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## Original Article

# Efficacy of Compassion Focused Therapy for Managing Skin Shaming of Acne in Young Women

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## ABSTRACT

People are socially evaluated from face as ugly/beautiful. So person with acne isolate themselves from social gathering because of fear of stigmatized as unattractive. This social rejection leads them towards skin shaming of acne. Previous studies were not giving much importance to psychological impact of acne; just dermatological treatment was focus of attention. **Objectives:** To find a short duration but effective therapy to manage skin shaming of acne in young women. To test the efficacy of Compassion Focused Therapy on managing skin shaming of acne in young women. **Methods:** The research was an experimental study with sample of 64 young women of 18-25 years. 32 young women are allocated to therapy group and 32 women are allocated to control group. Data were collected at three time intervals of pre-therapy, post-therapy and follow-up. SPSS 21.0 version was used for data analysis. **Results:** Results clearly indicated significant reduction of skin shaming due to acne of young women from pre-therapy to post-therapy and also from pre-therapy to follow up. When therapy group women data compared with control group women data, conforms our objectives of study that that compassion focused therapy is effective and efficient therapy to manage skin shaming of acne in young women. **Conclusion:** Compassion Focused Therapy is successful therapy to manage skin shaming of acne in young women.

## INTRODUCTION

Human first impression is formed mostly on the base of physical appearance. When talking about physical appearance, special attention is given on the beauty of our face. So we can say that in the formation of first impression, most prominent part is our face. In social gathering, people are judged on the base of some ideal standards about beauty. Clear face is symbol of beauty for females to meet the beauty ideals. Due to these standards, women with acne begin to consider themselves ugly [1]. Hence women with acne considered themselves misfit in society and lead themselves towards frustration, self-criticism and skin

shaming due to acne. The feelings of self-criticism, imperfection, negativity and embarrassment about one's own skin due to acne conditions is called skin shaming due to acne. Skin shaming triggers other psychological issues of low self-confidence, frustration and guilt of not meeting beauty norms. Most often acne is considered as dermatological problem but surprisingly it is the leading cause of depression regarding quality of life with acne, anxiety to attend social gathering with acne, self-criticism regarding skin appearance and shame of not having crystal clear face [2]. For facial beauty and attractiveness women

of young age show much concern than young male [3]. These beauty concerns leads women towards skin shaming of acne more rapidly as compared male. In past studies researchers were keenly interested to treat physical conditions of skin issues and acne. Not enough research work is present to manage psychological distress of acne conditions. So it is the need of time, to develop a healthy solution for young women to help them to get rid from skin shaming due to acne. A lot of therapies are used to treat the skin shaming due to acne. Many of them are effective but not all. In present study our focus is to develop the inner feelings of kindness, love, care and compassion to manage the skin shaming of acne. These inner feelings are craved through Self-Compassion Focused Therapy. Self-compassion is a way to being mindful, caring and loving for yourself. It help to get rid from the destructive feelings of worthlessness [4]. Self-compassion have three components [5]. Self-kindness is the first component of self-compassion which leads a person to being non-critical and non-judgmental in difficult phase of life [4]. As people having acne judge their skin dull and ugly but self-kindness teach them to accept the flaws of skin. In pain and sufferings, the second component of self-compassion which is common humanity teach us that difficulties are part of normal life. As a people question that why skin having flaws. Common humanity teach them not to be worry because everyone having imperfections and flaws. Third element of self-compassion is mindfulness which enable us to un-biased acceptance of reality. It teaches us to face reality instead of ignoring the failures and painful events. A person with acne avoid the social gathering because of fear of stigmatizing as ugly person. But mindfulness teaches us to be manfully accept the painful reality instead of avoiding or ignoring. Compassion work as a buffer for self against shame, anxiety, and guilt it is negatively correlated with guilt and intense emotions of shame [6]. A cross-sectional study give us insight that compassionate and kindness for self is a buffer against the negativity of harmful emotions. Self-compassion is a mental health tool to speed up personal well-being [7]. To cope up distress and negativity development of compassion for self is necessary. A study yielded results that positive self-perception and being mindful are the tool to foster self-compassion [8]. Hence to cultivate mental wellbeing to manage negativity, self-compassion based novice therapy is used [9, 10]. Because self-compassionate is a tool to foster kindness, gentleness and non-critic self-view in phase of pain and difficulty [11]. "There is no single dermatological issue that causes the huge sum of psychological trauma and sufferings and to destroy self-confidence then does by the acne. Mental wellbeing is miserable for person with acne because they are highly

