

Application of Self-Compassion to Communication and Conflict Resolution in the Property Management Industry

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ABSTRACT

As conflict is inevitable in the property management industry, communication and conflict resolution are essential skills for students to possess in order to have a successful career trajectory. However, existing research shows that students struggle with these soft skills thereby creating a gap between expected soft skills and observed soft skills of recent graduates. The purpose of this paper is to share details of a self-compassion intervention that is used in a property management operations course and provide student insights into the exercise to illuminate self-compassion as a concept that can be used to aid in communication and conflict resolution within the property management industry.

KEYWORDS

Soft skills; self-compassion; real estate; property management; student-centered learning

Introduction

As the field of property management continues to professionalize, students entering this profession are expected to be knowledgeable in topics including human resources, financial analysis, maintenance, repairs, marketing, and leasing (Carucci Goss & Campbell, 2008). While these topics are quite diverse, communication and conflict resolution remain constant skills needed in order to successfully carry out all of these tasks. However, students struggle with both of these concepts as communicating difficult news and dealing with conflict can be uncomfortable. The aim of this paper is to illustrate how contemplative practice, namely self-compassion, can enhance communication and conflict resolution skills in the field of property management.

Self-compassion, fostered through contemplative practice, can not only lead to personal benefits, but benefits interpersonally when dealing with relationship conflicts (Yarnell & Neff, 2013). In the context of property management, this can lead to healthy relationship functioning during periods of difficult conversations between employee and tenant and between employees. The ability to empathize and listen to the needs and desires of residents

and colleagues can foster the human relationship and continuing business relationship. The realization that the individual is interconnected with the various stakeholders throughout their workday via human imperfection can spark self-compassion and compassion for those whom they interact with on a daily basis. This can foster a diverse and inclusive environment where humans feel a larger sense of interconnectedness and compassion that opens communication channels and aids in conflict resolution.

Self-compassion involves “acknowledging that suffering, failure, and inadequacies are part of the human condition, and that all people—oneself included—are worthy of compassion” (Neff, 2003, p. 224). The three fundamental components include being kind versus self-critical to oneself, knowing that life experiences are part of the human experience rather than unique to self, and not over-identifying with painful thoughts and feelings through mindful awareness (Neff, 2003). Self-compassion as a contemplative practice can help recognize the interconnectedness between human beings. As Jerome (1890) states: “It is in our faults and failings, not in our virtues, that we touch one another and find sympathy. It is in our follies that

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we are one” (p. 20). Therefore, if we practice self-compassion, it is likely that we can recognize imperfection as a shared trait among all individuals. Realizing that all human beings experience distress and faults can assist in better communication and connection as we can feel understanding for others who are currently in this state.

As conflict is inevitable in the property management industry, communication and conflict resolution are essential skills for students to possess in order to have a successful career trajectory. However, existing research shows that students struggle with these soft skills thereby creating a gap between expected soft skills and observed soft skills of recent graduates. The purpose of this paper is to share details of a self-compassion intervention that is used in a property management operations course as well as student insights into the exercise to illuminate self-compassion as a concept that can be used to aid in communication and conflict resolution within the property management industry. The paper begins with a discussion on the importance of soft skills on employability followed by the soft skill gap that exists between graduates and employers in built environment programs. The merits of self-compassion are then presented as a soft-skill to be cultivated to address this soft skill gap. A synopsis of the data and methodology used to analyze the student responses to a self-compassion intervention is presented next. This is followed by the study’s results and discussion of these results. The manuscript concludes with some final thoughts.

Literature Review

Property management is not only about managing property, but also about managing people. This requires soft skill areas that include both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Muzio et al., 2007). Interpersonal skills are how humans interact with others and intrapersonal skills are how humans interact with themselves. Both types of soft skills are important for employment as evidenced by Pazil and Razak (2019) who synthesized literature on soft skills needed by graduates and found that the eleven major soft skill domains are communication skills, entrepreneurial skills, interpersonal skills, life-long learning skills, management skills, numeracy skills, problem solving skills, professional ethics and moral skills, self-management skills, technological skills, and thinking skills.

