Impact of Self-Compassion on Well-Being in Emerging Adults: A Revelation From Cluster Analysis

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Abstract

Emerging adulthood, marked by role transitions and increased stress, heightens vulnerability to psychopathology. Identifying unique characteristics and protective factors can buffer psychological turmoil and enhance well-being during this critical developmental stage. The study attempts to explore and comprehend the profile of emerging adult's self-compassion, and examine its role in influencing both their hedonic and eudemonic aspects of well-being. The current research utilized a cross-sectional design with a retrospective approach, involving a sample of 171 emerging adults aged 18 to 29 years, comprising both male and female participants. These individuals were recruited through a convenience sampling method. The instruments employed in the study included the Self-Compassion Scale, the Psychological Wellbeing Scale, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule. The K-means cluster analysis revealed two distinct clusters. The largest cluster (56.7%) comprised subjects with lower scores, while the second cluster (43.3%) was labeled the *'High Self-Compassion'* subgroup. Independent *t*-tests indicated that individuals with higher self-compassion reported significantly greater life satisfaction, higher positive affect, and lower negative affect ($p < 0.001$). Furthermore, significant differences were observed between the subgroups across all six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy ($p < 0.001$), environmental mastery ($p < 0.001$), personal growth ($p < 0.001$), positive relationships with others ($p < 0.001$), purpose in life ($p < 0.001$), and self-acceptance ($p < 0.001$). The results supported the value-based definition of self-compassion based on the evaluation of the self-compassion profile of emerging adults through self-reported measures.

Keywords: Self-compassion, psychological well-being, positive and negative affect, satisfaction with life

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Emerging adulthood - time of exploration and instability (Arnett, 2014) - connotes a critical phase of development whereby an individual is encountered with multiple changes, challenges and opportunities. As this is a transitional phase of development, emerging adults face multidimensional challenges in different significant life fronts including identity formation and need for autonomy (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is a time period of increased stress due to role transitions which makes them vulnerable to psychopathology (Arnett, 2000; Schulenberg et al., 2004). The need to establish independence, make important life decisions, and compromise social and cultural expectations are just a few of the significant opportunities and challenges that distinguish this period. In order to identify their values, interests, and objectives, people tend to explore and experiment more as they enter emerging adulthood. This stage can be exhilarating and transformative, but it can also be stressful, uncertain, and difficult on one's mental health. As such, it becomes substantial to acknowledge the characteristics and factors uniquely associated with this developmental stage of emerging adults that can help in buffering against the psychological turmoil and amplify the wellbeing quotient during this critical period of development. Self-compassion has become one such emerging construct in the context of positive psychology.

Self-compassion

Self-compassion involves an individual's desire to alleviate personal suffering and to nurture oneself with compassion. Self-compassion and self-kindness co-exists because it allows for constructive confrontations with one's pain without avoiding or isolating oneself from it. Another facet of self-compassion is giving one's shortcomings and insufficiencies uncritical thought because doing so enables one to see their issues as a part of the limitless periphery of human experiences (Neff, 2003). As Neff (2003) put forward, the construct of self-compassion includes—self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. Self-kindness entails a phenomenon whereby an individual demonstrates unconditional acceptance and

understanding towards one's own shelf with warmth and empathy as opposed to critical and harsh judgement. Another aspect of self-compassion deals with common humanity that emphasizes failures and shortcomings to be a larger shared phenomena as opposed to the classification of specific or private failure. Finally, a self-compassionate attitude succeeds mindfulness when someone puts their bad experiences and feelings into focus so they can deal with them consciously, without having to run away or avoid them. Mindfulness represents a harmonious state of awareness that occurs in the present moment, characterized by an acceptance of one's emotions without either suppressing them or becoming overwhelmed by them (Neff, 2004). It suggests the phenomena whereby an individual has a right kind of observation of the emotion that he/she experiences. The non-judgemental observation of thoughts and feelings provides for a healthy detachment and prevents any enmeshment that are likely to happen when an individual is too involved and engrossed with the arising thoughts and emotions. As a result, the dimension of mindfulness alludes to an individual's attempt to maintain a balanced perspective of their sentiments without going overboard.

Several empirical evidences have found self-compassion to be powerful indicator of positive psychological health. Self-compassion has been found to be inversely correlated with depressive symptoms, anxiety, and stress in one research by Raes et al. (2011). Neff et al. (2007) identified a positive relationship between self-compassion and both happiness and life satisfaction. Additionally, their research indicates that self-compassion may alleviate the negative effects associated with stress. Participants exhibiting higher self-compassionate attitude reported less psychological distress in reaction to a stressful circumstance. In a similar notion, Breines and Chen (2012) intended to study motivational functions of self-compassion through experiments, and found that participants ranging high on self-compassion fared well in dealing with personal weakness in a sense that they exhibited

