

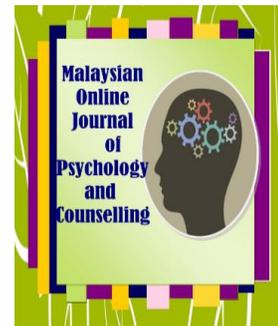
## EFFICACY OF COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPY (CFT) IN TREATING ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

This systematic review aims to evaluate the efficacy of Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) in the treatment of anxiety and depression among young adults aged 18 to 25. In particular, the review seeks to examine the prevalence and impact of these emotional disorders in this population, assess therapeutic outcomes of CFT, and explore its relevance and applicability to young adult mental health. A systematic search was conducted across major electronic databases to identify relevant studies, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and empirical research that met predefined inclusion criteria. Ten studies were selected for analysis. The review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, ensuring methodological rigor. The findings indicate that CFT produces statistically significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression among young adults. Furthermore, participants receiving CFT demonstrated improvements in self-compassion, emotional regulation, and overall psychological well-being. The evidence suggests that CFT is a promising and effective intervention for the treatment of anxiety and depression in young adults. The findings support further exploration and integration of CFT into counseling practices targeting young adult populations, particularly in culturally diverse settings.

**Keywords:** *Anxiety, depression, young adults, Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT).*



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## INTRODUCTION

Compassion essentially refers to the recognition of suffering in others coupled with an unwillingness to see them in that state (Sinclair et al., 2017). CFT uses cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness techniques, and evolutionary psychology elements to cultivate compassion toward the self (Gilbert et al., 2023). It was brought into existence by the idea that people who self-criticize and experience large amounts of shame find it difficult to heal using traditional forms of therapy (Millard et al., 2023). The central features of CFT are compassionate mind awareness, cultivating the image of compassionate selves, and compassionate practices (Gilbert, 2010). CFT provides a different approach, focusing on developing self-compassion in such a way as to reduce psychological suffering (Veshki & Shavandi, 2021). A variety of therapeutic exercises are employed within CFT to achieve these objectives.

The mental health of young adults has become an increasing concern in recent years. It is believed that the youth is very vulnerable to mental health issues due to their many transitions and pressures—moving to college, entering the workforce, and beginning to be independent (Pedrelli et al., 2015). Anxiety and depression play a big role in one's quality of life, academic performance, and social relations (Mofatteh, 2020). Although traditional therapies like CBT and medication work for most of the population, not everyone gets help from these treatments (Nakao et al., 2021).

Despite the increasing prevalence of anxiety and depression among young adults, there remains a gap in the identification and implementation of an appropriate therapeutic approach tailored to this population. While CFT has shown promise in addressing emotional disorders by fostering self-compassion and emotional regulation, there is limited evidence demonstrating its effectiveness specifically for young adults. This underscores the need for a systematic investigation into the efficacy, outcomes, and contextual adaptability of CFT for young adults experiencing anxiety and depression.

This systematic review aims to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of CFT in treating anxiety and depression among young adults, specifically those aged 18 to 25. This systematic review seeks to advance the existing body of research on CFT by examining its efficacy in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression among young adults. It aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of CFT's effectiveness and assess its potential as a valid alternative or complementary treatment for anxiety and depression within this demographic. Ultimately, this review aspires to contribute to the expanding array of mental health interventions available, emphasizing compassion's therapeutic role in promoting emotional healing.

## METHODOLOGY

The section below includes a comprehensive methodology description that outlines the search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the number and type of studies reviewed. This article is designed as a systematic review and aligns with PRISMA guidelines, ensuring methodological rigor, transparency, and clarity.

### *Identifying the Research Questions*

The following research questions were created to direct this investigation:

1. What are the primary factors contributing to the increasing prevalence of depression and anxiety among young adults in society?

2. How does Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) compare to traditional therapeutic approaches in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression in young adults?
3. What ways can Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) be adapted to effectively meet the specific needs of young adults struggling with anxiety and depression?

