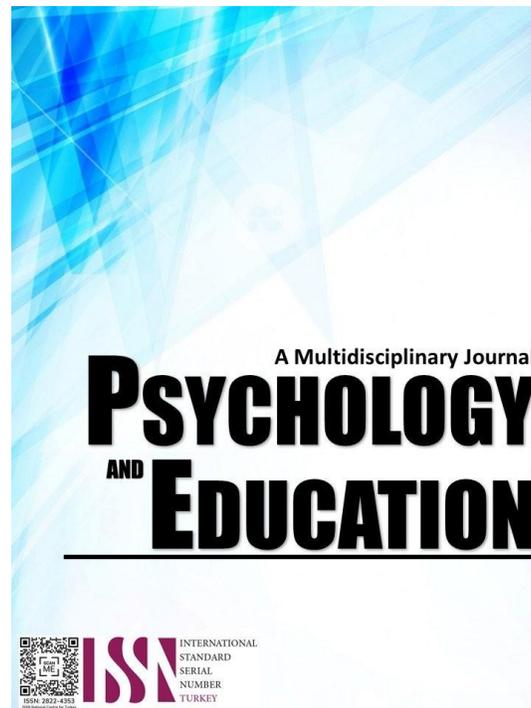


SELF-COMPASSION ACROSS SIX CORE DIMENSIONS AMONG FILIPINO LGBT YOUNG ADULTS: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY



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Self-Compassion Across Six Core Dimensions Among Filipino LGBT Young Adults: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

Self-compassion has been identified as a protective factor against minority stress, yet its multidimensional nature remains understudied in collectivist and conservative societies such as the Philippines. This descriptive study examined self-compassion across six core dimensions among 707 Filipino LGBT young adults aged 18–26, comprising 395 bisexual, 149 gay, 109 lesbian, and 54 transgender participants. Using the 22-item Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003), the study explored variations across gender identity and age. Overall self-compassion levels were moderate ($\bar{x} = 3.41$, $SD = 0.882$). High mean scores were found in Common Humanity ($\bar{x} = 3.65$, $SD = 0.863$) and Mindfulness ($\bar{x} = 3.55$, $SD = 0.855$), indicating strong recognition of shared human experience and balanced emotional awareness. In contrast, low levels emerged in Self-Judgment ($\bar{x} = 2.40$, $SD = 0.828$) and Over-Identification ($\bar{x} = 2.45$, $SD = 0.809$), reflecting persistent tendencies toward self-criticism and emotional overwhelm. Gender identity patterns showed that transgender respondents reported the highest Self-Kindness ($\bar{x} = 3.63$), while bisexual participants had the lowest Self-Judgment ($\bar{x} = 2.32$). Age-specific trends revealed peaks in overall self-compassion at ages 20 ($\bar{x} = 3.91$) and 24 ($\bar{x} = 4.47$), followed by notable declines at age 26, particularly among bisexual ($\bar{x} = 3.14$) and lesbian respondents ($\bar{x} = 3.55$). Transgender participants exhibited the greatest variability, ranging from 2.80 (age 19) to 4.69 (age 23). Findings highlight both strengths and vulnerabilities in Filipino LGBT youths' emotional self-relating. The study underscores the need for age-responsive and identity-affirming mental health interventions—particularly those targeting self-criticism and emotional regulation—to support resilience among Filipino LGBT young adults.

Keywords: *psychology, self-compassion, LGBT youth, subcomponents of self-compassion, descriptive design, mental health, Philippines, Southeast Asia*

Introduction

Across global contexts, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals continue to experience disproportionately high rates of mental health difficulties compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. These disparities stem from pervasive discrimination, social stigma, and institutional barriers embedded in healthcare, education, employment, and familial systems (Meyer, 2003; World Health Organization, 2022; Lu et al., 2025). International research consistently demonstrates that sexual and gender minority (SGM) groups face considerably elevated risks of depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, and suicidality (Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Pachankis et al., 2015). For instance, SGM individuals are 4.5 to 7.3 times more likely to be diagnosed with depression, while sexual minority youth show 82% to 317% higher odds of experiencing depressive symptoms than heterosexual youth (Bostwick et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2025). Similar trends appear in the United Kingdom, where half of LGBTIQ+ adults report depression and three in five report anxiety (WHO, 2022; Richmond, 2025).

Among these groups, bisexual individuals often experience even greater mental health challenges than gay and lesbian populations. Research shows that they face higher levels of depression, anxiety, suicidality, and overall life stress, exacerbated by factors such as unemployment, financial instability, and limited access to supportive networks (Bostwick et al., 2014). These disparities are not inherent to LGBT identities themselves but rather emerge from persistent systemic marginalization, exclusion, and social invalidation—patterns widely documented in global mental health research and underscored by the World Health Organization (Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Richmond, 2025; Lu et al., 2025).

The Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003) provides a foundational lens for understanding these disparities. According to this framework, LGBT individuals are exposed to chronic stressors related to their stigmatized identities, including discrimination, rejection, and internalized prejudice. These external and internal stressors contribute cumulatively to heightened psychological distress, substance use, and suicidality (Pachankis et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2025). Intersectionality further compounds these experiences, as individuals who belong to additional marginalized groups—such as ethnic minorities or low-income communities—face layered forms of discrimination and reduced access to affirming resources (Crenshaw, 1991; Logie et al., 2012; Poteat et al., 2011).

Amid these challenges, self-compassion has emerged as a promising protective psychological resource. Defined by Neff (2003) as treating oneself with kindness, recognizing shared humanity, and maintaining mindful awareness during difficult moments, self-compassion is associated with lower distress, reduced depression and anxiety, and greater emotional resilience (Neff & Germer, 2017; Zessin et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2025). Among LGBT populations, studies show that higher self-compassion can buffer the adverse effects of internalized stigma and discrimination (Szymanski & Henrichs-Beck, 2014; Vigna et al., 2018). However, much of the existing research conceptualizes self-compassion as a single global construct, often overlooking the distinct roles of its six subdomains—an oversight that may mask important cultural and contextual differences.

In the Philippines, LGBT youth face unique sociocultural pressures that heighten their vulnerability to mental health concerns. Strong familial expectations, religious conservatism, and deeply rooted gender norms often translate into negative attitudes, rejection, and discrimination (Garcia, 2009; Manalastas, 2013; Alibudbud, 2023). Surveys indicate that a significant portion of the Filipino population harbors negative views toward sexual and gender minorities, with LGBT youth frequently encountering bullying, abuse, and exclusion in their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities (Philippine LGBT Chamber of Commerce, 2019; Amnesty International Philippines, 2021). These experiences contribute to troubling mental health outcomes, such as higher rates of suicidal ideation among Filipino gay and bisexual young men compared to their heterosexual peers (Manalastas, 2013).

Despite these realities, many LGBT Filipinos still struggle to access supportive and affirming mental health services. Structural barriers—including stigma within healthcare settings, a shortage of trained professionals, and the persistence of harmful practices such as conversion therapy—limit their ability to seek and receive appropriate care (Almazan et al., 2022; Manalastas & Torre, 2016). While local research has examined external stressors such as discrimination and violence, little attention has been given to internal protective factors like self-compassion that may enhance resilience and support psychological well-being among LGBT youth (Alibudbud, 2024; Manalastas, 2013).

Given these gaps, the present study seeks to examine the levels of self-compassion across its six core subdomains among Filipino LGBT young adults aged 18 to 26. By situating this inquiry within the Philippine sociocultural context, the research aims to illuminate how cultural norms, familial dynamics, and societal expectations shape self-compassion and its expression among LGBT individuals. The findings aim to contribute to global discussions on LGBT mental health while informing the development of culturally responsive, identity-affirming, and youth-centered support systems in the Philippines.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to examine the levels of self-compassion across its six dimensions among Filipino LGBT young adults and to explore how these dimensions vary across gender identity and age. The design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to describe current levels of self-compassion while identifying patterns and relationships among the variables without manipulating any conditions.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were Filipino young adults aged 18 to 26 who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender and were residing in the Philippines at the time of data collection. A total of 707 participants qualified under the inclusion criteria and were purposively selected to ensure that only individuals pertinent to the study's objectives were included. The final sample consisted of 395 bisexual, 149 gay, 109 lesbian, and 54 transgender respondents.

Instrument

The primary instrument used in the study was the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Neff (2003). The scale measures six subcomponents of self-compassion: Self-Kindness, Self-Judgment, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness, and Over-Identification. It consists of 22 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Subscale scores and overall mean scores were interpreted as low, moderate, or high levels of self-compassion based on established scoring guidelines. The SCS is widely validated internationally and has been extensively used in studies on psychological well-being.

Procedure

The procedure began with securing ethical clearance before data collection. After approval, the researcher disseminated an online survey link containing the informed consent form and the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and individuals were allowed to proceed only after agreeing to the terms of the consent form. The online format enabled a wider reach across various regions in the Philippines, especially among populations that may be difficult to reach in person due to stigma or safety concerns.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, descriptive statistics, particularly the mean and standard deviation, were used to determine the levels of each self-compassion dimension across gender identities and age groups. Tables were generated to illustrate the distribution of scores across the six dimensions and respondent characteristics.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to ethical considerations throughout its implementation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality of responses was ensured by anonymizing all data and refraining from collecting personally identifiable information. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time without penalty. The researcher also ensured that the study complied with ethical guidelines for research involving gender and sexual minority populations, particularly regarding respect, privacy, and sensitivity to potential psychological risks.



Results and Discussion

Level of Self-Compassion among Filipino LGBT Young Adults

Table 1 presents a comprehensive analysis of self-compassion levels among Filipino LGBT young adults across six dimensions: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. The following interpretation provides a detailed examination of mean scores and their verbal interpretations, derived from the descriptive statistics.

