



Self-Compassion and Perceived Social Support as Moderators of Depressive Symptoms Following Relationship Dissolution

Anvesh Perada,
Independent Researcher,
Department of Psychology,
JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

Abstract

Breaking up relationships can be a major psychological stressor, and can increase symptoms of depression, emotional distress and adjustment to life changes. But, people react differently to the loss of a romantic partner, which may mean that personal and interpersonal resources can impact post-breakup adjustment. The purpose of this study is to explore the moderating effects of self-compassion and perceived social support in the relationship between relationship dissolution and depressive symptoms. Self-compassion could potentially help people engage with emotional distress in a more compassionate way, which may lead to less self-criticism, and perceived social support may provide reassurance, a sense of belonging, and emotional support when facing emotional distress. This study will have an adult quantitative research design with adults who have gone through a relationship break. Standardized assessment of depressive symptoms, self-compassion, and perceived social support will be used to collect data. The statistical analysis will test if the relationship between dissolution-related distress and depressive symptoms is mediated by self-compassion and/or perceived social support independently or together. The study aims to help understand the psychological resources related to adjusting to the loss of a relationship and identify how self-compassion and social connectedness can be supported through interventions to enhance these resources. The results might have application in counselling and mental health services related to problems in relationships.

Keywords: Relationship dissolution, depressive symptoms, self-compassion, perceived social support, psychological adjustment, emotional well-being.

Publication History

Received: 14 July 2026 **Accepted:** 20 August 2026, **Published:** 25 September 2026



Open Access (BOAI Compliant) | © 2026 Author(s). Published by SIJRI under Creative Commons CC BY-NC 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>). Official signatory to BOAI.

1. Introduction

Dissolution of relationships is an important life event which can have a profound impact on a person's emotional stability, psychological health and identity. When a romantic relationship comes to an end, you may lose your companion, emotional security, shared expectations and plans for the future. Separation can lead to sadness, feelings of loneliness and rejection, uncertainty and lowered self-worth for many, especially young adults. These are typical responses to the loss of a relationship, but can range from mild to extreme and brief to prolonged depending on the individual. Some people adapt to it over time and gain a new outlook on life, while others struggle with depressive symptoms and have trouble functioning in the areas of their social life, school, work, and relationship with others. It is important, therefore, to understand what factors can affect psychological adjustment around a relationship breakup so that those who might be more at risk for emotional distress can be identified.

Some symptoms of depression after a romantic breakup can be low mood, low interest in activities, low attention span, changes in sleeping habits, feelings of worthlessness or lack of motivation. Separation can also lead to self-destructive thinking, negative thoughts about the other person and future relationships. People can keep thinking about and questioning why their relationship did not work out or why they feel they are to blame for the failure, or worry about their future success in finding a relationship that will work. These cognitive and emotional reactions can prolong distress, especially when an individual's coping mechanisms are inadequate, or when they feel the separation is a threat



to the person's self-worth. But, divorce doesn't always result in depression. This life transition can be experienced differently by different people and may be affected by factors such as personal characteristics, past experiences, coping strategies and emotional support.

Self compassion is one psychological tool that could be helpful in promoting a more healthy adaptation. Self-compassion is characterized by treating oneself with kindness, understanding, and emotional balance when facing personal challenges, rather than with self-criticism. It is usually three intertwined aspects: self-kindness instead of self-judgment, awareness of shared humanity instead of sense of separation, and mindful awareness instead of overidentification with painful thoughts and feelings (Neff, 2003). In the realm of relationship dissolution, self-compassion can be instrumental in recognizing emotional suffering without the label of failure or lack. Self-compassion can be particularly important to recognize emotional suffering during a relationship breakup without the explanation of failure or lack. Self-compassionate people may be less likely to be overly critical, feel less drawn to judge themselves, and be ready to embrace their emotional experiences, understand that challenges in relationships are a normal aspect of human life, and slowly focus their attention on personal growth. Self-compassion has been linked in previous studies to reduced psychological distress and adaptive emotional responses (MacBeth & Gumley, 2012; Zessin et al., 2015). The results indicate that self-compassion is a psychological resource that is potentially relevant to people who have suffered a romantic separation and have depressive symptoms.