### ***Identifying Relevant Studies***

A detailed protocol was developed for the objectives, search strategy, inclusion or exclusion criteria, and data analysis procedures. This gave a structured guide through the entire review process and had the advantage of a coherent and replicable method.

Extensive searching was conducted in various electronic databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, and Scopus to identify relevant studies. Manual searching was done in important journals and reference lists. Combinations of keywords "Compassion Focused Therapy", "CFT", "anxiety", "depression", "young adults", and respective synonyms comprised the search content. The tested chosen terms capture the broadest extent of literature about the effect of CFT in the target sample with anxiety and depression.

**Table 2.1**

*Key Search Items Used to Elicit Published Studies*

Search terms
"Compassionate Focused Therapy" OR "CFT" OR "Compassion Focused Therapy Intervention" OR "CFT Intervention" AND
"Anxiety" OR "Anxious" OR "Depression" OR "Depressed" AND
"Young Adults" OR "Youths" OR "Early Adults" OR "Young People"

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for identifying eligible manuscripts for this study were determined at the outset. Manuscripts were included in this study if they had the following eligibility parameters:

**Table 2.2**

*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population	Young adults aged 18-25 years.	Participants outside the age range
Intervention	CFT for anxiety and depression	Primary focus is not CFT intervention for anxiety and depression
Outcomes	Empirical studies with quantitative or qualitative findings.	Studies that do not provide apparent statistical findings like a systematic or a meta-analysis review
Language	Written in English.	Articles published in languages other than English.
Publication		Non-peer-reviewed or informal articles, or unpublished doctoral thesis over the year range

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Efficacy Status	Published in relevant peer-reviewed academic journals from the year 2015-2023	Only applies one context when measuring the efficacy of CFT on anxiety and depression
Application of Model	Application of CFT in all context tackling depression and anxiety efficacy	The use of one element from the CFT model
	The use of CFT model as a whole instead of few elements	

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These criteria were set to ensure rigor, relevance, and applicability of studies that would be delivered within the review, hence ensuring this was going to provide a comprehensive and focused review of evidence towards or against the efficacy of CFT in young adults with anxiety and depression.

### ***Study Selection***

A systematic literature search was conducted on the following five databases: PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect. A set of primary terms, such as 'Compassion Focused Therapy', 'CFT', 'anxiety', 'depression', and 'young adults', along with their variants, were applied to find the relevant literature. The first search combined the main terms that relate to the therapy and all the conditions: "Compassion Focused Therapy AND anxiety," "Compassion Focused Therapy AND depression," and "CFT AND young adults." Further searching was done by applying the secondary search terms to attain comprehensiveness, for example, "Compassion Therapy", "compassion-based interventions", and "mental health treatments."

Several were identified from 2015 to 2023 using these search terms. Each title and abstract were screened for relevance based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Afterwards, full-text articles were retrieved for any potentially relevant study, which was reviewed thoroughly for eligibility to include in the systematic review.

After the first screening of 1004 results from our original search, 36 were deemed relevant. From these 36 articles, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, only 10 articles met the requirements and were analyzed in this study.

