

## Self-Compassion Levels Among Guidance and Counseling Students: A Descriptive Quantitative Study

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the distribution of university students' levels of self-compassion based on its psychological aspects. The research employed a descriptive quantitative approach involving 144 students from guidance and counseling study program at a higher education institution. The entire population was included as research participants without applying any sampling technique. Data were collected using a self-compassion scale developed in the form of a likert model, which encompasses six core dimensions: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness and over-identification. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive percentage techniques to classify self-compassion levels into three categories, namely low, moderate, and high. The results indicated that, overall, most students were classified in the moderate level of self-compassion (48%), followed by those in the low category (0%) and the high category (52%). Further analysis of each dimension showed that the majority of students also fell into the moderate category, with percentage distributions exceeding 40% across all aspects. These findings suggest that students' self-compassion has not yet developed optimally and tends to remain at a moderate level. This condition indicates the need for systematic developmental efforts oriented toward strengthening students' psychological aspects, particularly in fostering adaptive self-attitudes, emotional awareness, and balanced self-evaluation. The results of this study can serve as an empirical basis for designing guidance and counseling programs aimed at enhancing self-compassion among university students.



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### A. INTRODUCTION

Mental health has become a major global concern in recent years, affecting both adolescents and adults due to its significant impact on quality of life and social functioning. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that one in seven individuals aged 10-19 years worldwide experiences mental health problems, including stress, depression, anxiety disorders, and suicidal behavior (Pillay, 2022). This condition highlights that mental health issues are not merely individual problems but social phenomena that can reduce productivity, disrupt interpersonal relationships, and hinder educational and career attainment (Deng & Li, 2024; Santos et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2021).

In the context of higher education, the student phase is often understood as a transitional period between adolescence and adulthood, characterized by increasing academic, social, and developmental demands. During this period, students are required to adapt to new learning

environments, manage academic workloads, and meet expectations related to performance and future career preparation. These demands may increase psychosocial vulnerability, particularly among students who have limited coping resources or insufficient psychological resilience to manage academic pressure (Park et al., 2020). Globally, the first year of university is recognized as a critical period in which mental health problems tend to emerge or worsen. The WHO emphasizes the importance of monitoring students' mental health during this phase to understand prevalence patterns and associated sociodemographic factors (Mason et al., 2025).

Higher education institutions therefore function not only as spaces for intellectual development but also as environments for complex psychosocial growth. Students are frequently exposed to academic competition, repeated evaluations, fear of failure, uncertainty about future careers, and pressure to achieve high performance. These conditions demand adequate emotional regulation skills, which play an important role in maintaining psychological well-being and sustaining academic persistence (Pienyu et al., 2024). When such demands are not managed effectively, students may experience chronic stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and depressive symptoms.

Within the social domain, unmanaged academic pressure can contribute to withdrawal from peer relationships, deterioration in interpersonal quality, and the emergence of competitive academic cultures lacking emotional support. From a moral and character perspective, repeated experiences of failure may foster harsh self-judgment and weaken individuals' capacity to respond to themselves and others with empathy (Heng & Fehr, 2022; Rohmer et al., 2022). These conditions indicate the importance of psychological resources that help students maintain balance and self-acceptance amid academic challenges.

One psychological construct that has received increasing attention as an adaptive internal resource is self-compassion. Self-compassion refers to an individual's ability to treat oneself with kindness and understanding in the face of suffering, failure, or perceived inadequacy, rather than engaging in excessive self-criticism (K. Neff, 2003b, 2011). Conceptually, self-compassion consists of three core components: self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification (K. Neff, 2003a). These components reflect a balanced and humane way of relating to oneself during difficult experiences.

In the academic context, self-compassion is particularly relevant because learning processes inherently involve evaluation, correction, and the possibility of failure. Students who possess higher levels of self-compassion tend to interpret failure as part of the learning process rather than as evidence of personal inadequacy. This adaptive perspective is crucial, as excessive self-criticism has been shown to intensify stress and hinder effective adjustment. Previous studies indicate that self-compassion is associated with greater psychological well-being, resilience, and more adaptive emotional regulation strategies. Cross-national research also suggests that early phases of university life are especially vulnerable to mental health difficulties, highlighting the need to identify protective psychological factors such as self-compassion (Fong & Loi, 2016; Singha, 2024).

