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Advisor:

Toni Sawma, PhD

Assistant Professor in Practice and Clinical Psychology

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Association between Self-Compassion and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction among Lebanese university students: the Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

Lynn Azar

Undergraduate Student, Senior Study

Abstract:

Background: This study aims to investigate the association between self-compassion and romantic relationship satisfaction with the mediating role of self-efficacy among Lebanese university students. The hypothesis predicts a positive correlation between the variables.

Methods: A cross-sectional study among Lebanese university students aged between 18 and 25 who are in a romantic relationship was conducted through an online-sent survey targeted to measure self-compassion, romantic relationship satisfaction, and self-efficacy as a mediating role with age and gender as moderators. $N=97$ participants who met the criteria were included in data analysis. The survey link was sent through communicative social platforms and the link led firstly to the consent form. Data was analyzed through the *IBM SPSS Version 27* and its extension *PROCESS macro* by Andrew Hayes Version 2.4 for mediation and moderation.

Results: A moderate correlation was exhibited between self-compassion and romantic relationships, while self-efficacy displayed a significant correlation with both variables. Mediation effect was significant, while moderators age and gender were null to weakly correlated respectively.

Conclusion: Overall, this study highlights the mediating role of self-efficacy in assessing the relationship between self-compassion and romantic relationship satisfaction, and calls for further investigations in this subject, especially in the Middle East and Arab regions.

Keywords: self-compassion, relationship satisfaction, self-efficacy

Introduction:

To be compassionate entails being susceptible to and impacted by the pain or suffering of others, motivating one to seek to relieve their agony. It also means recognizing that all of us are flawed in one way or another, and that people are prone to making mistakes and facing failures (Neff, 2003). To that note, people usually tend to react in various ways to their flaws and mistakes. Some may respond to their failures by negative self-evaluation, others may embrace their failures with accepting compassion. Individuals with elevated levels of self-compassion practice sympathetic attitudes towards the self with acceptance, patience, love, kindness, and understanding without weighing judgments (Tandler et. al., 2020). Rather than replacing negative thoughts and emotions with positive ones, positive emotions are constructed by embracing the negative ones (Germer and Neff, 2013). Dr. Kristen Neff, a renowned researcher in the topic of self-compassion, duly individualizes the term compassion to be related to the self. She states that self-compassion is “being open to and moved by one’s sufferings” (Neff, 2003). To be self-compassionate is to acknowledge that everyone, including oneself, is deserving of compassion, and that failure, pain, and weaknesses are all natural parts of what it means to be human. In addition, Neff (2003) further extends the definition of self-compassion by conveying its 3 basic components: (1) being kind to and accepting of self instead of extending judgement and self-criticism, (2) seeing own experiences as a part of the greater communal experience of humanity rather than something exclusive and solitary, and (3) harmonizing awareness of unpleasant thoughts and emotions as opposed to over-identifying feelings. Moreover, it has been found that self-compassion influences interpersonal relationships. Romantic relationships, a key focus in the current study, have a different role in every stage of life. In early adolescence, for instance, short-termed romantic relationships are formed and start to increase in number while

emerging through middle adolescence to become more intimate and committed for a longer while in later adolescence (Meier and Allen, 2009). Researchers investigated possible factors relating to satisfaction in romantic relationships and found several, including self-compassion (Neff and Beretvas, 2013), and self-efficacy (Julal Cnossen et. al., 2019; Cui et. al. 2008). Albert Bandura, the father of the Social Learning Theory, defines self-efficacy as whether or not individuals see themselves as capable and competent in specific situations and accomplishing a task, and it includes four bases: physiological and emotional states, first-handed experience, verbal influence, and distanced experience. Amongst the four, verbal reassurance for increasing motivation and belief in self is the simplest to provide as it does not require any experience, is readily accessible, and can be provided by others or by oneself to persuade self. Yet, in order to viably develop self-efficacy, the individual must be in a balanced emotional state (Bandura, 1991). Bandura (1977) further exemplified efficacy beliefs and confidence in self-efficacy to have a greater impact than the expectations of the outcoming consequences, and an individual is unable to take a certain action if they do not intrinsically believe that they can and are capable of doing it. Emotional balance and a supportive inner voice are also among the traits associated with self-compassion (Neff and Davidson, 2016). Jointly combined, it is sensible to conclude that individuals who are able to balance their emotions and believe in themselves as if they are encouraging a friend are likely to have a higher self-efficacy level (Uyar, 2023). The named author also notes that as self-efficacy impels emotions in contexts like romantic relationships, it further demonstrates its constructive role in the satisfaction of the relationships. In support of everything that has been so-far stated, many research aimed at examining self-compassion, the satisfaction among partners in romantic relationships, and self-efficacy. This is important for the present study as it aims to investigate the relationship of interest in Lebanese university students,

which is not given any attention to, neither in the Lebanese context in particular nor in the Arab or region in general. The following studies present the literature reviews that considered similar research questions to the current study.

