

The Motivational Framing of Self-Love in Kim Namjoon's UNICEF Speech

¹*Fifi Sulfani, ²Nuriadi Nuriadi, ³Baharuddin Baharuddin

Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Mataram, Jl. Majapahit No. 62, Mataram, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author e-mail: fanisulfani1645@gmail.com

Received: January 2026; Revised: February 2026; Published: February 2026

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the representation of self-love as a motivational message in Kim Namjoon's (RM) speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 2018. Using a qualitative discourse analysis method with a Discourse Representation Theory (DRT) approach (Kamp & Reyle, 1993), this research examines how self-love is constructed linguistically and rhetorically through an integration of DRT and Self-Compassion Theory (Neff, 2003). The primary data consist of the official transcript of RM's UNICEF speech, from which 15 utterances related to self-love were identified and analyzed. The findings reveal that self-love is represented through three main dimensions: personal identity, collective identity, and motivational elements. Linguistic strategies such as pronoun use, lexical choice, and repetition, as well as rhetorical devices including metaphor, direct address, and narrative technique, play a significant role in strengthening the message. The analysis shows that RM constructs self-love as a reflective, shared, and action-oriented process, encouraging audiences—particularly adolescents and young people—to accept themselves, recognize common human struggles, and confidently express their identities. This study contributes to the development of discourse analysis and communication psychology by demonstrating how motivational messages are shaped through language and how public speeches can function as sites for negotiating psychological values. The findings have practical implications for public communication and adolescent character education, particularly in designing messages that promote self-acceptance and mental well-being among youth.

Key word: Self-Love, Discourse Representation, Self-Compassion, Kim Namjoon, UNICEF, Speech.

How to Cite: Sulfani, F., Nuriadi, N., & Baharuddin, B. (2026). The motivational framing of self-love in Kim Namjoon's UNICEF speech. *Journal of Authentic Research*, 5(1), 993–1009. <https://doi.org/10.36312/fsyjs43>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/fsyjs43>

Copyright© 2026, Sulfani et al.

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) License.



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, self-love has become a widely discussed concept in relation to mental health and personal development, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Self-love is understood as the ability of individuals to acknowledge and accept themselves, and to value oneself while maintaining psychological balance, emotional well-being, and personal growth (Khosaba, 2012; Henschke & Sedlmeier, 2021). It involves cultivating a positive attitude toward oneself, acknowledging personal shortcomings without excessive self-judgment, and engaging in practices that support physical, emotional, and intellectual development (Neff, 2003b). Scholars emphasize

that self-love is not a static trait but an ongoing process that develops throughout life (Orth et al., 2008). As such, self-love has become increasingly relevant in contemporary society, where individuals are exposed to complex social pressures that challenge their sense of identity and self-worth.

From a linguistic perspective, self-love can be defined operationally as a discursive construction that integrates psychological self-acceptance with linguistic expressions of identity, value, and emotional connection to self and others. This definition integrates perspectives from both linguistics and psychology: linguistically, self-love is realized through specific lexical choices, pronoun usage, and rhetorical strategies that construct meaning; psychologically, it encompasses the three components of self-compassion – self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff, 2003a). This integrated definition guides the analysis of how self-love is framed and communicated in public discourse.

Despite its growing popularity, self-love is often misunderstood as narcissism or selfishness. In reality, self-love centers on prioritizing personal well-being without diminishing empathy for others (Neff, 2011). This misunderstanding is particularly problematic for adolescents, who face unique developmental challenges such as academic pressure, peer comparison, social media exposure, and the ongoing search for identity. Research indicates that adolescent self-esteem tends to fluctuate and may decline due to heightened self-awareness and critical self-evaluation, increasing vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and difficulties in developing healthy self-compassion (Orth et al., 2008; Bluth & Blanton, 2015). In this context, effective communication of self-love messages becomes essential, as the way such messages are delivered can influence how young audiences interpret, internalize, and practice self-love in their daily lives.

Language plays a crucial role in shaping how self-love is communicated and understood. Beyond functioning as a medium for conveying information, language operates as a social and discursive tool that constructs meaning, emotional engagement, and interpersonal connection (Hall, 1997). Through choices of words, sentence structures, and rhetorical patterns, speakers can influence audience perception and emotional response (Yusra et al., 2021). Language is the primary object of evaluation for a particular literary work, thus qualifying it as a work of art (Sunandar, Nuriadi, & Isnaini, 2023, p. 1). As Sudirman (2018) notes, word choice and speaking style reflect social values and can influence the appropriate reception of messages, just as communication is essentially the act of transferring and exchanging information with others. In public discourse, especially motivational speeches, language becomes a strategic resource that transforms abstract psychological concepts into relatable and persuasive messages. Therefore, examining self-love as a linguistic and discursive phenomenon offers valuable insights into how motivational meanings are constructed and communicated through discourse.