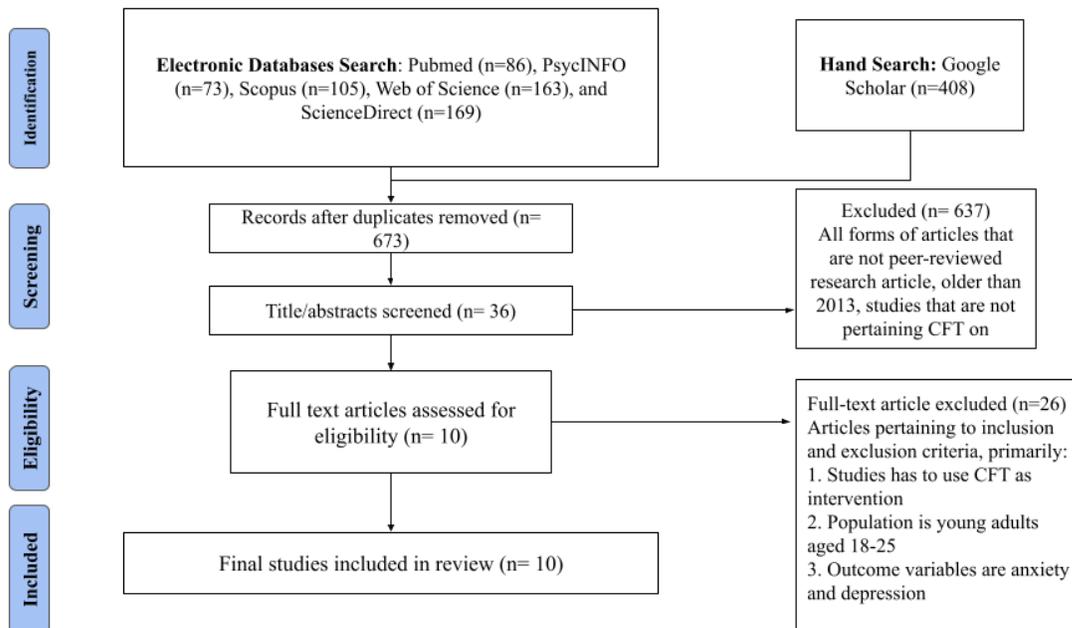
### ***Data Charting and Collating***

In this overview, an attempt has been made to systematically capture and synthesize the qualitative findings from included studies through a data recording and analysis process that will answer the research questions above. Data were recorded using a pre-designed form for extracting data, which helped to capture the qualitative data thoroughly. This template comprised categories such as 'study identification', 'methodological details', 'sample characteristics', 'intervention details', and 'qualitative outcomes'

The author extracted the following information from the selected studies: study identification, author's name, year of publication, country; methods; study design, data collection methods, approaches of analysis; participants; age distribution, gender across, diagnostic criteria for anxiety and/or depression; details of the CFT intervention, description, duration, frequency, and mode of delivery. It also captured qualitative outcomes, such as themes and patterns related to the impact of

CFT on anxiety and depression. It allowed all relevant qualitative data in the studies to be extracted organizationally, ensuring accurate and consistent data extraction and contributing to a robust qualitative synthesis.

**Figure 2.1**  
*PRISMA Flow Diagram for Article Selection*



The data charting process involved systematically extracting information from the ten articles included studies to ensure comprehensiveness in data synthesis. The data were then organized thematically to facilitate comparative analysis and to identify patterns and variations across the studies.

**Table 2.3**  
*Summary of Studies Included in The Systematic Review*

No	(Study Number) Author Details	Location	Study Design	Sample	Intervention	Outcomes on Depression and Anxiety
1	Asano et al. (2022)	Chiba and Tokyo (Japan)	Randomized Controlled Trial	18 participants were randomized into two groups: -10 in CFT group	A 12-session compassion-focused therapy program that included psychoeducation on depression, mindfulness, the	The Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) was used to assess depression and indicated the intervention's effectiveness. The study confirmed the feasibility and

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				-8 in UC (Usual Care) group	three-circle model, compassionate thinking, and exercises to promote compassion	preliminary efficacy of compassion-focused therapy (CFT) for treatment-resistant depression (TRD), but did not explore anxiety outcomes
2	Chupradit et al. (2022)	Bangkok, Thailand	Randomized Controlled Trial	The study involved 40 participants, with 20 in each group, all diagnosed with IBS. Participants had not undergone psychiatric therapy in the past three months.	The intervention used in this research is Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT), which was delivered over 8 sessions (1 session per week for 90 minutes) to the experimental group, in addition to routine treatment for IBS provided by a gastroenterologist	The research found that CFT significantly reduced depression scores in the experimental group compared to the control group, particularly noted during the follow-up period. The results indicated that CFT led to less depression and improved self-care behaviors, although the efficacy of CFT decreased over time
3	Egan et al. (2021)	USA and Japan	Systematic Review Design	The participation sample consists of young people, particularly university students, with a focus on those aged 14 to 24	The research evaluated interventions centered on self-compassion techniques designed to enhance self-kindness and diminish self-judgment. Insights regarding the specific types of interventions, such as whether they were guided or unguided, were obtained through consultations with young people.	The research indicates that self-compassion interventions demonstrate efficacy in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression among young people. The systematic review suggests that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression

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4	Farhadi et al. (2023)	Hamedan (Iran)	Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA)	The initial sample consisted of 311 students from Bu-Ali Sina University, out of which 287 participants were coded and included in the analysis after excluding incomplete responses	The intervention involved an eight-session self-compassion-focused therapy program, with each session lasting 90 minutes. The therapy was conducted online by a trained psychologist	The study concluded that self-compassion-focused therapy effectively reduced cognitive vulnerability to depression, dysfunctional attitudes, and improved self-esteem. However, specific outcomes related to anxiety were not detailed in the provided text
5	Fox et al. (2021)	Utah (United States of America)	Feasibility Trial Design	The participants were students seeking treatment at the university CAPS center. Students need to complete a valid pre-assessment within 21 days before their first session. This led to 75 clients being analyzed for the study's outcomes.	The intervention involved a standardized 12-session group CFT protocol, which included various topics such as compassion exploration, mindfulness, self-criticism, and compassionate communication. Each session was designed to address specific aspects of compassion and its application in mental health	The study reported significant effects on self-criticism, shame, and psychiatric distress, which are closely related to anxiety and depression. The results indicated that the new CFT protocol replicated past effects on these outcomes, demonstrating larger effects on psychiatric distress

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6	Heriot-Maitland et al. (2023)	South London (United Kingdom)	Single case experimental design	A total of eight participants with psychosis-related diagnoses were enrolled. Participants were secondary care mental health service users aged 18 or older, facing distressing symptoms such as voices and/or delusions. They met criteria including having a psychosis-related diagnosis, and were not engaged in extensive psychological therapy in the three years prior	The intervention involved Compassion-Focused Therapy for Psychosis (CFTp), a structured 26-session manualized approach developed by the lead author. It aimed to enhance social safeness and reduce social-rank threats (such as shame and self-criticism). The therapist worked in-person, following a detailed manual across different therapeutic stages including building compassionate self-attitudes and engaging with distressing symptoms in a non-hostile way	In this study, significant reductions in depression were observed in five out of seven participants, with both individual and group-level analyses confirming these improvements. While anxiety improved for four of the seven participants, one participant showed an increase in anxiety, which led to anxiety outcomes not reaching significance at the group level. Improvements in depression, stress, and other symptoms were generally sustained through the follow-up period, indicating the intervention's lasting effects
7	Millard et al. (2023)	Iran, UK, Canada, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and the USA	Systematic review and meta-analysis design	A total of 625 participants were involved with the sample comprising	The intervention consisted of Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT), which included techniques such as compassionate	CFT demonstrated significant reductions in depressive symptoms in four studies. However, effects on anxiety were mixed, with no consistent significant

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				74.88% women. Clinical samples included individuals with disorders such as eating disorders, depression, PTSD, social anxiety, schizophrenia, BPD, and prolonged grief	letter writing, compassionate imagery, and attention exercises. Each study adapted CFT components to its specific clinical sample, with formats varying from group sessions to individual interventions	improvements across studies. Some follow-up data showed sustained depression improvement, though anxiety results varied more
8	Sadeghi et al. (2018)	Ahvaz (Iran)	Randomized controlled trial	The sample comprised 30 female breast cancer patients, aged 20 to 50, who were undergoing chemotherapy. They were randomly divided into two groups of 15: an experimental group that received CFT and a control group that received Motivational Enhanceme	The experimental group underwent Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) following Gilbert's compassion protocol. This therapy included two 90-minute sessions each week for a total of 16 sessions across 8 weeks, conducted by clinical psychologists	The CFT intervention led to significant reductions in both anxiety and depression scores in the experimental group. Post-test analyses showed that CFT was particularly effective in reducing anxiety compared to the control group, which showed little to no improvement

