

## Students' profile of self-compassion at senior high school and implications for guidance and counseling

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### Abstract

Adolescence is a phase filled with uncertainty and confusion, especially when adolescents face academic failures, personal achievements, family pressures and physical images that cause emotional stress and emotional instability that affect adolescents' self-esteem. To overcome these challenges, adolescents must develop self-compassion, which is a good attitude towards themselves in dealing with failure and achieving psychological well-being. The purpose of this study was to determine the self-compassion profile of adolescents in senior high school. The research method used a quantitative survey design with 105 samples of senior high school adolescents (aged 16-17 years, the majority of Sundanese ethnicity, residing in rural areas). The research shows that adolescents' self-compassion is classified as moderate (95% = 100), high (1% = 1) and low (4% = 4). This condition shows that adolescents have moderate self-compassion but not too high. Descriptive test results showed a Cronbach Alpha of 0.415 in the moderate category with male adolescent having higher levels of self-compassion (mean 54.5) compared to female adolescent (mean 50.8). This finding highlights the importance of adolescents to master self-compassion in promoting emotional stability and resilience when facing any failure. Then the need for guidance and counseling programs that can focus more on developing self-compassion such as mindful self-compassion.

**Keywords:** *self-compassion, adolescent, failure, emotional stability, psychological well-being.*



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## **Introduction**

Self-compassion is being kind to oneself when facing failures and disappointments in life (K. Neff, 2003; K. D. Neff, 2023). Self-compassion means treating oneself as one would treat a friend who is facing difficulties (K. Neff, 2020). Through self-compassion, we become an inner ally rather than an enemy when facing failures and disappointments with empathy and care for ourselves (K. Neff & Germer, 2018). Self-compassion includes mindfulness, which means calmly acknowledging negative emotions without avoiding them or feeling overwhelmed (Lathren et al., 2021). Self-compassion in Islam is “Ar-Rahman” which means compassionate. However, to feel the suffering and empathy for others, individuals must love and love themselves first and understand more deeply their own strengths and weaknesses (Russell, 2020). A recent study by Ewert et al. (2021) revealed that Individuals with higher levels of self-compassion show better outcomes in terms of psychological well-being after the intervention. Self-compassion enhances interpersonal outcomes by reducing emotional exhaustion, fostering greater performance satisfaction, enhancing resilience and improving relationships with others (Dodson & Heng, 2022; Cormier et al., 2023; Muris & Otgaar, 2023).

Self-compassion is an old concept in Eastern philosophy, namely in Buddhism and Islam, but the concept of self-compassion is a new philosophy in Western psychology which is included in Positive Psychology (Karakasidou et al., 2021; Muris et al., 2022; K. Neff, 2003). Concept of self-compassion in the West was first initiated by Kristin Neff, a candidate professor of psychology at the University of Texas at Austin. According to Neff, self-compassion is an emotionally positive attitude towards oneself when facing failure (K. Neff, 2003). Instead of criticizing oneself when experiencing failure, Neff introduced the concept of being kind to oneself (K. Neff, 2020; K. D. Neff, 2023; K. D. Neff et al., 2006). Self-compassion helps individuals approach negative emotions with a more balanced and constructive mindset, minimizing their effect (Munroe et al., 2022; Han & Kim, 2023). In recent study by Kroshus et al. (2021) stated that self-compassion played a key role as the strongest and most consistent predictor of successful transitions to new environment. Being self-compassionate is training thoughts and feelings to continue being kind, rather than following primitive instincts (Amstrong, 2010). As Jungian psychologists point out, primitive instincts are “shadows” that influence thoughts and behaviors (Stein, 2020; Stein et al., 2021). This is often the case for individuals in the adolescent phase who are always uncompassionate against oneself and following primitive instincts rather than being compassionate when experiencing failure (K. D. Neff, 2011; K. D. Neff & McGehee, 2010). Self-compassion involves treating oneself with kindness, understanding, and support during difficult times, which counteracts the damaging effects of self-criticism among young people (Egan et al., 2022).

