

# Self-Compassion, Self-Concept, and Mindfulness in Emerging Adolescents

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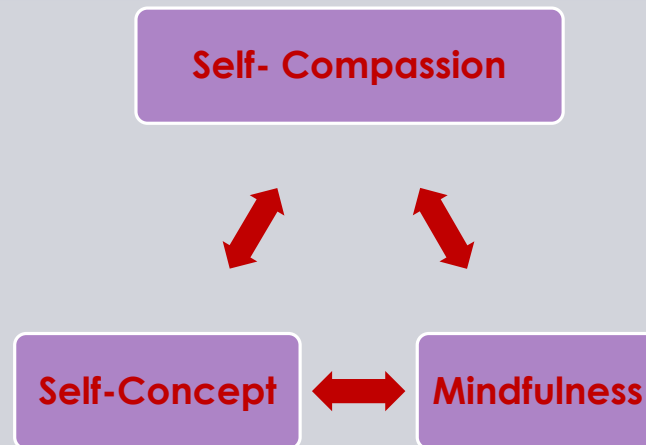
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# Focus of Study

Exploring the interconnectedness of **Self-Compassion**, **Self-Concept**, and **Mindfulness** and how they are related among emerging adolescents.



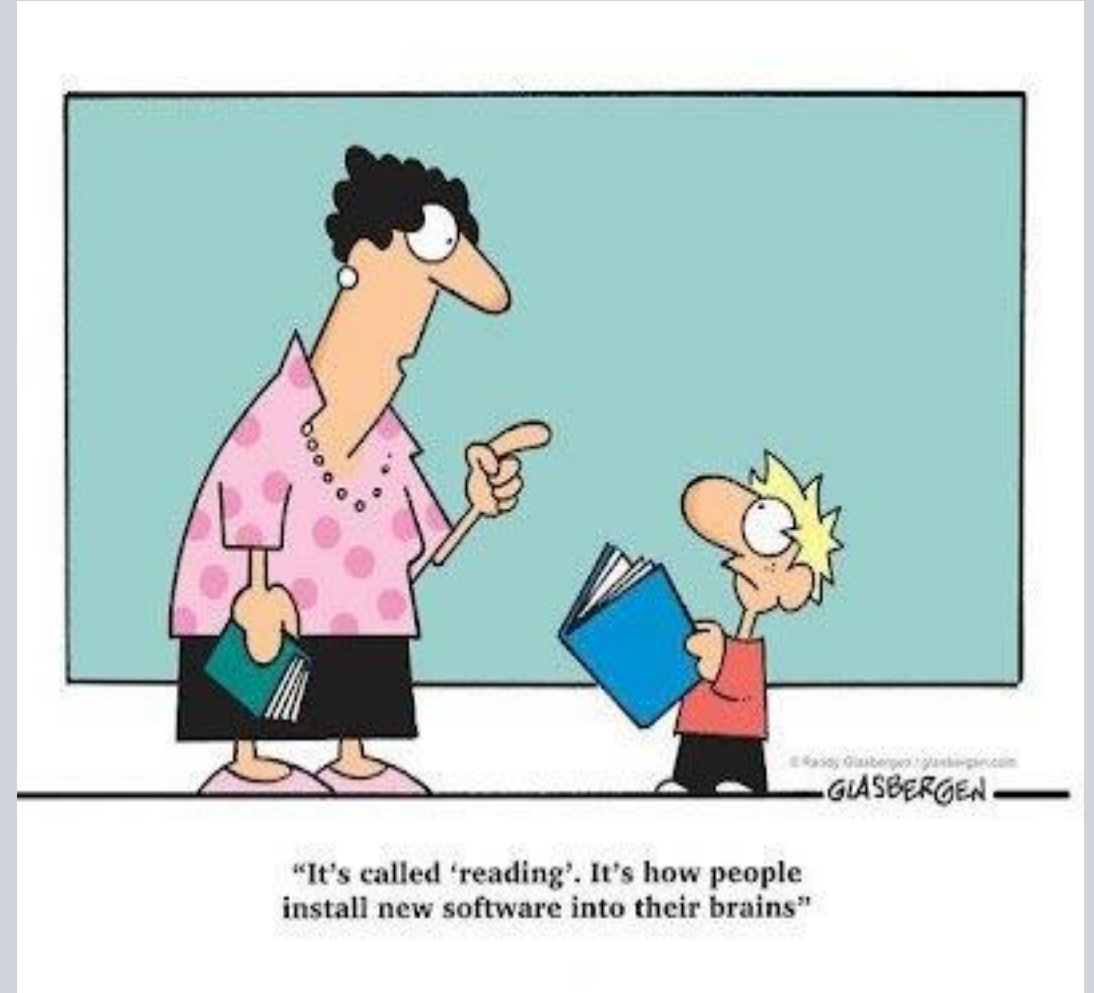
**Impact of Gender?**

# Theory of Mind

- ▶ Theory of Mind (ToM) is the ability to understand thoughts and emotions in ourselves and others.
- ▶ ToM answers the questions of *how* people understand themselves and the minds of others (Wellman, 2017) and *how the understanding* of such states can guide behaviours (Peterson et al., 2005)
- ▶ ToM encompasses many aspects of development across the lifespan including:
  - + prosocial behaviour
  - + self-compassion
  - + self-concept
  - + mindfulness
  - + spirituality
  - + self-reflection
  - + gender identification
  - + empathy

# Why is ToM important?

- ▶ The study of how adolescents think, feel, and act will provide a better understanding of their mental and social world, particularly in a school setting.
- ▶ Psychological reasoning and social behaviour can impact academic abilities, self-esteem, and gender differences during the complex transitions between childhood and adolescence – particularly in the school environment.

