



The Role of Self Compassion in Perceived Social Support among Young Adults Empirical Study

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Abstract: *Self-compassion involves being kind and understanding toward oneself during difficulties, fostering emotional resilience. Perceived social support refers to feeling cared for and supported by family, friends, and significant others.*

The present study explores the role of self-compassion in perceived social support among young adults, focusing on its influence on interpersonal perception and psychological adjustment. The sample size collected was 132. The questionnaires used in this study are Demographic Data Sheet, The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (SCS-SF). The MSPSS was developed in 1988 by Gregory D. Zimet, Nancy W. Dahlem, Sara G. Zimet, and Gordon K. Farley. It is a 12-item self-report instrument designed to measure perceived social support from three specific sources: family, friends, and significant others and SCS-SF scale was developed by Filip Raes, Elizabeth Pommier, Kristin D. Neff, and Dinska Van Gucht in 2011. It is a 12-item validated, shortened version of the original 26-item Self-Compassion Scale created by Dr. Kristin Neff. The scale measures self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. The data collected was analysed using the descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, t-test and Anova. The present study found a significant positive correlation between total self-compassion and perceived social support, no significant gender differences in either variable and no significant domicile differences except for the common humanity subscale.

Keywords: *Self-Compassion, Perceived Social Support, Social Functioning And Young Adults*

Introduction: Having compassion for oneself is really no different than having compassion for others. Self-compassion is simply the process of turning compassion inward. We're kind and understanding rather than harshly self-critical when we fail, make mistakes, or feel inadequate. We give ourselves support and encouragement rather than being cold or judgmental when challenges and difficulties arise in our lives. Research indicates that self-compassion is one of the most powerful sources of coping and resilience we have available, radically improving our mental and physical wellbeing. It motivates us to make changes and reach our goals not because we're inadequate, but because we care and want to be happy (Self-Compassion, 2026).

Kristin Neff, a self-compassion researcher and the first to define the term academically, describes self-compassion as having three elements.

1. Self-kindness, or refraining from harsh criticism of the self.
2. Recognizing one's own humanity, or the fact that all people are imperfect and all people experience pain.
3. Mindfulness, or maintaining a non-biased awareness of experiences, even those that are painful, rather than either ignoring or exaggerating their effect.

Self-compassion is also often confused with or linked to self-esteem, but the two differ: While self-esteem focuses on favorable self-evaluation, particularly for achievements, self-compassion is a form of self-acceptance, even in the face of failure. This emotion represents a shift away from being the best toward simply being the person one is. A person who scores high on measures of self-compassion might accept failures without defensiveness or justification and recognize that all people, even one's own self, are deserving of love and acceptance (GoodTherapy LLC, 2019). On the other hand, high self-esteem might lead to a tendency to ignore or hide any personal flaws.

Perceived social support refers to an individual's subjective belief that emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance is available from significant others when needed. Unlike objective measures of social networks, perceived support focuses on the quality and availability of support as interpreted by the individual. According to Sheldon Cohen and Thomas A. Wills (1985), social support acts as a protective factor that buffers individuals against the negative effects of stress. This stress-buffering hypothesis suggests that individuals who perceive higher levels of support are better able to cope with challenging life events.

In addition to its buffering role, social support also exerts a direct positive effect on well-being by fostering a sense of belonging, security, and self-worth (James S. House, 1981). Perceived social support is commonly conceptualized as multidimensional. Gregory D. Zimet et al. (1988) developed the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), identifying family, friends, and significant others as primary sources of support. Higher levels of perceived social support have consistently been associated with lower psychological distress and greater life satisfaction. Furthermore, strong social relationships have been shown to contribute to improved physical health and reduced mortality risk (Julianne Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010).

Perceived social support is recognized as a crucial psychosocial resource that promotes resilience, enhances coping, and supports psychological well-being, particularly among young adults facing developmental and academic challenges.

Material and Method

Participation and Survey

Area	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Rural	20	23	43
Urban	41	41	82
Semi urban	5	2	7
Total	66	66	132

In this research 132 samples were collected 66 Men and 66 Women. This study includes the Rural, Urban and Semi urban young adults.

Measures and Interpretation: The Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form (SCS-SF) is a validated 12-item, 5-point Likert scale developed by Raes et al. (2011) to measure how individuals treat themselves during

difficult times. It assesses six facets (self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification) with high reliability and a near-perfect correlation with the original 26-item scale (Raes et al., 2011).

