

## Study of Self-Compassion and Resilience among College Students

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The difficulties faced during early childhood can be cushioned against by psychological factors. The aim of the study was to find out the relationship between resilience and self-compassion among young adults and to find out gender difference on the two variables.

**Methodology:** Data was collected from 62 early adults and data was analysed using Mann Whitney-U test and Spearman correlation statistical techniques.

**Result:** According to the results, no gender difference existed on either of the variables. Along with this self-compassion and resilience were found to have a positive correlation among early adults. However, this correlation was not found in males alone but was found among females.

**Conclusion:** Based on the results of this study, if young adults are taught about these traits, their transition can be made easier and smoother.

**Key words:** Self-compassion, Resilience, Early adults

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### INTRODUCTION

Early adulthood as described by Erik Erickson is the period between 19-40 years of age. It is marked by social dilemma "intimacy versus isolation" and the related virtue is love during this period, an individual looks for affiliation and love from his or her partner. Therefore, this period is important from social perspective when he is trying to establish himself and looking for external support.

Individuals in this age group undergo a transition from the disciplinarian environment of school to a relatively different surrounding. It is thus necessary to understand the dynamics of their psychological aspects and ways to enhance them.

#### Self-Compassion

The self-concept was first identified operationally and implemented a decade and a half ago in the psychological literature [1]. A self-compassionate mentality is thought to reflect the equilibrium between increased compassionate and reduced uncompassionate self-reply in the face of personal inadequacy or difficulties in life: increased self-kindness, shared empathy and knowledge, reduced self-judgment, loneliness and over-identification [2]. Self-kindness includes being moist, compassionate and thorough toward oneself. Human culture requires accepting the common human nature of imperfection, recognizing that all human beings struggle and make errors. Mindfulness involves being aware with equanimity and balance of one's present moment of suffering. Self-judgment requires sharp criticism of one's own shortcomings. In the sense of suffering loneliness means feeling isolated. Over-identification happens when one's pain is combined to the extent where perspective is lost. The different components of self-compassion are conceptually distinct and rely on various ways that individuals respond to suffering emotionally (with more empathy and less

judgment), perceive suffering cognitively (as part of human experience rather than as isolating), and pay attention to suffering (in a more aware and less over-identified manner) [3]. While the six components of self-compassion are separable, they are thought to impact each other collectively and to function as a network [2].

### **Resilience**

The term resilience has been conceptualized through a number of fields, including engineering, ecology, economics, and psychology, in separate but connected ways. Psychological resilience has been described as a psychosocial dynamic process in which individuals who are subjected to prolonged hardship or potentially traumatic events experience positive psychological adaptation over time. Psychological resilience has been defined by field experts as involving cross-level interaction of protective mechanisms, including factors such as supporting family and relationships, successful coping skills, culture, and neurobiology. Resilience was also defined and measured as a collection of features which facilitates positive adaptation.

For older adults this research by Smith [4] explores the relationship between self-compassion and psychological resilience. A sample of 102 (69 per cent female) older adults living in an independent retirement care group (CCRC) took part in this study. They finished a survey measuring self-compassion, perceived stress, overall health, satisfaction, and depression. In older adults with lower self-compassion there is expected lower rates of satisfaction and higher rates of depression, high stress and poor health. Such adverse effects were buffered by greater self-compassion. Older adults with greater self-compassion demonstrated greater psychological well-being even though they were still under high stress or poor health. The research done by Gooding et al [4] aimed to examine psychological resilience in older adults (> 64 years) relative to young adults (< 26 years). Result concluded that the older adults were the more resilient community particularly in terms of the ability to control emotions and solve problems. The youngsters were more resilient to social assistance. Bad perceptions of general health and low energy levels forecasted low resilience rates regardless of age. Low scores for hopelessness also projected greater resilience in both classes. The study done by Kemper et al [5] examined the relationship between trainable qualities (mindfulness and self-compassion), with factors conceptually related to burnout and quality of care (sleep and resilience) in young health professionals and trainees. They took their sample of 213 clinicians and trainees. Results showed that respondents were 28 years old on average; 73 per cent were women. The occupations included dieticians (11%), nurses (14%), doctors (38%), social workers (24%), and others (12%). For all variables univariate analyzes demonstrated normative values. Sleep disruptions were strongly and significantly associated with perceived stress and poorer health but also with reduced attentiveness and self-compassion. A similar research by Neff and Vonk [6] explored the unusual influence of self-compassion on optimistic states alone (when adjusting for self-esteem). Neff and Vonk [6] sought to distinguish the positions of self-compassion and self-esteem to investigate whether self-esteem really is the predictor of "psychological wellbeing" commonly assumed by researchers. Results from this research showed that self-compassion, when accounting for self-esteem, predicted a remarkable variation in levels of confidence, satisfaction and optimistic mood.