The graduates of built environment programs are no exception in the need for soft skill development. Adnan et al. (2012) confirm that the key soft skills, such as communication skills and problem solving, are important to real estate employers in Malaysia while real estate employers in Nigeria also have high expectations for soft skills (Ayodele et al., 2020). In the United Kingdom, soft skills are identified as the main employability skills for real estate graduates (Poon, 2012). In the United States, interpersonal social skills are deemed essential for graduate real estate programs (Galuppo & Worzala, 2004) and communication has been ranked as the most important soft-skill for the built environment field among seven soft skill clusters across employers, alumni, faculty, and student stakeholders (Crawford & Dalton, 2016).

The importance of soft skills among property graduates is clear, but there is a disconnect between this importance in the property industry and cultivation of these skills among students. Companies tend to view soft skills as more important than students and recent graduates while colleges and universities are not effectively communicating this increased priority or preparing students with this skillset (Succi & Canovi, 2020). While it seems that hard skills such as financial and legal analysis are being taught among real estate faculty in the United States, there is a lack of courses that teach interaction skills among employees (Manning & Epley, 2006). At the same time, students are not aware that they need to acquire soft skills which can cause confusion when the theory learned by students in the classroom does not match with the real-world difficulties of dealing with people of different backgrounds and with conflicting needs (Ayodele et al., 2021; Kotval, 2003).

This has caused a soft skill gap between recent graduates and employers (Salleh et al., 2016). The importance of soft skills and the soft skill gap extends to the property industry across the world (Adnan et al., 2012; Ayodele et al., 2020; 2021; Galuppo & Worzala, 2004; Manning & Epley, 2006; Poon, 2012; 2014). Poon (2014) finds that communication skills hold the biggest soft skill gap as identified by real estate employers. Furthermore, a significant soft skill gap regarding dispute resolution is discovered among property graduates from the perspective of real estate employers (Ayodele et al., 2020). At the same time, real estate graduates rate themselves low on various soft skills including communication skills (Ayodele et al., 2021).

One way to address this soft skill gap for property students is to introduce self-compassion into the college classroom. Self-compassion is an intrapersonal soft skill that benefits psychological well-being (Neff et al., 2007; Van Dam et al., 2011). For example, self-compassion has been found to have a positive association with happiness, optimism, wisdom, agreeableness, extroversion, and conscientiousness while having a negative association with social comparison, self-rumination, and anger (Neff et al., 2007; Neff & Vonk, 2009). Self-compassion has also been shown to help in difficult situations by helping individuals acknowledge the difficult situation through emotion-focused coping strategies versus using avoidance-oriented strategies as well as acting as a buffer against stress (Neff et al., 2005; 2007). At the same time, self-compassion can moderate negative emotions during difficult situations (Leary et al., 2007). Therefore, it may be no surprise based on the aforementioned study findings on self-compassion that a positive correlation has been discovered between self-compassion and emotional intelligence (Heffernan et al., 2010).

The cultivation of self-compassion has been found to spillover into interpersonal skills including communication and conflict resolution. For instance, a positive correlation has been illustrated between communication competence and self-compassion (Ramos Salazar, 2022; Umphrey & Sherblom, 2018). Furthermore, people with higher levels of self-compassion are more likely to resolve relationship conflicts while considering the needs of both their self and others with greater authenticity (Yarnell & Neff, 2013). This interpersonal spillover in those with self-compassion skills may occur for various reasons. First, self-compassion has been linked to wisely understanding the self and others (Neff et al., 2007). Additionally, it has been shown that people that are kind to themselves tend to be kind to those that they are in relationship with (Neff & Beretvas, 2013). Furthermore, self-compassionate people are likely to inspire interpersonal trust in relationships (Crocker & Canevello, 2008).

Relationship management inevitably includes communication and conflict resolution to maintain positive relationships within the workplace. With property managers interfacing with multiple stakeholders on a regular basis, sometimes with competing interests, this becomes ever more important. As the aforementioned studies suggest, the cultivation of self-compassion can be one pathway to help property managers

communicate and resolve conflicts such as resolving tenant disputes or managing conflicts between team members.

Because of this, a self-compassion exercise was introduced to students enrolled in an undergraduate multifamily property management and operations course at a large university in the South Atlantic region of the United States to cultivate communication and conflict resolutions skills as an attempt to bridge the skill gap between expected and observed student soft skills that are necessary upon graduation into the field. As this course focuses on the day-to-day operations of an apartment community, it lends itself readily to this type of exercise to equip students with tools to better handle communication and conflict resolution as onsite property personnel handle resident concerns and complaints on a regular basis.

