

# Self-Compassion and Life Satisfaction among Young Adults

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**Abstract:** We live in a world where there are people going through so many difficult times and suffering from overwhelming situations. One major concern is that young adults are facing such drastic changes in life and sometimes the plan does not go according to them. Self-compassion is compassion inwards which means care for yourself and life satisfaction is how satisfied you are in your life. This research intends that one would know that self-compassion is as important as compassion for others and it will play a major role in life satisfaction. The main aim of the research is to find the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction among young adults. The analysis is based on the sample size of 245 participants collected through simple random sampling. The procedure includes collection and analysis of data. The research design employed is a correlational analysis. From the analysis it was found that self-compassion and life satisfaction have a relationship of 0.244 at the significance level of 0.01. In conclusion the two variables self-compassion and life satisfaction have a positive relationship between them.

**Keywords:** Self-Compassion, Life Satisfaction and Correlation

## 1. Introduction

Youth today are facing a number of challenges such as education background, family pressure, peers and societal norms etc. Allen and Leary (2010) found that self-compassion can be used as one of the coping mechanisms in stressful situations. In today's world self-compassion is not acknowledged highly by the young adults in stressful situations. Life satisfaction and self-compassion both play a major role in one's life, (Fleming2021). According to a research a central aspect of self-compassion is treating yourself kindly when things go wrong for example when people fail or make critical error, self-compassionate people tend to treat themselves with greater kindness, care and compassion and less voluntary criticism anger than people who are low in self-compassion, Allen and Leary (2010). Life satisfaction is the global evaluation rather than one that is grounded at any specific time in time or specific difference. It is our general feeling about our life and how please we are with how it's going (Ackerman, 2021). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century there have been a lot of research on self-compassion and life satisfaction. The benefit of this study is to expand knowledge of each individual especially young adults about self-compassion and young adults.

### 1.1 Self-Compassion

Having compassion for yourself is exactly the same as having compassion for others. Compassion is when you are moved by the suffering of others and your heart responds to their pain, the word compassion actually means to suffer with. (Neff, 2022) When this occurs you experience warmth, caring and the choice to assist the struggling individual in a few ways. There are three major or the key elements of self-compassion.

1) Self-kindness vs. Self-Judgment: - self-compassion means a warm understanding of oneself when we are suffering, failing or feeling inadequate rather than ignoring one's pain or criticizing oneself. Self-compassionate people recognize that it is inevitable to

experience failures, imperfections and difficulties in life, so they tend to be gentle with themselves when confronted with painful experiences rather than getting angry when life falls short of set ideals or goals. People cannot always get what they exactly want. When this reality is denied or fought, it increases suffering in the form of stress, frustration and self-criticism. Greater emotional calm is experienced when this reality is accepted with compassion and tenderness.

- 2) Common Humanity vs. Isolation: - Frustration about not having things exactly as we want is often unreasonable, as if "I" was the only one suffering or making a mistake, with a sense of infestation that is widespread. The definition of human itself is deadly, fragile and incomplete. Therefore self-compassion involves the recognition that suffering and the personal deficiencies are part of the general human experience. This is not something that happens only to "I", it is something that we all experience.
- 3) Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification:- Self-compassion also requires a balance of negative emotions so that they are not suppressed or exaggerated. This balanced attitude stems from the process of associating personal experiences with those of others thereby taking greater perspective on our own situation. It also comes from observing negative thoughts and feelings openly and clearly so that they are carefully recognized. Mindfulness is a non-judgmental and receptive stage of mind that observes as it is without suppressing or denying thoughts and emotions. We cannot but at the same time we cannot feel compassion for it. At the same time mindfulness requires that we not be over identified with thoughts and feelings, so that we are caught up and swept away by negative emotions (Neff, 2022).

One of the robust and consistent discoveries in the research literature is that individuals with high levels of self-compassion are less likely to have anxiety and depression in comparison to those having lower levels of self-compassion.

Teenagers can have a great deal of trouble with themselves. They are also very confident and also care about what others think about themselves and compare themselves to others. Self-compassion helps teenagers deal more proactively with failures, mistakes, setbacks and other difficult times. Teenagers treat themselves with self-compassion when they are happy, get along well with others, have the confidence to try new things etc. Self-compassion helps protect teenagers from mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. Teenagers with good levels of self-compassion are less likely to hurt themselves, feel suicidal, and show signs of eating disorders or substance abuse.