One prominent example of self-love discourse is Kim Namjoon's (RM) speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, delivered as part of UNICEF's "Love Myself" campaign. As the leader and primary spokesperson of the globally influential group BTS, RM occupies a unique position as a cultural figure capable of reaching diverse international audiences. The "Love Myself" campaign, initiated in collaboration with UNICEF, supports the #ENDviolence initiative and emphasizes empathy, self-acceptance, and youth empowerment (UNICEF, 2019). Delivered on a

global humanitarian platform, RM's speech frames self-love discourse not merely as an individual psychological concern, but as a shared social value essential for fostering resilient and compassionate communities.

Previous studies have examined self-love and motivational discourse from various perspectives. Neff (2003a, 2003b, 2011) developed the theoretical foundation of self-compassion and its psychological benefits. Klinge and Van Vliet (2019) explored self-compassion from the adolescent perspective through qualitative inquiry. Several studies have specifically analyzed RM's UNICEF speech: Hasanah, Alek, and Hidayat (2019) conducted a critical discourse analysis of the speech; Ella, Sukma, and Siti (2021) analyzed speech functions in the same speech; and Ramadhani Robi'ah, Farida Nur Fatinah, and Anita Arum Cahyani (2025) examined the speech using Systemic Functional Linguistics. While these studies have contributed valuable insights, they have primarily focused on general discourse features or specific linguistic functions without integrating psychological frameworks of self-compassion with linguistic analysis.

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of Discourse Representation Theory (DRT) and Self-Compassion Theory as an analytical framework for examining motivational discourse. This integration is theoretically justified by the complementary nature of these frameworks: DRT provides tools for analyzing how meaning is constructed through linguistic structures, references, and mental representations (Kamp & Reyle, 1993; Kamp, Genabith, & Reyle, 2010), while Self-Compassion Theory offers a psychological framework for understanding the components of self-love—self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff, 2003a). By combining these perspectives, this study can examine not only how self-love is linguistically represented, but also how linguistic structures reflect psychological dimensions of self-compassion. This integrated approach addresses a gap in existing literature, which has tended to examine either linguistic or psychological aspects of self-love in isolation.

From a broader communicative perspective, self-love discourse operates within structures of language and power, particularly when articulated in political and humanitarian forums. Language functions not only as a medium for conveying information, but also as a strategic instrument through which identity, ideology, and social values are constructed and negotiated (Thornborrow, 2004; Wareing, 1999; Baharuddin & Hum, 2014). Within this context, RM's speech demonstrates how self-love discourse can function as a motivational and humanitarian framework, aligning personal narratives with universal principles of human dignity, empowerment, and collective responsibility.

Based on the identified research gap, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How is self-love represented as a motivational message in Kim Namjoon's 2018 UNICEF speech?
2. What linguistic strategies are employed to convey self-love in the speech?
3. What rhetorical devices are used to strengthen the message of self-love in the speech?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to English language studies by demonstrating how motivational discourse functions in public speech and how language plays a critical role in shaping adolescent self-perception,

emotional involvement, and self-esteem. By focusing on linguistic and rhetorical constructions of self-love in a global humanitarian speech, this study contributes to discourse analysis by highlighting how motivational meanings are strategically built through language. Specifically, it offers insights into how public speeches function as sites where psychological values are linguistically framed and socially circulated.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the representation of self-love as a motivational message in Kim Namjoon's 2018 speech at the United Nations General Assembly. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on exploring meanings, interpretations, and linguistic constructions rather than measuring variables statistically. As noted by Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research enables researchers to understand how individuals or groups interpret social phenomena through rich and contextualized data. In this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the way self-love is constructed linguistically and rhetorically in a public speech and positioned as a motivational discourse for adolescent audiences.

The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary data are drawn from the official transcript of Kim Namjoon's 2018 UNICEF speech, which serves as the main object of analysis. This transcript is examined to identify utterances, phrases, and clauses that explicitly or implicitly convey messages related to self-love, identity, and motivation. From the transcript, 15 utterances were identified as directly relevant to self-love representation. Secondary data include relevant literature such as journal articles, books, and previous studies related to self-love, motivational discourse, speech analysis, and adolescent psychology. These sources are used to support the theoretical framework, provide analytical context, and situate the findings within existing scholarly discussions. Data collection is conducted through document analysis of the speech transcript and a systematic literature review, allowing the researcher to triangulate theoretical insights with textual evidence.