Data and Methods

The undergraduate multifamily property management and operations course is segmented into five modules consisting of human resources and relationship management, maintenance and risk management, marketing and leasing, financing and accounting, and sustainable property management. Specifically within the human resources and relationship management module, a written questionnaire exercise titled "Letting Go of Our Self-Definitions by Identifying Our Interconnectedness," adopted from Neff (2011), was introduced to address communication and conflict resolution within the property management industry. This type of intervention was selected as it has been suggested that cultivating soft skills should go beyond lecturing about them and providing students multiple experiential learning opportunities such as academic and non-academic presentations, case studies, and student-centered learning (Adnan et al., 2012; Nusrat & Sultana, 2019). This student-centered learning intervention asks the student to identify a trait that they judge themselves for as well as what they find as an important part of their self-identification such as being an angry or lazy person. They then work with this trait by answering a variety of questions related to circumstances and conditions where this trait arises. The point is for the student to realize that this trait may not define them and that the trait is circumstantial which can help students find more freedom and peace of mind from this trait. Furthermore, the aim of this exercise is for students to experience self-compassion and realize that these

traits are part of the shared human condition of imperfection. With this truth in mind, students are then asked how this interconnectedness exercise can help them with communication and conflict resolution in the property management field. [Table 1](#) illustrates the exercise and questions which were posed to all students enrolled in the course.

This written questionnaire exercise was given to students during Fall 2017, Winter 2017–2018, and Spring 2018 semesters with all responses being confidential to foster honesty and openness among students. The Fall 2017 and Winter 2017/2018 courses were offered online asynchronously albeit the Winter session was condensed over a couple of short weeks. The Spring 2018 course was offered in-person on-campus. Student enrollment consisted mainly of traditionally-aged college students with a property management major, residential property management minor, or real estate major.

Overall, there were 87 respondents out of 108 students enrolled for this course throughout three semesters representing an 81 percent response rate. The Fall 2017 course was offered online

Table 1. Class exercise.

Think about a trait that you often judge yourself for, and that is an important part of your self-definition. For examples, you may think of yourself as a shy person, lazy, angry, and so on. Then ask yourself the following questions:

1. How often do you display this trait—most of the time, sometimes, only occasionally? Who are you when you don't display the trait? Are you still you?
2. Are there particular circumstances that seem to draw out the trait, and others in which the trait is not apparent? Does this trait really define you if particular circumstances must be present in order for the trait to emerge?
3. What are the various causes and conditions that led to having the trait in the first place (early family experiences, genetics, life pressures, etc.)? If these "outside" forces were partly responsible for you having this trait, is it accurate to think of the trait as reflecting the inner you?
4. Did you choose to have this trait, and do you have much choice about whether or not you display this trait? If not, why are you judging yourself for this trait?
5. What happens when you reframe your self-description so that you are not defining yourself in terms of the trait? For example, instead of saying "I am an angry person," what happens when you say "Sometimes, in certain circumstances, I get angry." By not identifying so strongly with this trait, does anything change? Can you sense any more space, freedom, peace of mind?

We are all subject to human limitations. Every single one of us is in the same predicament. The British novelist Jerome K. Jerome once wrote, "It is in our faults and failings, not in our virtues, that we touch each other, and find sympathy. It is in our follies that we are one." In recognizing the shared nature of our imperfection, self-compassion provides the sense of connectedness needed to truly thrive and reach our full potential. Instead of looking outside ourselves for a sense of acceptance and belonging, we can directly satisfy these needs by looking within.

How might this exercise help you with communication and conflict resolution in property management?

asynchronously with 43 students enrolled and 41 respondents for this exercise. Two students did not complete the assignment. The Winter 2017/2018 course was also offered online asynchronously, albeit condensed over a couple of short weeks, with 18 students enrolled and 16 respondents for this exercise. Two students did not complete the assignment. The Spring 2018 course was offered in-person on-campus with 47 students enrolled with 30 respondents for this exercise. Although there were 87 respondents, a total of fifteen students did not specifically identify a trait. Therefore, data on 72 student self-identified traits were obtained from the student responses in this written questionnaire exercise.