constructive criticism of their personal weaknesses and sought comparison with their ideal counterparts. Furthermore, self-compassionate attitude not only compensated for the decremental beliefs that were associated with any act of moral indiscretion, but also prompted the participants to persevere in the face of a challenging task. Additionally, studies have shown that self-compassion is a better coping strategy than self-esteem. In a research by Neff and Vonk (2009), participants who concentrated on improving their self-esteem rather than practising self-compassion after a negative event reported less negative affect and greater emotional resilience. Finally, it has been discovered that higher psychological flexibility is correlated with self-compassion. Results from the study by Arch et al. (2014) reveal that participants with more self-compassion were more consistent in acting in accordance with their values even when confronted with hard and stressful emotional events. In case of elderly participants, Allen et al (2012) also found that self-compassion was instrumental in enhancing well-being by acting as a buffer against older adult's tendency to be judgemental and self- deprecatory regarding their changing life circumstances, functional disabilities and lack of autonomy.

Psychological Well-being

This research aims to assess the well-being index of emerging adults in relation to their self-compassion profiles. Although self-compassion has been empirically recognized as a potential predictor of individual well-being, it is crucial to develop a comprehensive understanding of the construct of 'well-being' as it is applied in this study. Well-being is characterized as a state of optimal psychological functioning and experience (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The notion of well-being is framed within two predominant traditions: hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. The hedonic perspective links well-being to the experience of pleasure and satisfaction (Homan, 2016). This perspective is often referred to as subjective well-being and is evaluated through indicators such as high life satisfaction, the presence of

positive emotions, and the infrequency of negative emotions (Diener, 1984). In contrast, psychological well-being, commonly known as eudaimonic well-being, focuses on the realization of human potential (Keyes et al., 2002).

Life Satisfaction

While life satisfaction has been described as the cognitive judgmental component of the concept of "subjective well-being" (Diener et al., 1985) in one context, it has also been described as an extremely subjective judgement of an individual that is obtained by comparing his current state of life circumstances to the standards that one has set for one's own shelf (Diener et al., 1999). In recent years, there has been a growing empirical interest in exploring the connection between self-compassion and life satisfaction. Evidence from the research conducted by Neff and McGhee (2010) suggests that self-compassion serves as a significant predictor of life satisfaction, even when controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction, while also highlighting a negative correlation between self-criticism and life satisfaction (Neff et al., 2005). Furthermore, empirical research has identified links between self-compassion and the encouragement of health-promoting behaviors, alongside a reduction in health-risk behaviors (Sirois et al., 2015). Allen and Leary (2010) found that a negative correlation exists between self-compassion and negative affect, suggesting that self-compassion may indirectly influence life satisfaction by mitigating negative emotional states. Additionally, research indicates that individuals exhibiting high levels of self-compassion are less likely to engage in avoidance and escapism, opting instead for positive cognitive restructuring. However, there seems to be no significant difference between self-compassionate and less self-compassionate individuals regarding their reliance on problem-solving or distraction as coping mechanisms. Numerous studies have indicated a consistent relationship between self-

compassion and life satisfaction. For instance, a correlational study involving college students revealed that self-compassion positively influenced their overall life satisfaction (Neely et al., 2009). In a separate investigation focused on gay men, self-compassion was identified as a significant predictor of life satisfaction, even after controlling for factors such as age, income, and sexual orientation openness. Longitudinal research further corroborates the association between self-compassion and overall happiness in life. Sbarra et al. (2012) conducted a study on individuals undergoing divorce, which demonstrated that those exhibiting higher levels of self-kindness experienced less emotional disruption related to their divorce in their daily lives. Moreover, evidence suggests that increases in life satisfaction were associated with enhanced self-compassion during therapeutic interventions for depression. In a similar vein, Zhang et al. (2018) found that self-compassion training among African American adults led to improved resilience and a reduction in depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts. Additional research has shown that enhancements in self-compassion corresponded with increased life satisfaction over a six-month timeframe in individuals suffering from chronic pain.

Positive and Negative Affect

Numerous research studies indicate a positive correlation between self-compassion and positive affect, while simultaneously revealing a negative correlation between self-compassion and negative affect. As per the Watson et al. (1988) defined “Positive Affect indicate the degree to which a person feels energized, engaged, and active. While low positive affect is characterised by negative emotional states like sadness and lethargy, high positive affect is a condition characterized of high vitality, complete concentration, and enjoyable participation. While low negative affect is a state of calm and serenity, negative affect is a generic dimension of subjective suffering and unpleasant engagement that encompasses a range of adverse mood states, including anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear,

and anxiousness". Research has demonstrated that individuals with elevated levels of self-compassion often experience increased positive emotions and reduced negative emotions (Krieger et al., 2015). A scoping review by Morgan et al. (2020) explored the impact of self-compassion on health-related behaviors in adults identified as prediabetic, as well as those diagnosed with type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. The review concluded that self-compassion, which involves self-acceptance and the practice of kindness towards oneself during difficult periods, can mitigate negative effects and enhance self-regulation. Numerous studies (Terry & Leary, 2011; Biber & Ellis, 2019; Dundas et al., 2017) have consistently shown that self-compassion-focused interventions are effective in promoting positive self-regulatory behaviors. Additionally, research by Halamova et al. (2019) revealed beneficial effects of self-compassion on both physical and psychological outcomes in young individuals. This study indicated that self-compassion interventions led to a notable reduction in self-criticism and unkind responses towards oneself. A comparative analysis involving undergraduate students, meditation practitioners, and older adults found that those who practiced self-compassion exhibited greater empathy and concern for the suffering of others, while still experiencing personal distress (Neff & Pommier, 2013).