Self-compassion involves;

- 1) Courage to notice and acknowledge your suffering.
- 2) Strength to stay present with your suffering and not turn away, deny or avoid.
- 3) Wisdom to know how to alleviate your suffering in a helpful way.
- 4) Commitment to act and to enhance your own well-being.

Self-compassion can be useful to reduce the symptoms of post-traumatic stress for those individuals who have suffered from sexual abuse or bully in their childhood.

### 1.2 Life Satisfaction

Life Satisfaction is a little more complicated than it looks. The term is sometimes used interchangeably with happiness, but it is two concepts. Life Satisfaction is an assessment of life as a whole, not just the current level of well-being. There are various definitions of life satisfaction:

- 1) An overall assessment of feelings attitudes about one’s life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. (Buetell, 2006)
- 2) Life satisfaction is the degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of his or her life as a whole. In other words, how much the person likes the life he or she leads. (Veenhoven, 1996).
- 3) A cognitive assessment of an underlying state thought to be consistent and influenced by social factors. (Ellison, 1989)

Although there are few differences between the definitions, the underlying idea is the same: life satisfaction refers to an individual’s overall feelings about his or her life. In other words life satisfaction is the global evaluation rather than

one that is grounded at any specific time point in time or in specific difference. Life satisfaction is not only more stable and long lived than happiness, it is also broader in scope. It is our general feeling about our life and how pleased we are with how it’s going. (Ackerman, 2021). The concept of life satisfaction is used in the philosophical and psychological explanation of happiness. “Satisfaction in life” is often used as a synonym of “happiness” and is often considered equal to or an integral part of happiness. However these different reports use two different meanings of satisfaction. In some places satisfaction refers to a meeting where expectation or criteria’s are recognized. In other accounts satisfaction refers to a feeling of being pleased with something. The research on life satisfaction has started to offer a crucial complement to one’s psychology conventional goals: the understanding of sadness or ill-being in the form of depression, anxiety and negative emotions. The addition of an effective orientation in the direction of the individual’s subjective experience of well-being offers an extra angle for researchers and clinicians alike. Based on Ed Diener there are four factors that were identified after the work done by Diener those are;

- 1) Psychological wealth is more than money; it is also your attitude, goals and engagement at work.
- 2) Happiness not only feels good, it is also beneficial to relationships, work and health.
- 3) It is also to set realistic expectations about happiness. No one is happy all the time.
- 4) Thinking is an important factor of happiness, boosting our cognition can boost our happiness, if done appropriately (Ackerman, 2021).

Studies on differences in life satisfaction between countries have shown that living conditions have a big impact on satisfaction with life. In other words, rich nations tend to have higher levels of life satisfaction than poor countries. Similarly on the same lines countries generally have higher life satisfaction than countries where unemployment rate is high. (Ackerman, 2021).

## 2. Literature Survey

This section includes a table of numerous researches done by various authors in the field of self-compassion and life satisfaction with different topics. The table includes the title of the article, author and the major findings found from the article.

**Table 2.1:** Showing numerous researches done in the field of self-compassion and life satisfaction.

Sr no.	Title	Author and Year	Major Findings
1	The relationship between stress and life satisfaction of Korean University students: mediational effects of positive affect and self-compassion.	Hyojin Cho, Sung-Kyung Yoo and Chan Jeong Park (2021)	It was found that there was a positive correlation between life satisfaction and self-compassion.
2	Self-compassion and life satisfaction: The mediating role of hope.	Ying Yang, Mengyuan Zhang and Yu Kou (2016)	It was found that there is a positive correlation between self-compassion, life satisfaction and hope.
3	Self-compassion and Life satisfaction in gay men	Lisa K Jennings and P.Philip Tan (2014)	It was found that there is a positive correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction.
4	Examining Life Satisfaction and Self-compassion Among Students Attending a Historically Black College and University in the US.	Kristine Fleming (2021)	It was found that self-compassion and life satisfaction have positive correlation.

5	Self-Compassion and Satisfaction with Life: A preliminary study on Indonesian students.	Deni Tri Anggraeni and Irwan Nuryana Kurniawan (2012)	It was found that there is a positive correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction
6	Forgiveness and Life Satisfaction across different age groups in adults	Kinga Kaleta and Justyna Mroz (2018)	It was found that life satisfaction and forgiveness have positive correlation between them.
7	Self-Compassion, Stress and Coping	Ashley Batts Allen and Mark R. Leary (2010)	It was found that there was a positive correlation between self-compassion, stress and coping.
8	Religiosity and Life Satisfaction	Anne Bergan and Jasmin Tahmeseb (2001)	It was found that religiosity and life satisfaction have a positive correlation between them.

