies: Concepts, Prevalence, Consequences and Compassion-Focused Therapy

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Abstract. Criminal behaviour tendencies are global phenomenon that affects individuals, families and societies at large. People are born innocent with a clean mind but as the individual interacts with the environment, they learn different behaviour, both bad and good. Hardly a day passes without hearing disturbing news about criminal activities. Not only do people get involved in criminal behaviour, but their actions also pose risks to their victims as well as the society. A crime-free society promotes incredible growth and development, whereas crime-ridden communities suffer from oppression, poverty and underdevelopment. Factors like dysfunctional families, parenting, peer influence, economic deprivation, and substance misuse exacerbate these tendencies. Sutherland's Differential Association Theory and Routine Activity Theory revealed criminal behaviour's learned nature, influenced by social interactions, motivated offenders, attractive targets, and inadequate guardianship. Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT), developed by Gilbert, is a psychological intervention that counteracts negative thought patterns and reduces criminal thinking, promoting rehabilitation among offenders, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies. This study therefore reviews the concept, prevalence, consequences of Compassion-Focused Therapy on criminal behaviour tendencies.

Keywords: Criminal Behaviour Tendencies, Differential Association Theory, Routine Activity Theory, Compassion-Focused Therapy

1. Introduction

Crime and criminal behaviour inclinations are an extensive field that differ across cultures and historical dynamics. While one conduct may be legally

prohibited in one group, it may be considered the norm in another. Regardless of differences in legality and criminal laws, crime knows no borders; it affects people of all ages, genders, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. There is rarely a day that goes by without hearing disturbing news about criminal activity. Not only do individuals involved in criminal behaviour endanger themselves, but their actions also pose risks to their victims as well as the society. A crime-free society promotes incredible growth and development, whereas crime-ridden communities suffer from oppression, poverty, underdevelopment, and illiteracy. Unfortunately, both men and women, young and old, are implicated in criminal behaviour. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), through the World Youth Report (WYR, 2020), has warned that the youth population, between the ages of 18–24 years, stands at 1.1 billion, constituting 18% of the global population and 24% of those aged 24 years and younger are indexed. The agency emphasized that young people are more likely to channel their energies in the wrong direction due to untapped and underutilized energy, coupled with poor guidance and direction. According to Youth (2030) Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations explicitly states that youth are the future and must be guided and nurtured to secure a sustainable future. Youth violence and criminal behaviour have permeated societies, causing havoc and untold hardship for individuals and communities. These issues are frequently highlighted in media reports and can be observed in everyday experiences.

2. Concept of Criminal Behaviour Tendencies

According to Howitt (2006), criminal behavioural tendencies refer to traits or characteristics within an individual that make them likely to engage in criminal activities. These tendencies are not necessarily innate but may develop over time through exposure to certain environments and experiences. Hentig (2009) posited that humans learn through imitation, observing and emulating the behaviours of those in their social surroundings. Criminal behavioural tendencies often involve engaging in illegal activities such as theft, burglary, violence, vandalism, and drug use. Among adolescents, these tendencies manifest as behaviours that disregard societal norms, violate laws, and infringe on the rights of others (e.g., property, sexual, legal, and emotional violations). Adolescents with such tendencies may display physical aggression, life instability, and impulsivity, often leading to violations of legal standards (Nnachi, 2000).

These behaviours can cause immediate physical or psychological harm and may escalate to broader negative outcomes, such as self-injury, suicide, hazardous sexual behaviour, substance misuse, and dangerous activities like driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (Correia & Jackson, 2020). Research indicates that more young individuals have been arrested by their early twenties than in previous generations. Their offenses range from status violations, underage drinking and smoking, to more severe property and violent crimes (Moffit, 2006). Several factors influence the development of criminal tendencies these include gender, family values, parental influence, parental education levels, peer pressure, home environment, and self-esteem. These factors interplay to shape individuals' behavioural patterns and decision-making processes, particularly during adolescence.

3. Factors Contributing to Criminal Behaviour Tendencies

According to UN-HABITAT (2007), several factors, such as family, parenting practices, peer pressure, social media, drug and alcohol misuse, and economic considerations, all contribute to crime and violence by providing possibilities for criminal activity.

