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### **ABSTRACT**

Background: self-compassion has been correlated with well-being among adults; there are a few studies on the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being in samples of high-school students. This study aimed to determine the correlation between self-compassion and psychological well-being. Methodology: Participants were two hundred forty-seven (177 males and 70 females) students from five high schools in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. Participants completed two-scale, including the self-compassion scale (SCS) and Ryff scales of psychological well-being. Regression was computed to analyze the component of self-compassion predicting psychological well-being. The t-test also computed analysis to compare the differences between the males and females in students' psychological well-being. Results: There was a difference between high school students in the male group and those in the female. More specially, this study elucidated that self-compassion was essential in increasing psychological well-being. Discussion and conclusion: The study provides practical implications for applying self-compassion interventions to improve high school students' psychological distress and well-being.

**Keywords:**High school students. Mental health. Psychology-well-being. Self-compassion.

### **INTRODUCTION**

High school students are at the ages of experiencing significant biological, neurological, social, and psychological alterations (Patton et al., 2016). During this stage of life, such changes may cause each high school student to undergo some mental health issues (Byrne et al., 2007). The most common mental health issues in high school students are significantly related to anxiety, stress, and depression (Brady & Kendall, 1992). Yet, the presence of mental health professionals and the access to mental health services for high school students in Vietnam are greatly limited and extremely scarce (Morris et al., 2011). Therefore, it is significant that early interventions are developed for these vulnerable populations to prevent the long-term impairment of high school students' well-being.

Psychological well-being means "the fulfillment of human potential and a meaningful life" (Chen et al., 2013, p. 1034). Psychological well-being encompasses six dimensions: positive attitudes to an individual's life (self-acceptance), the feeling of ongoing progress as an individual (personal growth), the belief that an individual life is purposeful and meaningful (purpose in life), having a positive feeling of connection with others (positive relations with others), an individual's ability to control his or her own life (environmental mastery), an individual decision-making (autonomy) (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Psychological well-being benefited an individual to achieve his or her true potential and individual functioning, such as hedonic well-being and biological health (Ryff & Singer, 1996). Evidence from both experimental and longitudinal studies showed that psychological well-being was correlated with prosocial behavior, better physical health, and creative thinking (Huppert, 2009). Taken together, targeting early interventions to high school students and advances in understanding the possible pathway to psychological well-being are beneficial to high school students, high schools, and society.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Direct Effect of Psychological Well-being and Self-compassion**

To provide some insight into the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being, it is crucial to comprehend the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Self-compassion is conceptualized as a personal desire and a greater personal initiative to enhance an individual's health and well-being (Neff, 2009). In other words, self-compassion could assist in the process of achieving particular goals (Barnard & Curry, 2011), which contributes to the development of well-being according to telic or goal theories of Emmons (1986)

and Michalos (1980). Regarding its multifaceted construct, common humanity (as a component of self-compassion) makes an individual feel connected to others when encountering difficult life circumstances (Neff, 2003). Relations with others is similarly regarded as a domain of psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Additionally, empirical literature provided some understanding of the positive correlation between self-compassion and psychological well-being (e.g., Hall et al., 2013; Kyeong, 2013; Neff et al., 2008; Quang et al., 2021; Saricaoglu & Arslan, 2013). Preliminary studies found that there was positive correlations between self-compassion and psychological well-being among the samples of 420 Vietnamese students (Quang et al., 2021), 350 Korean students (Kyeong, 2013), 182 American students (Hall et al., 2013), 636 Turkish students (Saricaoglu and Arslan, 2013), and 568 American, Thai, and Taiwanese students (Neff et al., 2008). In the similar vein, a meta analysis found the strongest association between self-compassion and psychological well-being (Zessin et al., 2015).

