Self-Compassion and Grit Among Young Adults

Vijayashree R[1], Ayesha Arif Zinna[2]
[1,2]*Department of Psychology, Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women, Chennai, India*

***Abstract* - The current study examined the gender differences in self-compassion and grit among young adults. The study also investigated the relationship between self-compassion and grit among young adults. Two hundred young adults (Male: 100, Female: 100) from the state of Tamil Nadu, completed the Self-Compassion Scale and the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S). Independent samples t-tests were computed to find out if there were any gender differences in these variables. Pearson's product moment correlations were carried out to find if there were any significant relationship between the variables. The analysis revealed that there was a significant gender difference in self-compassion between male and female young adults, female young adults had higher levels of self-compassion when compared to males. There was a significant gender difference in mindfulness subscale of self-compassion between male and female young adults. Female young adults had higher levels of mindfulness when compared to males. There were no significant gender differences in self-kindness, self-judgment, common-humanity, isolation, over-identification subscales of self-compassion and grit between male and female young adults. There was a significant positive relationship between self-kindness and grit, mindfulness and grit and self-compassion and grit among the male and female young adults. There was a significant negative relationship between self-judgment and grit, between isolation and grit and over-identification and grit among the male and female young adults. There was no significant relationship between common-humanity and grit among the male and female young adults.**

***Index Terms* - Self-compassion, Grit, Young adults**

INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood is a period of life where transition from adolescence to adult life takes place. They take on adult roles and responsibilities and are engaged in personal growth. This can be challenging as one strives to gain an identity for themselves in the society. Being self-compassionate towards oneself, may help the individuals to relieve the stress and guilt that occurs as a result of the perceived evaluations and self-judgments. (Stutts et al., 2018)

Compassion is being concerned for the sufferings of others, where one tends to show care and empathy for the individuals who are suffering and are encountering difficult times thereby helping them combat their distress by engaging in acts that helps them to lessen the pain they are going through, as a result of the problematic situation. (Neff, 2021) In the same way, self-compassion is the tendency to have understanding and acceptance towards oneself, when dealing with difficult times. As stated by Neff (2003), self-compassion involves being receptive to sufferings of the self, experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking a considerate, nonjudgmental perspective toward one's inadequacies and shortcomings, and recognizing that the experience one is going through is an element of the common human occurrences and happenings. Being, self-compassionate involves careful identification of the emotions that one personally is going through, and recognizing them without any criticisms or judgments, while also being thoughtful and aware that the distressing episodes such as failure, humiliation, loss of a loved one, a widespread pandemic and many other happenings. This altered perception will lead to self-acceptance with one's own short-comings and imperfections and it will help individuals to move towards change, in order to promote self-growth. This change will occur not because of the negative self-attributions, need for perception or the fear of being judged but because of the care and concern for one's own self. Being self-compassionate improves one's feeling of self-worth (K. D. Neff & Vonk, 2009), not by comparing oneself with others or the skills or abilities they possess but just because they are human. It boosts their happiness (Neff et al., 2007), increases their motivation (Breines & Chen, 2012), and promotes their inner self. It is also found that self-compassion increases the psychological well-being of individuals. Neff, Kirkpatrick, et al., (2007), studied

self-compassion and adaptive psychological functioning among two groups (mean age= 20.9 years and 21.05 years) and found a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being among the participants of the study. They also found that self-compassion helps to mitigate anxiety, when faced with an ego-threat in laboratory settings. Lee Thomas & Thenmozhi, (2019), examined psychological distress and self-compassion among young adults and found that increase in levels of self-compassion leads to decreased psychological distress among young adults. The difference between making a bad choice and being a bad person can be recognized through self-compassion. It helps in understanding that making a bad decision does not make a person bad or unworthy. (Gordon, 2019). Self-compassion can be enhanced by practicing forgiveness to both self and others, mindfulness, finding common ground with others, accepting the one's own flaws and exercising growth mindset.