sensitive towards their facial beauty and appearance" [12]. Because of appearance concerns, women face shaming of acne in their daily life [12]. So our study mainly focus on shame related to acne among young female and help them become compassionate towards their self through Compassion Focused Therapy. There is no enough literature is present about the treat acne effects on mental issues [13]. The previous literature revealed that, in past there was not too much attention given to skin related pain and distress of women so our main aim of study is to give attention to this issue to fill the research gap. In past the research regarding the skin-shaming due to acne are conducted in western world, so main purpose of the research is to conduct in eastern world and help the eastern females to manage the skin-shaming due to acne with the help of Self-Compassionate focused therapy. Objectives of the study were: To analyze the efficacy of compassion focused therapy in management of acne among young females. To analyze the efficacy of compassion focused therapy in management of acne among young females as compared to control group females. Hypotheses of the study were: Compassionate focused therapy significantly reduce skin shaming due to acne through compassion focused therapy. Compassionate focused therapy significantly reduce skin shaming due to acne in young women as compared to control group young women.

## METHODS

It was the experimental research, to test efficacy of Compassion Focused Therapy in management of Skin Shaming of Acne. The population included all the young females of Bahawalpur having skin shaming due to acne of age range 18-25. Random convenient sampling had use to collect data of young females (N= 64) with acne shaming. 50% females were included in therapy group and 50% females were included in control group. Sample was collected from private skin clinics, hospitals and universities. An informed consent form was filled by the participants to assure them that their data must be kept confidential. Self-compassion is to being mindfully accept the pain of self, experiencing care and love toward self, a practice of become nonjudgmental and having uncritical attitude for life's failures, and recognizing that one's self experience of pain and failure is part of the common human experience [14]. Negative feelings of disgust, guilt, frustration, imperfection and embarrassment about one's own skin due to acne and negative judgment of one's own skin as ugly and feel shame for having this unattractive appearance of the skin is skin shaming [15-18]. Short form of Neff's Self-Compassion Scale was used as screening tool to check the level of self-compassion in acne patients.

SCS consists of 12 items also having six subscales. Self-Kindness Items: 2, 6, Self-Judgment Items: 11, 12, Common Humanity Items: 5, 10, Isolation Items: 4, 8 Mindfulness Items: 3, 7 and Over-identification Items: 1, 9. A five point scale of almost never (1) to almost always (5) was used. Item number 11 and 12 of sub scale self-judgment, item number 4 and 8 of sub scale isolation and item number 1 and 9 of sub scale over-identification are reverse scored [9]. The SCS-SF was validated in English sample (n=415). The six-factor structure and a single higher-order factor was replicated. The SCS-SF demonstrated adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha  $\geq$  .86) and a near-perfect correlation with the long form SCS ( $r \geq$  .97 all samples). The SCS-SF is a reliable alternative to the long form SCS, especially when looking at overall self-compassion scores. The acne shame scale was modelled on McKinley and Hyde's (1996) body shame scale. It is 8 item based, 7-point Likert scale and the responses ranged from the strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale demonstrated good reliability ( $\alpha=0.92$ ). The reliability of scales in various samples as ( $\alpha=0.70$ ) in females of middle-age and also founded ( $\alpha=0.84$ ) reliability in undergraduate females [19]. The African-Caribbean women sample yielded the reliability of ( $\alpha=0.81$ ) [20]. The acne shame scale assesses the degree people feel bad about not meeting internalized cultural expectations of acne-free skin. The response of participant low on an item are reverse scored. If an item is not answered by the participants, it was considered as missing. The data of a participant were counted as missing who did not answer item number four of the scale. Total average scores were calculated by summing responses for each item and dividing this by the number of non-missing items. Self-compassion and skin-shaming questionnaires were used to screening the participants. After screening 64 young females of age range 18-25 were selected. After signing the informed consent forms, 32 women were randomly allotted to therapy and 32 into control group and all were kept blind about the conditions allocated. Therapy group females were provided compassionate focused therapy, which was consist of 3 training sessions (each of 15 minutes) in a week. Females in control group were generally discussed about acne, therapy was not given. After completion of 2 weeks of training, follow up of one month was spent, then questionnaire was filled by both groups, to test the efficacy of compassionate focused therapy in managing skin shaming. Data were quantitatively analyzed by using the SPSS version 21.0. We used the repeated measure analysis of variance (RM-ANCOVA) because in study we had data of two almost same groups of young women (therapy group, control group), we also had data of three different time points (pre-therapy, post-therapy, follow-up) to test the efficacy of therapy. Hence to analyze effect of time and

treatment on both therapy and control group we use the RM-ANCOVA. Results of analysis were presented in tabular and graphic forms.

