

The Relationship Between Self-Compassion and Psychological Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood Who Have Lost a Father Figure Due to Death

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Abstract. Several studies have shown that losing a loved one can disrupt psychological well-being. This study aims to determine the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being in emerging adults who have lost their father due to death. The hypothesis proposed in this research is that there is a positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being in emerging adults who have lost their father figure due to death. This research uses a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. The subjects of this research were 297 people. Data was collected using the Self-Compassion Scale—Short Form (SCS-SF) and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS). Data analysis in this study used Jamovi software version 2.2.5. The results of the analysis show that there is a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being in emerging adults who have lost their father figure due to death ($r = 0.665$; $p < 0.001$).

Keywords: emerging adulthood, lost father figure due to death, psychological well-being, self-compassion

1 Introduction

Having a complete and intact family is everyone's dream. Ideally, a family consists of a father, a mother, and children, each playing a role in building a harmonious relationship. Parents play a crucial role in supporting the development of their children as they grow and mature. Therefore, the presence of both mother and father figures significantly influences a child's psychological condition. The transition from adolescence to early adulthood is known as emerging adulthood. During this time, individuals begin to explore their lives and gradually become more mature. This period is characterized by self-exploration, instability, self-focus, ambiguity, and experimentation [1]. Although individuals strive for independence, they still need parental figures to support them in making decisions and navigating challenges [2]. Emerging adulthood can bring about various experiences, including the loss of a family figure, such as a father due to death. The roles of both parents are essential and complementary in childrearing. When one role, particularly that of the father, is missing, the parenting process may become less effective [3]. Loss is a common experience and can significantly impact an individual's development. Porter & Claridge [4] stated that individuals in emerging adulthood may experience disrupted development and difficulties due to loss, especially the death of a father figure.

An interview with participant X revealed that she was shocked and saddened by the sudden death of her father. As the youngest child, she was very close to him. She reported feelings of despair and considered dropping out of college, preferring to stay home due to fear and feeling unworthy. Even now, she still feels sadness but tries to calm herself with patience and acceptance. When overwhelmed, she often finds a quiet place to cry. Ramadhanti & Satiningsih [3] stated that the absence of a father figure can affect a child's psychological condition into adulthood, including reduced self-confidence, difficulty making decisions, feelings of unfairness, and fear of forming romantic relationships. McCoyd & Walter also found that losing a parent threatens emotional well-being and material needs [3]. Based on the research conducted by Majid and Abdullah [5], the loss of a father has an impact on individual's mental health. The impact of losing a father causes the child to struggle with emotional regulation and experience difficulties in social interactions with others.

Several studies have shown that losing a loved one can disrupt psychological well-being. Keyes et al. [6] found that unexpected death can lead to trauma, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Dhara & Jogsan [7] also found that depression negatively impacts psychological well-being. Therefore, individuals who experience depression will have low psychological well-being. Ryff [8] defined psychological well-being as a positive psychological function encompassing self-acceptance, relationship development, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth. A person is considered psychologically well when positive emotions outweigh negative ones and when they can manage emotional conflicts [9]. Although losing a father causes deep sorrow, such feelings should not persist indefinitely. Acceptance and the willingness to move forward are needed to improve psychological well-being. Ryff & Singer [10] suggested that factors influencing psychological well-being include demographics (age and gender), socio-economic status, and culture. Nasir & Rusli [11] identified self-compassion as one such factor. Self-compassion is the ability to treat oneself kindly in the face of suffering or failure [12]. Higher self-compassion is associated with higher psychological well-being (13–15). Based on this explanation, the researcher conducted a study on the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being in emerging adults who lost their father due to death. Although similar studies exist, this study focuses specifically on this unique subject group.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Definition of psychological well-being