Grit is the tendency of individuals to be determined and perseverant, in order to accomplish their dreams or aspirations. Duckworth et al., (2007), defined grit as being passionate and perseverative in order to achieve long term goals. Oppong, (2018), stated that grit is a belief that one can overcome the failure. He said that it is the readiness to takeover challenges, rather than avoiding them. According to him, perseverance, resilience, need for achievement and ambition are linked to grit. Grit is not only a trait but also a skill. It can be developed and enhanced in an individual through learning, over time and practice (Oppong, 2018). Grit helps individuals in order to with stand difficult circumstances without losing confidence, makes individuals consistent in their efforts, helps them to focus on what they can actually control and also helps them learn from their mistakes and let go of them. Finally, it protects individuals from becoming victims of the external influences because it helps them retain their personal choice. (Wilkinson et al., 2015). Akbağ& Ümmet, (2017), examined the predictive role of grit and basic psychological needs satisfaction on subjective well-Being among 348 young adults and found that grit predicts subjective well- being among young adults. They also found that there was a significant positive relationship between satisfaction of three basic needs and grit tendency among young adults. The levels of grit in an individual can be enhanced by building social support, setting small attainable goals, avoiding negative self-talk, having an optimistic view, developing a growth mindset and by practicing self-compassion. (Miller, 2020)

While self-compassion is being compassionate towards oneself, grit is being passionate towards attaining the goals. In this competitive and developing world, it is important that individuals stay determined in order to achieve goals, despite facing obstacles. In addition, well-being of the self is equally important. Self-compassion helps individuals in order to have a better view of themselves and grit improves one's perseverance towards achieving one's goals. Also, very few studies were done relating the variables of self-compassion and grit. Weiss, (2018), examined the predictive abilities of mindfulness, self-compassion and grit among 228 college students (mean age = 19.84yrs). She found that higher levels of self-compassion were related to better well-being and that self-compassion partially intervened the relationship between mindfulness and well-being among the college students. She also found that there was no significant relationship between grit and well-being among the college students. The authors in this study attempt to examine the relationship between the self-compassion and grit among young adults.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To compare self-compassion and grit among male and female young adults.
- To examine the relationship between self-compassion and grit among male and female young adults.

METHODS

Sample

The convenient sampling method was used in the present study. The sample consisted of 200 young adults, from the state of Tamil Nadu in the age range 19 to 25 years, out of which 100 were males (mean age = 22.4 years) and 100 were females (mean age = 21.5 years).

Procedure of data collection

The data was collected through an online Google form, which was shared with the target population through

WhatsApp. The purpose of the study was explained through the description on the online form. The subjects were encouraged to participate of their free will. Informed consent was taken and confidentiality of the responses was guaranteed.

Research design

Ex-Post facto research design was chosen for the study.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect data:

1) Self-Compassion Scale

Self-Compassion Scale by Neff, (2003), measures the level of self-compassion towards oneself. The scale consists of 26 items and has 6 subscales: self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness, self-judgment, isolation and over-identification. Self-kindness is being warm and understanding towards oneself, when encountered with suffering, failure or feelings of inadequacy. Self-judgment is the act of judging oneself. It results from the thoughts the individual has about oneself and the meaning attached to those thoughts. Common humanity is the ability to recognize that other people also experience difficulty and pain, like oneself. Isolation is the feeling of loneliness one experiences when encountered with suffering, failure or feelings of inadequacy. Mindfulness is a non-judgmental, receptive mind state in which one notices thoughts and feelings as they are, without trying to suppress or refuse them. Over-identification is getting over involved in one's own thoughts or feelings, which prevents a person from further moving on.

The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from (1) almost never to (5) almost always. Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-compassion. Reverse scoring should not be done for calculating the scores of the subscales. This scale is shown to have adequate psychometric properties, including high internal consistency of .92.

2) Short Grit Scale (Grit-S)

The Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) by Duckworth & Quinn, (2009), measures the trait level perseverance and passion for long term goals. The scale consists of 8 items, selected from the original grit scale (Grit-O, Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews and Kelly, 2007). The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very much like me (5) to not like me at all (1). Higher scores indicate higher levels of grit. The scale is shown to have adequate psychometric properties, and an internal consistency of $r = .59$, $p < .001$.

3) Personal data sheet

Demographic information such as age, gender, educational qualification, and occupation of the participants were collected.

Statistical Analyses

- Pearson's correlation co-efficient was used to investigate the relationship between self-compassion and grit, and between the subscales of self-compassion and grit.
- Independent Samples t-test was used to examine the gender differences in self-compassion, the subscales of self-compassion and grit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Means and t-values for self-kindness, self-judgment, common-humanity, isolation, mindfulness, over-identification, self-compassion and grit between male and female young adults.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	t-value	Significance levels
Grit	Male young adults Female young adults	100 100	25.82 26.91	1.6801	Not Significant
Self-compassion	Male young adults Female young adults	100 100	80.56 85.45	3.0779 $p<0.01$	
Self-kindness	Male young adults Female young adults	100 100	16.59 17.72	1.8875	Not Significant
Self-judgment	Male young adults Female young adults	100 100	15.77 14.68	-1.8864	Not Significant
Common-humanity	Male young adults Female young adults	100 100	13.55 13.95	0.8358	Not Significant