Perceived social support is another factor which could affect adjustment after a relationship ending. Perceived social support is the feeling that someone is available to provide emotional, informational, or practical support, such as a family member, friend, or significant person. It is not about the level of help that is given; it is about the feeling of being understood, accepted, valued and supported when struggling. Relationships that are supportive after a breakup can be opportunities to express feelings, to find reassurance, to stay in touch, and to develop new ideas about the breakup. People in the family and the community can also facilitate the practical adjustments and reorganisation of the daily life cycle for the person. Social support has been repeatedly shown as a correlate of psychological wellbeing and as a protective factor against depressive symptoms (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Rueger et al., 2016). On the other hand, the experience of rejection, socially isolated, or not getting the emotional support that you are looking for can strengthen feelings of loneliness and worry during the adjustment period.

Self-compassion and perceived social support can be associated with psychological well-being, but this relationship could go beyond the connections made with depressive symptoms. Specifically, both factors could serve as moderators between relationship dissolution and depression symptoms. A moderating variable affects the nature of the relationship between a predictor and an outcome. The current focus of the discussion is on how self-compassion might alleviate the relationship dissolution-related emotional difficulties' association with depressive symptoms. People who treat themselves with sensitivity might not be as prone to ongoing self-blame, self-evaluation, and rumination about the break-up. Likewise, this association could be reduced by feeling of social support, as this would make the individual feel less isolated and better able to cope with emotional reactions to separation. People who think they have a source of support they can rely on may find it easier to come to terms with their loss and make life adjustments.

These two moderators can be examined together to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the personal and interpersonal factors that may facilitate emotional adjustment. Self-compassion is an internal resource that one can use to attend to one's suffering while perceived social support is a relational resource related to perceived availability of support and understanding from others. These resources can be used alone or they may have different degrees of protection depending on the person's situation. Self-compassion is more likely to help someone who is socially isolated deal with a breakup, for instance. However, for someone else, supportive relationships can be a huge help even if they find it hard to handle self-critical thoughts. It is therefore important to investigate both factors in the same study to better understand if they have independent effects on the relationship between relationship dissolution and depressive symptoms, and if the combined effects add to the explanatory power of this relationship.

Although the research interest in self-compassion, social support and mental health has grown, there is a need for further investigation into the specific role of these resources in the context of romantic relationship loss. Depressive symptoms are frequently studied as a composite of stressors, and psychological changes that accompany a relationship breakup can include unique stressors such as rejection, disrupted attachment, change in self-definition, and uncertainty of future relationships. In addition, it's possible that two people can have the same relationship circumstances and yet have very different emotional reactions. There is some variation that may be explained by a closer look at self-



compassion and perceived social support. It also needs to be recognized that the present study was interested in the potential for these resources to alter the strength of the relationship between relationship dissolution and depressive symptoms, and not in assuming that they account for the pathway that leads to distress following dissolution.

The aim of the present study, titled “Self-Compassion and Perceived Social Support as Moderators of Depressive Symptoms Following Relationship Dissolution”, is to assess the relationship between romantic separation and depression symptoms while testing the possibility of self-compassion and perceived social support as moderators. The hypothesis of the study was that those who report greater self-compassion will report a lower relationship between relationship dissolution and depression symptoms, and that perceived social support will also decrease the relationship. The study will explore these psychological and interpersonal resources in combination, which could help to shed light on the emotional adjustment process after a relationship ends. The results could also have practical applications when it comes to counselling, psychological support services, and prevention efforts aimed at fostering self-kindness, healthy supportive relationships, and healthy coping responses for people going through the grieving process of the end of a romantic relationship.

2. Background of the study

Romantic relationships are crucial for emotional health, self-identity and psychological functioning, especially in the context of emerging adulthood. This stage of development is typically in the late teens and early 20's, a time of big changes in social relationships, independence and long-term planning. Affection, emotional security, companionship, and a sense of belonging are some of the things romantic partnerships can give. But once these bonds are broken, people can feel lonely, uncertain, disheartened, and feel a new sense of self-worth and future expectations. Relationship dissolution, therefore, is not simply a change in relationship status, but also a very important psychosocial stressor with a significant impact on depressive symptoms and emotional adjustment. Review articles have found correlations between the end of a close relationship and a range of psychological distress reactions, although the severity and duration of these reactions vary from person to person.

Symptoms of depression arising after the breakup of a relationship can involve sadness, lack of interest in activities, hopelessness or helplessness, sleep problems, concentration problems, and social isolation. This does not always mean a clinical depressive disorder as reactions to a breakup can vary in severity and length of time. Others slowly adjust and restructure their lives, while others suffer from longer grief patterns which impair school functioning, work performance, social interactions, and overall health and functioning. The study of depression in young adults involved longitudinal (before and after) observation of depressive symptoms following a breakup of a romantic relationship, which underscores the significance of individual differences in adjustment and the importance of understanding what may help to maintain psychological well-being during this period.