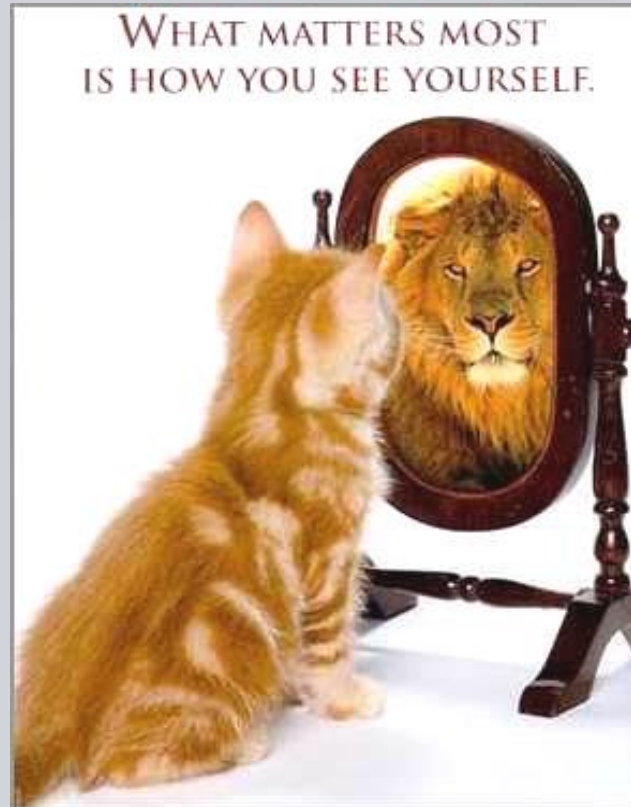


# Processes

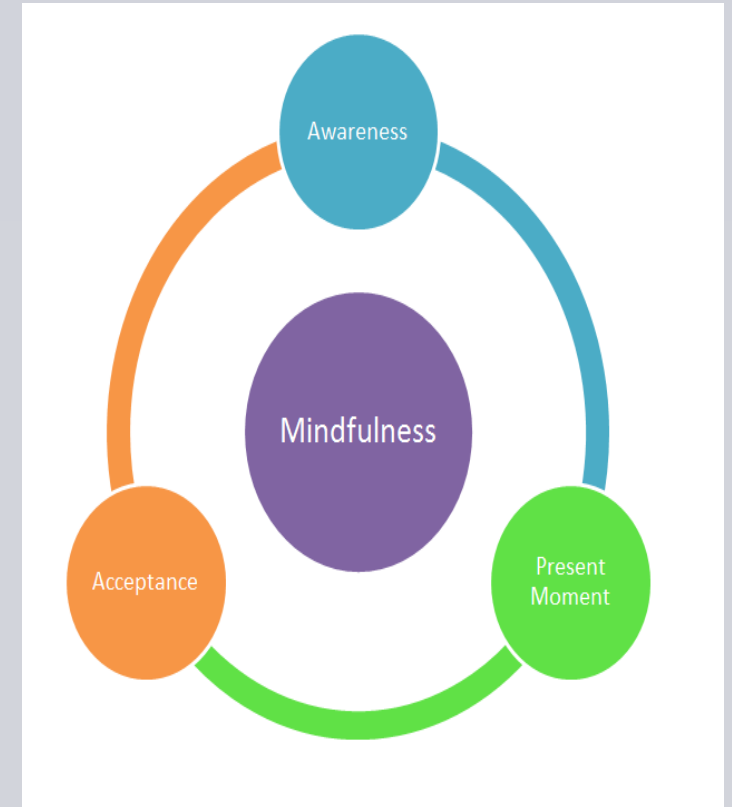
## Self-Compassion



## Self-Concept



## Mindfulness



# Processes

## Self-Compassion

- ▶ The act of caring, feeling warm, and understanding towards oneself (Peterson, 2017; Van der Gucht et al., 2017).
- ▶ Involves a healthy self-attitude and non-judgemental understanding of one's self (including pain and failures).
- ▶ Lower negative self-judgement is related to less judgement of others, improved social behaviour, and a positive emotional state towards oneself (Neff, 2003).

## Self-Concept

## Mindfulness

# Processes

## Self-Compassion

## Self-Concept

- ▶ Cognitive perception of one's feelings and beliefs directed towards oneself (Damon & Hart, 1988).
- ▶ The ability to describe and justify one's perceived self-worth (Bosacki, 2000) which may impact prosocial behaviour and self-esteem.
- ▶ Elements of self-concept include: self-perception of physical appearance, moral or behavioural conduct, and global sense of self or personal happiness (Harter, 1985).

## Mindfulness

# Processes

## Self-Compassion

## Self- Concept

## Mindfulness

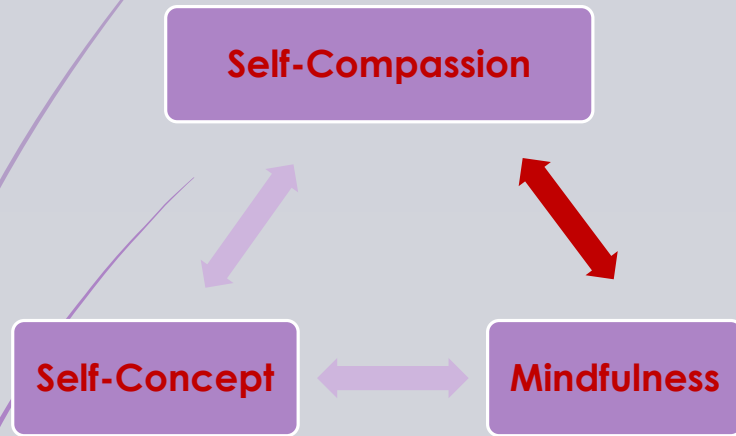
- ▶ An enhanced state of, and attention to, current reality (Brown & Ryan, 2003).
- ▶ As a balanced state of awareness, it results in the acceptance of mental and emotional states (Neff, 2003).
- ▶ The ability to develop and sustain mindful awareness is related to more positive health and well-being (Peer & McAuslan, 2016).