Isolation	Male young adults Female young adults	100 100	12.11 11.39	-1.2998	Not Significant
Mindfulness	Male young adults Female young adults	100 100	13.11 14.39	2.6888 $p<0.01$	
Over-identification	Male young adults Female young adults	100 100	12.99 12.61	-0.8361	Not Significant

Independent samples t tests were computed to investigate if there were any gender differences in grit, self-compassion and the 6 subscales of self-compassion - self-kindness, self-judgment, common-humanity, isolation, mindfulness, over-identification between male and female young adults. From the results, it is evident that there was no significant gender difference in grit between male and female young adults, t (198) = 1.6801. The mean scores obtained by female young adults (M = 26.91, SD = 5.151) did not significantly differ from the mean scores obtained by male young adults (M = 25.82, SD = 3.945). Similar findings were reported by Sigmundsson et al., (2020), who examined the gender difference and relationship between passion, grit and mindset among 146 young adults and found that there was no significant gender difference in grit levels among the male and female young adults. There was a significant gender difference in self-compassion between male and female young adults, t (198) = 3.0779, p<0.01. The mean scores obtained by female young adults (M = 85.45, SD = 12.873) were significantly higher when compared to the mean scores obtained by male young adults (M = 80.56, SD = 9.311). Similar findings were reported by Teleb & Awamleh, (2013) who studied the relationship between self-compassion and emotional intelligence for university students. They found that self-compassion was significantly higher in females when compared to the male students. Contradictory findings were reported by Yarnell and Stafford et al., (2015), who examined gender differences in self-compassion through meta-analysis study, across 71 journal articles. They found that the self-compassion was slightly higher in males than in females with a small effect size. There was no significant gender difference in self-kindness between male and female young adults, t (198) = 1.8875. The mean scores obtained by female young adults (M = 17.72, SD = 4.266) did not significantly differ from the mean scores obtained by male young adults (M = 16.59, SD = 4.200). There was no significant gender difference in self-judgment between male and female young adults, t (198) = -1.8864. The mean scores obtained by female young adults (M = 14.68, SD = 4.311) did not significantly differ from the mean scores obtained by male young adults (M = 15.77, SD = 3.847). There was no significant gender difference in common-humanity between male and female young adults, t (198) = 0.8358. The mean scores obtained by female young adults (M = 13.95, SD = 3.406) did not significantly differ from the mean scores obtained by male young adults (M = 13.55, SD = 3.362). There was no significant gender difference in isolation between male and female young adults, t (198) = -1.2998. The mean scores obtained by female young adults (M = 11.39, SD = 4.499) did not significantly differ from the mean scores obtained by male young adults (M = 12.11, SD = 3.231). There was a significant gender difference in mindfulness between male and female young adults, t (198) = 2.6888, p<0.01. The mean scores obtained by female young adults (M = 14.39, SD = 3.342) were significantly higher when compared to the mean scores obtained by male young adults (M = 13.11, SD = 3.390). There was no significant gender difference in over-identification between male and female young adults, t (198) = -0.8361. The mean scores obtained by female young adults (M = 12.61, SD = 3.216) did not significantly differ from the mean scores obtained by male young adults (M = 12.99, SD = 3.211).

Table 2. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlations of Grit with Self-Compassion and Subscales of Self-Compassion

Variable	Grit
Self-compassion	.43**
Self-kindness	.24**
Self-judgment	-.27**
Common-humanity	.05 NS
Isolation	-.21**
Mindfulness	.22**
Over-identification	-.27**

Note:

