

## Introduction

- **Self-Compassion:** refers to kindness to oneself in times of suffering. The construct of self-compassion consists of self-kindness, common humanity (i.e. the ability to relate one's own suffering to others' suffering, rather than isolating away from others), and mindfulness (i.e. the ability to be aware of distressing cognitions rather than overidentifying with them; Neff, 2003).
- **Social support:** refers to the relationship transaction between helping entities (i.e. family, friends and significant other; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988).
- **Emotional Empathy:** is the ability for someone to have an emotional reaction to another person's emotional state (Spreng, McKinnin, Mar, & Levine, 2009).

### Evidence for the association between variables of interest:

- Extant literature supports the relationship between self-compassion and social support (Maheux & Price, 2016; Neff, 2003), but little research has been found to explore self-compassion's association with different types of social support (i.e. friends, significant other, and family).
- The association between self-compassion and empathy has been mixed. Self-compassion has been found to have a positive correlation with empathy (Neff & Pommier, 2013). In contrast, association between self-compassion and emotional empathy was found to be weak and nonsignificant (Wei, Liao, Ku, & Shaffer, 2011).

### Current Study

- The purpose of this study is to investigate the associations between self-compassion, social support, and emotional empathy.
- Hypotheses:
  - Self-compassion, social support, and emotional empathy will positively correlate with each other.
  - Differences in self-compassion will occur among groups of participants whose primary social support is either with friends, significant other, or family.
  - Female participants will score higher on positive subscales of self-compassion and males will score lower on negative subscales of self-compassion.

## Methods

### Participants

- Participants were recruited from psychology and social science courses at a mid-sized junior college. Surveys were in written format and administered individually in a classroom setting. The initial sample consisted of 92 participants who were screened for failure to complete the survey (14) and incorrect response to check items (5). A total of 73 participants completed surveys.
- **Age and gender:** ranged from 18 to 46 ( $M = 22.90$ ,  $SD = 5.44$ ); 63.01% identified as female ( $N = 46$ ).
- **Race and ethnicity:** Included 50.68% Caucasian, 26.03% Other, 10.96% Asian, 9.59% African American, 2.74% American Indian or Alaskan Native.
- **Marital status:** 43.84% single, 43.84% were in a committed relationship, 10.96% married, and 1.37% separated.
- **Current residence:** 65.75% family, 23.29% significant other, 8.22% friend(s), and 2.74% alone.

### Measures

- **Self-Compassion Scale (SCS;** Neff, 2003). Participants' self-compassion will be measured with the SCS which is a 26-item scale that consists of six subscales (i.e. self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness, self-judgment, isolation, overidentification) with 5-point Likert items. Within the current study, the entire SCS had an internal consistency of .95.
- **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS;** Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). Participants' social support will be measured with the MSPSS which is a 12-item scale consisting of four subscales with on a 7-point scale (1 = very strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Within the current study, the entire MSPSS had an internal consistency of .94.
- **Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ;** Spreng, McKinnin, Mar, & Levine, 2009). Emotional empathy will be measured with the TEQ which consists of 16 items that are ranked on a 5-point scale (0 = never, 4 = always). Within the current study, the entire TEQ scale had an internal consistency of .87.

### Analysis

- Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficients were used to explore the variables of interest. Independent samples  $t$ -tests were and one way ANOVA's were used to measure mean differences. Groups were determined by the highest MSPSS subscale (i.e., friends, significant other, and family) score.