The selection of the 2018 UNICEF speech as the corpus for this study is justified by its historical and social significance. Delivered at the United Nations General Assembly, this speech represents a moment when a youth cultural figure addressed a global political forum on issues of mental health and self-acceptance. The speech is part of UNICEF's "Love Myself" campaign, which specifically targets youth empowerment and violence prevention (UNICEF, 2019). This context makes the speech particularly relevant for examining how self-love discourse is constructed for adolescent audiences in a global humanitarian framework.

Data analysis is carried out using qualitative discourse analysis guided by Discourse Representation Theory (DRT) proposed by Kamp and Reyle (1993). This framework is applied to examine how meaning is constructed through linguistic structures, references, and contextual relationships within the speech. The analysis follows several stages:

First, the speech transcript is reviewed and relevant quotations are classified into thematic categories based on a predetermined analytical framework. The analytical framework includes three main categories: (1) types of self-love representation (personal identity, collective identity, motivational elements), (2)

linguistic strategies (pronoun use, lexical choice, repetition), and (3) rhetorical devices (metaphor, direct address, inclusive language, narrative technique).

Second, the procedure for analyzing data using DRT involves several steps: (a) identifying discourse referents (entities introduced in the text, such as "I," "we," "you," "fans"); (b) mapping conditions and relations between referents to understand how mental representations are constructed; (c) tracking referential chains across the text to examine how meaning is developed and sustained; and (d) analyzing how contextual information and world knowledge are integrated into the construction of meaning. This systematic procedure allows the study to reveal how language functions not only as a medium of expression but also as a strategic tool for constructing meaning and emotional engagement in public speech.

Third, each selected utterance is elaborated and interpreted by analyzing linguistic features including pronoun use, lexical choices, sentence relations, and contextual shifts, alongside rhetorical strategies such as personal narratives, direct address, and motivational calls. The analysis explicitly integrates DRT with Self-Compassion Theory by examining how discourse structures reflect the three components of self-compassion: self-kindness (expressions of warmth and understanding toward oneself), common humanity (recognition that suffering and imperfection are shared human experiences), and mindfulness (balanced awareness of one's emotions).

To ensure the credibility of interpretations, this study employs triangulation of theory, drawing on multiple theoretical perspectives (DRT, Self-Compassion Theory, and representation theory) to cross-validate findings. Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted through discussions with colleagues in discourse analysis to review interpretations and challenge assumptions. An audit trail was maintained throughout the research process, documenting analytical decisions and interpretive steps to ensure transparency and dependability.

The researcher acknowledges potential biases in qualitative interpretation. As a researcher with background in discourse analysis and an interest in youth culture and motivational communication, there may be a tendency to emphasize certain aspects of the speech that align with these interests. To mitigate this bias, the analysis remained grounded in the theoretical framework and textual evidence, with interpretations constantly checked against the data and discussed with peers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are derived from Kim Namjoon's (RM) speech delivered at the United Nations General Assembly in 2018. The data were obtained by transcribing the speech and identifying utterances that convey messages of self-love. Each selected utterance was analyzed using a qualitative discourse analysis approach to examine how self-love is constructed linguistically and rhetorically. This analysis is grounded in Discourse Representation Theory (Kamp & Reyle, 1993), which explains how meaning is built through language and context, and Self-Compassion Theory (Neff, 2003a), which provides a psychological framework for understanding self-love. Based on these theoretical perspectives, the data are categorized into three main aspects: representations of self-love, linguistic strategies, and rhetorical devices.

Representation of Self-Love in Kim Namjoon's Speech

The analysis identifies several forms of representation of self-love constructed through Kim Namjoon's speech. These representations are realized through personal identity, collective identity, and motivational elements, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Representation of Self-Love

Representation of Self-Love Type	Sentences	Interpretation	DRT Analysis	Self-Compassion Component
Personal Identity	"I was born in Ilсан, a city near Seoul, South Korea. I was just an ordinary boy."	RM presents himself as humble and relatable, reinforcing sincerity.	Introduction of discourse referent "I" with ordinary attributes establishes mental representation of accessible identity. Shift in perspective from internal to external evaluation creates complex mental representation of self-awareness.	Self-kindness: Accepting one's origins without judgment.
	"At nine or ten, I began to see myself through the eyes of others."	Reflects the tension between individuality and external judgment.	Temporal referents (past, present, future) construct a unified discourse representation of evolving self.	Mindfulness: Awareness of emotional experience and social influence.
	"I have come to love myself for who I am, for who I was, and for who I hope to become."	Expresses a continuous process of identity formation and acceptance.	Shift from singular "I" to plural "we" expands discourse referents to include collective experience.	Self-kindness: Acceptance of self across time.
Collective Identity	"We have become artists performing in huge stadiums and selling millions of albums."	Shows collective identity despite fame, connecting with youth globally.		Common humanity: Shared success and experience.