Ryff and Singer [10] view well-being as a concept formed from a collection of experiences and the optimal functioning of an individual human being. Furthermore, according to Ryff [8], psychological well-being is a condition in which individuals are able to make independent decisions, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, create or manage environments that align with their needs, pursue meaningful life goals, and possess the drive for self-development. Huppert [16] stated that psychological well-being is a combination of feeling favourable and functioning effectively. These two elements contribute to a life that runs smoothly while also equipping individuals with the ability to protect themselves from stress by managing it effectively. From the perspective of Deci and Ryan [17], psychological well-being reflects a fully functioning individual, assessed through three main frameworks: eudaimonia (flourishing of the soul), self-development, and life purpose. Meanwhile, Bradburn, as cited in Ryff & Keyes [18] described psychological well-being as a condition influenced by two dimensions: positive affect and negative affect. For Bradburn, psychological well-being is achieved when these two dimensions are balanced. Based on the above definitions, psychological well-being can be

concluded as a condition in which individuals demonstrate healthy psychological functioning, live their lives effectively, and are able to manage stress and negative emotions they encounter.

2.2 Aspects of psychological well-being

According to Ryff (1989), the aspects of psychological well-being are as follows:

- a. **Self-Acceptance**—Ryff [8] defines self-acceptance as the ability of individuals to fully accept themselves as a prerequisite for self-actualization, optimal functioning, and maturity. This includes having a positive view of one's past. Individuals with high self-acceptance tend to exhibit elevated levels of positive psychological functioning. Conversely, those with low self-acceptance often feel dissatisfied with themselves, express disappointment about past events, and struggle to view themselves as individuals of quality.
- b. **Positive Relations with Others**—Ryff [8] emphasizes that positive and warm interpersonal relationships are essential to psychological well-being. Such relationships require the development of affection, intimacy, friendship, empathy, and love. Individuals with strong abilities in forming positive relationships tend to be warmer, more open, empathetic, and affectionate, as well as capable of accepting and understanding the relationships they are in. In contrast, individuals with low abilities in this aspect may find it difficult to be warm or open and may feel isolated or frustrated in their relationships.
- c. **Autonomy**—According to Ryff [8], autonomy refers to an individual's independence and freedom in regulating their own behaviour or actions. Individuals with high autonomy demonstrate strong independence, the ability to resist social pressure to think and act in prescribed ways, and self-regulation and self-evaluation based on personal standards rather than the standards of others. Conversely, individuals with low autonomy may struggle to make independent decisions and tend to conform to social pressures.
- d. **Environmental Mastery**—Ryff [8] defines environmental mastery as the ability of individuals to create, control, or select environments that suit their psychological needs. Individuals with high environmental mastery can manage their surroundings effectively, control external activities, take advantage of opportunities, and shape environments that meet their needs. On the other hand, individuals with low environmental mastery may struggle to manage daily life, feel unable to change or control their environment, and find it difficult to recognize available opportunities.
- e. **Purpose in Life**—Ryff [8] asserts that having life goals or a clear direction is a crucial aspect of psychological well-being. Individuals with a strong sense of purpose tend to live with greater direction and perceive their lives as meaningful. Conversely, individuals without clear life goals may experience a sense of meaninglessness, lack of direction, and absence of future plans.
- f. **Personal Growth**—As described by Ryff [8], personal growth refers to openness to experiences and the continual development of personal potential. Individuals with high levels of personal growth perceive themselves as constantly evolving, open to new experiences, aware of their potential, and able to recognize and embrace change over time effectively.

