

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SELF-COMPASSION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEEKING PROFESSIONAL HELP IN YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the relationship between self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes, as well as the disparity in gender for the two variables in young adults. The research design for the study was cross-sectional. The sampling strategy was convenience sampling. The research was conducted on 260 undergraduate young adults from Pakistan, with the age range of 18 to 25. The Self-compassion scale (SCS) and Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form were used for data collection. The statistical analysis used was Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Independent T-tests. There was not a significant association between self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes found, in Pakistani young adults. Furthermore, men were more likely to have increased positive attitudes toward professional psychological help as compared to women. However, no difference in the self-compassion levels between the two genders was examined. Conclusively, while the results were disparaging, the significance of self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes was discovered through this research, leading to a better understanding of the mentality of Pakistani young adults on the two variables. Further studies may be conducted to analyze the barriers to seeking psychological counseling and improving self-compassion in Pakistani young adults.

Keywords: self-compassion, help-seeking attitudes, gender

INTRODUCTION

A study conducted in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, Pakistan, found that many factors influenced the mental health of the young adults living there, including cultural norms, parental expectations, present psychological setbacks, and the lack of access to psychological health facilities. (Ghazal, Arthur, Hussain, Khudadad, Malik, & Ali, 2021) These factors may be affecting the mental health of young adults on a deeper level, but since there are not many

resources available to young adults, they may not be able to seek treatment.

Around 50 percent of all psychological health problems are first diagnosed at the age of 14, and around 75% are discovered at the age of 24 (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Merikangas, & Walters, 2005).

Neff (2003) formulated the operational definition of self-compassion, defining the theory as compassion turned inward, with an

individual becoming acceptive of their suffering, and aiming to help themselves with kindness and compassion.

Young adults with extensively higher self-compassion can rationalize and handle the difficulties they face (Chishima, Mizuno, Sugawara, & Miyagawa, 2018). As such, having extensive self-compassion helps individuals become resilient, and empathize with their difficulties, due to the notion that they share the general human experience.

Individuals with self-compassion can be aware of the criticism of help-seeking behaviors, however, they are less likely to let this stigmatization alter their perceptions of the benefits of seeking guidance (Heath, Brenner, Lannin, & Vogel, 2018). Through this, we can infer the notion that the prospect of self-compassion positively impacts help-seeking.

In Pakistan, in-depth research on the variables, self-compassion, and help-seeking is limited. The World Health Organization claims that while 24 million people in Pakistan require help for mental illnesses, there are only 0.19 available psychiatrists for 100,000 individuals currently living in Pakistan, leading to Pakistan having the lowest resources for psychiatric help in the world (World Health Organization, 2024) However, it has been found that self-compassion lowers mental distress in Pakistani undergraduate college students. (Khalid, 2022) Infrequent gender differences have been recorded, with women scoring greater in self-compassion, and men scoring lower, in Pakistani young adults. (Salam & Farhan, 2021)

Due to the literature gap, this study aimed to examine the help-seeking attitudes and self-compassion perspectives of young adults in Pakistan. The relationship between the variables will also be analyzed in this research.

Literature Review

The prospect of self-compassion as an important research area has advanced over the previous decade, as it determines the level of compassion individuals hold for themselves. While societal compassion is imperative, compassion for the self has become one of interest for researchers over the years, due to the implications of the variable on a societal and personal level.

Self-compassion positively affects the mental health and general life satisfaction of individuals. Practicing self-compassion helps enhance mental health by increasing emotional adaptation and processing undesirable emotions (Diedrich et al., 2017).