Literature Review:

Self-compassion has gathered expanded research attention lately, exceeding 200 studies and articles since the publication of the two revolutionizing articles in 2003 defining and measuring self-compassion by Dr. Kristen Neff. A constant finding among these research analyses is that greater self-compassion level is associated with lesser symptoms of psychopathology like depression, anxiety, and stress (Barnard and Curry, 2011; MacBeth and Gumley, 2012). Other conclusions were reached by similar research demonstrating how self-compassion facilitates resilience by moderating reactions to negative events, along the lines of the study by Leary et. al. (2007), where undergraduate students were requested to remember painful memories, create imaginative scenarios involving failure, loss, anger, and shame, or do a socially embarrassing task. This study found that those who exhibited high levels of self-compassion had less severe reactions, a reduction in unwanted feelings, more open-minded beliefs, and an increased willingness to recognize their own responsibilities while setting their difficulties in perspective. People who adopt these traits of self-compassion can manage to accept the role they play in unfortunate situations without becoming consumed by negative feelings and self-judgements, such as fights with romantic partners (Leary et. al., 2007). As self-criticism is the antonym of self-compassion, studies actually indicate that criticizing oneself triggers the defense mechanism of the nervous system which increases the natural tendency of

the “fight-or-flight” response as the *defense* system *defends* us from the pain of harsh criticism (Hamed et. al., 2019).

Moreover, there has been growing evidence among many research studies over the years that suggest self-compassion may influence or have an impact on the relationship satisfaction with partner (Yarnell et.al., 2012; Crocker and Cranevello, 2008). A noteworthy study by Braithwaite et. al. (2010), college students in committed romantic relationships scored higher on mental health wellbeing than their single peers. Much research aimed to answer the question about the role of self-compassion in social relationships, how it is displayed, and the extent of its impact. Correspondingly, self-compassion has shown to be a positive psychology variable that has an impact on marital and relationship satisfaction among couples (Fahimdanesh et. al., 2020). In fact, several recent studies have demonstrated that self-compassion makes us healthier and happier and may also be interpreted as a constructive predictor of romantic relationships (Baker and McNulty, 2011; Jacobson et. al., 2018; Neff and Beretvas, 2013). The cited authors additionally annotate that self-compassion helps us to be accepting of and open to emotional support from our partner, which elevates satisfaction in relationship. Neff and Beretvas (2013) also demonstrated that females significantly score lower on self-compassion and higher in relationship wellbeing than men. It has been further verified that since self-compassion fosters emotional resilience, it is capable of promoting supportive and beneficial ways to handle conflicts and disagreements, especially with romantic partners (Yarnell and Neff, 2012). Partners who are highly self-compassionate perceive themselves as being supportive of each other, and this has been correlated with beneficial outcomes including cooperative problem-solving and dispute settling, elevated intimacy, and positive stability in their relationship (Baker and McNulty, 2011). Additionally, it has been shown to encourage self-reliance among individuals,

which therefore leads to an increase in autonomy in romantic relationship and decreased mutual monitoring (Neff and Beretvas, 2013).

The school of positive psychology similarly recognizes self-compassion and self-efficacy as person-oriented qualities that influence one's ability to form deeper and healthier interpersonal relationships as well as experience ultimate fulfillment (Seligman and Pawelski, 2003). When people are mindful in difficult circumstances, they face the challenges with no fear of failure. Even if they fail, they will accept it and remind themselves that failure will not always follow, and in a sense, the experience of inefficacy does not alter the perception of self-efficacy (Neff and Germer, 2017). Essentially, self-evaluation of efficacies is correlated with level of self-compassion (Neff and Davidson, 2016). In a correlational study by Neff et. al. (2018), 1519 individuals between the ages of 18 and 80 were assessed in seven different categories linked to self-concept. The findings implied that self-compassion is negatively correlated with dysfunctional perfectionism and fear of failure while being strongly positively correlated with self-efficacy and concept. Other recent research findings also displayed a significant association between self-compassion and self-efficacy (Manavipour and Seidan, 2016; Babenko and Oswald, 2019).

