



SELF COMPASSION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH IMPULSIVITY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN INDIA

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Abstract

Self-Compassion is being understanding and warm towards yourself even if one feels inadequate, is suffering and failing and not beating yourself down. It is a self-soothing and regulating mechanism and influences how one addresses their own concerns and others. The aim of this study is to understand the relationship between self-compassion and impulsivity, and self-compassion and preference for different conflict resolution styles in young adults, of ages 18-26 years in India. A sample N=180 young adults (90 Females and 90 Males) was taken with all the participants being between the age range of 18-26. Tools used were Self Compassion Form- Short Form, Barratt Impulsivity Scale-15, and Conflict Management Styles

Quiz to measure the levels of Self Compassion, Impulsivity, and preference for different Conflict Resolution Styles respectively. The results found that a negative correlation exists between self-compassion and impulsivity. Self-compassion was seen to be positively correlated with preference for compromising and competing conflict resolution styles and negatively correlated with avoiding conflict resolution style. Males were found to have a higher preference for competing conflict resolution style, but no gendered differences were observed in levels of other variables. Limitations and future implications are also discussed.

Keywords: Self Compassion, Impulsivity, Conflict Resolution Styles, Self-Awareness Theory

Introduction

Self-Compassion

Over the years Self Esteem has been criticized as a primary measure of psychological health and Self Compassion has been introduced as a better measure to conceptualize the relationship one shares with themselves (Neff, 2003). Self-Compassion is defined by Neff (2003a) as “an emotionally positive self-attitude that should protect against negative consequences of self-judgment, isolation, and rumination (such as depression). It is like compassion for others as it necessitates being touched by and being receptive to one's own suffering rather than avoiding or distancing oneself from it.

Domains of Self Compassion

Neff (2016) has defined self-compassion as a complex construct with overlapping but conceptually separate components that fall into 3 general categories.

Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgment

Neff (2016) states that we are often tough on ourselves, but for others, we try to be kinder and more encouraging when they are going through a tough period. When we are self-

compassionate, we extend the same grace to ourselves as we would to others, acknowledging the flaws and embracing ourselves that lessens the thoughts of inadequacy.

Common Humanity vs. Isolation

We often assume that our suffering is unique, and nobody has messed up or failed like us, it is an assumption that is not based and can lead to a sense of alienation. But someone who has self-compassion would acknowledge that all of us face failures and difficulties as a part of human experience, this makes us feel less alone and isolated (Neff, 2016).

Mindfulness vs. Over-identification

A balanced awareness of the present moment doesn't minimize or maximize the unpleasant feeling, which is what mindfulness is about (Shapiro et al., 2006). We tend to over-identify with our thoughts and emotions and risk getting carried away. To cultivate Self Compassion means to be willing to face and consciously recognize our own suffering and not battling our reality (Neff, 2016).

Gilbert (2014) argues that people who grew up in a secure and nurturing environment have higher levels of self-compassion and are better able to initiate and sustain pleasant and safe sensations associated with self-soothing systems. Self-compassion helps people to down regulate hyper-arousal, which enables them to process and experience negative emotions in a compassionate manner as well as manage distress.

Gilbert et al., (2009); Neff (2015), in their research have concluded that people with more self-compassion exhibit less psychological symptoms. Self-compassion is also associated with multiple facets of interpersonal well-being along with individual well-being, like altruism, perspective taking, readiness to apologize and forgive, social connectivity (Fuochiet al., 2018; Neff & Pommier, 2013).

Impulsivity

Impulsivity (behaviorally) is defined by Dalley et al. (2011), as the “tendency to act prematurely without foresight.” Moeller et al. (2001) stated that impulsivity is crucial in clinical and scientific domains pertaining to risky behaviors and specific mental illnesses, DSM, and ICD list impulsivity as a diagnostic requirement for a number of conditions.

Inadequate emotion regulation techniques may contribute to the emergence and maintenance of psychopathology by competing with self-regulation objectives when experiencing emotional distress. (Gross & Munoz, 1995; Moore et al., 2008). This conflict causes people to refocus their attention on reducing emotional distress by seeking out instant gratification and relief, like smoking cigarettes or acting impulsively, rather than on a longer-term goal of self-regulation, like getting healthier (Tice et al., 2001).