**Objectives**

The objective of the study is to study the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction.

**Hypothesis**

Alternative Hypothesis: - There will be a correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction

**3. Methodology**

Methodology involves an elaborated explanation of the research process used to address the research questions including the research design, participants, questionnaires, data collection, and statistical analyses used.

**3.1 Sample**

In this research, the number of participants included 245 participants of the age group 18 to 28 years old that is young adults, out of which 45.71% were males and 54.28% were females. Participants were gathered through simple random sampling via Google forms. College students, early employers participated in the research, from India. The youngest sample observation was 18 years old and the oldest being 28 years old. The majority aged participants were 20 years of age. The mean age of the sample is 22.28 and standard deviation is 0.94.

**3.2 Research Design**

This research design is a correlational design, helping in identifying correlation between both the variables i.e. Self-Compassion and Life Satisfaction.

**3.3 Tools**

1) **Self-compassion:** To analyze self-compassion, Neff’s Self-Compassion Scale was used. The scale consists of 26 items. The scale is analyzed on the basis of 6 subscales: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, over-identified. Out of the 26 items item number 5, 12, 19, 23, 26 are self-kindness items, 1, 8, 11, 16, 21 are self-judgment items, 3, 7, 10, 15 are common humanity items, 4, 13, 18, 25 are isolation related item, 9, 14, 17, 22 are mindfulness related items and 2, 6, 20, 24 are over identified item. The scale is calculated on the scale of 1 to 5, 1 being “Almost never” and 5 “Almost Always”. The reliability of the scale is 0.93 and the validity is. There is no reverse scoring done in the scale.

- 2) **Life Satisfaction:** - To examine life satisfaction with Life Scale was assessed on the participant which was developed by Diener. The scale consisted of 5 items. The scale is calculated on the basis of 7 point Likert Scale, that is 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree. There is no reverse scoring used in the scale. The reliability of the scale is 0.74(Cronbach’s alpha).
- 3) **Demographic Questionnaire:** - The demographic questionnaire was developed by the researcher. It collected data on the respondents’ age, gender, education, hobbies, occupation and qualification

**3.4 Procedure**

After considering the required age group for the research (19-28) and figuring out the appropriate tools as per the variable, a Google form was created with all the required information and was circulated to people through emails and messages. The participants were briefed and assured about the confidentiality and no miss use of the collected data. After getting all the required samples, each participant was scored according to their response and according to the scoring key as mentioned in the two questionnaires. The respondents were made fully aware of the purpose of the research and were in no way coerced. The participants were also explicitly informed that they were in no way obligated to participate in the study by completing the survey and that they could change their mind at any point during the survey.

**3.5 Statistical Analysis**

Since the nature of the research is correlational, Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient and descriptive statistics will be used to find the relationship between Self-compassion and Life Satisfaction.

**4. Results**

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 4.1:** Descriptive statistics for self-compassion and life satisfaction

Variables	Mean	SD	Median	Mode
Self-Compassion	81.21	9.63	80	78
Life Satisfaction	15.53	6.22	15	15