In addition, a person who has not previously been in a relationship may feel a lesser sense of efficacy in their current one given that they lack direct experience, which is one of the primary sources of self-efficacy, according to Bandura, as cited in Julal Cnossen et. al. (2019). The cited study also found no association between being in a romantic relationship and the level of self-efficacy but discovered a significant link between romantic experience and social efficacy of self. Cohen (2013) further discovered in her study that participants who had a romantic partner

scored ten times higher in levels of self-efficacy than individuals who were not in a relationship. Also, certain research findings suggest that there are no notable variations between the relationship self-efficacy levels of men and women (Ogan and Oz Soysal, 2021), while other findings argue that women are more likely to develop it (Ly, 2021). Finally, a study by Uyar (2023) examined the role of self-compassion in romantic relationships while taking the mediating role of self-efficacy in romantic relationships in particular and found a weak relationship between self-compassion and satisfaction of relationship, while a significantly strong correlation was revealed for the mediator effect on the association between self-compassion and relationship satisfaction.

Few to no studies assess age as moderator, which creates a gap in the research available and the reason behind using age as one of the moderators. Although a wide variety of research has been conducted similar to our current research question, rare to no studies of combined variables of self-compassion, romantic relationship satisfaction, or self-efficacy has been conducted, particularly in Lebanon and the Arab region countries, which accentuates the limitations presented in the literature available and assert the purpose behind the selected population in Lebanon, especially in university students and this further emphasizes the research objectives of the current study.

Objectives:

The aim of this research is (1) to investigate the extent of the relationship between self-compassion and romantic relationship satisfaction while taking into consideration the mediating role of self-efficacy and (2) to test whether the moderating variables of age and gender may have an impact on the association of interest.

The hypotheses predicted (H1) a positive correlation between levels of self-compassion and levels of relationship satisfaction, (H2) a positive correlation between the mediating variable self-efficacy and the independent and dependent variable separately, and (H3) a significant mediating effect on the relationship between self-compassion and relationship satisfaction.

Methodology:

This is a cross-sectional study design among Lebanese university students aged between 18 and 25 and are in a romantic relationship. The study was carried out and data was collected throughout the period between November 2023 and December 2023. Participants were provided with an online link to the questionnaire sent through social media platforms like WhatsApp. This link led them to a Google form survey with the first page including the consent form, the aim of the study, and their guaranteed and respected anonymity. There were no expenses involved in taking part and initiating in this study. The independent variable is self-compassion, and the dependent variable is romantic relationship satisfaction with the mediating role as self-efficacy, and age and gender as moderators.

1. Participants:

A total of 108 participants completed the survey. 11 of them were either single or not in a relationship, not currently enrolled in university, or not within the age range of 18 and 25, and hence were excluded from the data analysis of this study since they did not meet the requirements. Participants were selected through a purposive sampling strategy, and conclusively, the total number of participants in this study was N=97 who met the abovementioned criteria and filled out the online survey sent. They voluntarily accepted

participating in the study after answering “Yes” to the consent form on the first page that opens once the link is accessed. If participants answered “No”, the survey would lead them to the submission page. The participants had to answer 4 sections of questions that collected: socio-demographic data, self-compassion, couple satisfaction, and self-efficacy assessments. Individuals who were not Lebanese, not in a romantic relationship or married, not between the ages of 18 and 25, and not university students were excluded from the study and data analysis.

2. Instruments:

Socio-demographic data: (* moderator)

The first section collected 10 items relating to socio-demographic data including age*, gender*, sexual orientation, relationship status, governorate of residence, university enrollment, job status, monthly income, number of rooms in household (excluding kitchen and bathrooms), and number of people in household (including oneself). Individuals whose ages were not between 18 and 25 were excluded, in addition to anyone who did not answer “in a relationship” or “married” to the relationship status question was sent directly to the submission form with no access to the rest of the survey and its sections, and thus was excluded from the data analysis.