Heatherton & Baumeister (1991) and Wagner & Heatherton (2015) in their research have demonstrated that impulsive actions stem from lack of self-awareness and may be driven by a negative self-perception. According to Self-Awareness Theory, self-awareness's unpleasantness might lead to impulsivity (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991). People who have high self-awareness will be conscious of their shortcomings and can lead to negative experiences of diminished self-worth. To cope with this people, tend to become less self-aware, which in turn compromises their ability to be troubled by their mistakes. According to researchers, self-compassion lessens the negative effects of a decline in self-esteem, which in turn lessens the unpleasant sentiments of objective self-awareness (Adams & Leary, 2007; Kelly et al., 2010; Murphy et al., 2005; Web & Forman, 2013).

Conflict Resolution Styles

Sweeney and Carruthers (1996), defined Conflict Resolution as, “the process used by parties in conflict to reach a settlement.” Thomas and Kilmann model (1974) conceives of five

conflict-resolution philosophies according to two fundamental considerations, namely “concern for self” and “concern for others”: Competing (concern for self: high, and concern for others: low), Collaborating (concern for self: high, and concern for others: high), Compromising (concern for self: moderate, and concern for others: moderate), Avoiding (concern for self: low, and concern for others: low) and Accommodating (Opposite of competing) (concern for self: low, and concern for others: high). People’s decisions in conflict situations are influenced by a variety of outside variables, including power dynamics in equality (Neff & Harter, 2002). Nevertheless, psychological variables that are internal to an individual, such as self-compassion, may also have an impact on how conflicts are resolved.

Crocker and Canevello (2008) states that high self-compassion led to more compassionate aims and the partner felt more socially supported and fostered interpersonal trust. Capacity to successfully balance one’s own and other’s demands is also influenced by self-compassion. Self-compassion recognizes one’s own needs are legitimate and deserving of attention, just as the needs of others are (Neff & Vonk, 2009). Without diminishing the self, it enables individuals to stay connected and refraining from being self-centered. It also promotes interpersonal perspective-taking as one adopts being compassionate about self (Davidson, 2007). Lastly, they also have their needs for relatedness, competence and autonomy met (Neff, 2003a).

Dual Concern model resembles collectivism-individualism and can be used to describe the cultural differences in conflict resolution (Triandis et al., 1988). In Collectivistic cultures there is an emphasis on more concern for relationships and others and in Individualistic cultures the emphasis is more on concern for self (Hui & Triandis, 1986). Thus, in more collectivistic cultures there is a preference for conflict resolution styles that are in line with harmony enhancing ways, while individualistic cultures go for more competitive strategies. Indian society is a blend of collectivistic and individualistic tendencies, and it promotes

interdependence and connectedness through familial bonds while factors like affluence, geopolitical, urbanization and psychosocial characteristics have been moving the population towards a more individualistic approach in more urbanized locations (Sinha, 2001; Jha & Singh, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

To investigate the relationship between Impulsivity and Conflict Management Styles: Competing, Compromising, Collaborating, Avoidance and Accommodating, in Indian Young Adult Population (age- 18-26), and assess gender differences.

Objectives

- To investigate the relationship between Self Compassion and Impulsivity.
- To investigate the relationship between higher or lower levels of Self Compassion and all five Conflict Management Styles that represent higher or lower levels of concern for the self: Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Accommodating and Avoiding.
- To assess gender differences in levels of Self Compassion among young adults.
- To assess gender differences in levels of Impulsivity among young adults.
- To assess gender differences in all types of Conflict Management Styles used by young adults.

Hypothesis

- There will be no significant relationship between Self Compassion and Impulsivity.
- There will be no significant relationship between levels of Self Compassion and all five Conflict Management Styles that represent higher or lower levels of concern

for the self: Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Accommodating and Avoiding.

- There will be no significant differences in levels of Self Compassion among male and female young adults.
- There will be no significant differences in levels of Impulsivity among male and female young adults.
- There will be no significant differences in all different types of Conflict Management Styles preferred among male and female young adults.

Methods. The following sample, measures and procedures were done to study the research objectives.

Sample

Overall, 180 (N=180) young adults in India between the ages 18-26 years received and were requested to fill the survey. 90 participants were male (50%) and 90 participants were female (50%). The sample was collected through simple random sampling design.