Self-compassion is a psychological resource that maybe provides a clue as to why some people do better than others after breakup. Self-compassion is the process of treating oneself with compassion when suffering, failing, and experiencing emotional pain. It entails being kind to yourself, recognizing shared humanity, and consciously becoming aware of challenging experiences. After a relationship has ended, person may take personal responsibility for the breakup, may have a preoccupation with personal value and may view rejection as proof of personal imperfection. Such self-criticisms can exacerbate feelings of unhappiness and lead to depressive symptoms. However, people who respond to their life experiences with greater self-compassion might be more likely to accept their pain without it becoming a sense of self. Self-compassion also can help a person view relationship in a more balanced way, understanding that being separated from someone doesn't mean they are no longer a good person.

Evidence for the importance of self-compassion for post-breakup adjustment includes research on emotional distress and depressive symptoms among those who initiated romantic breakups. Self-compassion and self-forgiveness were linked to the relationship between breakup distress and depression symptoms, according to Akbari and colleagues' research. The present study indicates that responses to the self-following the termination of a relationship could be crucial in understanding psychological adjustment. This does not, however, imply that a link between self-compassion and positive adjustment means that it serves as a mediator between dissolution and depressive symptoms. This is something that needs to be explored through empirical research.

Another possible important factor is perceived social support—a person's sense that support is provided by family, friends, peers and others that are trusted. Relationship dissolution can have a significant impact not only on intimate



relationships, but also on the shared friendship network, daily activities, and emotional support. Supportive relationships can help to allow people to feel their feelings, be reassured, have different viewpoints, and feel connected to others during this time. Feelings of isolation can be lessened when individuals feel there is support available. On the other hand, those who feel they are not being helped may experience greater emotional difficulties in coping with emotional distress, especially if their former partner was their main source of companionship or emotional support.

Studies of marital loss and mental health have focused on perceived social support as a variable in psychological functioning after marital loss. More general studies on the relationship ending process have also found that individual, relational and contextual factors impact on the psychological outcomes of the separation process. The findings of this study lend credence to the need for further research on social support as a protective resource. However, perceived social support is not always viewed as equally positive; the value of social support received can be dependent on the nature, availability, and receptiveness of social support received.

While both self-compassion and perceived social support can play a role in psychological resilience, they are thought to serve as different types of potential protection. Self-compassion is the internal psychological resource that influences individuals' perception and reaction to their own pain. An interpersonal resource that represents the degree to which people feel they can ask for help from others is perceived social support. Supportive friends and family can coexist with the person who is overly self-critical, and another person can show self-compassion even if he or she has a fairly small circle of people to look after him or her. It might therefore be useful to study both factors together in the same study to gain a more complete understanding of why some people have more depressive symptoms after a relationship ends than others.

In the present study, Self-Compassion and Perceived Social Support are hypothesized to moderate the link between relationship dissolution and depressive symptoms, thereby potentially shaping the impact of relationship dissolution on depressive symptoms. In particular, self-compassion might undermine this link by attenuating self-critical reactions and fostering a more tolerant mindset to emotional suffering. Likewise, perceptions of social support could buffer the relationship by decreasing isolation and making emotional and instrumental support more available. Statistically speaking, a moderating effect would indicate that the association between dissolution experiences and depressive symptoms varies by self-compassion and/or perceived social support level. These are suggested relationships to be investigated and not assumptions to be made a priori.

The study is important because most of the literature to date has examined the relationship between relationship dissolution and psychological distress, and there is less literature on the interaction of internal and interpersonal resources to influence depression responses. Current reviews have suggested that other factors that might influence the relationship between dissolution and mental health should be explored.

A closer look at the interaction of self-compassion and perceived social support might shed light on whether these two factors contribute uniquely and in different ways for people who are separated from the loved one.

Results could be relevant for counselling services, campus mental health and psychological support programs for young adults. Interventions might include self-compassion exercises, techniques for responding to self-critical thoughts, and building supportive social connections, if supported by the proposed relationship(s). Acknowledging that no one should be blamed for causing their own suffering, such approaches would also outline resources that might assist them with coping with a tough life transition. Overall, the goal of this study is to build knowledge about the post-relationship dissolution depressive symptoms by exploring the possible psychological, personal and social factors that can aid in positive adjustment.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine depression symptoms of people after a relationship break-up.
2. To explore the relationship between relationship dissolution-related distress and depressive symptoms.
3. To explore the effect of self-compassion as a moderator between relationship dissolution-related distress and depressive symptoms.
4. To examine the interaction between perceived social support and relationship dissolution-related distress and depression.
5. To explore the joint moderating role of self-compassion and perceived social support on depressive symptoms after relationship breakup



4. Literature Review

1. Relationship Dissolution and Depressive Symptoms:

Breaking up a romantic relationship can be a very large interpersonal stressor, especially if it had offered the emotional security, companionship, and sense of belonging that they desired. Separation can create a disruption in a routine, expectations for the future, and an individual's sense of self-worth. The psychological implications of the dissolution of the relationship are, however, very different from one person to another, and are related to the quality of the relationship, the personal assessment of the relationship, the resources available to the person and the coping strategy used.