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				nt Therapy (MET)		
9	Soltani & Fatehizade (2020)	Isfahan (Iran)	Single case experimental design	The sample consisted of three women who had recently gone through a romantic relationship breakup. These participants were selected from a pool of 65 volunteers based on specific inclusion criteria, which included factors like age, previous romantic experience, and scores on the Love Trauma Inventory (LTI)	The intervention used in this study was Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT), administered over eight weekly sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. This therapy included exercises to cultivate self-compassion and manage distress, such as mindfulness, compassionate imagery, and exercises to address self-criticism and shame	The study found that after undergoing CFT, participants showed notable reductions in symptoms of depression and rumination, with total improvements across the intervention and follow-up phases. The intervention was deemed successful in mitigating anxiety-related symptoms and reducing rumination after the breakup
10	Petrocchi et al. (2023)	United States, Iran, Canada and European Nations	Meta-analytic approach, specifically focusing on randomized controlled trials	The meta-analysis covers 7,875 participants, drawn from a variety of populations across	Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) is the primary intervention analyzed, which is designed to develop compassion through	CFT demonstrated a significant positive impact on reducing depression, anxiety, and self-criticism. Specifically, CFT was associated with a reduction in depressive symptoms and improvements in

				clinical and nonclinical settings, and includes people from both inpatient and outpatient environments.	psychoeducation and skills training. CFT interventions vary in length and structure, from single-session interventions to more extensive programs, including group and individual formats, as well as self-help versions	both self-compassion and overall well-being. Studies from Iran particularly showed strong effects in reducing these negative mental health outcomes
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## RESULTS

The efficacy of CFT as a treatment for depression and anxiety in young adults aged 18 to 25 was assessed through a review of 10 studies. All included studies reported significant improvements in participants' overall psychological well-being, with the majority indicating that CFT contributed to notable enhancements in mental health outcomes.

### ***Impact and Prevalence of Depression and Anxiety in Young Adults***

Depression and anxiety disorders are the most prevalent psychological disorders (Mirza et al., 2021). Depression is a mood disorder that causes a person to have persistent feelings of sadness and to lose interest over time in things that they previously appreciated (Chand & Arif, 2023), and is one of the most common mental health problems worldwide (Article 1). It is found that 11 percent of young adults experienced a major depressive episode, which also put to light a considerable burden of the depression that inflicts this population (Article 7). Anxiety is prevalent in a person's day-to-day life and can take the form of mood disturbances, thought, behavioral, and physiological disturbances in the form of an anxiety disorder (Chand & Marwaha, 2023). Thirty percent of young adults have suffered anxiety disorders at one time or another, hence ranking as one of the common mental disorders these age groups face (Syed Fahad Javaid et al., 2023).

The prevalence of depression and anxiety within this age group is particularly concerning, as many individuals are transitioning into tertiary education or entering the labor market. The impact resulting from these mood disorders affects their general well-being as it can result in impaired social relationships and a dip in productivity and academic performance (Article 6). These conditions also significantly impair their quality of life, leading to lower self-esteem, reduced motivation, increased feelings of isolation, and uncertainties regarding their future. This may be a cause of great stress and emotional disturbance, leading to poor mental health outcomes for the individual (Article 1). The impact of depression and anxiety on young adults does not stop at their suffering. Instead, it extends to a societal level, from increased utilization of health care to underachievement in education and finally to long-term effects on career prospects and relationship possibilities (Article 2).

As mentioned in article 9, people who experience a period of depression have a lower rate of self-compassion, giving rise to the need for CFT.

