

Self-Compassion, Self-Criticism and Hope among Emerging Adults

Harshitha.S^{1*}, Ms. R.Sasi²

ABSTRACT

In this competent world, emerging adults are faced by various pressures such as academic, family and societal interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. These pressures may make an individual feel inadequate and may self-criticise during times of hardships. Self-compassion may help these individuals to cope with difficult circumstances which may also help them have a high hope about the future. This current study investigated to understand the relationship between self-compassion, self-criticism and hope among emerging adults. The study also examined if there were any gender differences in self-compassion, self-criticism and hope. The sample consisted of 300 emerging adults (150 male and 150 female) of the age range 18 to 25 years. The study was ex post-facto in nature and convenient sampling technique was used. Data was collected by administration of the questionnaire: Self-compassion scale (Kristin Neff, 2003), The Forms Of Self-Criticizing/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale (Gilbert et.al, 2004) and Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (Snyder et.al, 1991). Pearson's Correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between the variables and independent samples 't' test was used to examine gender differences in self-compassion, self-criticism and hope. The results indicated that there is a significant negative relationship between self-compassion and self-criticism. There is a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and hope. There is a significant negative relationship between self-criticism and hope. There is also a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and reassure self. There is a significant negative relationship between self-criticism and reassure self. There is also a significant positive relationship between reassure self and hope. The results showed no significant difference in self-compassion and reassure self with regard to gender. There was a significant difference in self-criticism and hope with respect to gender.

Keywords: *Self-compassion, Self-criticism, Hope, Emerging adults.*

Emerging adults is the marked period of young people who attempts to be more independent and explore their work, personal life and social life than others age groups. It is believed that the young people in their twenties are the ones who struggle with the identity exploration,

¹ Psychologist, Elixir Learning Academy, Velachery, Chennai, India.

² Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women, Teynampet, Chennai, India.

*[Responding Author](#)

Received: March 15, 2019; Revision Received: April 2, 2019; Accepted: April 20, 2019

Self-Compassion, Self-Criticism and Hope among Emerging Adults

instability, self-focus, and feeling in-between (Henin & Robin, 2010). On one hand though they have the freedom and choice to explore, they may experience it challenging to take important life-decisions be it in relationships, career or self-identity. The transition to new educational settings, new social circles or workplace environments and the change in one's beliefs or values during this period may bring about feeling inadequate or hatred, blaming oneself for failures or mistakes in life. Thus, they are likely to indulge in self-criticism when things go wrong which may lead to low self-compassion. Being self-compassionate is owning a wise and understanding voice of oneself as a mentor or as a kind friend motivating and helping to see things in a balanced way and ensures that no one is perfect and to be kind, understanding, and accountable to oneself. With regard to self-criticism, self-compassion is believed to be more adaptive and coping response to perceived failure (Gilbert et al., 2004). Self-compassion is considered to be an adaptive emotional regulation (ER) strategy. It aids to consider and change one's negative emotion to a positive self-referential affect by distancing one's suffering (Berking & Whitley, 2014). Thus, self-compassion plays a significant role to deal with uncertainties and failures or hardships in life where the young adults are more likely to engage in self-critic thoughts. When emerging adults exert self-criticism, their level of hope may influence and may lead to being unproductive or can result in derailment from their goals in life. Individuals with high level of hope tend to reach their goals even during the time of setbacks/ failures and consider mistakes as a learning experience. They also view failures are an opportunity to learn and thus their self-esteem is boosted up which makes them to complete their task. On the other hand, individuals with low hope tend to view failures in a negative way and tend to have lower self-esteem. Thus, hope is not an emotion or a character trait, but it's more of a process whereby individuals can enhance their level of hope leading to a healthier psychological well-being. Thus, it is evident that hope plays an important role in young adults who are the future contributors be it in a family, workplace or for the society. This intrigued the researcher to understand the role of self-compassion and self-criticism which can influence their hope. Thus, the present study attempts to find out whether there is relationship between self-compassion, self-criticism and hope among emerging adults. The study will contribute in strengthening the emerging adults holistic well-being by being self-compassionate and hopeful thereby achieve their goals. Therefore, training programs can be provided to enhance their self-compassion and to increase knowledge and understanding on how to deal with self-critic thoughts.

Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between self-compassion, self-criticism and hope among emerging adults.
2. To examine if there were gender difference in self-compassion, self-criticism and hope among emerging adults.

Research Design

The Research design was Ex post facto research.