Acolin et al. (2023) studied the early and post-romantic breakup of relationships among young adults and their corresponding depressive symptomology. Their results showed that depressive symptoms rose during the time of the breakup, but were typically back to pre-breakup levels within about three months. This rise was more pronounced when people felt negatively about the breakup, indicating that the emotional adjustment to the breakup is related to subjective experiences of the event. This discovery underscores the need to consider personal psychological strengths as part of the study of depressive symptoms following a relationship breakup.

Likewise, Tran et al. (2024) explored factors that are related to emotional adjustment following a breakup. They noted that factors related to the previous relationship, such as relationship length and quality, and recovery factors like the circumstances of the separation, can have a significant impact on recovery. The results indicate that relationship dissolution is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon, and psychological outcomes of the dissolution vary according to individual and relationship factors. Cross et al. (2021) examined if low self-esteem was a predictor of decreased well-being after relationship dissolution. They addressed one of the limitations of previous studies on well-being after a relationship break-up, by comparing those who broke up with those who had a matched relationship. This work is relevant because self-evaluation can affect the way that people perceive rejection, loss, and relationship status changes. The concept of self-compassion in the present study was viewed as a related, but different personal resource that could impact vulnerability to depressive symptoms following a breakup.

2. Self-Compassion as a Protective Psychological Resource:

Self-compassion is being kind to oneself when one is suffering or feeling inadequate. Neff (2003) theorized self-compassion as having three interrelated components: mindfulness (as opposed to being over-identified with distress), common humanity (as opposed to isolation), and self-kindness (as opposed to self-judgment). These dimensions are especially important after the relationship has ended as people may feel guilty for the breakup, think that the break-up is a personal failing, or keep having thoughts of the painful memories.

With respect to depressive symptoms, self-compassion can encourage an individual to recognize their own emotional suffering yet not let it be their identity or their worth. Self-compassion might help to make sense of and defuse the negative experiences in a way that leads to more positive adjustment following the end of a romantic relationship, in part by reducing self-critical thinking. It should be evaluated empirically, however, and not presumed to be the same for everyone.

In a meta-analysis of studies on the relationships between self-compassion and psychopathology, MacBeth and Gumley (2012) found a significant relationship between self-compassion and decreased psychological distress. Their results offer a more conceptual framework for studying depression symptomology in relation to self-compassion. However, the evidence on general psychological distress does not necessarily indicate that there is a specific relationship between self-compassion and the relationship between relationship dissolution and depression. The study also offers a relationship-specific approach to the concept of romantic breakup initiators conducted by Akbari and colleagues. They determined that self-compassion and self-forgiveness were applicable to the correlation between breakup distress and depressive symptoms in college students who broke up. This is crucial as the person who ends a relationship can feel a sense of guilt, of responsibility or emotional conflict, not just rejection or abandonment. The study validates the investigation of self-compassion as a mediator of breakup-related distress and allows for further research into self-compassion's moderating effect in breakup-related distress.

3. Perceived Social Support and Emotional Adjustment:

Perceived social support is one's perception that emotional, informational and practical support is available from others, typically friends, family, and trusted others. After a relationship ends, the support received from these sources could be even more crucial, as the person might experience a loss of a major source of emotional reassurance and