Positive levels of self-compassion have been discovered to produce lesser scores of concern, worry, and sadness (Macbeth, & Gumley, 2012) The link of elevated self-compassion scores relates to a generally positive effect, on life, and emotional satisfaction in a sample of 80 participants, aged 22-25, enrolled in Kashmir University. (Bhat, & Shah, 2015). A large motivator for self-improvement remains self-compassion, to progress individually. Therefore, those wishing to improve their life would be willing to gain assistance from a professional. (Breines, & Chen, 2012)

Older adults are said to experience self-compassion on a greater level than younger adults. Middle-aged adults pursue actual well-being frequently, while young adults are not concerned (Hwang, Kim, Yang & Yang, 2016).

A review by Egan et al., (2022) states that around 85% of young adults had less exposure to self-kindness, leading to the theory that the young adults of the new generation do not know what it is.

Culturally, self-compassion levels can differ, according to the region being studied. The consequences of being less self-compassionate are suggestively negative in Chinese cultures compared to Western cultures (Lee, 2019). A study by Arimitsu, Hitokoto, Kind & Hofmann (2019) revealed that in a sample of Japanese and American adult participants, self-compassion was observed to have a significantly positive effect in adults from the United States, compared to Japanese adults.

In Pakistan, one research found that a sample of 234 undergraduate students showed 52% reported moderate outcomes of self-compassion, 26% reported low outcomes, and only 22% reported high outcomes of self-compassion. (Salam & Farhan, 2021) In another study, Pakistani students who scored higher on self-compassion had fewer depressive symptoms (Hameed, Bangash, Mohsin, Hassan, & Aymen, 2023), which in turn proves that self-compassion increases the likelihood of a

better lifestyle, and better mental health, in Pakistani young adults as well.

Measuring professional psychological help attitudes is important in discovering the possibility of increased help-seeking intentions or behaviors in young adults.

'Attitudes toward seeking psychological help' are impacted by several factors such as self-stigma, degree of knowledge regarding mental health issues, and perception of symptom intensity. In a study with 486 participants, these three factors had the highest impact on young adults' help-seeking behaviors and attitudes. (Beatie, Stewart, & Walker, 2016)

A review by Adams et al., (2022) discovered that subjective norms had no impact on the United States help-seeking intentions of individuals, however in populations from China and South Asia, social pressures impacted the individuals' help-seeking intentions (Zhao, He, Zeng, & Ye, 2019).

Young adults, especially, face much pressure from others, or their own families, if they desire professional psychological help. A review of Filipino adults' psychological help preferences displayed that individuals preferred informal help sources (such as friends and family), and professional psychological help was kept as a last resort. (Martinez et al., 2020)

Despite this, participants in one study were in favor of seeking counseling and experienced positive attitudes toward psychological guidance (Mojtabai et al., 2016) A major reason for an individual being open to seeking help was their experience with counseling previously. A Saudi Arabian research found that participants had a good perception of seeking help for psychological problems. (Mahsoon et al., 2020) Similarly, in a study done on Nigerian individuals, it was found that individuals' relatives believed that the use of medicines or seeking help from religious figures could cure mental illness. (Zever, 2017) Another study by Mahfouz et al., (2016) found that out of 575 young adults in Saudi Arabia, 47% believed that religious authority figures could cure mental problems

In the Pakistani context, lower help-seeking behavior was observed in Pakistani students because of stigmatization (Khan et al., 2015) and societal values that young adults hold (Zaidi & Ali, 2017). Furthermore, the social stigma of mental

health greatly impacts the perception of individuals in Pakistan toward psychological help, leading to a reluctance to obtain help for mental health issues.

One study by Zafar et al., (2024) discovered that a negative attitude toward seeking professional help was found in 56% of medical student participants from Karachi.

Certain studies have been conducted on the two variables in Pakistan. Professional counseling has been irrefutably linked to an increase in self-compassion (Zhang, & Hao, 2019). Another study found that those with positive levels of self-compassion had more intentions of seeking mental help. Gorczynski et al., (2020) learned that mental help-seeking intentions are exclusively linked to self-compassion. The increase in seeking treatment extends from self-compassion lessening humiliation, self-guilt, and self-justification. (Dschaak et al., 2021)

In the discussion of gender, women's attitudes toward help-seeking are considered to be more encouraged. (Nurdiyanto et al., 2023) Women were also found to reach out to male family members, as well as formal institutions, although the frequency was lesser than their desire to gain benefits from other women (Tull & Salusky, 2022) This is supported by the study by Qiu, Xu, Li, Zhao, & Yang (2024) which claims that women scored better on the ATSPPH scale, as compared to men.

