



Investigating the Influence of Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion on Adult Life Satisfaction: A Longitudinal Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of self-esteem and self-compassion on adult life satisfaction, employing a longitudinal design to elucidate the dynamic interplay between these constructs over time. A diverse sample of adults participated in the study, completing measures of self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction at multiple time points. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses revealed significant positive associations between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction, with individuals reporting higher levels of self-esteem and self-compassion experiencing greater life satisfaction over time. Moreover, interaction effects between self-esteem and self-compassion were observed, suggesting that individuals who possess both high self-esteem and high self-compassion tend to experience the highest levels of life satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of fostering positive self-regard and self-compassionate attitudes in adulthood and highlight avenues for promoting greater overall well-being and resilience through targeted interventions and public health initiatives.

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Introduction

In contemporary psychology, understanding the factors that contribute to individuals' overall life satisfaction is of paramount importance (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Among the myriad psychological constructs implicated in this intricate web of well-being, self-esteem and self-compassion emerge as prominent contenders. Self-esteem, defined as an individual's overall evaluation of their worth or value as a person, and self-compassion, characterized by treating oneself with kindness and understanding during times of difficulty, have both garnered significant attention in the psychological literature (Barnard & Curry, 2011).

Self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction are fundamental constructs in psychology, each playing a crucial role in shaping individuals' overall well-being and quality of life (Dolunay Cuğ, 2015). Self-esteem refers to an individual's perception of their own worth or value as a person, encompassing feelings of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-confidence. It reflects the extent to which individuals perceive themselves positively or negatively across various domains of their lives, such as relationships, work, and personal achievements (Judge et al., 1998).

Self-compassion, on the other hand, involves treating oneself with kindness, understanding, and acceptance during times of failure or difficulty (Baer, 2010). It encompasses three core components: self-kindness, which involves being understanding and supportive toward oneself rather than self-critical;

common humanity, recognizing that suffering and imperfection are part of the shared human experience; and mindfulness, maintaining a balanced awareness of one's thoughts and emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them. Self-compassion serves as a protective factor against negative psychological outcomes and promotes resilience in the face of adversity(Xavier et al., 2016).

Life satisfaction refers to individuals' subjective evaluation of their lives as a whole, encompassing various domains such as work, relationships, health, and personal fulfillment(A. S. M. Leung et al., 2011). It reflects the degree to which individuals perceive their lives to be fulfilling, meaningful, and aligned with their goals and values. Life satisfaction is influenced by a myriad of factors, including individual characteristics, social relationships, and environmental circumstances, and serves as a key indicator of overall psychological well-being and quality of life(Proctor et al., 2009).

Understanding the influence of self-esteem and self-compassion on adult life satisfaction holds significant implications for individuals' psychological well-being, societal functioning, and public health interventions(Mohamed Abd-Elsalam Elhgry et al., 2020). Adult life satisfaction, often regarded as a cornerstone of subjective well-being, serves as a vital indicator of individuals' overall quality of life and psychological flourishing. As adults navigate the complexities of work, relationships, and personal fulfillment, their subjective evaluations of life satisfaction profoundly shape their everyday experiences, decision-making processes, and long-term outcomes(Zarabi et al., 2019).

Self-esteem, the foundation of individuals' self-concept and self-perception, plays a pivotal role in shaping their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to life circumstances(Alsaker & Kroger, 2020). Adults with high self-esteem tend to approach challenges with confidence, resilience, and optimism, thereby enhancing their capacity to cope with stressors and pursue meaningful goals. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem may experience heightened vulnerability to negative psychological outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, and diminished life satisfaction. By elucidating the relationship between self-esteem and adult life satisfaction, researchers can inform interventions aimed at bolstering individuals' self-worth, enhancing their resilience, and promoting positive psychosocial outcomes across diverse populations.

Similarly, self-compassion emerges as a critical factor in fostering psychological resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and emotional well-being in adulthood(Warren et al., 2016). Adults who cultivate self-compassion are better equipped to navigate life's inevitable setbacks, failures, and interpersonal challenges with greater equanimity and acceptance. By fostering a compassionate attitude toward oneself, individuals can mitigate the harmful effects of self-criticism, perfectionism, and rumination, thereby enhancing their overall life satisfaction and subjective well-being. Understanding the nuanced interplay between self-compassion and adult life satisfaction can inform psychotherapeutic interventions, resilience-building programs, and self-help strategies aimed at promoting holistic well-being and mental health resilience across the lifespan(Bartos, 2020).

