

SELF-COMPASSION, SELF-ACCEPTANCE, NARCISSISM AND MENTAL WELL-BEING: EVIDENCE FROM PAKISTANI EMERGING ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Self-compassion is identified as a key psychological resource associated with emotional resilience and adaptive self-regulation, whereas narcissism reflects a more defensive and externally contingent form of self-evaluation.

Objectives: The study examines the relationships between self-compassion, self-acceptance, narcissism and mental well being among Pakistani young adults along with investigating the gender differences across study variables.

Method: The sample for this cross sectional research comprised of 175 young adults approached at academic institutes of Lahore.

Results: findings indicate interesting set of associations between research variables. Significant gender variations were observed across study variables. These findings are discussed in light of cultural context, developmental challenges of young adulthood, and implications for clinical and educational interventions in Pakistan.

Keywords: Self-compassion, self-acceptance, narcissism, Pakistani young adults, psychological well-being

INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, increased self-reflection, and heightened sensitivity to social evaluation (Barr et al., 2018; Ciobotaru et al., 2024). In Pakistan, young adults face distinct sociocultural pressures including academic competition, strong familial expectations, and socioreligious norms emphasizing achievement and social conformity. These factors can intensify self-criticism and psychological distress, making the study of adaptive self-related constructs particularly relevant. The manner in which

individuals relate to themselves plays a central role in psychological adjustment, emotional regulation, and mental well-being. Contemporary psychological research increasingly recognizes that not all forms of positive self-regard are equally adaptive. While some self-related constructs foster resilience and emotional balance, others may function as defensive strategies that undermine long-term well-being. Among these constructs, self-compassion, self-acceptance, and narcissism have received growing empirical attention due

to their distinct implications for psychological functioning.

Self-compassion, conceptualized by Neff (2003), refers to a kind, mindful, and nonjudgmental attitude toward oneself during times of difficulty or perceived failure. It comprises three core components: self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification. Rather than evaluating the self positively or negatively, self-compassion emphasizes acceptance of human imperfection and emotional balance (Neff & Pommier, 2012). Extensive research has demonstrated that self-compassion is associated with lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, and higher levels of life satisfaction, resilience, and emotional well-being (Homan, 2016; López et al., 2018). Unlike self-esteem, which often depends on social comparison and achievement, self-compassion provides a stable and unconditional source of self-worth (Ehret et al., 2018; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012). Individuals high in self-compassion are more likely to engage in adaptive coping strategies, demonstrate emotional flexibility, and recover more effectively from setbacks (Kunuroglu & Yuzbasi, 2021).

Importantly, self-compassion does not imply self-indulgence or complacency. Instead, it encourages personal responsibility and growth by allowing individuals to acknowledge shortcomings without excessive self-criticism (Neff & McGehee, 2010). This distinction is particularly relevant in achievement-oriented contexts, where harsh self-evaluation can exacerbate psychological distress.

Self-acceptance refers to an individual's unconditional acceptance of all aspects of the self, including strengths, limitations, and past experiences. It involves recognizing personal attributes without excessive evaluation or rejection and is considered a core component of psychological well-being in humanistic and positive psychology traditions (Umeatuegbu, 2025). High levels of self-acceptance have been linked to emotional stability, self-esteem, and overall life satisfaction (Dryden, 2013). Individuals who accept themselves are less likely to engage in maladaptive self-criticism and more likely to maintain a coherent and integrated self-concept

(Faustino et al., 2020). Unlike contingent self-worth, self-acceptance does not fluctuate based on success or failure, making it a protective factor against psychological distress (Lu et al., 2022). The relationship between self-compassion and self-acceptance is theoretically and empirically robust. Self-compassion may facilitate self-acceptance by fostering a nonjudgmental stance toward personal shortcomings. Together, these constructs contribute to a healthier and more resilient sense of self.

In contrast to self-compassion and self-acceptance, narcissism represents a more fragile and defensive form of self-regard. Narcissism is characterized by grandiosity, entitlement, dominance, and a heightened need for admiration. While narcissistic traits may appear to reflect high self-confidence, research suggests that they often mask underlying insecurity and unstable self-esteem (Golec de Zavala, 2018). Narcissistic individuals tend to rely heavily on external validation to maintain a positive self-image. When confronted with criticism or failure, they may respond with defensiveness, hostility, or emotional withdrawal. Although narcissism can be associated with short-term benefits such as assertiveness and leadership emergence, it is frequently linked to interpersonal difficulties, emotional dysregulation, and reduced psychological well-being (Wirtz & Rigotti, 2020).

