Self-Compassion Among K-12 Music Educators

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore self-compassion among K-12 music educators. Our sample consisted of 139 practicing K-12 music educators across the United States. Participants completed a modified version of the Self-Compassion Scale Long Form (Neff et al., 2021), which measured both positive (self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness) and negative (self-judgment, isolation, over-identification) aspects of self-compassion (Neff, 2003). Through one-way ANOVAs, we found significant differences between teaching experience and participants' scores for mindfulness, over-identification, self-judgment, isolation, and their overall self-compassion scores. We also discovered significant differences between age, over-identification, self-judgment, grade level taught, common humanity, and isolation.

Compassion in teaching can impact teachers' commitment, satisfaction, and burnout (Frenzel, 2014; Oplatka & Gammerman, 2021). However, while compassion is recognized as essential, it can also lead to compassion fatigue, particularly in professions where individuals bear witness to the suffering of others (Sinclair et al., 2017). Self-compassion provides individuals with the recognition and validation they seek, reducing the need for external affirmation and promoting mental health, well-being, and resilience (Neff, 2003). With limited existing research on this topic in

music education, we examined self-compassion among K-12 music educators, exploring compassion, compassion fatigue, and self-compassion broadly and within the field of music education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Compassion

Compassion encompasses a sympathetic awareness of others' suffering coupled with a desire to alleviate it, distinct from empathy, which involves understanding and being sensitive to others' feelings, thoughts, and experiences (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Furthermore, compassion is a multifaceted social process involving several interconnected components: recognizing distress, interpreting suffering, experiencing empathetic concern in response, and addressing it (Dutton et al., 2014; Kanov et al., 2004). Compassion can also be viewed as sensitive love, involving behavioral, cognitive, and emotional attitudes aimed at supporting individuals in distress (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005).

Within the field of education, compassion aligns well with the interpersonal nature of teaching, particularly in interactions with students (Frenzel, 2014; McClain et al., 2010; Oplatka & Gammerman, 2021). Compassion can be viewed as a reflective sentiment that drives caring actions, rooted in an empathetic concern for students (Schubert & He, 2020). Kennedy and colleagues (2021), developers of the *Intentional Compassion Framework*, explored its implications in Australian schools, unveiling educators' inclination towards compassionate environments marked by attributes such as active listening, understanding, practical support, and efforts to discern educators' needs. The exploration of compassion in teaching points to its significance but also underscores the potential benefits for educators and their students.

The examination of compassion in teaching has brought to light its multifaceted nature, encompassing its various dimensions and effects on teachers' well-being, satisfaction, and commitment (Frenzel, 2014; McClain et al., 2010). Teachers' compassion levels can be influenced by gender, experience in teaching (Çalışoğlu, 2018), personal history, relationships, and leadership models (Oplatka & Gamerman, 2021). Christian-Brandt and colleagues (2020) found that novice elementary educators ($N = 163$) teaching in underserved localities exhibited elevated compassion satisfaction and diminished burnout rates. Older educators reported lower compassion satisfaction and a greater inclination towards exiting the field. Researchers identified a positive relationship between teachers' satisfaction and commitment when combined with compassion, as well as an inverse relationship with teacher burnout (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016). Teachers might enhance their well-being and find purpose through a mindful education structure that underpins awareness, compassion, efficacy, and mindful action (Schussler, 2020).

Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue can lead to a decline in compassionate feelings towards others (Sinclair et al., 2017). This phenomenon can also diminish an individual's capacity to witness others' suffering, which is a type of secondary traumatic stress that appears

from re-experiencing traumatic events through another person or associated anxiety (Figley, 2002). Yang and colleagues (2021) concluded that experienced teachers ($N =$ 321) had higher instances of compassion fatigue than newer teachers, while Farrell (2022) reported that female educators experienced higher levels of compassion fatigue than their male colleagues. Furthermore, compassion fatigue amongst educators can equate to burnout (Yu et al., 2022); however, other scholars proposed that forming deep, meaningful bonds with students can help alleviate compassion fatigue (Yang et al., 2021). Educators can address compassion fatigue by partaking in self-care activities and establishing personal boundaries in an effort to curb fatigue and burnout (Yang et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2022).

