

SELF-COMPASSION AND STRESS AMONG YOUTH DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

The aim of the study was to find out the relationship between self-compassion and stress during Covid-19 Pandemic on Indian youth population. The sample collected was snowball in nature and consisted of total 100 individuals (57% female and 43% male), aged between 18-30. For the measurement of Self-compassion and stress the tools used were Self-compassion Questionnaire (Patil K, 2020) and the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein, 1983), respectively. It was hypothesized that there will be a negative correlation between Self-compassion and Stress. The value of mean and standard deviation for Self-compassion was 141.39 and 18.85 respectively. The value of mean and standard deviation for Stress was 19.92 and 6.58 respectively. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was found out to be $r = -.339 > 0.01$ level, which indicates that there was a negative correlation between Self-compassion and Stress.

Keywords: *Self-compassion, Stress, Covid-19.*

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Introduction:

We live in the era of social media, where people post their updates right from getting up from their beds to going back to it. People hardly meet each other due to their work loads and different shifts they meet on weekends for the sake of keeping their lives beautiful and happening on social media platforms. With social media comes the burden of unrealistic goals, beauty standards, and lifestyles. The sense of worthlessness is creeping among people at a slow pace. People are setting unrealistic goals as a result they are failing miserably at it which in turn is affecting their mental health. It's important now more than ever to show mercy to ourselves to show compassion and care towards ourselves. Social media has been a boon and a bane. It has given a lot to us but at the expense of our mental health and in turn our physical health. Circadian rhythms have changed drastically after the emergence of smartphones. People are suffering from Insomnia, eating disorders. People are craving food just by looking at the pictures from social media and the next thing they can do is just order it sitting at home or at the office from any application that deals with instant food deliveries. There are quotes which suggest anything and people follow and share them to a wide audience blindly. The amount of negativity it carries affects the way a person thinks about themselves. People are lacking Self-love and Self-compassion because of all the unrealistic standards set by social media and its influencers. It's important to give time to ourselves and focus on loving and living for ourselves.

Self-compassion is extending compassion to one's self in instances of perceived inadequacy, failure, or general suffering.

Kristin Neff (2003) has defined self-compassion as being composed of three main elements – self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.

- Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment: Self-compassion entails being warm towards oneself when encountering pain and personal shortcomings, rather than ignoring them or hurting oneself with self-criticism.
- Common humanity vs. Isolation: Self-compassion also involves recognizing that suffering and personal failure is part of the shared human experience rather than isolating.
- Mindfulness vs. Over-identification: Self-compassion requires taking a balanced approach to one's negative emotions so that feelings are neither suppressed nor exaggerated. Negative thoughts and emotions are observed with openness, so that they are held in mindful awareness. Mindfulness is a non-judgmental, receptive mind state in which individuals observe their thoughts and feelings as they are, without trying to suppress or deny them. Conversely, mindfulness requires that one not be "over-identified" with mental or emotional phenomena, so that one suffers aversive reactions. This latter type of response involves narrowly focusing and ruminating on one's negative emotions.

Psychological stress is defined as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being” (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Any change that creates physical, emotional, or psychological discomfort is referred to as stress. Your body's reaction to anything that requires attention or action is stress. To some extent, everyone is stressed. However, how you handle stress has a significant impact on your overall health. Changing your situation is sometimes the greatest approach to manage your stress. At other times, the greatest option is to alter your approach to the problem. There are numerous factors that can induce stress in one's life. Work, finances, relationships, children, and day-to-day hassles are all common sources of stress. The fight-or-flight response, which is triggered by stress, is the body's reaction to a perceived threat or danger. Certain hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, are released during this reaction. This increases heart rate, slows digestion, shunts blood flow to key muscle groups, and alters other autonomic nerve activities, providing a burst of energy and vigour to the body. The relaxation reaction is aimed to return systems to normal operation once the perceived threat has passed. However, in the event of chronic stress, the relaxation response isn't activated frequently enough, and being in a near-constant state of fight-or-flight might harm the body. Stress can also lead to a number of undesirable behaviours that are harmful to your health. Many people, for example, react with stress by overeating or smoking. These bad behaviours harm the body and lead to more serious problems in the long run.

Literature review:

There are many researches which show there is negative relationship between Self-compassion and Stress, and positive relationship between Self-compassion and Stress management.

1. Kristin D. Neff and Pittman Mcgehee (2009) focused at self-compassion in teenagers and included a comparison group of young adults. The findings showed that self-compassion was highly linked to happiness in both adolescents and adults.
2. Zumra Ozyesdl and Muge Akbag (2013) wanted to see if self-compassion can predict depression, anxiety, and stress in a Turkish sample. Self-compassion scores were found to be adversely connected with depression, anxiety, and stress in correlation analysis.
3. Hester R. Trompetter, Elian de Kleine and Ernst T. Bohlmeijer (2016) observed that the negative link between

positive mental health and psychopathology was largely mediated by self-compassion.