## ***Therapeutic Outcome of CFT in Treating Anxiety and Depression***

CFT is a holistic method for treating mental health by focusing on core emotional processes, facilitating self-compassion, and developing resilience (Stroud & Griffiths, 2021). Based on the reviews, CFT is proven to be beneficial in treating anxiety and depression among young adults (Articles 1 to 10). It has huge potential by inducing and subsequently utilizing self-compassion to deal with maladaptive thought processes and help regulate emotions (Halamová et al., 2023). It works on their shame and self-criticism, which happen to be common contributors to depression and anxiety, and helps in the reduction through developing a more compassionate attitude towards their struggles and challenges (Article 9). This method is superior in improving self-compassion and reducing levels of depression by improving the main outcomes of self-compassion and self-reassurance while reducing self-criticism, fear of self-compassion and clinical symptomology (Article 7). Another meta-analysis shows that CFT is effective in reducing general symptoms (in particular, depression, anxiety, and self-criticism) and improving compassion-based outcomes (compassion for self and others) across a range of clinical and nonclinical samples. (Article 10).

CFT interventions have been helpful in effectively surmounting difficult emotions as they enhance their regulation, shortcut tolerance and resilience to stressors, and empower the patient to deal with overwhelming emotions at the moment effectively (Article 4). Increased self-care behaviors through CFT and the coping skills that are developed also go a long way in ensuring improved mental health results for patients who suffer from anxiety and depression (Article 10). Post-CFT intervention, there are larger reductions in their symptoms and fears of compassion for self and greater compassion (Article 1). It can also reduce cognitive vulnerability to depression by regulating the emotional systems and increasing mindfulness, which reduces safety-seeking behaviors and modifies cognitive patterns around the axis of the compassionate mind (Article 4).

CFT is an effective method for lowering depression, enhancing self-care practices, and enhancing quality of life (Article 2). Therefore, knowing the mystery and trickery of the mind and its sensitivity to depression and anxiety allows them to learn how to cope with depression and anxiety and heal them (Article 8), as well as to play a protective role against depression or its relapse through cognitive factors (Article 4).

## ***Application and Relevance of CFT for Young Adults***

There is evidence that interventions to increase self-compassion reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression in young people (Article 3). A lack of compassion is associated with insecure attachment and childhood maltreatment and may mediate the effect of insecure attachment on emotional regulation disorders (Article 4). Therefore, CFT is directed toward a compassionate attitude toward the self and is appropriate for negotiating the frequently stormy passage of early adulthood (Bratt et al., 2020). College and university periods are a time of stressful transitions, and CFT group protocol appears to be feasible, acceptable, and effective in a college counseling center setting (Article 5). In this form of psychotherapy, young adults are allowed to challenge and reformulate self-critical thoughts and, in this way, lighten the emotional burden that those thoughts may carry (Article 5). The method then increases self-compassion and helps young adults build a stronger sense of self-worth and the control necessary for keeping good mental health amidst societal expectations and peer influence (Article 3). One may be open to feelings of inadequacy, stress, and self-criticism during young adulthood (Downey & Crummy, 2021); therefore, CFT gives particular skills to create self-compassion and emotional resiliency to better cope with such issues (Article 6).

Research evidence indicates that cultivating a healthy, compassionate, and kind relationship with oneself is crucial for young adults to mitigate the negative effects of such pressures. Developing these competencies is essential as they balance personal aspirations and external demands, such as achieving academic success and securing future employment.

Besides developing self-compassion, CFT aids young adults in developing emotional resilience and the acceptance of self (Mazaheri et al., 2020). Young adults who treat themselves with compassion respond to setbacks and disappointments in ways that suggest that they are learning experiences, not personal failures (Article 8). This underscores the importance of improving stress management and anxiety reduction, which, in turn, fosters the development of healthier interpersonal relationships. Equipping them with skills to extend compassion toward others can help young adults nurture and build stronger, more empathetic social relations (Article 7).