2.3 Factors Influencing Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being can be influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors originate from within the individual, such as age, gender, and personality. External

factors come from outside the individual, such as environment, culture, and social status. Ryff & Singer [10] outlined several factors that influence psychological well-being, including:

- a. Age According to Ryff [8], psychological well-being is influenced by age differences. Ryff & Singer [10] further noted that environmental mastery and autonomy tend to increase with age, while self-control and life purpose tend to decline. Self-acceptance and positive relations with others, however, remain stable across age groups.
- b. Gender Ryff & Singer [10] noted that women tend to have higher psychological well-being in aspects such as personal growth and positive relationships. The other four aspects showed no significant gender difference. However, they also found that this contradicts findings by Strickland [19], who found that women are more likely to face psychological problems such as depression.
- c. Socioeconomic Status Ryff & Singer [10] found that individuals with higher education levels and income or positions tend to have higher psychological well-being. Socioeconomic status also affects health conditions.
- d. Culture Cultural differences also influence psychological well-being. In Western individualistic cultures, aspects such as self-acceptance and autonomy score higher, while in interdependent Eastern cultures, positive relations with others are more emphasized.

Other influencing factors include self-compassion. A study by Rizky et al. [20] found that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with higher psychological well-being. Renggani & Widiyasavetri [21] also stated that self-compassion can be a major source of psychological well-being or eudaimonic happiness.

2.4 Self-Compassion

Self-compassion, developed by Neff [12] based on the general concept of compassion, refers to the practice of loving and caring for oneself in the face of difficulty, suffering, failure, or life challenges. According to Neff, it emphasizes valuing oneself as an imperfect human being. Having self-compassion does not mean being selfish, as this sense of compassion also extends to others [22]. Simply put, self-compassion is how individuals relate to themselves when experiencing failure, hardship, incapacity, or suffering [23]. Shepherd and Cardon [24] described self-compassion as an individual's ability to regulate negative emotions associated with failure and to use such experiences as learning opportunities. Breines and Chen [25] found that self-compassion represents the capacity to respond adaptively to failure, thereby facilitating personal development. According to Krieger et al. [26], self-compassion involves adopting affectionate and caring attitudes toward oneself when dealing with life challenges, whether related to psychological or physical pain. Ferrari et al. [27] emphasized that self-compassion allows individuals to face difficulties openly rather than avoiding them. It reflects an awareness that experiencing pain is part of the shared human experience. From the above definitions, self-compassion can be concluded as the practice of extending compassion toward oneself when facing failure or suffering, recognizing such experiences as part of the human condition, and drawing lessons from them. Neff [12] identified the following aspects of self-compassion:

- a. Self-Kindness—Self-kindness refers to the extent to which individuals understand, appreciate, and care for themselves during hardship. This aspect fosters a supportive attitude that validates one's feelings even in times of struggle. The opposite of self-kindness is *self-judgment*, which involves self-criticism, condemnation, and a lack of self-love.
- b. Common Humanity—Common humanity reflects the understanding that both positive and negative experiences are normal parts of life. It recognizes that no one is perfect and that

everyone makes mistakes and faces failures, imperfections, and pain. This perspective helps individuals accept problems as natural and universal. The opposite of common humanity is *isolation*, in which individuals feel they must bear burdens alone and tend to withdraw from others.

- c. Mindfulness—Mindfulness is a balanced and present-focused awareness of difficulties. Mindful individuals acknowledge their pain without exaggerating or avoiding it. The opposite is *over-identification*, where individuals become consumed by their problems, believing that these problems define them and perceiving them as larger than they truly are.

Thus, the aspects of self-compassion consist of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness [12].

3 Method

3.1 Research Design

This research employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The correlational quantitative design is used to examine the relationship between two or more variables statistically [28].

3.2 Research Subjects

The subjects of this study were emerging adults aged 18–25 years who had lost their father due to death, male or female, and were willing to participate in the research from beginning to end. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the criteria of emerging adulthood.

