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Secure Attachment and Self-Compassion among Adolescents: A Gender-Based Moderation Analysis

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Abstract: Self-compassion is a significant psychological aspect that plays a crucial role in helping adolescents cope with psychological distress and challenging circumstances. During the adolescent period, individuals tend to have low self-compassion due to frequent rumination and self-evaluation. Secure attachment is one of the psychological factors that could potentially influence the level of self-compassion. Thus, this study aims to analyse the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion in high school students, considering gender as a moderating variable. The study included 206 Teuku Umar High School students in Semarang, consisting of 106 females and 100 males. Data collection techniques employed the Self-Compassion Scale (26 items) and the Inventory of Parent and Peer (19 items). The results of the analysis revealed a positive relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion, with an R coefficient value of 0.3308 and R^2 of 10.94%. While secure attachment did not significantly affect overall self-compassion directly ($p = 0.4760$), gender was found to significantly moderate the relationship ($p = 0.0256$). These findings suggest that women tend to have higher levels of self-compassion than men. However, high secure attachment in women is associated with lower self-compassion levels. This is due to the complex influence of sociocultural norms on emotional regulation and self-evaluation in women. This research highlights the importance of gender consideration in comprehending the dynamics between secure attachment and self-compassion. The implications of these results point to the need for a more sensitive approach to gender differences in developing self-compassion for adolescents. Future research is urged to explore other factors that influence self-compassion, as well as using a longitudinal design to capture changes in this relationship over time.

Key Words: Self-compassion; Secure attachment; Gender; Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Self-compassion is an ability that adolescents need when undergoing a challenging transitional period. According to Neff (2023), self-compassion refers to how an individual treats themselves when faced with failure, inability, or suffering. Rather than judging or hurting oneself, self-compassion involves treating oneself with warmth and care in an unpleasant situation. Those with high self-compassion tend to have high self-worth because they are more accepting of themselves and kind to themselves (Neff, 2011). Self-compassion consists of three domains (Neff, 2016): how individuals respond emotionally to suffering (self-kindness or judgment), how individuals cognitively understand their difficulties (common humanity or isolation), and how individuals pay attention to their difficulties (mindfulness or overidentification).

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Self-kindness is a form of kindness in which individuals provide support rather than judgment to themselves when experiencing life challenges (Neff, 2023). Self-kindness involves maintaining a positive emotional state in difficult situations. Common humanity is the feeling of connection when experiencing failure and the awareness that life challenges are a common part of human life (Neff, 2023). Recognizing that every human experiences suffering fosters the understanding that humans are imperfect. Mindfulness leads to awareness and recognition of discomfort (Neff, 2023). Accepting the unpleasant reality helps adolescents develop the perspective that negative thoughts and feelings are temporary.

Adolescents have lower levels of self-compassion than other age groups because they often evaluate and compare themselves based on their identity and place in the social hierarchy (Neff, 2003). Developmental tasks that arise during the transition from childhood to adulthood—including identity formation, changes in social roles, achieving parental autonomy, and the need for belonging and peer group acceptance—are predictors of an adolescence prone to suffering (Steinberg, 2015). In addition to these tasks, adolescents often engage in self-evaluation due to the pressures they face, such as stress over academic achievement, self-adjustment, and body image issues related to puberty. This can lead to egocentric behaviour, where adolescents believe their appearance and behaviour are the focus of others' attention (Neff, 2003). Self-compassion helps adolescents form a balanced perspective on their failures and mistakes, allowing them to be kind to themselves instead of being self-critical or making unpleasant social comparisons (Neff & McGehee, 2010). A meta-analysis conducted by Marsh et al. (2018) found a strong correlation between low self-compassion and high psychological distress, especially in adolescents aged 10-19 years. Consistent with Neff and McGehee's (2010) findings, high psychological distress due to low self-compassion triggers isolation, self-criticism, and self-pity, which are contrary to self-compassion abilities.