Inclusion criteria

- Should be within 18-26 years of age range.
- Should be well versed in English (to fill the survey)
- Should have completed High School Education
- Should consent willfully to share information for the survey.

Exclusion criteria

- Is not within the age range of 18-26 years.
- Is not well versed in English.
- Is not ready to share the information in the survey.

Measures

The tool used to measure Self Compassion was Self Compassion Form- Short Form, for Impulsivity was Barratt Impulsivity Scale-15, and for Conflict Resolution Style was Conflict Management Styles Quiz. Description for each tool is given below:

- ***Self-Compassion Scale- Short Form***

Developed by Raes et al. (2011), it is a 12-item scale, adapted from the original 26 item Self Compassion Scale. It measures dimensions like Self-Kindness, Self-Judgement, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness, and Over-Identification. The items are scored on 5-point likert scale, with 1 being Almost Never and 5 being Almost always, except in negative items where the scoring is reversed. The SCS-SF has shown an internal consistency of 0.86 and near perfect correlation with long form SCS.

- ***Barratt Impulsivity Scale-15***

BIS-15 is a short form scale for Impulsivity developed by Spinella (2007). It is an adaptation of BIS-11 which is a 30-item scale. It measures three types of impulsivities: Attention Impulsivity, Motor Impulsivity, and Non-Planning Impulsivity. Items range on a 4-point Likert scale, 1- Rarely/Never to 4-Almost Always except in the reversed scored items. It has a good validity and has test-retest reliability and internal consistency of 0.80 and 0.793.

- ***Conflict Handling Styles***

Developed by Reginald (2006), it is a 15-item scale measuring following dimension: Collaborating, Compromising, Accommodating, Avoiding, and Competing. It is a 4-point Likert scale, with 1-Rarely to 4-Always. Style with highest score is most preferred and with lowest is least preferred.

Procedure

The goal of the study was explained to the participants and offline, in person surveys were filled out. We expressed our gratitude to each participant for their assistance. The surveys filled by participants were standardized.

Analysis of Data

After conduction of inferential and descriptive analysis of the collected data on SPSS 21.0.0.0, to find the relationship between Self Compassion, Impulsivity and Conflict Handling Resolution Styles and their gender differences, the results were as follows:

Relationship between Self Compassion and Impulsivity among young adults in India

Table 1

Correlation between Self Compassion and Impulsivity

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2
1. Self-Compassion	180	18.62	3.84	-	
2. Impulsivity	180	31.63	6.68	-.437	-

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

Relationship between Self Compassion and Conflict Resolution Styles (Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Accommodating and Avoiding)

Table 2

Correlation matrix for Self-Compassion and preference for different Conflict Resolution Styles

		Collaborating Style	Competing Style	Avoiding Style	Accommodating Style	Compromising Style
Self-Compassion	Pearson Correlation	.245	.256	-.273	-.077	.063
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.000	.306	.403
	N	180	180	180	180	180
	SD	18.62	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

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

Difference in levels of Self Compassion among male and female young adults in India

Table 3

Group Statistics for male and female young adults and their levels of Self Compassion

	Gender	N	M	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Self-Compassion	Female	90	18.23	3.76	.396
	Male	90	19.00	3.90	.411

Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation, and standard error in Self Compassion levels for male and female young adults.

Table 4

Independent Samples Test to assess gender differences in levels of Self Compassion among young adults

	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Self-Compassion	-1.344	178	.181	-.767	.571

Differences in levels of Impulsivity among male and female young adults in India**Table 5***Group Statistics for male and female young adults and their levels of Impulsivity*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Impulsivity	Female	90	31.98	6.24	.658
	Male	90	31.28	7.11	.750

Table 6*Independent Samples Test to assess gender differences in levels of Impulsivity among young adults.*

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Impulsivity	.713	178	.477	.711	.998

Table 7*Group Statistics for male and female young adults and their levels of preference for different Conflict Resolution Styles*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std Deviation	St. Error Mean
Collaborating Style	Female	90	-.10	0.97	.102
	Male	90	.10	1.02	.107
Competing Style	Female	90	-.26	0.90	.095
	Male	90	.26	1.04	.109
Avoiding Style	Female	90	-.14	1.00	.105
	Male	90	.14	0.99	.104
Accommodating Style	Female	90	-.05	1.07	.113
	Male	90	.05	0.93	.098
Compromising Style	Female	90	-.03	0.90	.096