The aforementioned demarcation of well-being into subjective well-being and psychological well-being shows two separate contours, where subjective well-being was set forth as a portrayal of hedonistic viewpoint and psychological well-being was conveyed as well-being derived from optimal and positive functioning that is meaning and value driven. A widely recognized and influential theoretical framework concerning psychological well-being is grounded in the work of Ryff (1989). This model delineates six distinct dimensions that collectively define the operationalization of psychological well-being. Each of these dimensions presents unique challenges that individuals encounter in their pursuit of a meaningful life and fulfilling experiences. The dimensions include self-acceptance, which

entails fostering a favorable perception of oneself and one's circumstances; personal growth, indicative of a continuous journey of development; a sense of purpose in life, reflecting the belief that one's existence has direction; the cultivation of positive interpersonal relationships; environmental mastery, which denotes the capacity to effectively navigate and manage one's surroundings; and autonomy, marked by a robust sense of self-determination. Eudaimonic well-being represents a unique aspect of psychological functioning (Homan, 2016) associated with optimal personal development and the realization of potential. These assertions are grounded in empirical research that indicates a moderate correlation between eudaimonic well-being and subjective well-being measures (Keyes et al. 2002; Ryff 1989a). Additionally, psychological well-being postulates that meaningful strivings on the part of the individual towards actualizing his/her greatest potential is not subjected to experiencing instant gratification, rather are more inclined towards deeper level of inner satisfaction and fulfilment (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Extensive research supports the notion that self-compassion is linked to favorable psychological outcomes and improved adaptability. Investigations have revealed a relationship between self-compassion and effective coping strategies (Neff, 2004). In a study targeting older adults, Homan (2016) found a positive association between self-compassion and psychological well-being, highlighting that self-compassion acted as a mediator in the connection between self-assessed health and depression. Furthermore, in a study examining individuals with recurrent depression, self-compassion emerged as a protective factor, influencing the impact of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on the intensity of depressive symptoms over a 15-month duration (Kuyken et al., 2010). Felder et al. (2016) explored the influence of self-compassion on psychological well-being in perinatal women, discovering that elevated levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms were correlated with diminished self-compassion. Additionally, research by Zhang et al. (2020) illustrated a positive

association between self-compassion and life satisfaction, alongside a negative correlation with depression and anxiety. Likewise, MacBeth and Gumley (2012) recognized self-compassion as a crucial predictor of psychological well-being, even when accounting for various demographic and personality factors. Other investigations have examined the ways in which self-compassion can bolster psychological health. For instance, Shapira and Mongrain (2010) reported that self-compassion was linked to enhanced emotional regulation, which subsequently correlated with increased well-being. In a related study, Molnar et al. (2018) demonstrated that self-compassion could alleviate self-criticism and mitigate the adverse effects of perfectionism on psychological health.

However, this study has attempted to establish a connection between two key viewpoints on wellbeing: the eudemonic perspective, which is characterised by psychological well-being, and the hedonic perspective is defined by the concepts of life satisfaction and affective well-being, which encompass both positive and negative emotions. This viewpoint prioritizes the attainment of elevated positive affect, diminished negative affect, and an enhanced sense of life satisfaction, thereby framing well-being through a hedonic lens (Diener, 2000; Sonnentag, 2015). According to Ryan and Deci (2001), eudemonic well-being, on the other hand, refers to living completely or to enabling the fullest level of human potential. The pursuit of well-being is not solely about enhancing positive experiences while reducing adverse occurrences (Ryan et al., 2001). Nevertheless, there is paucity of empirical attempts towards a comprehensive investigation of self-compassion in relation to both the hedonic and eudemonic perspectives of well-being, especially in Indian context. Moreover, it was revealed in the course of review that although a few studies have attempted to acknowledge the concept of self-compassion, there is absence of any such attempt towards exploring the natural separateness of groups based on the characteristics of self-compassionate characteristics in emerging adult population. Moreover, this research holds

significance from the standpoint of developing scientific intervention initiatives that support emerging adults' healthy self-compassionate value patterns and thus enhance their overall development.