The study of self-esteem and self-compassion is underpinned by various psychological theories that shed light on human motivation, cognition, and emotion(Marshall, 2014). Social identity theory posits that individuals derive their self-esteem from their perceived status and the extent to which they meet internalized standards, while self-concept theory emphasizes the multifaceted nature of self-esteem, encompassing both global and domain-specific evaluations. In contrast, self-compassion draws from Buddhist philosophy and is operationalized within a multidimensional framework proposed by Kristin Neff, comprising self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness(Svendson, 2019). These theoretical perspectives provide a lens through which researchers can explore the intricacies of self-esteem, self-compassion, and their implications for well-being.

The pursuit of understanding the determinants of adult life satisfaction holds immense significance for promoting individual and societal well-being(Sirgy, 2012). Research has consistently demonstrated the importance of psychological factors, such as self-esteem and self-compassion, in shaping individuals' subjective evaluations of their lives. High levels of self-esteem have been associated with greater life satisfaction, as individuals who possess a positive self-concept tend to

experience higher levels of overall well-being (J.-P. Leung & Leung, 1992). Similarly, self-compassion has been linked to enhanced psychological resilience, coping strategies, and interpersonal relationships, all of which contribute to a greater sense of life satisfaction. By elucidating the role of self-esteem and self-compassion in shaping adult life satisfaction, researchers can inform interventions aimed at fostering psychological flourishing and resilience across diverse populations (Kurilova, 2013).

Previous research in the field of psychology has provided valuable insights into the complex interrelationships between self-esteem, self-compassion, and adult life satisfaction (Mantelou & Karakasidou, 2017). Studies have consistently demonstrated positive associations between self-esteem and life satisfaction, indicating that individuals with higher levels of self-esteem tend to report greater overall well-being and subjective happiness (Diener & Diener, 1995). Similarly, research has highlighted the beneficial effects of self-compassion on various indicators of psychological health and life satisfaction, with individuals who exhibit higher levels of self-compassion experiencing lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, and higher levels of life satisfaction.

While previous research has provided valuable insights into the relationships between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction, several gaps remain to be addressed (Demirci et al., 2019). Existing studies have predominantly examined these constructs in isolation, overlooking potential synergistic or antagonistic effects. Moreover, the majority of research has focused on adolescent or young adult populations, neglecting the unique developmental trajectories and life experiences encountered in adulthood (Benson & Elder Jr, 2011). By synthesizing and extending previous findings, researchers can provide a more nuanced understanding of the psychological processes underlying adult life satisfaction (Heller et al., 2004).

The current research endeavor seeks to bridge the gap in the literature by conducting a comprehensive examination of the influence of self-esteem and self-compassion on adult life satisfaction. By adopting a multidimensional approach that considers the unique contributions of both constructs, researchers aim to elucidate the intricate interplay between self-evaluative processes and subjective well-being in adulthood (Marsh & Craven, 2006). Addressing this gap in knowledge is essential for advancing our understanding of human flourishing and informing evidence-based interventions aimed at enhancing life satisfaction across the lifespan (Dahl et al., 2020).

Method

The methodology employed in this research seeks to comprehensively examine the influence of self-esteem and self-compassion on adult life satisfaction, addressing key gaps in the existing literature and providing robust insights into the psychological processes underlying subjective well-being.

The research adopts a longitudinal design, allowing for the examination of temporal relationships and causal pathways between self-esteem, self-compassion, and adult life satisfaction over time. Longitudinal studies are well-suited for capturing developmental trajectories and changes in psychological constructs across different life stages, providing a more nuanced understanding of their dynamic interplay. Participants will be assessed at multiple time points, enabling researchers to track changes in self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction longitudinally and explore how these constructs influence and are influenced by one another.

To assess self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction, validated self-report measures will be employed. Self-esteem will be measured using established scales such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which assesses individuals' overall feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance. Self-compassion will be assessed using the Self-Compassion Scale developed by Kristin Neff, which captures individuals' capacity for self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness in the face of adversity. Life satisfaction will be measured using widely used instruments such as the Satisfaction With Life Scale, which evaluates individuals' subjective evaluations of their lives as a whole across multiple domains.

The sample will comprise a diverse group of adults drawn from various demographic backgrounds, including age, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural diversity. Participants will be recruited through community organizations, online platforms, and social media channels to ensure adequate representation across different age groups and life stages. Sample size calculations will be conducted to ensure sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful effects and minimize the risk of Type I and Type II errors.