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion involves recognizing that suffering, failure, and inadequacies are inherent in the human experience and that everyone deserves compassion (Neff, 2003). It encompasses three key components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff, 2003; Neff & Vonk, 2009). Practicing self-compassion allows individuals to internally validate and acknowledge themselves, which reduces reliance on external validation and offers a valuable framework for self-recognition and validation (Hess, 2020). Self-compassion involves individuals perceiving themselves positively when faced with setbacks or challenges (Kelley & Farley, 2019) and involves treating themselves kindly and understandingly while normalizing human experiences (Shimizu et al., 2016). Self-compassion has also been linked to improved mental health, well-being, and resilience, as well as reduced levels of anxiety and depression (Chen, 2022; Egan et al., 2021; Neff & Pommier, 2013).

Self-compassion can have a positive impact on academic success and resilience, suggesting the value of targeted interventions in education. Egan and colleagues (2021) studied the relationship between self-compassion, mindfulness, resilience, and academic outcomes among 206 undergraduate students. Their findings illuminated a positive connection between academic success and resilience, self-compassion, and mindfulness, suggesting interventions to enhance self-compassion in tertiary education. Such interventions could equip students with skills to handle constructive criticism and academic feedback, reducing self-criticism (Egan et al.). Further evidence supports the claim that increased self-compassion is beneficial. For example, higher self-compassion has been associated with increased self-efficacy (Iskender, 2009), motivation to learn, reduced fear of failure (Neff et al., 2005), decreased procrastination and anxiety (Williams et al., 2008), and better ability to confront challenges (Terry et al., 2013).

Self-compassion can also play in role in enhancing educators' well-being and resilience. Kasalak (2020) conducted a study with Turkish preservice teachers ($N = 376$) utilizing the Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (Neff, 2003; Raes et al., 2011). They found significant relationships between self-compassion attitudes and life satisfaction. Additionally, they observed negative significant relationships between self-compassion

attitudes and employment anxiety. Furthermore, self-compassion contributed to fostering stress resilience among teachers, specifically the transition from self-judgment to self-kindness, psychological isolation to psychological connectedness, and emotional turmoil to emotional mindfulness facilitated their ability to effectively manage and cope with stress (Chen, 2022).

Music Educators and Self Compassion

Currently, there is very limited research on self-compassion specifically within music education (e.g., Hess, 2020; Neff, 2003), highlighting a significant gap in the existing literature concerning the examination of self-compassion among practicing music educators. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore self-compassion among K-12 music educators. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What do K-12 music educators' self-compassion overall score and subscale scores (common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, self-judgment, self-kindness, over-identification) indicate about their self-reported self-compassion?
2. Does gender, school setting, grade level, content area, teaching experience, or age have a significant impact on K-12 music educators' self-reported level of self-compassion?
3. What are K-12 music educators' perceptions of self-compassion?

METHOD

We utilized a survey instrument for this descriptive study to examine self-compassion in music education. We designed this investigation for practicing K-12 music educators in the United States during the spring of 2022.

Participants

We received approval to conduct this investigation from our university's human subjects committee in early spring of 2022. The study included active K-12 music teachers in the United States. Participants provided consent by completing a digital form through Qualtrics. Refer to Table 1 for participant characteristics.

DEFINITIONS

Teaching experience fell into two groups: novice, encompassing individuals with one to three years of experience, and experienced, comprising those with four or more years of experience (Gold, 1989, 1996). *Self-kindness* involves individuals being supportive, caring, and understanding towards themselves in times of pain, while common humanity occurs when individuals recognize that all humans fail and make mistakes. *Mindfulness* entails being aware of the present moment experience of suffering with perspective and balance, while self-judgment consists of harshly criticizing oneself for failures and in-

Table 1
Participant Characteristics (N = 139)

	n	%
Gender		
Female	78	56.1
Male	58	41.7
Non-binary	2	1.4
Genderqueer	1	0.8
School Setting*		
Suburban	82	59.0
Urban	34	24.5
Rural/small town	30	21.6
Other	2	1.4
Teaching Grade Level**		
Middle School	75	54.0
High School	64	46.0
Elementary School	43	30.9
Teaching Content Area*		
Band	54	38.8
General Music	49	35.3
Choir	46	33.1
Orchestra	16	11.5
Other	33	23.7
Teaching Experience		
Novice	24	17.3
Experienced	115	82.7

*Participants self-selected school setting locale.
**Some participants indicated more than one response.

adequacies. *Isolation* refers to feeling alone and cut off from others in the experience of suffering, while over-identification occurs when individuals become carried away with their suffering to the point that the perspective is lost (Neff et al., 2021).