The present study: Taking into consideration, the vulnerabilities associated with the developmental stage of emerging adulthood and the buffering effects associated with trait self-compassion, this research attempts to explore and comprehend the profile of emerging adult's self-compassion, and examine its role in influencing both their hedonic and eudemonic aspects of well-being. Thirdly, this study also aims at identifying the important confounding variables.

Methods

Research Design

The present study utilized a cross-sectional design with retrospective approach using quantitative method. The study adhered to the principles outlines in the Declaration of Helsenki and followed the STROBE reporting checklist.

Participants

The research included a sample of 171 emerging adults sourced from various universities across India. Participants were aged between 18 and 29 years, comprising both male and female individuals. Recruitment was conducted through non-random sampling methods, specifically utilizing convenience and snowball sampling techniques.

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Emerging adults aged 18 to 29 years
2. Both male and female emerging adults
3. Emerging adults who provide consent for the study
4. Emerging adults who are able to read and understand English language

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Emerging adults who have been suffering from severe psychiatric and medical conditions.

Measurements:

Socio demographic data sheet: It contains participants age, gender, education, residence and family type

The Self-compassion Scale: The self-compassion scale, developed by Dr. Kristin Neff in 2003, serves as a self-report instrument designed to assess self-compassion. Comprising 26 items across six dimensions—Self-Kindness, Self-Judgment, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness, and Over-identification—respondents evaluate each item using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "Almost never" and 5 signifies "Almost always." Notably, the items associated with the dimensions of self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification are scored in reverse. Elevated scores in self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, coupled with lower scores in self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification, indicate a greater level of self-compassion. The scale demonstrates strong psychometric properties, with a Cronbach's alpha of .92 (Neff, 2003).

Psychological Wellbeing Scale: The Psychological Wellbeing Scale, developed by Carol D. Ryff in 2007, serves as a self-assessment tool for evaluating psychological wellbeing. This scale comprises 42 items categorized into six distinct dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Participants are instructed to evaluate each item using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strong agreement and 7 indicates strong disagreement. The internal consistency of each dimension was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in the following coefficients: self-acceptance ($\alpha = 0.93$), positive relationships with others ($\alpha =$

0.91), autonomy (α = 0.86), environmental mastery (α = 0.90), purpose in life (α = 0.90), and personal growth (α = 0.87).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale: The Life Satisfaction Scale was created by Diener and colleagues in 1985. This instrument is a self-assessment tool comprising five items that gauge an individual's satisfaction with life. Participants are instructed to evaluate each item using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 7 signifies strong agreement. The individual scores are summed to derive a total life satisfaction score, with higher totals indicating greater life satisfaction. The scale demonstrates robust psychometric properties, evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha of .87 (Diener et al., 1985).

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule: The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) was introduced by Watson et al. in 1988. The version utilized in this context is a brief form of the PANAS, comprising 20 items, with an equal distribution of 10 items assessing positive affect and 10 items evaluating negative affect. Participants were instructed to rate each item using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "Very slightly or not at all" and 5 signifies "Extremely." The reliability of the positive affect scale, as measured by the Cronbach alpha coefficient, ranged from 0.86 to 0.90, while the negative affect scale exhibited a reliability range of 0.84 to 0.87 (Watson et al., 1988).

Procedure

In the current research, a Google Form was created to streamline the data collection process from emerging adults. The initial page of the form contained a consent from, followed by a concise overview of the study's objectives. The subsequent section gathered socio-demographic information from the participants. Each following section included various assessment tools, such as the self-compassion scale, the satisfaction with life scale, the positive and negative affect schedule, and the psychological well-being scale. After the Google Form was created, the investigator reached out to potential participants via telephone,

social media platforms, and in-person interactions to invite them to partake in the study. Furthermore, the investigator enhanced data collection efforts through personal networks. The link to the Google Form was also disseminated through social media channels, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. Additionally, the investigator engaged with participants directly to initiate the data collection process. It is important to note that no incentives were provided for participation in the study. Finally, participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study before completing the survey and were encouraged to reach out to the researcher with any questions or concerns at any stage of the recruitment and participation process.

Statistical Analysis

The data obtained for the study were subjected to statistical screening and processing in order to eliminate any potential for data input errors. After the pertinent coding of the data was done, additional data analyses were performed using SPSS Inc. (2011). IBM SPSS Statistics Base 20. Chicago, IL: SPSS Inc. To investigate and explore the profile of self-compassion among emerging adults and to disseminate its potential in the development of life satisfaction, affect and psychological wellbeing, k-means cluster analysis was performed along with other desirable descriptive statistics. All the statistical significance level was set at less than 0.05.

Results

Socio Demographic Characteristics of Emerging Adults

The average age of the sample (N = 171) was 22.89 years, with a standard deviation of 2.49. Among the 171 participants, 103 were female and 68 were male. All participants were unmarried. Regarding educational attainment, 18.1% were undergraduates, 27.5% were graduates, 33.9% were postgraduates, and 20.5% held professional qualifications. A significant majority, 71.3%, resided in nuclear families, while 28.7% lived in joint families.