Intervention based studies further demonstrate that mindfulness-oriented programs for university students are generally associated with improvements in mental health indicators, including reductions in stress and anxiety. These outcomes are conceptually related to the

mindfulness component of self-compassion, reinforcing the relevance of self-compassion as a preventive and promotive factor in higher education settings (John Lothes et al., 2021; Sharma & Palomares-Fernandez, 2023). Consequently, self-compassion may serve as a valuable psychological foundation for supporting students in coping with academic demands and developmental challenges.

Despite the growing body of literature on self-compassion, there remains a need for descriptive quantitative data that specifically map the level of self-compassion among university students, particularly within the Indonesian higher education context. Profiling students self-compassion level into high, moderate, and low categories, as well as examining its component dimensions, is essential for understanding their actual psychological conditions. Without such baseline data, university counseling services and student support programs may lack empirical grounding, potentially reducing their effectiveness. Moreover, such profiles can assist higher education institutions in formulating policies and interventions that promote a healthier academic climate, emphasizing not only achievement but also student well being.

This study is limited to examining self-compassion among students within the Guidance and Counseling study program at a single higher education institution, focusing on a descriptive quantitative approach. Therefore, the findings are not intended to be generalized across all student populations but rather to provide a contextualized understanding within a specific academic and cultural setting.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on profiling self-compassion levels based on six psychological dimensions within the Indonesian higher education context, particularly among prospective counselors. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine relationships or intervention effects, this study provides a detailed descriptive mapping that can serve as a foundational basis for developing culturally responsive guidance and counseling programs.

Therefore, this study aims to describe the level of self-compassion among university students, particularly those enrolled in the Guidance and Counseling study program, by examining its distribution across six psychological dimensions. This study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on self-compassion in higher education and practically by providing an empirical basis for developing guidance and counseling services and student development programs that are responsive to students' psychological needs.

## **B. METHODS**

This study employed a survey research design using a quantitative approach. Quantitative research, as described by Cresweel (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), involves formulating specific research questions, collecting quantifiable data, applying statistical procedures for analysis, and conducting objective and systematic investigations to explain phenomena under study. In line with this approach, the present study was conducted to describe the level of self-compassion among university students.

The population of this study consisted of all students enrolled in the Guidance and Counseling study program at IKIP Siliwangi Cimahi, totaling 740 students. Considering the relatively large population size, not all members were involved as research participants. Therefore, a sampling technique was applied to obtain a representative subset of the population.

The sampling method used in this study was simple random sampling. This technique allows each member of the population to have an equal opportunity to be selected as a sample, without considering specific strata or subgroup classifications. According to Sugiyono (Sugiyono, 2019), simple random sampling is appropriate when the population is relatively homogeneous in relation to the variables being studied. Through this procedure, a total of 144 students were selected as research participants. This sample size was considered sufficient to represent the characteristics of the population and to meet the objectives of descriptive quantitative analysis.

Data were collected using a questionnaire as the primary research instrument. The instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire developed in the form of a likert scale consisting of 62 items. The questionnaire was adapted and modified from the self-compassion scale (SCS) originally developed by Neff (K. Neff, 2003b). The instrument measures six dimensions of self-compassion, namely self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. Each item required respondents to indicate their level of agreement according to the response options provided in the scale.

The data analysis technique employed in this study was descriptive percentage analysis, which aims to present an accurate and systematic description of the empirical data obtained from the field. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate minimum and maximum scores, mean values, and standard deviations. Based on these statistical indicators, respondents' self-compassion levels were categorized into three levels: high, moderate, and low. The categorization process was conducted using Microsoft Excel to ensure accuracy in score computation and classification.

The results of the analysis provide a descriptive profile of students' self-compassion levels and serve as a basis for understanding their psychological condition. This classification is expected to support the development of guidance and counseling programs, psychoeducational services, and preventive interventions that are responsive to students' psychological needs in higher education context.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. General Profile of Students Self-Compassion

Based on the data obtained from all participants, an analysis was conducted to describe the general level of self-compassion among students of the Guidance and counseling study program at IKIP Siliwangi. According to Neff (K. Neff, 2003b, 2003a), self-compassion consists of six interrelated dimensions, namely self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. The overall distribution of students' self-compassion levels is presented in table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Students Self-Compassion Levels

Category	%	F
High	52%	76
Moderate	48%	68
Low	0%	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>144</b>

Table 1 shows that students' self-compassion is generally at a good level. More than half of the students (52%) are classified in the high category, while 48% are in moderate

category, and non are categorized as low. This indicates that, overall, students tend to demonstrate adequate self-kindness, balanced emotional awariness, and an understanding that personal difficulties are part of common humanity experience.

