

Role of Self-Compassion on Rumination and Procrastination

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ABSTRACT

It is understood that mental health is a growing concern, especially among young adults considering it is a period of significant transitions and identity exploration. Procrastination may be more common among young adults because of the challenges they face in their jobs or studies. Procrastination can lead to rumination if goals are not met. This can result in low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. This study investigates the interplay between rumination, procrastination, and self-compassion among young adults. 211 participants responded to the questionnaires on DASS21, Rumination Responsive Scale, General Procrastination Scale, and Self-compassion Scale. 58 participants were screened out using the DASS21, this was done to screen out the clinical population of depression, anxiety, and stress. The results of the study using 153 participants demonstrate a significant positive correlation between rumination and procrastination, a significant negative correlation between self-compassion and rumination, and self-compassion and procrastination. Furthermore, self-compassion was seen to impact rumination and procrastination significantly. These results contribute to the growing body of knowledge about the connections between rumination, procrastination, and self-compassion among young adults.

Keywords: *Rumination, Procrastination, Self-compassion*

Procrastination is defined as the lack or absence of self-regulated performance and the behavioural tendency to postpone what is necessary to reach a goal (Ellis et al., 1977; Knaus et al., 2000). People occasionally tend to put off or postpone finishing jobs because of internal or external distractions or because they are persistent in a particular area of the task. Procrastination is more likely when there are more decision points when cognitive restructuring is required, and when there is more stress during the choosing point. Procrastinators may have an increased risk of anxiety and depression, as well as an increased risk of suicide (Ferrari et al., 1991; Flett et al., 2016; Klibert et al., 2016). Procrastinating habits can also result in decreased self-efficacy and self-esteem (Ferrari et al., 1991; Ferrari et al., 2014).

Rumination is repetitive, prolonged, and recurrent negative thinking about one's self, feelings, personal concerns, and upsetting experiences (Watkins et al., 2008). Rumination is the term used to characterize a phenomenon in which people, rather than taking action to

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deal with or resolve their problems, repeatedly and passively focus on the reasons for and possible negative consequences of unfavourable life events. Researchers have hypothesized that rumination causes avoidance coping strategies such as procrastination because of its link to negative emotion (Constantin et al., 2018). According to the Response Styles Theory, rumination is dysfunctional and leads to depression by strengthening thoughts that are consistent with a depressed mood, hindering the ability to solve problems, and interfering with instrumental action. Another study showed that high levels of procrastination were linked to high levels of impulsivity and high frequencies of intrusive thoughts; the relationship between procrastination and daydreaming was mediated by lack of perseverance (Rebetez et. al., 2017).

A positive self-attitude that includes self-kindness, realizing that everyone makes mistakes and is inadequate, and being attentive to one's own pain is known as self-compassion (Neff et al., 2003). Self-compassion is the term used to describe a sound feeling of self-acceptance. It also entails being compassionate and self-sufficient with perceived difficulties and defeats, accepting and embracing the unpleasant parts of self. Researchers note that their clients worry that if they grow more self-compassionate, they might also become more self-pitying or self-centered, based on their experiences working with patients (Gilbert et al., 2004). A study suggested that lower levels of self-compassion may explain some of the stress experienced by procrastinators and interventions that promote self-compassion could therefore be beneficial for individuals (Sirois 2013).

Previous studies have mostly focused on understanding the impact of rumination, procrastination, or self-compassion on mostly student population. Though studies are focusing on employees or comparing the two variables they are minimal. Along with that, there aren't many studies understanding the impact of self-compassion on rumination and procrastination. Most studies have studied the general population with these variables, but studies screening out individuals with depression, anxiety, and stress were difficult to find. It is important to screen this group of individuals as the levels of rumination, procrastination, and low self-compassion are highly influenced by the symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Procrastination, rumination, and self-compassion are three psychological constructs that significantly influence the mental well-being and functioning of young adults. Young adulthood is a critical period marked by significant life transitions, academic pressures, and identity exploration, making individuals vulnerable to mental health issues. Investigating the role of self-compassion in mitigating the negative impact of procrastination and rumination on academic and occupational performance can inform interventions aimed at improving productivity and success among young adults. By fostering a compassionate attitude towards oneself, individuals may be better equipped to recognize and address maladaptive thought patterns, ultimately leading to improved psychological well-being. By examining the relationship between procrastination, rumination, and self-compassion, this study can inform the development of more comprehensive and holistic interventions that address multiple facets of psychological functioning and promote mental health awareness among young adults.