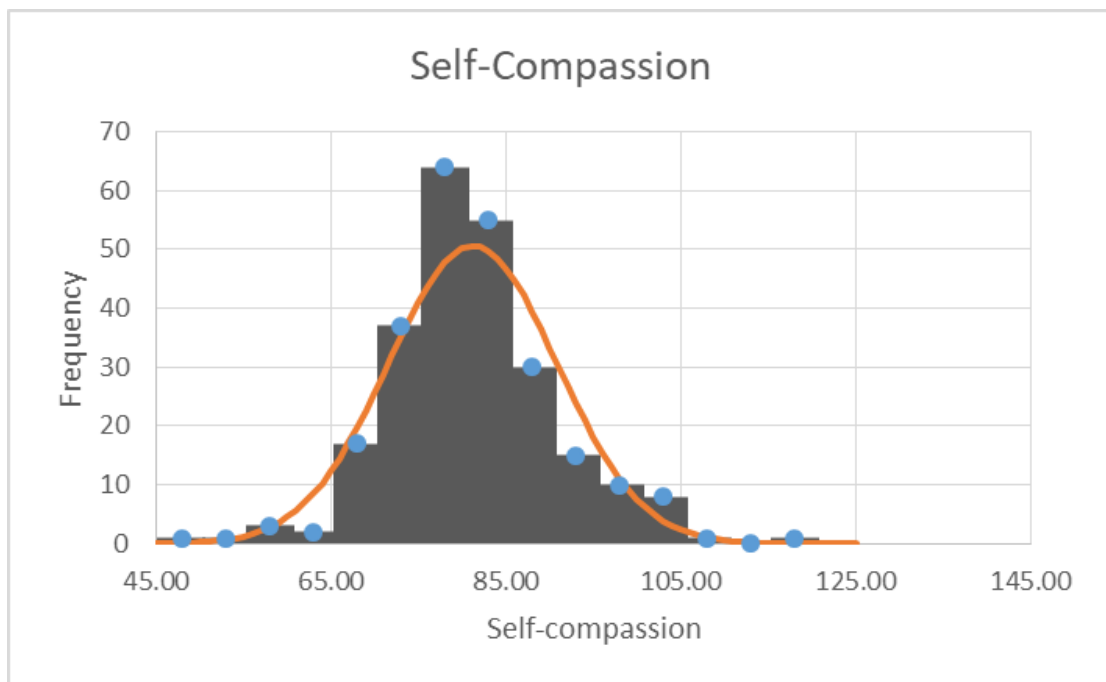


Figure 4.1: Graph representing self-compassion

From the above observations from the graph 4.1, it can be said that the sample is of normal distribution since the measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode) for all the three variables are quite similar to one another. For

Self-compassion, mean =81.21, median =80, mode= 78, standard deviation= 9.63 and the total number of results analyzed were N= 245.

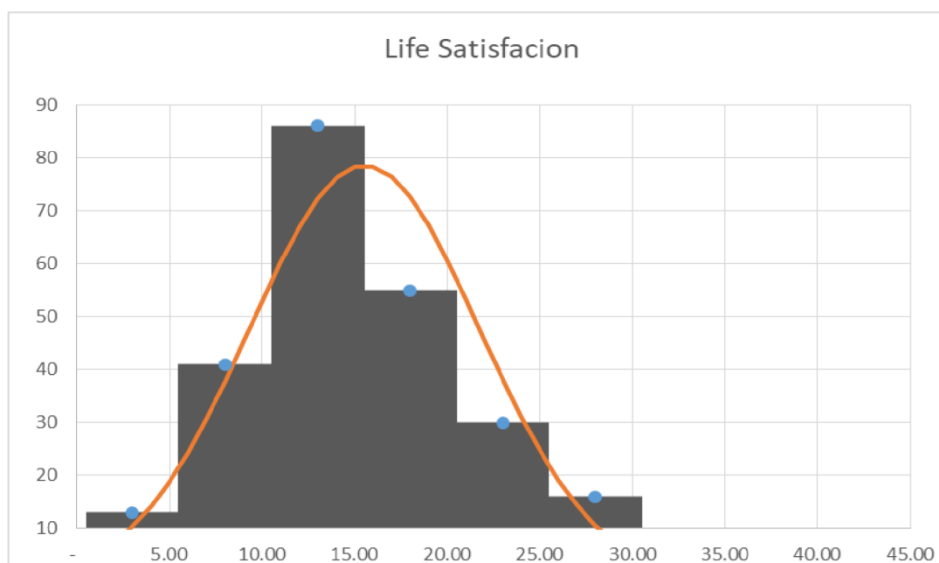


Figure 4.2: Graph representing life satisfaction

From the above observations from the graph 4.2, it can be said that the sample is of normal distribution since the measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode) for both the variables are quite similar to one another. For Life Satisfaction, mean=15.53, median=15, mode= 15, standard deviation=6.22 and the total number of results analyzed were N=245.

After analyzing the data Pearson product moment correlation method was applied to study the correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction among young adults by using SPSS .18. Table 4.2 shows the obtained correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction was  $r= 0.244$ ,  $p<.01$ , Indication that  $H_0$  there will be no correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction among young adults is rejected. Hence an alternative hypothesis stating that there will be positive correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction among young adults is **accepted**.