In addition to predicting psychological well-being in adolescents, self-compassion mediates the relationship between family and psychological problems that can be managed effectively (Neff & McGehee, 2010). Through a brief interview with counselling teacher IE at Teuku Umar High School, it was found that there are differences in self-compassion between students who live with their parents and those who live with other relatives. Students who do not live with their parents tend to isolate themselves, communicate poorly, arrive late to school, and lack discipline; this applies to both male and female students. Specifically, overthinking and self-blame were found to be habits of female students. Additionally, female students tend to be more closed off during individual counselling sessions than male students. The results of Neff and McGehee's (2010) research support this finding, showing that the self-compassion and psychological well-being of adolescents are influenced by relationships with and internal reflections on parents. Poor family relationships affect low levels of self-compassion (Neff & McGehee, 2010). Affectionate communication and inner dialogue between parents and children build a loving internal reflection of self-compassion. Conversely, parenting that does not support adolescents can lead to harsh self-criticism and perpetuate the cycle of family dysfunction (Neff & McGehee, 2010). Therefore, family functioning, maternal and paternal support, and attachment style predict self-compassion in adolescents.

Self-compassion can be affected by factors such as gender, age, culture and parental roles (Neff, 2003; Neff & Faso, 2015). Lathren et al.'s (2021) research found that children with caring parents are more likely to develop secure relationships, resulting in a higher level of awareness when they enter adolescence. A positive attachment relationship between parents and adolescents represents a cognitive state that develops mindfully (Lathren et al., 2021). Attachment style is closely related to adolescent self-compassion (Xie et al., 2022). The first attachment that children experience is with their parents (Rizka & Danahfatin, 2024). One attachment style that positively affects self-compassion, particularly in adolescents, is secure attachment (Lathren et al., 2021). Secure attachment is characterised by a belief that others will respond and provide support when needed. This sense of security establishes a solid foundation for mental health and psychological well-being (Mikulincer et al., 2003). Having positive beliefs about others and oneself increases confidence in one's sensitivity and responsiveness, and leads to viewing oneself as competent, valuable, loved and special (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) state that individuals with secure attachment show a sense of self-worth and trust that others are present to provide support and appreciation. This trust stimulates the development of self-compassion, especially in adolescents. Feelings of worth arising from secure

attachment facilitate the development of self-compassion. Otherwise, adolescents and early adults with resistant or dependent attachment styles show lower levels of self-compassion (Neff & McGehee, 2010). Those with stable secure attachment showed significantly higher levels of self-compassion (Neff & McGehee, 2010). Additionally, adolescents with secure attachment, supportive mothers, and functional families tend to have higher self-compassion because they are surrounded by people who model caring and compassion in appropriate ways (Neff & McGehee, 2010).

Gender is another internal factor that affects an individual's self-compassion. Women are generally considered to have a greater sense of dependence and empathy, which leads to the assumption that they have better self-compassion than men. However, research shows that women tend to be more self-critical and require more rumination coping strategies than men. This indicates that women have lower levels of self-compassion (Neff, 2003). Lathren et al. (2021) found that, for men, mindfulness is an important moderating factor in showing self-compassion. For women, however, mindfulness can result in decreased motivation to solve relationship problems. A consistent pattern indicates healthier cognitive and emotional tendencies in women. In men, healthy cognitive and emotional skills are evident in mental health. Different self-relationship profiles in men and women are an indicator of potential adaptive behaviours when facing self-difficulties. These behaviours can include maladaptive responses to non-compassionate self-response styles (Neff, 2003). Further research is needed to understand the different outcomes in men and women when responding to the self with compassion.