METHOD

Aim:

The study aims to understand the relationship of rumination, procrastination, and self-compassion and the impact of self-compassion on rumination and procrastination among young adults.

Objectives:

- To examine whether there is a significant relationship between rumination and procrastination.
- To investigate the relationship between self-compassion and rumination.
- To study the correlation between self-compassion and procrastination.
- To study the impact of self-compassion on rumination among young adults.
- To study the impact of self-compassion on procrastination among young adults.
- To study if there is a significant difference between students and employees on the level of impact of rumination and procrastination

Hypotheses:

- H1: There might be a significant relationship between Rumination and Procrastination among Young Adults
- H2: There might be a significant relationship between Rumination and Self-compassion among Young Adults
- H3: There might be a significant relationship between Self-compassion and Procrastination among Young Adults
- H4: There might be a significant impact of Self-compassion on Rumination.
- H5: There might be a significant impact of Self-compassion on Procrastination
- H6: There might be a significant difference between Students and Employees on the levels of Rumination.
- H7: There might be a significant difference between Students and Employees on the levels of Procrastination.

Sample:

Using a non-probability Convenient sampling strategy, (N= 211) individuals were identified across Karnataka, encompassing both males (N = 112) and females (N = 99). Participants had to be Indian citizens who were currently studying or working between the ages of 18-25. The survey was done in the months of December 2023 to February 2024 via an online (Google Forms) self-report measure after obtaining informed permission from the participants. Any participant diagnosed with a past or present psychiatric illness. 58 participants who fell under the subsets of depression, anxiety, and stress subscales were screened out using the DASS21.

Flett et al in 2016, demonstrated the importance of cognitive variables in the explanation of depression and procrastination. A high degree of procrastination and depression was correlated with elevated levels on measures tapping cognitive risk factors (ruminative brooding and automatic thoughts related to procrastination) or a low level of protective, self-relevant cognitive factors associated with resilience. These findings suggest that procrastinators may be more susceptible to depression as a result of these cognitive risk and resilience characteristics coexisting. To avoid the clinical population of individuals with depression, anxiety, and stress the DASS21 screening tool was used. 153 participants' data was then entered into Microsoft Excel and exported to JAMOVI for statistical analysis.

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Tools:

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995): Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 is a three-factor model measuring depression, anxiety, and stress of 21 self-report questions. These scales show good to moderate internal consistency (alpha coefficient is 0.90) and Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha is 0.74).

Ruminative Responses Scale (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1999): Ruminative Responses Scale is a three-factor model measuring Reflection, Brooding, and Depression-related of 22 self-report questions. These scales show good to moderate internal consistency (alpha coefficient is 0.90) and Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha is 0.67).

General Procrastination Scale (Lodha et al., 2016): The General Procrastination Scale is a single-factor model measuring Procrastination of 23 self-report questions. These scales show good to moderate internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha is 0.714).

Self-Compassion Scale - Short Form (SCS-SF) (Raes et al., 2011): The Self-Compassion Scale is a two-factor model measuring Self-disparagement and Self-care of 12 self-report questions. These scales show good to moderate internal consistency (alpha coefficient is ≥ 0.86) and Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha is 0.54 - 0.75).

Design:

This study employed a quantitative study design. The independent variable was self-compassion and the dependent variables were rumination and procrastination. The descriptive and inferential statistics were computed using the JAMOVI software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the Interplay of Procrastination, Rumination, and Self-compassion Among Young Adults. The study illustrates the relationship and impact of self-compassion on rumination and procrastination.

Table 1: Showing Descriptive statistics for Procrastination, Rumination, and Self-Compassion

	Rumination	Procrastination	Self-compassion
Mean	46.7	64.1	36.4
Std. Deviation	9.57	10.5	7.36

Descriptive statistics for three variables were computed based on a sample size of $N = 153$ participants. The variables included Rumination ($M = 46.7$, $SD = 9.57$), Procrastination ($M = 64.1$, $SD = 10.5$), and Self-Compassion ($M = 36.4$, $SD = 7.36$).