Self-kindness entails being understanding and kind to oneself in times of pain or failure, rather than engaging in harsh self-criticism. The data reveal significant variability among different groups. Gay (3.57) and transgender (3.63) individuals exhibit the highest levels of self-kindness, categorized as high self-compassion. Conversely, bisexual (3.31) and lesbian individuals (3.41) display moderate self-kindness. The overall mean score (3.41) suggests that Filipino LGBT young adults, as a collective, practice self-kindness to a moderate extent. This aligns with Neff's (2003) conceptualization of self-kindness as a critical aspect of self-compassion, highlighting the importance of being kind to oneself during difficult times. Additionally, Booker and Perlin (2019) explored how character strengths like curiosity and gratitude contribute to self-compassion among young adults, emphasizing the role of self-kindness in fostering a positive self-view.

Table 1. Level of Self-Compassion

Indicator	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Self-Kindness	Bisexual	395	3.31	0.873	Moderate Self-Compassion
	Gay	149	3.57	0.807	High Self-Compassion
	Lesbian	109	3.41	0.939	Moderate Self-Compassion
	Transgender	54	3.63	0.932	High Self-Compassion
	Mean		3.41	0.882	Moderate Self-Compassion
Self Judgement	Bisexual	395	2.32	0.807	Low Self-Compassion
	Gay	149	2.53	0.811	Moderate Self-Compassion
	Lesbian	109	2.51	0.814	Moderate Self-Compassion
	Transgender	54	2.40	0.992	Low Self-Compassion
	Mean		2.40	0.828	Low Self-Compassion
Common Humanity	Bisexual	395	3.62	0.861	High Self-Compassion
	Gay	149	3.67	0.803	High Self-Compassion
	Lesbian	109	3.63	0.935	High Self-Compassion
	Transgender	54	3.83	0.888	High Self-Compassion
	Mean		3.65	0.863	High Self-Compassion
Isolation	Bisexual	395	2.46	0.856	Low Self-Compassion
	Gay	149	2.56	0.816	Moderate Self-Compassion
	Lesbian	109	2.58	0.873	Moderate Self-Compassion
	Transgender	54	2.54	0.971	Moderate Self-Compassion
	Mean		2.51	0.86	Moderate Self-Compassion
Mindfulness	Bisexual	395	3.52	0.811	High Self-Compassion
	Gay	149	3.57	0.862	High Self-Compassion
	Lesbian	109	3.50	0.929	High Self-Compassion
	Transgender	54	3.79	0.975	High Self-Compassion
	Mean		3.55	0.855	High Self-Compassion
Over-Identification	Bisexual	395	2.44	0.782	Low Self-Compassion
	Gay	149	2.53	0.78	Moderate Self-Compassion
	Lesbian	109	2.49	0.861	Low Self-Compassion
	Transgender	54	2.27	0.948	Low Self-Compassion
	Overall Mean		2.45	0.809	Low Self-Compassion

Transitioning from self-kindness to self-judgment is crucial to understand how self-criticism impacts self-compassion within this population. Self-judgment reflects the tendency to be critical and judgmental towards oneself. The findings indicate that bisexual (2.32) and transgender (2.40) individuals exhibit low self-compassion in this domain, while gay (2.53) and lesbian (2.51) individuals show moderate self-compassion. The collective mean score of 2.40 indicates a prevalent inclination towards self-criticism among Filipino LGBT young adults, denoting low self-compassion in self-judgment. This is consistent with findings by Pauley and McPherson (2010), who observed that individuals with higher levels of self-criticism often experience lower self-compassion, impacting their overall mental health. This aligns with the findings that bisexual and transgender individuals exhibit low self-compassion in this domain. Furthermore, Fisher, Poirier, and Blau (2012) discuss the importance of addressing self-judgment in therapeutic settings to improve emotional and behavioral outcomes for LGBT youth.

In addition to self-kindness and self-judgment, the concept of common humanity plays a significant role in self-compassion. Common humanity involves recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy are part of the shared human experience. The results demonstrate high scores across all groups: bisexual (3.62), gay (3.67), lesbian (3.63), and transgender (3.83). These scores indicate a strong sense of connection and shared experience, highlighting that Filipino LGBT young adults acknowledge their suffering and imperfections as

part of a larger human experience. The overall mean score of 3.65 categorizes this dimension as high self-compassion. According to Neff (2003), recognizing common humanity helps individuals understand that they are not alone in their struggles, which can foster a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation. Johns et al. (2019) highlighted that promoting a sense of common humanity in schools can improve resilience and mental health among LGBTQ youth.