The following is relevant previous research related to secure attachment and self-compassion, which supports the research to be discussed. According to previous studies, there is a positive correlation between attachment and self-compassion in young adults and adolescents (Maisari & Aulia, 2022; Wulandari, 2024). However, Wulandari's (2024) study, which focused on adolescents, showed a higher correlation. Another study by Henny and Yendi (2021) found that women fell into the medium category, while men fell into the high category. This means that female adolescents are quite accepting of their strengths and weaknesses. They have a sufficient tendency to understand their personality imperfections and can control their negative emotions. Meanwhile, male adolescents were found to be able to accept their advantages and disadvantages, control their emotions, and not overreact to problems. Yıldız and Eldeleklioğlu (2024) reinforce the results of Henny and Yendi's (2021) research, showing that gender significantly affects anxiety and self-compassion. However, the sample was dominated by women, so the results may not be generalizable. In contrast, the findings of these three studies suggest that gender is an important moderator variable in research on secure attachment and self-compassion. The results of Lathren et al.'s (2021) research on interpersonal relationships and self-compassion in adolescents reinforce this idea, suggesting that future relevant research should explore gender and personality variables as moderators.

The limited studies that specifically explored gender as a moderator in the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion, the imbalance in the composition of the sample, and the lack of selection of high school-age adolescents, who are in the developmental period of attachment patterns and emotional management, as subjects encouraged researchers to conduct further research to understand whether the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion strengthens or weakens based on gender by examining the effect of the strength or direction of the relationship. This study chose high school students as subjects, a different age group than in previous research, which has contributed to an improved understanding of the impact of secure attachment and self-compassion in academic and social contexts. The purpose of this study was thus to explore whether gender moderates the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion in high school students.

METHOD

To identify the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion in students, a quantitative research correlational design was employed. This study then examines how gender acts as a moderator variable that may strengthen or weaken the relationship between the variables. The non-experimental design was chosen as the variables can be measured, analyzed, and interpreted statistically.

Participants

This research concentrated on the group of students ranging in age from 15–17 years by involving the students of Teuku Umar High School in Semarang. The population of this study was 332 students. The sampling technique used is probability sampling, a sampling technique that provides equal opportunities for each member of the population to be selected as a sample member (Sugiyono, 2019). gender representation to avoid inequality in the number of groups between males and females, the sampling technique utilized is proportionate stratified random sampling. Based on the sample calculation using the formula of Yamane & Isaac and Michael in Sugiyono (2019: 137) with a 5% error percentage, the number of sample to be used is 181 students. However, in order to anticipate the possibility of invalid data and to obtain more representative and accurate results of the population under study, the number of samples used exceeds the minimum number, 206 students. With a total of 106 female students and 100 male students.

Instrumentation

This study adapted the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), which is based on the translation by Sugianto et al. (2020), to measure self-compassion levels in individuals. The scale contains 26 statements that cover the various dimensions of self-compassion. Each item is rated using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The scale has a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .872, indicating that the instrument reliably and consistently measures self-compassion.

To measure secure attachment between adolescents and their parents, the study used the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA-R) scale, which was translated into Indonesian by Safaria et al. (2024). This scale consists of 19 items. It comprises 19 statements with a Likert scale ranging from (1) Very Unsuitable to (4) Very Suitable. This instrument's reliability value (Cronbach's Alpha) is .950, indicating that it is highly reliable. Based on their reliability levels, both measurement tools fall into the category of strong reliability. These values were obtained after conducting reliability and validity tests in accordance with the participants' criteria and the research context.

Procedures

Data collection was performed by providing questionnaires to respondents in the form of Google Forms. This questionnaire used a Likert scale from 1 (Very Unsuitable) to 4 (Very Suitable). Respondents were instructed to select the response that best reflected their circumstances. Prior to completing the questionnaire, respondents were provided with informed consent and informed that there were no correct or incorrect answers. During the completion of this questionnaire, the researchers reviewed directly to ensure that the results obtained could be accounted for and avoid bias, respondent dishonesty, filling errors, and uncontrolled filling time.

Data Analysis

In this study, the dependent variable is self-compassion, and the independent variable is secure attachment. To examine the nature of the relationship between these variables and explain its variation, this study incorporates a moderator variable: gender. The study employs moderator analysis data processing techniques with Andrew F. Hayes's Model 1 Process Macro. This method provides more comprehensive results regarding the moderating effect of the moderator variable on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Putri, 2023). The process macro also provides interaction test results that support the inferential validity of the study and align with the research objective of exploring the interaction between secure attachment and self-compassion more deeply, along with additional explanations of the moderating effect of gender.