Motivational Element	"Our fans have become a major part of this campaign with their action and enthusiasm."	Highlights mutual support and participatory empowerment.	Introduction of "fans" as discourse referents creates relational network of mutual influence.	Common humanity: Recognition of others' contribution to shared goals.
	"After releasing the 'Love Yourself' albums... we started to hear remarkable stories from our fans all over the world about how our message helped them... those stories constantly remind us of our responsibility."	Expands self-love into a global movement by showing how fans worldwide internalize and respond to the message.	Complex discourse representation linking "we," "fans," and "responsibility" constructs ethical dimension of collective identity.	Common humanity: Connection with others' experiences; Mindfulness: Awareness of impact on others.
	"So, let's take one more step. We have learned to love ourselves, so now I urge you to 'speak yourself.'"	Calls the audience to act positively and persevere.	Shift from descriptive to hortatory discourse mode creates action-oriented mental representation.	Self-kindness: Encouraging self-acceptance; Mindfulness: Present-moment awareness of choice.
	"What is your name? What excites you and makes your heart beat?"	Encourages introspection and personal purpose.	Direct questions create interactive discourse representation, inviting audience to construct their own mental referents.	Mindfulness: Self-reflection and awareness of personal values.

Personal Identity	"I was born in Ilsan, a city near Seoul, South Korea. I was just an ordinary boy." RM presents himself as humble and relatable, reinforcing sincerity.	Introduction of discourse referent "I" with ordinary attributes establishes mental representation of accessible identity.	Self-kindness: Accepting one's origins without judgment.
----------------------	--	---	--

Table 1 demonstrates that self-love in RM's speech is represented as a multidimensional discourse encompassing personal identity, collective identity, and motivational elements. Rather than being framed as a singular psychological construct, self-love emerges as a dynamic process that connects individual self-reflection with social belonging and purposeful action.

The integration of DRT and Self-Compassion Theory in analyzing these representations reveals how linguistic structures reflect psychological dimensions. In the personal identity category, the introduction of discourse referents such as "I" with specific attributes (born in Ilsan, ordinary boy) constructs a mental representation of self that is accessible and relatable. This representation aligns with self-kindness, as RM presents himself without judgment or pretense. The statement "I began to see myself through the eyes of others" introduces a complex mental representation involving both self and others, reflecting the mindfulness component of self-compassion—the awareness of one's experience without over-identification. The temporal progression in "who I am, who I was, and who I hope to become" creates a unified discourse representation of self across time, reflecting self-kindness as acceptance of one's complete self.

In the collective identity category, the shift from "I" to "we" expands the discourse representation to include multiple referents, constructing self-love as a shared experience. This linguistic structure directly reflects the common humanity component of self-compassion—the recognition that all humans experience struggles and successes. The inclusion of "fans" as discourse referents creates a relational network that positions self-love as mutually constituted through social connection. The statement about "responsibility" adds an ethical dimension to collective identity, suggesting that self-love, when recognized as shared, carries implications for how one relates to others.

The motivational elements demonstrate how DRT can account for shifts in discourse mode. The move from descriptive statements to hortatory expressions ("let's take one more step," "I urge you") changes the function of the discourse from representing states of affairs to prompting action. This shift invites the audience to construct their own mental representations and to see themselves as agents capable of change. The reflective questions ("What is your name? What excites you?") directly engage the audience in constructing their own discourse representations, embodying the mindfulness component of self-compassion through guided self-reflection.

From the perspective of representation theory (Hall, 1997), self-love discourse in RM's speech is constructed through meaning-making practices that connect

language, identity, and culture. Hall emphasizes that representation is the process through which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture through language. In this speech, self-love is not simply reflected or described but actively produced through specific representational practices. RM's autobiographical narratives, such as "I was born in Ilsan... I was just an ordinary boy," produce meaning by positioning self-love within ordinary, accessible experience rather than as an abstract ideal. The representation of self-love through personal narrative constructs it as a lived, achievable process rather than a distant goal. Furthermore, the representation of self-love through collective identity and motivational elements produces self-love as a cultural value that connects individual experience to broader social meanings, reinforcing Hall's argument that representation is central to the constitution of social life and cultural identity.