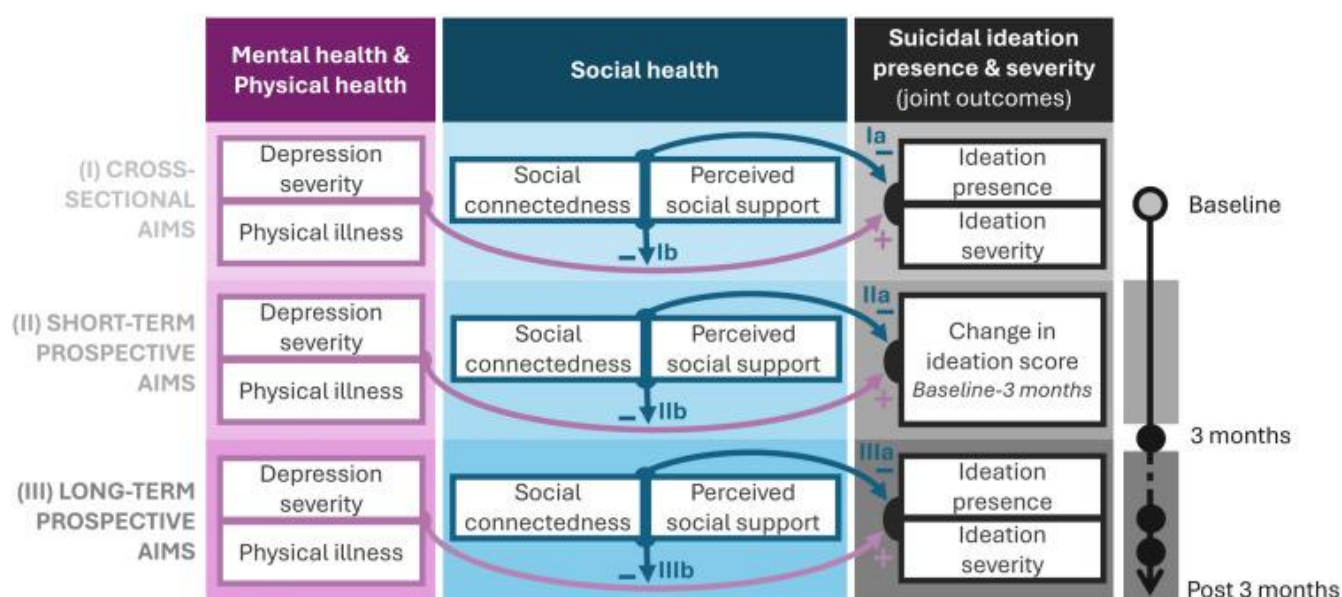


companionship.

The stress-buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985) links the beneficial psychological effects of social support and the impact of stressful life events. From this viewpoint, supportive relationships can be used to aid the person's understanding of stressful events in more positive ways, to help manage emotions, and to provide access to coping mechanisms. Perceived support could lessen the extent that separation-related distress becomes chronic depression when applied to relationship dissolution.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support was created by Zimet et al. (1988) to measure family, friends and significant others perceived social support. This framework is helpful in the present research since the availability of support can vary in sources. For instance, one might feel very supported by friends, while feeling less supported by family. Differences like this might account for variation in emotional reactions to like losses.

Perceived Social Support and Psychological Well-being also provide support as a contributor to more favourable psychological well-being. According to a 2024 study on the relationship between perceived social support, self-compassion, and psychological well-being, the self-compassion scores were significantly higher and the depression, anxiety, and stress scores were significantly lower for individuals who indicated that they had high levels of perceived social support. These results suggest a need to study the two resources in conjunction and not separately. But associations in an overall well-being sample do not provide evidence of a moderating effect of social support on depressive symptoms specifically following relationship dissolution.



Source: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2667174325000679>

4. The Interaction Between Self-Compassion and Perceived Social Support:

Self-compassion and perceived social support can be seen as complementary psychological resources. Self-compassion is more about the internal response to suffering, while perceived social support is more about whether or not other people are there to provide support. These resources can work in isolation or as complementary supports in the adjustment period after a break up.

Someone with high self-compassion can deal with a sense of rejection without too much personal blame. A person who also feels good about social support might have opportunities to talk about the breakup, to gain reassurance, and to continue to feel a sense of connection with others. These resources can work together to help reduce the severity or duration of depression.

On the other hand, a person with low levels of self-compassion may be more prone to self-criticism and harsh self-judgment during separation, and a person with low perceived support may feel more lonely and less able to deal with the situation. In situations where both are scarce, the psychological aspects of separation could be more challenging to deal with. The idea is in line with Cohen and Wills' (1985) stress-buffering approach and Neff's (2003) self-compassion concept.



However, there is a difference between a "main effect" and a "moderating effect". A main effect would indicate that self-compassion or perceived social support are related to depressive symptoms regardless of break up-related factors. Moderation, however, refers to the relationship between relationship dissolution or breakup-related distress and depressive symptoms varying by self-compassion and/or perceived social support. The question of this distinction could be answered in the present study, which can tests interaction effects rather than just correlations.