In terms of living arrangements, 55% of participants stayed in their family homes, whereas 45% lived away from home. The majority of participants (63.2%) were located in urban areas, with 24.6% in semi-urban areas and 12.3% in rural regions (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample (N = 171)

Demographic Characteristic	Value
Age	Mean = 22.89, SD = 2.49
Gender	
Female	103 (60.2%)
Male	68 (39.8%)
Marital Status	
Unmarried	171 (100%)
Educational	
Undergraduates	(31) 18.1%
Graduates	(47) 27.5%
Postgraduates	(58) 33.9%
Professional Qualifications	(35) 20.5%
Family Type	
Nuclear Families	(122) 71.3%
Joint Families	(49) 28.7%
Living Arrangements	
Family Home	(94) 55%
Away from Home	(77) 45%
Geographic Location	
Urban Areas	(108) 63.2%
Semi-Urban Areas	(42) 24.6%
Rural Areas	(21) 12.3%

Findings of the Cluster Analysis

K-means clustering is a computational method employed to categorize objects into K distinct groups based on their features (Rawal et al., 2021). The primary objective of cluster analysis is to uncover a structure within a specified dataset, resulting in the formation of clusters. Items within a cluster are expected to exhibit similarity to each other while demonstrating dissimilarity from items in other clusters. The ultimate arrangement of the data

must adhere to a specific optimality criterion, which reflects the preference for various partitions (Zakharov, 2016). In the current investigation, k-means cluster analysis was utilized to explore the self-compassion profiles of emerging adults, taking into account the six dimensions of self-compassion: kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. The analysis commenced with an exploratory phase employing the k-means method. Subsequently, both two-cluster and three-cluster solutions were examined, with the two-cluster solution identified as the most suitable due to its ability to account for a greater proportion of variance in the clustering variables. Convergence was reached after nine iterations, marked by minimal or no changes in the cluster centers. The two-cluster solution was assigned theoretical significance. Table 2 displays the mean and standard deviation values for the six dimensions of self-compassion across the two identified clusters or sub-groups.

Table 2

Descriptive Analysis for six Dimensions of Self-compassion Across two Emerged Clusters (n = 171)

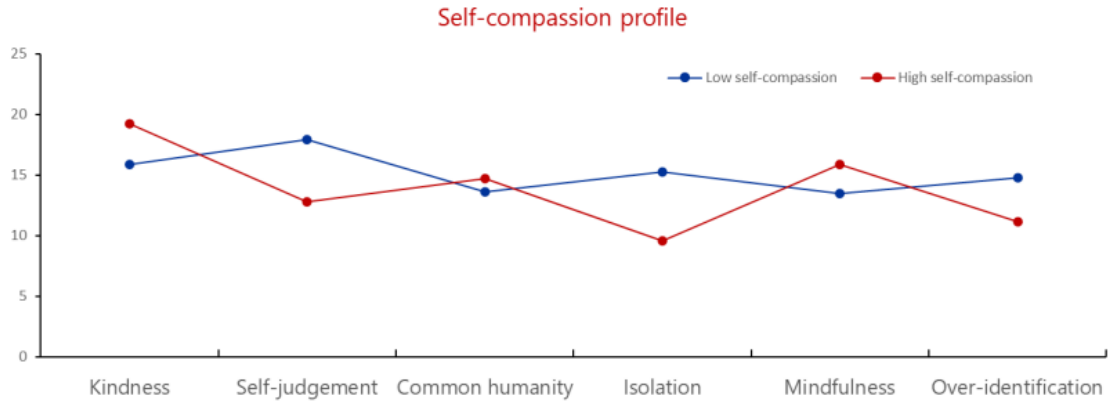
	Kindness		Self-judgement		Common humanity		Isolation		Mindfulness		Over-identification	
	Low	*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*	*High*	*Low*	*High*
M	15.88	19.22	17.94	12.81	13.58	14.73	15.24	9.58	13.45	15.88	14.76	11.16
SD	4.04	3.639	2.875	3.483	3.415	3.089	2.886	3.066	3.373	2.591	2.174	2.586

As emerged from the current analysis, the best fitting result was a two-cluster solution. The largest cluster which accounted for about 56.7% was comprised of those subjects who had lower scores in dimensions like kindness, common humanity and mindfulness, whereas, had greater scores in dimensions pertaining to the negative aspects of self-compassion like–self-judgement, isolation and over-identification. Hence, this cluster was assigned the label as ‘Low self-compassion’ subgroup (n=97). Likewise, the other cluster was assigned the label ‘High self-compassion’ subgroup which accounted for about 43.3% (n = 74) and was comprised of those subjects who had higher scores in dimensions like

kindness, common humanity and mindfulness, but had lower scorings in negative the aspects of self-compassion like–self-judgement, isolation and over-identification. There were 60 females and 37 males in 'Low self-compassion' subgroup, forasmuch, in case of 'High self-compassion' subgroup, the number of females was 43 and that of males was 31. Figure 1 depicts the profile of the two-emerged clusters of emerging adults.