Empirical studies consistently show that narcissism is negatively associated with constructs such as empathy, emotional intimacy, and psychological well-being (Bagci et al., 2023). From a self-regulation perspective, narcissism reflects a strategy aimed at protecting the self from perceived threat through self-enhancement rather than self-acceptance.

Emerging research suggests that self-compassion and narcissism represent fundamentally different approaches to managing self-worth. While self-compassion promotes acceptance and emotional balance (Zipagan et al., 2023), narcissism relies on inflated self-views and external affirmation. Studies have demonstrated negative associations between self-compassion and narcissistic traits, suggesting that compassionate self-relating may reduce the need for defensive self-enhancement (Barnett & Flores, 2016).

Similarly, self-acceptance has been found to be inversely related to narcissism. Individuals who accept themselves unconditionally may have less need to assert superiority or seek validation from others. In contrast, low self-acceptance may increase vulnerability to narcissistic coping strategies, particularly in environments that emphasize competition and social comparison and consequentially impact mental well-being.

Mental well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional balance, psychological functioning, and a sense of purpose and satisfaction with life. Contemporary psychological research increasingly emphasizes the role of self-related processes in shaping mental well-being, particularly how individuals respond to personal challenges, evaluate themselves, and regulate emotions. Among these processes, self-compassion, self-acceptance, and narcissism represent distinct approaches to self-regulation with important implications for mental well-being (Ferrari et al., 2023).

Self-compassion has emerged as a robust predictor of positive mental well-being (Pandey et al., 2021). Individuals high in self-compassion respond to stress and failure with kindness, mindfulness, and an understanding that suffering is a shared human experience. This compassionate stance reduces excessive self-criticism and emotional reactivity, thereby promoting psychological resilience (Sun et al., 2016). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that self-compassion is associated with lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, and higher levels of life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Bluth & Blanton, 2015). By fostering emotional balance and adaptive coping, self-compassion serves as a protective psychological resource that enhances overall mental well-being.

Closely related to self-compassion is self-acceptance, which refers to an unconditional acceptance of oneself, including personal strengths and limitations. Self-acceptance contributes to mental well-being by reducing internal conflict and promoting a stable sense of self-worth that is not contingent upon external achievement or approval (Kivity et al., 2016). Individuals who accept themselves are better able to tolerate imperfection and maintain psychological equilibrium during

adversity (Bingöl & Batik, 2019). Research indicates that higher self-acceptance is associated with greater happiness, emotional stability, and psychological well-being (Marshall & Brockman, 2016). In this sense, self-acceptance complements self-compassion by providing a broader evaluative framework through which individuals relate to themselves in a balanced and nonjudgmental manner.

In contrast, narcissism represents a more fragile and maladaptive approach to self-regulation. Although narcissistic individuals may display apparent confidence and self-importance, their self-esteem is often contingent on external validation and admiration. This reliance on self-enhancement strategies can undermine mental well-being, particularly when expectations are unmet or the self is threatened (Choudhary & Kumari, 2024). Empirical evidence consistently shows that narcissism is negatively associated with psychological well-being and positively associated with emotional instability, interpersonal difficulties, and distress (Akıncı, 2015). Rather than fostering genuine self-acceptance, narcissism functions as a defensive strategy that may provide short-term self-esteem but compromises long-term mental health (Clarke & Mahadi, 2017).

Taken together, self-compassion and self-acceptance appear to enhance mental well-being through adaptive emotional regulation and stable self-worth (Marshall & Brockman, 2016), whereas narcissism undermines well-being by promoting defensive and externally contingent self-evaluation. Understanding how these constructs interact provides valuable insight into the psychological mechanisms underlying mental well-being. Promoting self-compassion and self-acceptance may therefore be particularly effective in enhancing mental health, while reducing reliance on narcissistic self-regulation strategies that impair psychological functioning.

Most empirical research on self-compassion, self-acceptance, and narcissism has been conducted in Western cultural contexts. However, cultural values play a significant role in shaping self-concept and emotional regulation. In collectivistic societies such as Pakistan, where social harmony, family expectations, and achievement norms are highly salient, self-related constructs may

function differently. Young adults in Pakistan face increasing academic pressure, economic uncertainty, and social comparison amplified by digital media. These stressors may influence the development of self-compassionate or narcissistic self-regulation patterns. Despite the relevance of these issues, empirical studies examining these constructs within the Pakistani context remain limited.