3.3 Research Instruments

- a. The Psychological Well-Being Scale used in this study consisted of 18 items. Initially developed by Ryff [8], the scale was later shortened by Ryff and Keyes [18] and adapted by Clarke et al. [29]. It employed a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 6 = *Strongly Agree* for favorable items, with reverse scoring applied to unfavorable items.
- b. Self-compassion was measured using the 12-item *Self-Compassion Scale–Short Form* developed by Neff [8], which comprises three components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. A 5-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 = *Almost Never* to 5 = *Almost Always* for favorable items, with reverse scoring for unfavorable items. Higher scores indicate greater self-compassion.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Jamovi version 2.2.5. Statistical tests included assumption testing and hypothesis testing. Assumption tests were conducted to validate conditions for hypothesis testing, while hypothesis testing was conducted to determine the relationship between psychological well-being and self-compassion in emerging adults who had lost their father due to death.

4 Result

Of the 335 participants, it was discovered that participant who meet the requirements criteria in study This obtained as many as 297 people.

Table 1. Description Subject Study

No.	Variables Demographics		Amount	Percentage
1	Gender	Man	20	6.73%
		Woman	277	93.27%
2	Age	18-21 years	167	56.23%
		22-25 years	130	43.77%
3	Long Lost	< 1 year	21	7.07%
		1-5 year	124	41.75%
		> 5 years	152	51.18%

Based on the table above, most respondents in this study were female, comprising 277 individuals (93.27%), while 20 respondents (6.73%) were male. In terms of age, 167 respondents (56.23%) were between 18 and 21 years old, whereas 130 respondents (43.77%) were between 22 and 25 years old. Furthermore, 20 participants (7.07%) had experienced paternal loss for less than one year, 124 participants (41.75%) for approximately one to five years, and 152 participants (51.18%) for more than five years.

4.1 Research data description

The research data description was prepared to determine the levels of each variable, namely *self-compassion*, and well-being psychological. The table below presents a general overview of the research data, including both hypothetical and empirical data. These include minimum and maximum values, means, and standard deviations, which are used to calculate the categorization of the research data.

Table 2. Data Description

Variables	Hypothetical				Empirical			
	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Self-Compassion	12	60	36	8	12	60	38.14	6.84
Psychological Well-being	18	108	63	15	32	79	55.81	9.50

The data categorization in this study were categorization into five levels very low, low, medium, high, and very high. Table 3 below presents the categorization of scores for the psychological well-being.

Table 3. Psychological Well-Being Score Categorization

Guidelines	Score	Category	Amount	%
$X < \mu - 1.8\sigma$	$X < 39$	Very Low	13	4.38%
$\mu - 1.8\sigma \leq X < \mu - 0.6\sigma$	$39 \leq X < 50$	Low	68	22.90%
$\mu - 0.6\sigma \leq X < \mu + 0.6\sigma$	$50 \leq X < 62$	Average	129	43.43%
$\mu + 0.6\sigma \leq X < \mu + 1.8\sigma$	$62 \leq X < 73$	High	74	24.92%
$X > \mu + 1.8\sigma$	$X > 73$	Very high	13	4.38%

Note. N = 297, X = Subject score, μ = empirical M, σ = empirical SD .

Based on table 3, it can be observed that the highest percentage of psychological well-being in this study falls within the average category, with a total of 129 subjects (43.43%). Subsequently, the following table presents the categorization of self-compassion scores obtained in this study.

Table 4. Self-Compassion Score Categorization

Guidelines	Score	Category	Amount	%
$X < \mu - 1.8\sigma$	$X < 26$	Very Low	11	3.07%
$\mu - 1.8\sigma \leq X < \mu - 0.6\sigma$	$26 \leq X < 34$	Low	76	25.59%
$\mu - 0.6\sigma \leq X < \mu + 0.6\sigma$	$34 \leq X < 42$	Average	133	44.78%
$\mu + 0.6\sigma \leq X < \mu + 1.8\sigma$	$42 \leq X < 50$	High	68	22.90%
$X > \mu + 1.8\sigma$	$X > 50$	Very high	9	3.03%

Note. N = 297, X = Subject score, μ = empirical M, σ = empirical SD .

Based on Table 4, it can be concluded that the highest level of self-compassion in this study also falls within the average category, with a total of 133 subjects (44.78%).