	Male	90	.03	1.09	.115
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Table 8

Independent Samples Test to assess gender differences in levels of Impulsivity among young adults

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Collaborating Style	-1.412	178	.160	-.210	.149
Competing Style	-3.533	178	.001	-.511	.145
Avoiding Style	1.831	178	.069	.271	.148
Accommodating Style	-.665	178	.507	-.099	.149
Compromising Style	-.454	178	.651	-.068	.149

Discussion

The aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship shared by self-compassion, impulsivity, and different conflict resolution styles, namely collaborating, competing, compromising, accommodating, and avoiding, among young adults in India.

Our first null hypothesis, that there will be no significant relationship between self-compassion and impulsivity, has been rejected, because our results established that a significant relationship existed between them. They are moderately but inversely correlated, i.e., with more self-compassion, a person is less impulsive, and vice versa. This finding is consistent with Morley and Richard's (2017) study on college students following a negative event and the role of self-compassion on impulsivity following it. Their results implied that participants who had higher levels of self-compassion following negative events were less likely to have an increase in levels of impulsivity, and the overall results suggested that self-compassion was observed to have acted as a mediator between self-esteem's effect on impulsivity and negative affect.

According to the Self Awareness theory given by Duval and Wicklund (1972), unpleasant self-awareness might lead to impulsivity. High levels of self-awareness lead to one being conscious of their own shortcomings, which might lead them to be aware of their own personal failure and which in turn might lead to an uncomfortable sense of diminished self-worth. To lessen these feelings, people end up being less conscious of themselves, and their capacity for regulating self-control is compromised because they are not troubled by their mistakes. Research by Adams and Leary (2007) suggests that self-compassion lessens the unpleasant sentiments of objective self-awareness. Thus, not hindering the capability to self-regulate.

According to our second null hypothesis, there will be no significant relationship between levels of self-compassion and all five conflict management styles that represent higher or lower levels of concern for the self: Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Accommodating and Avoiding have been partially rejected.

The results indicated that collaborating and competing conflict resolution styles were weakly but positively correlated with self-compassion, i.e., people who had higher concern for self, preferred collaborating, and competing styles. Collaborating Resolution Style is a win-win situation and competing is used when a person is more concerned with their own needs but can be associated with negative emotions and affects. Competing style can be appropriate if the other party is exploitative or if an unpopular decision must be taken. Avoiding Style on the other hand had a weak yet a negative correlation with self-compassion, showing someone with high self-compassion would not avoid discussing or addressing their conflicts. People with Avoiding Styles have lower levels of satisfaction with the situation or lower mutual trust. Lower concern for your own needs, as well as the needs of others leads to preferring avoiding style (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). These results are in line with Yarnell and Neff (2013) who conducted a study on examining the link of self-compassion and balancing the need of self and

others in situations of conflict and found that individuals with higher self-compassion resolve their conflict balancing their own needs and others as well, without subordinating their own needs during times of conflict, leading to healthy resolutions. Self-Compassion recognizes that a person's own needs and worthy and valid of consideration just as other's needs are.

For the relationship between accommodating and compromising resolution styles and self-compassion, results showed that enough evidence wasn't present to establish a relationship between preference for mentioned conflict resolution styles and self-compassion. In line with our results, Bobot (2010) talks about an accommodating style that can be used if a person is being generous, is obeying or is yielding and is occasionally useful for maintaining relationships. Therefore, it doesn't always signify a lack of self-compassion when preferring this style.

Likewise, compromising style is usually a win-lose situation and can be useful when the prolonging conflict can be harmful to the relationship and time constraints are present. Macintosh and Stevens (2008) talk about how it can be a good strategy if both parties have equal power, or no resolution has worked yet. So, it is not a definitive signifier of self-compassion levels. These results should be further researched. As Dildar and Amjad (2017) discovered, power, role and setting play a big role in conflict resolution styles. These results also reflect an attitude of the young Indian population that has both collectivistic and individualistic tendencies.

