

# Ruminative Subtypes as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Self-Compassion and Suicidality

Erin McMeekin, Michelle Pei, & Keyne C. Law PhD

## Brooding buffers the protective factor of self-compassion on perceived burdensomeness among individuals with high and average levels of brooding

### BACKGROUND

- Despite an increase in research inquiries, suicide rates are on the rise (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023), especially for the college aged population, highlighting the challenge to accurately **predict when and if** a person will attempt suicide and deploy the necessary prevention strategies.
- The **Interpersonal Theory of Suicide** posits that suicidal desire emerges when perceived burdensomeness (PB) and thwarted belongingness (TB) coalesce (Van Orden et al., 2010).
- **Self-compassion** (SC), or an inward understanding that serves to ameliorate suffering and self-blame, has shown to be a reliable protective factor against suicidality (Sun et al., 2020).
- **Rumination** has been identified as a risk factor for suicidality with brooding particularly associated with suicide attempts (Rogers et al., 2017).
- Previous studies have not explored the interaction of SC and ruminative subtypes on TB and PB

### AIM

- Explore whether self-compassion moderates brooding and reflection as well as whether the effect of SC on TB and PB depends on ruminative subtypes.

### METHODS

#### Sample

- 264 undergraduate psychology students attending a state university in the Southern US ( $Mage=21.03$ ,  $SD=6.25$ ; 83.9% Female, 62.1% White)

#### Procedures

- Participants took a series of self-report surveys with 188 completing the RRS and INQ and 74 completing the SCS

#### Measures

- Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003)
- Ruminative Response Scale (RRS) (Nolen & Morrow, 1991)
  - Brooding, Reflection, Depressive
- Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ) (Van Orden et al., 2008)
  - Perceived Burdensomeness, Thwarted Belongingness

#### Data Analytic Approach

- We ran a series of multiple regression analyses to gather the moderating effects of rumination on the relationship between SC and interpersonal needs. We then used simple slopes to plot significant interaction effects.

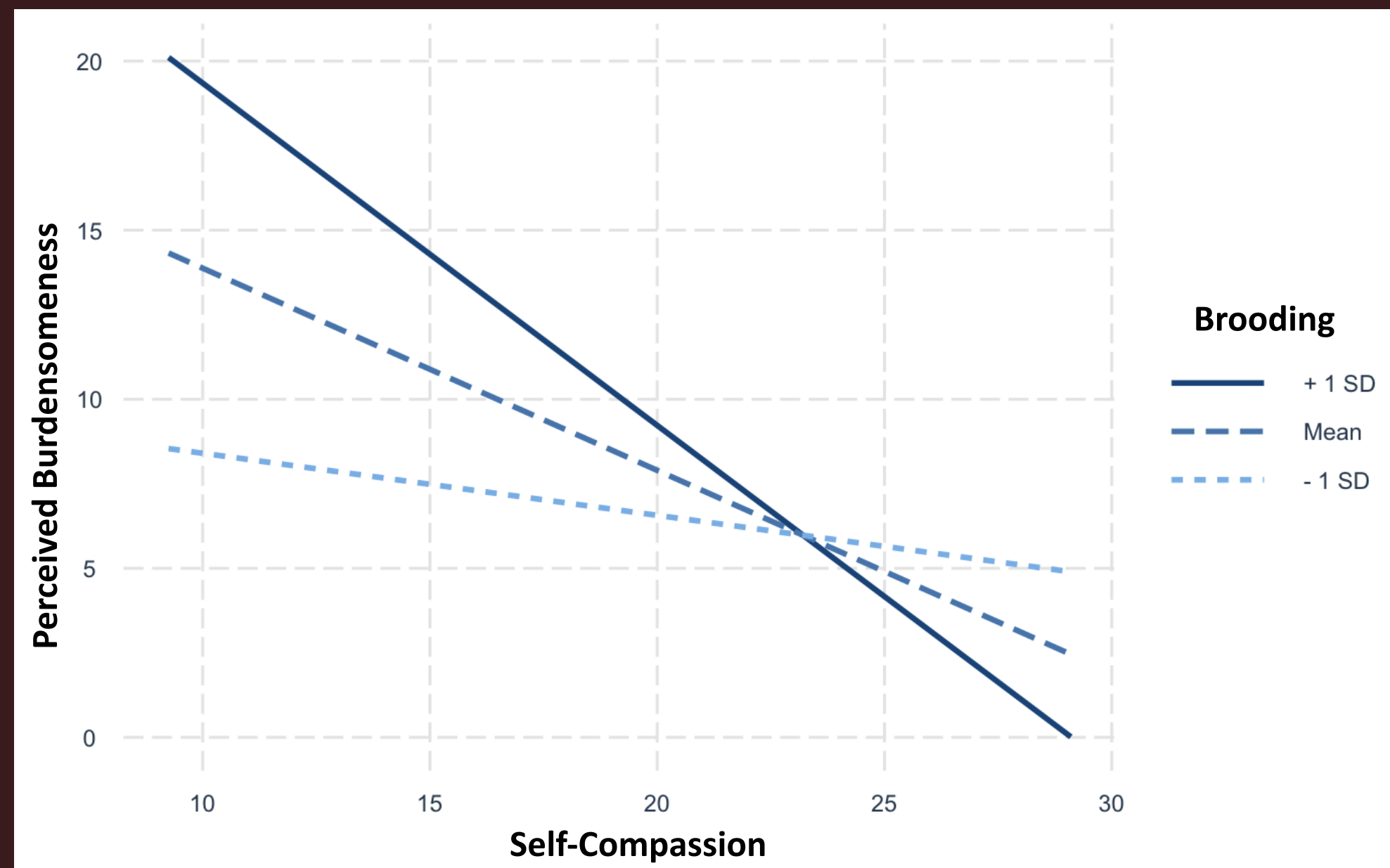


Figure 1. Simple Slopes analysis of Self-Compassion and three levels of Brooding for Perceived Burdensomeness.

### RESULTS

#### Perceived Burdensomeness

- The effect of SC, rumination subtypes, and their interactions on PB was significant ( $F(3,260) = 19.98$ ,  $R^2=.187$ ,  $p<.001$ ).
- There was a significant main effect of brooding on PB ( $b=2.58$ ,  $t=4.13$ ,  $p<.001$ ).
- There was a significant two-way interaction effect between self-compassion and brooding on PB ( $b=-0.11$ ,  $t=-3.12$ ,  $p=.002$ ).

#### Simple Slopes

- At both high (+1 SD) ( $SE = -1.26$ ,  $t = .19$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and mean levels ( $SE = 0.13$ ,  $t = -5.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ), of brooding the effect of self-compassion on PB was significant and positive

#### Thwarted Belongingness

- The model containing main effects was significant ( $F(3,260) = 21.85$ ,  $R^2=.201$ ,  $p<.001$ ).
- Significant main effect of Self-Compassion on TB ( $b=-.472$ ,  $t=-2.510$ ,  $p=.013$ ).
- Significant main effect of brooding on TB ( $b=1.14$ ,  $t=4.89$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

### APPLICATIONS

- Using this knowledge can inform future clinical assessments and identification of suicidality based on the discussed risk factors
- Employing cognitive restructuring in a therapeutic setting to dismantle negative rumination styles (like brooding) to abate the escalation to suicidality

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Continue to explore the role of the individual subscales of self-compassion to assess which are more powerful or protective than others
- Delve deeper into the role of reflection as a ruminative subtype and its role in suicidality as a whole
- Consider the impact of SC and rumination on the protection from and emergence of acquired capability