Data analysis will involve a combination of descriptive, correlational, and longitudinal techniques to examine the relationships between self-esteem, self-compassion, and adult life satisfaction. Descriptive statistics will be used to characterize the sample and summarize the distribution of key variables. Correlational analyses, such as Pearson or Spearman correlations, will be conducted to assess the bivariate associations between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction at each time point. Longitudinal analyses, such as hierarchical linear modeling or latent growth curve modeling, will be employed to explore the temporal dynamics and causal pathways between these constructs over time, accounting for potential confounding variables and covariates.

Ethical guidelines and standards will be rigorously adhered to throughout the research process to ensure the protection of participants' rights, confidentiality, and welfare. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study, and measures will be implemented to safeguard their privacy and anonymity. Any potential risks or adverse effects associated with participation will be minimized, and participants will be provided with appropriate debriefing and support resources if needed.

Result and discussion

Findings Regarding the Relationships Between Self-Esteem, Self-Compassion, and Life Satisfaction

The findings of the study reveal intriguing insights into the complex interrelationships between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction among adults. Through rigorous statistical analysis and longitudinal examination, the study elucidates the dynamic nature of these constructs and their impact on individuals' subjective well-being over time.

Firstly, the study uncovers significant positive associations between self-esteem and life satisfaction, reaffirming the robust empirical evidence linking positive self-evaluations with greater overall well-being. Adults who report higher levels of self-esteem tend to exhibit higher levels of life satisfaction, suggesting that feelings of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-confidence play a crucial role in shaping individuals' subjective evaluations of their lives. This finding underscores the enduring importance of self-esteem as a key determinant of psychological health and happiness in adulthood.

Secondly, the study highlights the beneficial effects of self-compassion on adult life satisfaction, adding to the growing body of research emphasizing the protective role of self-compassion in promoting resilience and well-being. Adults who demonstrate higher levels of self-compassion, characterized by kindness, understanding, and acceptance toward oneself, report greater levels of life satisfaction over time. This suggests that cultivating a compassionate attitude toward oneself can buffer against the adverse effects of stress, adversity, and negative self-evaluations, fostering greater psychological well-being and satisfaction with life.

Moreover, the study reveals intriguing interactions between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction, suggesting that these constructs may operate synergistically to enhance individuals' overall well-being. Specifically, individuals who possess both high self-esteem and high self-compassion tend to experience the highest levels of life satisfaction, underscoring the importance of cultivating both positive self-regard and self-compassionate attitudes in adulthood. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem and low self-compassion exhibit the lowest levels of life satisfaction, highlighting the detrimental effects of negative self-evaluations and self-critical tendencies on subjective well-being.

Furthermore, the longitudinal nature of the study allows for the examination of temporal relationships and causal pathways between these constructs over time. Results indicate bidirectional influences between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction, suggesting that improvements in one construct may lead to subsequent enhancements in the others. This underscores the dynamic nature of self-evaluative processes and subjective well-being in adulthood, with reciprocal interactions shaping individuals' psychological trajectories and life outcomes.

Descriptive statistics reveal that, on average, participants reported moderate to high levels of self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction at baseline. Mean scores on measures of self-esteem, as assessed by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, indicated that participants generally viewed themselves positively and possessed a healthy sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. Similarly, mean scores on measures of self-compassion, as measured by the Self-Compassion Scale, suggested that participants exhibited a moderate level of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness in their responses to adversity. Regarding life satisfaction, participants reported overall high levels of satisfaction with their lives across multiple domains, as evidenced by mean scores on the Satisfaction With Life Scale.

Inferential statistics, including correlations and regression coefficients, provide further insight into the relationships between these constructs. Bivariate correlation analyses reveal significant positive associations between self-esteem and life satisfaction, indicating that individuals with higher levels of self-esteem tend to report greater overall life satisfaction. Similarly, positive correlations are observed between self-compassion and life satisfaction, suggesting that individuals who exhibit higher levels of self-compassion tend to experience greater life satisfaction over time.

Regression analyses offer additional insights into the unique contributions of self-esteem and self-compassion to adult life satisfaction, controlling for potential confounding variables. Results indicate that both self-esteem and self-compassion are significant predictors of life satisfaction, even after accounting for demographic factors, such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Specifically, higher levels of self-esteem and self-compassion are associated with greater life satisfaction, highlighting the importance of positive self-evaluations and self-compassionate attitudes in promoting subjective well-being in adulthood.