## Results

### Bivariate correlation analysis (see Table 1):

- **Self-compassion will be positively correlated with social support, was supported.** Self-compassion was positively correlated with social support,  $r = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- **Self-compassion will be positively correlated with emotional empathy, was not supported.** Self-compassion was positively correlated with emotional empathy,  $r = .09$ ,  $p = .436$ .
- **Social support will be positively correlated with emotional empathy, was supported.** Social support was positively correlated with empathy,  $r = .35$ ,  $p < .01$ .
- **Differences in self-compassion will occur among social support groups, was not supported (see Figure 1 and 2).** Participants in the significant other group had the highest SCS mean score ( $M = 79.33$ ,  $SE = 4.40$ ) compared to the friends group ( $M = 76.33$ ,  $SE = 7.39$ ) and family group ( $M = 74.69$ ,  $SE = 6.08$ ). The mean differences were not significant  $F(3,69) = 0.16$ ,  $p = .92$ .
- **Female participants will score higher than males on SCS positive subscales (self-kindness, common-humanity, and mindfulness), was not supported.** The mean score of male participants scored higher on the positive subscales of the SCS ( $M = 9.88$ ,  $SE = 0.44$ ) compared to females ( $M = 9.39$ ,  $SE = .41$ ). The mean difference .49, CI 95% [-.77, 1.74] was not significant  $t(71) = .77$ ,  $p = .44$ .
- **Male participants will score higher than females on SCS negative subscales (judgment, isolation, and overidentification), was not supported.** The mean score of male participants scored higher on the negative subscales of the SCS ( $M = 8.96$ ,  $SE = 0.41$ ) compared to females ( $M = 8.38$ ,  $SE = 0.49$ ). The mean difference .59, CI 95% [-0.84, 2.01] was not significant  $t(71) = .82$ ,  $p = .42$ .

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations Between Variables of Interest

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD
1. SCS	-						78.27	22.20
2. TEQ	.09	-					48.41	8.68
3. MSPSS	.40***	.35**	-				64.88	16.83
4. MSPSS Friends	.25*	.27*	.86***	-			21.52	5.76
5. MSPSS Sig. Other	.34**	.44***	.87**	.70***	-		23.00	6.77
6. MSPSS Family	.42***	.20	.83***	.55***	.53***	-	20.36	7.19

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; SCS = Self-Compassion Scale, TEQ = Toronto Empathy Questionnaire, and MSPSS = Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.  $N = 73$

Figure 1.