Similarly, it is important to consider how isolation affects self-compassion among these individuals. Isolation measures the extent to which individuals feel isolated during difficult times. The data reveals that bisexual individuals (2.46) exhibit low self-compassion in terms of isolation, whereas gay (2.56), lesbian (2.58), and transgender (2.54) individuals display moderate self-compassion. The mean score of 2.51 suggests a moderate level of self-compassion in this domain, indicating a tendency among Filipino LGBT young adults to feel somewhat isolated during challenging times. Diener, Oishi, and Lucas (2003) indicate that cultural and personality factors significantly influence individuals' experiences of well-being, which may explain the variations in feelings of isolation among different groups within the LGBT community. The CDC (2019) also highlights health considerations for LGBTQ youth, indicating the importance of addressing feelings of isolation to improve mental health outcomes.

Furthermore, mindfulness, as a dimension of self-compassion, provides insight into how individuals balance their awareness of painful experiences. Mindfulness pertains to being aware of one's painful experiences in a balanced manner that neither ignores nor exaggerates them. The findings show that all groups—bisexual (3.52), gay (3.57), lesbian (3.50), and transgender (3.79)—score high in mindfulness, with an overall mean score of 3.55. This indicates that Filipino LGBT young adults are generally mindful and balanced in their awareness of painful experiences. Neff and McGehee (2010) found that mindfulness is crucial for fostering psychological resilience. Davis and Hayes (2011) reviewed the benefits of mindfulness in psychotherapy, highlighting its role in maintaining emotional balance.

Finally, examining over-identification sheds light on how deeply individuals immerse themselves in their negative experiences. Over-identification involves being overly immersed in one's negative experiences. The results reveal that bisexual (2.44), lesbian (2.49), and transgender (2.27) individuals exhibit low self-compassion in this domain, while gay individuals (2.53) show moderate self-compassion. The mean score of 2.45 suggests a tendency towards low self-compassion in over-identification, implying that these individuals might be prone to over-identifying with their negative experiences. According to Gilbert and Irons (2005) emphasized the detrimental effects of over-identification on mental health, advocating for therapeutic interventions to reduce this tendency. Hatchel et al. (2019) on minority stress among transgender adolescents also underscore the importance of addressing over-identification to improve mental health outcomes.

In summary, Filipino LGBT young adults exhibit varying levels of self-compassion across different indicators. They generally display moderate to high self-compassion in areas such as self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. However, they tend to show low self-compassion in self-judgment and over-identification, indicating a propensity for self-criticism and over-identification with negative thoughts and emotions. These findings highlight the diverse nature of self-compassion within this population and point to the importance of fostering self-kindness and reducing self-judgment and over-identification to improve overall well-being. The insights derived from this analysis can inform targeted interventions aimed at enhancing self-compassion among Filipino LGBT young adults, thereby promoting better mental health outcomes and overall life satisfaction.

Applying the principles of Self-Compassion Theory, the higher levels of self-kindness among gay and transgender individuals suggest that they are more understanding and supportive toward themselves, enhancing their overall well-being. High scores in common humanity indicate that Filipino LGBT young adults recognize their experiences as part of the larger human condition, reducing feelings of isolation. The high mindfulness scores show that these individuals maintain a balanced awareness of their painful experiences. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), these aspects of self-compassion enhance autonomy, competence, and relatedness, potentially contributing to lower levels of suicidal ideation.

Subcomponents of Self-Compassion Across Age and Gender Identity Among Filipino LGBT Young Adults

The table 2 revealed how age and gender identity intricately interact to shape self-compassion among Filipino LGBT young adults aged 18 to 26. The six subcomponents—Self-Kindness, Self-Judgment, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness, and Over-Identification—present distinct developmental patterns that vary across identities, emphasizing the intersectional nature of emotional well-being. These findings are essential for shaping identity-specific mental health interventions and culturally responsive policy recommendations in the Philippine context.

Beginning with Self-Kindness, which reflects the ability to be caring and understanding toward oneself, the data demonstrate notable variation across age and gender identity. Among bisexual participants, the highest score was at age 20 ($\bar{x} = 3.62$), dropping sharply by age 26 ($\bar{x} = 2.69$). Similarly, lesbian individuals reported a high at age 20 ($\bar{x} = 4.00$), peaking at 24 ($\bar{x} = 4.50$), before declining at age 25 ($\bar{x} = 2.30$). In contrast, gay participants showed steady improvement, peaking at age 24 ($\bar{x} = 4.20$). Transgender participants also exhibited a marked increase from age 18 ($\bar{x} = 3.00$) to age 23 ($\bar{x} = 4.65$). These findings align with developmental theories that position self-compassion as a skill that evolves with identity integration and emotional maturity (Neff, 2023). The sharp decline in later ages among bisexual and lesbian groups may reflect increasing life stressors such as career pressures or romantic instability, compounded by cultural expectations of conformity and filial duty within Filipino collectivist society (Medina, 2001). These external demands can re-trigger internalized stigma, particularly in young adults still negotiating their roles in traditional family structures (Feinstein, 2022).



