

Flourishing in University Students in Indonesia in terms of Self-Compassion

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Abstract: Flourishing refers to a state of optimal well-being in which individuals experience positive psychological functioning and a sense of fulfillment. Self-compassion is considered an important factor that may contribute to flourishing. This study aimed to examine the effect of self-compassion on individual flourishing. A quantitative correlational design was employed, involving 184 undergraduate students from urban areas in Indonesia who were recruited using convenience sampling. Data were collected using the Indonesian version of the Self-Compassion Scale for Youth (SCSY) and analyzed using simple linear regression. The results revealed that self-compassion was a positive and statistically significant predictor of flourishing ($B = 0.245$, $\beta = .254$, $t = 3.542$, $F(1, 182) = 12.548$, $p = .001$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .064$) indicated that self-compassion explained 6.4% of the variance in flourishing. These findings suggest that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with higher levels of flourishing among university students. However, most of the variance in flourishing was explained by factors beyond the scope of the present model. This study highlights the relevance of self-compassion as a psychological resource that may be considered in efforts to promote university students' well-being and optimal development in Indonesia.

Keywords: Flourishing; Self-Compassion; Indonesian University Students

INTRODUCTION

Flourishing, a concept in positive psychology, describes an individual's optimal state of well-being and happiness (Varga *et al.*, 2025). According to Seligman (2011), individuals can achieve well-being or a state of flourishing by nurturing five aspects of the PERMA model: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. This is in line with the opinion of Diener *et al.* (2010) who define prosperity as a state of psychological and social well-being. This state encompasses purpose and meaning, supportive relationships, engagement, contributions to others, competence, being a good person, optimism, and respect. These aspects play a key role in social-psychological functioning. As a result, flourishing is a crucial component that helps individuals function fully and achieve a meaningful quality of life.

For students, flourishing is essential for supporting academic progress. Research by Chamizo-Nieto *et al.* (2021) demonstrates that flourishing positively affects academic performance, enabling students to achieve higher grades. Furthermore, several studies have found that flourishing students tend to attain numerous academic accomplishments and are highly engaged in various aspects of their lives. However, not all students achieve flourishing, as this state is influenced by multiple factors. These factors can be broadly categorized as internal and external (Faizah *et al.*, 2024). Psychological well-being and a sense of purpose and meaning in life serve as internal factors, while environmental conditions, social relationships, social support, academic pressure, excessive media consumption, and additional workloads make up the external ones. Together, these factors influence an individual's level of flourishing. A low level of flourishing can negatively affect motivation to learn, academic achievement, and the quality of social relationships, potentially leading to long-term consequences

such as insufficient readiness for employment and barriers to the development of professional skills (Faizah et al., 2024). This evidence highlights that low flourishing in students affects not only academic success but also social well-being and future career prospects.

Given the various negative impacts arising from low flourishing, self-compassion is a crucial factor that can help individuals achieve a high flourishing state. Neff (2003) first introduced self-compassion as an individual's ability to recognize suffering, failure, and inadequacy as normal human conditions and experiences. In a more recent development, Neff (2023) defined self-compassion as a state in which individuals can support themselves when experiencing suffering or pain. This suffering may stem from personal mistakes or external challenges. Through self-compassion, individuals tend to be more accepting of their shortcomings and failures. In addition, they often develop healthier emotions, experience reduced anxiety, and avoid excessive self-criticism.

Based on this, it can be concluded that self-compassion is closely related to flourishing. In fact, self-compassion stands out as an important factor in improving the condition of individual flourishing. This improvement happens through the five aspects of the PERMA model and the eight aspects of well-being explained by Diener, such as relationships, competence, purpose, and meaning. As a result, both flourishing and self-compassion play a crucial role in individual development, particularly for students. These qualities influence not only well-being and psychological health, but also academic performance, social relationships, and resilience in the face of challenges. Therefore, students need to improve self-compassion and flourishing to support the development of their potential and achieve a meaningful life.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational method to examine the effect of self-compassion (X) on flourishing (Y). The self-compassion instrument used the Indonesian version of the Self-Compassion Scale for Youth (SCSY), developed by Ramadhan et al. (2024), based on an adaptation of Neff's Self-Compassion for Youth measurement tool. The instrument contains 17 items structured according to aspects of self-compassion, including self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification. The flourishing instrument used the Indonesian version of Diener's Flourishing Scale, developed by Nurcahyo & Valentina (2024). The Flourishing Scale contains eight items that measure respondents' perspectives on relationships, self-esteem, goals, and optimism. The SCSY and Flourishing Scale were distributed to 170 university students in Indonesia via Google Form. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression using SPSS to determine the extent to which self-compassion influences individual flourishing. The hypothesis used in this study is that self-compassion influences student flourishing.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistic

The study involved 184 participants. Descriptive statistical analysis showed that the mean flourishing score was 41.45 (SD = 8.22), with scores ranging from 16 to 56. Meanwhile, the mean self-compassion score was 53.42 (SD = 8.54), with scores ranging from 29 to 83 as shown in Table 1. These results provide an overview of the distribution and variability of flourishing and self-compassion among the adolescent participants. Regarding age, the majority of participants were 18 years old ($n = 85$, 39.0%), followed by those aged 19 years ($n = 54$, 24.8%), 20 years ($n = 26$, 11.9%), 21 years ($n = 12$, 5.5%), and 17 years ($n = 5$, 2.3%). Only one participant was aged 22 years (0.5%), and one was aged 23 years (0.5%). Thus, the sample was predominantly composed of adolescents aged 18–19 years. In terms of ethnic background, Javanese participants constituted the largest group ($n = 95$, 43.6%), followed by Bugis participants ($n = 47$, 21.6%), Sundanese participants ($n = 23$, 10.6%), and those from other ethnic backgrounds ($n = 17$, 7.8%). Minangkabau participants accounted for the smallest group ($n = 2$, 0.9%). Overall, the sample represented several ethnic backgrounds, although Javanese and Bugis participants constituted the largest proportions.

Linear Regression Result

Prior to conducting the correlation or simple linear regression analysis, preliminary assumption tests were performed to determine whether the data met the requirements for the selected statistical analysis. The residual normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test yielded a p-value of .810 (.810 > .05).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 184)

Aspect	N	Percentage (%)
Flourishing		
Minimum	16	
Maximum	56	
Mean	41.45	
SD	8.22	
Self-compassion		
Minimum	29	
Maximum	83	
Mean	53.42	
SD	8.54	
Age (years)		
17	5	2.7
18	85	46.1
19	54	29.3
20	26	14.1
21	12	6.52
22	1	.54
23	1	.54
Ethnic background		
Javanese	95	51.6
Sundanese	23	12.5
Bugis	47	25.5
Minangkabau	2	1.08
Other ethnic backgrounds	17	9.23

Table 2. Value of the Determination Coefficient of the Self-Compassion Against the Flourishing

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.254 ^a	0,064	0,059	7,97180

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self Compassion

Table 3. ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	797,438	1	797,438	12,548	.001 ^b
	Residual	11566,018	182	63,550		
	Total	12363,457	183			

Dependent Variable: Flourishing

Predictors: (Constant), Self Compassion

Table 4. Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	28,382	3,735		7,600	0,000
	Self Compassion	0,245	0,069	0,254	3,542	0,001

Dependent Variable: Flourishing

As this value exceeded the .05 significance threshold, the residuals did not significantly deviate from a normal distribution, indicating that the assumption of residual normality was satisfied. The linearity assumption was examined using the deviation-from-linearity test. The results indicated that the deviation from linearity was not statistically significant (.287 (.287 > .05)), suggesting that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables did not significantly deviate from linearity. The result heteroscedasticity test showing p-value of .593 (.593 > .05), which is greater than 0.05, suggesting the absence of heteroscedasticity. Therefore, the data were considered suitable for simple linear regression analysis. After fulfilling the prerequisite tests, the researchers conducted a simple linear regression analysis to examine the effect of self-compassion on student flourishing. The results are presented in Tables 2, Table 3, and Table 4. A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether self-compassion significantly predicted flourishing among adolescents. The results indicated that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1,182) = 12.548$, $p = .001$. The model yielded a correlation coefficient of $R = .254$, an R^2 value of .064, and an adjusted R^2 value of .059. These findings indicate that self-compassion explained 6.4% of the variance in flourishing, while the remaining 93.6% was attributable to other factors not included in the model.

The regression coefficients further demonstrated that self-compassion was a positive and statistically significant predictor of flourishing ($B = 0.245$, $SE = 0.069$, $\beta = .254$, $t = 3.542$, $p = .001$). This finding suggests that a one-unit increase in self-compassion was associated with a 0.245-unit increase in the predicted flourishing score. The resulting regression equation was $Y = 28.382 + 0.245X$, where Y represents the predicted flourishing score and X represents the self-compassion score. Overall, the findings suggest that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with higher levels of flourishing among adolescents. However, given the modest proportion of variance explained, other individual and contextual factors may also contribute to adolescents' flourishing. As the analysis was based on observational data, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of a significant predictive association rather than a causal relationship.

DISCUSSION

Flourishing is a state of complete well-being. It is characterized by happiness and life satisfaction, physical and mental health, meaningful purpose, wisdom, and positive social relationships with others (Vanderweele, 2017). This state is essential for individuals to maintain their physical and mental health. As a result, they achieve well-being and grow into optimal individuals (Vanderweele *et al.*, 2019). Flourishing is necessary for everyone, including students. Students who flourish are considered better able to face various difficulties in their lives (Mengstie, 2025; Yukhymenko-Iescroart *et al.*, 2023).