Statistical Analysis

Statistics used are Pearson correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationships between variables and independent samples *t*-test was used to examine gender differences in the three variables.

Sample Design

The sample consisted of 300 emerging adults between the age group of 18-25 years of age. Among the 300 sample, 150 are male and 150 are female emerging adults. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the sample.

Tools Used For the Study

Self- Compassion Scale – Kristin Neff, 2003 The 26-item self-report Self-compassion Scale measured compassion towards the self. Likert scale items (1 = almost never, to 5 = almost always) assessed the extent to which participants treat themselves with self-compassion during times of difficulty. The total self-compassion scale scores evidenced good internal reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$). The scale is also found to have a good construct, predict and convergent validity.

The Forms Of Self-Criticizing/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS) – Gilbert et.al, 2004 This scale was developed by Gilbert et al. (2004) to measure people's critical and reassuring self-evaluative responses to a setback or disappointment. The scale contains 22-items measuring two types of self-criticism, Inadequate Self and Hatred Self along with self-reassurance. Positive items reflect the ability to self-reassure and negative items indicate self-critical thoughts and feelings.. Participants respond to a probe statement "when things go wrong for me. ... " on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 0 = not at all like me, to 4 = extremely like me). The Forms Of Self-Criticizing/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale is found to have a good internal reliability. Cronbach alphas were 0.90 for inadequate self and 0.86 for hated self and reassured self respectively. Moreover, the internal reliability of FCRS scores has been found to be high across a wide variety of populations. The two subscales of self-criticism (i.e., hated self and inadequate self) have been found to be highly correlated in the original validation study ($r = .68$). FSCRS-SF subscale scores had satisfactory convergent validity estimates with theoretically related constructs.

Adult Dispositional Hope Scale – Snyder et.al, 1991 A 12-item measure of a respondent’s level of hope. In particular the scale is divided into two subscales that comprise Snyder’s cognitive model of hope: (1) Agency (i.e., goal-directed energy) and (2) Pathways (i.e., planning to accomplish goals). Of the 12 items, 4 make up the Agency subscale and 4 make up the Pathways subscale. The remaining 4 items are fillers. Each item is answered using an 8-point Likert-type scale ranging from Definitely False to Definitely True. This scale taps into dispositional hope in adults aged over 15 years. The ADHS has demonstrated extremely good levels of reliability with Snyder et al, (1991) reporting Cronbach alphas of .74 to .84 for overall hope, .71 to .76 for agency thoughts and .63 to .80 for pathway thoughts when sampling student and clinical populations. Scores on the ADHS are positively correlated with scores on the Life orientation test (Scheier & Carver, 1985), negatively correlated with scores on the Hopelessness Scale, (Beck et al, 1974) and unrelated to the Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein, Scheier & Buss, 1975) thus supporting the convergent and discriminant validity of this scale.

Statistics Used

t-test was used to investigate the differences between the two groups and Pearson product moment correlation method was used to find relationship between variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Pearson’s Product Moment correlation between Self-compassion and Self-criticism among emerging adults.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient
Self-compassion	
Self-criticism	-0.207 **

** $p < .01$.

Self-Compassion, Self-Criticism and Hope among Emerging Adults

From the above table, it is observed that the correlation coefficient between self-compassion and self-criticism among emerging adults $r(298) = -0.207$, which is significant at 0.01 level. The negative relationship indicates that increase in self-compassion, self-criticism decreases in emerging adults. The finding seem to indicate that individuals who are likely to have self-critic thoughts are less likely to be compassionate towards oneself. This research is supported by the research conducted by Kelly & Tasca (2016) which indicated that Self-compassion showed a strong negative relationship with self-criticism.

Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment correlation between self-compassion and hope among emerging adults.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient
Self-compassion	0.403**
Hope	

**
 $p < .01$

From the above table, it is observed that the correlation coefficient between Self-compassion and hope among emerging adults $r(298) = 0.403$, which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between Self-compassion and Hope. The positive relationship indicates that increase in self-compassion, the level of hope increases in emerging adults. The findings seem to indicate that individuals who are self-compassionate are more likely to be hopeful about their future. This research is in line with the research done by Umphrey & Sherblom (2014) found that both pathway thinking and agency thinking of the hope component is positively correlated with self-compassion.