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

A set of twenty-six items was applied for the assessment of self-compassion using the *Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)*, developed by Dr. Kristen D. Neff (2003). This scale is divided into six subscales (*total of 26 items*) sequentially measuring: self-kindness (*5 items*), self-judgement (*5 items*), common humanity (*4 items*), isolation (*4 items*), mindfulness (*4 items*), and over-identification (*4 items*). Participants answered the items on a Likert scale ranging from 1

“almost never” to 5 “almost always”. Higher scores specified higher self-compassion level. Items of the subscales self-judgement, isolation, and over-identification were reversely scored.

Cronbach’s Alpha was .962 which indicates reliability and the mean and standard deviation of the six subscales were $M = 4.099$ and $S.D. = .681$, with the individual means and standard deviations of the subscales as follow:

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
SELF_KINDNESS	3.8021	.75470	97
SELF_JUDGEMENT	4.2268	.85373	97
COMMON_HUMANITY	4.1856	.76229	97
ISOLATION	4.2268	.92568	97
MINDFULNESS	4.1057	.73051	97
OVERIDENTIFICATION	4.0928	.91949	97

Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI)

A twenty-three-item self-report measure of romantic relationship satisfaction, the *Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI)*, was applied to measure the relationship happiness among couples. Items that were irrelevant to the study from the originally 32-item scale were excluded, as allowed by the authors of the scale (Funk and Rogge, 2007). The questions were divided into 5 subsections (ss) with each a scoring of its own. The scorings were mostly Likert scale of 0-5 except for the first, and are recorded as such: (ss 1) on a scale of 0 “*extremely unhappy*” to 6 “*perfect*”, (ss 2) on a scale of 0 “*always disagree*” to 5 “*always agree*”, (ss 3) on a scale of 0 “*never*” to 5 “*all the time*”, (ss 4) on a scale of 0 “*not at all true*” to 5 “*completely true*”, and (ss 5) on a scale of 0 “*not at all*” and 5 “*completely*”. Items are divided into the subsections as such: 1, 3, 2, 12, 5 (23 in total). Higher scores indicated higher levels of satisfaction in the relationship. Items 6, 10, and 15 were reverse scored. The mean for the total items was $M = 4.181$ and

standard deviation $SD = .753$, with a Cronbach's Alpha $.978$ which denotes reliability among the scale.

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE-6)

The short form 10-item version of the General Self-Efficacy (GSE-6) was used to assess the mediating role of self-efficacy. As per the FQA article on the GSE website (Schwarzer et. al., 2012), research studies can replicate and apply the scale without formal authorization insofar as an adequate reference is presented to the source of the scale (Romppel et. al., 2013). Participants were asked about how often are they capable of solving problems and situations on a scale from 1 “*not at all true*” to 4 “*exactly true*”. The higher the score the more the self-efficacy level. Cronbach's Alpha was $.916$ and it signifies reliability, with mean $M=3.4753$ and standard deviation $SD=.501$.

3. Data Analysis:

All data collected on Google docs survey were linked and edited in Excel, then imported and analyzed through SPSS Version 27, with the mediating effect of self-efficacy and moderating effects of age and gender assessed through PROCESS macro by Andrew Hayes Version 2.4. Descriptive statistics like means, standard deviations, and frequencies were assessed. The data was tested for bivariate correlation with the use of Pearson test for normality.

Ethical Concerns:

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Lebanese American University (LAU IRB): **LAU.SAS.TS2.21/Nov/2023**. An informed consent form was provided

for participants prior to filling out the survey through the access of the link and were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected. Participants agreed for consent and therefore had access to the survey. Individuals who answered “No” to the consent question were sent to the submission form and did not complete the survey. To support this, no name or email is required to be filled out in the survey and the data will be stored securely with the strict sole access to the concerned professional researchers. Data will only be used for clinical analysis and undergraduate research purposes, and will not be published.

Results:

Demographic data

Participants were $N = 97$, with a *mean* age of $M = 22.5$ (*minimum*=18, *maximum*=25), and a *standard deviation* ($SD=1.964$). 62% of the respondents were female and 38% were male, with 91% heterosexual, 7% homosexual, and 2% bi-sexual. Also, 95 participants were in a relationship and 2 were married. 63 participants reside in Mount Lebanon, 20 in North Lebanon, 13 in Beirut, and 1 in Nabatiyeh. Further demographic data such as university enrollment, employment status, monthly incomes, and household crowding index like number of rooms in household excluding kitchen and bathroom and number of people in household including oneself are exhibited in [***Table 1***](#).