RESULTS

This study found a positive correlation between secure attachment and self-compassion ($r = .3308$). This indicates that secure attachment is associated with higher levels of self-compassion. Table 1 shows that secure attachment explains 10.94% of the variance in self-compassion, as indicated by $R^2 = 0.1094$. This percentage indicates that other factors besides secure attachment contributes to self-compassion.

Table 1. Regression Analysis Results of the Effect of Secure Attachment on Self-Compassion

| Model | R | R ² | MSE | F | df1 | df2 | P |
|-------|--------|----------------|--------|-------|-----|-----|-------|
| 1 | 0,3308 | 0,1094 | 57,767 | 8,272 | 3 | 202 | 0,000 |

The main effect of secure attachment on self-compassion for the entire sample was not significant ($p = 0.4760$). This suggests that, when gender is not considered a moderator variable, secure attachment does not universally have a significant direct effect on self-compassion in adolescents.

Gender moderated the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion ($p = 0.0355$). The presence of a negative interaction coefficient suggests that the strength of the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion varies by gender. The following is the details of the interaction level in this analysis which is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Moderation Regression Analysis Results

| Variable | Coefficient (B) | SE | t | p | 95% CI LL | 95% CI UL |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|
| Constant | 51.9086 | 9.5353 | 5.4439 | < .001 | 33.1071 | 70.7100 |
| Secure Attachment (X) | 0.1101 | 0.1541 | 0.7141 | 0.4760 | -0.1938 | 0.4139 |
| Gender (W) | 12.9281 | 5.7484 | 2.2490 | 0.0256 | 1.5936 | 24.2626 |
| X × Gender (Int_1) | -0.1972 | 0.0932 | -2.1167 | 0.0355 | -0.3808 | -0.0135 |

Note: X = Secure Attachment, Y = Self-Compassion, W = Gender (1 = male, 2 = female), Int 1 = X × W Interaction.

The results of the conditional effects analysis showed that secure attachment did not significantly affect self-compassion in male adolescents ($p = 0.2205$). In contrast, secure attachment had a significant effect on female adolescents, followed by a negative relationship (-0.2843 ; $p < 0.001$). This finding shows that different patterns appear between males and females.

Table 3. Conditional Effects of Secure Attachment on Self-Compassion in Each Gender

| Gender | B (Effect) | SE | t | p | 95% CI LL | 95% CI UL |
|------------|------------|--------|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|
| Male (1) | -0.0871 | 0.0709 | -1.2290 | 0.2205 | -0.2269 | 0.0527 |
| Female (2) | -0.2843 | 0.0604 | -4.7041 | < .001 | -0.4035 | -0.1651 |

The pattern depicted in the interaction graph reinforces the finding that gender moderates the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion. For male adolescents, the determination value ($R^2 = 0.015$) showed that secure attachment explained only 1.5% of the variation in self-compassion, indicating a very weak relationship. In contrast, the value of R^2 in female adolescents ($R^2 = 0.175$) showed a greater contribution (17.5%) and a negative relationship.