This scale is used to measure an individual's level of self-compassion, particularly in instances of pain or failure. The scale is considered a reliable, faster alternative to the original 26-item SCS when assessing overall self-compassion.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) is a widely used 12-item self-report questionnaire designed to measure perceived social support from three specific sources: Family, Friends, and Significant Other. Developed by Zimet et al. (1988), it uses a 7-point Likert scale (1=Very Strongly Disagree, 7=Very Strongly Agree) to assess how well individuals feel supported (Zimet et al., 1988).

Total scores range from 12 to 84. Higher scores indicate greater perceived social support. The scale has demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha often 0.85–0.95), good test-retest reliability, and strong factorial validity. This scale measures the adequacy of support, higher scores are associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety. The MSPSS is known for being brief, easy to administer, and a reliable tool for assessing social support across various populations worldwide.

Data Analysis: The data collected from the Self-compassion and Perceived Social Support questionnaires were analysed using various statistical methods. These included a cross tabulation of domicile and gender, frequency distribution tables for both Self-Compassion and Perceived Social Support, Additional analyses involved Pearson's correlation to assess relationships between variables, an Independent Samples t-Test, and a t-Test for comparing group means. Furthermore, a One-Way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences, along with ANOVA tests to explore variations both within and between groups.

Results

Table 1: Results of Pearson's product moment Correlation between Self Compassion and Perceived Social Support

Self-Compassion		Perceived Social Support
Over identification	Pearson Correlation	-.346
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000
	N	132
Self Judgement	Pearson Correlation	-.152
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.081
	N	132
Self Kindness	Pearson Correlation	.265
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.002
	N	132
Mindfulness	Pearson Correlation	.373
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000
	N	132
Isolation	Pearson Correlation	.167
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.056
	N	132

Common Humanity	Pearson Correlation	.200
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.022
	N	132
Total Self Compassion	Pearson Correlation	.373
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000
	N	132

The results indicate a significant positive correlation between total self-compassion and perceived social support ($r = .373, p < .001$). This suggests that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with higher perceived social support among young adults.

Subscale-wise Findings:

- Over-identification showed a significant negative correlation with perceived social support ($r = -.346, p < .001$). This indicates that individuals who excessively identify with their negative emotions tend to perceive lower social support.
- Self-Judgement showed a negative but non-significant correlation ($r = -.152, p = .081$). Although the relationship is negative, it is not statistically significant.
- Self-Kindness showed a significant positive correlation ($r = .265, p = .002$), indicating that individuals who are kinder toward themselves perceive greater social support.
- Mindfulness showed a moderate positive and highly significant correlation ($r = .373, p < .001$). This suggests that balanced emotional awareness is strongly associated with higher perceived social support.
- Isolation showed a positive but non-significant correlation ($r = .167, p = .056$). The relationship is weak and not statistically significant at the .05 level.
- Common Humanity showed a significant positive correlation ($r = .200, p = .022$), indicating that recognizing shared human experiences is associated with greater perceived social support.

The findings suggest that positive components of self-compassion (self-kindness, mindfulness, and common humanity) are significantly associated with higher perceived social support, while negative components (over-identification and self-judgement) are associated with lower perceived social support. Mindfulness and total self-compassion showed the strongest relationships.

Table 2: An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in Self-Compassion and Perceived Social Support.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' value	Sig. (2 tailed)
Self-Compassion	Male	66	13.1515	4.94972	-.862	.390
	Female	66	13.8485	4.31542		
Perceived Social Support	Male	66	53.8182	17.92369	-1.447	.150
	Female	66	57.8182	13.54185		

The independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences among males (n = 66) and females (n = 66).

Self-Compassion

Male Mean = 13.15 (SD = 4.94)

Female Mean = 13.85 (SD = 4.31)

T = -0.862, p = .390

There is no significant gender difference in self-compassion, as the p-value is greater than .05.

Perceived Social Support

Male Mean = 53.81 (SD = 17.92)

Female Mean = 57.81 (SD = 13.54)

T = -1.447, p = .150

There is no significant gender difference in perceived social support.

The results indicate that gender does not significantly influence self-compassion or perceived social support in this sample. Although females scored slightly higher on both variables, the differences were not statistically significant.