# Empirical Evidence

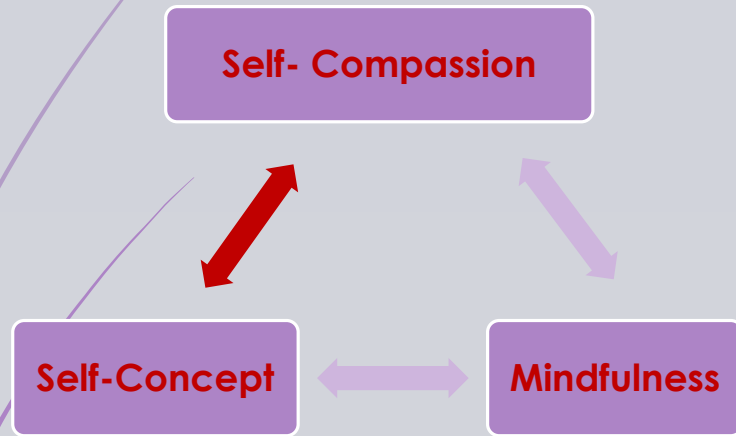
- ▶ Previous research explores self-compassion, self-concept, and mindfulness but there is limited research on the interconnectedness of these three processes and how they are related.
- ▶ ToM and self-concept are a core tenet for adolescents' educational experiences, however, the nature of these experiences remains unexplored (Bosacki et al., 2016).
- ▶ We explore:
  - how mindfulness, as an equilibrated mental perspective, is a component of self-compassion (Neff, 2003).
  - how both mindfulness and self-compassion influence positive mental health outcomes (Bluth & Eisenlohr-Moul, 2017).
  - how self-concept impacts the level of compassion towards oneself.

# Empirical Evidence



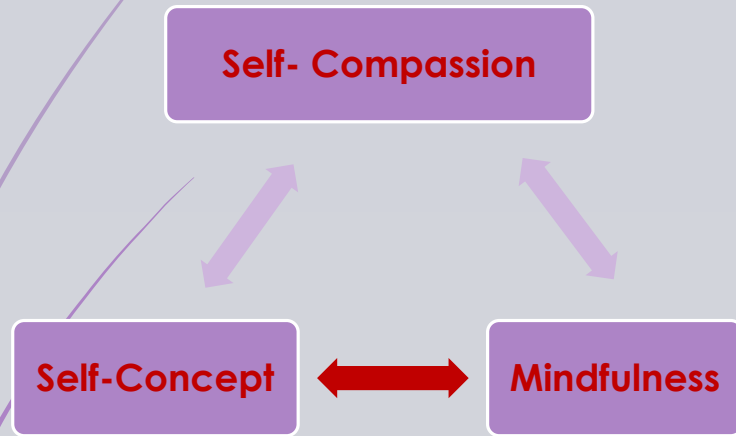
- Neff's research outlines that Self-Compassion has three principal components: kindness, **mindfulness**, and common humanity (Strauss et al., 2016).
- Research in Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) finds **that self-compassion** may impact change in symptoms of depression and reduce stress in adolescents (Kuyken et al., 2010; Galla, 2016).

# Empirical Evidence




- ▶ Research shows negative correlations between self-compassion and depression/anxiety or aggression and **positive correlations between self-compassion and self-esteem** (Bluth et al., 2006)
- ▶ Self-compassion is lowest during adolescence when compared to the rest of the lifespan (Neff, 2003) and decreases due to age which is linked to **negative self-worth perceptions** in 13-14 year olds (Bengtsson et al., 2016).

# Empirical Evidence



- Research connects **mindfulness** and fear of negative evaluation which **may intensify self-judgement and negative self-perception** (Roemer et al., 2009).
- Research shows **gender differences** within the area of self-concept (Harter, 1999; Bosacki, 2016).
- Adolescent **females' self-concept focuses on physical and social attributes** (Bosacki, 2016) and their **social self-concept influences their self-worth** (Harter, 1999).



# Research Questions

**How are adolescents' perceptions of self-compassion, self-concept, and mindfulness related?**

**How does gender impact these three psychosocial abilities and are there differences between males and females?**

# Method

## *Participants*

- ▶ 146 Grade 8 students from 13 schools in Ontario, Canada (97 females,  $M = 13.5$  years)
- ▶ Mainly middle-class social economic background and mainly Euro-Canadian ethnicity

## *Procedure*

- ▶ Participants were group-administered within a school setting
- ▶ Measure included standardized self-report questionnaires (pencil and paper tasks) focusing on self-compassion, self-concept, self-perception, and mindfulness.