How psychological well-being may distinguish between genders has been an area of interest for researchers. Indeed, Tomy et al. (2011) found that females have higher well-being. Still, both genders, specifically from early to mid-adolescence, displayed an age-related decrease in personal well-being (Tomy et al., 2011). Another study indicated that girls held higher psychological well-being than boys (Sun et al., 2016). The other findings showed significant gender differences in the levels of psychological well-being (Akhter, 2015).

Although there is an association between self-compassion and psychological well-being in adult samples, the literature is scarce in terms of their relationship among high school students. At this time, there have been limited studies on the role that self-compassion is linked to psychological well-being of high school students in Vietnam. Given the dearth of research examining the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being among highschool students, the current study investigated two hypotheses. First, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being among highschool students in Vietnam ( $H_{01}$ ). Second, it was hypothesized that there was significant discrepancy in psychological well-being among male and female highschool students in Vietnam ( $H_{02}$ ).

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants and procedure

After the consent of the Ethical Committee from the first author's university, five high schools in Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam were chosen by convenience sampling. The questionnaires were allocated to 260 high school students, but only 247 surveys were collected. There were 177 males (71.7%) and 70 females (28.3%). Regarding their grade, 54 students (21.9%) were in grade 10, 39 students (15.8%) were in grade 11, and 154 students (62.3%) were in grade 12.

**Table 1: the demographic information.**

		<b>n (%)</b>
Gender	Male	70(28.3)
	Female	177(71.7)
Grade	10	54(21.9)
	11	39(15.8)
	12	154(62.3)
High school	An Lac high school	150(60.7)
	Nguyen Van Linh high school	97(39.3)

Note: n: Number of participants; %: Percentage

### Measure

#### Psychological Well-Being

The Psychological Well-Being (PWB; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) was used to measure the level of students' psychological well-being. The scale has 6 dimensions, including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The students were asked to respond to six-point likert scale items with the labels "completely disagree" and "completely agree". We used the version of the scale that had been translated into Vietnamese (Calderon et al., 2019). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient in the study was 0.9.

#### Self-Compassion

The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003) was used to measure students' perceptions of self-compassion. The scale consists of 26 items, which assesses six dimensions, including self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. The likert scale ranges from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Higher scores mean a higher

level of self-compassion. The Vietnamese version of SCS has shown good validity and reliability in the Vietnamese population (Quang et al., 2021). The current study reported Cronbach's alpha of (0.9).

**Data Analysis**

The analyses were performed using the SPSS 20.0 statistical software package to analyze the information on the frequency of research subjects. Second, we examined the mean value, standard deviation, and the correlation between the self-compassion and the psychological well-being scales to evaluate the predicted score. Finally, the possible differences between males and females in students' psychological well were used in the independent measures t-test, and regression analysis was used to determine the links between self-compassion and psychological well-being.

**RESULTS**

The SCS was (M=17.81; SD=2.88), the mean SK was (M=14.40; SD=3.24), the mean CH was (M=12.38; SD=2.50), the mean M was (M=12.67; SD=2.91), and the mean PWB was identified (M=24.28; SD=3.75). Results indicated that PWB was positively and significantly correlated with SK, CH, M and SCS (r=0.01, to 0.21, p < 0.01). The components of SCS was positive correlated with SCS (r=0.30, to 0.35, p < 0.01).

**Table 2. Means, standard deviations, confidence, and the correlation between research variables**

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. PWB	24.28	3.75	1				
2. SK	14.40	3.24	.01**	1			
3. CH	12.38	2.50	.12**	.50**	1		
4. M	12.67	2.91	.08**	.48**	.65**	1	
5.SCS	17.81	2.88	.21**	.30	.42**	.35**	1

Note: \*\* p<0.01;\*p<0.05; M: mean; SD: Standard deviation; PWB: Psychological well-being; SK: Self-kindness; CH: Common humanity; M: Mindfulness.