Table 3: A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences based on domicile (rural, urban and semi-urban)

One way Anova	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig. (2 tailed)
Over identification	132	6.3864	1.88059	0.39	.962
Self Judgement	132	6.6742	1.93204	1.423	.245
Self kindness	132	6.2045	1.90915	.893	.412
Mindfulness	132	6.7500	2.31943	1.043	.355
Isolation	132	5.8788	1.98479	.309	.735
Common Humanity	132	5.8485	1.77551	5.361	.006
Total Self-Compassion	132	13.5000	4.63887	1.043	.355
Perceived Social Support	132	55.8182	15.95070	.234	.792

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in self-compassion components and perceived social support based on domicile. The results revealed that there were no significant differences in over-identification, self-judgement, self-kindness, mindfulness, isolation, total self-compassion, or perceived social support, as all p-values were greater than .05. However, a statistically significant difference was found in the common humanity component (F = 5.361, p = .006), indicating that individuals from different domiciles differ in their perception of shared human experiences. Overall, domicile does not appear to significantly influence overall self-compassion or perceived social support in this sample, except for the dimension of common humanity.

Discussion: The present study examined the relationship between self-compassion and perceived social support among young adults, along with differences based on gender and domicile. The findings provide meaningful insight into how internal emotional processes relate to social perceptions.

The correlation analysis demonstrated a significant positive relationship between total self-compassion and perceived social support. This indicates that individuals who are more compassionate toward themselves are more likely to perceive greater support from others. The detailed findings are as follows:

- Mindfulness showed the strongest positive association with perceived social support.
- Self-kindness and common humanity were significantly and positively related to perceived social support.
- Over-identification was significantly negatively related to perceived social support.
- Self-judgement and isolation were not statistically significant.

These findings suggest that the positive dimensions of self-compassion enhance emotional regulation and balanced thinking, which may improve interpersonal functioning. In contrast, excessive emotional involvement (over-identification) may reduce one's ability to perceive support realistically.

With regard to gender differences, the independent samples t-test indicated no significant differences in self-compassion or perceived social support. Although females scored slightly higher on both variables, the differences were not statistically significant. This suggests that:

- Self-compassion operates similarly across males and females.
- Perceived social support does not significantly vary by gender in this sample.

Thus, gender does not appear to be a determining factor in shaping these constructs among young adults.

The one-way ANOVA results examining domicile differences showed largely non-significant findings. Specifically:

- No significant differences were found in over-identification, self-judgement, self-kindness, mindfulness, isolation, total self-compassion, or perceived social support.
- A significant difference was found only in common humanity.

This suggests that residential background does not broadly influence self-compassion or perceived social support. However, differences in common humanity may reflect variations in social environment, cultural exposure, or community interaction across domiciles.

Overall, the study highlights that internal psychological factors, particularly mindfulness and self-kindness, play a stronger role in shaping perceived social support than demographic factors such as gender or domicile. The findings reinforce the importance of fostering self-compassion to promote emotional well-being and social connectedness among young adults.

Conclusion : The present study examined the relationship between self-compassion and perceived social support among young adults, along with differences based on gender and domicile. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between total self-compassion and perceived social support, suggesting that individuals who respond to themselves with kindness, balanced awareness, and a sense of shared humanity are more likely to perceive greater support from others. This aligns with the conceptual framework proposed

by Neff (2003a, 2003b), who identified self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness as core components of self-compassion that promote psychological resilience and interpersonal well-being.

Consistent with previous empirical findings, mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity were positively associated with perceived social support, while over-identification showed a negative relationship. Prior research has demonstrated that self-compassion enhances adaptive emotional regulation and reduces maladaptive cognitive processes, thereby strengthening social connectedness and well-being (Neff & McGehee, 2010; Zessin et al., 2015; Marsh et al., 2018). Furthermore, self-compassion has been found to buffer the negative effects of stress and improve relational functioning, which may explain its association with greater perceived support (Allen et al., 2021).

The study also found no significant gender differences in self-compassion or perceived social support, indicating that these constructs function similarly across males and females in young adulthood. Additionally, domicile did not significantly influence overall self-compassion or perceived social support, except for the common humanity dimension. These findings suggest that internal psychological resources such as self-compassion may play a more central role in shaping perceptions of support than demographic factors.

The results reinforce the importance of self-compassion as a protective psychological factor that enhances both emotional well-being and perceived social support among young adults.

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