# Measures

## **Self-Compassion Short-Form Scale (SCS-SF, Neff, 2003; 2016)**

- ▶ **12 item Likert scale self-report questionnaire**
- ▶ **6 subscales: Self-Kindness, Self-Judgement, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness, Over-identified.**
- ▶ **Item ratings begin at 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always) – negative subscale items are reverse scored.**
- ▶ **Total scores calculated by adding the means of each subscale together – higher score referring to higher self-compassion.**

# Measures

## Perceptions of Self-Competencies Scale (PSCS; Harter, 1985)

- ▶ 18 item self-report questionnaire \*
- ▶ 3 subscales – each subscale included 6 items: physical appearance, moral or behavioural conduct, global sense of self/personal happiness.
- ▶ Participants asked to select one of two sentences that most applied to themselves. \*\*
- ▶ Subscale scores were calculated using the mean of each of the subscales' six items.



# Measures

## Mindful Attention Awareness Scale-Children (MAAS-C, Bennis, 2004)

- ▶ 15 item scale self-report questionnaire
- ▶ Assesses self-compassion, self-perception, and mindfulness – focusing on day-to-day experiences.
- ▶ Each statement scored from 1 (almost never) to 6 (almost always). \*
- ▶ Higher scores are reflective of higher dispositional mindfulness.

# Results

- ▶ A total score was calculated for each of the 3 variables: Self-Compassion, Self-Concept, and Mindfulness
- ▶ **Significant correlations** were found between each of the 3 variables:

Self-Concept ( $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = .64$ ) and Mindfulness ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = .80$ )

>  $r = .575$ ,  $p = \leq 0.01$ ,  $n = 135$

Self-Concept and Self-Compassion ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = .61$ )