Table 3: Pearson's Product Moment correlation between self-criticism and hope in emerging adults.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient
Self-criticism	-0.168**
Hope	

**
 $p < .01$

From the above table, it is observed that the correlation coefficient between Self-criticism and hope among emerging adults $r(298) = -0.168$, which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that there is a negative relationship between Self-criticism and Hope. The negative relationship indicates that increase in self-criticism, the level of hope decreases in emerging adults. The findings seem to indicate that one may not be hopeful about their future if they are more likely to indulge oneself in negative thoughts. This is supported by a research done by Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick (2007) indicated that individuals who are more hopeful about their goals are likely to be more positive in their inner self-talk and less critical of themselves when faced with a challenge, obstacle, or initial failure.

Table 4: Pearson's Product Moment correlation between self-compassion and reassure self among emerging adults.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient
Self-compassion	0.514**
Reassure self	

**
 $p < .01$

Self-Compassion, Self-Criticism and Hope among Emerging Adults

From the above table, it is observed that the correlation coefficient between self-compassion and reassure self among emerging adults $r(298) = 0.514$, which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between Self-compassion and Reassure self. The positive relationship indicates that increase in self-compassion, the level of reassure-self increases in emerging adults. This research is in line with the research done by Barrow & Alexandra (2007) revealed that self-compassion is significantly positively related to self-reassuring.

Table 5: Pearson's Product Moment correlation between self-criticism and reassure self among emerging adults.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient
Self-criticism	-0.282**
Reassure self	

** $p < .01$

From the above table, it is observed that the correlation coefficient between Self-criticism and reassure self among emerging adults $r(298) = -0.282$, which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that is a negative relationship between self-criticism and reassure self. The negative relationship indicates that increase in self-criticism, decreases the reassure self in emerging adults. This research is supported by a research done by Gilbert et.al (2004) findings revealed that being self-critical or wanting to harm oneself is negatively mediated by being able to self-reassure and focus on one's positives.

Table 6: Pearson's Product Moment correlation between Reassure self and hope among emerging adults.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient
Reassure Self	0.352**
Hope	

** $p < .01$

From the above table, it is observed that the correlation coefficient between Hope and Reassure self among emerging adults $r(298) = 0.352$, which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between Hope and Reassure self. The positive relationship indicates that increase in reassure self, the level of hope increases in emerging adults.

Table 7: Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on self-compassion between male and female emerging adults.

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	CR Value
Self-compassion	Male	150	3.18	0.38	1.244 ^{NS}
	Female	150	3.25	0.48	

NS – Not significant

From the above table, it is observed that the critical value for $t(150) = 1.244$ is not significant indicating there exists no significant difference in self-compassion between male and female emerging adults. However, the mean scores indicate that women are slightly greater in self-compassion when compared to men though the result is not statistically significant. This is in

Self-Compassion, Self-Criticism and Hope among Emerging Adults

contradictory to the study done by Yarnell & Neff (2013) which found that males had slightly higher levels of self-compassion than females. However, in this research there is no gender differences with regard to self-compassion.

Table 8: Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on self-criticism in male and female adults.

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	CR Value
Self-criticism	Male	150	26.60	7.99	3.153**
	Female	150	23.20	10.50	

** $p < .01$

From the above table, it is observed that the critical value for $t(150) = 3.153$, $p < 0.01$, which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that there exists a significant difference in self-criticism between male and female emerging adults.

Comparing the mean values, men are slightly greater in self-criticism when compared to women which signifies that men are more self-critical about themselves when things go unfavorable than women. This is in contradictory to the study done by Xavier, Gouveia, Cunha (2016) indicated that females reported more levels of self-criticism than males.

Table 9: Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on reassure self between male and female emerging adults.

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	CR Value
Reassure self	Male	150	21.43	6.20	1.226 ^{NS}
	Female	150	22.36	6.95	

NS – Not significant

From the above table, it is observed that the critical value for t test is -1.226 which is not significant indicating there exists no significant difference in self-reassure between male and female emerging adults. However, the mean scores indicate that women are slightly greater in self-reassure when compared to men though the result is not statistically significant.

Table 10: Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on hope in male and female emerging adults.

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	C.R. Value
Hope	Male	150	44.81	9.93	4.841**
	Female	150	49.90	8.18	

** $p < .01$

From the above table, it is observed that the critical value for $t(150) = 4.841$, $p < 0.01$, which is significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that there exists a significant difference in hope between male and female emerging adults. However, the mean scores indicate that women are slightly greater in hope when compared to men. The findings seem to indicate that women may rely in adaptive coping strategies and may focus on their success more than men.