According to Neff (K. Neff, 2011), self-compassion reflects the ability to respond to personal suffering with kindness rather than self-criticism, to maintain mindfull awariness of emotions, and to recognize shared humanity in difficult experiences. The dominance of high and moderate categories suggests that students possess relatively adaptive psychological resources that support emotional regulation and adjustment during academic life.

The absence of students in the low category also indicates a generally sufficient level of emotional resilience. Such resilience may be influenced by social support, learning environments, and cultural values emphasizing interpersonal harmony and mutual care (C. Kim & Ko, 2018). In the Indonesian context, which tends to emphasize collectivistic values, students may be more inclined to perceive personal difficulties as shared experiences rather than purely individual failures.

Nevertheless, the proportion of students in the moderate kategori (48%) deserves attention. This group may still experience fluctuations in self-compassion, including tendencies toward self-criticism or emotional imbalance under pressure. Previous studies suggest that university students are in a developmental phase marked by identity exploration and heightened vulnerability to internal stressors (K. D. Neff & Germer, 2013; K. Neff & Germer, 2017). Therefore, although the overall profile is positive, efforts to strengthen self-compassion remain necessary.

## 2. Students Self-Compassion Based on its Dimensions

Self-compassion in this study was examined through six dimensions : (1) self-kindness, (2) self-judgment, (3) common humanity, (4) isolation, (5) mindfulness, and (6) over-identification. The distribution of students across these dimensions is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Students Self-Compassion by Dimension

Dimension	High		Moderat		Low	
	%	F	%	F	%	F
Self-Kindness	77%	110	23%	33	0%	0
Self-Judgment	42%	61	50%	71	11%	1
Common Humanity	90%	128	10%	15	0%	0
Isolation	46%	66	48%	68	9%	9
Mindfulness	53%	76	46%	66	1%	1
Over-Identification	36%	51	57%	82	10%	1
						0

The results in Table 2 provide a more detailed description od strengths and vulnerabilities across the six dimensions of self-compassion. Each dimension reflects a different psychological process involved in how students respond to difficulties, emotional challenges, and perceived failures.

### Self Kindness

The Self-Kindness dimension shows a very strong tendency, with 77% of students classified in the high category and none in the low category. This indicates that most students are able to treat themselves with warmth, understanding, and care when facing difficulties. According to Neff (K. Neff, 2003a), self-kindness serves as a protective factor that reduces harsh self-criticism and supports emotional well-being.

The absence of low scores suggests that students generally possess a positive internal attitude toward themselves. This tendency may also be influenced by cultural values emphasizing empathy, mutual respect, and interpersonal harmony. In the Indonesian context, particularly within Sundanese culture, the value of *silih asih* (mutual compassion) encourages individuals to show kindness not only toward others but also toward themselves, which may contribute to the high level of self-kindness observed in this study.

### Self-Judgment

The self-judgment dimension shows greater variability compared to self-kindness. While 42% of students are in the high category, 50% fall into the moderate category and 8% into the low category. This indicates that a substantial proportion of students still experience tendencies toward negative self-evaluation.

Self-judgment represents the opposing pole of self-kindness and is associated with harsh self-criticism and self-blame (K. Neff, 2003a). Students in the moderate and low categories may be more vulnerable to internal pressure, perfectionistic standards, and fear of failure. Previous studies have shown that university students often engage in self-compassion and experience high performance expectations, which can intensify self-judgment (K. D. Neff & Germer, 2013; K. Neff & Germer, 2017). These findings suggest the importance of interventions aimed at reducing self-critical tendencies and fostering a more compassionate internal dialogue.

### Common Humanity

Common humanity emerges as one of the strongest dimensions in this study, with 90% of students classified in the high category. This indicates that most students are able to perceive personal difficulties as part of shared human experience rather than as isolated or personal shortcomings. According to Neff and Germer (K. Neff & Germer, 2017), recognizing common humanity helps reduce feeling of isolation and supports psychological balance.