>  $r = .575$ ,  $p = \leq 0.01$ ,  $n = 141$

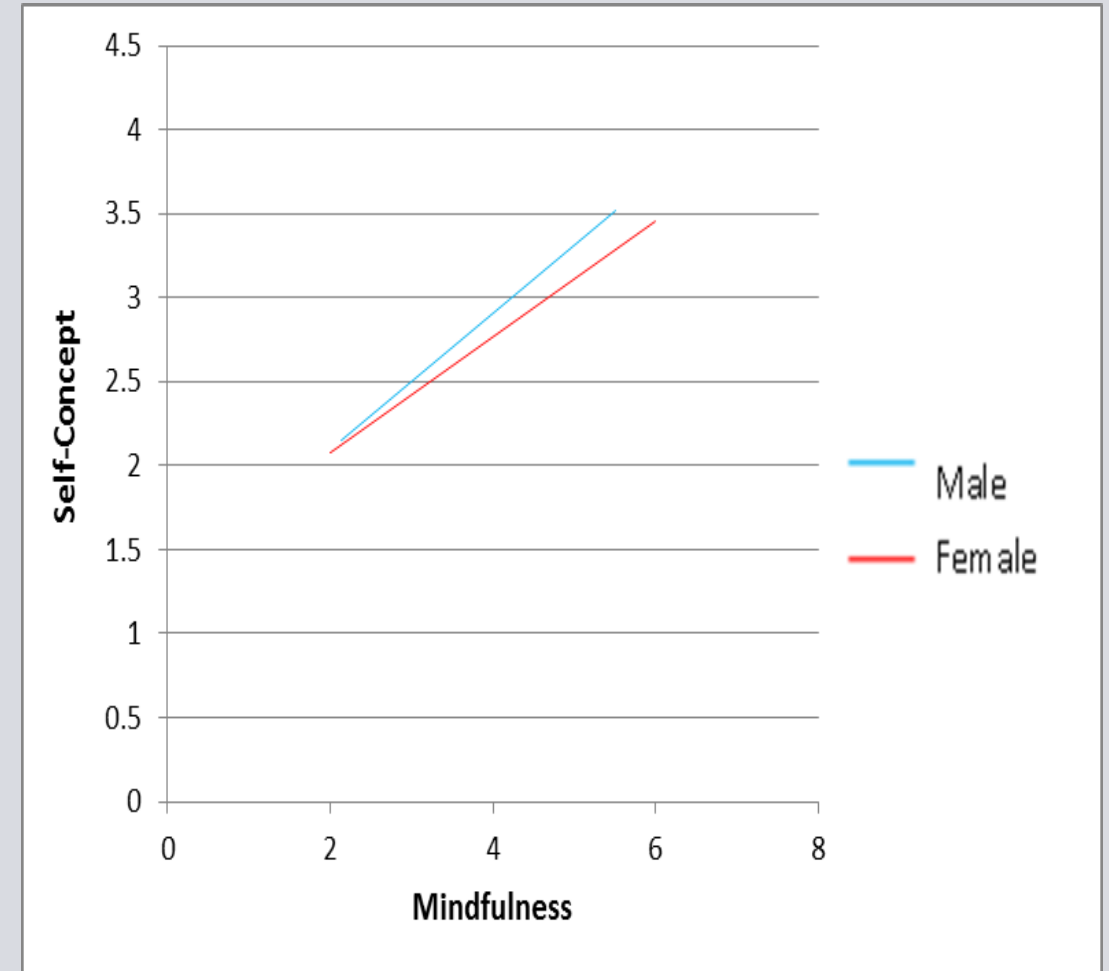
Self-Compassion and Mindfulness

>  $r = .418$ ,  $p = \leq 0.01$ ,  $n = 141$

# Results

## Self-Concept and Mindfulness

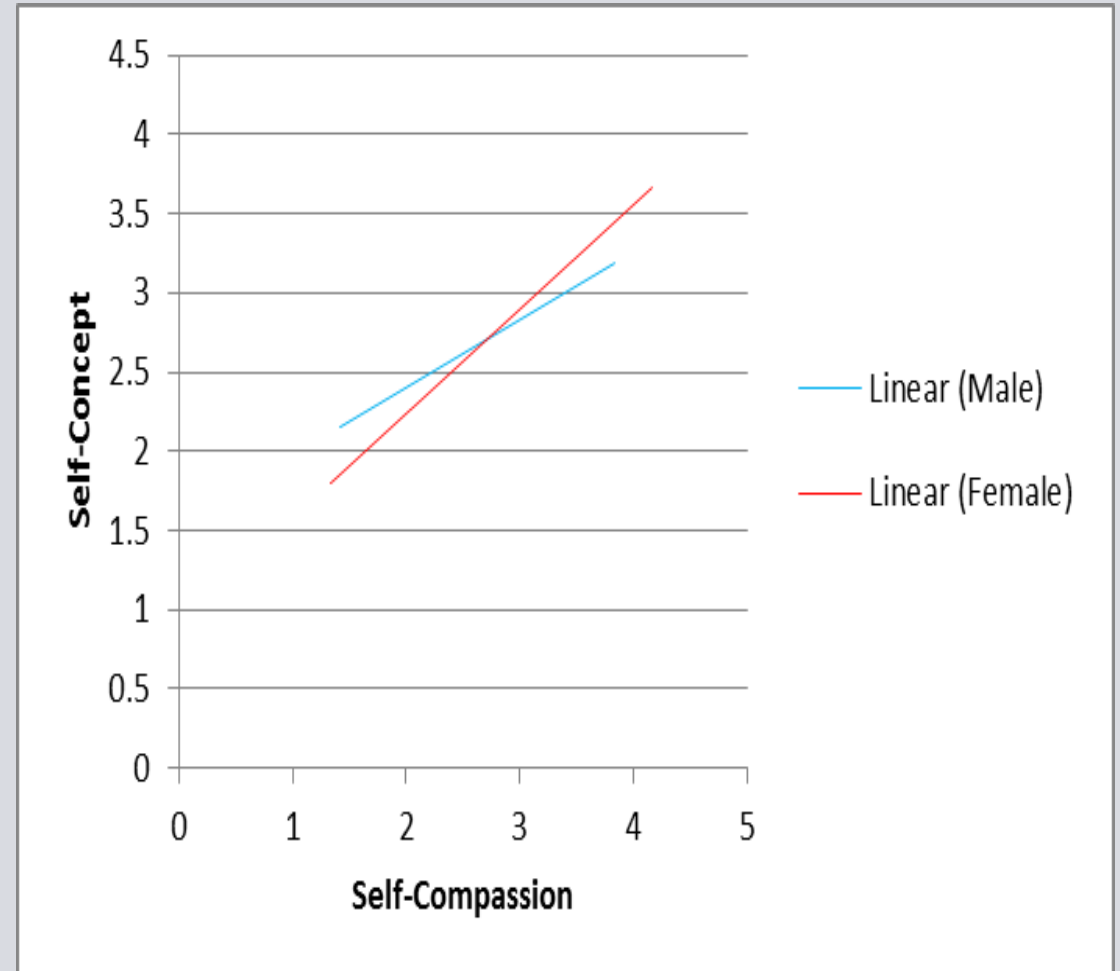
- ▶ Mindfulness was a **significant predictor** of Self-Concept and accounted for 21.3% of variance ( $F(1,133) = 36.05$ )
- ▶ Increase of 1% when **gender** and the interaction term of **gender and Mindfulness** were added .
- ▶ Neither **gender** nor the **interaction term of gender and Mindfulness** were **significant predictors** of Self-Concept, accounting for 22.3% of the variance for Mindfulness ( $F(3,131) = 12.57, p = \leq 0.01$ )