Roskar et al., (2017) discovered that men were more likely to distance themselves from accepting psychological problems, as they believe it causes damage to their self-esteem. However, a study by Nagai, Kimura, Honda, Iida, & Mizuno (2023) claimed that university students were more inclined to look for specialized psychological help, and this intention was significantly more prominent in men. A review by Kantar & Yalçın (2023) states that self-compassion leads to men being likely to seek qualified help for their psychological problems if they experience any difficulties.

There is a slight disparity in the aspects of self-compassion between men and women. A review by Yarnell & Neff, (2015) claimed that women are less self-accepting and more sympathetic toward themselves. It was discovered that women, as opposed to men, may have less self-compassion (de Souza et al., 2020); however, a study by Yang,

Zhang, & Kou. (2016) observed insignificant differences between the variables in gender.

Rationale of the study

This research aimed to provide literature on the mindsets of Pakistani young adults about self-compassion, and help-seeking, both variables together and individually. The study proposes to find the correlation between self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes. It also touches upon the gender differences regarding both self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes.

Hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive relationship between self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes in young adults.

H2: Women are more likely to have better help-seeking attitudes as compared to men.

H3: Men are more likely to have higher self-compassion as compared to women.

Method

Research Design A cross-sectional design was used for this analysis and was applied to a correlational study.

Participants:

A sample of 316 participants from two public and two private universities was collected; 48 responses were discarded, due to incomplete questionnaires. The sampling method applied was ‘nonprobability convenience sampling’.

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

Sample Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
			20.95	1.83
Gender				
Male	120	46.2		
Female	140	53.8		
Academic Year				
Freshman	26	23.8		
Sophomore	65	25.0		
Junior	55	21.2		
Senior	78	30.0		
Educational Institution				
Public	106	40.8		
Private	154	59.2		

Table 1 shows a sample of 260 participants, contained 46.2% men and 53.8% women. The minimum age reported by the participants was 18, while the maximum age was 25, averaging at $M=21.00$, $SD=1.83$. The sample contained 40.8% of participants from public universities and 59.2% from private universities. These statistics can be observed in the table above.

Inclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria for this study included young adults studying in universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Individuals within the age bracket (18-25) were asked to partake in this study. Individuals in different academic disciplines were included. Participants familiar with English reading and writing were included in this study.

Exclusion criteria

The exclusion criteria in the research consisted of participants with/pursuing master’s and postgraduate degrees. Individuals from segregated

universities were excluded, as well as individuals from rural areas.

Measures for Data Collection

An information sheet and consent form were provided to the partakers gaining consent from each participant and explaining the purpose of the study.

The “Self-compassion scale” (SCS) by Neff (2003) was applied to determine self-compassion in individuals. The reliability of the ‘SCS’ is elevated, with a Cronbach Alpha value of .92. The ‘SCS’ contains 29 items in a five-point Likert scale, partitioned into six sub-scales. The scale measures “self-kindness, self-judgment (reverse scored), isolation (reverse scored), common humanity, mindfulness, and over-identified items (reverse scored)” (Neff, 2003). The total is calculated by computing each subscale's mean and computing the total mean.

“Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form” (ATSPPH-SF) (Fischer & Farina, 1995) determined the ‘attitudes’ individuals hold toward seeking certified aid. The scale’s reliability is significant, as the Cronbach Alpha value of the scale is .84. It is a questionnaire with ten items, with a four-point Likert scale. Within the ten items, items 2, 4, 8, 9, and 10 are reverse-scored. Scoring is calculated by computing scores of all items. Greater scores indicate more favorable attitudes towards seeking professional help. Participants filled out a demographics sheet consisting of gender, current academic year, educational institution, and age.

