



A Study on Self-Compassion, Narcissism and Perfectionism in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Self-compassion, narcissism and perfectionism are some of the personality traits seen in students and young adults. As they grapple with the difficulties of making a name for themselves, establishing their own identity and being seen as worthy. Amid the whirlwind i.e., the years from 18 to 25, every young individual is expected to do something extraordinary, grand and different. However, one forgets to focus on the pressures through which every young adult must go through during those years, and the inner battles they need to conquer. The purpose of the paper was to study self-compassion, narcissism and perfectionism among young adults. A sample size of 32 was taken between the age range of 18-25 years. Standardised scales, Neff's self-compassion scale (short form), Narcissism Personality Inventory (short form) and Big Three Perfectionism Scale (short form) were used to measure the variables. The results found out that there is a significant positive correlation between Self-critical Perfectionism and Self-compassion, and between Rigid Perfectionism and Narcissism. It is of the essence that young adults look beyond the materialistic achievements and try to see the

world as something between black and white. They should learn to make their own universe and thrive in it; with the ones they feel most at comfort.

Keywords: *Self-compassion, narcissism, perfectionism, young adults*

INTRODUCTION

Self-compassion, narcissism and perfectionism are some of the qualities which we all experience at some point or the other in our lives. One may seem completely positive and others too grim. Therefore, one of the main goal of this study is to; not segregate them into mere black and white compartments but focus on the grey areas in between. Self-compassion refers to treating oneself with kindness and giving ourselves the space to grow and learn from our setbacks. Oftentimes we are too quick to listen to a friend who's in need, or help an acquaintance in school. However, there are times do we forget to show the same level of empathy to ourselves, and not jump to nihilistic conclusions. In order to practice mindfulness, it's really important to develop self-compassion skills in ourselves and let go of the pessimistic behaviours. It's also suggested that one should show the same compassion that we so willingly offer others.

Narcissism is what lies on the opposite end of the self-compassion spectrum. It's when one prioritises and only think about themselves, but almost in a toxic, obsessive way. Another study variable is perfectionism, which refers to, when one sets their goals too high, rigid and aims to be "flawless." Perfectionism is a personality trait which drives and motivates people to achieve their goals no matter the price and hard work. These individuals never get satisfied easily and don't settle for mediocrity. It roots itself from unrealistic expectations from the environment or our own self and the stigma of never being 'good enough.'

Self-compassion, narcissism and perfectionism are some traits that are very commonly seen in young adults nowadays. With the extreme levels of competition, the drive to be the best and success being viewed as too materialistic; these three entities come into play one way or another.

Self-Compassion

“Self-compassion has been defined as a self-attitude that involves treating oneself with warmth and understanding in difficult times and recognising that making mistakes is part of being human” (Breines & Chen, 2012). Additionally, Neff (2003) defined, it “as an emotionally positive self-attitude that should protect against the negative consequences of self-judgement, isolation and rumination (such as depression).

A study was done by Gard et al. (2012) to investigate the effects of yoga on quality of life, perceived stress, mindfulness and self-compassion among young adults. The sample size was 33, and they were assessed on the above-mentioned variables before and after the completion of a 4-month yoga intervention. The participants were asked to fill out the same questionnaire at two points of time, and it was found that the effect of group on quality of life was mediated by mindfulness and self-compassion. The effect of group on stress was mediated by self-compassion. Hence, it showed that effects of yoga-based programs could cultivate subjective well-being in young adults.

According to a study done by Hwang et al. (2016), on the interactive effects of self-compassion, self-esteem and age on mental health among different age groups. Previous research related to the field suggested that self-compassion has a significant positive association with well-being, but they were done on young adults represented by college students. A sample of 1813 adults was taken whose age ranged from twenties to fifties. The

questionnaire measured self-compassion, self-esteem, subjective well-being and depression. The results showed that there is a positive relationship between self-compassion and subjective well-being in older adults. It also showed that self-compassion maybe complementary to self-esteem in improving mental health.

Narcissism

“Narcissism is a psychological disorder characterized by pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts” (Terry, 1988). According to Horney (1939), “narcissism is a spectrum which ranges from healthy self-esteem to a pathological state.”

A study conducted by Bhachech (2021) on young adults showed that selfie and narcissism are closely linked to each other. 132 male subjects were taken in total, and asked to fill out an online questionnaire which included: demographic variables, selfie taking behaviour and the NPI-16. The results showed that people who were high in narcissism took 5-10 number of selfies per day.

A research study done by Anwar (2016) was aimed at assessing the relationship between narcissism, self-esteem and aggression in young adults. The scales used were NPI (Narcissistic Personality Inventory), DIAS (Direct and Indirect Aggression Scale) and RSES (Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale). The results showed that narcissism is positively associated with aggression and self-esteem is negatively associated with aggression. It was also found that men scored higher than females in terms of narcissism. The study also suggested some measures to limit the severity of narcissism and anger issues in young adults.

Perfectionism

“Striving for flawlessness and setting exceedingly high standards for performance, accompanied by tendencies for overly critical evaluations” (Stoeber, 2011). Frost et al. (1990) defined perfectionism “as a personality trait characterized by striving for flawlessness and setting excessively high standards for performance accompanied by overly critical evaluation of one’s behaviour.

In a review study by Sunkarapalli and Agarwal (2017), on fear of failing and perfectionism. It was done on a sample of 200 young adults from Hyderabad. The methods used to collect the data were purposive and snowball sampling. They used the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory and Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. The results showed a positive correlation between fear of failing and perfectionism.