# Results

## Self-Concept and Self-Compassion

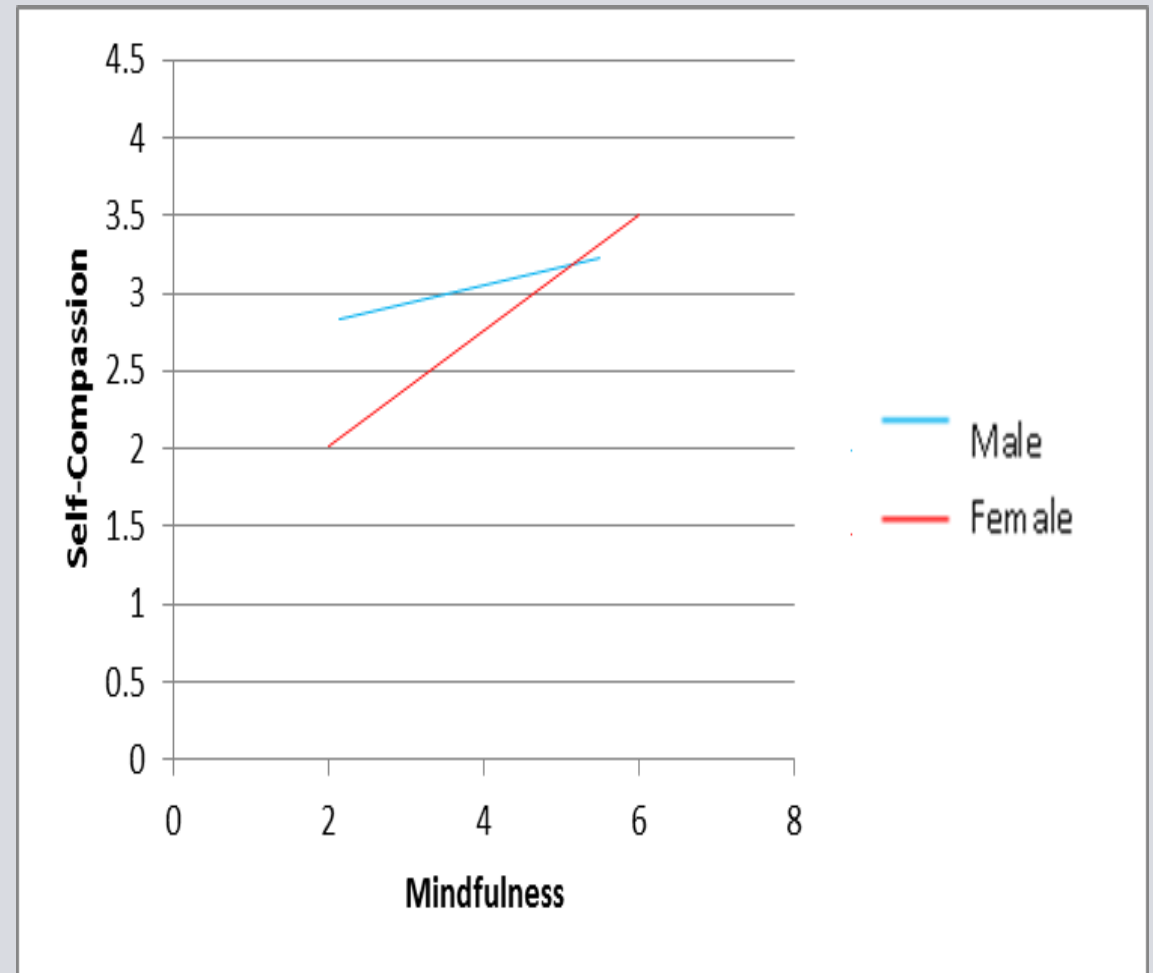
- ▶ Self-Concept was a **significant predictor** of Self-Compassion and accounted for 33.1% of variance ( $F(1,137) = 67.71$ )
- ▶ Increase of 58.7% when **gender** and the interaction term of **gender and Self-Concept** were added
- ▶ **Gender** and the interaction term of **gender and Self-Concept** were **significant** predictors of Self-Compassion, accounted for 91.8% of the variance for Self-Compassion ( $F(3,135) = 502.97, p = \leq 0.01$ )