Table 2: Showing Coefficients for Pearson Product Moment-Correlation between Rumination, Procrastination, and Self Compassion

	Rumination	Procrastination	Self-Compassion
Rumination	1	0.248**	-0.304***
Procrastination		1	-0.192*
Self-Compassion			1

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

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Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients between Rumination, Procrastination, and Self-Compassion. The results indicated that Rumination was positively and significantly correlated to Procrastination ($r = 0.248$). It was indicated that Rumination was negatively and significantly correlated with Self-Compassion ($r = -0.304$, $p < 0.001$). Further, it indicated that Procrastination was negatively and significantly correlated with Self-Compassion ($r = -0.192$, $p < 0.05$).

The finding is in line with Flett et al (2016), Brooding over negative thoughts can have a high impact on how an individual can function in terms of sticking to their schedule or even their mental health. According to our findings, people who ruminate more also procrastinate more frequently. Rumination could be a form of fixation from completing a task. Often individuals tend to fixate on the possible negative outcomes or their inability to perform certain tasks. Procrastination could be a form of maladaptive coping mechanism where when faced with distressing thoughts, individuals might delay tasks to avoid confronting those negative emotions directly.

Procrastination and Rumination could be observed from the Reciprocal Effect. People who ruminate frequently have recurring unpleasant thoughts about the past or worries about the future. Procrastination can be a coping strategy used to postpone addressing the source of distress. People who put off doing chores could feel guilty, ashamed, or critical of themselves for not finishing them on time. These unpleasant feelings might cause people to ruminate on their perceived flaws or failings, which can make them put off tasks even longer in an attempt to block out the upsetting thoughts.

Table 3: Showing Linear Regression to assess the impact of Self-compassion on Rumination

Model	Predictor Variable	B	SE	R ²
1	Self-compassion	-0.304	5.04	0.332

Table 3 displays the results of a linear regression analysis examining the dependent variable Rumination and the predictor variable Self-compassion. In the regression model, the reports of the standardized beta coefficients (β), standard errors (SE), t-values, and R² values were identified. Self-compassion was entered as the only predictor variable. The results showed a significant negative association between Self-compassion and Rumination ($\beta = -0.304$, $SE = 5.04$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 33.2% of the variance in Self-compassion. Therefore, with one unit of increase in Self-compassion, levels of Rumination decrease by 0.304.

According to Yamasaki et al in 2024, self-compassion plays a moderating role in the relationship between rumination and psychological health, serving as aggravating/protective actors for psychological health. Higher levels of self-compassion among ruminating adults may also be related to emotional dysregulation and a kinder and more compassionate outlook toward oneself. Self-compassionate people acknowledge their mistakes without harsh self-criticism, this lessens the tendency to ruminate excessively. Often, individuals isolate themselves brooding and feeling guilt or less efficient making them feel uniquely burdened.

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Table 4: Showing Linear Regression to assess the impact of Self-compassion on Procrastination

Model	Predictor Variable	B	SE	R2
1	Self-compassion	-0.192	5.83	0.256

Table 4 displays the results of a linear regression analysis examining the dependent variable Procrastination, and the predictor variable Self-compassion. In the regression model, the reports of the standardized beta coefficients (β), standard errors (SE), t-values, and R2 values were identified. Self-compassion was entered as the only predictor variable. The results showed a significant negative association between Self-compassion and Procrastination ($\beta = -0.192$, SE = 5.83, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 25.6% of the variance in Self-compassion. Therefore, with one unit of increase in Self-compassion, levels of Procrastination decrease by 0.192.

According to Williams et al in 2008 individuals with high self-compassion reported dramatically less motivation anxiety and procrastination tendency than those with low or moderate self-compassion. Individuals with increased levels of self-criticism tend to be harsher on their ability to complete or perform tasks and often delay completing tasks. They tend to feel demotivated and could lose confidence in their abilities because of the lack of a more compassionate and positive view of themselves. Increased emotional distress, negative emotions, and distressing experiences could often be the means of avoiding completion of tasks. Self-compassionate individuals are less likely to procrastinate because they approach tasks with a balanced perspective. They recognize their imperfections without self-blame, which reduces avoidance behaviour.