The adolescent phase is an amazing time because it experiences many important events that mark the transition to adulthood (Yusuf et al., 2021). Adolescence begins to enter the stage of conformity which has positive and negative impacts. The negative impact of conformity makes adolescents alienated and not accepted in the group environment because they do not conform to the group's cultural standards. This makes adolescents feel a sense of failure in finding peer groups (Hurlock, 1980). According to Yusuf et al. (2021) the adolescent phase is seen as a time of “storm & stress”, frustration and suffering, conflicts and problems due to adolescents' failure to overcome their own problems, which ultimately solve the problem not according to their expectations (Hurlock, 1980; Rochani et al., 2022; Santrock, 2018). The adolescent phase is also referred to as the “identity crisis” phase, where adolescents begin to look for their ideal form and question who I am by doing a lot of exploration (Yusuf et al., 2021). Many adolescents fail to form a self-identity due to the bad influence of the environment and following the wrong idol (Alwisol, 2014; Nurihsan, 2021; Santrock, 2018). In addition, the adolescent phase has many social and academic demands that are imposed, many adolescents worry about failing to face all the demands in this phase (Cheung et al., 2023).

Therefore, adolescents need to master self-compassion so that adolescents have the ability to cope with the pressure they are experiencing, can improve emotional well-being and are able to build positive relationships with peers in their environment (Bluth & Blanton, 2014; K. Neff, 2003; K. D. Neff & McGehee, 2010). With good self-compassion, adolescents can solve their daily problems such as stress, anxiety and depression (Bluth et al., 2016; Muris et al., 2019, 2022). Self-compassion enhances mental well-being and serves as a safeguard against the adverse effects of negative perceptions related to mental health challenges (Kotera et al., 2024). In addition, adolescents who have high self-compassion skills have low stress levels, good emotion regulation and are happier (Bluth et al., 2016; Smeets et al., 2014; Yarnell & Neff, 2013; Zhang & Li, 2023). Stress experienced by adolescents can be managed well when adolescents have good self-compassion (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Stahl & Goldstein, 2010). Research results show that gender greatly affects the level of adolescent self-compassion (K. Neff et al., 2021; Yarnell et al., 2015). Male adolescents have a higher level of self-compassion than female adolescents. Male adolescents are higher in aspects of self-compassion (self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness), while female adolescents are higher in aspects of self-criticism (self-judgment, isolation and over-identification) (Deniz et al., 2022; Henje et al., 2024; Nazari et al., 2022). This is because male adolescents have higher emotional resilience than adolescents in perceiving failure and physical image (Amarnes et al., 2023).

However, research on self-compassion with adolescent populations is very limited. Until now, most self-compassion research has been conducted in the adult population using the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) instrument (Muris et al., 2022; Pommier et al., 2020). Many studies using the SCS instrument to measure self-compassion in adolescents have good results, but the statements in the SCS items are considered very difficult and do not match the competencies of adolescents (K. Neff et al., 2021). So that the instrument was reconstructed which was adjusted to the competencies possessed by adolescents. Neff reconstructed the Self-Compassion Scale Youth (SCSY) which consists of 17 items with 5 Likert scales and has been validated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Exploratory Structural Equating Modeling (ESEM) bifactor with a Cronbach Alpha reliability level of 0.82 including the good category (K. D. Neff et al., 2021). This SCSY has been researched and validated in various countries such as the United States (K. D. Neff et al., 2021), Sweden (Henje et al., 2024), Greece (Karakasidou et al., 2021), Turkey (Deniz et al., 2022), Persia (Nazari et al., 2022), China (Zhao et al., 2023), Hong Kong and the UK (Cheung et al., 2023), Indonesia (Amaliah et al., 2024; Ramadhan, 2024) and other countries.

However, published research on self-compassion in adolescents using the SCSY instrument in Indonesia is still very limited. After searching the data using the help of the Publish or Perish 8 (PoP8) application and the AI-based web, Connected Paper. The resulting data found is only 2 article that has been published using the SCSY instrument on adolescents. The results of Amaliah et al. (2024) research show that the validity and reliability of using SCSY in the moderate category using samples of late adolescents and early adults aged 18-25 years. While Ramadhan (2024) shows the use of SCSY on adolescent samples that focus on analyzing instruments using EFA and CFA in JASP measurement applications and measurement using the Rasch model with SCSY results in the moderate category.