Given the theoretical importance and applied relevance of self-compassion, self-acceptance, and narcissism, the present study aims to examine their interrelationships and their implications for psychological well-being among Pakistani young adults. By investigating these constructs simultaneously, the study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of adaptive and maladaptive self-regulation within a culturally specific context.

Understanding these dynamics may inform culturally sensitive interventions designed to promote mental well-being and reduce reliance on maladaptive self-enhancement strategies. The findings are expected to have implications for research, clinical practice, and mental health promotion among young adults in Pakistan.

Methodology

The sample of this cross sectional study consisted of 175 Pakistani young adults recruited from university settings through convenience sampling technique. Participants represented diverse academic disciplines and socioeconomic backgrounds. Inclusion criteria required participants to be within the young adult age range that is from 18 till 29 years and included representation of men ($n= 89$) and women ($n= 86$). The sample was approached at campus during their free time.

Measures - The research data was collected through demographic questionnaire, Self-compassion scale, Unconditional self acceptance questionnaire, WHO-5 Wellbeing Index and Narcissistic personality inventory.

Self-Compassion Scale (Urdu Version) - The Urdu adaptation of the Self-Compassion Scale by Gull and Nazim 2023 was used to assess self compassion. The scale demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency and construct validity. It consisted of 26 items rated on 5 point Likert scale and provides 6 subscale and

composite scores calculated independently (Neff, 2003).

Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire

- Self-acceptance was assessed using a standardized measure evaluating unconditional acceptance of the self irrespective of success or failure, it was developed by Leonora and Windy (2001). The questionnaire records responses on a Likert scale and provides information regarding attitudes and beliefs associated to unconditional self-acceptance.

WHO-5 Well being index - This was used as a quick measure to assess wellbeing of the participants on 5 statements recording responses on a 6 point rating scale with higher scores depicting better well being. The measure has been used widely in large scale studies and reported to have sound psychometric properties.

Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16)

- Narcissistic traits were measured using the brief NPI-16 developed by Raskin et al., (1998), capturing dimensions of grandiosity and entitlement. The abbreviated version has 16 items of the original NPI and provides a quick and reliable measure of narcissism (Vazir-harami et al., 2023).

Procedure

A cross sectional study was designed to achieve the research aims. All required permissions were taken from relevant boards and authorities before starting the research. All participants completed the questionnaires in the same sequence in an inperson setting after providing informed consent. All ethical rights of the participants were ensured and they were thanked for their cooperation.

The data were processed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences and a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics was employed. Pearson product moment correlation and regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships between self-compassion, self-acceptance, narcissism and well being. Analysis of variance and t-test were carried out to investigate score differences across various groups. Reliability analyses were performed to assess internal consistency of the scales.

Results

The sample included almost equal gender ratio, however, majority of the sample was single (89 percent). Majority of the participants were living in nuclear family system (69 percent) and

belonged to urban residential areas (64 percent). No participant reported any significant physical or mental disability.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability (N = 175)

Variable	Mean	(SD)	Cronbach's α
Self-Compassion	36.42	11.56	.88
Self-Acceptance	73.58	19.61	.86
Narcissism	19.71	8.49	.79
Mental Well-Being	83.65	20.54	.90

All measures suggested strong reliability for the present sample.

Table 2 Correlation between Scores of Self Compassion, Self Acceptance, Narcissism and Well-being (N = 175)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1.Self-Compassion	—			
2.Self-Acceptance	.60**	—		
3.Narcissism	-.41**	-.39**	—	
4.Mental Well-Being	.52**	.57**	-.38**	—

** $p < .001$

The findings of correlation analysis reveal several meaningful and interesting associations. Self-compassion demonstrated a significant positive association with self-acceptance ($p < .001$) supports the conceptual overlap between these constructs. This strong association suggests that individuals who are kinder and more understanding toward themselves are also more likely to accept themselves unconditionally. Self-compassion moderately and negatively associates with narcissism ($p < .001$) indicating that individuals high in self-compassion tend to exhibit lower narcissistic traits, supporting the view that compassionate self-regulation contrasts with defensive self-enhancement strategies characteristic of narcissism. Similarly, self-acceptance showed a significantly inverse association with narcissism