Family Factors: Dysfunctional families significantly influence students' tendencies toward criminal behaviour (Broadhurst, Duffin, & Taylor, 2008). Marital disruptions, such as divorce, separation, or single parenting, often result in stress and frustration, leading to anger, aggression, and disruptive behaviour

among students (Young et al., 2007; Odedokun 2022b). Even intact families may exhibit issues like alcoholism, child abuse, or spousal violence, contributing to future criminal behaviour in children (Utting, Montiero, & Gbate, 2006). When all these are not well managed, it could lead to a criminal behaviour tendency.

Parenting Styles: Permissive parenting, characterized by indulgence and lack of boundaries, often fosters entitlement and irresponsibility among students, increasing the likelihood of criminal tendencies (Kopko, 2007; Utti, 2006). Uninvolved parenting, marked by neglect and minimal interaction, can lead to emotional detachment, social instability, and risky behaviours in adolescents (Wargo, 2007; Odedokun, 2022a). Poor parental supervision, lack of engagement in school activities, and failure to provide guidance exacerbate these issues (Hill, and Tyson, 2009; Boroffice, 2004).

Social Factors: Community instability, including political violence, gang activity, and high crime rates, shapes student behaviour negatively (Leoschut, 2008). Students in such environments are exposed to normalized deviant behaviour, increasing their risk of involvement in criminal activities.

Peer Influence: Peer pressure is a critical factor in shaping adolescent behaviour. Association with criminal peer groups often fosters attachment to deviant behaviours and increases the likelihood of offending (Young et al., 2007; McCord et al., 2001). Many young people engage in criminal activities to gain respect or impress their peers, which can include acquiring weapons or engaging in violence (NCH, 2008).

Economic Factors: Economic deprivation directly impacts students' behaviour. Those from impoverished backgrounds are more likely to live in high-crime areas, face limited educational and economic opportunities, and be exposed to anti-social behaviours (Campbell, 2021). Such students may resort to criminal activities to achieve material wealth and social status unavailable through legitimate means (Margo, 2008).

Substance Abuse: Drug and alcohol misuse are significant contributors to youth crime. Regular alcohol consumption is associated with violent incidents and poor school performance, often leading to exclusion and increased risk factors for offending (Matthews, Brasnett, & Smith, 2006; Richardson & Budd, 2003). Drugs are particularly accessible in deprived areas, fostering higher levels of youth involvement in crime (Utting et al., 2006, Omopo and Odedokun, (2024). In addition, drug abuse, particularly excessive alcohol use and drug usage, is another significant factor that contributes to criminal behaviour in educational institutions. According to

Asiyai and Oghuvbu (2020), these actions function as important stimulants, creating an atmosphere where employees and students may commit crimes. When taken as a whole, these issues present a sobering image of the condition of education in many institutions, where social vices and criminal activity jeopardise both safety and learning. Restoring order, promoting a sense of security, and maintaining the integrity of educational settings all require coordinated efforts to address these problems.

4. Consequences of Criminal Behaviour Tendencies

Criminal behaviour tendencies have serious repercussions that affect the entire educational community in addition to the individuals directly engaged. The safety and stability of learning settings are upset by such acts, which foster an atmosphere of fear and insecurity that jeopardises the wellbeing of both the staff and the students. The social fabric of institutions is weakened by this erosion of safety and confidence, endangering both the goal of education and the advancement of society. Educational institutions, which ought to be havens of knowledge and development, are coming under more and more pressure from social vices and other illegal activity. Nwikipo et al. (2022) have observed that incidents like violence and the carrying of weapons have become frighteningly frequent. These environments' moral and social standards are further undermined by other problems like rape, premarital cohabitation, and indecent and provocative clothing (Oluwadare et al., 2020; Nwikipo & Offordueze, 2022).