Correlations

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to assess the two-tailed bivariate relationships for normal distributions among the study variables. As shown in [***Table 2***](#), subscales of self-compassion show moderate to very high correlations among each other, such as common

humanity and isolation ($r = -.465$), self-kindness and self-judgement ($r = -.676$) and isolation and over-identification ($r = .899$). Furthermore, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted for the association between self-compassion and relationship satisfaction (R1), self-compassion and self-efficacy (R2), and relationship satisfaction and self-efficacy (R3). R1 showed the weakest yet a moderate correlation ($r = .494$), while R2 and R3 exhibited a considerably high and significant correlation, respectively ($r = .655$; $r = .592$).

Regression, mediation, and moderation

Mediation and moderation analyses were conducted through the PROCESS macro tool developed by Andrew Hayes. The mediation analysis of self-efficacy in self-compassion and romantic relationship satisfaction revealed a high significant result ($p = .0000$) and $R-sq = .4293$, as shown in [Table 3](#). The total effect model of self-compassion on relationship satisfaction with self-efficacy as mediator also displayed a statistically significant result ($p = .0000$), yet the direct effect shows weak significance ($p > .05$), with $R-sq = .3696$. In addition, gender and age were assessed as moderators of the study. Age was not found to have a significant moderating effect on the relationship ($p > 0.1$), while gender was found to be at weak significance ($p > 0.05$).

Table 1

		Age*			
		N		%	
<i>Socio demographic data, N=97</i>		18	3	3.1%	
		19	6	6.2%	
		20	7	7.2%	
		21	16	16.5%	
		22	11	11.3%	
		23	16	16.5%	
		24	22	22.7%	
		25	16	16.5%	
Current university enrollment					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	AUB	11	11.3	11.3	11.3
	AUL	1	1.0	1.0	12.4
	CIT	2	2.1	2.1	14.4

cnam	1	1.0	1.0	15.5
LAU	39	40.2	40.2	55.7
LCU	2	2.1	2.1	57.7
LIU	5	5.2	5.2	62.9
LU	4	4.1	4.1	67.0
NDU	22	22.7	22.7	89.7
USEK	7	7.2	7.2	96.9
USJ	3	3.1	3.1	100.0
Total	97	100.0	100.0	

Job Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed	55	56.7	56.7	56.7
	Self-Employed	19	19.6	19.6	76.3
	Unemployed	23	23.7	23.7	100.0
	Total	97	100.0	100.0	

Monthly Income (USD)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	+ \$2000	5	5.2	5.2	5.2
	\$1 - \$499	26	26.8	26.8	32.0
	\$1000 - \$1499	23	23.7	23.7	55.7
	\$1500 - \$1999	3	3.1	3.1	58.8
	\$500 - \$999	40	41.2	41.2	100.0
	Total	97	100.0	100.0	

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Number of rooms in your household, excluding kitchen and bathroom	97	2	11	5.96	1.719
Number of people in your household, including you	97	1	6	3.52	1.119

Table 2

Correlation of subscales in Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Intervals (2-tailed) ^a	
			Lower	Upper
SELF_KINDNESS - SELF_JUDGEMENT	-.676	<.001	-.772	-.551
SELF_KINDNESS - COMMON_HUMANITY	.533	<.001	.373	.662
SELF_KINDNESS - ISOLATION	-.471	<.001	-.613	-.300
SELF_KINDNESS - MINDFULNESS	.551	<.001	.395	.676

SELF_KINDNESS - OVERIDENTIFICATION	-.502	<.001	-.637	-.336
SELF_KINDNESS - SCQtotal	.761	<.001	.663	.834
SELF_JUDGEMENT - COMMON_HUMANITY	-.500	<.001	-.636	-.334
SELF_JUDGEMENT - ISOLATION	.798	<.001	.712	.861
SELF_JUDGEMENT - MINDFULNESS	-.620	<.001	-.729	-.480
SELF_JUDGEMENT - OVERIDENTIFICATION	.798	<.001	.712	.861
SELF_JUDGEMENT - SCQtotal	-.906	<.001	-.936	-.863
COMMON_HUMANITY - ISOLATION	-.465	<.001	-.608	-.292
COMMON_HUMANITY - MINDFULNESS	.541	<.001	.383	.668
COMMON_HUMANITY - OVERIDENTIFICATION	-.490	<.001	-.628	-.322
COMMON_HUMANITY - SCQtotal	.694	<.001	.574	.785
ISOLATION - MINDFULNESS	-.660	<.001	-.760	-.531
ISOLATION - OVERIDENTIFICATION	.899	<.001	.852	.931
ISOLATION - SCQtotal	-.877	<.001	-.917	-.822
MINDFULNESS - OVERIDENTIFICATION	-.660	<.001	-.759	-.530
MINDFULNESS - SCQtotal	.800	<.001	.715	.862
OVERIDENTIFICATION - SCQtotal	-.888	<.001	-.924	-.837