($p < .001$), suggesting that unconditional self-acceptance is associated with reduced reliance on narcissistic self-evaluative patterns. Mental well-being positively relates with both self-compassion ($p < .001$) and self-acceptance ($p < .001$). These findings indicate that individuals who treat themselves kindly and accept themselves without excessive self-criticism report better psychological well-being. In contrast, mental well-being was negatively correlated with narcissism ($p < .001$), indicating that higher narcissistic traits are linked with poorer mental well-being. Overall, the correlation findings demonstrate a coherent pattern in which self-compassion and self-acceptance function as protective psychological resources, while narcissism appears to be a risk factor for reduced well-being.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Mental Well-Being

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	0.84	0.29	—	2.90	.004

Self-Compassion	0.46	0.06	.49	7.67	<.001
Self-Acceptance	0.31	0.07	.33	4.43	<.001
Narcissism	-0.21	0.08	-.18	-2.63	.009

Note. $R = .76$, $R^2 = .58$, adjusted $R^2 = .57$

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether self-compassion, self-acceptance, and narcissism predicted mental well-being. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(3, 171) = 78.64$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 58% of the variance in mental well-being ($R^2 = .58$, adjusted $R^2 = .57$). As presented in Table 3, self-compassion emerged as the strongest positive predictor of mental well-being ($\beta = .49$, $p < .001$). Self-

acceptance also significantly and positively predicted mental well-being ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$). In contrast, narcissism was a significant negative predictor of mental well-being ($\beta = -.18$, $p = .009$). These findings indicate that compassionate and accepting self-relating uniquely contribute to psychological well-being, while narcissistic traits independently predict lower well-being.

Table 4 Gender Differences in Psychological Variables with Effect Sizes (N = 175)

Variable	Gender	M	SD	t(173)	p	Cohen's d	95% CI
Narcissism	Men	22.83	10.51	8.80	<.001	1.31	[7.94, 12.54]
	Women	12.59	2.46				
Self-Compassion	Men	27.31	17.58	5.56	<.001	0.84	[-15.20, -7.23]
	Women	38.53	6.52				
Self-Acceptance	Men	61.47	18.63	5.61	<.001	0.85	[-19.21, -9.21]
	Women	75.68	14.58				
Mental Well-Being	Men	73.54	20.56	6.58	<.001	0.94	[-22.38, -12.06]
	Women	89.76	13.11				

Note. Men (n= 89), Women (n=86).

Independent samples *t*-tests results indicated that women scored significantly higher than male participants on self-compassion, $t(173) = 5.56$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($d = 0.84$). Similarly, females demonstrated significantly greater self-acceptance than males, $t(173) = 5.61$, $p < .001$, also with a large effect ($d = 0.85$). In contrast, male participants scored significantly higher on narcissism compared to female participants, $t(173) = 8.80$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect size ($d = 1.31$). Finally, females reported significantly higher levels of mental well-being than males, $t(173) = 6.58$, $p < .001$, with a large effect ($d = 0.94$). These results suggest substantial and meaningful gender differences across all psychological variables examined.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationships between self-compassion, self-acceptance, narcissism and mental well-being among Pakistani young adults, contributing to the limited indigenous literature on adaptive self-related constructs. Consistent with international findings, self-compassion demonstrated a strong positive association with self-acceptance, suggesting that individuals who respond to personal difficulties with kindness and mindfulness are more likely to accept themselves unconditionally (Zhang et al., 2020). Importantly, self-compassion showed a significant negative relationship with narcissism. This finding supports theoretical assertions that narcissism and self-compassion represent fundamentally different strategies for self-regulation (Demirici et al., 2019). While

narcissism relies on exaggerated self-enhancement and external validation, self-compassion allows individuals to acknowledge imperfection without defensiveness. In the Pakistani sociocultural context, where performance pressure and social comparison are pronounced, narcissistic traits may emerge as maladaptive coping mechanisms. Self-compassion appears to counterbalance these tendencies by fostering emotional humility and realistic self-appraisal.