Linguistic Strategies in Conveying Self-Love

In addition to representational meanings, the speech employs specific linguistic strategies that function to support and reinforce the representation of self-love, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of Linguistic Strategies in Conveying Self-Love

Representation of Self-Love Type	Sentences	Interpretation	DRT Analysis	Self-Compassion Component
Pronoun Use	"I was born in Ilsan, a city near Seoul, South Korea. I was just an ordinary boy."	Creates intimacy through personal narrative.	First-person singular pronoun "I" establishes speaker as primary discourse referent, grounding representation in personal experience.	Self-kindness: Personal acceptance expressed through self-reference.
	"What is your name? What excites you and makes your heart beat?"	Builds interaction and reflection.	Second-person "your" directly addresses audience, creating interactive discourse and inviting listeners to become discourse referents in their own	Mindfulness: Invites self-reflection and awareness.

			mental representations. Shift from "we" (inclusive collective) to "I" (speaker) to "you" (audience) creates complex referential structure linking all participants. Repetition of key phrases creates discourse coherence and stabilizes meaning across the text, making concepts mentally accessible.	
	"We have learned to love ourselves... I urge you to speak yourself."	Unites speaker and audience in shared identity.		Common humanity: Shared experience and collective journey.
Lexical Choice & Repetition	"Love myself," "Speak yourself"	Reinforces central message and emotional resonance.		Self-kindness (love myself) and mindfulness (speak yourself as authentic expression).

Table 2 illustrates that self-love is linguistically conveyed through strategic pronoun use and lexical repetition. The use of first-person pronouns establishes intimacy and authenticity, while second-person forms invite audience participation and self-reflection. Inclusive pronouns such as "we" reinforce collective identity and shared experience. Repeated lexical items, particularly "love myself" and "speak yourself," function as discourse markers that stabilize meaning and enhance emotional resonance throughout the speech.

The DRT analysis of pronoun use reveals how referential strategies construct different relationships between speaker, audience, and the concept of self-love. First-person singular pronouns establish the speaker as the primary discourse referent, grounding abstract concepts in personal experience. This personal grounding aligns with self-kindness, as RM's self-references model accepting self-regard. Second-person pronouns create what DRT terms "interactive discourse," where the audience is not merely passive recipient but is directly addressed and invited to become an active participant in constructing meaning. This interactive structure reflects the mindfulness component by prompting self-reflection. Inclusive "we" creates a collective discourse referent that encompasses speaker and audience, directly embodying the common humanity component of self-compassion—the recognition that experiences of struggle, growth, and self-acceptance are shared rather than isolating.

Lexical repetition in DRT functions to create discourse coherence and stabilize meaning. When key phrases such as "love myself" and "speak yourself" recur

throughout the speech, they become what DRT terms "discourse topics"—central concepts around which other information is organized. This repetition makes these concepts mentally accessible and emotionally resonant, reinforcing their importance. From a self-compassion perspective, "love myself" directly activates the self-kindness component, while "speak yourself" aligns with mindfulness as authentic self-expression and awareness.

Rhetorical Devices Used in the Speech

The representation of self-love in Kim Namjoon's speech is further strengthened through the use of rhetorical devices that enhance emotional engagement and persuasive meaning, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Types of Rhetorical Device

Representation of Self-Love Type	Sentences	Interpretation	DRT Analysis	Self-Compassion Component
Metaphor & Imagery	"These faults and mistakes are what I am, making up the brightest stars in the constellation of my life."	Turns flaws into beauty, symbolizing acceptance.	Creates rich mental representation by mapping abstract concept (faults/mistakes) onto concrete image (stars/constellation), making self-acceptance vivid and accessible.	Self-kindness: Reframing imperfections positively; Mindfulness: Balanced awareness of self.
Direct Address	"What is your name? What excites you and makes your heart beat?"	Invites audience reflection and participation.	Direct questions create interactive discourse, requiring audience to engage in mental representation construction.	Mindfulness: Promotes self-reflection and awareness.
Inclusive Language	"We have learned to love ourselves, so now I urge you to speak yourselves."	Strengthens collective identity and belonging.	Complex referential structure links "we" (collective experience) with "I" (speaker authority) and "you" (audience agency).	Common humanity: Shared journey and collective encouragement.
Narrative Technique	"I was born in Ilsan, a city near Seoul, South Korea. I was just an	Builds credibility and emotional connection through	Narrative structure creates temporal coherence in discourse representation, connecting past self to present message.	Self-kindness: Accepting and valuing one's history.

ordinary boy."	personal experience.
-------------------	-------------------------

Table 3 demonstrates how rhetorical devices transform abstract concepts of self-love into vivid and emotionally grounded expressions. Metaphor and imagery reframe imperfection as a meaningful aspect of identity, while direct address encourages audience reflection and engagement. Inclusive language and narrative techniques further strengthen credibility and emotional connection, positioning self-love as both achievable and socially meaningful.