5. Research Gap and Rationale for the Present Study:

Existing research has demonstrated that relationship dissolution is linked to transient increases in depressive symptoms; self-compassion is also related to psychological distress and to adjustment to relationship dissolution; and perceived social support is related to more positive mental health outcomes. But, these lines of research do not fully clarify the interaction between self-compassion and perceived social support and their combined effects on depressive symptoms after a relationship dissolution. In the present study, Acolin et al. (2023) investigated the course of depressive symptoms and the influence of subjective appraisal and perceived control. Cross et al. (2021) explored self-esteem and well-being following relationship dissolution, and studies investigating self-compassion and breakup distress have suggested that the self-compassion construct may be relevant. It is hypothesized, however, that perceived social support helps buffer the psychological effects of stressful experiences, in the process of which providing a theoretical explanation has been offered by the stress-buffering hypothesis.

5. Material and Methodology

The study will utilize a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach to investigate if relationship dissolution is related to depressive symptoms in a way that is moderated by self-compassion and perceived social support. The sample size will be about 300 adults (18-35 years) who have been in a romantic relationship within the past year, but who have since broken up. Purposive and convenient sampling will be used to recruit participants, who will have signed informed consent and meet pre-determined eligibility requirements. Participants will complete a structured questionnaire which will include information about their family, the nature of the disconnection, depressive symptoms, self-compassion, and social support. The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) will be used to measure depressive symptoms, the Self-Compassion Scale–Short Form (SCS-SF) will be used to measure perceived social support, and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) will be used to measure self-compassion. They will be used as standardized tools, to be tested in accordance with their scoring systems. Data analysis will be carried out descriptive, reliability analysis, and Pearson's correlation analysis and hierarchical multiple regression. Interaction terms between relationship-related distress and each moderator will be included in the model for the moderation analysis and bootstrapping will be used to estimate confidence intervals as needed. Potential covariates will include relevant demographic and relationship characteristics, including age, gender, length of relationship, and length of time since separation. Ethical approval will be secured prior to data collection and confidentiality, right to withdraw and voluntary participation will be ensured. If participants report having significant distress, they will be given relevant information on mental-health support. This study will be conducted in a cross-sectional design making interpretations of findings as associations and not causal effects.

6. Results and Discussion

The end of a relationship may be a strong emotional trigger that impacts a person's mental health, self-esteem, and feeling of safety with others. The proposed analysis will include a test of the relationship between experiences after the dissolution of a relationship and depressive symptoms, with self-compassion and perceived social support as moderators. Depressive symptoms can be linked to rejection, loneliness, thinking about things negatively and wondering about future relationships. But people can have a lot of variations in reactions to the end of a romantic relationship. The above differences indicate that the psychological impact of the breakup of a relationship should be viewed not just through the lens of the stressful event itself, but also through the lens of the personal and social resources available to the person.

Self-compassion could be a significant factor in understanding differences in depressive symptoms after a relationship break-up. People who are more self-compassionate are more likely to recognize or accept their emotional suffering, but not be overly critical or blame themselves or make negative judgements about self. They do not see the breakdown of a relationship as failing to measure up; they might believe that it is part of life. In this context, a connection between



relationship-related distress and depressive symptoms may be lessened by self-compassion. Those who react to the loss of a relationship by ruminating over the situation over and over in their minds, feeling inadequate, or feeling very critical of themselves, may feel more emotional. These interpretations are in line with the general theoretical framework of self-compassion as a potentially protective psychological resource, however, its moderating effect will be assessed in the statistical analysis of the study.

This is because perceived social support can also impact a person's coping after a romantic relationship termination. Friends, family members, and trusted others can give emotional reassurance, be available to share challenging experiences, and make a person feel a sense of belonging in a time of uncertainty. People who feel that they have supportive relationships that are available to them might feel less isolated and find themselves better able to cope with the sadness, disappointment and disruption to their routines. However, under the normal conditions of limited or inadequate support, a sense of isolation can heighten feelings of loneliness, and adjustment might be more difficult. Studies with young adults indicate that depression levels may increase immediately after the breakup, but may proceed differently depending on the manner in which the breakup is appraised and the individual's sense of control. The present research context demonstrates that perceived social support can thus serve as a buffer, lessening the strength of the relationship between relationship-associated distress and depressive symptoms.