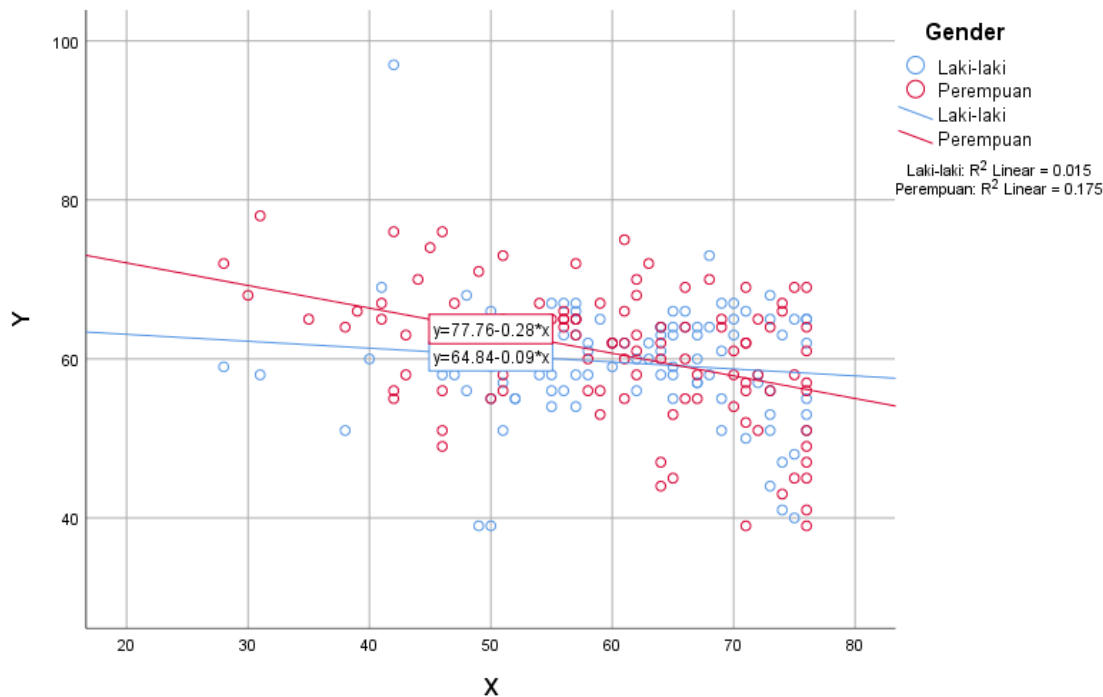


Figure 1 Conditional Effect Graph of Secure Attachment on Self-Compassion in Each Gender. Note: Blue for male and red for female

The findings of this study show that female adolescents with a secure attachment style have lower self-compassion. In contrast, secure attachment has no effect on self-compassion in males. This finding conceptually contradicts the intuitive and theoretical assumption that individuals with secure attachment tend to have higher self-compassion. These results suggest that other factors may contribute to the relationship between attachment and self-compassion, particularly among adolescent girls.

DISCUSSION

This study collectively emphasizes the significant role of considering gender considerations into the examination of the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion. The findings of this study indicate that secure attachment does not invariably enhance self-compassion; rather, its effect appears to vary according to gender. According to Neff and McGehee's (2010) research, individuals who have formed a secure attachment tend to exhibit a more pronounced capacity for self-compassion. However, other factors may contribute to variations in these outcomes across different genders. The present study found that incorporating gender as a moderator revealed distinct patterns in the relationships between adolescent boys and girls.

A comparative analysis reveals that women tend to exhibit a greater diversity of levels of self-compassion in comparison to men. According to Neff et al. (2005), women who exhibit a secure attachment style may demonstrate a paradoxical effect, whereby levels of secure attachment are associated with diminished self-compassion, attributable to elevated self-criticism and societal pressures. Consequently, although secure attachment is generally linked to favourable psychological outcomes, the results for women may differ. This discrepancy in influence may be attributed to variations in cultural norms and expectations concerning patterns of self-concept and self-response in men and women (Rankin et al., 2004). The prevailing cultural conditions and the understanding of social norms related to masculinity and femininity exert distinct pressures on men and women. As posited by Yarnell et al. (2015), the discrepancy in cultural socialization pressure exerts an influence on the development of emotion regulation, encompassing the cultivation of self-compassion.

The existence of societal perceptions related to femininity tends to encourage greater expectations in women to recognize and labelling of emotional states, while societal expectations of masculinity in

men encourage suppression or repression of their emotional states. This suppression has been identified as a predictor of variations in self-compassion in men (Ferrari et al., 2023). Emotional suppression in men is often regarded as a manifestation of toughness, while women are socialized to be more expressive but self-critical, because of the societal expectations imposed on women (Yarnell et al., 2015). The environment that fosters the socialization and reinforcement of feminine and masculine values is likely to exert a significant influence on the level of self-compassion within a given cultural community (Yarnell et al., 2015).