Table 2. *The subcomponents of self-compassion vary across age and gender identity among Filipino LGBT young adults*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Sd</i>	
Self-Kindness	Bisexual	18	3.51	0.671	
		19	3.27	1.043	
		20	3.62	0.973	
		21	3.28	0.752	
		22	3.54	0.905	
		23	3.27	0.731	
		24	3.20	0.367	
		25	3.57	0.983	
		26	2.69	1.173	
		GAY	18	3.68	0.737
			19	3.42	0.903
			20	3.67	1.332
			21	3.48	0.571
	22		3.34	0.984	
	23		3.84	0.535	
	24		4.20	0.283	
	25		3.67	1.155	
	26		3.99	0.947	
	Lesbian		18	3.54	0.802
			19	3.19	1.169
			20	4.00	1.414
			21	3.55	0.832
		22	3.16	0.797	
		23	2.80	0.310	
		24	4.50	0.577	
		25	2.30	1.501	
26		3.68	0.676		
Transgender		18	3.00	0.000	
		19	2.94	1.330	
		20	2.80	NaN	
		21	4.18	0.793	
	22	2.85	0.379		
	23	4.65	0.700		
	24	NaN	NaN		
	25	3.51	0.107		
	26	3.79	0.872		
	Self-Judgment	Bisexual	18	3.74	0.804
			19	3.75	0.823
			20	4.05	0.768
			21	3.63	0.833
22			3.76	0.758	
23			3.53	0.727	
24			3.11	0.413	
25			3.53	0.816	
26			3.79	0.867	
Gay			18	3.71	0.797
			19	3.48	0.781
			20	3.20	1.587
			21	3.43	0.633
		22	3.57	0.768	
		23	3.31	0.602	
		24	3.60	0.566	
		25	3.80	1.039	
		26	3.31	1.267	
		Lesbian	18	3.25	0.879
			19	3.74	0.992
			20	4.20	1.131
21			3.50	0.571	
22			3.81	0.600	
23			3.27	0.413	
24			4.00	1.155	
25	2.20		1.386		



		26	3.33	0.401	
	Transgender	18	3.00	0.000	
		19	2.83	1.298	
		20	4.20	NaN	
		21	4.03	0.968	
		22	3.65	0.379	
		23	4.70	0.600	
		25	3.29	0.901	
		26	3.60	0.928	
Common Humanity"	Bisexual	18	3.68	0.730	
		19	3.61	0.954	
		20	4.12	0.855	
		21	3.63	0.805	
		22	3.88	0.895	
		23	3.46	0.401	
			24	3.37	0.691
			25	3.71	1.077
			26	2.90	1.141
		Gay	18	3.89	0.832
			19	3.66	0.882
			20	2.92	1.507
			21	3.46	0.641
			22	3.46	0.686
			23	3.77	0.802
			24	4.63	0.530
			25	4.00	0.866
			26	4.19	0.770
	Lesbian	18	3.43	0.865	
		19	3.49	1.102	
		20	4.00	1.414	
		21	3.87	0.785	
		22	3.50	0.740	
		23	3.08	0.129	
		24	4.50	0.577	
		25	2.38	1.588	
		26	4.01	0.763	
	Transgender	18	3.30	0.411	
		19	2.89	1.368	
		20	3.75	NaN	
		21	4.21	0.629	
		22	3.63	0.479	
		23	4.88	0.250	
		25	3.86	0.497	
		26	3.93	0.840	
Isolation	Bisexual	18	3.46	0.767	
		19	3.68	0.932	
		20	3.92	0.902	
		21	3.46	0.799	
		22	3.74	0.775	
		23	3.35	0.682	
			24	3.25	0.476
			25	3.21	1.077
			26	3.40	1.352
		Gay	18	3.48	0.739
			19	3.39	0.925
			20	3.33	1.607
			21	3.50	0.681
			22	3.43	0.881
			23	3.45	0.498
			24	3.25	1.061
			25	3.50	1.299
			26	3.36	1.012
	Lesbian	18	3.47	0.770	
		19	3.67	0.979	
		20	4.00	1.414	



		21	3.37	0.740
		22	3.68	0.409
		23	2.92	0.129
		24	4.50	0.577
		25	2.38	1.588
		26	3.08	0.855
	Transgender	18	3.10	0.137
		19	2.21	0.895
		20	3.25	NaN
		21	4.06	0.880
		22	3.06	0.125
		23	4.50	1.000
		25	3.64	0.690
		26	3.45	0.856
Mindfulness	Bisexual	18	3.63	0.744
		19	3.41	0.899
		20	3.78	0.989
		21	3.56	0.753
		22	3.66	0.741
		23	3.47	0.473
		24	3.41	0.467
		25	3.75	0.880
		26	3.18	1.321
	Gay	18	3.58	0.631
		19	3.38	0.915
		20	3.17	1.893
		21	3.39	0.609
		22	3.54	1.067
		23	3.86	0.728
		24	4.25	0.354
		25	3.67	1.155
		26	4.13	0.952
	Lesbian	18	3.32	0.837
		19	3.33	0.982
		20	4.00	1.414
		21	3.79	0.885
		22	3.30	0.798
		23	3.08	0.129
		24	4.50	0.577
		25	2.50	1.732
		26	3.75	0.811
	Transgender	18	3.10	0.137
		19	2.93	1.382
		20	3.25	NaN
		21	4.33	0.862
		22	3.00	0.289
		23	4.63	0.750
		25	3.75	0.645
		26	4.04	0.820
Over Identification	Bisexual	18	3.41	0.649
		19	3.69	0.876
		20	4.12	0.752
		21	3.46	0.712
		22	3.75	0.830
		23	3.39	0.610
		24	3.26	0.519
		25	3.25	0.975
		26	3.53	0.954
	Gay	18	3.61	0.724
		19	3.52	0.779
		20	3.08	1.010
		21	3.42	0.594
		22	3.43	0.933
		23	3.55	0.368
		24	3.38	0.884