5. Prevalence of Criminal Behaviour Tendencies

The prevalence of criminal behaviour tendencies among young people has grown to be a major global concern, with recent data pointing to alarming patterns in different geographical areas. Globally, similar patterns emerge. Reports from Europe, Asia, and the Americas reveal widespread youth involvement in street gangs, drug abuse, riots, and armed robbery. These behaviours reflect a universal challenge driven by socioeconomic and systemic factors, calling for urgent intervention to address their root causes. According to the World Crime Index, Venezuela has the highest global crime index score at approximately 80.7%, followed by Papua New Guinea with a score of 80.3%, and then Haiti at 78.9%. at 66.6%, Nigeria is placed 11th and exhibits startlingly high rates of theft, drug trafficking, and armed robbery. The prevalence of armed robbery has peaked at 85.32% (Numbeo, 2025).

In Nigeria, the situation on campuses and within communities has become increasingly precarious. Garba and Kabir (2023) documented incidents of terrorist kidnappings in the northern regions and sexual violations in the southern areas, emphasizing the dangers faced by students and the broader population. Similarly, Nwikipo et al. (2022) reported a sharp rise in weapon possession and usage among students to perpetrate violence, further underscoring the severity of criminal behaviour tendencies. Economic hardship and poverty remain central drivers of these behaviours. Abatta (2023) observed that unemployment and limited opportunities push many young people toward criminal activities such as theft, drug trafficking, and internet fraud. These acts often serve as a means of survival or a way to achieve social status. Within educational institutions, cultism and thuggery are pervasive, as highlighted by Eleje et al. (2024). These behaviours compromise the safety of campuses and hinder academic pursuits, leaving students vulnerable to both internal and external threats. Substance abuse also plays a critical role in exacerbating criminal tendencies. Asiyai and Oghuvbu (2020) identified drug misuse as a major catalyst for criminal behaviour within Nigerian tertiary institutions, affecting both students and staff. This aligns with earlier findings by the National Bureau of Statistics (2017), which reported that youth crimes such as bullying, drug abuse, thuggery, and armed robbery dominate the crime index in Nigeria. Which could be found in the higher institution.

6. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks, incorporating behavioural science, psychology, sociology, and criminology, analyse factors influencing criminal behaviour and guide effective treatments, emphasizing compassion-focused therapy for fostering behavioural skills and empathy.

6.1 Differential Theory of Association

Differential association theory, introduced by Sutherland in 1939 in the *Principles of Criminology*, explains criminal behaviour as a learned process shaped by social interactions and environments (Sutherland, 1939). This theory posits that individuals acquire criminal tendencies through communication within intimate social groups. Sutherland emphasized that criminal behaviour is not inherited or biologically determined but is instead learned through exposure to specific values, techniques, and motives that favour lawbreaking (Akers & Sellers, 2012).

The theory outlines nine principles to explain the learning process:

- Criminal behaviour is learned, not inherited or biologically predisposed (Sutherland, 1939).
- This learning occurs through interaction and communication with others.
- Learning happens within close, intimate groups rather than impersonal relationships.
- The learning includes techniques for committing crimes and specific motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes.
- The direction of motives and drives is influenced by whether definitions of legal norms are seen as favourable or unfavourable.
- A person becomes delinquent when exposure to definitions favourable to lawbreaking outweighs those unfavourable to it.
- The process of learning varies in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity based on social associations (Akers & Sellers, 2012).
- The mechanisms for learning criminal behaviour are the same as those for learning any other behaviour.
- Criminal behaviour is not explained solely by general needs or values, as non-criminal behaviours can also fulfil similar needs (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002).

Symbolic interactionism suggests that individuals' perceptions of reality are shaped by social relationships and shared meanings, influencing their interpretation of societal norms and potential criminal behaviour (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). Sutherland's differential association theory emphasizes the role of socialization in promoting criminal behaviour, focusing on the broader social context and intimate associations as a learning mechanism.