Table 2

Depicts the Profile of the two Emerged Clusters of Emerging Adults in Self-compassion.



Self-compassion as an Indicator of Emerging Adult's Life Satisfaction, Positive and Negative Affect and Wellbeing

In alignment with the second objective of this research, which sought to investigate the impact of self-compassion on the well-being of emerging adults, analyses were undertaken to differentiate between two distinct subgroups: individuals exhibiting low self-compassion and those demonstrating high self-compassion. This study concentrated on multiple facets of well-being, encompassing life satisfaction, positive and negative affect, as well as six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. To evaluate the disparities in well-being indicators between these two subgroups, nine independent sample t-tests were conducted.

Appealingly, observations made from the results of t-test predicted that the two clusters based on self-compassion scores of subjects significantly differed from each other in respect of life-satisfaction, positive and negative affect and all the six dimensions of psychological wellbeing. Emerging adults with high self-compassion (M = 24.22, SD = 5.955) reported significantly higher satisfaction with life compared to those with low self-compassion (M = 20.08, SD = 7.063), with a t-value of -4.053 ($P < 0.001$), indicating a significant difference. Emerging adults in the high self-compassion group (M = 36.80, SD = 6.806) experienced significantly higher positive affect than those in the low self-compassion group (M = 30.65, SD = 7.587), with a t-value of -5.486 ($P < 0.001$), also showing a statistically significant difference. Conversely, emerging adults with high self-compassion (M = 21.04, SD = 6.541) reported significantly lower negative affect compared to those with low self-compassion (M = 27.00, SD = 7.833). This difference was also statistically significant, with a t-value of 5.287 ($P < 0.001$). All comparisons indicate that higher self-compassion is associated with greater life satisfaction, higher positive affect, and lower negative affect, with all differences being statistically significant at $P < 0.001$.

Individually expressed, for the domain life-satisfaction, the emerged subgroups differed significantly ($p<0.001$), similarly, for both positive and negative affect, the subgroups also deferred significantly ($p<0.01$) and finally, for all the six dimensions of psychological well-being i.e. autonomy ($p<0.001$), environmental mastery ($p<0.001$), personal growth ($p<0.001$), positive relation with others ($p<0.001$), purpose in life ($p<0.001$), self-acceptance ($p<0.001$), the subgroups differed significantly.

The results further suggested that the emerging adults contained within the subgroup labelled as High self-compassion subgroup obtained significant higher scores in all the positive dimensions measured in the study, and at the same time also obtained significant lower scores in the measure of negative affect. Contrastingly, with the emerging adults'

participants contained within the subgroup of Low self-compassion, the scores were significantly lower in all the positive dimension being measured, except the dimension of negative affect, in which the subgroup's scores were significantly higher than High self-compassion subgroup. An independent samples t-test was performed to evaluate the impact of participant age on the composition of the high self-compassion and low self-compassion groups. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in the mean ages of the emerging adult participants across the two subgroups ($p<0.005$).

Table 3

Findings of the Independent t-Test Analysis (n = 171)

Variables	Cluster	N	M	SD	T	P
SWL	Low self-compassion	97	20.08	7.063	-4.053	.000
	High self-compassion	74	24.22	5.955	-4.147	.000
Positive Affect	Low self-compassion	97	30.65	7.587	-5.486	.000
	High self-compassion	74	36.80	6.806	-5.567	.000
Negative Affect	Low self-compassion	97	27.00	7.833	5.287	.000
	High self-compassion	74	21.04	6.541	5.416	.000

Note: SWL = Satisfaction with life

Discussion

The current research made an effort to examine and comprehend the self-compassion profile in emerging adults. The subjects of the current study were all emerging adults, who were initially thought to be a homogenous group. However, when their levels of self-compassion were taken into account across all six dimensions—kindness, self-judgement, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification—they were statistically divided and grouped into two meaningful natural subgroups or clusters—High subgroup and Low subgroup. This signifies that, although the initial group was homogenous, the degree of presence of self-compassion is not uniform across the subjects. Two different heterogeneous groups were formed depending on the degree and severity of self-compassion experiences.

One of the key findings of the study also suggested that the two subgroups of emerging adults were confounded by age. Self-compassion as a trait in emerging adults

distinguishingly differs with age. For this reason, it was observed that the emerging adults differed significantly across the ages. In terms of possible age-group variations in self-compassion, the developmental research offers a more precise foundation for speculation. Developmental psychology substantiates the scientific claim that certain potentials or abilities are specific to certain developmental stages. In relation to the development of self-compassion, it is observed that in comparison to young adults, more self-compassionate attitudes are noteworthy in middle aged adults and elderly (Hwang et al., 2016; Neff, 2003). Various empirical studies have explored the self-compassionate values and practices in middle aged adults and elderlies and have found that self-acceptance i.e., one of the key aspects of self-compassion is instrumental in enkindling wellbeing and positive outcomes despite the developmental challenges faced by them (Ryff, 1989; Ong et al., 2006).