N.B.: SCQtotal is the total items of subscales of SCS

Table 3

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****

Model : 4
 Y : RSQtotal
 X : SCQtotal
 M : SEQtotal
 Sample Size: 97

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

SEQtotal

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6552	.4293	.1448	71.4670	1.0000	95.0000	.0000

Model

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
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constant	1.4996	.2369	6.3308	.0000	1.0293	1.9698
SCQtotal	.4819	.0570	8.4538	.0000	.3688	.5951

Standardized coefficients
coeff

SCQtotal .6552

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

RSQtotal

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6080	.3696	.3653	27.5606	2.0000	94.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.8844	.4487	1.9711	.0517	-.0065	1.7753
SCQtotal	.2054	.1199	1.7135	.0899	-.0326	.4434
SEQtotal	.7064	.1630	4.3345	.0000	.3828	1.0300

Standardized coefficients

coeff

SCQtotal .1857

SEQtotal .4699

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

RSQtotal

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4936	.2436	.4337	30.6030	1.0000	95.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.9438	.4100	4.7409	.0000	1.1298	2.7577
SCQtotal	.5459	.0987	5.5320	.0000	.3500	.7417

Standardized coefficients

coeff

SCQtotal .4936

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
.5459	.0987	5.5320	.0000	.3500	.7417	.4936

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
.2054	.1199	1.7135	.0899	-.0326	.4434	.1857

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
SEQtotal	.3405	.0931	.1585	.5230

N.B.: RSO is for the total items of CSI, and SEO is for the total items of GSE-6

Discussion:

The aim of this research was to investigate the correlation between self-compassion and romantic relationship satisfaction while investigating self-efficacy as a mediating role. This study also assessed age and gender as moderators. Many findings were revealed through the data analysis which provide valuable insights into the dynamics of this study's construct while also revealing the limitations accompanied.

Demographic data

The demographic characteristics of the participants ($N = 97$) presented a predominant heterosexual and relationship-involved sample. Of the genders, more than half of the participants were females ($n = 60$), however, both genders exhibit the same impact of their self-compassion to satisfaction of relationship with romantic partner ($p < 0.05$), which contradicts with previous literature claiming females score higher than males (Neff and Beretvas, 2013). The age distribution represented a homogeneous collection of young adults in university students, allowing partial generalizability of the findings within this age group. Governorates of residence of participants were mostly in Mount Lebanon (64.9%) and Northern regions (20.6%), with very few in Beirut (13.5%) and Nabatiyeh (1%), and this further highlights the need to consider wider studies that include Lebanese youths from all regions of the country.

Correlations

Consistent with previous literature (Neff, 2003), the correlation analysis highlights many significant interrelationships among the different subsections of self-compassion. For instance, the subscales of isolation and overidentification have a very high correlation ($r = .899$), in

addition to the subscales isolation and mindfulness ($r = -.660$) with a high correlation, and a moderate correlation between self-kindness and common humanity ($r = .533$). In addition, R1 aligns with the first hypothesis H1 in proving a positive moderate correlation between the independent and dependent variables self-compassion and relationship satisfaction ($r = .494$), and this is in accordance with the study by Neff and Beretvas (2013) which associates high levels of self-compassion with healthier romantic relationships. R2 ($r = .655$) and R3 ($r = .592$) signified a high correlation between the mediating variable self-efficacy and the independent and dependent variable separately, supporting H2 and implying a statistically significant correlation, which maintains the results and findings of the previous literature that relates self-efficacy to self-compassion (Neff et. al., 2018) and self-efficacy to romantic satisfaction with partner (Cohen, 2013).