NS – Not Significant
*p <.05
**p<.01

Pearson's product moment correlations were computed to assess the relationships between self-compassion and the 6 subscales of self-compassion with grit. It is evident from the results that the correlation coefficient between self-compassion and grit was significant, r (198) = 0.43, p<0.01. This indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and grit. This shows that individuals who exhibit acceptance towards oneself in a genuine way, when confronted with personal failings and challenging situations also tend to be more passionate and persistent in achieving their goals despite difficulties, failures or oppositions. It was found that the correlation coefficient between self-kindness and grit was significant, r (198) = 0.24, p<0.01. This indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between self-kindness and grit. This shows that individuals who are warm and understanding towards oneself also tend to be more passionate and persistent in achieving their goals despite difficulties, failures or oppositions. From the results it is evident that the correlation coefficient between self-judgment and grit was significant, r (198) = -0.27, p<0.01. This indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between self-judgment and grit. This shows that individuals who are less often involved in judging themselves tend to be more passionate and persistent in achieving their goals. It can be observed from the results that the correlation coefficient between common-humanity and grit was not significant, r (198) = 0.05. This indicated that there was no significant relationship between common-humanity and grit. This shows that the ability of individuals to recognize that other people also experience difficulty and pain like themselves, is not really linked to their passion and perseverance towards long-term goals when encountered with difficulties, failures or oppositions. It is evident from the results that the correlation coefficient between isolation and grit was significant, r (198) = -0.21, p<0.01. This indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between isolation and grit. This shows that individuals who experience the feeling of loneliness when encountered with challenges or personal failures tend to be less passionate and persistent in achieving their goals. From the results, it can be observed that the correlation coefficient between mindfulness and grit was significant, r (198) = 0.22, p<0.01. This indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between mindfulness and grit. This shows that individuals who have a non-judgmental, receptive mind state also tend to be more passionate and persistent in achieving their long-term goals despite difficulties, failures or oppositions. Similar findings were reported by Raphiphatthana et al., (2019), who investigated the association between mindfulness and grit among the university students of the western (N=343) and non-western cultures (N=233). They found a significant positive relationship between mindfulness and grit across both the cultural groups. Similar findings were also reported by Raphiphatthana & Jose, (2020), who examined the relationship between dispositional mindfulness and grit, moderated by meditation experience and culture. They found that there was a significant positive relationship between mindfulness and grit, irrespective of the cultural background and meditative experience. It can be observed from the results that the correlation coefficient between over-identification and grit was significant, r (198) = -0.27, p<0.01. This indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between over-identification and grit. This shows that individuals who are too much involved in their own thoughts and feelings tend to be less passionate and persistent in achieving their goals as it tends to restrict them from further moving on, when encountered with difficulties, failures or oppositions.

CONCLUSIONS

The study compared self-compassion and grit among male and female young adults. There was a significant gender difference in self-compassion between male and female young adults. Female young adults had higher levels of self-compassion when compared to males. There was a significant gender difference in mindfulness subscale of self-compassion between male and female young adults. Female young adults had higher levels of mindfulness when compared to males. There were no significant gender differences in self-kindness, self-judgment, common-humanity, isolation, over-identification subscales of self-compassion and grit between male and female young adults.

The study also examined the relationship between self-compassion and grit among young adults. There was a significant positive relationship between self-kindness and grit, mindfulness and grit and self-compassion and grit among the male and female young adults. There was a significant negative relationship between self-judgment and grit, between isolation and grit and over-identification and grit among the male and female young adults. There was no significant relationship between common-humanity and grit among the male and female young adults.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

From the conclusions, it can be inferred that individual with higher levels of self- compassion also tend to have higher levels of grit. The tendency of being compassionate towards oneself can be enhanced by practicing self-forgiveness, exercising growth mindset and expressing gratitude. (Ohlin, 2021). Therefore, training programs can be given to the students in order to teach the ways to improve self-compassion, which helps them to accept themselves completely, along with their weaknesses and move towards self-growth. Guided mindfulness meditation may also enhance the levels of self- compassion among the individuals.

Grit levels among the young adults can be enhanced by involving them in activities such as, identifying their goals or purpose, interviewing people who have undergone tough situations in their lives, the hard thing rule by Duckworth, “Grit pie” exercise, identifying the hardest part of the problem, avoiding negative self-talk and by practicing optimism. (Miller, 2021). Hence, programs and workshops can be organized in colleges and schools in order to improve grit levels which enables the individuals to identify their goals and increases their passion and perseverance to attain them.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study was conducted only on 100 male and 100 female young adults.
2. The study was restricted only to young adults of age range 19-25 years from the state of Tamil Nadu.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. A larger sample can be studied.
2. Self-compassion and grit levels can be examined across different age group.
3. The predictive role of self-compassion on grit among young adults and other different age groups can be examined.