The metaphor of "faults and mistakes" as "the brightest stars in the constellation of my life" is particularly significant in the integration of DRT and Self-Compassion Theory. In DRT terms, this metaphor creates a complex mental representation by mapping the abstract domain of personal imperfection onto the concrete domain of celestial imagery. This mapping makes the abstract concept of self-acceptance vivid and cognitively accessible. From a self-compassion perspective, this metaphor directly embodies self-kindness—the ability to be warm and understanding toward oneself when confronted with personal failings. Rather than harsh self-judgment, the metaphor transforms mistakes into sources of beauty and meaning. The metaphor also reflects mindfulness, as it represents a balanced awareness of imperfection without over-identification.

Direct address through rhetorical questions creates what DRT terms "interactive discourse representation," where the audience is not merely represented in the text but actively engaged in meaning construction. These questions invite listeners to become discourse participants, constructing their own mental representations in response to the prompts. This interactive structure embodies the mindfulness component by guiding audience members toward self-reflection and present-moment awareness of their identities, passions, and values.

The narrative technique, particularly the opening autobiographical account, establishes what DRT terms "temporal coherence" in discourse representation. By connecting past self ("I was just an ordinary boy") to present self (the speaker at the UN), the narrative creates a unified discourse representation of identity across time. This temporal coherence reflects self-kindness as acceptance of one's complete history and journey. The narrative also builds credibility and emotional connection, as listeners can relate to the universal experience of growing up, facing doubts, and developing self-understanding.

Inclusive language, particularly the strategic shift between "we," "I," and "you," creates what DRT terms "referential complexity" that links all participants in the discourse. This referential structure embodies the common humanity component of self-compassion by constructing self-love as a collective journey rather than an individual achievement. The statement "We have learned to love ourselves, so now I urge you to speak yourselves" positions the speaker as both part of the collective (we) and as an individual with authority to encourage others (I), while directly addressing the audience (you). This complex referential structure reinforces that self-love, while personally experienced, is fundamentally social in its meaning and practice.

Integration of Findings and Theoretical Implications

The integration of DRT and Self-Compassion Theory throughout this analysis reveals that self-love in RM's speech is constructed through a coherent discursive

strategy that aligns linguistic structures with psychological dimensions. DRT provides tools for analyzing how meaning is built through discourse referents, referential chains, and contextual relationships, while Self-Compassion Theory offers a framework for understanding the psychological content of those meanings. This integration demonstrates that motivational discourse is most effective when linguistic form and psychological content work in concert.

The findings align with and extend previous research on self-compassion. Neff's (2003a, 2011) framework of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness is clearly reflected in the linguistic and rhetorical strategies of the speech. Self-kindness is primarily realized through personal narratives that model accepting self-regard and through metaphors that reframe imperfection positively. Common humanity is constructed through inclusive pronouns, collective identity references, and acknowledgment of shared experiences with fans and global youth. Mindfulness is embodied through reflective questions, balanced awareness of both strengths and struggles, and the invitation to present-moment self-reflection.

The study also extends previous analyses of RM's speech. While Hasanah, Alek, and Hidayat (2019) examined critical discourse aspects and Ella et al. (2021) analyzed speech functions, this study contributes a psychologically-informed discourse analysis that reveals how linguistic choices reflect and promote self-compassion. This integration addresses a gap in existing literature, which has tended to examine either linguistic or psychological aspects of motivational discourse in isolation.

The findings have significant implications for the study of persuasive communication and motivational rhetoric. The speech demonstrates that effective motivational discourse operates on multiple levels simultaneously: it constructs mental representations that make abstract concepts accessible (DRT level), employs linguistic strategies that create intimacy and collective identity (linguistic level), uses rhetorical devices that enhance emotional engagement (rhetorical level), and activates psychological processes of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (psychological level). This multi-level integration may explain the speech's powerful impact on adolescent audiences globally.