This study aims to analyze the self-compassion profile of adolescents at state high school 1 Nagrak, Sukabumi Regency with a sample of adolescents aged 15-17 years and live in rural areas using the SCSY instrument and what are the implications in guidance and counseling to increase self-compassion in adolescents so that adolescents can be kind to themselves when facing failure and be able to increase emotional resilience to achieve psychological well-being in a school setting.

**Method**

The method used in this research is quantitative method. Quantitative research encourages researchers to identify a research problem based on trends in the field or the need to explain why something happens. This means that research problems can be best answered through research that encourages researchers to establish different trends (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative research has been associated with epistemology, the positivist paradigm and is understood from the point of view that social phenomena can occur and be studied as objective phenomena (Houser, 2020).

Participants in this study were students who were in class X state high school 1 Nagrak totaling 105 participants with an age range of 15-17 years (15 years = 10 students, 16 years = 78 students, 17 years = 17 students) with details of 61 female and 44 male. There were 104 participants of Sundanese ethnicity and 1 person of Batak ethnicity. The area of residence of the participants was 97 people from rural areas and 8 people from urban areas.

The instrument used is the Self-Compassion Scale for Youth (SCSY) which was reconstructed by K. Neff et al. (2021) and then translated into Indonesian language in UPI Language Center. The total statement items amounted to 17 items taken from aspects of self-compassion K. Neff (2003) which consisted of self-kindness (SK) vs self-judgment (SJ), common humanity (CH) vs isolation (I) and mindfulness (M) vs over identification (OI). The scale used is a Likert scale with 5 alternative answers, namely 1) Almost Never, 2) Rarely, 3) Sometimes, 4) Very Often and 5) Almost Always. For unfavorable answers, a reverse scoring of 1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2 and 5 = 1 is carried out (K. Neff et al., 2021).

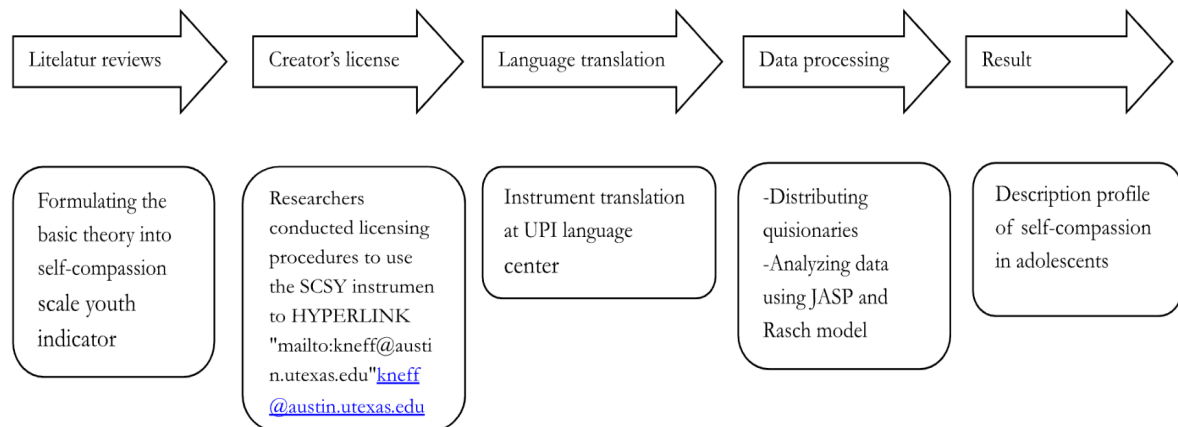


Figure 1. Stage of research Findings and Discussion

Based on the results of the fit analysis of 17 SCSY items using Rasch modeling, all items can be understood by participants and the instrument measures what should be measured (Sumintono & Widhiarso, 2015). All items function normally with a level of reliability or item quality with a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.415 and Mcdonald's of 0.49 with a moderate category (Creswell, 2012). The descriptive test results show that the Mean is 52.3 and is in the moderate category.