Procedures

After taking approvals from BOS, ERC and IRB data collection was started. Participants were approached and educated about the research objective. They were informed of their rights as participants, and that there were no risks or benefits to participating in this study. Participants provided consent before their data was collected and analyzed. They were provided with the booklet, which took 15-25 minutes to complete. After the collection of data, the data was calculated using the SPSS-Version 26.

Ethical Considerations

The necessary approval from the Board of Studies, Institutional Review Board, and the

Reliability Analysis

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for ‘Self-Compassion and help-seeking attitudes’

Scale	Actual Range (Minimum-Maximum)	M	SD	α
Self-compassion	2.02-3.95	3.00	.398	.672
ATSPPH	5-28	15.42	4.402	.624

The table above represents the descriptive statistics for the ‘self-compassion scale’. The mean of the participants on the ‘SCS’ was 3.00, with an average of every item being 3.00 on a Likert Scale, showing a moderate frequency of ‘self-compassion’ that participants encountered. The Cronbach Alpha value for the ‘SCS’ in this sample was .672, demonstrating an acceptable value of the scale's internal consistency.

The table above represents the descriptive statistics for ‘the attitudes toward seeking

Ethics Review Committee was obtained for this research.

Adequate information about the research was given to the participants, before the study. Confidentiality was maintained for the data collected from participants. The data collected was encrypted; other than the researcher, no third party had access to the file.

Informed consent was taken from participants. They were provided with an information sheet. Withdrawal rights were given to the participants, and they could choose to refuse to partake in the study at any point. This study did not have the potential for harm to participants. This study contained no deception; participants could willingly indulge.

Results

SPSS-Version 26 was used to analyze the data, for multiple statistical analyses. Frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were calculated through SPSS for descriptive statistics. In inferential statistics, ‘Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient’ was applied to determine the correlation between the variables. For the comparison in determining self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes, between men and women, an ‘Independent T-test’ was applied.

professional psychological help scale’. The average of the participants on the ATSPPH-SF was 15.42 on a four-point scale with the mean of items. This displayed a low scoring of the participants in their attitudes toward seeking help for psychological problems. The Cronbach Alpha value of the ATSPPH-SF in this sample was .624, showing adequate inner reliability of the measure used in Pakistani young adults.

Test of Normality

Table 4: Skewness and Kurtosis

Variable	N	Skewness	Kurtosis
Total SC	260	-.219	-.130
Total ATSPPH	260	.116	-.303

Skewness and Kurtosis’ were used, to determine the data normality, across the sample for ‘self-compassion and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help’. Total “Self-compassion” (Neff, 2003) was negatively skewed, with a value of -.219, while “attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help” (Fischer & Farina, 1995) were positively skewed, with a

value of .116. The values fell within the range of (-2 to +2). Both kurtosis values were negatively skewed for “Self-compassion”, with a value of -.130, and “attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help”, with a value of -.303. All kurtosis values aligned in the acceptable range of (-3 to +3).
Inferential Statistical Analysis

H1: “There is a positive relationship between self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes in young adults”.

Table 5: ‘Correlation between Self-compassion and Attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help’

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2
Self-compassion	260	3.01	.398	—	
ATSPPH	260	15.42	4.40	-.061	—

To observe the correlation between “self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes”, the ‘Pearson Correlation Coefficient’ was used. The findings displayed an insignificant undesirable correlation between the two variables, $r = -.061$,

$p > 0.05$, as shown in the table above. This result rejects the hypothesis, indicating that there is little to no correlation ‘between self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes’.

H2: “Women are more likely to have better help-seeking attitudes as compared to men.”