Self-Compassion, Self-Criticism and Hope among Emerging Adults

This is in support with the study done by Rehman et.al (2014) which signified that women had higher level of hope than men.

CONCLUSION

1. There is a significant negative relationship between self-compassion and self-criticism among emerging adults.
2. There is a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and hope among emerging adults.
3. There is a significant negative relationship between self-criticism and hope among emerging adults.
4. There is a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and reassured self among emerging adults.
5. There is a significant negative relationship between self-criticism and reassured self among emerging adults.
6. There is a significant positive relationship between reassure self and hope among emerging adults.
7. There is no significant difference between male and female emerging adults in self-compassion.
8. There is a significant difference between male and female emerging adults in self-criticism.
9. There is no significant difference between male and female emerging adults in reassure self.
10. There is a significant difference between male and female emerging adults in hope.

Implications

The emerging adult period can be challenging with lots of negative self-evaluations and self-judgments. It is found that practicing mindfulness and self-compassion may enhance well-being in emerging adults. Thus, intervention to teach mindfulness and self-compassion may help these young people to cope with difficult situations and improve emotional well-being. Psycho-education on how to monitor one's negative thoughts and emotions and also to be aware and accept the circumstances may bring about a better clarity to handle the situation. Thus, it is also the role of a psychologist to bring awareness and provide training programs for emerging adults and other age groups on self-compassion which can help the individuals handle interpersonal, work-life situations and social problems more effectively and to possess a hopeful outlook about life. Thus, self-compassion benefits the individual personally as well socially.

Limitations

1. The research was done with only 300 emerging adults.
2. The geographical area was restricted to the state capital- Chennai.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. A larger sample could have been used.
2. Other psychological variables related to self-compassion can be investigated.
3. The study can be done with other age groups such as adolescence and adults.

REFERENCES

Ana Xavier, José Pinto-Gouveia, & Marina Cunha (2016). Non-suicidal self-injury in adolescence: The role of shame, self-criticism and fear of self-compassion. *Child and Youth Care Forum*, 45, 571-586. doi: 10.1007/s10566-016-9346-1

Self-Compassion, Self-Criticism and Hope among Emerging Adults

- Barrow, A. (2007). Shame, self-criticism and self-compassion in eating disorders. Retrieved from <https://ira.le.ac.uk/handle/2381/31236>
- Berking, M., & Whitley, B. (2014). Affect regulation training. New York, NY: Springer
- Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., et al. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11, 191-206.
- Gilbert, P., Clarke, M., Hempel, S., Miles, J. N. V., & Irons, C. (2004). Criticizing and reassuring oneself: An exploration of forms, styles and reasons in female students. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 43, 31-50.
- Kelly, A. C., & Tasca, G. A. (2016). Within-persons predictors of change during eating disorders treatment: An examination of self-compassion, self-criticism, shame, and eating disorder symptoms. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*.
- Marantz Henig, Robin (18 August 2010). "What Is It About 20- Somethings?". *The New York Times*.
- Neff, K. D., Rude, S. S., & Kirkpatrick, K. (2007). An examination of self-compassion in relation to positive psychological functioning and personality traits. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41, 908-916.
- Rehman, A., Rehman, S., Razzaq, S. and Wali, A. (2014). Relationship between hope and anxiety among university students. *European Journal of Psychological Research*. [online] Idpublications.org. Available at: <http://www.idpublications.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Relationship.pdf>
- Snyder, C.R., Irving, L., & Anderson, J.R. (1991). Hope and Health: Measuring the will and the ways. In C.R. Snyder & D.R. Forsyth (Eds.) *Handbook of social and clinical psychology: The health perspective* (pp.285-305). Elmsford, New York: Pergamon Press.
- Umphrey, L. R., & Sherblom, J. C., (2014). The relationship of hope to self-compassion, relational social skill, communication apprehension, and life satisfaction. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 4(2), 1-18. doi:10.5502/ijw.v4i2.1
- Yarnell, L. M., Neff, K. D. (2013). Self-compassion, interpersonal conflict resolutions, and well-being. *Self and Identity*. 2:2, 146-159.

Acknowledgements

The authors profoundly appreciate all the people who have successfully contributed in ensuring this paper in place. Their contributions are acknowledged however their names cannot be mentioned.

Conflict of Interest

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

How to cite this article: Harshitha S, & R Sasi (2019). Self-Compassion, Self-Criticism and Hope among Emerging Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7(2), 30-37. DIP:18.01.005/20190702, DOI:10.25215/0702.005