Additionally, the interaction between self-compassion and perceived social support should not be ruled out. Self-compassion is a psychological resource that an individual has within himself, while perceived social support is an appraisal of the available interpersonal resources. Individuals who treat themselves with understanding and feel that supportive people are around them may be better able to deal with the emotional impact of losing a relationship, possibly with the help of these resources. Self-compassion could decrease the self-blame, and social support could offer validation and practical support. However, it must not be taken for granted that the protective effects of these factors are the same for everyone. This can vary based on the length of the relationship, the nature of the split, how long it's been since the breakup, any prior mental health issues and the state of other social relationships. A moderation analysis can help determine if the association of breakup-related distress to depressive symptoms is different when the resource is present compared to when the resource is absent, or when the resource is present with the distress compared to when it is absent with the distress.

The potential implications for psychological support and counselling after relationship dissolution are discussed. Interventions might involve supporting the individual to think and feel less judgmental when facing emotional pain, debating excessive self-blame, keeping important social relationships and seeking help when emotional distress is too difficult to manage alone. Few studies have investigated a relationship between college students who initiate breakups and depressive symptoms; self-compassion and self-forgiveness are part of the possible explanation. Previous research has identified a link between breakup distress and depressive symptoms among college students who break up with their partners and has proposed that self-compassion and self-forgiveness are relevant to this relationship.

These findings establish a foundation for future research exploring self-compassion, and the moderate effect of perceived social support needs to be specifically tested in the current study. It is also important to note that depression following a breakup is not necessarily a depression disorder and that if a person experiences a lot of sadness or it just lasts for too long, it may need to be assessed by a professional.

In conclusion, the study provides a framework to help understand how individuals in similar circumstances of relationship loss might be reporting varying degrees of depressive symptomology. Detailed analyses of self-compassion and perceived social support as moderators could help clarify individual and interpersonal factors related to more adaptive adjustment. There are strict rules, however, for making conclusions about whether these variables have significant interactions with the relationship. Those conclusions must be drawn from the effect sizes, the confidence intervals and the significance tests for the interaction terms. In a cross-sectional design, the results should be viewed as associations, not evidence that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between lower depression and self-compassion or social support. Longitudinal studies would give better information on whether or not these resources are related to changes in depressive symptoms over time.

7. Limitations of the study

There are some limitations to this present study that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study: Self-Compassion and Perceived Social Support as Moderators of Depressive Symptoms Following Relationship Dissolution. When using self-reported questionnaires, errors of recall, social desirability, and self-



disclosure of emotional experiences may affect the results. The length of the relationship, the circumstances of the breakup, the amount of time that has passed since the breakup, and the amount of emotional attachment may also influence depressive symptoms and perceived availability of support. In addition, the results are not necessarily generalizable to the general population of people going through a relationship breakdown if the sample is small in size, or limited to a specific age group, geographical area, cultural upbringing or a particular demographic group. A cross-sectional study design may make it harder to determine the temporal order of the relationships between self-compassion, perceived social support, and the outcome variables of depressive symptoms or the moderating effects of these variables. Other factors can also have an impact on the outcomes and may not be completely captured by the analysis such as past mental health issues, coping skills, personality traits, and current interpersonal issues. These limitations could be explored in future research through longitudinal studies, via larger and more varied participant groups, and with the use of validated assessment tools, as well as the introduction of further psychological and social factors to gain a broader understanding of emotional adjustment after relationship dissolution.

8. Conclusion

Divorce or separation can be an emotionally difficult life event that has an impact on emotional health, self-esteem and adjustment. Self-compassion and perceived social support might be important factors in reducing depressive symptoms during this time. Self-compassion fosters a compassionate and understanding response to emotional suffering that transcends self-blame, whereas perceived social support promotes a sense of belonging, reassurance and emotional security. These factors can be viewed as potential moderators that can affect the relationship between relationship dissolution and depressive symptoms and may account for the variability in emotional reactions to dissolution. Knowing their roles can help create positive interventions to help them accept themselves, build their social relationships, and develop stronger coping skills after the loss of a relationship. Further studies with different populations and over longer periods of time should be conducted to determine the impact of self-compassion on psychological adjustment and the impact of perceived social support on self-compassion. In general, taking into account both personal and interpersonal resources can help develop a more holistic view of the signs of depression after a breakup of the relationship, and can help inform strategies for increasing emotional health in the aftermath of a relationship ending.