The analysis also reveals the collective dimension of self-love as a significant finding. Through the use of inclusive pronouns, references to fans, and acknowledgment of shared responsibility, the speech constructs self-love as a social value rather than merely an individual psychological state. This collective framing has important implications for understanding how self-love discourse functions in public communication. It suggests that self-love, when framed as socially shared, can serve as a basis for community building and collective empowerment, not just individual well-being.

The cross-cultural dimension of the speech deserves attention. As a Korean public figure addressing a global audience through English, RM navigates cultural differences in his construction of self-love. The speech balances universal themes of human struggle and self-acceptance with culturally specific elements, such as the emphasis on collective identity (which resonates with East Asian cultural values) while addressing global youth. This cross-cultural adaptability may contribute to the speech's international resonance.

Limitations and Contextual Considerations

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. As a textual analysis focused on a single speech, it cannot account for audience reception or the actual impact of the message on listeners. Future research could employ mixed methods to explore how adolescent audiences interpret and internalize self-love messages from public figures. Additionally, this analysis is limited to linguistic and rhetorical features and does not examine paralinguistic elements such as tone of voice, facial expression, and body language, which significantly influence how the message is received. RM's delivery style, including his calm tone, sincere expression, and measured gestures, likely enhances the emotional impact of the words analyzed here. Future multimodal studies could integrate analysis of verbal and nonverbal elements.

The findings should also be considered within the broader social context of adolescent mental health in the digital era. RM's speech emerges at a time when youth globally face unprecedented pressures from social media, academic competition, and uncertain futures. The speech's message of self-acceptance, shared humanity, and authentic expression addresses these contemporary challenges. Public figures like RM play an increasingly important role in shaping psychological discourse among youth, filling gaps that traditional institutions (family, school, religious organizations) may not adequately address. This study contributes to understanding how such influence operates through language.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how self-love is represented as a motivational message in Kim Namjoon's 2018 UNICEF speech, what linguistic strategies are employed to convey self-love, and what rhetorical devices strengthen the message. The analysis yields several conclusions that address these research questions.

First, self-love is represented through three interconnected dimensions: personal identity, collective identity, and motivational elements. Personal identity representations construct self-love as an ongoing process of self-acceptance grounded in ordinary human experience. Collective identity representations expand self-love from individual psychology to shared social value, emphasizing mutual support and collective responsibility. Motivational elements transform self-love from reflective state to active practice, encouraging audience members to "speak themselves" and engage in self-definition.

Second, the linguistic strategies employed to convey self-love include strategic pronoun use and lexical repetition. First-person pronouns establish authenticity and intimacy; second-person pronouns invite audience participation and self-reflection; inclusive pronouns construct collective identity and shared experience. Lexical repetition of key phrases ("love myself," "speak yourself") stabilizes meaning and enhances emotional resonance throughout the speech.

Third, the rhetorical devices used to strengthen the message include metaphor and imagery, direct address, narrative technique, and inclusive language. Metaphor transforms abstract self-acceptance into vivid imagery; direct address engages audience members as active participants in meaning-making; narrative technique builds credibility and emotional connection; inclusive language reinforces collective identity and belonging.

The integration of Discourse Representation Theory and Self-Compassion Theory throughout the analysis reveals that these representations, strategies, and devices work together to construct self-love as a psychologically meaningful and socially relevant discourse. DRT illuminates how meaning is built through discourse referents, referential chains, and contextual relationships. Self-Compassion Theory reveals how these linguistic structures reflect and promote self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.

This study contributes theoretically to the development of discourse analysis and communication psychology by demonstrating the value of integrating linguistic and psychological frameworks in analyzing motivational discourse. The integration of DRT and Self-Compassion Theory provides a model for examining how language shapes psychological meaning and how psychological concepts are realized through linguistic structures. This theoretical contribution extends existing studies by shifting focus from measurement-based approaches to discourse-oriented analysis of psychological constructs.

The study also offers practical implications for public communicators, educators, and mental health practitioners. For public communicators, the analysis reveals effective strategies for delivering motivational messages: grounding abstract concepts in personal narrative, using inclusive language to create collective identification, employing metaphor to make psychological concepts vivid, and directly engaging audiences through reflective questions. For educators, these strategies can inform character education programs that promote self-acceptance and emotional well-being among adolescents. For mental health practitioners, understanding how self-compassion is linguistically constructed can inform the design of therapeutic materials and public health campaigns.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The analysis is limited to a single speech and does not include empirical data on audience reception. The textual focus cannot account for paralinguistic elements such as tone, gesture, and facial expression that influence message reception. Future research should address these limitations by conducting comparative analyses of multiple speeches by different public figures, employing multimodal approaches that integrate verbal and nonverbal analysis, and investigating audience reception through surveys, interviews, or experiments. Such research would further illuminate how motivational discourse operates and how self-love messages can be effectively communicated to support adolescent well-being.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis by examining other speeches by BTS or comparing RM's speech with those of other public figures addressing psychological and social issues, as well as by employing mixed methods to explore audience reception and impact. For communication practitioners, educators, and social activists, RM's use of personal narratives, inclusive language, metaphors, and reflective questions can serve as an effective model for delivering empathetic and empowering messages in educational, social, and mental health contexts. For the general public, particularly young people, RM's message of self-love highlights the importance of self-kindness, acceptance of