	25	3.67	1.155
	26	3.49	1.187
Lesbian	18	3.56	0.693
	19	3.95	0.897
	20	4.25	1.061
	21	3.35	0.967
	22	3.52	0.514
	23	3.33	0.516
	24	4.38	0.722
	25	2.13	1.299
	26	3.25	0.612
Transgender	18	3.30	0.411
	19	3.04	1.475
	20	4.25	NaN
	21	4.08	0.764
	22	3.81	0.375
	23	4.81	0.375
	25	3.36	0.802
	26	3.75	0.920

Turning to Self-Judgment, which involves critical self-evaluation, elevated scores were found among bisexual individuals at age 20 (\bar{x} = 4.05), lesbians at the same age (\bar{x} = 4.20), and transgender individuals at age 23 (\bar{x} = 4.70), echoing patterns of low self-kindness. These results illustrate how internalized stigma manifests as harsh self-assessment, especially during transitional stages of identity development (Toomey et al., 2023). Conversely, lesbians aged 25 reported the lowest self-judgment (\bar{x} = 2.20), potentially indicating emotional growth or increased access to affirming networks. In the Filipino setting, where religious conservatism and patriarchy continue to influence family dynamics, deviations from gender norms can provoke significant psychological distress (Garcia, 2020). This highlights how sociocultural pressures intensify self-judgment among sexual and gender minorities, notably when familial or institutional support is lacking.

The subcomponent of Common Humanity, the recognition that one’s struggles are part of a larger human experience, showed some of the most optimistic findings. Gay (\bar{x} = 4.63) and lesbian (\bar{x} = 4.50) participants aged 24, along with transgender individuals aged 23 (\bar{x} = 4.88), reported the highest levels. This suggests that identity consolidation and community engagement foster a sense of connectedness. In contrast, lower scores were seen among transgender participants aged 19 (\bar{x} = 2.89) and bisexual participants aged 26 (\bar{x} = 2.90), pointing to persistent feelings of marginalization. Research confirms that resilience grows from community validation, which nurtures the development of common humanity (Puckett et al., 2022; Vigna et al., 2021). However, in the Philippine context, such validation is often limited to urban areas or online spaces (Redoble, 2022), leaving many LGBT youth in rural or conservative environments with little opportunity for positive social mirroring.

For Isolation, lesbian participants aged 20 and 24 (\bar{x} = 4.00 and \bar{x} = 4.50, respectively), and transgender individuals aged 23 (\bar{x} = 4.50) reported the highest levels, while transgender participants aged 19 had the lowest (\bar{x} = 2.21). These disparities may reflect the protective role of early social support or identity concealment, which temporarily shields younger individuals from external stigma. The higher isolation scores later in development suggest that greater visibility or transition may expose individuals to discrimination, exacerbating loneliness. This aligns with the findings of Flores et al. (2020) and Bowleg (2021), who note that layered marginalization in gender and sexual identity intensifies social exclusion. In the Philippines, deeply embedded religious and patriarchal norms contribute to familial rejection and peer discrimination, particularly against transgender individuals (David et al., 2020).

Regarding Mindfulness, the highest scores were recorded among lesbian (\bar{x} = 4.50) and gay (\bar{x} = 4.25) participants at age 24, and transgender individuals at age 23 (\bar{x} = 4.63). These results suggest that mindfulness increases with age and possibly serves as a learned resilience strategy. In contrast, bisexual participants at age 26 (\bar{x} = 3.18) and transgender participants at age 19 (\bar{x} = 2.93) reported lower levels, suggesting either limited exposure to mindfulness practices or difficulty in regulating emotion during formative stages. Mindfulness is increasingly recognized as a protective factor among trauma-exposed populations, and may be cultivated through practice or therapeutic intervention (Garland et al., 2022; Neff & Germer, 2020). However, structured mindfulness programs remain scarce in Philippine mental health services, limiting their reach among vulnerable LGBT groups (Averilla, 2021).