According to a study done by Doyle and Catling (2022), maladaptive perfectionism and low self-esteem can act as risk factors for student mental illnesses. They also help in determining whether resilience moderates these predictive relationships. A total sample of 434 students were taken, the scales used were PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire) and GAD-7 (Generalised Anxiety Disorder Assessment). The variables perfectionism, self-esteem and resilience were analysed in relation to the PHQ and GAD using regression analysis. The results showed that perfectionism discrepancy, self-esteem and resilience predicted anxiety and depression; resilience may act as a protective factor against mental illness

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose is to study self-compassion, narcissism and perfectionism among young adults.

Hypothesis

- There will be significant relationship between self-compassion and narcissism among young adults.
- There will be significant relationship between self-compassion and perfectionism among young adults.

Methods

Sample

A total sample of 32 young adults in the age 18-25 was collected from the city Chandigarh.

Measures

The following standardised tools were used to measure self-compassion, narcissism and perfectionism among young adults.

- ***Neff's Self-Compassion Scale (Short form)***

The scale as developed by Raes et al. (2010) was used to assess self-compassion in people. The scale consisted of 12 items with a response scale of 5-point Likert, "Never;" "Rarely;" "Sometimes;" "Often;" "Always." Items 1,4,8,11 and 12 were reverse scored.

- ***Narcissism Personality Inventory (Short form)***

The scale as developed by Ames et al. (2006) was used to measure the levels of narcissism. The scale was a short form version of the original scale given by Raskin and Terry (1988)

which had a total of 40 items. The NPI short form has a total of 16 items with highlighted responses being scored as 1 and the other as 0.

- ***Big Three Perfectionism Scale (Short form)***

The original scale was developed by Smith et al. (2016) to assess perfectionism. The scale consisted of 16 items with a response scale of 5-point Likert, “Strongly Disagree;” “Disagree;” “Neutral;” “Agree;” and “Strongly Agree.”

Procedures

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google Forms; each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardised psychological tests were administered to the participants.

Analysis of Data

Results

The responses of the participants were analysed using Pearson’ Correlation to see relationship among self-compassion, narcissism and perfectionism.

Table 1*N, Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables*

Descriptives													
		Self-Compassion		Narcissism		Perfectionism		Rigid Perfectionism		Self-critical Perfectionism		Narcissistic Perfectionism	
N		32		32		32		32		32		32	
Mean		38.5		4.66		43.7		14.1		17.6		13.0	
Standard deviation		7.43		2.65		12.2		4.17		5.04		4.39	

Table 2*Correlation between Self-compassion, Narcissism and Perfectionism*

Correlation Matrix													
		Self-Compassion		Narcissism		Perfectionism		Rigid Perfectionism		Self-critical Perfectionism		Narcissistic Perfectionism	
Self-Compassion		—											
Narcissism		0.000		—									
Perfectionism		-		0.328		—							
		0.326											
Rigid Perfectionism		-		0.385	*	0.705	***	—					
		0.229											
Self-critical Perfectionism		-	**	0.117		0.746	***	0.696	***	—			
		0.482											
Narcissistic Perfectionism		-		0.272		0.635	***	0.255		0.233		—	
		0.176											
Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001													

Discussion of Results

The results found out that there is a significant positive correlation between Self-critical perfectionism and rigid Perfectionism ($r=0.696$, $p < .001$). The results also found a significant

negative correlation between Self-critical perfectionism and Self-compassion ($r = -0.482$, $p .01$). There is a significant positive correlation between Rigid Perfectionism and Perfectionism ($r = 0.705$, $p < .001$), significant positive correlation between Self-critical perfectionism and Perfectionism ($r = 0.746$, $p < .001$), significant positive correlation between Narcissistic Perfectionism and Perfectionism ($r = 0.635$, $p < .001$). There is also a significant positive correlation between Rigid Perfectionism and Narcissism ($r = 0.385$, $p < .05$). Further no significant correlation was found between Perfectionism and Self-Compassion, Rigid Perfectionism and Self-Compassion and Narcissistic Perfectionism and Self-Compassion. There was no significant correlation between Perfectionism and Narcissism, Self-Critical Perfectionism and Narcissism and Narcissistic Perfectionism and Narcissism as well.

According to a study done by Set (2021), on the effects of narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and self-compassion, in the relationship between attachment and psychopathology done on 203 students. The study used Beck depression scale, Beck anxiety scale, narcissistic personality inventory, vulnerable narcissism scale, and self-compassion scales. The results found out that there was a positive correlation between vulnerable narcissism and narcissistic personality traits, negative correlation with self-compassion, and positive correlation with depression and anxiety.

A study done by Sherry et al. (2014) on narcissism and perfectionism, measured the traits of perfectionism, perfectionistic self-presentation, perfectionism cognitions, and narcissism. A sample of 983 undergraduates was taken, to find out which dimensions of perfectionism are related to narcissism and if the relationship between them generalises across men and women. The results showed that other-oriented perfectionism and perfectionistic self-promotion were positively and uniquely correlated to narcissism. The results supported that narcissistic perfectionists are demanding, critical and grandiose.

Conclusion

The purpose of the research was to study self-compassion, narcissism and perfectionism among young adults. A sample size of 32 was taken between the age range of 18-25 years. Standardised scales were used to measure self-compassion, narcissism and perfectionism. The results found that there was a positive correlation between Self-critical Perfectionism and Self-Compassion and between Rigid Perfectionism and Narcissism. Therefore, showing the significant relationship between the above-mentioned variables. Given the findings of this paper and today's time, it would be appropriate to say that the young adults are under a microscope, which often they impose on themselves voluntarily. It is suggested that young adults understand the importance of mindfulness and take it one step at a time, be kind to themselves and take everything with a grain of salt.

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