## RESULTS

The Table 1 consist of descriptive statistics. Comparison of mean and standard deviation of post therapy ( $M=22.56$ ,  $SD=2.16$ ) and follow-up ( $M=23.37$ ,  $SD=3.01$ ) scores show reduction than pre therapy ( $M=38.31$ ,  $SD=3.30$ ) scores of skin shaming of therapy group women. The standard deviation and mean score of control group show minor reduction in skin shaming at three levels.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics(N=64)

Skin Shaming due to Acne Scores				
Pre therapy		Post Therapy	Follow up	
Treatment	Mean $\pm$ SD	Mean $\pm$ SD	Mean $\pm$ SD	N
Compassionate Focused Therapy group	38.31 $\pm$ 3.30	22.56 $\pm$ 2.16	23.37 $\pm$ 3.01	32
Control group	39.96 $\pm$ 2.13	37.93 $\pm$ 2.61	38.62 $\pm$ 2.31	32

The Table 2 gives the between subjects interaction effects of skin shaming due to acne scores of therapy group with treatment group as computed by the repeated measure analysis of variance (RM-ANCOVA). There was statistically significant interaction effect of therapy training with skin shaming of acne of therapy group.

$F(1, 61)=494.21$ ,  $p<.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .89$ .

Whereas there was not statistically significant interaction effect of general discussion with skin shaming of acne of control group.

$F(1, 61)=.33$ ,  $p>.005$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .005$ .

**Table 2:** Between Subjects Effects(N=64)

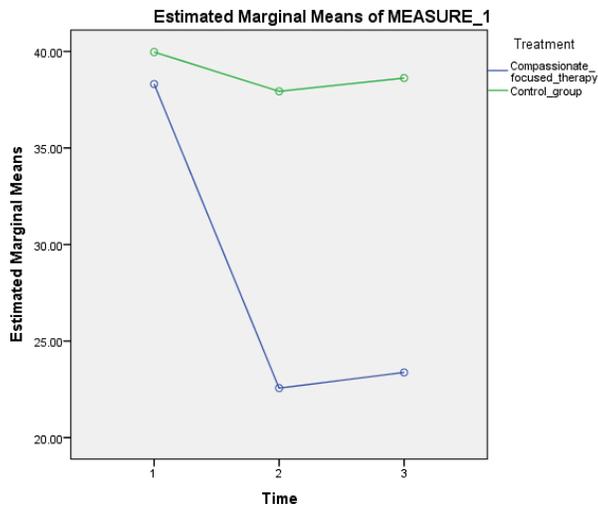
Source	df (Error df)	F	P	Partial Eta2
Skin shaming due to acne score of therapy group* Therapy Training	1(61)	494.21	.000	.89
Skin shaming due to acne score of control group* General Discussion	1(61)	.33	.56	.005

The Table 3 describes the pairwise comparison of skin shaming for three time points as computed by repeated measure analysis of variance (RM-ANCOVA). There is significant reduction in skin shaming due to acne at post therapy  $p < 0.001$  and at follow-up  $p < 0.001$  when compared with pre therapy.

**Table 3:** Within Subjects Pairwise Comparisons(N=64)

Skin Shaming due to Acne Score						
(I) factor1	(J) factor1	Mean Difference (I-J)	SE	P	95% Confidence Interval	
					LL	UL
1	2	8.89	.39	.000	8.11	9.67
2	3	8.14	.41	.000	7.30	8.97
3	1	-8.89	.39	.000	-9.67	-8.11
	3	-.75	.36	.04	-1.48	-.01
	1	-8.14	.41	.000	-8.97	-7.30
	2	.75	.36	.04	.01	1.48

Figure 1 indicated the effect of time and treatment. It clearly indicated that through the Compassionate Focused therapy shows young women of therapy group show continuous improvement in Skin shaming due to acne from post-therapy to follow up. Whereas control group having no