Themes in student self-identified traits were discovered by incorporating the Big-Five personality traits theoretical framework (Goldberg, 1990). The Big-Five factor structure was selected for this study as it has proven robust since virtually all personality trait descriptors can be represented with this model (Goldberg, 1990). The five factor poles within this framework are surgency (or extraversion), agreeableness, conscientiousness (dependability), emotional stability (vs. neuroticism), and culture, intellect & openness as illustrated in [Table 2](#). For each factor pole, there is an assignment of a plus or minus where a plus for the specific factor pole represents terms close to the factor pole whereas a minus represents terms further from the factor pole. For example, in the agreeableness factor pole, the term cooperation is assigned as part of II+ as cooperation is in line with agreeableness whereas belligerence is assigned II– as belligerence is not in line with agreeableness. Each trait identified by the student was classified as a term within a factor pole. For example, one student identified with the trait "lazy." Based on this response, the lazy trait was

Table 2. Big Five Personality Factor Organization and examples.

Factor pole	Examples
I. Surgency (or Extraversion)	I+: Gregariousness, Ambition, Optimism I–: Shyness, Lethargy, Pessimism
II. Agreeableness	II+: Cooperation, Empathy, Warmth II–: Belligerence, Pomposity, Callousness
III. Conscientiousness (Dependability)	III+: Organization, Persistence, Logic III–: Disorganization, Negligence, Indecisiveness
IV. Emotional Stability (vs. Neuroticism)	IV+: Placidity, Independence IV–: Insecurity, Fear, Emotionality
V. Culture, Intellect, Openness	V+: Intelligence, Creativity, Curiosity V–: Shallowness, Unimaginativeness, Stupidity

classified as lethargy within the I– factor pole within the Big Five personality framework. Another example is a student identifying with the trait “outgoing” which was then classified as gregariousness within the I+ factor pole within the Big Five personality framework.

Student reported personality traits were also compared across mode of course delivery and timeframe to determine any impacts on responses. For example, the Fall 2017 course was offered online asynchronously, the Winter 2018 course was offered in a condensed timeframe online asynchronously, and the Spring 2018 course was offered on campus.

A general inductive approach was employed to analyze students’ qualitative written responses to how this written questionnaire exercise may help them with communication and conflict resolution in property management. A general inductive approach for analysis of qualitative data is a research method whereby the researcher interprets the raw data through detailed readings to derive themes (Thomas, 2006). The procedures for this research method included raw data preparation, close reading of the text, creation of themes, coding text to include overlapping coding and uncoded text, and continuing revision and refinement of themes (Thomas, 2006). Specifically, an inductive analysis of qualitative data was deemed appropriate for this study because this approach fosters condensing raw data that is extensive and varied into a summary format and also aids in identifying any unplanned significant themes arising from the intervention (Thomas, 2006).

Results and Discussion

Table 3 illustrates the classifications among the Big Five Personality Types with the most prevalent factor pole being I– followed by II– and then I+. The least common are both V+, V–, and IV+. As seen in Figure 1, 65 percent of students identified with a negative factor pole that hinders communication and conflict resolution while thirty-five percent of students identified with a positive factor pole. Although a majority of students identified with a negative personality trait, it was surprising to see that 35 percent of students identified with a positive trait since the exercise asks students to pick a trait that they often judge themselves for. This suggests that the word “judgment” may not always bring with it a negative connotation nor may personality traits which

Table 3. Big Five Personality type classification.

Big Five Personality Type classification				
Factor pole	Male	Female	Total	Total %
I+	9	2	11	15%
I–	13	3	16	22%
II+	5	2	7	10%
II–	11	4	15	21%
III+	4	2	6	8%
III–	5	3	8	11%
IV+	0	0	0	0%
IV–	6	2	8	11%
V+	1	0	1	1%
V–	0	0	0	0%
Total	54	18	72	100%

Sometimes can be seen as negative such as introversion.

Thirty-five out of the 100 trait clusters within the Big V personality trait framework are represented in the sample as well as a total of forty-five distinct traits identified when reviewing the actual terms within a factor pole. The top three identified traits are shyness at ten, irritability at five, and gregariousness and precision tied as third most popular with four students each identifying this as their trait. There were seventeen traits where there was only one student which selected that particular trait such as lethargy, bossiness, and persistence. When reviewing personality traits by semester, it was interesting that no respondents within the Winter session identified within the sloth trait. This may be because they were taking an extra course during winter break which shows in and of itself a lack of laziness. Shyness was most popular during the Spring semester when the course was offered in person in the brick-and-mortar style learning environment. Perhaps this type of learning environment evoked this trait in students to a greater degree as they were seen by peers and the instructor in this learning environment versus an online asynchronous class delivery where they were not seen.