Data Collection Instrument

We assessed the self-compassion levels of K-12 music educators using a modified version of the Self-Compassion Scale Long Form, which evaluates both positive (self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness) and negative (self-judgment, isolation, over-identification) aspects of self-compassion (Neff et al., 2021). Neff (2003) recommended the long form for examining the influence of a self-compassionate mindset on overall well-being. Therefore, we aimed to investigate the self-compassion of K-12 music educators.

We obtained permission to use this survey from the authors (Neff et al., 2021) for our study with K-12 music educators. Before administering the survey, we consulted five experienced university music education professors to review its relevance, appropriateness, and content validity. Incorporating their feedback, we revised the survey to address grammatical errors and improve clarity in certain questions. The authors of the original survey (Neff et al.) reported a high internal consistency with a reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha = .94. Our calculation of Cronbach's alpha for our use of this scale resulted in a value of .90.

We adapted the Likert scale items from the Self-Compassion Scale Long Form (Neff et al., 2021) specifically for K-12 music educators in our modified survey. The survey consisted of 13 questions organized into two sections. The first question solicited participants' consent to participate, while Part I (items 2-9) collected demographic information. Part II centered on the six components of self-compassion (items 10-11), which incorporated the Self-Compassion Scale Long Form (Neff et al., 2021). We reworded the introduction to this section to read: *There can be obstacles and challenges as a K-12 music educator. Think about these that have happened or are currently happening over the 2021-2022 academic school year and please indicate, in the context of your professional music education setting, how well each statement applies to how you are feeling toward yourself right now.* Participants indicated their self-compassion using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all true for me*; 3 = *Neither untrue or true for me*; 5 = *Very true for me*). Prompts included statements such as: *I'm giving myself the caring and tenderness I need*; *I'm being supportive toward myself*; and *I'm obsessing and fixating on everything that's wrong.* Items 12-13 comprised optional open-ended questions, allowing participants to elaborate further on the situations referenced in their Likert responses. The complete survey is located in Supplemental Figure 1.

Procedure

We utilized convenience sampling (Creswell, 2009) and the online survey platform *Qualtrics* to conduct the survey from April to May 2022. We set the inclusion criteria for our study as being a K-12 music educator in the United States and having active membership in a state music education association. We contacted various state music

education associations, and the following states agreed to distribute the survey to their general membership: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

        Our recruitment emails included an invitation to participate, a clear statement outlining the study's purpose, an estimated completion time, and a secure link to the anonymous online survey. We ensured participant anonymity and protection of personal information by utilizing an anonymous survey link generated by *Qualtrics*, thereby avoiding the collection of any identifying data such as names, email addresses, or IP addresses.

Data Analysis

        We exported the data to SPSS 28.0 for further analysis. Initially, our dataset comprised 164 responses; however, after excluding incomplete responses in which one or more questions were unanswered, our final sample consisted of 139 valid responses. For the demographic questions in Part I of the survey, we computed frequencies to examine the distribution of responses and computed one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) to explore the relationship between Likert items (Part II) and various categorical variables. We used open coding techniques following Gibbs' (2007) guidelines to gain insights from the open-ended questions in Part II. We independently coded and analyzed the responses and identified themes and patterns, which we further refined through axial coding, comparing and contrasting the codes to arrive at overarching themes (Saldaña, 2021).

Limitations

        We acknowledge the limitations of our study and its findings may not be applicable to all K-12 music educators associated with state music education associations. Our sample may have been biased towards individuals with a specific interest in self-compassion, potentially limiting the applicability of our results. Additionally, our research approach, involving direct outreach to state music education associations, may have resulted in missing data from certain regions where our recruitment efforts were less successful.

RESULTS

Self-Compassion Scores

        We collected responses from 139 participants who rated 18 prompts (1 = *Not at all true for me*; 3 = *Neither untrue or true for me*; 5 = *Very true for me*). Mean scores for each prompt (see Tables 2 and 3) indicated in an overall self-compassion score of 60.67 (*SD* = 12.52). Subscale scores falling within the ranges of 1.00-2.49, 2.50-3.50, and 3.51-5.00 represented low, moderate, and high levels of self-compassion, respectively (Neff et al., 2021).