In Indonesia, the societal value of femininity is often diminished in comparison to the value attributed to masculinity (Apriliandra & Krisnani, 2021). Women are frequently positioned to prioritize domestic roles and obedience, resulting in the emergence of marginal inequalities in gender equality. The issue of gender marginalization, which involves the placement of men in a superior position and women in an inferior position, gives rise to social dynamics that prioritize women in self-sacrifice. This dynamic results in a higher tendency for women to criticize themselves (Apriliandra & Krisnani, 2021). Adolescent girls exhibit higher levels of public self-consciousness and social comparison compared to their male counterparts. This phenomenon can be attributed to a tendency among adolescent girls to evaluate themselves based on social expectations (Rankin et al., 2004). The heightened societal expectations concerning image and moral rectitude appear to be associated with a heightened propensity for low self-compassion among women.

In collectivist cultures, such as Indonesia, emotional attachment to close others is a significant concern in emotional regulation (Strand et al., 2019). Collectivist cultures place significant emphasis on social connectedness and group identity, thereby exerting a profound influence on emotional functioning through close and involved relationships (Hofstede, 2011). In collectivist cultures, adolescents' efforts to meet social demands often result in an insecure-anxious attachment pattern, leading to behaviours that are driven by a need for attention and validation from significant figures. In contrast, in individualistic cultures, attachment is characterized by an emphasis on independence, personal autonomy, and self-expression. This phenomenon can be attributed to the parenting style, which has been observed to result in an insecure-avoidant attachment pattern among children. Adolescents exhibiting an insecure-avoidant attachment pattern have been observed to employ a strategy of withholding expression and avoiding deep emotional involvement as a means of maintaining self-reliance (Strand et al., 2019). Therefore, the question must be raised: why is secure attachment associated as a predictor of psychological well-being? Individuals who have formed secure attachments have been shown to exhibit increased flexibility in their behaviour and a higher degree of adaptability in their social relationships (Strand et al., 2019).

Secure attachment provides adolescents with an emotional foundation that fosters self-acceptance and improves their attitude toward emotional experiences. Secure attachment fosters emotional intelligence, enabling individuals to manage their emotions and demonstrate compassion toward themselves. Secure attachment serves as a supportive foundation for emotional development; however, it does not always directly contribute to specific psychological aspects, such as self-compassion (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007). The present study found that secure attachment does not universally increase self-compassion. Rather, it demonstrated an interaction between secure attachment and gender, resulting in a pattern where women with secure attachment exhibit lower levels of self-compassion. Consequently, these findings challenge the assumption that secure attachment invariably positively contributes to levels of self-compassion or emotional well-being. These findings contribute to an expanded theoretical framework, underscoring the influence of sociocultural factors and gender on the effects of differences in self-compassion and attachment.

This study contributes to the extant literature on gender differences in emotion regulation. Women who experience elevated levels of public self-consciousness and social comparison have been observed to engage in self-criticism, which, in turn, has been shown to result in diminished levels of self-compassion, despite the presence of secure attachment (Rankin et al., 2004; Yarnell et al., 2015, 2019). The findings of this study suggest a link between secure attachment in women and lower levels of self-compassion. The phenomenon of attachment, when considered in relation to the prevailing socio-cultural norms within a given society, has been demonstrated to serve as a perpetuator of feelings of inadequacy among women. Conversely, the impact of secure attachment on men's self-compassion appears to be negligible. This phenomenon is attributed to the influence of masculine norms that tend to

suppress emotional expression in men. Consequently, social pressures and cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity may impede the emotional influence of secure attachment. These findings underscore the notion that gender also moderates the relationship between attachment and its influence on emotional regulation.

The complexity of emotional development during adolescence is influenced by a multitude of factors, including attachment experiences with parents, social dynamics, and cultural pressures associated with gender roles. Santrock (2011) asserts that during the process of adolescent identity and self-concept formation, contextual factors such as culture, gender, peer group pressure, and family influence play a pivotal role. During the identity-seeking phase, adolescents' emotional regulation and self-concept are also influenced by social and cultural dynamics. This period is characterized by an increase in self-awareness, alterations in social roles within society, and the emergence of evaluation based on the social standards that are prevalent in the individual's environment (Steinberg, 2014). The findings of this study further corroborate previous findings, emphasizing that when observing the emotional development of adolescents, the social-cultural context and gender roles are important to examine further, even considering the possibility of social interventions to support the development of adolescents' emotional regulation.