Regression, mediation, and moderation

The mediation analysis through PROCESS macro revealed a statistically significant effect of self-efficacy ($p = .0000$) with the proportion of variance explaining a 42.93% mediation effect ($R-sq = .4293$) on self-compassion and relationship satisfaction, and this proves the hypothesis H3 and reflects the findings of Uyar's (2023) study that articulates self-efficacy in romantic relationship presented a prominent mediation effect on the association between self-compassion and satisfaction of relationship. The total effect model finding proposes that the self-compassion significantly contributes to predicting romantic relationship through the mediation effect of increased self-efficacy ($p = .0000$). When self-compassion and self-efficacy were assessed as the predictors of the dependent variable, the model explained an approximate 37% ($R-sq = .3696$) variability in the outcome of romantic satisfaction with partner. Although not

statistically significant conventional alpha level ($p > 0.05$), self-compassion explains 26% of variation in relationship satisfaction, without the mediating effect, and this prediction is moderately significant as the Pearson correlation. Conversely, the moderation analysis of age showed no statistical significance ($p > 0.1$) with self-compassion and relationship satisfaction, and this suggests no interaction with the association of interest. However, a statistically significant positive relationship is revealed ($p < .001$) between self-compassion and relationship satisfaction at ages approximately ≥ 20 , as shown in [Table 4](#). Gender, on an additional note, did not present a statistically significant interaction ($p > 0.05$), but the conditional effects reveal that the impact of self-compassion on relationship satisfaction is statistically significant for both genders ($p < 0.01$) with 61% in males and 51.5% in females, yet varies in its extent, respectively ($p = .0002$, $p = .0001$). This is further outlined in [Table 5](#), and implies no major differentiations across genders, unlike the findings of Neff and Beretvas (2013) that favored females. Therefore, age and gender were not considered to be key impactful moderators in the present study.

Table 4:

Run MATRIX procedure:

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***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****
Model   : 1
  Y      : RSQtotal
  X      : SCQtotal
  W      : Age

Sample Size: 97
*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
  RSQtotal
Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .5113    .2615    .4326    10.9748    3.0000    93.0000    .0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant    4.1756    .0671    62.2494    .0000    4.0424    4.3088
SCQtotal    .5467    .0997    5.4831    .0000    .3487    .7447
```

Age	.0442	.0346	1.2759	.2052	-.0246	.1129
Int_1	.0485	.0514	.9442	.3475	-.0535	.1506

Focal predict: SCQtotal (X)
 Mod var: Age (W)

Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):

Age	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-1.9639	.4514	.1329	3.3957	.0010	.1874	.7154
.0000	.5467	.0997	5.4831	.0000	.3487	.7447
1.9639	.6420	.1502	4.2729	.0000	.3436	.9404

Table 5

```

Run MATRIX procedure:
***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****
Model : 1
Y : RSQtotal
X : SCQtotal
W : gender1

Sample Size: 97
*****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
RSQtotal
Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .5183   .2686   .4285   11.3839   3.0000   93.0000   .0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant   3.7980   .2314  16.4109   .0000   3.3385   4.2576
SCQtotal    .7066   .3430   2.0604   .0421   .0256   1.3877
gender1     .2363   .1369   1.7253   .0878  -.0357   .5082
Int_1     -.0954   .2025  -.4712   .6386  -.4975   .3067

-----
Focal predict: SCQtotal (X)
Mod var: gender1 (W)
Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):
gender1 Effect se t p LLCI ULCI
1.0000 .6112 .1598 3.8247 .0002 .2939 .9286
2.0000 .5158 .1243 4.1488 .0001 .2689 .7627
Gender (1) for males, gender (2) for females.
    