REFERENCE

[1] Akbağ, M., & Ümmet, D. (2017). Predictive Role of Grit and Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction on Subjective Well-Being for Young Adults. Journal of Education and Practice, 8(26), 127–135. www.iiste.org

[2] Breines, J., & Chen, S. (2012). Self-Compassion Increases Self-Improvement Motivation. Bulletin Personality and Social Psychology, 38(9), 1133–1143. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212445599

[3] Duckworth, Angela L, Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92(6), 1087–1101. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1087

[4] Duckworth, Angela Lee, & Quinn, P. D. (2009). Development and Validation of the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S). Journal of Personality Assessment, 91(2), 166–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223890802634290

[5] Gordon, S. (2019). Self-Compassion Makes Life More Manageable. Very well mind. https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-develop-self-compassion-4158290

[6] Lee Thomas, S., & Thenmozhi, S. (2019). Psychological Distress and Self-Compassion among Young Adults. International Journal of Education and Psychological Research, Volume 8(2), 90–95. www.ijepr.org

[7] Miller, K. D. (2020). 5+ Ways to Develop a Growth Mindset Using Grit and Resilience. PositivePsychology.Com. https://positivepsychology.com/5-ways-develop-grit-resilience/

[8] Miller, K. D. (2021). 5+ Ways to Develop a Growth Mindset Using Grit and Resilience. PositivePsychology.Com. https://positivepsychology.com/5-ways-develop-grit-resilience/

[9] Neff, K. (2021). Definition and Three Elements of Self Compassion | Kristin Neff. https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/

[10] Neff, K.(2003). Self-Compassion: An Alternative Conceptualization of a Healthy Attitude Toward Oneself. Self and Identity, 2, 85–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860390129863

[11] Neff, K. D. (2003). The Development and Validation of a Scale to Measure Self-Compassion. Self and Identity, 2, 223–250. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860390209035

[12] Neff, K. D., & Vonk, R. (2009). Self-Compassion Versus Global Self-Esteem: Two Different Ways of Relating to Oneself. Journal of Personality, 77, 1. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2008.00537.x

[13] Nev, K. D., Kirkpatrick, K. L., & Rude, S. S. (2007). Self-compassion and adaptive psychological functioning. Journal of Research in Personality, 41, 139–154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2006.03.004

[14] Nev, K. D., Rude, S. S., & Kirkpatrick, K. L. (2007). An examination of self-compassion in relation to positive psychological functioning and personality traits. Journal of Research in Personality, 41, 908–916. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2006.08.002

[15] Ohlin, B. (2021). 5 Steps to Develop Self-Compassion & Overcome Your Inner Critic. PositivePsychology.Com Psychology.Com. https://positivepsychology.com/self-compassion-5-steps/

[16] Oppong, T. (2018). The Theory of “Grit” as a Predictor of Success in Life. Medium. https://medium.com/personal-growth/the-theory-of-grit-as-a-predictor-of-success-in-life-24274ceec46

[17] Raphiphatthana, B., & Jose, P. (2020). The Relationship Between Dispositional Mindfulness and Grit Moderated by Meditation Experience and Culture. Mindfulness, 11, 587–598. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01265-w

[18] Raphiphatthana, B., Jose, P., & Chobthamkit, P. (2019). The Association Between Mindfulness and Grit: an East vs. West Cross-cultural Comparison. Mindfulness, 10(1), 146–158. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0961-9

[19] Sigmundsson, H., Haga, M., & Hermundsdottir, F. (2020). Passion, grit and mindset in young adults: Exploring the relationship and gender differences. New Ideas in Psychology, 59, 100795.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2020.100795

[20] Stutts, L. A., Leary, M. R., Zeveney, A. S., & Hufnagle, A. S. (2018). A longitudinal analysis of the relationship between self-compassion and the psychological effects of perceived stress. Self and Identity, 17(6), 609–626. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2017.1422537

[21] Teleb, A. A., & Awamleh, A. A. Al. (2013). The Relationship Between Self-compassion and Emotional Intelligence for University Students. Current Research in Psychology, 4(2), 20–27. https://doi.org/10.3844/crpsp.2013.20.27

[22] Weiss, A. E. (2018). Examining the Predictive Abilities of Mindfulness, Self-Compassion, and Grit. In Capstones and Honors Theses. 1. https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/cap_theseshttps://researchrepository.wvu.edu/cap_theses/1

[23] Wilkinson, J., VanBuren, K., & Poole, C. (2015). 5 Benefits of Grit and How to Get it. Incito Leadership and Executive Coaching. https://www.incito.ca/blog/5-benefits-of-grit-and-how-to-get-it

[24] Yarnell, L. M., Stafford, R. E., Neff, K. D., Reilly, E. D., Knox, M. C., & Mullarkey, M. (2015). Meta-Analysis of Gender Differences in Self-Compassion. Self and Identity, 14(5), 499–520. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2015.1029966