The present study examined the interrelationships among self-compassion, self-acceptance, narcissism, in a sample of Pakistani young adults using correlational and multiple regression analyses. The findings offer robust support for theoretical models that distinguish adaptive self-regulatory processes from maladaptive self-enhancement strategies and provide culturally relevant insights into psychological well-being within the Pakistani context. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive association between self-compassion and self-acceptance, suggesting that individuals who respond to personal difficulties with kindness, mindfulness, and an awareness of shared humanity are also more likely to accept themselves unconditionally. This finding supports the conceptual overlap between these constructs and aligns with international research demonstrating that self-compassion fosters a non-contingent sense of self-worth (Zhou & Xu, 2019; Quang et al., 2022). In the Pakistani sociocultural context, where achievement-based evaluation and social comparison are prevalent, self-compassion may play a critical role in mitigating harsh self-judgment and promoting psychological balance.

Both self-compassion and self-acceptance were moderately and negatively correlated with narcissism. These inverse relationships suggest that compassionate and accepting self-attitudes are fundamentally incompatible with narcissistic self-regulatory strategies characterized by grandiosity, entitlement, and defensiveness. Rather than relying on exaggerated self-views to manage insecurity, individuals high in self-compassion appear more willing to acknowledge imperfections without threat to self-worth. This distinction is particularly relevant in collectivistic cultures

like Pakistan, where overt self-enhancement may conflict with social norms emphasizing humility and relational harmony.

Mental well-being demonstrated significant positive associations with self-compassion and self-acceptance, indicating that individuals who treat themselves kindly and accept themselves without excessive self-criticism experience higher levels of psychological well-being (Chio et al, 2021; Dundas et al., 2015). These findings are consistent with the growing body of literature linking self-compassion to reduced anxiety and depression, greater life satisfaction, and enhanced emotional resilience (Bluth & Blanton, 2015; Booker & Dunsmore, 2019). Conversely, the negative correlation between narcissism and mental well-being suggests that narcissistic traits may undermine psychological health, possibly due to their dependence on external validation and heightened sensitivity to ego threat.

Taken together, the correlational findings suggest a coherent pattern in which self-compassion and self-acceptance function as protective psychological resources (Zhou & Xu, 2019), whereas narcissism represents a vulnerability factor for reduced mental well-being.

The regression analysis provided further insight by examining the unique contribution of self-compassion, self-acceptance, and narcissism in predicting mental well-being. The overall model accounted for a substantial proportion of variance in mental well-being, indicating strong explanatory power and underscoring the combined importance of these self-related constructs in psychological adjustment.

Self-compassion emerged as the strongest positive predictor of mental well-being, even after controlling for self-acceptance and narcissism. This finding highlights the central role of compassionate self-relating as a foundational mechanism underlying psychological well-being (Ferrari et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2020). Unlike self-esteem, which can fluctuate based on success or failure, self-compassion offers a stable and resilient form of self-regulation that promotes emotional equilibrium (Diedrich et al., 2016). In the Pakistani context, where young adults often face intense academic, familial, and societal pressures, self-compassion may serve as a

particularly valuable resource for coping with stress and maintaining mental health.

Self-acceptance also uniquely and positively predicted mental well-being, indicating that unconditional acceptance of oneself contributes independently to psychological health beyond the effects of self-compassion. This suggests that while self-compassion and self-acceptance are closely related, they are not redundant. Self-acceptance may reflect a broader evaluative stance toward the self, whereas self-compassion captures moment-to-moment emotional responses to suffering. Together, these constructs appear to operate synergistically in promoting well-being (Bluth et al., 2017).

Literature relate different levels of narcissism with variant impact on well being (Giacomin, & Jordan, 2016). In contrast, narcissism emerged as a significant negative predictor of mental well-being, even when positive self-related constructs were included in the model. This finding reinforces the conceptualization of narcissism as a maladaptive self-regulatory strategy (Bernierth, 2022). Although narcissistic traits may temporarily enhance self-confidence, they appear to erode psychological well-being over time due to their reliance on external validation and vulnerability to perceived threats (James et al., 2017). The unique negative contribution of narcissism underscores its clinical relevance and highlights the importance of distinguishing healthy self-regard from defensive self-enhancement.

