

Self-Compassion Therapy for Improving Adolescent Mental Health at Hasyimiyah Orphanage

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Mental health is defined as the optimization of mental function, enabling individuals to be more productive, maintain healthy relationships, and effectively adapt to challenges. Self-compassion refers to a positive attitude toward oneself, characterized by a calm response to problems and the absence of excessive self-blame in the face of failure. This study aimed to examine the effect of self-compassion therapy on improving the mental health of adolescents. **Materials and Methods:** A pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest approach was employed, using a total sampling technique. The sample consisted of 16 adolescents residing in the Hasyimiyah orphanage. Self-compassion therapy was administered twice per week. Data were analyzed using a paired t-test, which yielded a *p*-value of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant effect of the therapy. **Results and Discussion:** Post-intervention results showed that 50% of participants fell into the normal category, 37.5% into the borderline category, and 12.5% into the abnormal category. **Conclusion:** These findings suggest that self-compassion therapy can be an effective intervention for enhancing adolescent mental health.

Keywords: Self-compassion therapy, mental health, adolescent



INTRODUCTION

Mental health refers to the optimization of an individual's mental functions, allowing them to become more productive and capable of solving the problems they face. However, mental health disorders can disrupt a person's mood and impair their ability to interact with others and solve problems effectively (Aziz et al., 2023).

According to a World Health Organization report (2019), approximately 10 to 20% of children and adolescents worldwide experience mental health issues. Furthermore, half of all mental disorders begin by the age of 14 and continue into the mid-20s. Adolescents often experience anxiety during puberty, perceiving the physical and emotional changes as strange and unsettling. Puberty is a developmental phase marked by physical growth,

psychological changes, and the maturation of sexual functions, typically occurring between the ages of 10–12 to 13–15 years (Aziz et al., 2023).

Rianti et al. (2020) states that adolescence is a phase where individuals are emotionally unstable, easily irritated, and engaged in the journey of identity formation. This period is marked by hormonal changes, physical development, shifts in social environments, and evolving thinking patterns—all of which contribute to adolescents' vulnerability to mental health problems. Similarly, Elon and Malinti (2019) support the view that these rapid changes increase the susceptibility of adolescents to mental health disorders.

Based on a preliminary study conducted by the researcher through interviews at the Hasyimiyah Orphanage in Bandung, Diwek, Jombang, on 28

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January 2025, 10 adolescents were interviewed. Findings revealed that 75% of them expressed having no future aspirations, frequently blamed themselves for failures, and 20% stated they believed they had no talents or potential. Additionally, 5% felt they were unfortunate due to the absence of parental figures and lack of attention. Previous studies have shown that children residing in institutional care or orphanages are particularly vulnerable to mental health problems, often categorized as individuals with mental health concerns. This vulnerability is attributed to factors such as the death of parents, parental divorce, poor parent-child relationships, absent or overly busy parents, or financial difficulties. Consequently, their emotional needs and basic care are not adequately fulfilled. As a result, alternative care institutions, such as orphanages, are established to fulfill children's rights. However, adolescents living in orphanages often lack—or completely miss out on—parental love and attention. These youth may develop negative self-perceptions, anxiety about themselves and their future, low self-confidence, and difficulty coping with stressful situations. Hence, adolescents in such settings are particularly susceptible to mental health challenges (Zahra, 2020).

Mental health disorders significantly impact adolescents' daily lives, particularly in their interactions with others and their overall productivity. Previous research indicates that if left untreated, such issues can lead to severe consequences, including depression, social dysfunction, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation or attempts (Yasipin et al., 2020).