In acknowledgement of the second objective that aimed at examining the impact of self-compassion on well-being in emerging adults, an assessment of how subjects differed in their accounts of well-being (life satisfaction, positive and negative affect and six dimensions of psychological well-being) depending on their profile of self-compassion was made. As evident from the results of the study emerging adults self-compassion profile significantly influenced their ability to experience wellbeing and satisfaction. It was also evident from the results that the wellbeing scores of the subjects belonging to higher cluster were significantly better than those belonging to the Low cluster. Self-compassion within emerging adults have been found to be instrumental in accelerating positive states of functioning. In the current study, the concept of wellbeing has been examined through both hedonic and eudaimonic lenses. The hedonic perspective emphasizes the subjective dimensions of wellbeing, which include essential elements such as the presence of positive emotions, minimal negative emotions, and elevated life satisfaction (Diener, 2000). Conversely, the eudaimonic perspective frames wellbeing primarily in relation to personal development and self-

actualization, authenticity, personal expression, and the quest for meaning in life (Sonnentag, 2015; Ryff, 1995). This latter viewpoint can be encapsulated within the broader notion of psychological wellbeing.

To illuminate the results one by one, this study finds significant influence of self-compass on life-satisfaction of the participants, which suggests that individuals demonstrating the capacity to extend compassion, support, and empathy towards oneself, especially in moments of hardship or failure are most likely to experience overall sense of subjective satisfaction and contentment in life. Owing to the fact that emerging adulthood years are marked by critical adulthood choices, where individuals are more vulnerable towards experiencing negative emotions and functioning, self-compassion can exhibit buffering effect by providing individuals, positive resources in form of character strength in dealing with negative life events and outcomes, that ultimately increase their levels of life-satisfaction. Numerous empirical studies have substantiated the positive correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction. For instance, research involving gay men (Jennings & Tan, 2014), individuals in self-quarantine during the pandemic (Li et al., 2021), older adults (Kim & Ko, 2018), and both college students and community adults (Wei et al., 2011) has highlighted this relationship. Furthermore, additional evidence supporting the connection between self-compassion and overall life happiness has emerged from various studies. Notably, Kotsou et al. (2011) found that self-compassion significantly predicted life satisfaction among young adults. Similarly, the investigation by Sirois and Kitner (2015) on individuals with chronic health issues indicated that higher levels of self-compassion were associated with increased life satisfaction and lower depressive symptoms.

A significant finding from the study indicates that a greater degree of self-compassion correlates with an increased level of positive affect and a reduced level of negative affect. Self-compassion inherently includes specific emotional regulation skills, which involve

treating oneself with kindness and understanding during times of hardship and distress. Self-compassionate individuals demonstrate the traits of self-kindness as opposed to self-judgement, an understanding of universality of pain and suffering as opposed to being overindulged in suffering alone and also if confronted with negative affective states and thoughts, they are more likely to be mindfully attentive to internal disturbances, in order to generate a balanced perspective of their experience so as not to overreact to it (Miyagawa, 2023). A substantial body of research has examined the relationship between self-compassion and positive affect, consistently demonstrating a positive correlation between these two constructs. For example, Neff et al. (2007) found that individuals exhibiting higher levels of self-compassion reported greater positive affect compared to those with lower levels. Additionally, longitudinal research conducted by Sirois et al. (2015) indicated that self-compassion serves as a predictor of positive affect over time, suggesting that individuals who engage in self-compassionate practices are more inclined to experience happiness. Conversely, evidence suggests that negative affect and self-compassion are inversely related. Raes et al. (2011) identified a connection between self-compassion and indicators of stress, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, their findings indicated that self-compassion mediates the relationship between self-criticism and negative affect, implying that individuals who cultivate self-compassion are less susceptible to the negative emotions associated with self-criticism (Neff et al., 2005). Regarding negative affect, the study revealed that those with self-compassion experienced significantly lower levels of negative emotions. This result further suggests that self-compassion enables individual to deal with adversities and difficult emotions in a more non-judgemental and consciously aware manner which prevent excessive indulgence of an individual with immature or maladaptive coping strategies like denial and suppression that later may result into experience of psychological or psychopathological issues. Studies relate the trait self-compassion with reflective wisdom (Neff et al., 2007;

Ardelt, 2003) that depicts that those who have higher level of self-compassion have equilibrium in appraisal of their self which signifies the emotional safety they experience.