Finally, Over-Identification—the tendency to be consumed by distressing thoughts—was most pronounced among transgender individuals aged 23 (\bar{x} = 4.81) and lesbian participants aged 20 (\bar{x} = 4.25), reinforcing the emotional burden these groups face. Lesbian individuals at age 25 showed the lowest score (\bar{x} = 2.13), suggesting that emotional regulation may improve with maturity or greater support. These findings resonate with Turban et al. (2022) and Hatzenbuehler et al. (2021), who document the psychological toll of unaddressed minority stress. In the Philippine context, the pressure to uphold family honor or “save face” often discourages emotional expression, compounding the risks of over-identification and emotional suppression (Garcia & Tan, 2020).

In conclusion, the descriptive results deepen our understanding of how self-compassion develops across age and identity, uniquely shaped by Filipino cultural norms. Although not all subgroup differences reached statistical significance, the descriptive trends point



to developmental vulnerabilities that warrant targeted support. Mental health interventions for Filipino LGBT youth must therefore be age- and identity-sensitive, integrating elements of self-compassion, emotional regulation, and social connectedness. Future research should pursue multivariate analyses to validate these patterns and explore longitudinal trajectories that account for sociocultural influences over time.

How do overall self-compassion scores vary across specific ages (18–26) and gender identities (bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender) among Filipino LGBT young adults?

Table 3. Overall self-compassion scores across ages (18–26) and gender identities

	Age (2)	Gender	Mean	SD
Self-Compassion	18	Bisexual	3.54	0.4922
		Gay	3.65	0.5140
		Lesbian	3.46	0.7198
		Transgender	3.16	0.2191
	19	Bisexual	3.53	0.7545
		Gay	3.47	0.7166
		Lesbian	3.53	0.7639
	20	Transgender	2.80	1.2339
		Bisexual	3.91	0.6678
		Gay	3.23	1.3903
	21	Lesbian	4.05	1.3435
		Transgender	3.46	NaN
		Bisexual	3.48	0.5584
		Gay	3.45	0.5265
	22	Lesbian	3.58	0.5086
		Transgender	4.17	0.7600
		Bisexual	3.72	0.6567
		Gay	3.44	0.5552
	23	Lesbian	3.43	0.4031
		Transgender	3.27	0.2928
		Bisexual	3.39	0.3251
		Gay	3.69	0.5400
	24	Lesbian	3.04	0.0671
		Transgender	4.69	0.6150
Bisexual		3.30	0.3333	
Gay		3.94	0.1556	
25	Lesbian	4.47	0.6062	
	Transgender	NaN	NaN	
	Bisexual	3.50	0.9162	
	Gay	3.70	1.1258	
26	Lesbian	2.33	1.5415	
	Transgender	3.62	0.3075	
	Bisexual	3.14	0.6840	
	Gay	3.83	0.7346	
		Lesbian	3.55	0.5807
		Transgender	3.79	0.7485

Table 3 shows the descriptive analysis of overall self-compassion scores across ages 18 to 26, and gender identities (bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender) among Filipino LGBT young adults, revealing important intersectional trends that align with contemporary psychological theories of development, minority stress, and self-compassion. The findings provide insight into how internal experiences of self-kindness, self-judgment, and emotional regulation differ by both chronological age and gender identity.

Overall, bisexual and gay participants reported relatively stable self-compassion scores across the age range. For bisexual individuals, means ranged from 3.14 (age 26) to 3.91 (age 20), while gay participants scored between 3.23 (age 20) and 3.94 (age 24). This consistency suggests a moderate level of resilience or adaptive emotional regulation, particularly during the early to mid-20s. The relative stability may also reflect access to supportive peer networks or the internalization of strategies for managing minority stress. Prior research highlights that higher levels of self-compassion in LGB youth are associated with lower psychological distress, as self-compassion serves as a buffer against internalized stigma and marginalization (Chan & Mak, 2020)

In contrast, lesbian participants demonstrated significant fluctuations in their self-compassion levels. Particularly high scores were noted at ages 20 ($\bar{x} = 4.05$) and 24 ($\bar{x} = 4.47$), indicating strong emotional resilience or possibly increased identity affirmation during these years. However, a dramatic drop was observed at age 25 ($\bar{x} = 2.33$, $SD = 1.54$), suggesting heightened vulnerability to self-criticism or identity-related distress. Such variability may reflect contextual or structural stressors, including societal rejection, gender role expectations, or lack of community belonging common among lesbian populations facing compounded minority stress

(Hatzenbuehler et al., 2020). These findings are supported by research indicating that lesbian youth are disproportionately affected by stigma-related psychological burdens and may benefit significantly from targeted, identity-affirming self-compassion interventions (Vigna et al., 2020).