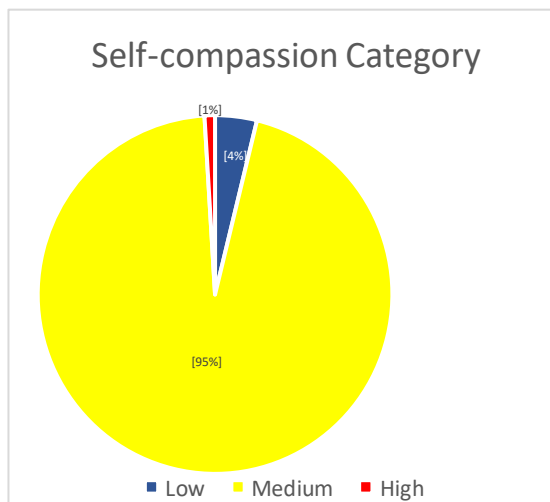


Figure 2. Profile of self compassion in adolescents

The results showed that self-compassion in adolescent sample was moderate (95% = 100), high (1% = 1) and low (4% = 4). This condition shows that the average adolescent sample has moderate but not too high self-compassion behavior. This is because adolescents still do not have self-compassion skills when they experience failure or suffering in academics, family, self-identity formation, egoism and physical image. Many adolescents still criticize themselves when experiencing failure in the adolescent phase compared to being kind and understanding and warm to themselves. There are still many adolescents who feel that what happens to them is difficult and only they experience it so that they isolate themselves and sink into abstract thinking, besides that many samples of adolescents still overthink in the face of challenges and failures experienced, instead of focusing fully on the problem so that it can be resolved properly (K. Neff et al., 2021; K. D. Neff, 2011, 2016).

The higher the level of self-compassion the higher the adolescents to be kind to themselves, consider that failure is a common humanity trait and think attentively about the problems experienced. The lower the level of self-compassion the higher the adolescent's self-criticism, self-isolation of challenges and problems faced and excessive thinking about what is being experienced. (Cunha et al., 2016; Gruber et al., 2023).

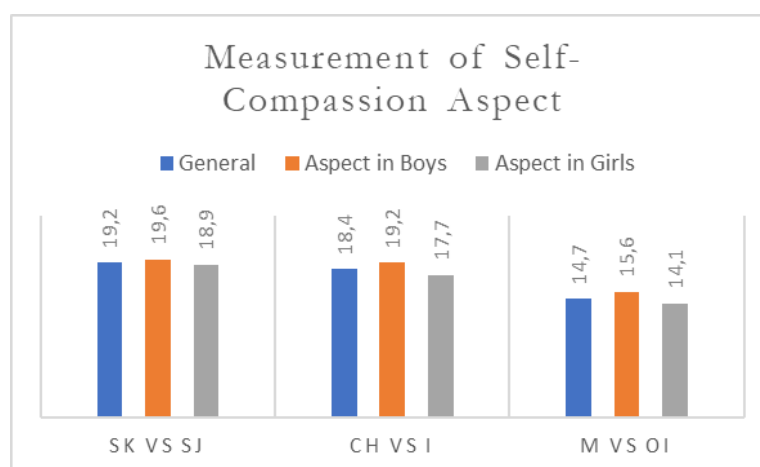


Figure 3. Measurement of self-compassion aspect

The results of self-kindness (SK) vs self-judgment (SJ) aspect produced data on the male Mean value of 19.6 in the moderate category, while the female Mean value of 18.9 is in the moderate category. There is a difference of 0.7 which in this aspect male adolescents are higher than female

adolescents. Results of the common humanity (CH) vs isolation (I) aspect produced data on the Mean male value of 19.2 and was included in the moderate category while the female Mean value of 17.7 is in the moderate category. There is a difference of 1.5 which means that in this aspect male adolescents are higher than female adolescents. Results show that the mindfulness (M) vs over identification (OI) aspect produces data on the Mean value of male 15.6 in the moderate category, while the female Mean value of 14.1 is in the moderate category. There is a difference of 1,5 which in this aspect male adolescents are higher than female adolescents.