By embracing the principles of compassion and self-kindness, young adults can cultivate a positive self-relationship, which serves as a foundational element for overall well-being. Young people recognize the importance of self-compassion concerning anxiety and depression, and in particular, noted the need for tailored treatments which are inclusive and address diversity (Article 3). By incorporating elements of CFT, young adults are better equipped to navigate the stressors of early adulthood, emerging as more balanced, empathetic, and psychologically resilient individuals.

## DISCUSSION

The following themes are discussed to have a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of CFT and its application and relatedness of CFT to this targeted group.

### ***Depression and Anxiety in Young Adults are a Significant Concern***

Depression and anxiety are closely related, given that 45.7% of patients diagnosed with depression have experienced anxiety disorder at least once in their lifetime (Kalin, 2020). Both conditions are the most commonly diagnosed mental health disorders among this age group (Syed Fahad Javaid et al., 2023). The frequency of depression and anxiety among university students within the age range of 18 to 24 years was found to be 75% and 88.4% (Chandra & Misra, 2024). It is demonstrated that at least 11% have depression (Milard et al., 2023) and 30% of young adults at least experience once-in-a-lifetime anxiety disorders (Syed Fahad Javaid et al., 2023). Among 49% of those who reported leaving school prematurely, approximately 1 out of 5 indicated that anxiety was the leading cause for this decision (Van Ameringen et al., 2003). This makes it crucial for depression and anxiety to be solved effectively, especially when young adulthood is an important developmental period, as it is essential for navigating adult life (Appl Dev Sci, 2016).

Both depression and anxiety interfere with well-being, causing significant negative effects on one's social relationships, academic performance and even physical health. People with higher levels of depression are found to report more frequent negative social interactions and tend to be more sensitive and react more intensely (Steger et al., 2009) while facing challenges to maintain healthy social relationships with others.

These studies emphasize that the high prevalence of depression and anxiety among young adults necessitates increased awareness alongside the provision of accessible mental health resources. Furthermore, they underscore the importance of cultivating a safe and supportive environment that encourages individuals to seek help when needed. Fostering a supportive ecosystem in schools, workplaces, and communities, signals value for mental well-being and facilitates empathy and equality, thus improving well-being (Martinson & Žydzūnaitė, 2023). Given the challenges of early

adulthood, it is essential to prioritize the creation of awareness, access, support, and intervention strategies aimed at enhancing the coping mechanisms of young adults, thereby fostering improved well-being and resilience.

### ***CFT in Treating Depression and Anxiety***

The main attributes of the CFT framework include sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, care for well-being, non-judgement and distress tolerance (Gilbert, 2020). It is essential to understand the underlying mechanisms of these conditions to understand how CFT affects individuals with depression and anxiety. Highly self-critical individuals often activate the threat and protection system in response to failures, disappointments, or mistakes, which can result in harsh or punitive self-reactions. This self-critical tendency exacerbates difficulties in managing anxiety and stress. CFT addresses this by fostering a sense of compassion and warmth, thereby reducing self-directed hostility. This, in turn, helps to mitigate harmful behaviors such as self-harm, excessive self-criticism, shame, guilt, and negative self-talk. The developed skills through CFT create a sense of soothing and warmth, effectively reducing the feeling of threat (Gilbert & Procter, 2006).

The CFT therapist introduces the emotional regulators and uses and practices compassionate skills to individuals. All these techniques revolve around building up compassionate mindsets, behavioral, and thoughts in themselves, stimulating their contentment, soothing and safeness system (Gilbert, 2010). This limits the impact of overwhelming self-criticism that causes self-suppression and low esteem instead of self-reflection among depression and anxiety populations. While the negative self-thoughts, such as shame and self-criticism in people with depression and anxiety come from an overactive threat system, the compassion in CFT balances out the harshness and promotes more self-acceptance instead.

Overall, CFT has shown effective results in improving depression and anxiety among young adults. The use of CFT must be added to the therapist's repertoire, and one of the reasons is that traditional therapeutic approaches, while effective for many people, do not work for everyone (Craig et al., 2020).