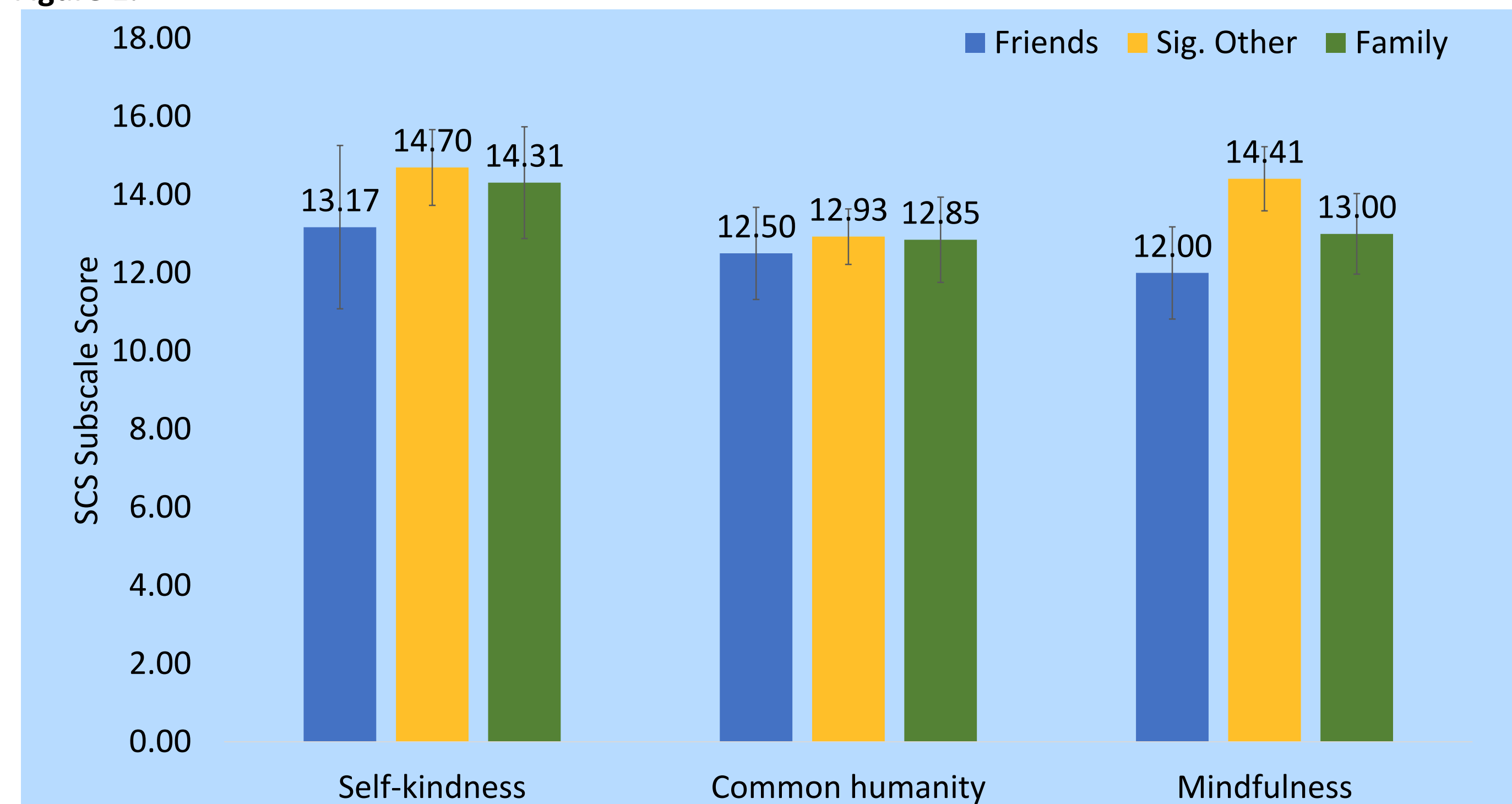


Figure 1. Positive subscale mean scores for friends, significant other, and family groups. Error bars denote one standard error around the mean.

Figure 2.