In context of the analysis made to understand the association between self-compassion and all the individual domains of psychological well-being it was found that for the dimension of self-acceptance, the group with higher self-compassion scores, scored higher. Self-acceptance encompasses positive attitude toward self with an acknowledgement of multi-dimensionality of self, including positive and negative qualities in both past and present context (Ryff, 1995). The capacity to recognize one's own flaws and imperfections with enhanced understanding and kindness exemplifies the positive correlation between self-compassion and self-acceptance. Acknowledging that mistakes and setbacks are inherent aspects of the human experience necessitates a degree of self-compassion. Individuals who practice self-compassion tend to be more forgiving of their own shortcomings, as opposed to being overly critical or judgmental. Empirical research supports the notion that self-compassion and self-acceptance are interrelated. For example, a positive association between these two constructs was identified even when controlling for factors such as self-esteem and self-criticism (Neff & Vonk, 2009). Furthermore, Neff (2003) argued that self-compassion represents a constructive form of self-acceptance. Similarly, both the groups of higher and lower self-compassion differed significantly in terms of purpose of life. This implied that higher self-compassion was related to higher purpose in life. Self-compassion can aid people in identifying and pursuing their values and goals, which is one way it may be favourably related to life purpose. Self-compassion increases a person's propensity to be accepting and encouraging of themselves, even when they encounter difficulties or challenges. The development of greater clarity and focus in one's life, as well as the identification of values and fulfilling objectives, can be aided by this. Additionally, self-compassion may aid people in growing empathy and a sense of connectedness with others, which may heighten their

sense of purpose in life. When people are kind and understanding to themselves and others, they may be more motivated to seek goals that are consistent with their values and that contribute to others as well. Additionally, studies have shown that having a purpose in life may mediate the link between self-compassion and other favourable results, such as resilience and well-being. For instance, research by Sirois et al., (2015) showed that the relationship between self-compassion and wellbeing among people with chronic illness was partially mediated by a person's sense of purpose in life. Regarding self-compassion and one of the other dimensions of psychological well-being i.e., positive relations with others, it appears that subjects with high self-compassion have demonstrated higher positive inter-personal relationships which indicates that greater level of self-compassion enables an individual to demonstrate self-acceptance, healthy attributions, emotional regulatory skills and self-worth. These abilities in turn enhance inter-personal as well as intra-personal relationships. Many research evidences posit that empathy mediates as a potential mechanism, through which self-compassion influences development and sustenance of positive relationships. Weng et al (2013) in a study contained that, people who practise self-compassion exhibited more activity in brain areas linked to empathy when they saw images of people in pain. Moreover, research indicates that having positive relationships with others, such as romantic partnerships, friendships, and social connections, is favourably correlated with having self-compassion. Relationship between self-compassion and personal growth have already been empirically studied which suggest that higher level of self-compassion encourages motivation and competency in contrast to over-indulgence or rumination. One such research evidence suggests that when participants were asked to remember their regret experiences, self-compassionate people claimed to have made more progress in their personal lives (Zhang & Chen, 2016). High levels of self-compassion correlate with reduced procrastination, enhanced adaptive motivational strategies, and increased self-efficacy within

academic settings (Williams et al., 2008; Neff et al., 2005; Iskender, 2009). A study conducted in a workplace revealed that Self-compassion enabled workers to show perseverance and learn from their mistakes in the workplace (Shepherd & Cardon, 2009). Again, a significant relationship between self-compassion and environmental mastery was also found. While environmental mastery includes an individual's potential to have an effective and constructive command of one's environment, individuals high on the trait self-compassion are well equipped with the affective and cognitive aptness through which they consciously keep on constructing and regulating their environment. The results indicate that a greater degree of self-compassion is associated with increased autonomy. Individuals who exhibit high levels of self-compassion possess the capacity for self-soothing, can focus their mindful awareness on their emotions, and experience a sense of shared humanity in moments of distress (Hope et al., 2014). Furthermore, self-compassion encourages individuals to adopt a mastery-oriented approach rather than a performance-oriented one.

Limitations and Future Directions

The research does have a number of significant limitations, though. Self-reports may be problematic for emerging adults because they may not be able to correctly judge how self-compassionate, they are. Additionally, this research employed a cross-sectional design, which may not be reliable for determining causal relationships. The study has also ruled out the possibility that the components of well-being themselves could have an impact on self-compassion. There is good scientific evidence that there is a bidirectional and reciprocal relationship between self-compassion and wellbeing. (Kelly & Dupasquier 2016). Hence, more clarity could be gained with the use of longitudinal designs in future studies.

Conclusion

The results supported the value-based definition of self-compassion based on the evaluation of the self-compassion profile of emerging adults through self-reported measures.

It has been found that emerging adults' self-compassion ideals are a sign of various aspects of their well-being. The results of the present study raise concerns about awareness, evaluation, intervention planning, and future research. It is important to practise and apply self-compassion techniques with emerging adults on a variety of developmental levels. The research could be useful for developing scientific intervention initiatives that support emerging adults' healthy self-compassionate value patterns and thus enhance their overall development.

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