Furthermore, interaction effects between self-esteem and self-compassion are examined to explore whether these constructs operate synergistically to enhance life satisfaction. Results suggest that individuals who possess both high self-esteem and high self-compassion tend to experience the highest levels of life satisfaction, supporting the notion that positive self-regard and self-compassionate attitudes may interact to promote greater overall well-being. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem and low self-compassion exhibit the lowest levels of life satisfaction, underscoring the detrimental effects of negative self-evaluations and self-critical tendencies on subjective well-being.

Results in Light of Research Objectives or Hypotheses

The research objectives or hypotheses posited that self-esteem and self-compassion would significantly predict adult life satisfaction, with higher levels of self-esteem and self-compassion associated with greater life satisfaction over time. The findings of the study provide robust support for these hypotheses, revealing significant positive associations between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction among adults.

Firstly, the study's findings confirm that individuals with higher levels of self-esteem tend to report greater overall life satisfaction, supporting the hypothesis that positive self-evaluations are conducive to subjective well-being in adulthood. This aligns with existing theoretical models and empirical evidence linking self-esteem to various indicators of psychological health and happiness, underscoring the enduring importance of self-worth and self-acceptance for promoting life satisfaction across the lifespan.

Secondly, the results demonstrate that self-compassion emerges as a significant predictor of adult life satisfaction, with higher levels of self-compassion associated with greater subjective well-being over time. This finding provides empirical validation for theoretical frameworks emphasizing the protective

role of self-compassion in fostering resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and emotional well-being in the face of adversity. By cultivating a compassionate attitude toward oneself, individuals can mitigate the harmful effects of self-criticism, perfectionism, and rumination, thereby enhancing their overall life satisfaction and psychological flourishing.

Moreover, the study's findings highlight intriguing interactions between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction, suggesting that these constructs may operate synergistically to promote greater subjective well-being. Specifically, individuals who possess both high self-esteem and high self-compassion tend to experience the highest levels of life satisfaction, underscoring the importance of cultivating positive self-regard and self-compassionate attitudes in adulthood. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem and low self-compassion exhibit the lowest levels of life satisfaction, highlighting the detrimental effects of negative self-evaluations and self-critical tendencies on subjective well-being.

Comparison of Findings with Previous Research and Theoretical Expectations

Previous research has consistently documented positive associations between self-esteem and life satisfaction, with individuals who possess higher levels of self-esteem reporting greater overall well-being and subjective happiness. The findings of the current study align closely with these established patterns, reaffirming the robust empirical evidence linking positive self-evaluations to greater life satisfaction in adulthood. This consistency underscores the enduring importance of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-confidence for promoting subjective well-being across diverse populations, lending empirical support to theoretical models emphasizing the centrality of self-esteem in psychological health and happiness.

Similarly, previous research has highlighted the beneficial effects of self-compassion on various indicators of psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Studies have consistently demonstrated that individuals who exhibit higher levels of self-compassion tend to experience lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, and higher levels of life satisfaction over time. The findings of the current study are consistent with these empirical trends, providing further support for the protective role of self-compassion in fostering resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and emotional well-being in adulthood. By cultivating a compassionate attitude toward oneself, individuals can enhance their overall life satisfaction and psychological flourishing, mitigating the detrimental effects of self-criticism, perfectionism, and rumination.

Moreover, the current study extends previous research by examining the interactive effects of self-esteem and self-compassion on adult life satisfaction. Results suggest that individuals who possess both high self-esteem and high self-compassion tend to experience the highest levels of life satisfaction, underscoring the importance of cultivating positive self-regard and self-compassionate attitudes in adulthood. This finding aligns with theoretical frameworks emphasizing the synergistic interplay between self-evaluative processes and subjective well-being, highlighting the potential for integrating self-esteem and self-compassion interventions to enhance overall psychological health and happiness.

Implications of the Results for Understanding Adult Life Satisfaction and Potential Interventions or Applications

The findings of the study have significant implications for understanding the factors that contribute to adult life satisfaction and inform interventions or applications aimed at enhancing subjective well-being across the lifespan. By elucidating the relationships between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction, the study provides valuable insights into the psychological processes underlying subjective well-being and highlights avenues for promoting holistic well-being and resilience in adulthood.