Tanwar and Garg [7] conducted a study to find out gender difference on depression, anxiety, stress and self-compassion among college faculties in Delhi and Meerut. According to the results, the two genders did not differ on any of the variables. Along with this, they also found a significant positive relationship among depression, anxiety and stress, but no correlation with self-compassion among male college faculties. As opposed to this, self-compassion was significantly related to depression in the negative direction.

The study done by Bluth [8] in which self-compassion was explored as a possible mediator in the relationship between mindfulness and dimensions of emotional well-being, identified by the three components of self-kindness, feeling a part of a shared humanity, and retaining balance in difficult circumstances. Parameters measuring tolerance, self-compassion, positive and negative effects, life satisfaction and perceived tension consisted of an online survey administered to 67 urban high school teenagers. Results suggested that self-compassion served as a mediator in the relationship between awareness and both negative and perceived stress, but not in the relationship between awareness and positive impact or satisfaction with life.

### Rationale of the Study

During the early adulthood phase, students undergo a transition from school to University. They try to adapt to a new environment, especially those who live away from their parents. They spend more time among their peers. Therefore, it is necessary to understand psychological well-being of college going population and aid faculties and parents to recognise and remedy any early signs of distress.

## METHODOLOGY

### Objectives

- To find out the difference between male and female college students on Self-Compassion and Resilience.
- To find out the relationship between self-compassion and resilience among college students, both male and female.
- To find out the relationship between self-compassion and resilience among female college students.
- To find out the relationship between self-compassion and resilience among male college students.

### Hypotheses

- H1 There is a significant difference between male and female college students on Self-Compassion.
- H2 There is a significant difference between male and female college students on Resilience.
- H3 There is a significant correlation between self-compassion and resilience among college students of both the genders.
- H4 There is a significant correlation between self-compassion and resilience among female college students.
- H5 There is a significant correlation between self-compassion and resilience among male college students

**Design of study:** The present study is non-experimental, correlational, cross-sectional and quantitative in nature.

**Sample:** Data was collected on 62 college students in Delhi and NCR through convenience sampling comprising of 33 females and 29 males. The age range of the population was 18 to 40 years. The study included full time students.

### Tools

In this study, following two questionnaires were used to collect the data –

**Self-Compassion Scale (SCS):** Self-Compassion Scale was developed by Neff [1]. It consists of 26 items self-report measure assessing self-evaluations. The scale represents emotions, behaviours and thoughts related to the various components of self-compassion. It consists of 6 sub-scales that measure how often people respond to feelings of inadequacy or suffering. Responses are given on a 5-point Likert's scale ranging from 1 "almost never" to 5 "always" with higher scores indicating higher levels of the construct measured. Internal consistency the whole scale's three-week test-retest reliability was .92, while the test-retest reliability for the subscales ranged from 0.80 to 0.88. When validity analyses were done, positive associations with measures of social connectedness, life satisfaction, self-esteem and emotional processing was revealed. Negative associations with measures of psychological distress, self-criticism, neurotic perfectionism, and rumination was found. For the purpose of this study, self-compassion scale was taken as a whole.

**Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale 10-Item:** The CD-RISC 10 is a 10-item unidimensional self-reported scale that measures items measuring resilience. It is a shortened version of the original 25-item CD-RISC [10-11].