A variety of themes emerged when analyzing the responses which asked students how the exercise might help with communication and conflict resolution in property management as illustrated in Figure 2. One resounding theme focused on self-inquiry from how it affects the student from an internal perspective. Self-inquiry seemed to help with self-compassion as one student noted that “this exercise helps up with communication and conflict resolution because it helps us actually look deeper into ourselves and see what we may or may not be doing wrong. Everyone has a common trait that has grown over the years. Every trait is not a bad trait because it makes a person who they are.” A look inward also appears to help with communication and conflict resolution as one student states

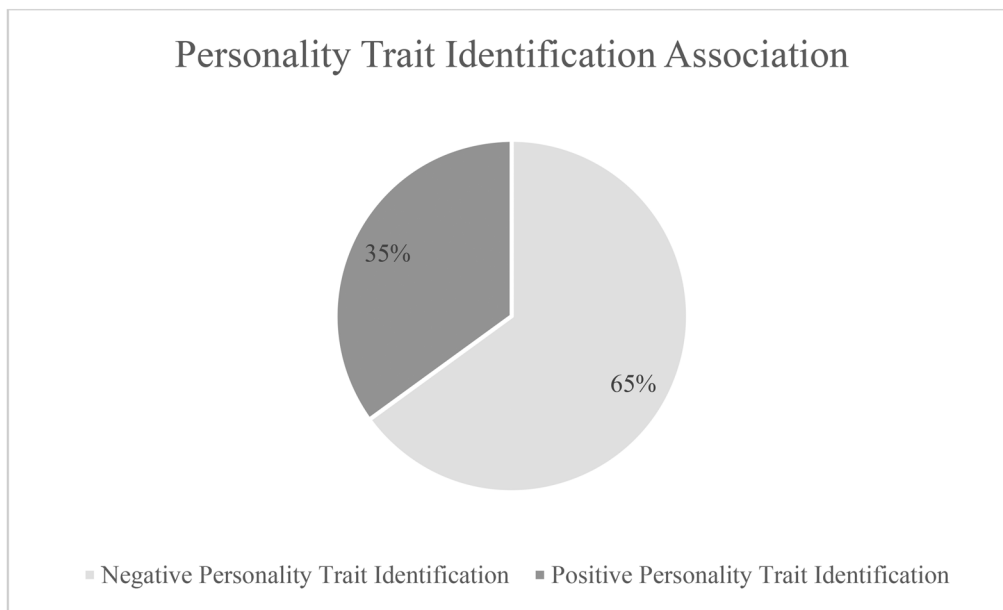


Figure 1. Personality Trait Identification Association.