Table 5: Showing t-test analysis of the difference in Rumination and Procrastination between students and employees

Variables	Logistic Parameters	N	M	SD	t
Rumination	Students	92	48.1	9.42	2.267
	Employees	62	44.6	9.49	
Procrastination	Students	92	65.8	9.90	2.526
	Employees	61	61.5	10.91	

Table 5 displays the results of the t-test analysis is conducted to identify the differences in the students and employees in the variables rumination and procrastination. There were significant differences in the scores for students (M = 48.1, SD = 9.42) and employees (M = 44.6, SD = 9.49) for the rumination. $t(151) = 2.267$, $p = 0.025$. There were significant differences in the scores of students (M = 65.8, SD = 9.90) and employees (M = 61.5, SD = 10.91) for procrastination. $t(151) = 2.526$, $p = 0.013$.

According to et al Einabad in 2017, students' anxiety is linked to both their academic success and their ability to fit in with their friends. These aspects can cause self-judgment and overidentification, which can have detrimental effects like procrastination. Our study showed that the student participants have higher levels of Procrastination and Rumination compared to the working participants. Students face transitions like moving away from home, adjusting to new routines, and exploring career paths. These changes can trigger rumination. However, employees have stability in their routines and roles, have adapted to their work environment, and have a clearer sense of purpose. Academic environments

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emphasize performance, grades, and competition. Fear of failure and the desire to excel can lead to rumination and procrastination. While work performance matters, it's often less intense than academic pressure and focus on long-term goals rather than immediate outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study offers insights into the association between rumination, procrastination, and self-compassion, highlighting the significant role of self-compassion as a predictor of rumination and procrastination. A significant correlation was found between rumination, procrastination, and self-compassion. A significant negative relationship was found where if self-compassion decreases the other two variables which are rumination and procrastination would increase. Significant differences were found between students and employees on the variables rumination and procrastination, the mean value of rumination and procrastination among the student population was higher than that of the working population. However, there was no significant difference in the gender factor.

Implications

These findings have important implications for developing interventions to alleviate self-compassion and reduce or help navigate ruminating procrastinating featuring in individuals. It emphasizes the importance of conducting further research to fully comprehend the intricate nature of rumination, procrastination, and its relationship with self-compassion, and identify in depth the factors influencing the negative correlation of self-compassion with rumination and procrastination. Interventions may include cognitive-behavioural techniques, mindfulness-based practices, and self-compassion training to enhance adaptive coping strategies and improve psychological well-being. By fostering self-compassion as a protective factor against maladaptive coping strategies, interventions can help individuals manage stress, anxiety, and depression more effectively. Such interventions should be tailored in a way to promote academic and occupational success among young adults. Policies focused on education, workplace well-being, and community-based interventions can integrate evidence-based practices to address procrastination, rumination, and self-compassion. Educators, counsellors, and mental health professionals can incorporate strategies to promote self-compassion and address procrastination and rumination in their interventions, support services and support the psychological well-being of young adults.

Limitation of study

There were certain limitations identified in this study. The limitation is that the study couldn't reach a higher sample size due to the shortage of time. Screening of the participants from the DASS21 further reduced the overall sample size. The sample was restricted to people who were from Karnataka who were well-known in the English language. Studying a larger population with a wider demography will bring a deeper understanding on the relationship and impact on rumination, procrastination and self-compassion. The study is confined to young adults between the ages 18-25 only.

Recommendations:

Studies can be conducted on different age groups such as school-age or late adulthood. It can further be studied in depth by adapting to longitudinal study. The results suggest that interventions aimed at improving self-compassionate behaviour should focus on addressing methods to reduce ruminative and procrastinatory behaviour. Effective interventions or guidelines can be planned to reduce procrastination and rumination behaviour in developmental age groups.

Ethical considerations:

Informed consent was taken from the participants as the first step, participants were provided with the clear instructions for the tests. Confidentiality was maintained, data collected is strictly in a protected document and is used only for research purposes. The participants were informed about the actual purpose of the study before the assessments were conducted, each participant was debriefed about the experiment and its actual purpose after the completion of the experiment.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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