Research findings indicate that self-compassion influences student flourishing. These results align with research by Verma & Tiwari (2017). They found that self-compassion is a predictor of flourishing. The aspects of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness within self-compassion positively correlate with human development. Self-compassion has both direct and indirect impacts on flourishing through mindfulness. Self-compassionate individuals experience greater awareness without judgment. This reduces mental health issues and leads to flourishing (Yildirim *et al.*, 2022).

Self-compassion has three aspects: self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification (Neff, 2023). Self-kindness shows an individual's concern for themselves. It involves understanding oneself during adversity. The common humanity aspect helps individuals feel connected to others. It allows people to recognize that everyone experiences failure. Meanwhile, mindfulness is awareness of everything experienced without avoiding or exaggerating (Syahril *et al.*, 2025). These aspects help individuals accept themselves, even when faced with failure. This positively impacts their flourishing state (Zulfa & Prastuti, 2020). Self-compassion also plays a role in developing and understanding self-acceptance. This contributes to emotional satisfaction and a sense of purpose in life. Both of these impacts affect individual flourishing (Aulia *et al.*, 2025).

The findings are consistent with the conceptualization of self-compassion proposed by Neff (2003), who described self-compassion as a constructive way of relating to oneself during experiences of failure, suffering, and personal inadequacy. Self-compassion consists of three interconnected components: self-kindness rather

than self-judgment, common humanity rather than isolation, and mindfulness rather than overidentification with negative experiences. Together, these components provide a framework for understanding how individuals respond to academic difficulties, interpersonal challenges, and uncertainty about the future. Rather than interpreting setbacks as evidence of personal inadequacy, self-compassionate individuals may be more inclined to acknowledge their difficulties, recognize that imperfection is part of the human experience, and respond to themselves with understanding. Such responses may support the maintenance of psychological functioning when individuals encounter stressful circumstances.

Flourishing, meanwhile, represents a broader conception of well-being that extends beyond the absence of psychological distress. It encompasses positive functioning, including positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, as well as other dimensions of psychological and social well-being. Diener et al. (2010), for example, conceptualized flourishing in terms of important psychological and social resources, such as purpose, supportive relationships, competence, self-acceptance, and optimism. From this perspective, self-compassion may contribute to flourishing by helping students maintain a balanced relationship with themselves while continuing to pursue meaningful academic and personal goals. Students who can acknowledge their limitations without excessive self-criticism may be better positioned to preserve self-worth, engage constructively with difficulties, and remain involved in activities that contribute to a meaningful life.

The significant positive association identified in the present study therefore provides empirical support for the relevance of self-compassion in understanding flourishing among Indonesian university students. However, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of a predictive association rather than proof that self-compassion directly causes flourishing. Because the study used an observational regression design, the direction of the relationship and the potential influence of other variables cannot be established conclusively. It is also possible that students who experience greater flourishing have more psychological resources available to respond compassionately to themselves. Longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to clarify the direction and mechanisms of this relationship.

Comparison With Previous Research

The present findings are consistent with previous empirical studies examining the relationship between self-compassion and flourishing. Abdullah and Saleh (2025) investigated self-compassion among 203 first-year university students in Indonesia and found a positive, statistically significant association between self-compassion and overall flourishing. Their findings also indicated significant positive associations between self-compassion and the individual dimensions of flourishing. This evidence is particularly relevant because it demonstrates that the relationship between these constructs can also be observed within the Indonesian higher education context. The consistency between their findings and those of the present study strengthens the argument that self-compassion is a meaningful psychological correlate of flourishing among university students in Indonesia.

Nevertheless, the standardized regression coefficient in the present study was lower than that reported by Abdullah and Saleh (2025). This difference should not automatically be interpreted as a contradiction between the studies. Variations in participant characteristics, sampling procedures, study contexts, measurement instruments, and statistical models may contribute to differences in the magnitude of the observed associations. Abdullah and Saleh focused specifically on first-year students, who may experience particular challenges associated with the transition to university life. The present study included a broader group of university students, potentially encompassing individuals at different stages of academic and personal development. Such differences may affect the extent to which self-compassion is associated with flourishing.

International research provides further support for the present findings. Liu et al. (2024) examined self-compassion and psychological flourishing among 842 college students. Their results indicated that self-compassion positively predicted psychological flourishing. Importantly, their study also identified hope as a partial mediator of the relationship and emotion regulation as a moderator of the pathway between self-compassion and hope. These findings suggest that the association between self-compassion and flourishing may involve additional psychological processes rather than a single direct pathway. Similarly, Chan et al. (2022) investigated compassion from others, self-compassion, psychological distress, flourishing, and meaning in life

among 536 university students in Hong Kong. Their findings indicated that self-compassion was associated with resilience, which was in turn associated with lower psychological distress and higher flourishing and meaning in life. This evidence suggests that self-compassion may be relevant to flourishing partly because of its relationship with individuals' capacity to adapt to adversity.