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Participants' (N = 139) Self-Compassion Subscale Scores

Scale	M	SD
Positive self-compassion		
Common humanity (prompts 3, 9, 15)	11.44	2.31
Mindfulness (prompts 5, 11, 17)	10.64	2.44
Kindness (prompts 1, 7, 13)	9.83	2.99
Negative self-compassion		
Over-identification (prompts 2, 8, 14)*	10.22	3.05
Isolation (prompts 6, 12, 18)*	9.59	1.91
Self-judgment (prompts 4, 10, 16)*	8.95	2.98

*Reverse-scored

Table 3

Participants' (N = 139) Responses to the Self-Compassion Scale Long Form

Prompt	Subscale	M	SD
I'm being kind to myself.	Kindness	3.43	1.05
I'm being supportive toward myself.	Kindness	3.26	1.17
I'm giving myself the caring and tenderness I need.	Kindness	3.14	1.19
I see my difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.	Common humanity	3.91	0.98
I'm remembering that difficult feelings are shared by most people.	Common humanity	3.84	0.88
I'm remembering that there are a lot of others in the world feeling like I am.	Common humanity	3.69	1.05
I'm keeping things in perspective.	Mindfulness	3.77	0.94
I'm keeping my emotions in a balanced perspective.	Mindfulness	3.48	1.05
I'm taking a balanced view of this painful situation.	Mindfulness	3.39	0.92
I'm being pretty tough on myself.	Self-judgment	3.38*	1.25
I'm being a bit cold-hearted towards myself.	Self-judgment	3.33*	1.24
I feel intolerant and impatient toward myself.	Self-judgment	3.22*	1.24

Table 3 (continued)

Prompt	Subscale	*M*	*SD*
I'm feeling all alone right now.	Isolation	3.57*	1.43
I feel like I'm struggling more than others right now.	Isolation	3.34*	1.32
I'm blowing this painful incident out of proportion.	Over-identification	3.91*	1.11
I'm getting carried away with my feelings.	Over-identification	3.67*	1.07
I'm obsessing and fixating on everything that's wrong.	Over-identification	3.52*	1.19

*Reverse-scored

**1.00-2.49 = low self-compassion, 2.50-3.50 = moderate self-compassion, and 3.51-5.00 = high self-compassion (Neff et al., 2021)

Factors Impacting Self-Compassion

We conducted one-way ANOVAs to analyze the responses to the 18 Likert statements in Part II of the survey, assessing data normality and homogeneity using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Levene tests. No violations appeared. We found a significant difference between age and participants' over-identification score, $F(4, 133) = 3.73$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .101$. The comparison revealed that teachers 51 to 60 years old had higher over-identification scores ($M = 11.68$, $SD = 2.31$) than those over 60 years old ($M = 11.66$, $SD = 3.12$), 31 to 40 years old ($M = 9.48$, $SD = 3.16$), 20 to 30 years old ($M = 9.21$, $SD = 3.24$), and 41 to 50 years old ($M = 10.29$, $SD = 2.71$). There was also a significant difference between age of self-judgment, $F(4, 134) = 2.55$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .071$. Participants over 60 years old reported higher scores ($M = 10.44$, $SD = 3.78$) than those ages 51 to 60 ($M = 9.75$, $SD = 2.69$), 41 to 50 ($M = 9.13$, $SD = 2.88$), 31 to 40 ($M = 8.84$, $SD = 2.99$), and 20 to 30 ($M = 7.75$, $SD = 2.81$).

Findings indicated a significant difference between teaching experience and participants' mindfulness score, $F(1, 136), = 3.93$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .028$. Experienced teachers had higher scores ($M = 10.82$, $SD = 2.37$) than novice teachers ($M = 9.75$, $SD = 2.59$). There was a significant difference between teaching experience and over-identification, $F(1, 136) = 5.50$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .039$, where the comparison revealed that experienced teacher reported higher scores ($M = 10.50$, $SD = 2.95$) than novice teachers ($M = 8.92$, $SD = 3.26$). A significant difference appeared between teaching experience and self-judgment, $F(1, 136) = 4.50$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .032$. Experienced teachers reported higher scores ($M = 9.91$, $SD = 2.95$) than novice teachers ($M = 7.79$, $SD = 2.90$). We found another significant difference between teaching experience and isolation, $F(1, 136) = 5.91$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .042$, where the scores for experienced teachers were higher ($M = 9.77$, $SD = 1.88$) than novice teachers ($M = 8.75$, $SD = 1.85$). Lastly, we discovered a significant difference between teaching experience and participants' overall self-compassion score, $F(1, 136) = 6.38$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .045$. Experienced teachers reported higher scores ($M = 61.89$, $SD = 12.21$) than novice teachers ($M = 54.92$, $SD = 12.62$).