**Figure 1:** Graphical representation of effect of time and treatment on control group and experimental group

## DISCUSSION

Mostly women are more concerned about facial appearance as compared to man. Emotional health is closely related to physical appearance. So when face is affected by acne, emotional health is also badly affected. Skin shaming due to acne is the result of adverse emotional health. Our social life is also affected as the result of skin shaming of acne. Women negatively judge their face as ugly due to acne and avoid social gatherings. They are fearful that they are judged negatively because of face full of acne. So the current study gives insight into about the solution to manage the acne shaming. Current research findings give us insight that Compassion Focused Therapy effectively manages the skin shaming due to acne in young women. Our first objective of study was that compassion focused therapy is effective to manage skin shaming of acne in young females as compared to the comparison of mean values of table one, we noticed significant reduction in skin shaming values of therapy group from pre-therapy ( $M=38.31$ ,  $SD=3.30$ ) to post-therapy ( $M=22.56$ ,  $SD=2.16$ ) and from pre-therapy to follow-up ( $M=23.37$ ,  $SD=3.01$ ). When notice the mean values of control group from pre-therapy ( $M=39.96$ ,  $SD=2.13$ ) to post-therapy ( $M=37.93$ ,  $SD=2.61$ ) and from pre-therapy to follow-up ( $M=38.62$ ,  $SD=2.31$ ) showed no significant reduction of skin shaming scores, so we can say that our second objective of study is accepted that compassion focused therapy is effective to manage skin shaming of acne of young females of therapy group as compared to control group females. So we can say that our study findings are consistent with previous researches as to reduce psychological effects like, guilt, anger and shame. Compassion Focused Therapy is effective [20]. Moreover, Compassionate focused meditation treatment is effective to reduce the anxiety and self-blame [21]. From repeated

measure analysis of variance (RM-ANCOVA) results of table two, when compared the effect of therapy on therapy group with effect of general discussion with control group women, we found that Compassion Focused Therapy successfully lessens the skin shaming due to acne ( $F(1, 61)=494.21$ ,  $p<.001$ , partial  $\eta^2=.89$ ). While general discussion with control group women are not enough to manage the skin shaming due to acne ( $F(1, 61)=.33$ ,  $p>.005$ , partial  $\eta^2=.005$ ). So alpha values of therapy group when compared with control group confirmed our second objective, to effectively manage the skin shaming of acne. Compassion Focused Therapy is one of the most effective therapies as compared to general discussion about acne with control group women. Our findings are confirmed by the previous study by Kirby *et al.*, that Compassion Focused Therapy is successful therapy to manage negativity and self-blame. Moreover, it is a best tool to foster positivity and secure mental health [22]. Hence, Compassion Focused Therapy develops kindness, self-understanding in phase of personal sufferings and pains [22, 23]. Pairwise comparison of self-compassionate based therapy to manage skin shaming of acne at three different levels of treatment in table three shows that there is significant reduction in skin shaming at post-therapy ( $p<0.001$ ) and follow-up ( $p<0.001$ ) when compared with pre-therapy, which also confirms our first objective of study. Figure 1 mean values show the effect of time (pre-therapy, post-therapy and follow-up) with treatment (compassion focused therapy for therapy group women) (general acne discussion sessions for control group women) (general discussion for control group women). When compared the effect of time and treatment therapy group mean values show improvement as compared to control group women, which clearly supported our second objective of research. That compassion focused therapy reduces skin shaming of therapy group women as compared to control group women. Previous study by Irons *et al.*, also yielded same results that Compassion Focused Therapy is an easy training to foster self-kindness, sense of strength and courage in painful time instead of self-blaming, shame and criticism [24]. It is a low cost therapy equally effective for all people having acne shaming to reduce self-criticism, frustration, guilt and shame [25]. Hence, the current study findings are a healthy addition in literature. Findings of present research are a solution for young women to get rid of negativity of skin shaming due to acne by Compassion Focused Therapy.

## CONCLUSIONS

We concluded that Compassion Focused Therapy is one of the best choices for young women to successfully manage the skin shaming of acne. Compassion focused therapy develops Self-Compassion through training sessions,

which help young women to non-judgmentally accept skin with flaws instead of shaming and self-criticism.

### Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: AK, AB

Methodology: AK, AB

Formal analysis: AK, AB

Writing-review and editing: AK, AB,

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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