From the three aspects of self-compassion, it can be concluded that the male and female adolescents who became the research sample fell into the moderate category. However, based on gender differences in self-compassion aspects, it shows that male adolescents have higher levels of self-compassion than female adolescents. This happens because female adolescent are often the object of sexual harassment in adolescents compared to male adolescents (Ferrari et al., 2023; Henje et al., 2024; Yarnell et al., 2015). This result contradicts the cultural view that women inherit more compassion in feminism than men, this is because female adolescents who have a higher level of self-compassion due to the influence of female parenting patterns who are often a loving mother figure (Bluth, 2018; Bluth et al., 2018; McIntosh, 2016).

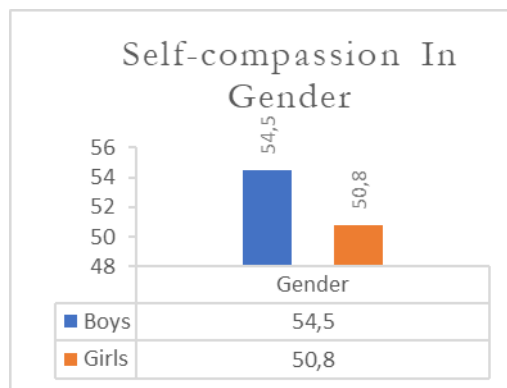


Figure 4. Profile of self-compassion in Gender

Descriptive test results obtained data that the Mean in the self-kindness (SK) vs self-judgment (SJ) aspect has a value of 19.2 in the moderate category, then the Mean in common humanity (CH) vs isolation (I) aspect has a value of 18.4 in the moderate category and the Mean in the mindfulness (M) vs over identification (OI) aspect has a value of 14.7 in the moderate category. In general, male adolescents have a Mean value of 54.5 with a moderate category than female adolescents have a Mean value of 50.8.

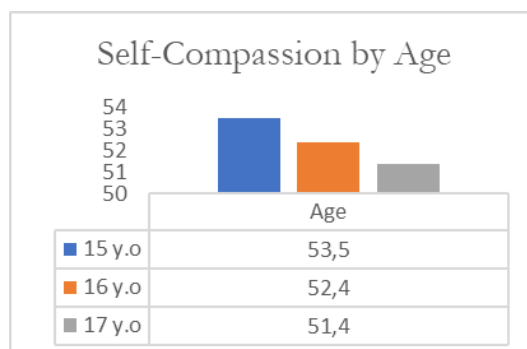


Figure 5. Self-compassion by age

ANOVA test results based on age show data that the Mean value of 15 years old is 53.5, the Mean value of 16 years old is 52.4 and the Mean value of 17 years old is 51.4. There is a significant difference that the older adolescents get, the lower their self-compassion. This is in line with the research of Bluth et al. (2018); Bluth & Neff (2018) that adolescents who move in the final phase have

a low level of self-compassion and tend to easily feel stress, anxiety and depression (Bluth et al., 2016, 2018; Muris et al., 2019). The significance results show  $P > 0.05$ , with a P value of 0.667, which means that there is no difference in self-compassion between male and female adolescents based on age. This result is consistent with the fact that the older the age, the higher the level of self-compassion so that individuals have more compassionate and are able to be kind to themselves and have a better level of mental well-being (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Yarnell & Neff, 2013; Zessin et al., 2015).

In this regard, self-compassion is a driving factor to improve mental health in adolescents (Zessin et al., 2015). Mental health in adolescents phase is high on the agenda of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal's (SDG's) and adolescents have an important place in SDG's agenda point 3 of ensuring healthy lives and promoting good mental health (Proctor, 2014; Shawa, 2018). Adolescents who have good levels of self-compassion have resilience to stress, anxiety and depression (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Bluth, 2018; Bluth & Blanton, 2014). In addition, many adolescents do not have a good life plan and adolescents must survive the various challenges and pressures experienced in the adolescent phase (Santrock, 2018; Yusuf et al., 2021). Many adolescents feel dissatisfied with their body image due to the influence of social media (Nur'aeni et al., 2023).