4. Amy Finlay-Jones, Robert Kane and Clare Rees (2016) presented a study with preliminary evidence for the effectiveness and acceptance of online self-compassion training as a positive, integrative, and meaningful strategy for trainee psychologists to reduce distress and promote self-compassion and pleasure.
5. Kristin J Homan and Fuschia M Sirois (2017) found that Self-compassion had an indirect influence on physical health, showing that taking a kind, accepting and thoughtful position toward one's defects and mistakes may have benefits for lowering stress and fostering health behaviours.
6. Michelle E. Neely, Diane L. Schallert, Sarojanni S. Mohammed, Rochelle M. Roberts and Yu-Jung Chen (2009) The goal and emotion regulation constructs were combined in this investigation to better understand college students' well-being, drawing on prior research that found the ability to disengage from goal pursuit and shift energy toward alternate goals as a significant contributor to well-being.
7. Amanda, Jennifer, Roswiyani1, Roswiyani2, Satyadi and Heryanti (2021) looked into the relationship between self-compassion and stress in emerging adults who are going through an early adult crisis. The outcome reveals a number of findings. First, boosting self-compassion in emerging adults can lower stress. Second, the positive elements of self-compassion, which include self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, have the ability to relieve stress. Third, the negative aspects of self-compassion, such as self-judgment, isolation, and overidentification, can contribute to increased stress.
8. Daichi Sugawara, Yuta Chishima and Masashi Mizuno (2016) studied the benefits of self-compassion on stress and mental health (well-being, depression). The study looks into the idea that practising self-compassion can help people feel less depressed and happier.
9. Kathryn Birnie, Michael Speca and Linda E. Carlson (2010) looked at the effects of MBSR (Mindfulness-based stress reduction) on self-compassion and empathy, as well as mindfulness, stress symptoms, mood disturbance, and spirituality. Self-compassion and components of empathy were found to have high links to psychological health.
10. Ashley Batts Allen and Mark R. Leary (2010) found that Self-compassionate people rely more on positive cognitive restructuring and less on avoidance and escape, but they do not appear to differ in the degree to which they manage through problem-solving or diversion from less self-compassionate persons.

Method:

Hypothesis:

There will be a negative correlation between Self-compassion and Stress.

Sample:

100 Individuals were selected by Incidental and Snowball sampling method. Among the sample 57% were female and 43% were male, aged between 18-30.

Tool:

Self-compassion Questionnaire (Patil K, 2020) was used for measuring Self-compassion among the individuals. It consisted of 40 items, measuring six domains Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment, Common humanity vs. Isolation and Mindfulness vs. Over-identification. The Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein, 1983) was used for the measurement of Stress.

Procedure:

The data was collected through online survey. Standard Instructions were clearly provided with the forms. Personal Data such as age and gender were asked. Individuals name in the form was optional so that the individual feels comfortable about giving the honest responses.

Result:

Dimension	Mean	S.D.	Correlation
Self-Compassion	141.39	18.81	-.399**
Stress	19.92	6.58	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion:

This study aimed to find out the relationship between self-compassion and stress during Covid-19 Pandemic on Indian youth population. The results showed that there was a negative correlation between self-compassion and stress. The correlation coefficient was found out to be $-.399^{**}$. The mean and S.D. of Self-compassion was reported as 141.39 and 18.81 respectively. The mean and S.D. of Stress was reported as 19.92 and 6.58 respectively. The burden of unattainable aspirations, beauty standards, and lifestyles comes with social media. People are gradually developing a sense of worthlessness. They create unreasonable goals, and as a result, they fail terribly, which has a negative impact on their mental health. It's more crucial than ever to have mercy on ourselves and to treat ourselves with kindness and care. Social media has proven to be both a blessing and a curse. It has provided us with much, but at the sacrifice of our mental and physical health. Because of the unattainable standards set by social media and its influencers, people lack self-love and self-compassion. It's critical that we devote time to ourselves and concentrate on loving and living for ourselves. For months, COVID-19 has been a worldwide phenomenon. It has wreaked havoc on people's lives all around the world due to its high spread pace. Isolation, taking online classes, frequent network outages, social and family pressure have all contributed to individuals' feelings of stress. As expected, the pandemic has had an impact on people's mental health around the world.

Conclusion:

The obtained result indicates that the given hypothesis has been proved. As per the test results, individuals high on self-compassion were found to be low on Perceived Stress Scale and on the contrary, individuals low on self-compassion were found to be high on Perceived Stress Scale. The researches in review of literature also support the result.

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Cite This Article:

** Ms. Kranti Patil, **Dr. Arvind Kakulte & ***Ms. Madhura Inamdar (2022). Self-Compassion and Stress among Youth during Covid-19 Pandemic, Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Education Research Journal, XI (III) May – June, 19-23.*