Table 6: Independent Samples Test for ‘Attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help’

Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (232.2)	<i>p</i>	Cohen’s <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
ATSPPH	14.77	4.78	15.97	3.98	-2.19	.029	.275439

To test the gender differences between the ‘help-seeking attitudes’ of women and men, an ‘independent t-test’ was applied. The inclination to have better ‘attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help’ was observed in men ($M = 14.77$, $SD = 4.78$) as compared to women ($M = 15.97$, $SD = 3.98$), t (232.2) = -2.19,

$p = .029$, as displayed in the table above. A small percentage of effect was observed, $d = .275439$, as estimated by ‘Cohen’s *d*’. Therefore, we can conclude that men have slightly better ‘attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help’ as compared to women.

H3: “Men are more likely to have higher self-compassion as compared to women.”

Table 7: Independent Samples Test for Self-compassion

Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (258)	<i>p</i>	Cohen’s <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Self-compassion	3.039	.426	2.967	.370	1.49	.140	.183105

An 'independent samples t-test' was rerun to determine the gender variances in "self-compassion scores" (Neff, 2003). No notable difference was observed between the scores of men ($M = 3.039$, $SD = .426$) and women ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .370$), $t(258) = 1.49$, $p = .140$. The effect size was significantly small, $d = .183105$, as calculated by the eta squared formula. This result rejects the hypothesis, as there is no prominent difference between the self-compassion scores for men and women, as displayed in the table above.

Discussions

Psychological distress is often prevalent in younger generations, including emerging adults, due to several reasons such as career expectations, relationships, and study pressures, (Kim, Yu & Kim, 2020).

The analysis of this study showed that no significant correlation between 'self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes' in Pakistani young adults exists. Individuals experiencing greater self-compassion do not necessarily believe in gaining certified aid for their psychological issues. Additionally, the results also show that men have better viewpoints toward seeking professional mental help as compared to women, though the difference is insignificant.

The literature displayed positive results for the 'relationship between self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes'. Self-compassion was observed to be a prominent factor in the 'help-seeking attitudes' of young adults (Zhang & Hao, 2019; Heath, Brenner, Vogel, Lannin, & Strass, 2017; Gorzynski, Sims-Schouten, & Wilson, 2020; Dschaak, Spiker, Berney, Miller, & Hammer, 2021) However, our exploration found an insignificant correlation between the two variables, which falls in line with some researches (Bhatti, 2018).

Firstly, the literature review claimed that older individuals experienced more self-compassion and were found to score higher on the self-compassion measure (Hwang, Kim, Yang & Yang, 2016; Kim & Ko 2018). Further explanation of this concept is explored by another research, which found that 85% of young adults have not been introduced to self-compassion and cannot practice it, leading to lower scores. (Egan et al., 2022) Since our study was on young adults, we may safely assume that young adults do not experience self-compassion

and aim for help-seeking due to multiple confounding variables.

Cultural differences and values can explain the results that we have obtained. While Western countries are more educated about self-acceptance, other countries may differ. Chinese adults were not in favor of others knowing of their psychological diagnosis, as they believed it would ostracize them from their peers (Zhao, He, Zeng, & Ye, 2019). As such, they aimed for self-reliance to deal with any psychological problems they experienced (Shi, Shen, Wang, & Hall, 2020). Young adults from the United States had a much more positive outlook on self-compassion, than their Japanese counterparts (Arimitsu, Hitokoto, Kind & Hofmann, 2019).

Even in Pakistan, it was unearthed that moderate self-compassion was experienced by individuals (Salam & Farhan, 2021), and those who experienced self-compassion had less depressive indicators in comparison to those who did not practice self-compassion (Hameed, Bangash, Mohsin, Hassan, & Aymen, 2023). However, the help-seeking attitudes in Pakistan were less than favorable, with 56% of students from a medical college in Karachi having negative viewpoints toward seeking professional help. (Zafar et al., 2024)

The reduction of symptoms, such as misery, apprehension, and tension, are reduced by self-appreciation and kindness to yourself, as individuals can regulate their emotions and maintain a balance between their mental health states (MacBeth & Gumley, 2012; Diedrich et al., 2017). From this, we can infer that since high self-compassion decreases the effects of negative psychological symptoms, young adults may not feel the need to get help for their psychological issues, due to the belief that they can survive without outside help.