shared human struggles, and mindful self-awareness as foundations for emotional well-being and healthier relationships.

REFERENCES

- Baharuddin, D., & Hum, M. (2014). Pribahasa di ranah politik: Sebuah analisis tentang penggunaan bahasa kiasan di antara politisi di TV One dan Metro TV. *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Mataram*, 3(2), 145-162.
- Bluth, K., & Blanton, P. W. (2015). The influence of self-compassion on the well-being of adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 30(3), 323-346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558414546718>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Ella, K. A., Sukma, N. A., & Siti, L. (2021). Speech function analysis used in the United Nations speech video about youth and self-acceptance delivered by Kim Namjoon of BTS. *Undergraduate Conference on Language, Literature, and Culture (UNCLLE)*, 1(1), 65-74.
- Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. SAGE Publications.
- Hasanah, U., Alek, A., & Hidayat, D. N. (2019). A critical discourse analysis of Kim Namjoon's (RM's) speech at the United Nations. *International Journal of English and Cultural Studies*, 2(2), 30-41. <https://doi.org/10.11114/ijecs.v2i2.4500>
- Henschke, E., & Sedlmeier, P. (2021). What is self-love? A qualitative study on the concept and its relationship with psychological well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 22(6), 2677-2698. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-020-00336-5>
- Kamp, H., & Reyle, U. (1993). *From discourse to logic: Introduction to modeltheoretic semantics of natural language, formal logic and discourse representation theory*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Kamp, H., Genabith, J., & Reyle, U. (2010). Discourse representation theory. In D. Gabbay & F. Guenther (Eds.), *Handbook of philosophical logic* (Vol. 15, pp. 125-394). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0485-5_3
- Khosaba, R. (2012). Self-love: The foundation of psychological well-being. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 7(4), 289-298.
- Klinge, K. E., & Van Vliet, K. J. (2019). Self-compassion from the adolescent perspective: A qualitative study. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34(3), 323-346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558417722768>
- Neff, K. D. (2003a). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2(2), 85-101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309032>
- Neff, K. D. (2003b). The development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2(3), 223-250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309027>
- Neff, K. D. (2011). Self-compassion, self-esteem, and well-being. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00330.x>

- Neff, K. D. (2023). Self-compassion: Theory, intervention, and research. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 74, 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-032420-031047>
- Orth, U., Robins, R. W., & Widaman, K. F. (2008). Life-span development of self-esteem and its effects on important life outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(5), 1190-1204. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013266>
- Ramadhani Robi'ah, W., Farida Nur Fatinah, & Anita Arum Cahyani. (2025). Analysis of Kim Namjoon's speech using systemic functional linguistics (SFL): "We have learned to love ourselves, so now I urge you to speak yourself." *JPGENUS: Jurnal Pendidikan Generasi Nusantara*, 3(1), 57-61. <https://doi.org/10.61787/dy059969>
- Sudirman, S. (2018). Word choice and speaking style as reflections of social values in public communication. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 10(3), 112-128.
- Sunandar, W., Nuriadi, N., & Isnaini, M. (2023). An analysis of metaphorical expressions used in Forrest Gump movie: A formalism study. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 3(1), 1-15.
- Thornborrow, J. (2004). Language and identity. In L. Thomas & S. Wareing (Eds.), *Language, society and power: An introduction* (2nd ed., pp. 157-172). Routledge.
- UNICEF. (2019). "We have learned to love ourselves, so now I urge you to 'speak yourself.'" United Nations Children's Fund.
- Wareing, S. (1999). Language and gender. In L. Thomas & S. Wareing (Eds.), *Language, society and power: An introduction* (pp. 65-82). Routledge.
- Yusra, K., Amrullah, Lestari, Y. B., Nuriadi, & Lail, H. (2021). Language as a social and discursive tool in public communication. *International Journal of Linguistics and Discourse Analysis*, 4(2), 78-95.