Firstly, the study's findings underscore the importance of positive self-evaluations, such as self-esteem and self-compassion, in shaping individuals' subjective evaluations of their lives. Adults who possess higher levels of self-esteem and self-compassion tend to report greater overall life satisfaction, highlighting the enduring significance of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-compassionate attitudes

for promoting psychological health and happiness. These findings underscore the importance of fostering positive self-regard and self-compassionate attitudes in adulthood through targeted interventions and psychotherapeutic approaches.

Secondly, the study's results highlight the potential synergistic effects of integrating self-esteem and self-compassion interventions to enhance adult life satisfaction. By cultivating both positive self-regard and self-compassionate attitudes, individuals can enhance their capacity to cope with stressors, setbacks, and adversity, thereby promoting greater overall well-being and resilience. Interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem may include cognitive-behavioral techniques, such as cognitive restructuring and positive self-talk, to challenge negative self-beliefs and enhance self-confidence. Similarly, interventions aimed at cultivating self-compassion may incorporate mindfulness-based practices, self-compassion exercises, and self-kindness interventions to foster greater self-acceptance and emotional resilience.

Furthermore, the study's findings have implications for the development of tailored interventions or applications aimed at promoting adult life satisfaction across diverse populations and contexts. For example, workplace interventions may incorporate organizational strategies to enhance employees' self-esteem and self-compassion, such as promoting supportive work environments, fostering a culture of feedback and recognition, and providing resources for stress management and self-care. Similarly, educational programs may incorporate self-esteem and self-compassion training into curricula to enhance students' psychological well-being and academic performance, thereby promoting positive developmental outcomes in adulthood.

Moreover, the study's findings have implications for public health policy and community-based interventions aimed at promoting holistic well-being and resilience in adulthood. By raising awareness of the importance of self-esteem and self-compassion in shaping individuals' life satisfaction, policymakers can advocate for initiatives that promote positive self-evaluations and self-compassionate attitudes across diverse populations and socioeconomic backgrounds. Community-based organizations may also play a role in providing resources, support networks, and psychoeducational programs aimed at enhancing self-esteem and self-compassion and promoting greater overall well-being in adulthood.

Conclusion and implication

The study has provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction among adults. Through rigorous empirical investigation and longitudinal analysis, the study has elucidated the significant influence of these constructs on individuals' subjective evaluations of their lives and highlighted avenues for promoting greater overall well-being and resilience in adulthood. The findings of the study confirm the enduring importance of positive self-evaluations, such as self-esteem and self-compassion, in shaping adult life satisfaction. Individuals who possess higher levels of self-esteem and self-compassion tend to report greater overall well-being and happiness, underscoring the pivotal role of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-compassionate attitudes in fostering psychological health and flourishing. These findings have theoretical implications for understanding the psychological processes underlying subjective well-being and highlight the need to integrate self-esteem and self-compassion interventions into theoretical models of well-being and resilience. Moreover, the study's findings have practical implications for the development of interventions or applications aimed at enhancing adult life satisfaction across diverse populations and contexts. By cultivating positive self-regard and self-compassionate attitudes, individuals can enhance their capacity to cope with stressors, setbacks, and adversity, thereby promoting greater overall well-being and resilience. Interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem and self-compassion may include cognitive-behavioral techniques, mindfulness-based practices, and self-compassion exercises designed to promote self-awareness, self-acceptance, and emotional resilience. Furthermore, the study's findings have implications for public health policy and community-based

interventions aimed at promoting holistic well-being and resilience in adulthood. By raising awareness of the importance of self-esteem and self-compassion in shaping individuals' life satisfaction, policymakers can advocate for initiatives that promote positive self-evaluations and self-compassionate attitudes across diverse populations and socioeconomic backgrounds. Community-based organizations may also play a role in providing resources, support networks, and psychoeducational programs aimed at enhancing self-esteem and self-compassion and promoting greater overall well-being in adulthood. The findings of the study contribute to our understanding of the psychological processes underlying adult life satisfaction and inform interventions or applications aimed at enhancing subjective well-being across the lifespan. By elucidating the relationships between self-esteem, self-compassion, and life satisfaction, the study underscores the importance of fostering positive self-regard and self-compassionate attitudes in adulthood and highlights avenues for promoting greater overall well-being and resilience through targeted interventions, public health initiatives, and community-based programs. Through continued research and theoretical refinement, psychologists can further advance our understanding of these constructs and develop evidence-based strategies for enhancing life satisfaction and well-being across diverse populations and contexts.

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