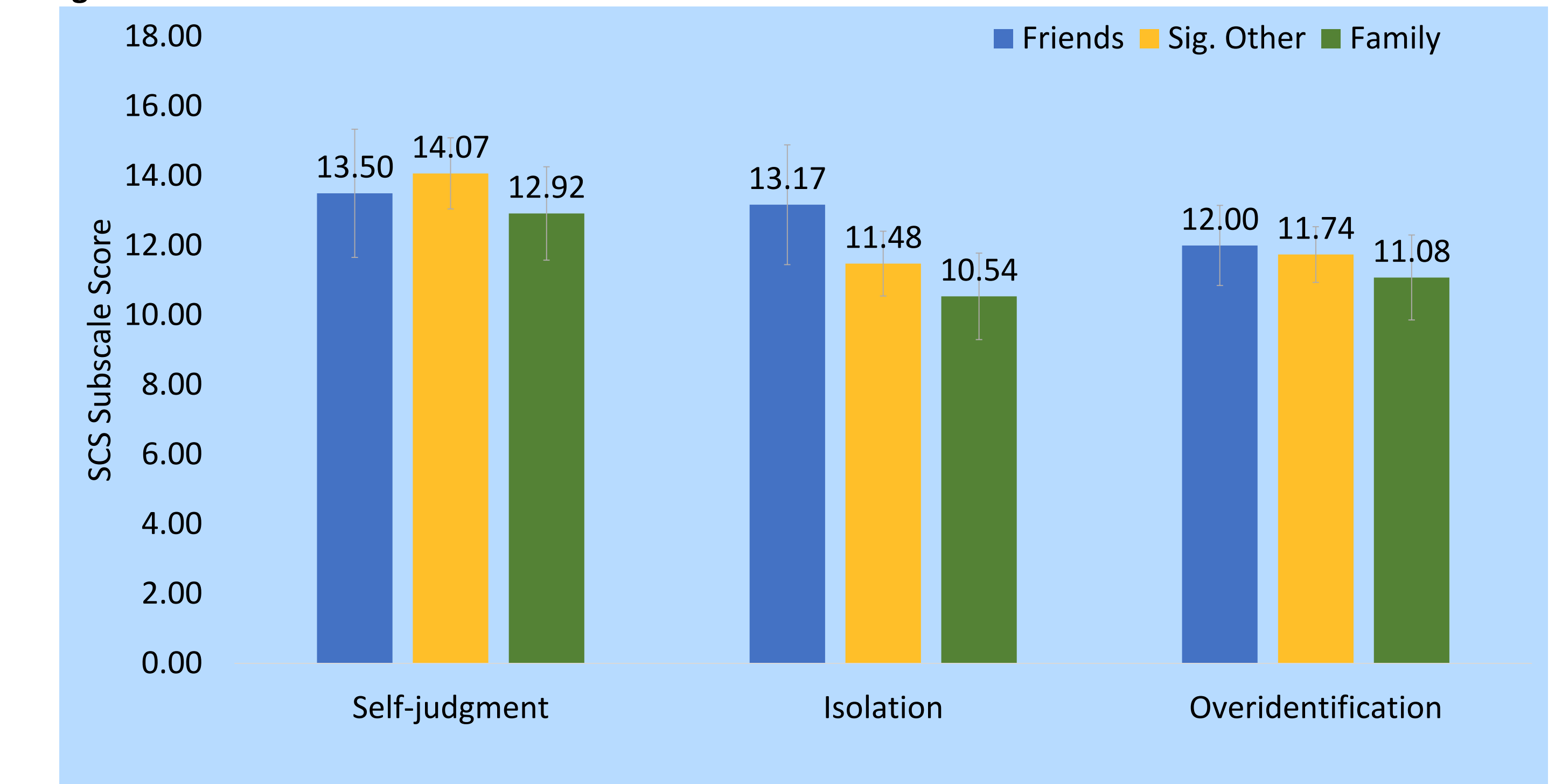


Figure 2. Negative subscale mean scores for friends, significant other, and family groups. Error bars denote one standard error around the mean.

## Discussion

- Findings from the current study support extant literature regarding the relationship between self-compassion and social support. While emotional empathy and social support held an association, the relationship between emotional empathy and self-compassion was found to be weak and not significant. This suggests that emotional empathy is not requirement for self-compassion
- The differences in the level of self-compassion among the friends, significant other, or family social support groups were not significant. Moreover, no significant differences were found between males in females relative to the positive and negative aspects of self-compassion. These findings suggests that self-compassion is stable across social support and gender.
- Taken together, the current study findings suggest that cultivating emotional empathy may not be beneficial to cultivating self-compassion. Future research should investigate whether other aspects of empathy (e.g. cognitive empathy) has a role in self-compassion

## Limitations

- The data from this cross sectional analysis makes it impossible for us to determine the causality between the variables of interest.
- A college sample was used in which most participants identified as female (63.01%) making it difficult to generalize to other populations.
- All measures were self-reported in which report bias and social desirability is potential.
- The TEQ is not specific to just measuring emotional empathy. The measurement of emotional empathy is likely to be attenuated by its additional ability to measure a variety of empathy related constructs (e.g., emotional contagion or sympathetic physiological arousal).

## Selected References

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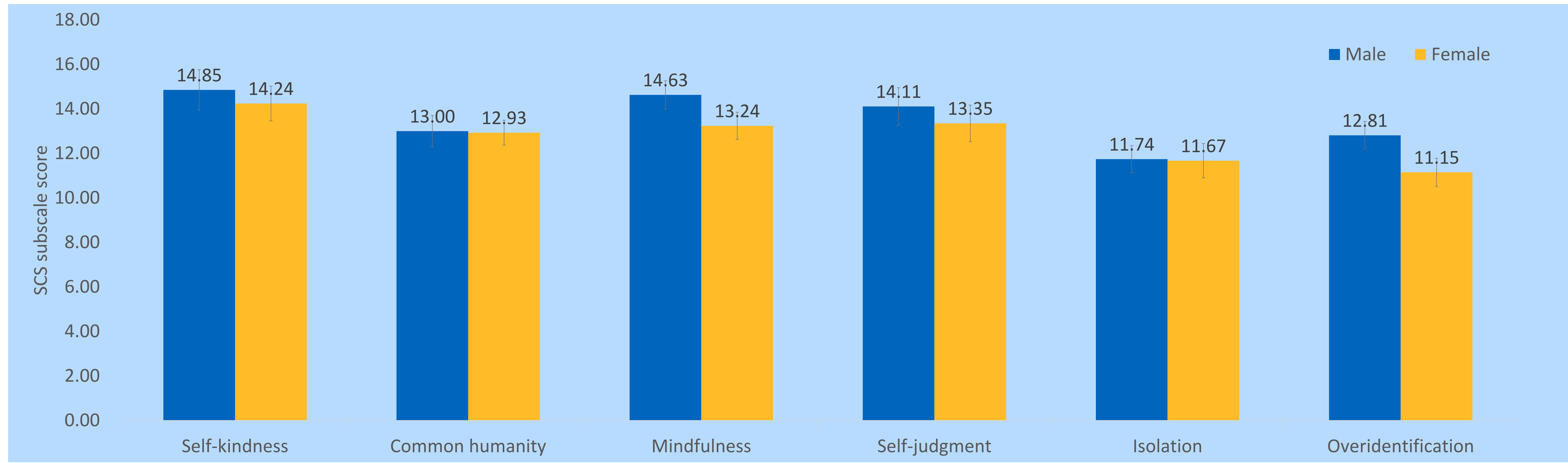