4.2 Assumption test

This assumption test was conducted to determine whether the hypothesis should be tested using parametric or non-parametric correlation analysis. The assumption tests consisted of a normality test and a linearity test, both of which were performed using Jamovi version 2.2.5.

The normality test is a prerequisite analysis used to assess the distribution of data for the research variables. The data distribution is considered normal if the significance value is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). The results of the normality test for the self-compassion and psychological well-being variables are presented below.

Table 5. Normality Test

Variables	Significance (p)	Information
Self-Compassion	0.028	Not normal
Psychological well-being	0.575	Normal

Based on the normality test conducted for both variables, it was found that the self-compassion variable had a significance value of 0.028 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the data for the self-compassion variable are not normally distributed. Meanwhile, the psychological well-being variable had a significance value of 0.575, indicating that the data are normally distributed ($p > 0.05$).

Following the normality test, the prerequisite analysis continued with a linearity test to examine the relationship between the two variables in this study. The linearity assumption is considered met if the significance value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). In this study, the results of the linearity test for the self-compassion and psychological well-being variables are presented in table 10 below.

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression Test

Model	F	p	Information
1	184	< 0.001	Linear

Based on the linearity test conducted, the significance value was found to be $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being is considered linear, as the p-value is less than 0.05. In other words, self-compassion can significantly predict psychological well-being.

4.3 Hypothesis testing

The hypothesis proposed in this study is that there is a positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being in emerging adults who have lost a father figure due to death. The higher the self-compassion, the higher the psychological well-being of emerging adults who have experienced the loss of a father figure, and vice versa. Based on the assumption tests conducted, hypothesis testing was carried out using a non-parametric correlation test, specifically Spearman's rho correlation. This was due to the results of the normality test, which indicated that one of the variables in this study was not normally distributed.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing

PWB_TOTAL			
SC_TOTAL	Spearman's rho	0.635	***
	p-value	$< .001$	

Notes . * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Based on the correlational analysis conducted, the significance value was found to be $p < 0.001$, indicating a significant correlation between self-compassion and psychological well-being ($p < 0.05$). The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was 0.635, which indicates a positive relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is accepted.

5 Discussion

Based on the analysis results, there is a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being among emerging adults who have experienced the loss of a father figure. Specifically, higher levels of self-compassion are associated with greater psychological well-being, whereas lower levels of self-compassion correspond to lower psychological well-being in this group. The findings of the study revealed a non-parametric Spearman's rho correlation coefficient of 0.635 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$.

These results are supported by previous studies. Anggoro [30], in a study on wives who had lost their spouses to death, found a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being. Similarly, research by Fauziah & Rofiqoh [31] also identified a significant influence of self-compassion on psychological well-being. Other studies with similar variables have consistently demonstrated a significant positive relationship between the two [32–34]. Positive psychological adjustment and low levels of depression have been associated with close relationships between parents and children [35]. Therefore, the loss of a father is likely to affect the psychological adjustment and depression levels in emerging adults. Prior research has also shown that high levels of depression correlate with low levels of psychological well-being [36]. A literature review by Wardi & Ningsih [37] emphasized a strong link between self-compassion and psychological well-being. Their study also found that self-compassion contributes effectively to the development of psychological well-being. In this study, self-compassion was shown to be a predictor of psychological well-being in emerging adults who lost their fathers due to death, with an effective contribution of 40.3%, while the remaining 59.7% was influenced by other variables not examined in this research. The effective contribution was calculated by squaring the correlation coefficient between self-compassion and psychological well-being (R^2).