The strong presence of this dimension may be influenced by the collectivistic cultural orientation prevalent in Indonesian society, where individuals are encouraged to view themselves as interconnected with others. Such cultural values promote shared understanding and social connectedness, which can strengthen students' ability to interpret challenges as common human experiences (U. Kim et al., 2006).

### Isolation

The isolation dimension shows a moderate pattern, with 46% of students in the high category, 48% in the moderate category, and 6% in the low category. Isolation refers to the tendency to feel alone or disconnected when facing difficulties. Students in the moderate

category may occasionally experience feelings of loneliness or emotional disconnection, particularly under academic stress.

Those in the low category may be more vulnerable to feelings of alienation, which can increase the risk of psychological distress. Even students who generally perceive social support may still experience isolation during periods of academic pressure or emotional strain. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening social connectedness and emotional support systems within the university environment (K. D. Neff, 2023).

### Mindfulness

The mindfulness dimension shows a relatively balanced distribution between the high and moderate categories, with a small proportion of students (1%) classified in the low category. This indicates that most students demonstrate an adequate level of awareness toward their internal experiences, although some still experience difficulty maintaining balanced attention during emotionally challenging situations.

Mindfulness, as a core component of self-compassion, refers to the ability to observe thoughts and emotions clearly and nonjudgmentally (K. D. Neff & McGehee, 2010). Students in the moderate category may still respond reactively to academic stressors, which is common in higher education environments characterized by evaluation and performance pressure (Yarnell & Neff, 2013). Strengthening mindfulness skills may help students regulate emotions more effectively and maintain psychological balance.

### Over-Identification

The over-identification dimension represents the weakest aspect of self-compassion in this study. Only 36% of students are classified in the high category, while 57% are in the moderate category and 7% in the low category. Over-identification refers to the tendency to become excessively absorbed in negative thoughts and emotions, making it difficult to maintain a balanced perspective (K. Neff, 2003a).

Students in the moderate and low categories may have difficulty distancing themselves from distressing experiences, which can increase vulnerability to stress and emotional exhaustion. Over-identification often manifests as rumination or excessive focus on perceived failures, especially in academically demanding contexts. These findings indicate the need for interventions that promote emotional regulation, reflective awareness, and adaptive distancing from negative internal experiences. Strengthening this dimension is essential to support overall self-compassion and psychological adjustment among university students.

The findings of this study have important implications for university counselors and student development programs. The predominance of moderate levels of self-compassion indicates that many students still require structured psychological support to strengthen adaptive self-attitudes. University counseling services are encouraged to design preventive and developmental interventions focusing on enhancing self-compassion through psychoeducational programs, group counseling, and mindfulness-based approaches.

Specifically, interventions may target reducing self-judgment and over-identification, as these dimensions showed relatively weaker profiles among students. Counselors can

integrate self-compassion training into academic guidance services to help students cope with academic pressure, failure, and emotional distress more effectively.

Furthermore, higher education institutions should consider incorporating self-compassion development into student support programs, such as orientation sessions, resilience training, and well-being workshops. By doing so, universities can foster a more supportive academic environment that not only emphasizes achievement but also prioritizes students' psychological well-being and personal growth.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

This study concludes that level of self-compassion among students in the guidance and counseling study program is generally categorized as good, with most students falling into the high and moderate categories and none classified in the low category. These findings indicate that, overall, students possess a relatively positive capacity to relate to themselves with understanding and care when facing academic or personal challenges. However, the analysis across dimensions reveals that several aspects, particularly self-judgment, mindfulness, and over-identification, still require further strengthening as a proportion of students demonstrate moderate to low tendencies in these components.

These results suggest that although students show potential in emotional regulation, they remain vulnerable to excessive self-criticism and insufficient present-moment awareness. Therefore, higher education institutions and counseling practitioners are encouraged to design and implement guidance and training programs that emphasize emotional regulation, self-reflection, and self-acceptance. Program integrating culturally responsive approaches, including indigenous counseling perspectives, may serve as relevant and contextual strategies to enhance students self-compassion development.

For future research, it is recommended to develop and evaluate intervention models specifically aimed at strengthening weaker dimensions of self-compassion. Further studies may also employ experimental or quasi-experimental design to examine the effectiveness of such interventions, involve larger and more diverse samples, or explore the role of cultural and contextual factors in shaping self-compassion among university students. These efforts are expected to contribute to more comprehensive and evidence-based approaches in promoting students psychological well being within higher education settings.

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