Therefore, adolescent mental health is very important, especially in the era of technological disruption, which results in a less strong mentality and less resilience in generation Z (Anggraini et al., 2023; Muhamad, 2023; Turnip, 2023). Mental health is the most worried factor by adolescents besides other dangerous diseases because mental health is close to adolescents (Muhamad, 2023). So that the role of guidance and counseling services in schools is very important for development of adolescents mental health in order to grow in accordance with their developmental tasks (Yusuf & Nurihsan, 2016). Guidance and counseling teachers are facilitators who guide adolescents to grow well and empower individuals so that they are able to live well (Yusuf, 2009). The empirical fact that the existence of guidance and counseling teachers is to develop students' socio-emotional in four areas namely individual, social, academic and career (Yusuf & Nurihsan, 2016). The implication of adolescents' self-compassion profile on guidance and counseling services emphasizes a comprehensive approach that is holistic with humanistic. Guidance and counseling teachers must provide awareness that self-compassion when adolescents face challenges and failures is an important support in improving mental health (Iwanski, 2023). Students who have good self-compassion will be able to regulate emotions and make the right decisions (K. D. Neff & McGehee, 2010).

The implementation of individual counseling services and group counseling to develop students' self-compassion also needs to be carried out with a holistic approach that is humanist and slowly makes students aware of the failures and challenges they face such as academic stress, personal family pressure, social pressure and career pressure (Nurihsan, 2021). In addition, it can develop workbooks that can be used by students while at home by developing mindful self-compassion workbooks, loving kindness meditation videos. Guidance and counseling teachers need to bring self-compassion study closer to students so that students begin to realize the importance of having a good attitude towards themselves when facing challenges and failures. Guidance and counseling teachers must have adequate service capabilities, one of which is by carrying out Mindful Self-Compassion-based counseling interventions, namely focusing thoughts on one's own goodness (Gilbert, 2014), then Loving-Kindness Meditation and developing a self-compassion workbook through online media or a pocket book. Apart from that, guidance and counseling teachers must also be able to develop self-compassion first for themselves, such as in the workplace (Susi Fitri & Revitia Thalita Salsabila, 2020). The development of self-compassion in the school environment certainly cannot be done only with counseling interventions. However, it is very important to build a support system with parents and other school personnel so that the school environment supports the creation of a compassionate and peaceful environment (Dowling & Osborne, 1994). By prioritizing system support, it can create students' self-compassion both at home and at school. Thus, the development of self-compassion in students can be integrated with existing guidance and counseling services so that it can significantly develop self-compassion in adolescent students.

The limitations of this study are the use of samples that are too small and homogeneous and do

not meet the maximum limit of using the Rasch and JASP models resulting in moderate reliability and validity, therefore the results of the study cannot generalize adolescent self-compassion in general. Then the distribution of the instrument was carried out by online survey method and the researcher did not see directly when the sample filled in the instrument, so it could not see the general expression. Recommendations for future research are to enlarge the scale of the sample studied with various regions and ethnicities, so as to produce varied data and can generalize research to measure adolescent self-compassion. In addition, survey filling can be done more strictly so that samples fill in seriously according to their personal circumstances even though filling in the instrument through the online method. Future research is to develop a research sample so that the level of reliability or quality of the instrument is much better.

## **Conclusion**

Adolescents must have a good self-compassion attitude because in this phase adolescents will be faced with various personal and family pressures, social pressures, academic pressures and career pressures that encourage adolescents to have thoughts and feelings of failure because few individuals in the adolescent phase have good plans for their lives. Adolescents who have a high level of self-compassion tend to have the skills to manage stress, anxiety and depression in their daily lives. In addition, they are able to plan their lives so that they do not experience failure and continue to be kind to themselves when they experience failure. This is inversely related to adolescents with low levels of self-compassion, where they tend to over-criticize themselves when they fail, isolate themselves from the social environment and act too much thinking that only they feel it. In this research shows that male adolescent have a higher or better level of self-compassion compared to female adolescent. While female adolescents are more likely to be high in the aspect of self-criticism. Male adolescents are more kind to themselves when experiencing failure compared to women who are higher to criticize themselves when experiencing failure. There is a very contrasting difference in these results. Getting older age greatly affects the level of self-compassion of adolescents. Adolescents entering the late adolescent phase tend to be higher in self-criticism compared to the early adolescent phase. This is because adolescents have many fears and failures experienced compared to the previous phase. The amount of pressure experienced by late adolescents encourages adolescents to criticize themselves more than being kind to themselves when experiencing failure.

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