Figure 3. Negative subscale mean scores for friends, significant other, and family groups. Error bars denote one standard error around the mean.

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. SCS TOTAL	-																
2. SCS Self-Kindness	.88***	-															
3. SCS Common Humanity	.72***	.60***	-														
4. SCS Mindfulness	.84***	.77***	.71***	-													
5. SCS Self-Judgment	.90***	.73***	.49***	.62***	-												
6. SCS Isolation	.86***	.66***	.48***	.58***	.80***	-											
7. SCS Over-Identified	.85***	.61***	.45***	.61***	.80***	.79***	-										
8. TEQ TOTAL	.09	.11	.23	.05	-.02	.15	-.05	-									
9. TEQ Perception	.15	.17	.21	.01	.05	.27*	.03	.68***	-								
10. TEQ Comprhnsion	-.04	-.01	.00	-.05	-.07	.01	-.11	.58***	.48***	-							
11. TEQ Assessment	.11	.12	.21	.08	.01	-.14	.03	.81***	.39**	.22	-						
12. TEQ Physiological Arousal	-.02	.04	.08	-.03	-.08	.02	-.10	.87***	.48***	.59***	.61***	-					
13. TEQ Altruism	.16	.15	.30*	.14	.08	.19	-.01	.79***	.49***	.40***	.51***	.61***	-				
14. MSPSS TOTAL	.40***	.43***	.38**	.41***	.29*	.38**	.15	.35**	.36**	.26*	.24*	.28*	.33**	-			
15. MSPSS Friends	.25*	.25*	.23	.24*	.19	.31**	.06	.27*	.38**	.17	.15	.20	.22	.86***	-		
16. MSPSS Signficant Other	.34**	.40**	.33**	.33**	.25*	.32**	.10	.44***	.39**	.34**	.30*	.36**	.42***	.87***	.70***	-	
17. MSPSS Family	.42***	.43***	.40**	.46***	.29*	.33**	.21	.20	.18	.15	.17	.15	.20	.83***	.55***	.53***	-
<i>M</i>	78.27	14.47	12.96	13.75	13.63	11.70	11.77	48.41	5.70	3.12	14.10	12.38	9.81	64.88	21.52	23.00	20.36
<i>SD</i>	22.20	5.04	3.71	3.89	5.12	4.54	3.99	8.68	1.58	.88	3.31	2.50	2.20	16.83	5.80	6.77	7.19

Note. \*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001; SCS = Self-Compassion Scale, TEQ = Toronto Empathy Questionnaire, and MSPSS = Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. N = 73

## Additional Information

- For more information please contact: Mernyll A. Manalo E-mail: Mernyll@gmail.com
- Links:
  - Self-Compassion: <http://self-compassion.org/>
  - Social Support: [gzimet.wixsite.com/mspss](http://gzimet.wixsite.com/mspss)
  - Empathy: [psychology-tools.com/toronto-empathy-questionnaire/](http://psychology-tools.com/toronto-empathy-questionnaire/)