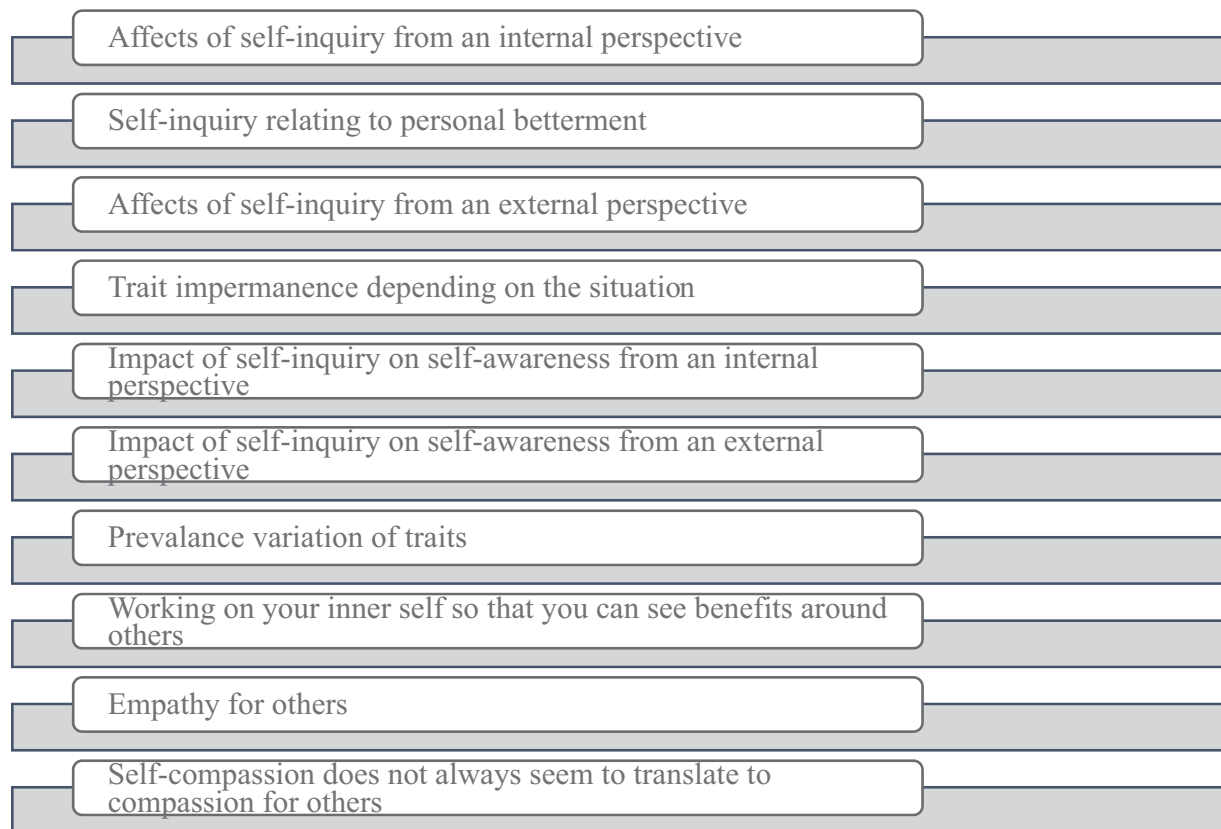


Figure 2. Communication and conflict resolution in property management themes.

“communication is key and if you don’t realize how you are communicating with others, it will not be of much help” while another comments that “exercises like this will help to resolve this conflict because it forces the individual to think about what the issue is and why it started. Once we find out what the root of the issue is, it becomes easier to fix this conflict without

creating more conflict. It also shows how you react to certain situations by realizing how often you display a certain trait. It can help you change that trait so that when future conflicts arise, you can act a different way than what you used to.”

Self-inquiry relating to personal betterment is also evident as one student states that “this exercise

helps you look in. You have to look deeper than one trait, but this is the beginning. Reflecting on your problems and flaws can help you to overcome them. You may realize things about yourself that you did not know before." While the previous student saw the exercise from a place of flaws, another student draws on identification of strengths. This student states that "the biggest application I think that this exercise has to offer and help with is allowing you to think about what your strengths are as an individual. I think that this is very important because it allows you know put into words what your strengths are and gives you the chance to think about how you can best apply them to the job you are faced with. But this inquiry cannot be a one-time exercise as a student recognizes that "asking yourself these questions periodically also helps you to think through some of the things that you're doing that you don't necessarily realize."

Self-inquiry from the perspective of how it affects the interactions between the student and another person also materialized as a theme. As one student put it, "knowing one's self very well will make one better at getting to know other people" while another simply but profoundly states "words have power and the way we behave starts with the things we tell ourselves." Another student strengthens this theme by stating that "this assignment could help me try to figure out how people think and why they act the way that they do if conflict arises. The type of thinking in this exercise really help to dissect a trait, which could also help to dissect a conflict or a communication problem." Relating it to communication and conflict resolution, one student comments that "knowing and acknowledging your flaws is important step in improving your communication skills. Without acknowledging your short-comings, you are unable to improve upon them, and without improvement, there is no room for growth" while another notes that the exercise "makes you think critically and to dive deeper into looking about how you define yourself, which is a really important to have the ability to think critically when it comes to conflict resolution." Relating this theme back to property management, a student notes that "if you know what makes you angry or something, then being able to acknowledge that and working around that emotion can help you become a better property manager." This sentiment is echoed by many students as evidenced by another student who states that "I would be able to be a better property manager if I know what traits I have, so that I can make sure that I do not act in a negative way." One

student provided a property specific scenario of this theme as follows: "For example, if someone realizes that they don't like to aggravate or cause stress on people, this could be an issue with a property manager in terms of an issue such as collecting rent. If someone is not self-aware that they are anti-conflict, then tenants could potentially get away with not paying rent and never be confronted about it by the property manager. On the other hand, if the property manager is aware that being anti-conflict is one of their weak spots, they can continuously consciously know that is a problem for them and know they have to work to overcome it."