6.2 Routine Activity Theory

Routine activity theory focuses on the conditions that enable criminal activity. Routine Activity Theory emphasises the opportunity structures that either promote or discourage crime, in contrast to theories that concentrate on the motivations behind crime or the socio-political causes for criminal behaviour. The concept was initially put forth by Felson and Cohen in their 1979 seminal paper titled "Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach." The hypothesis has been used widely and is now among the criminology theories that are most frequently quoted. In routine activity theory, crime is

likely to occur when three essential elements of crime converge in space and time: a motivated offender, an attractive target, and the absence of capable guardianship (Cohen, Cantor & Kluegel, 1981). The analytic focus of routine activity theory takes a macro-level view and emphasizes broad-scale shifts in the patterns of victim and offender behaviour. It focuses on specific crime events and offender behaviour/decisions. Routine activity theory is based on the assumption that crime can be committed by anyone who has the opportunity. The theory also states that victims are given choices on whether to be victims mainly by not placing themselves in situations where a crime can be committed against them.

6.3 Psychological Intervention- Compassion-Focused Therapy

Gilbert (2000) created the psychotherapy technique known as Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) to assist people in developing empathy for both themselves and other people, particularly those who are dealing with feelings of guilt and self-criticism (Gilbert, 2005). To combat negative inner dialogues, it places a strong emphasis on cultivating self-kindness and compassionate self-talk. According to Kolts (2018), CFT views human challenges through the prism of evolution, emotional brain dynamics, the impact of early experiences, and social relationships. CFT, which has its roots in Buddhism, supports the Dalai Lama's (2001) idea of lessening one's own and other people's suffering.

According to Neff (2009), CFT lessens feelings of loneliness by accepting and being gentle when dealing with challenging circumstances and self-criticism. Three interconnected elements form the foundation of the therapy:

1. Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgement: Self-compassionate individuals are understanding and compassionate towards themselves, recognizing that challenges are inevitable and not judging them, rather than reacting with judgment and criticism.
2. Common Humanity vs. Isolation: Self-compassionate individuals acknowledge that all humans experience suffering and are never alone in our mistakes or imperfections, which can help reduce feelings of isolation.
3. Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification: Mindfulness involves recognizing negative thoughts and emotions without judgment, while self-compassion observes thoughts without attachment, preventing exaggeration or minimization of these feelings. CFT promotes psychological well-being by allowing individuals to experience emotions while maintaining healthy emotional distance, fostering positive emotions and

mental health through compassionate engagement with oneself and others. (Gilbert, 2005; Neff, 2003).

6.3.1 Empirical Support for Compassion-Focused Therapy

Compassion-based therapy has emerged as a promising intervention for addressing criminal thinking and fostering rehabilitation among offenders. Rezapour-Mirsaleh, Shafizadeh, Shomali, and Sedaghat (2021) found that compassion-based treatment effectively reduces criminal thoughts in male convicts, which is consistent with earlier findings by Morley (2015, 2018), Neff and Vonk (2009), and Woldgabreal et al. (2014). Cognitive distortions, which are frequently amplified by personality qualities such as lack of empathy, self-orientation, and irresponsibility, play a substantial role in criminal behaviour (Hare, 1996). Compassion-focused therapies assist offenders gain self-confidence, empathy, and a better understanding of shared human suffering by addressing these distortions (Gilbert & Procter, 2006; Neff, 2003a, 2003b). These interventions also give offenders, particularly those with traumatic past, a sense of inner warmth and the ability to self-soothe, opening the path for long-term behavioural change and reduced recidivism.

8 Weeks of Compassion-Focused Therapy Treatment Package for Criminal Behaviour Tendencies

Week One

Session 1: General Orientation and Pre-test Administration

Objectives:

During and by the end of the session, the counselling psychologist achieved the following:

- I. Introduced themselves to the participants and facilitated their introductions.
- II. Created a tension-free and relaxing environment.
- III. Established rapport and a good working relationship with the participants.
- IV. Provided an overview of the program's goals and structure to the participants.
- V. Enlightened the members about the benefits of the program.
- VI. Agreed on meeting times, venue, and the preferred method of information dissemination.
- VII. Administered the pre-test assessment.