This study also analyzed the relationship between the three components of self-compassion and psychological well-being in emerging adults who had lost a father figure. All three components—mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness—were found to have a significant positive relationship with psychological well-being. The strongest correlation was shown by the mindfulness component, with a coefficient of 0.551 and a significance value of $p < 0.001$. This finding aligns with the study by Yulistyowati & Savira [38], which also identified a significant positive relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being. This suggests that as a person's mindfulness increases, so too does their psychological well-being. Germer and Siegel, as cited in Germer et al. [39] stated that deep mindfulness fosters self-compassion and wisdom, which in turn leads to psychological freedom. Furthermore, mindfulness is said to enhance energy, mental clarity, and happiness [39]. Following mindfulness, the second strongest correlation was found in the common humanity component ($r = 0.540$; $p < 0.001$), and the lowest was in the self-kindness component ($r = 0.460$; $p < 0.001$). The correlation between the three components of self-compassion and psychological well-being is also supported by the findings of Kurnia et al. [33], which showed a significant positive relationship between all aspects of self-compassion and psychological well-being. However, in their study, self-kindness had the highest correlation compared to the other two components. The characteristics of the people who took part in the study help explain the results. Most of them were women, making up 93.27% of the group, which means the findings might mainly show what women feel emotionally. This matches earlier studies that show women are often more likely to join research on emotions and how people deal with stress. Looking at their ages, about 56.23% were between 18 and 21 years old, and 43.77% were aged 22 to 25. This shows the group is mostly made up of people who are in the early stages of adulthood. This time in

life is important because it's when people are trying to figure out who they are, gaining more independence, and facing emotional challenges, especially after losing a parent. The similar numbers of people in these age groups make the sample more representative of this group. When it comes to how long they had lost their fathers, more than half, or 51.18%, had lost their fathers for over five years. This means the study looks at how people adjust to the loss over a long period, and it allows for looking at both short-term and long-term ways of coping. On the other hand, the smaller number of people who had recently lost their fathers—less than a year, which is 7.07%—helps understand the early stages of grief and how it affects mental health.

The results in table 3 show that most participants (43.43%) had average levels of psychological well-being. Fewer were in the high (24.92%), low (22.90%), very low (4.38%), or very high (4.38%) categories. This means that most young adults in the study felt their psychological well-being was about average after losing a father figure. Having most people in the average group might be because emerging adulthood is a time of change. This suggests that some people struggled more with the loss and might have trouble moving past their grief or adjusting to life without their father figure. It shows the importance of helping these individuals develop better coping skills and emotional control. Support that focuses on self-compassion could be especially helpful.

Based on table 4, nearly half of the participants (44.78%) had average self-compassion scores, according to the results. About a quarter (22.90%) have high scores, and a quarter (25.59%) have low scores. A comparable small percentage (3.03%) have very high scores, while fewer people (3.07%) have very low scores. This indicates that although there are significant individual differences, young adults who have lost a father figure generally exhibit moderate levels of self-kindness, mindfulness, and a sense of community. Overall, these results show that while many young adults can adapt well to the loss of a father, a significant number still face challenges in maintaining good mental health. This highlights the need for programs and support that help this group improve their psychological well-being.

Overall, this study confirms a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being in emerging adults who have lost a father figure due to death. Nevertheless, the study was unable to explore differences in psychological well-being based on gender or time since loss due to significant disparities in the distribution of data across these categories. Another limitation of the study was the difficulty in finding supporting data from other sources with the same research topic. Additionally, the questionnaire did not include attention check questions, which could have ensured that participants answered the items attentively and sincerely. The absence of such questions may have resulted in less accurate responses due to inattentive or careless answering behaviour.

6 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being in emerging adults who have experienced the loss of a father due to death. This means that the higher the level of self-compassion, the higher the level of psychological well-being among the study participants. Conversely, lower levels of self-compassion correspond to lower levels of psychological well-being.

Based on the findings of this study, it is expected that participants become more aware of the importance of self-care and develop self-compassion to enhance their psychological well-being. Future researchers are encouraged to include additional relevant variables as mediators in the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being to provide more varied research data. It is also recommended that future research incorporate attention check questions in the questionnaire to ensure that respondents carefully consider each item presented.

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