The results also indicated a significant difference between grade level taught (e.g., elementary, middle school, high school) and participants' scores for common humanity, $F(4, 133) = 3.23$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .089$. Those teaching elementary school reported higher scores ($M = 12.19$, $SD = 1.38$) than those teaching middle school ($M = 11.71$, $SD = 2.71$) and high school ($M = 10.41$, $SD = 2.89$). There was also a significant difference between grade level taught and isolation, $F(4, 133) = 2.60$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .073$. Elementary teachers reported higher scores ($M = 10.23$, $SD = 2.08$) than middle school ($M = 9.84$, $SD = 1.92$) and high school teachers ($M = 8.84$, $SD = 1.76$). We found no significant differences between participants' self-compassion score and gender, self-selected school setting, grade level, or content area.

Perceptions of Self-Compassion

At the end of Part II of the survey, we asked participants to elaborate on their K-12 teaching situations, receiving responses from 76 (54.7%) participants. We analyzed the responses to identify themes and patterns through open coding (Gibbs, 2007), refining them through axial coding (Saldaña, 2021). Participants' responses reflected four themes: students and music programs, workloads, mental health, and treatment of music teachers.

Students and Music Programs

Participants highlighted concerns about students' behavior, engagement, and motivation, with comments touching on various aspects. One respondent mentioned, "Students easily give up, and I believe social media contributes to their apathy, lack of respect, and poor communication skills (they can type rude comments on social media)." Others noted the challenge of motivating students who are losing enthusiasm for learning. Regarding music programs, participants expressed stress and pressure to improve or maintain them. Some comments included, "We need to increase enrollment in programs that lack support and funding," "I now feel pressured to return my program to 'normal,' but the students are not in the same place," and "My program is struggling to grow." The latter comments referred to the return to in-person instruction after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Workloads

Participants noted the significant burden of heavy workloads among teachers, exemplified by instances where educators found themselves teaching multiple subjects or taking on additional responsibilities. One participant mentioned, "In addition to the [m]usic classes I teach, I am also teaching a 6th grade science class because we lost a teacher this year and I am certified. Therefore, I do not have a planning period and was required to take an additional online ESOL class." Another participant noted:

> I am in the midst of tech week with our high school musical and I am playing for it as well as still trying to teach 5 classes, 4 of which are middle school. We have our spring concert next week at one middle school and the following week at the other middle school.

Mental Health

In the final survey question, where we asked participants, "Is there anything else you would like to share with us?", twenty-seven (19.4%) participants provided a response. As one participant commented, "I am leaving the profession at the conclusion of the 2021-2022 school year due to the mental and physical fatigue I have faced over the last 4 years," while another mentioned, "I have depression and anxiety." Other participants noted more positive aspects of their mental health such as, "I've been practicing meditation daily for the past 6 years," and "being part-time is my key to sanity and self-care."

Treatment of Music Teachers

Respondents provided insights into the treatment of music teachers, reflecting on their experiences with administrators, colleagues, parents/guardians, and the community. These ranged from, "[The] head director at school treats me like I am younger than I am. [He] acts as if he is a 20+ year veteran, when he is only 4 years older than I am" to "[I] have been assaulted, stolen from, and made the victim of an ongoing harassment campaign this year at my current work site. I am seriously considering leaving the profession due to a lack of support and the way these incidents have negatively impacted my teaching experience."

One participant noted, "Until teachers are treated as the professionals they are and are given the supports [*sic*] they need such as 1-1 ELL, ESE staff, technical positions to manage sound/lighting, etc., I will not be returning to public education." Another commented, "It's been tough watching a lot of teachers leave the profession. I left a very toxic and damaging position. I am in a great school now but having to work through all of the trauma from my last job has been especially taxing." Our study involving 139 participants revealed insights into the self-compassion levels of K-12 music educators. The analysis of self-compassion scores across various factors such as age, teaching experience, and grade level taught underscored the nuanced interplay between personal and professional contexts.

DISCUSSION

We examined self-compassion among practicing K-12 music educators in the United States. Participants self-reported high levels of positive self-compassion for common humanity and mindfulness but also indicated high levels of negative self-compassion for over-identification and isolation. Overall self-compassion scores ($M = 60.67$; $SD = 12.52$) resulted in a mean score of 3.37 per prompt, suggesting a low level of self-compassion (Neff et al., 2021).