Our third null hypothesis, there will be no significant differences in levels of Self Compassion among male and female young adults, has not been rejected. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the means due to gender differences between male and female young population in levels of self-compassion, despite males scoring higher mean than female. The results are supported by Hyde (2005) who stated differences in male and female self-compassion levels should not be overemphasized according to a theory called

‘Gender Similarities Hypothesis,’ which states that females and males, as well as girls and boys are more similar than different with usually gender differences of psychological variables being close to zero. Though our study had no significant difference the higher male mean can be explained in line with previous studies that have found a significant difference with higher levels of compassion in males than females. It has been found females usually have a higher negative self-talk tendency and tend to be more critical of themselves (DeVore & Pritchard, 2013; Leadbeater et al., 1999).

The fourth null hypothesis, there will be no significant differences in levels of Impulsivity among male and female young adults, has not been rejected. These results according to Weinstein & Dannon (2015) are a part of mixed results in levels of impulsivity among adults males and females, which is usually a result of hormonal changes, for example, Pine and Fletcher (2011) women in their luteal stages, (non-fertile stages) are seen to have higher levels of impulsivity than females in all the other phases of menstruation, which can explain the ambiguous results found in females where different fertility stages can postpone reduction of impulsivity in females. Also, the effects of hormonal changes impact dopamine reward system (affects meso-cortico-limbic pathways). This might explain no significant difference in levels of impulsivity.

The fifth null hypothesis, there will be no significant differences in all different types of Conflict Management Styles preferred among male and female young adults, has been partially rejected. While no significant difference was found between levels of preference for collaborating, compromising, accommodating, and avoiding conflict resolution styles between male and female young adults, only competing conflict resolution styles had a significant difference in mean with males attaining higher scores than females. A study by Chusmir and Mills (1989) found that females and males tend to be agenda focused on workplace settings than home settings where they are more relationship-focused but in general women are more

relationship focused. This can explain the higher levels of competitive conflict resolution style in males. As shown by Dildar and Amjad (2017) in their review, women, and men both collaborated equally at home, but men are more competitive, while they are equally dominating or subordinate at work settings according to their roles, and gender differences tend to diminish. Power, role, and setting are a big determinant of conflict resolution styles.

Conclusion

The study was conducted with the aim of finding the relationship between self-compassion with impulsivity and conflict resolution styles, in the young adult population of India, (ages 18- 26) and assessing gender differences. The paper reflected, that there was a negative association between self-compassion and impulsivity among young adult population, while for different conflict resolution styles, there was a positive association between self-compassion and preference for collaborating and competing styles, while there was a negative association between self-compassion and preference for avoiding style, but no significant correlation was discovered for self-compassion and accommodating and compromising styles.

While for gender differences, there were no gender differences found for self-compassion and impulsivity, while for conflict resolution styles, male had higher preference for competing styles of conflict resolution but no significant difference for levels of preference for collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating styles.

Limitations

Main limitation for the research is our sample is not a true representation of our population, our sample consists of 50% male population and 50% female population, moreover, given the population size of young adults in India, 180 can be considered a small sample.

Another important limitation is, better scales that are more generalized and widely used

could be used, if more time and financial resources were present. For example, Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, which is a widely used and reliable for conflict management style assessment, could have been used.

Components of Self Compassion and Impulsivity were not explored due to time restraints, and for example, Feher (2016) found that though Self Compassion didn't correlate, positive and negative components of Self Compassion correlated with different conflict management styles. For this long form-Self Compassion Scale and Barratt Impulsivity Scale-11 should have been used, to properly assess these components individually.

This study only focuses on assessing the relations, but causal factors haven't been explored. It has been established with previous research that Indian youth has both individualistic tendencies and collectivistic as well, but how these tendencies affect levels of self-compassion and their relationship with other variables hasn't been explored.

Future Implications

The findings of this study gave a deep insight regarding the importance of cultivation of self-compassion among young adults and how it regulates impulsivity levels and increases preference for adaptive conflict resolution styles among them. This emphasis of Self Compassion as a measure for psychological health and its cultivation, can be applied in therapeutic settings and personality development of young adults, which in turn could decrease impulsive tendencies and can help them learn to choose conflict resolution styles which not only address their own concerns but also others in any interpersonal setting.

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