Presentation:

The researchers welcomed the participants and introduced themselves as the counsellor, along with other team members involved in coordinating the program. They engaged the participants by asking for their names to create a comfortable and familiar

atmosphere. The participants were briefed on the program's details, including its objectives, structure, and eight-week duration. The researcher highlighted the potential benefits of participation and agreed with the group on a convenient time and place for future sessions. Participants were reassured that their contributions were valued and encouraged to feel at ease sharing openly as the training progressed. The researcher motivated the participants to identify specific personal changes they hoped to achieve through the program and encouraged them to fully participate with those goals in mind. After the orientation, a pre-test assessment was conducted. The researcher then opened the floor for participants to ask questions.

Closing:

The researchers thanked the participants for their attendance and for volunteering to participate in the training. They reminded them of the time and venue for the next meeting and appealed to them to take time to review the take-home task, which would be discussed alongside the subsequent session's topic.

Session Notes:

The program to reduce tendencies toward criminal behaviour emphasized a comprehensive and holistic approach addressing both immediate challenges and underlying causes. Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) was identified as a promising intervention for nurturing self-compassion and enhancing emotional regulation among polytechnic students. The eight-week program aimed to foster self-compassion, reduce self-criticism, and improve emotional regulation. It addressed psychological factors contributing to criminal tendencies, promoting positive behavioural changes and enhancing psychological well-being. Participants learned how unmanaged emotions, impulsivity, and a harsh inner dialogue could lead to risky or harmful behaviours and how CFT could replace these patterns with compassionate strategies.

Week

Two

Session 2:

Objectives:

By the end of the session, the participants had:

- I. Defined Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT).
- II. Enumerated the three components of CFT.
- III. Explained criminal behaviour tendencies and their consequences.
- IV. Discussed the importance of CFT as a buffer against criminal behaviour tendencies

Introduction: The researcher warmly welcomed the participants to the session and used their names during communication to enhance their sense of belonging and acceptance.

Closing: The researcher appreciated the participants for their active participation and contributions during the session and appealed to them not to miss the next session.

Homework: Participants were asked to journal about a self-critical thought and practice responding with self-kindness.

Session Notes:

Compassion-focused therapy (CFT), developed by Gilbert, was presented as a therapeutic approach for managing challenging emotions and fostering healthier responses to life's difficulties through self-compassion. The three components of CFT self-kindness, mindfulness, and common humanity were explained. Participants learned how criminal behaviour tendencies often arise from unresolved emotional struggles, impulsivity, and a lack of positive coping skills. The session highlighted the significant consequences of criminal behaviour, including legal, social, and personal repercussions. CFT was presented as a critical tool for addressing these tendencies by fostering emotional regulation, building resilience, and encouraging thoughtful rather than impulsive actions. The participants explored how developing self-compassion could help them handle stress, setbacks, and challenges with greater stability and reduce the likelihood of engaging in harmful behaviours. In summary, the session underscored the role of CFT in promoting positive behavioural changes, enhancing emotional well-being, and reducing tendencies toward criminal behaviour through compassion-based strategies.

Week

Three

Session 3: Understanding Emotional Patterns and Self-Compassion

Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants:

I. Identified and understood their recurring emotional responses and triggers.

II. Became aware of self-critical thoughts or attitudes, enabling them to identify areas for greater self-compassion.

III. Practiced self-compassion by fostering a kind, forgiving attitude toward themselves, which built emotional resilience and well-being.

IV. Equipped themselves with skills to respond to emotions in a healthy, constructive way, improving emotional regulation and resilience.

Introduction: The session began with the researcher emphasizing the importance of understanding emotional patterns and fostering self-compassion as essential skills for emotional growth and resilience. Participants explored how recognizing their recurring emotional responses helped them manage stress and challenges more effectively. They also learned how self-compassion could transform their relationship

with emotions, promoting stability and emotional strength over time.

Homework: Participants were instructed to maintain an emotion awareness diary, noting emotional triggers and practicing compassionate responses.

Session Notes:

Understanding Emotional Patterns

1. Recognizing Emotional Triggers:

Participants identified situations, words, or events that evoked strong emotional responses. They learned that understanding triggers helped prevent automatic reactions.

- Emotion Journaling: Students kept a daily journal, recording what triggered specific emotions (e.g., anger, sadness, joy) and their reactions.