Participants' ages were significantly related to self-compassion (Çalışoğlu, 2018; Oplatka & Gamerman, 2021). K-12 music educators aged 51 to 60 reported higher scores for over-identification, suggesting a tendency to become carried away with their own suffering to the point of losing perspective (Neff et al., 2021). We found no statis-

tically significant differences between self-compassion scores and gender, which contrasts with previous literature indicating higher rates of compassion fatigue among female educators (Farrell, 2022). Others scholars may wish to explore potential connections or correlations between self-compassion and compassion fatigue in K-12 music educators.

Novice educators reported significantly lower overall self-compassion scores. Previous researchers have emphasized the challenges faced by novice music educators, including feelings of inadequacy in musical knowledge (Shin, 2021), overwhelming workload, self-doubt, and a sense of isolation from peers (Conway & Zerman, 2004). Novice educators often experience praxis shock, characterized by the disparity between expectations and reality in their teaching careers (Ballantyne, 2007). Given these personal struggles, it is unsurprising that novice educators in our study reported lower self-compassion scores, which might impact their feelings of compassion fatigue and burnout (Yang et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2022). These findings suggest that novice music educators may struggle with being patient with their mistakes, harboring impatience towards themselves, and experiencing isolation due to perceived inadequacies. School districts and sites may wish to increase opportunities for novice educators to work with experienced mentors who can assist them in navigating self-compassion struggles and challenges.

Elementary music educators ($n = 43$) scored significantly higher in common humanity and isolation aspects of self-compassion, mirroring Christian-Brandt and colleagues' (2020) findings of elevated compassion among elementary teachers. It is possible that these educators acknowledge feelings of inadequacy as common, understanding that others share similar emotions. Given the national focus on social-emotional learning in elementary schools, incorporating mindfulness and relationship-building (Raschdorf et al., 2021), elements of self-compassion may be integrated into this teaching approach. This could explain the higher self-compassion scores among elementary music educators. Future researchers might delve into the connection between a social-emotional learning approach and educators' self-compassion, while school districts may consider providing training in social-emotional learning and mindfulness for educators.

Survey results underscore the challenges and experiences encountered by today's music educators. Participants addressed issues such as students' behavior, engagement, and motivation, noting frustration with students' tendency to give up easily, partly attributed to the influence of social media. These findings align with existing research indicating teachers' experiences of stress and anxiety (Chen, 2022; Kasalak, 2020). A common sentiment emerged that many students have lost their enthusiasm for music education, posing a challenging for educators in fostering motivation.

Participants also described grappling with heavy workloads and facing negative treatment by various stakeholders. They shared anecdotes of overwhelming responsibilities that extended beyond music instruction. Others mentioned the challenging task of managing musical productions while teaching multiple classes, leaving little room for

planning and exerting a significant strain on their time and energy. Mental health emerged as a significant concern in their responses, with some educators expressing feelings of fatigue and burnout due to the toll the profession has taken on their well-being. On a positive note, some educators found solace in practices like meditation and self-care, which helped them cope with the demands of their profession (Neff & Pommier, 2013; Shimizu et al., 2016).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MUSIC EDUCATORS

The research findings on self-compassion and its potential impact on music educators offer implications for the music education community. Since there has been limited exploration of self-compassion in the field of music education (Hess, 2020; Kelley & Farley, 2019), music educators might familiarize themselves with self-compassion and its implications for their careers. This could be integrated into music teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development to equip educators with the tools needed to manage stress effectively.

Research indicates that self-compassion can contribute to improved mental health, well-being, and resilience (Chen, 2022; Egan et al., 2021; Neff & Pommier, 2013). Music educators might acknowledge its potential benefits for their emotional and psychological health. Integrating self-compassion practices into their daily routines can aid in navigating professional demands and preserving overall well-being. Furthermore, establishing mentorship programs and support networks within the music education community is crucial. Experienced educators can play a pivotal role in guiding and supporting their less-experienced colleagues toward developing self-compassion as a coping mechanism. Lastly, administrators, colleagues, and the broader educational community might recognize the importance of self-compassion and provide resources and encouragement to educators seeking to develop and maintain it.

CONCLUSION

Music educators can enhance their teaching practices by integrating principles of social-emotional learning, recognizing the beneficial relationship between self-compassion and social-emotional well-being (Egan et al., 2021; Neff & Pommier, 2013). This can help create a more compassionate and emotionally supportive learning environment for students and educators alike. Self-compassion has the potential to be a transformative force in the lives of music educators. Recognizing its importance, promoting self-compassion through training and support, and continuing to explore its applications within the field can lead to a more resilient, fulfilled, and mentally healthy community of music educators.

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