Among transgender participants, the data showed the greatest variability, reflecting both high potential for emotional resilience and significant vulnerability. Self-compassion scores ranged from a low of 2.80 (age 19) to a high of 4.69 (age 23), illustrating the uneven psychological terrain that transgender youth often navigate. Transgender individuals who experience social affirmation and community support tend to report higher self-compassion, while those exposed to stigma, dysphoria, and systemic barriers often report elevated levels of self-judgment and emotional distress (Testa et al., 2020). This is consistent with findings from Finlay-Jones et al. (2021), who demonstrated that group-based mindful self-compassion training significantly improved mental health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ young adults, including transgender participants, by reducing shame and increasing emotional clarity.

Importantly, the age-specific fluctuations in self-compassion across identities reflect broader developmental processes associated with emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). This period, often characterized by identity exploration, instability, and heightened emotional reactivity, can be particularly complex for LGBTQ+ individuals negotiating intersecting stressors related to societal marginalization, family rejection, and evolving self-concept. As such, age and identity jointly shape emotional self-appraisals such as self-compassion.

Conclusions

This study investigated the overall self-compassion levels among Filipino LGBT young adults aged 18 to 26, examining differences across age and gender identity (bisexual, gay, lesbian, transgender). Utilizing a multidimensional framework of self-compassion, encompassing Self-Kindness, Self-Judgment, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness, and Over-Identification, the results offer meaningful insights into how compassion toward the self is experienced in a culturally and developmentally specific context.

One of the most significant findings was the wide variability in self-compassion levels among lesbian and transgender participants, with some of the highest and lowest scores observed in these groups across specific ages. Lesbian participants demonstrated both high self-compassion scores (e.g., age 24) and drastic declines (e.g., age 25), suggesting emotional volatility or situational stressors linked to identity affirmation, social rejection, or structural stigma. Transgender participants, on the other hand, displayed the greatest internal variation, with self-compassion scores ranging from exceptionally low to very high. These disparities may reflect the intersection of gender dysphoria, access to affirming care, and the unequal sociopolitical recognition of transgender identities within Filipino society.

Bisexual and gay participants exhibited more stable and moderate self-compassion scores, which may indicate relative resilience or broader social acceptance, especially within urban and university-centered environments where visibility and peer support are more accessible. However, the data also suggest subtle stress points in early adulthood (ages 20–22), reflecting a critical period where identity development intersects with increasing social expectations, role transitions, and exposure to minority stress.

Importantly, across all groups, the lowest average scores were observed in Self-Judgment and Over-Identification, two subcomponents that reflect tendencies toward self-criticism and emotional over-involvement in negative experiences. These findings align with global research indicating that LGBT youth, particularly in collectivist societies such as the Philippines, are highly vulnerable to internalized stigma, shame, and rejection sensitivity, factors consistently associated with reduced psychological well-being (Chan & Mak, 2020; Finlay-Jones et al., 2021; Vigna et al., 2020). Conversely, relatively higher scores in Common Humanity and Mindfulness suggest strengths in awareness and shared experience, which may be leveraged in resilience-building interventions.

Together, these findings highlight that self-compassion is not a static trait but a dynamic construct shaped by developmental stage, identity status, and sociocultural environment. Filipino LGBT youth navigate a unique psychosocial landscape where religious conservatism, family pressure, and systemic exclusion converge with identity formation, creating both risk and opportunity for emotional development.

Although this study is descriptive in nature, the patterns observed in self-compassion across age and gender identity among Filipino LGBT youth offer meaningful insights that can inform realistic, context-sensitive action. Based on the findings, it is recommended that mental health practitioners, guidance counselors, and educators incorporate self-compassion development into their existing support frameworks. Programs and interventions should be tailored to address the specific challenges faced by LGBT youth, particularly in relation to self-judgment and emotional over-identification areas where participants in this study showed notably lower scores. Short-term workshops, peer-led reflection circles, and counseling modules grounded in Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) or Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) can be adapted into existing school- or community-based psychosocial support programs.

In school settings, the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) are encouraged to enhance their existing guidance and wellness programs by integrating identity-affirming mental health content. Training school counselors and teachers on SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics) awareness can help create a more inclusive environment where LGBT students feel seen and supported. For communities outside of formal institutions, local government units (LGUs) and barangay health workers can collaborate with NGOs and local youth groups to deliver workshops or group support sessions, especially in rural or underserved areas where access to mental health services is limited.



Moreover, youth development programs led by government agencies like the National Youth Commission (NYC), as well as student affairs offices in universities, can play a pivotal role by embedding self-compassion literacy in leadership development, anti-bullying campaigns, or gender equality initiatives. These efforts need not be resource-intensive; simple interventions such as guided journaling, group sharing sessions, and mindfulness exercises can foster emotional awareness and resilience among LGBT youth.

Finally, future research should expand on the descriptive findings of this study by employing inferential and longitudinal methods to examine how self-compassion develops over time within this population. Doing so would provide a stronger evidence base for policymaking and intervention design. Nonetheless, even at the descriptive level, the current findings underscore the urgent need for mental health and wellness programming that is not only culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate, but also inclusive of the diverse identities and lived experiences of Filipino LGBT youth.

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