Additionally, the present findings provide compelling evidence of gender-based differences in self-compassion, self-acceptance, narcissism, and mental well-being among Pakistani young adults (Nazim et al., 2022). Overall, women exhibited significantly higher levels of self-compassion, self-acceptance (Vasile, 2013), and mental well-being, whereas men demonstrated higher levels of narcissism. Importantly, the observed effect sizes ranged from large to very large, indicating that these differences are not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. The higher self-compassion observed among women is consistent with prior research suggesting that women tend to engage more readily in emotional awareness, empathy, and self-reflection (Murn & Steele, 2020). In the

Pakistani sociocultural context, women are often socialized to attend to relational and emotional processes, which may facilitate compassionate self-responding. Self-compassion involves acknowledging personal suffering without harsh self-judgment (Neff, 2010), a tendency that may be more socially acceptable for women than men in traditional South Asian societies.

Gender differences in self acceptance revealed an interesting set of findings opposing the trend presented in previous researches (Matud et al., 2020). One significant difference noted in previous studies was that the sample consisted of older adults, whereas, current research included young adults, this difference must have contributed to the opposing trend. Women's higher self-acceptance suggests a greater capacity to integrate strengths and limitations into a coherent self-concept. In contrast, Pakistani men may experience stronger sociocultural pressures to demonstrate competence, success, and emotional control. Such expectations may foster conditional self-worth, making unconditional self-acceptance more difficult to attain. The strong gender difference in self-acceptance underscores the psychological costs of rigid masculinity norms. The most pronounced gender difference was observed in narcissism, with men scoring significantly higher than women. This finding aligns with extensive international literature indicating that narcissistic traits particularly grandiosity, dominance, and entitlement are more prevalent among men (Weidmann et al., 2023). Within Pakistani culture, masculine ideals emphasizing authority, status, and achievement may inadvertently reinforce narcissistic self-enhancement as a socially rewarded strategy. While such traits may initially promote confidence, they appear to carry significant psychological costs.

Consistent with this interpretation, men reported significantly lower mental well-being compared to women (Chan et al., 2022; Gómez-Baya et al., 2018; Nazim et al., 2022). The inverse relationship between narcissism and well-being suggests that reliance on external validation and self-aggrandizement may undermine emotional stability and life satisfaction. In contrast, women's higher levels of self-compassion and self-acceptance may

serve as protective psychological resources that enhance resilience and well-being.

The large effect sizes observed across variables highlight the importance of considering gender differences in psychological assessment and intervention. These findings suggest that mental health initiatives targeting Pakistani young adults may benefit from gender-sensitive approaches. For men, interventions focusing on cultivating self-compassion and reducing maladaptive self-enhancement may be particularly beneficial. For women, reinforcing existing strengths in self-compassion and self-acceptance may further promote psychological well-being.

Theoretical and Cultural Implications - The findings support contemporary theoretical frameworks that contrast compassionate self-regulation with narcissistic self-enhancement. Self-compassion and self-acceptance promote psychological stability by allowing individuals to confront personal limitations without shame, whereas narcissism attempts to protect self-worth through inflated self-perceptions. In Pakistani society, where social comparison and performance pressure are pronounced, these dynamics may be particularly salient.

Culturally, self-compassion aligns well with indigenous values emphasizing empathy, patience, and shared humanity, making it a culturally congruent target for intervention. The negative association between narcissism and well-being also suggests that culturally reinforced achievement norms may inadvertently contribute to maladaptive self-regulation among youth.

Clinical and Educational Implications - The results have important implications for mental health practice and education in Pakistan. Interventions that cultivate self-compassion and self-acceptance—such as compassion-focused therapy and mindfulness-based programs—may enhance psychological well-being and reduce reliance on narcissistic coping strategies. University counseling services may benefit from integrating these approaches into preventive mental health programs for students. Moreover, gender-sensitive approaches that promote self-compassion and unconditional self-acceptance—particularly among male students—may help counteract maladaptive self-evaluative patterns and enhance psychological well-being.

University counseling services and psychoeducational workshops could incorporate compassion-focused strategies tailored to culturally relevant gender norms.

Limitations and Future Directions - Despite its strengths, the study's small sample size and cross-sectional self-report data, limits causal interpretation. More diverse sample and longitudinal research is needed to examine developmental pathways linking self-compassion, narcissism, and mental well-being. Future studies should also explore potential mediating or moderating relationships, such as whether self-compassion buffers the negative impact of narcissism on well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the correlation and regression findings underscore the pivotal role of self-compassion, self acceptance and narcissism in psychological well being of young adults.

Findings have meaningful implications for mental well-being and underscore the value of culturally and gender-sensitive mental health interventions aimed at fostering psychological wellbeing.

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