The research results show that SCS significantly predicted PWB, B = 0.35, SE = 0.12, p < .005 (table 3). Specifically, SK was significantly predicted on PW (B = 0.07, SE = 0.15, p < .01), CH was a marginally significant predictor of PW (B = 0.14, SE = 0.21, p = .05), and M was predicted PWB (B = 0.31, SE = 0.16, p = .055). Furthermore, SCS was significantly predicted on PW and B = 0.31, SE = 0.16, p < .005, which As supported hypothesis 1.

**Table 3. Regression results**

Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	20.64	2.04		10.10	.000
SK	.07	.15	.04	-.51	.006
CH	.14	.21	.06	.67	.05
M	.26	.17	.10	1.50	.004
SCS	.35	.12	.13	3.4	.004

Note: SK: Self-kindness; SJ: Self-judgment; CH: Common humanity; I: Isolation; M: mindfulness; OI: overidentification, SCS: Self-compassion.

Our research reported that the difference between the females (n = 175; M = 24.10; SD=6.26) and males (n = 70; M = 24.85; SD=5.32). In addition, our there were significantly different between male and female about psychological-well being t(245)= 1.01, p<.01, d=.006. (supporting Hypothesis 2)

**Table 4. T-test findings comparing females and males to PWB.**

Gender level	PWB					
	M	SD	n	95% CI for Mean Difference	T(p)	Cohen's d
Male	24.85	6.26	70	[-.76; -2.36]	1.6**	.006
Female	24.10	5.32	177	[-.88; -2.48]		

Note: \*\*p<.01.

## DISCUSSION

The study aimed to provide an insight into the association between self-compassion and psychological well-being (supported hypothesis 1). Our findings suggested that there was a significant difference between male and female high school students in psychological well-being (supported hypothesis 2). The current study's findings can be utilized to inform the development of self-compassion interventions to enhance high school students' psychological distress and well-being.

The first hypothesis was stated among a sample of high school students. The finding was consistent with previous studies showing the positive association between self-compassion and psychological well-being (Hall et al., 2013; Kyeong, 2013; Neff et al., 2008; Quang et al., 2021; Saricaoglu & Arslan, 2013). Particularly, self-compassion entails being open to an individual's suffering without avoiding it and understanding his or her own deficiencies, failures rather than judging them, which is fundamentally similar to the concept of psychological well-being (Neff, 2003, 2004). Self-compassion was associated with adaptive coping and a high level of resilience, which accounts for psychological well-being (Neff et al., 2007). Self-compassion also acted as a buffer against pathological symptoms (i.e., anxiety and depression) and promoted positive feelings (Wei et al., 2011).

Secondly, our finding depicted that there was significant difference in psychological well-being among male and female high school students. This finding was similar to previous studies reporting discrepancies in psychological well-being among boys and girls (Sun et al., 2016; Tomy & Cummins, 2011). One possibility is that girls have an instinct for the soothing personality of self-kindness, but boys are tough and make self-judgment as a result of traditional social norms (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). Hence, boys are prone to being self-critical instead of being self-compassionate.

Our study supported the telic or goal theories (Emmons, 1986; Michalos, 1980). This theory postulates that self-compassion is seen as an individual desire to achieve particular goals, which enhances the greater levels of well-being. Our study was primarily conducted among a sample of high school students, which provides empirical evidence for the current state of psychological well-being in Vietnam.

## LIMITATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

A number of limitations should be noted. The most notable limitation is the small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of these findings. An additional limitation is the use of cross-sectional data, which can not draw any firm conclusions about causality. Another notable limitation is that the study was primarily based on self-report measures; thus, different data collection methods should be used to provide some insight into the role of self-compassion in psychological well-being. Further longitudinal research on self-compassion and psychological well-being with larger and more representative samples or various settings is necessary to increase generalizability and determine causality.

Despite these limitations mentioned above, our study makes some contributions. First, the findings support the idea that self-compassion has a role to play in high school students' psychological well-being. Given the difficulties that high school students encounter, it may be an attempt to facilitate students' psychological well-being. Second, there is also an implication for practitioners and educators. For instance, they can host self-compassion programs in educational settings to enhance high school students' psychological well-being.

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