# Results

## Self-Compassion and Mindfulness

- ▶ Mindfulness was a **significant predictor** of Self-Compassion and accounted for 17.5% of variance ( $F(1,139) = 29.39$ )
- ▶ Increase of 8.6% when **gender** and the interaction term of **gender and Mindfulness** were added
- ▶ Accounted for 26.1% of the variance for Self-Compassion ( $F(3,137) = 16.10, p = \leq 0.01$ )
- ▶ **Gender** was **significant** when added, however **interaction term of gender and Mindfulness** was **not significant**



# Discussion

- ▶ Findings suggest that gender played a significant role in adolescents' Self-Concept, Self-Compassion, and Mindfulness.
- ▶ Results support research that shows how these concepts influence positive mental health outcomes (Neff, 2003).
- ▶ The impact of gender supports research that indicates how adolescent females may have lower self-compassion due to gender-role intensification and the pressure to conform to stereotypical sex roles (Bluth et al., 2016).
- ▶ Significant positive relations were found among Self-Concept, Self-Compassion, and Mindfulness as interrelated concepts, resulting in improved emotional well-being and positive mental health.
- ▶ Results support research that adolescents with high self-compassion may react to adversity and negative self-evaluations with self-kindness and lessen the potential for negative self-concept/self-esteem (Marshall et al., 2015).




# Conclusions

## *Theoretically*

- ▶ Our research highlights the interconnectedness between these three psychosocial factors, and how they impact adolescents' perceptions of their self-worth.

## *Practically*

- ▶ Our research provides a framework for the development of mindfulness and educational programs for youth that foster Self-Compassion and a caring and supportive view of the self.
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# Future Research

- ▶ Alternate studies hypothesize that adolescents with greater self-compassion report greater well-being and mental health, as well as, less perceived stress (Bluth et al., 2016). These studies were performed in a controlled laboratory setting.
- ▶ We suggest further research is needed to explore how these concepts affect the well-being and mental health of adolescents within a psychosocial setting. Additional environmental stress factors may also impact well-being and mental health in this environment.
- ▶ Previous research between Canadian and Polish youth suggests that there may be cultural influences affecting ToM and self-concept (Bosacki et al., 2016).
- ▶ Further research in Canada with a greater ethnic diversity among adolescents may illustrate how cultural differences and self-perceptions affect well-being and mental health in school settings.





# Acknowledgements

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  - ▶ Our thanks to the schools, children, parents, and teachers who participated in this study.
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# Thank You!

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