The perception around getting counseling can help explain the help-seeking attitudes of individuals. The perception around seeking psychological help is so skewed, that individuals often prefer looking to familiar sources of seeking psychological help, such as speaking to loved ones and companions about current issues, rather than seeking professional help. (Martinez et al., 2020) Many individuals believe that mental health does not require specific professional interventions, as it can be cured through other means such as

religious healers and religious services, or marriage (Mahfouz et al., 2016; Zever, 2017)

Young adults who have frequent knowledge of psychiatric issues are more open to using psychological help while practicing self-compassion. Those with limited exposure to in-depth knowledge of mental health concerns refrain from understanding the magnitude of help-seeking (Beatie, Stewart, & Walker, 2016), and 85% of students in another study had no idea about self-compassion (Egan, Rees, Delalande, Greene, Fitzallen, Brown, & Finlay-Jones 2022). Our analysis showed that not only were Pakistani young adults unaware of psychological problems, but they also lacked knowledge of the prospect of 'self-compassion'.

The concept of social stigma decreased the prospect of seeking professional help for young adults in Pakistan. The research found that lower help-seeking behavior was found in Pakistani students due to stigmatization (Khan et al., 2015), which was prominent in a study conducted on Turkish and Pakistani students (Sultan, 2012). This could help explain the results that we analyzed, considering the present stigmatization, cultural differences, and unawareness of self-compassion in Pakistani young adults currently. We hypothesized that women would have significantly better help-seeking attitudes, due to research stating that men tend to have more negative perceptions of help-seeking as compared to women, who have more positive perspectives (Yousaf, Popat & Hunter, 2015; Rüsçh et al., 2014; Qiu, Xu, Li, Zhao, & Yang, 2023) Men preferred to distance themselves from psychological problems, believing that it impacted their self-esteem, and made them look weaker (Roskar et al., 2017)

However, our results discovered that it was men who were more presumably open to specialized help as compared to women. Our results showed that men had better help-seeking attitudes than women, although the difference was insignificant. A study by Molla (2022) discovered that women were reluctant to deviate toward getting a diagnosed analysis due to feelings of shyness in asking for professional psychological help. Men, especially at the university level, have more intent to seek psychological help, especially if they have more self-compassion (Nagai, Kimura, Honda, Iida, & Mizuno, 2023; Kantar, & Yalçın, 2023).

While the perception of men gaining psychological help would be negative, due to social and personal factors such as perceived vulnerability, and believing that seeking help is unacceptable, our results showed that men were more comfortable with gaining professional psychological help, as compared to women.

While the reasoning for this was not further determined, the general perception of mental health issues is poor in Pakistan. If previous experience with mental health service providers was good, young adults were interested in revisiting the concept of obtaining mental help (Mojtabai et al., 2016) Unfortunately, in Pakistan, the lack of development of psychological services can lead to bad experiences by individuals (WHO, 2023). Our results agree with the lack of psychological facilities, especially for university students. Additionally, since women prefer seeking help from informal relationships (Martinez et al., 2020; Tull & Salusky, 2022), men can gain professional help, since their psychologist does not know them personally, removing the possibility of judgment. Gender inequality is prevalent in Pakistani societies as well. Men are more prone to psychological problems/disorders when in comparison with females (Zada et al., 2021)