Self-inquiry not only aids students in identifying traits they judge themselves for, but also seems to assist in their awareness of trait impermanence depending on the situation. For example, one student states that "since most traits are not evident in a person 100% of the time, it is likely that particular circumstances draw out the trait. Due to this fact, I believe it is important to communicate in a way that draws out the desired traits in each party." This lack of trait permanence is further evidenced by a student who says "I think this exercise is helpful in a few ways. It can help you to look at things from a different perspective." Relating this idea to communication and conflict resolution a student notes that "by not identifying yourself with a trait or limiting yourself to past tendencies, it is much easier to make the smartest possible decision whether it be general smooth and efficient communication or calmly resolving conflict." While another states that "this exercise may help with communication and conflict resolution in property management because it made me really think about all of my traits and which ones are bad or good and which may benefit me in the future." This identification of external circumstances and traits displayed can provide opportunities for betterment and self-knowing as a student remarks "knowing what external factors lead us to do the things we do helps us better understand who we are as people; allowing us to grow and learn from these less desirable traits we possess." While another states that the exercise "helps someone understand themselves better by looking inward at their self-recognized faults, and examining and defining what causes them." The connection between trait impermanence and reactions is seen by a student who states that "by realizing that environmentally developed traits aren't permanent even though they are persistent, people (especially managers) are almost always able to choose how they react in each situation."

Self-inquiry also seemed to help with self-awareness of reactivity from both an internal and external perspective. For example, one student notes that “it’s not your situation that defines you, but how you react to that certain situation.” Another states that “problems are going to arise, and the way managers handle the situations make a big impact on enjoyment of resident living.” This self-awareness of reactivity is further strengthened by a student that comments “in property management, there are a lot of situations where unforeseen conflicts arise. Knowing that this will happen, self-evaluation allows you to understand how you might react and prepare accordingly.”

While students realized that a particular trait is not always present, they also realized that “each person possesses different personality traits and there are different circumstances that draw out these traits for everyone. When communicating and attempting to resolve conflict in property management, it is important to recognize how and when to use these traits as a positive force instead of a negative.” A student also raises a good point that they “believe some traits are more prevalent than other, but often times some of are negative traits that, are rarely shown, bother us the most. I think this exercise helps us look within ourselves to see our true selves.”

There is also the common idea of working on your inner self so that you can see benefits around others. This is illustrated by a student response that states that “this exercise can help you in property management because if you can communicate with yourself and work through your own judgments, you will be able to communicate with others more efficiently. Working through your own conflicts and self-judgment will give you the ability to carry that skill into the workplace” This theme is strengthened by a student who comments that “this exercise will help anyone with communication skills and conflict resolution because it forces people to become self-aware. Anyone who is more in-tune with themselves and their personal strengths and weaknesses will be more successful in the long term as they know what they’re naturally skilled at and what they need to be more consciously aware of as a weakness so they can put an effort into continually improve if they choose to.” Finding space while working on your inner self resonates with a student show states that “I know that in order to avoid responding or reacting negatively to conflict or communication issues, I need to take a moment and realize that this trait is not something that I am so strongly identified with.”

The idea of empathy also arises in student responses as one student comments “putting

yourself in the customer’s shoes and assessing the situation from a different perspective can really help you be the ‘bigger person’ and ultimately resolve the conflict.” This theme is further developed by another student who states that “by recognizing that other people are not perfect and have their own flaws that do not define them, will help me be more compassionate and have a better understanding of their point of view.” Similarly a student says that “this exercise may help me with communication and conflict in property management by being able to recognize that all people struggle with different types of personality traits that do not define the type of person they are” while another notes that “it is important to keep in mind that everyone has their faults and insecurities that they are likely aware of.” Relating empathy to how it can affect the business environment, a student notes that “when presented with conflict being able to empathize and listen to the needs and desires of the tenant or employee can be the difference in losing that person or fostering the human relationship and continuing business.”

Self-compassion does not always seem to translate to compassion for others as one student comments “even upon realizing that I am wrong I will still try to manipulate my argument so I come out on top.” Also, it seems as if this exercise did not resonate with one student as their response states “I had a difficult time with this particular assignment as I do not think of myself as angry or lazy or any of the other emotions listed at the top of the page (and others like them). However, knowing who I am is part of being self-aware and knowing how I am likely to handle a situation prior to it occurring. It can allow me to take preparations to avoid me being me and taking too long to research or to encourage me to be myself and follow my instincts.” Reflections such as these from students who expressed discomfort or skepticism towards this exercise are insightful as it underscores the value of the intervention in sparking dialogue and training around soft skills. Addressing these barriers can further broaden the applicability and impact of this approach.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to share details of a self-compassion intervention that is used in a property management operations course as well as student insights into the exercise to illuminate self-compassion as a concept that can be used to