### Procedure

The Researcher used both offline and online medium to collect the data. Once the questionnaire was compiled and printouts were taken, participants were approached in library and in class rooms. The study was explained to them briefly and confidentiality was ensured. They were told that their participation was completely voluntary and they can walk out of the study anytime they wished. Consent was drawn from the interested students and the printed form was given to them in the printed form.

Thus the total sample consisted of 62 participants (29 males and 33 females).

### Data Analysis

Each of the two questionnaires was scored separately according to the guidelines laid down by the author. During the analysis, non-parametric statistical techniques were employed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), Mann Whitney U test and Spearman Correlation techniques were used.

### Result and Discussion

The aim of the study was to find out gender difference between males and females on self-compassion and resilience. Along with this the relationship between these variables was also computed among young adults, male and female college students.

**Table 1: Comparison between males and females on Study Variables**

Variables	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann Whitney U	p- value
Self-Compassion	Male	29	34.00	986.00	406.000	.306
	Female	33	29.30	967.00		
Resilience	Male	29	32.79	951.00	441.000	.596
	Female	33	30.36	1002.00		

According to table no. 1 no significant difference between males and females is observed on self-compassion. Although the difference is not significant it can be said that male college students ( $M = 34.00$ ) are more compassionate towards self than female college students ( $M = 29.30$ ). Similar results were found in the study done by Yarnell, et al (2015) that represents one of the first comprehensive analyzes of possible gender disparities in self-compassion using meta-analytic approaches, and how such gender differences are moderated by age or ethnic minority status. Results showed that males had significantly higher self-compassion levels than females.

There was no significant difference between the two genders on resilience as well however according to the mean ranks male college students were found to be more resilient ( $M = 32.79$ ) than females ( $M = 30.36$ ). Similar results were found in the research done by Masood el al (2016) which examined the gender differences in resilience and psychological distress in burn patients. The research sample consisted of 50 burn patients, collected from four separate Lahore hospitals. The findings revealed that men with burns are more resilient than women.

**Table 2: Descriptive and Correlations of Study Variables in Early adults**

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2
Self-Compassion	62	84	14	-	
Resilience	62	28.58	7.39	.488**	-

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

According to table 2 there is a significant positive correlation between self-compassion and resilience  $r(60) = .488, p = .00$ . This means that an increase in self-compassion will lead to an increase in resilience and vice versa.

**Table 3: Descriptive and Correlations between study variables among female college students**

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2
Self-Compassion	33	82.55	16.83	-	
Resilience	33	27.88	8.04	.619**	-

\*\*p&lt;0.01

According to table 3 there is significant positive correlation between self-compassion and resilience among female college students  $r(31) = 0.619$ ,  $p = .00$  this indicates that an increase in self-compassion will lead to a subsequent increase in resilience.

**Table 4: Descriptive and Correlations between study variables among male college students**

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2
Self-Compassion	29	85.66	9.89	-	
Resilience	29	29.38	6.62	.310	-

As shown in table 4 there is no significant correlation between self-compassion and resilience among male college students  $r(27) = 0.102$ ,  $p = .102$  which means that a change in either of these variables will not affect the other one.

## CONCLUSION

The present research aimed to look at the two variable, resilience and self-compassion among college students. Based on the results, it can be concluded that both of these variables are linked to each other and can influence one another in some situations. Apart from this, the gender difference, although insignificant, can have important implications for future researches.

Despite few limitations, the results of the present study can be used by educators and parents to assist students in better adapting to the changing environment from school to college. Apart from this, they can encourage and train students in developing resilience and self-compassion to enhance their quality of life.

### Limitations and Recommendations

Just like every other study, this study also has some limitations such as small sample size, unequal frequencies of males and females, inability of the researcher to focus on any one city and questionnaires not being adapted to Indian population.

For further researches, it is recommended to collect a larger sample size, with equal number of males and females including other gender as well. Apart from this, the measures used in the study should be adapted to Indian population.

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