Prior research states that self-kindness is imperative to the individual's cognitive health and well-being, as it helps individuals normalize their emotions, and process negative feelings more healthily (Diedrich, Burger, Kirchner, & Berking, 2017). There is a predetermined expectation that gaining counseling would be directly linked to self-consideration (Brienes, & Chen, 2012) This has been supported by previous literature (Diedrich et al., 2017; Macbeth, & Gumley, 2012). Literature states that women are often critical of themselves, rather than self-compassionate, and men experience more self-compassion. (Yarnell & Neff, 2013; Yarnell, Stafford, Neff, Reilly, Knox, & Mullarkey, 2015; de Souza, Policarpo, & Hutz 2020) While men may be able to forgive their own mistakes, women feel as if they have to reach a standard of perfectionism. However, in another study, men are considered less self-compassionate based on whether they follow masculine gender roles, traditionally set by society, making it possible that men are not encouraged to pursue self-acceptance (Yarnell et al., 2015)

Women tend to be tougher with themselves and do not fall under the category of highly emotional, but according to tradition, they are expected to be more feminine. However, many studies have also shown that there is an irrelevant distinction between the self-kindness scores of the two genders (Yang, Zhang, & Kou, 2016; Abbasi & Zubair, 2015).

In our research, we found no difference in self-compassion levels between genders for Pakistani young adults. Generally, self-compassion does not differ in both genders, in terms of health behaviors, as amplified self-compassion levels were equal in both gender (Honsel, 2019).

Self-compassion could be less practiced in young adults for a few reasons. A study found that participants felt that their parents' lack of practicing self-compassion resulted in difficulty in being compassionate with themselves. (Dunkley-Smith, Reupert, Ling, & Sheen, 2021) It was also discovered that young adults were highly self-critical, which proved as a significant obstruction to practicing self-compassion. (Egan et al., 2022) This result exists as a parallel with the majority of the previous research, as there were identical self-compassion scores of the genders.

Implications

The present study discovered that there is little to no correlation between self-compassion and help-seeking attitudes in young adults in Pakistan. To counter this, research needs to be conducted to determine why young adults in Pakistan can experience self-compassion but not have formidable attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help, and vice versa, and which variables may be impacting their reluctance to seek help if their 'self-compassion' levels are high. The finding of men having better help-seeking attitudes may imply that, with the changing times, mental health literacy in men is evolving. To further understand this phenomenon, it is important to continue researching men's cognitive concerns, and their willingness to obtain psychological aid. Discovered variables impacting men's positive 'attitudes toward seeking help' may help in forming programs that encourage men to gain access to better mental health resources. Additionally, women's lack of positive attitudes should also be studied, and in-depth

research should be conducted to find out the possible reasons for women being unwilling to seek psychological help.

Lastly, this research proves no gender differences in self-compassion. Research on this aspect may help determine the best way to increase self-compassion, in a gender-neutral way, for the benefit of both men and women in Pakistan. Future research could also explore other variables that can define the impact on 'help-seeking attitudes'.

Further suggestions for this study include studying the reasons behind negative attitudes toward self-compassion, and help-seeking attitudes, so that a better understanding of the relationship between the two variables may be obtained.

Limitations

Our study was conducted on university undergraduates, aged 18-25, from public and private universities in Lahore. Although the study was done through convenience sampling, there may be a self-reporting bias within the results, leading to skewed data. One limitation included the time and resource constraints faced by the researcher, which further led to data being collected quickly, and with limited resources.

Conclusion

The concepts of "self-compassion" and "help-seeking attitudes" have been an important factor in understanding the general perspective of individuals about how willing they are to seek help if they experience compassion for themselves. In Pakistan, through our research, we discovered that both men and women experience the same amount of 'self-compassion'. The scores on the 'self-compassion scale' were equal in all aspects for both genders, although further interrogation would conclude that self-compassion is generally low in both genders. We also discovered that help-seeking attitudes are higher in men, leading to the previous literature and our research contrasting. Nevertheless, this research can be considered valuable, for the intention of understanding and implementing programs to help individuals raise their self-compassion, and seek help from professionals, if they experience any kind of psychological issues.

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