Table 1: Shows the correlation between Self-compassion and life satisfaction among young adults (N=245)

Variables	Life Satisfaction	Self-compassion
Life Satisfaction	1	
Self-compassion	0.244**	1

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level of significance

## 5. Discussion

This research is a correlational study which intends to measure the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction among young adults. Further in this research, previous research as literature review is mentioned to provide evidence for each variable with various topics. This research study based on 245 participants aged between 19 to 28 years of age act as valid evidence to prove the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction. The tables validate this statement. Using correlation coefficient for quantitative analysis, helps in signifying the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction and hence accepting the alternative hypothesis, which states that there will be a positive relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction. The Null hypothesis was rejected. The findings from the analysis state that self-compassion and life satisfaction are positively correlated which indicates that if self-compassion is high then there will be high levels of life satisfaction or if self-compassion is low then there will be low levels of life satisfaction. The sample size was 245 between the age group of 19 to 28 years (young adults). The mean age of sample is  $M= 22.28$  out of which 54.28% are females and 45.71% are males. It was found that the participants who scored high on Self-Compassion Scale indicating higher level of self-compassion scored high on Satisfaction with Life Scale indicating high levels of life satisfaction. From the study of Jennings and Tan in 2014, the research proves that self-compassion and life satisfaction as the population used in the research is found to have an increased rate of anxiety and depression due to internalizing social oppression which leads to increased levels of self-compassion and life satisfaction. Another study by Anggraeni and Kurniawan in 2012 also found a positive correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction in the sample chosen by the researchers. The reason behind the result was the negative effect of stress, psychological problems and disorders in college life. According to the researchers, people who are able to cope with the stress and the negative effects and emotions will have good self-compassion and eventually be satisfied in life. Another recent study to support the hypothesis was done by Fleming in 2021 which also proves the positive correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction. The reason behind the results was the higher GPA in college among the population and less levels of stress and negative effects. The other reason for the result is related to high levels of self-kindness which leads to high levels of life satisfaction. We live in a world where there are people going through so many difficult times and suffering from overwhelming situations. One major concern is that young adults are facing such drastic changes in life and sometimes the plan does not go according to them. In these situations people mostly care about others and put other people first and care for them first without knowing the danger or the threat to themselves, which makes us wonder how satisfied they will be in their lives in other phases or situations in future or how satisfied they are now in the present time. This research intends that one would know that self-compassion is as important as compassion for others and it will play a major role in life satisfaction. This research will be done for the betterment of the future generation with respect to a better self in their adulthood. As the variables to be used in

this research are from the positive psychology perspective which is a fairly new field compared to the other fields. Thus, exploring them would give us a better idea and stand point. This research needs to be done because this part of the field has to be explored more so that we will be finding different views on it and how can an individual help themselves or the others dealing with such crises and also because there is a lack of research papers about this particular topic.

## 6. Conclusion

The main aim behind the research was to find the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction. Self-compassion means to care for oneself and life satisfaction means how satisfied you are in your life. Self-compassion plays a major role in one's life. From the result it is evident that self-compassion and life satisfaction have a positive correlation between them. The sample of the study was collected via Google forms the sample size being  $N= 245$ . The data analysis was done through Pearson's Correlation on SPSS. The alternative hypothesis was accepted that there will be a positive correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction and the Null hypothesis being rejected. The reason behind the finding might be the stress level at the time when the participants were filling the form was less. The other reason could be the socio-economic factor as some of the participants were emerging employees, the socio-economic status could be good and hence the life satisfaction.

## 7. Future Scope

Future research can be conducted to study gender and age differences. Cross culture studies can also be conducted in future by collecting samples from Individualistic and Collectivistic culture.

As per the limitations are concerned, no research is perfect and there is always scope of improvement. This research acknowledges limitations and opens up for further criticism.

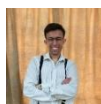
Some points to note:

- 1) The research was conducted during the time of the covid-19 pandemic 2021-2022. The researcher did not control the factors like socio-economic background, personality traits, and other extraneous variables.
- 2) The research did not control the factors like socio-economic background, personality traits, and other extraneous variables.
- 3) Because of the pandemic, the participant's responses could have been biased and it might not represent the actual position or scenario of the individual.
- 4) The data collection process was performed via Google forms, as a result there was lack of physical interaction and one to one communication and because of that, there could also be a good possibility of lack of honest responses, and lack of observation of participants.

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## Author Profile



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