- Reflection: At the end of the week, participants reviewed their entries to identify patterns and insights into how certain situations or interactions influenced their feelings.

2. Identifying Automatic Responses and Coping Styles:

Participants explored their automatic responses to emotions, such as withdrawing, lashing out, or shutting down, and considered healthier coping mechanisms.

- Role-Playing Scenarios: Participants practiced identifying feelings and reactions in controlled hypothetical situations.

- Goal: To recognize habitual responses and develop alternative, constructive ways to handle emotions.

3. Tracking Patterns Over Time:

Participants consistently tracked their emotional patterns to uncover deeper insights into recurring triggers.

- Mood Tracking Tools: Students used digital apps or worksheets to document moods, intensity, and triggers, helping them understand the influence of thoughts on emotions.

Fostering Self-Compassion

1. Practicing Kind Self-Talk:

Participants learned to replace harsh self-criticism with kind, supportive inner dialogue.

- Reframing Self-Talk: They practiced rewriting self-critical thoughts as if speaking to a friend (e.g., changing "I failed" to "I tried, and I'll keep improving").

- Goal: To shift from harsh criticism to supportive and understanding self-talk.

2. Self-Compassion Exercises:

Participants engaged in exercises that encouraged a positive, supportive relationship with themselves.

- Loving-Kindness Meditation: A guided meditation helped participants send positive, kind wishes to themselves and others.

• **Self-Compassion Journal:** Participants reflected on challenging experiences, acknowledging difficulties and responding with kindness and compassion.

Week Four

Session 4: Building Compassionate Imagery

Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants:

Developed self-compassion by using compassionate imagery to foster kindness toward themselves.

Enhanced emotional resilience through compassionate imagery for managing difficult emotions.

Strengthened empathy by visualizing compassion in interactions with others.

Reduced self-criticism by replacing negative thoughts with supportive mental imagery.

Session Notes

Participants were introduced to the practice of building compassionate imagery, focusing on four key areas: self-compassion, emotional resilience, empathy, and reducing self-criticism.

1. **Developing Self-Compassion:** Participants practiced compassionate imagery, creating positive mental images to foster kindness and warmth toward themselves. They learned to counter self-criticism and negative self-talk by visualizing themselves in a kinder light and offering themselves understanding and patience.

2. **Enhancing Emotional Resilience:** Participants visualized compassion and inner strength, learning to handle stress, frustration, and setbacks more effectively. This practice equipped them with the ability to stay grounded and balanced during adversity.

3. **Strengthening Empathy:** Through compassionate imagery, participants developed a more patient, understanding approach to their relationships. They practiced mental exercises that promoted empathy, fostering a sense of connection and shared humanity.

4. **Reducing Self-Criticism:** Participants replaced harsh inner dialogue with supportive mental imagery, shifting to a positive self-view. This new perspective encouraged healthier, constructive inner dialogue over time.

In summary, participants engaged in exercises that cultivated self-compassion and empathy while building emotional resilience and reducing self-criticism. These practices aimed to foster a healthier, more supportive relationship with themselves and others.

Exercise I: how to build compassionate imagery

This exercise is to help build up a compassionate image for you to work with and develop (you can have more than one if you wish, and they can change over time). You may choose to develop a compassionate image which is sitting next to you (the driver) on your bus and will offer you unconditional support and guidance. Whatever image comes to mind, or you

choose to work with note that it is your creation and therefore your own personal ideal what you would really like from feeling cared for and cared about. In this practice it is important that you try and give your image certain qualities. These will include; Wisdom, Strength, Warmth and Non-Judgement. Your compassionate image will be there for you no matter what and will always be by your side to support you and give you wisdom and strength. Here are some questions that might help build the image.

1. How would you like your ideal caring, compassionate image to look/appear – visual qualities. Does your compassionate image seem old or young; male or female (or non-human looking e.g., an animal, sea or light).

If possible, we begin to focus on our breathing, finding a calming rhythm and making a half smile. Then we can let images emerge in the mind as best we can- do not try too hard, if nothing comes to mind, or the minds wander, just gently bring back to the breathing and practice compassionately accepting.