aid in communication and conflict resolution within the property management industry. Communication influences the service quality of a property manager and the perceived characteristics of the landlord contact person significantly impact the way the company is perceived as a whole (Ojekalu et al., 2019; Rasila, 2010). From a leaky kitchen sink to increased rental rates, residents bring a plenitude of concerns and complaints to onsite property personnel. By implementing self-compassion practices to onsite personnel, this could foster a better empathy and understanding of the resident's perspective knowing that all human beings are interconnected when it comes to feeling distress in their lives. For example, a property manager may have a trait of impatience. If a resident comes in and exhibits impatient behavior, the property manager may be more inclined to be sympathetic to this resident should she practice self-compassion and realize the interconnectedness of this trait. This sympathy can translate into better communication and conflict resolution as the property manager can put themselves into the resident's shoes so to speak.

As conflict is inevitable in the property management industry, communication and conflict resolution are essential skills for students to possess in order to have a successful career trajectory. This paper describes how a self-compassion exercise is implemented into a human resources and relationship management module within an undergraduate property management operations course to cultivate self-compassion, an intrapersonal skill that can aid in the interpersonal skills of communication and conflict resolution skills. Results from this study reveal that the majority of students identify with a trait that hinders communication and conflict resolution. Building self-compassion skills through curriculum interventions like the one used in this current study can help to lessen the soft skill gap by cultivating improved communication and conflict resolution skills in the property management field. These results can inform property management curriculum and teaching by providing an example of how to cultivate this soft skill which is highly sought after by employers and equips faculty and employers with a creative technique to cultivate soft skills that can help with communication and conflict resolution.

Self-compassion exercises can also be implemented into other property courses at the college level as well as professional training programs to aid in communication and conflict resolution. For example, in a real estate development course, the instructor could have students identify various

stakeholders throughout the real estate development process such as consultants, the design/construction team, lawyers, real estate service firms, lenders, other financing sources, and municipalities in order to lead and manage the development team. Then, the instructor can emphasize the importance of building relationships with these various stakeholders who often have conflicting needs. The next step would be to introduce self-compassion as one pathway to build relationships through communication and conflict resolution with these parties sharing the research that shows the benefits of cultivating self-compassion as well as various exercises that can be used for this cultivation. Professional training programs within the property industry could create a continuing education course focusing on communication and conflict resolution with self-compassion one tool among others such as active listening and negotiation to enhance these soft skills.

Students receive a lot of knowledge during their college careers, but there is not necessarily space in current curricula to address the soft skill gap. Using exercises like the one presented in this study provides experiential learning space for students to share and teachers to listen to get a pulse of where students are at a soul and heart level and see how that fits with the knowledge that is being brought to them. In this way, students are not only nourished intellectually, but also at a soul level as well. If students can tune into this subtle mind, which can be difficult in the age of distraction, perhaps a greater proportion will be able to see society as more "we" versus "me" and a promotion of a oneness versus dualistic society.

There are some limitations to this study which need to be addressed. First, while people can experience a whole multiple of traits within a short period of time, students may have been persuaded to pick a trait they most recently experienced versus one they find to be an important part of their self-definition. This limitation can be addressed in a future study through the use of a longitudinal analysis. Also, as the exercise provided examples of traits that students may judge themselves for such as shy, lazy, or angry, this may have led students into self-selecting this trait. Furthermore, the subjective nature of self-reported traits does not allow confirmation of accuracy of responses and certain personality traits that may be more valued in the real estate and property management field may influence students' self-assessments in this study. The sample also is limited in diversity which provides opportunities for future studies to compare results across industries.

While this manuscript shared one example of a soft skill intervention within one course, a coordinated approach between industry and across the higher education institution including faculty, staff, and students as well as industry is essential in disseminating soft skills to students for enhanced employability (Rao, 2014). Continual exposure throughout the curriculum including internships can provide students multiple opportunities in multiple contexts to help students refine their communication and conflict resolution skills to bridge this soft skill gap (Oladokun & Olaleye, 2018). As self-compassion has been shown to cultivate other soft skills, further studies perhaps using a pre-posttest design using the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003) should be pursued to examine potential effects of this intervention or other self-compassion interventions in the classroom on the self-compassion of students.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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