The broader literature also supports the relationship between self-compassion and positive psychological functioning. In their meta-analysis of 79 samples comprising 16,416 participants, Zessin et al. (2015) found an overall correlation of ($r = .47$) between self-compassion and well-being. The association was stronger for cognitive and psychological well-being than for affective well-being. Although well-being and flourishing are related but distinct constructs, these findings provide a broader empirical basis for understanding why self-compassion may be associated with positive functioning.

Taken together, these studies indicate a relatively consistent pattern across different populations: self-compassion tends to be associated with greater flourishing or related indicators of well-being. The present study extends this evidence by examining the predictive relationship in a sample of Indonesian university students. However, differences in effect sizes across studies emphasize the importance of examining the specific contextual and psychological factors that may strengthen or weaken this relationship.

Several psychological mechanisms may help explain why self-compassion is positively associated with flourishing. The first concerns emotional regulation and responses to negative experiences. University students commonly encounter academic demands, examinations, competing responsibilities, interpersonal difficulties, and uncertainty about future employment. These experiences may generate disappointment, anxiety, or feelings of inadequacy, particularly when students perceive that their performance falls short of their expectations. Self-compassion may help students respond to these experiences without intensifying their distress through excessive self-criticism.

Flourishing is not simply the experience of feeling happy; it also involves functioning effectively, developing positive relationships, pursuing meaningful objectives, and experiencing a sense of accomplishment (Diener et al., 2010). By reducing the tendency to respond to mistakes with harsh self-judgment, self-compassion may enable students to remain engaged in activities that are important to them even when outcomes are imperfect. Nevertheless, future research should directly test these proposed mechanisms to determine whether emotional regulation, resilience, hope, or goal engagement statistically explains the association observed in the present study. Accordingly, the present findings support an integrative understanding of flourishing. Self-compassion may be a useful psychological resource, but its contribution should be considered alongside other personal and environmental conditions. Future studies could compare the relative contributions of self-compassion, social support, resilience, hope, and academic self-efficacy using multiple regression or structural equation modeling. Such approaches would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors associated with flourishing among Indonesian university students.

Implications for Higher Education and Counseling Services

The findings have practical implications for university counseling services and student development programs in Indonesia. The positive association between self-compassion and flourishing suggests that self-compassion may be a useful component of preventive and developmental interventions designed to support students' psychological well-being. Rather than focusing exclusively on reducing distress, such programs could also help students develop constructive ways of responding to mistakes, managing difficult emotions, and maintaining engagement with meaningful goals (Tornerio et al., 2026).

University counselors could incorporate self-compassion-oriented activities into individual counseling, group counseling, psychoeducation, or student well-being workshops. Relevant activities may include identifying patterns of self-critical thinking, practicing balanced self-talk, recognizing shared human experiences, and developing mindful awareness of difficult emotions. Students could also be encouraged to reflect on how they respond to academic setbacks and explore alternatives to excessively critical self-evaluation. These activities may help students develop more adaptive responses to challenges while preserving their motivation to learn and improve.

In addition, self-compassion could be integrated into academic advising and programs that support students' transitions into university life. Students may benefit from learning that acknowledging limitations does not require abandoning personal responsibility or academic standards. Instead, self-compassion can be framed as an approach that combines self-acceptance with constructive action (Lebares et al., 2022). Students can acknowledge disappointment while identifying practical steps to improve performance, seek support, and pursue their goals. However, the present findings do not establish that a self-compassion intervention will necessarily increase flourishing. The regression analysis examined an association between measured variables rather than the effects of an intervention. Therefore, universities should consider pilot programs and evaluate their effectiveness using appropriate research designs, including pretest–posttest comparisons and control groups where feasible. Future evaluations could measure not only self-compassion but also flourishing, resilience, emotional regulation, and students' perceptions of academic and social functioning.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that self-compassion significantly influences flourishing among college students. Simple linear regression analysis revealed that self-compassion accounts for 26.4% of the variance in flourishing, highlighting its critical role in supporting students' psychological and social well-being. Students with higher self-compassion are better equipped to accept their shortcomings, regulate their emotions, and effectively interpret life experiences, including failures and academic challenges. These findings also affirm that self-compassion provides a foundation for students to navigate everyday challenges, including academic pressures, thereby supporting the attainment of flourishing. However, the study suggests that flourishing is also shaped by additional internal and external factors not explored here. Further research is warranted to investigate other variables that may influence student flourishing.

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