The findings of this study emphasize the necessity of considering gender and cultural context to comprehensively understand the relationship between secure attachment and self-compassion in adolescents. Regarding the academic implications of this research, several key findings have been identified. Firstly, the present study posits the necessity for counselling intervention programs that encompass the emotional needs of both male and female adolescents. Counselling approaches that are sensitive to gender must explicitly promote self-compassion to assist adolescents in coping with the social standards that are prevalent in their environment. Counselling programs based on compassion-focused therapy (Gilbert, 2009) have proven effective in reducing self-criticism and increasing self-compassion. These programs can be adapted to the adolescent context with gender-based adjustments.

Secondly, it is essential to promote an emotionally supportive environment within the school and home settings. The creation of an emotionally supportive environment is imperative for fostering interaction within a framework of emotional acceptance, validation of feelings, and the modelling of empathetic responses. According to Shaver and Mikulincer (2007), the formation of secure attachment is optimal when individuals perceive the presence of a secure base in their daily relationships. Consequently, individuals in positions of proximity, such as parents and educators, must receive training to become responsive secondary attachment figures, thereby facilitating academic success and emotional well-being. Durlak et al. (2011) found that Social Emotional Learning is one of the school-based interventions that integrate attachment principles and effectively improve emotional regulation and empathy among students. The implementation of this intervention can serve as a strategy to promote an emotionally supportive environment for students within the academic setting.

Thirdly, there is a necessity for the dissemination of training to educators, with the objective of equipping them with the capacity to identify gaps in self-compassion among adolescents. It is imperative to acknowledge the presence of signs of low self-compassion as a crucial component of the monitoring of adolescents' psychological profiles. This involves the deliberate observation of behaviours such as perfectionism, extreme self-criticism, and self-isolation. A diverse array of adolescent profiles has been demonstrated to exhibit disparate effects on well-being (Ferrari et al., 2023). The training of teachers consists of an understanding of gender-based psychological dynamics, modules on empathy, and affective communication skills that support the development of positive competencies in students. Teachers, as significant figures outside the family, play a crucial role in providing social support for self-acceptance in adolescents who are vulnerable to self-evaluation and social standards.

Study Limitations

The interpretation of the results is hindered by several methodological limitations of the study. First, the limited sample size, which was restricted to a single school, increases the risk of sampling bias and limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population with different socio-cultural backgrounds. Secondly, the utilization of self-report scales for data collection, which may not fully capture the complexity of self-compassion dimensions, leaves room for unaccounted aspects of self-

compassion or attachment relationships among adolescents. Furthermore, the interpretation of data in this study may be influenced by gender disparities, particularly those related to cultural and relational dynamics. Despite the utilization of gender as a moderator variable, the intricate processes through which individuals formulate their identities based on gender roles and cultural norms of masculinity and femininity remain a subject of limited exploration.

CONCLUSION

Secure attachment has been demonstrated to contribute to the development of adolescent self-compassion; however, its effects are gender-specific and are shaped by cultural norms. The findings of this study suggest that the influence of social norms and complex gender pressures on emotional regulation and self-evaluation contributes to diminished levels of self-compassion in women. In the case of males, the effect is negated by the construct of masculinity, which has been shown to suppress emotional expression. Consequently, it is imperative for future research to explore aspects not covered in this study, such as more diverse dimensions of self-compassion, adolescents' subjective experiences based on gender, and expanding the scope to include other psychological factors that influence the development of self-compassion in adolescents. For future research, a longitudinal and qualitative approach is recommended to describe the dynamics of relationships in a more comprehensive and contextual manner, and to explicitly consider gender constructions based on local socio-cultural contexts.

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