How would you like your ideal caring-compassionate image sound? (voice/tone)

What other sensory qualities can you give to it

3. How would you like your ideal caring-compassionate image to relate to you?

4. How would like to relate you like to relate to your caring compassionate image?

Homework: Participants were tasked with practicing compassionate imagery daily in real-life situations, applying the skills learned during the session to foster kindness and resilience.

Closing Remarks: The facilitator expressed gratitude to the participants for their patience, active participation, and cooperation throughout the session. The researcher encouraged them to attend the next session and continue their engagement with the program.

Week Five

Session 5: Developing Self-Soothing and Distress Tolerance Skills

Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

I. Develop the ability to recognize and understand emotional triggers.

II. Learn and practice self-soothing techniques that engage the senses.

Homework: Participants were encouraged to practice a self-soothing exercise daily and note its effects on their mood or stress levels.

Session

Understanding Self-Soothing Skills

Self-soothing skills provide comfort during emotional distress by engaging the senses, promoting grounding, and reducing emotional intensity.

Importance: These skills help redirect attention to positive sensory experiences, reducing the impact of negative emotions and providing a pause for reflection.

Techniques:

Sight: Observe calming visuals like nature scenes or create a comforting visual space.

Sound: Listen to soothing music or nature sounds.

Smell: Use relaxing scents like lavender or vanilla.

Taste: Mindfully savor comforting foods or beverages.

Touch: Engage in tactile comfort, like cuddling a soft blanket or using a weighted blanket.

Distress Tolerance Skills

These skills help individuals endure and manage intense emotions without impulsive actions.

Purpose: Not to eliminate distress but to help tolerate and navigate it constructively.

Techniques:

Distraction: Engage in hobbies or activities that shift focus from negative emotions.

Improving the Moment: Use positive visualization or mindfulness practices to create inner peace.

Week Six

Session 6: Compassionate Communication

Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

I. Develop greater awareness of their emotions, needs, and triggers in communication.

II. Cultivate Nonviolent Communication (NVC) principles in real-life scenarios.

III. Foster empathy by responding with compassion rather than reaction.

IV. Articulate feelings and needs effectively while respecting others.

Homework: Participants were asked to apply a specific compassionate communication technique (e.g., active listening or nonjudgmental responses) in a conversation and document their experience.

Session Notes:

Compassionate communication emphasizes empathy, understanding, and connection.

Frameworks:

1. Nonviolent Communication (NVC): Involves observation, feelings, needs, and requests.

2. Mindful Communication: Focuses on being present and nonjudgmental in conversations.

Week Seven

Session 7: Integrating Compassion into Daily Life and Future Challenges

Objectives:

Notes:

Participants were guided to:

- Reflect on their progress and set future goals for using CFT skills.

- Explore ways to apply compassion in daily routines and challenges.

Homework: Complete a self-reflection on CFT skills learned and outline the next steps for continued growth.

Session Notes:

Practical strategies for daily compassion:

1. Self-Kindness: Practice supportive self-talk and engage in self-care rituals.

2. Common Humanity: Share struggles and recognize shared human experiences.

3. Mindfulness: Use meditation and breathing exercises to stay present.

4. Self-Compassion Journal: Reflect on experiences and respond with kindness.

5. Positive Affirmations: Develop and repeat affirmations to reinforce self-worth.

Week Eight

Session 8: Skill Application, Conclusion, and Post-Test Administration

Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should:

I. Recap and rehearse skills learned throughout the program.

II. Be encouraged to integrate the skills into their daily lives.

III. Stay motivated in pursuing academic and life goals.

IV. Conclude the training program.

V. Complete the post-test assessment instrument.

1. Closing Remarks:

The facilitator acknowledged the participants' progress and commitment over the past eight weeks, emphasizing the transformative power of self-compassion. Participants were encouraged to continue practicing these skills as lifelong habits, facing challenges with kindness and resilience.

The session ended with gratitude for their openness and participation, alongside well-wishes for their future growth and compassionate journeys.

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