### ***Therapeutic Advantages of CFT for Young Adults***

Significant changes accompany the passage from childhood to adulthood, such as the demands of education, uncertainty in one's work, the formation of one's personality, and difficulties sustaining relationships. These difficulties frequently result in feelings of inadequacy, increased stress, and self-criticism, which puts young adults at higher risk for mental health problems. Individuals may encounter particular psychological and emotional challenges throughout the critical developmental stage of young adulthood, necessitating specialized, evidence-based, and culturally appropriate interventions. (Parra et al., 2020). Young adults frequently experience problems with identity, self-worth, and social pressures; these problems can be made worse by underlying guilt and self-criticism. (Gedik, 2018). This is where an adult's self-compassion has to be strengthened (Neff, 2023). Self-compassionate people are better able to see mistakes as opportunities for growth rather than as personal failings, which helps them manage their stress and feel less anxious (Haj Sadeghi et al., 2018; Silke et al., 2023).

In contrast to other compassion-based interventions, CFT emphasizes psychoeducation based on various theoretical frameworks (e.g., social psychology, neuroscience, and Buddhist psychology) and their connections to physiological and neurophysiological mechanisms like the parasympathetic nervous system (Kirby, 2017). Exercises centered around compassion are intended to stimulate these systems directly (Kirby, 2017). The practices of CFT, including emotional regulation, self-soothing, and mindfulness, are crucial for coping with the emotional ups and downs that frequently

come with growing up. These techniques support young adults in maintaining their composure, coping with distress, and controlling intense feelings healthily (Schuman-Olivier et al., 2020). The emphasis on kindness and self-compassion in the therapy gives young adults the psychological tools they need to handle the challenges of early adulthood with more emotional resilience and balance.

Through the development of self-compassion, psychological strength, and emotional resilience, CFT gives young adults the skills they need to meet the particular difficulties that come with this time of life. The capacity for compassion, fostered by CFT, facilitates the growth of more robust and sympathetic social bonds, as Silke et al. (2023) indicate. Therefore, young adults are requesting more awareness of this technique (Article 3).

## **LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The efficacy of CFT may be compromised by cultural stigma, particularly in non-Western contexts such as Malaysia, where deeply ingrained societal attitudes may hinder full participation in therapy. It is recommended that the approach be adapted to suit diverse cultural contexts to enhance the effectiveness and acceptance of CFT. This can be achieved by incorporating culturally sensitive techniques and promoting community education to reduce stigma.

The therapist's expertise is critical to the effectiveness of CFT, particularly when working with clients who have unresolved trauma, as emotional reactivation may exacerbate distress. It is essential to prioritize specialized training for therapists that incorporates trauma-informed care and strategies for managing emotional reactivation. Such training ensures that therapists are equipped to navigate the complexities of trauma while maintaining a supportive therapeutic environment.

Understanding CFT's long-term effectiveness is complicated further by the subjective nature of outcome measures and the predominant focus on immediate results. It is crucial to develop more objective assessment tools and conduct longitudinal studies. Such research is vital for assessing the sustained impact of CFT over time. By addressing these challenges and implementing these recommendations, CFT can be more effectively tailored to meet the needs of young adults across diverse cultural and therapeutic contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

This systematic review has highlighted the promising effects of CFT in treating depression and anxiety in young adults aged between 18-25. Results show that CFT helps young people with their emotional and psychological requirements while also cultivating a caring attitude that can lessen the negative impacts of anxiety and despair.

Given the increasing prevalence of anxiety and depression in young adults, integrating CFT into clinical practice could offer an important tool for mental health professionals. Expanding the application of CFT across various settings—such as clinical, community, and educational environments—would demonstrate its efficacy and promote its widespread recognition and value. Mental health professionals can optimize CFT interventions by implementing the recommendations outlined in this review, ultimately enhancing the mental well-being of young adults coping with anxiety and depression. In conclusion, considering the unique challenges young adults face in contemporary society, CFT represents a promising intervention that warrants further research and greater integration into clinical practice.

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