```

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the current study exhibited significant results, many limitations are highlighted. First, the sample size is relatively narrow ($N = 97$) and thus makes the study findings unreliable, limits generalizability to larger populations, and prone to increased variability. In addition, the

methodology used through self-reports measurements introduce possibility of response bias and social desirability bias where participants may provide answers that align with societal norms or expectations or may have answered the survey after a fight with partner for instance, and this may create an inaccuracy in the data analysis. While confidentiality and anonymity were ensured at an utmost effort, these biases are inherent in self-report assessment tools and must be considered when interpreting the result. The demographic characteristics of participants did not include Lebanese university students from all over Lebanon as it primarily presented responses from Mount Lebanon, Beirut, and the North, excluding students in the other regions like the South who potentially had no access to the survey.

Future studies should include a more organically diverse sample to better examine the relationship through the cultural and regional variations amongst the people of a certain population. Finally, this cross-sectional study inhibits a causal relationship between variables, which is why longitudinal research is needed to ensure a collection of data over multiple points over time to provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between self-compassion and satisfaction with romantic partner and self-efficacy while highlighted other theoretical mediators and moderators and enhance overall reflection and build upon the available literature studies.

Conclusion:

This study underlines the significance of the correlation between self-compassion and romantic relationship satisfaction through the mediating role of self-efficacy. Age and gender were weighed as moderators. Overall, the findings of this study were moderately to highly significant as all the hypotheses were retained and none was rejected, with the objectives

accomplished as well. Non-significant results demonstrated weak yet important influence. This study brings into line the previous literature in emphasizing the role self-compassion plays in romantic relationships while navigating how self-efficacy and other possible variables can contribute to the association of interest. In essence, this study interposes to the growing body of research on the psychological aspects of wellbeing that influence and impact relationship satisfaction and calls for future research to dig deeper into the complexities of the causal relationship.

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NOTICE OF IRB EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

To: Ms. Lynn Azar
Dr. Toni Sawma
Assistant Professor
School of Arts and Sciences

NOTICE ISSUED: 21 November 2023
EXPIRATION DATE: 21 November 2025
REVIEW TYPE: EXEMPT CATEGORY B

Date: November 21, 2023

RE: IRB #: LAU.SAS.TS2.21/Nov/2023

Protocol Title: Association between Self-Compassion and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction among Lebanese University Students: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

Your application for the above referenced research project has been reviewed by the Lebanese American University, Institutional Review Board (LAU IRB). This research project qualifies as exempt under the category noted in the Review Type

This notice is limited to the activities described in the Protocol Exempt Application and all submitted documents listed on page 2 of this letter. **Final reviewed consent documents or recruitment materials and data collection tools released with this notice are part of this determination and must be used in this research project.**

CONDITIONS FOR ALL LAU NOTICE OF IRB EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

LAU RESEARCH POLICIES & PROCEDURES: All individuals engaged in the research project must adhere to the approved protocol and all applicable LAU IRB Research Policies & Procedures. **PARTICIPANTS must NOT be involved in any research related activity prior to IRB notice date or after the expiration date.**

EXEMPT CATEGORIES: Activities that are exempt from IRB review are not exempt from IRB ethical review and the necessity for ethical conduct.

PROTOCOL EXPIRATION: **PROTOCOL EXPIRATION:** The LAU IRB notice expiry date for studies that fall under Exemption is 2 years after this notice, as noted above. If the study will continue beyond this date, a request for an extension must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the Expiry date.

MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS: Certain changes may change the review criteria and disqualify the research from exemption status; therefore, any proposed changes to the previously IRB reviewed exempt study must be reviewed and cleared by the IRB before implementation.

RETENTION: Study files must be retained for a period of 3 years from the date of project completion.

IN THE EVENT OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ABOVE CONDITIONS, THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SHOULD MEET WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IRB OFFICE IN ORDER TO RESOLVE SUCH CONDITIONS. IRB CLEARANCE CANNOT BE GRANTED UNTIL NON-COMPLIANT ISSUES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the IRB office by email at irb@lau.edu.lb



The IRB operates in compliance with the national regulations pertaining to research under the Lebanese Minister of Public Health's Decision No.141 dated 27/1/2016 under LAU IRB Authorization reference 2016/3708, the international guidelines for Good Clinical Practice, the US Office of Human Research Protection (45CFR46) and the Food and Drug Administration (21CFR56). LAU IRB U.S. Identifier as an international institution: FWA00014723 and IRB Registration # IRB00006954 LAUIRB#1

Dr. Joseph Stephan
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED:

LAU IRB Exempt Application	Received 16 November 2023
Research Protocol	Received 16 November 2023
Informed Consent	Received 17 November 2023
Questionnaire	Received 17 November 2023
Links to online survey	Received 16 November 2023, amended 17 November 2023
IRB Comments sent: 17 November 2023	PI response to IRB's comments dated: 17 November 2023
CITI Training – Toni Sawma	Cert.# 42439700 Dated (10 May 2021)
CITI Training – Lynn Azar	Cert.# 53078786 Dated (5 December 2022)