References

1. Akbari, M., & Seydavi, M. (2022). Neglected side of romantic relationships among college students: Breakup initiators are at risk for depression. *Family Relations*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12682>
2. Acolin, J., Cadigan, J. M., Fleming, C. B., Rhew, I. C., & Lee, C. M. (2023). Trajectory of depressive symptoms in the context of romantic relationship breakup: Characterizing the “natural course” of response and recovery in young adults. *Emerging Adulthood*, 11(5), 1211–1222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21676968231184922>
3. Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
4. Bowlby, J. (1980). Attachment and loss: Vol. 3. Loss: Sadness and depression. Basic Books.
5. Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310–357. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310>
6. Cutrona, C. E., & Russell, D. W. (1987). The provisions of social relationships and adaptation to stress. In W. H. Jones & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Advances in personal relationships* (Vol. 1, pp. 37–67). JAI Press.
7. Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science*, 13(1), 81–84. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00415>
8. George, L. K., & Lynch, S. M. (2003). Race differences in depressive symptoms: A dynamic perspective on stress exposure and vulnerability. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 44(3), 353–369.
9. Graber, E. C., Laurenceau, J.-P., Miga, E., Chango, J., & Coan, J. (2011). Conflict and love: Predicting young adult romantic relationship functioning from observations of interactions in early adolescence. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 28(6), 814–832.



Scriptora International Journal of Research and Innovation (SIJRI)

Journal Homepage: <https://scriptora.org>

10. Han, A., & Kim, T. H. (2023). Effects of self-compassion interventions on reducing depressive symptoms, anxiety, and stress: A meta-analysis. *Mindfulness*, 14, 1553–1575. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-023-02148-x>
11. Hammen, C. (2005). Stress and depression. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 1, 293–319. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.1.102803.143938>
12. Lakey, B., & Orehek, E. (2011). Relational regulation theory: A new approach to explain the link between perceived social support and mental health. *Psychological Review*, 118(3), 482–495. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023477>
13. Leary, M. R., Tate, E. B., Adams, C. E., Allen, A. B., & Hancock, J. (2007). Self-compassion and reactions to unpleasant self-relevant events: The implications of treating oneself kindly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(5), 887–904. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.5.887>
14. Neff, K. D. (2003). The development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2(3), 223–250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309027>
15. Neff, K. D. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2(2), 85–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309032>
16. Neff, K. D., & Germer, C. K. (2013). A pilot study and randomized controlled trial of the mindful self-compassion program. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 69(1), 28–44. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21923>
17. Neff, K. D., Kirkpatrick, K. L., & Rude, S. S. (2007). Self-compassion and adaptive psychological functioning. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41(1), 139–154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2006.03.004>
18. Neff, K. D., & McGehee, P. (2010). Self-compassion and psychological resilience among adolescents and young adults. *Self and Identity*, 9(3), 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860902979307>
19. MacBeth, A., & Gumley, A. (2012). Exploring compassion: A meta-analysis of the association between self-compassion and psychopathology. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 32(6), 545–552. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2012.06.003>
20. Sirois, F. M., Kitner, R., & Hirsch, J. K. (2015). Self-compassion, affect, and health-promoting behaviors. *Health Psychology*, 34(6), 661–669. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0000158>
21. Zhang, J. W., & Chen, S. (2017). Self-compassion promotes positive adjustment for people who attribute responsibility of a romantic breakup to themselves. *Self and Identity*, 16(6), 732–759. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2017.1305985>
22. Sprecher, S. (1994). Two sides to the breakup of dating relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 1(3), 199–222.
23. Perilloux, C., & Buss, D. M. (2008). Breaking up romantic relationships: Costs experienced and coping strategies deployed. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 6(1), 164–181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/147470490800600119>
24. Sbarra, D. A. (2006). Predicting the onset of emotional recovery following nonmarital relationship dissolution: Survival analyses of sadness and anger. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(3), 298–312. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205280913>
25. Sbarra, D. A., & Emery, R. E. (2005). The emotional sequelae of nonmarital relationship dissolution: Analysis of change and intraindividual variability over time. *Personal Relationships*, 12(2), 213–232.
26. Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52(1), 30–41. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5201_2
27. Radloff, L. S. (1977). The CES-D Scale: A self-report depression scale for research in the general population. *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 1(3), 385–401. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014662167700100306>
28. Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., & Williams, J. B. W. (2001). The PHQ-9: Validity of a brief depression severity measure. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 16(9), 606–613. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1525-1497.2001.016009606.x>
29. Tran, K., Castiglioni, L., Walper, S., & Lux, U. (2024). Resolving relationship dissolution—What predicts emotional adjustment after breakup? *Family Process*, 63(3), 1157–1170. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12914>



**Scriptora International Journal of Research and Innovation
(SIJRI)**

Journal Homepage: <https://scriptora.org>

30. Zell, E., & Stockus, C. A. (2025). Social support and psychological adjustment: A quantitative synthesis of 60 meta-analyses. *American Psychologist*, 80(1), 33–48. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001323>