Self-compassion therapy is highly relevant in addressing these issues. Many individuals tend to dislike certain aspects of themselves and often engage in harsh self-criticism. Self-compassion helps reduce these negative self-perceptions (Andayani et al., 2022). Self-compassion is a positive attitude toward oneself that involves minimizing excessive self-criticism of one's flaws, circumstances, or identity. When facing challenges, adolescents with high self-compassion are less likely to blame themselves or experience anxiety, fear, or restlessness (Yasipin et al., 2020). Prior studies have shown that self-compassion is effective in enhancing individuals' abilities to manage negative emotions and even helps reduce suicidal behavior (Neff, 2023). Therefore, the researcher chose to apply self-compassion therapy to adolescents living in orphanages to examine the extent of its impact on their mental well-being.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, the researcher employed a pre-experimental design using the one group pre-test and post-test design, which is a type of research used to explore causal relationships by involving a single group of subjects. In this design, the same group is observed again after receiving an intervention or treatment (Nursalam, 2019). The population in this study consisted of 16 adolescents residing at the Hasyimiyah Orphanage in Bandung. The sample included all 16 adolescents who were experiencing mental health problems, selected using a total sampling technique.

A mental health questionnaire was used as the measurement tool, comprising 50 items—27 questions assessing psychological distress and 23 questions assessing psychological well-being. The intervention provided was self-compassion therapy. To analyze the effect of self-compassion therapy on the mental health of adolescents in the orphanage, the study employed a paired t-test as the statistical analysis method (Nursalam, 2019).

RESULTS

Table 1 shows that 3 respondents (18.7%) were 11–13 years old, 11 respondents (68.6%) were 14–16 years old, and 2 respondents (12.1%) were 17–20 years old. There were 4 male respondents (25%) and 12 female respondents (75%). Regarding education level, 2 respondents (12.5%) had elementary school education, 9 respondents (56.1%) had junior high school education, and 5 respondents (31.2%) had senior high school education. As for parental status, 5 respondents (31.7%) still had living parents, while 11 respondents (68.3%) had lost their parents.

Table 2 shows that, before the self-compassion intervention, 9 respondents (56.3%) were categorized as borderline, and 5 respondents (31.25%) were categorized as abnormal. **Table 3** shows that, after the self-compassion intervention, 8 respondents (50%) were categorized as normal, 6 respondents (37.5%) as borderline, and 2 respondents (12.5%) as abnormal.

A paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the mental health conditions of adolescents before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the self-compassion therapy intervention. The results showed a p -value of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that H_0 is rejected. This means there is a significant effect of self-compassion therapy in improving the mental health of adolescents.

Table 1 Frequency distribution of respondents by age, gender, education, and parental status.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
11-13	3	18.7
14-16	11	68.6
17-20	2	12.1
Total	16	100
Gender		
Male	4	25
Female	12	75
Total	16	100
Education Level		
Elementary School	2	12.5
Junior High School	9	56.1
Senior High School	5	31.2
Total	16	100
Parental Status		
Still alive	5	31.7
Deceased	11	68.3
Total	16	100

Source of Data: Primary Data, 2024

Table 2 Frequency distribution before the self-compassion intervention at the Hasyimiyah Orphanage, Bandung, Jombang

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pre-Test		
Normal	2	12.5
Borderline	9	56.3
Abnormal	5	31.25
Total	16	100

Source of Data: Primary Data, 2024

Table 3 Frequency distribution after the self-compassion therapy at the Hasyimiyah Orphanage, Bandung Jombang

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Post-Test		
Normal	8	50
Borderlinre	6	37.5
Abnormal	2	12.5
Total	16	100

Source of Data: Primary Data, 2024

Table 4 T-test statistical results on the effect of self-compassion therapy in improving adolescent mental health at the Hasyimiyah Orphanage, Bandung Jombang

Mental Health	Before		After	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Normal	8	50	8	50
Borderlinre	6	37.5	6	37.5
Abnormal	2	12.5	2	12.5
Total	16	100	16	100

The T-test results showed a *p*-value of 0.002

DISCUSSION

Identification of adolescents' mental health prior to the self-compassion therapy intervention

Based on the research findings prior to the self-compassion intervention, it was found that 9 respondents (56.3%) were categorized as having borderline mental health, and 5 respondents (31.25%) were in the abnormal category. One of the most likely contributing factors is the absence of parental roles. Respondents who had lost one or both parents often lacked attention and affection compared to other adolescents. Among the 16 respondents, the majority were female, and gender differences are also a factor associated with lower levels of mental health in adolescents.

According to Neff (2023), females tend to have more complex thought processes compared to males, making them more vulnerable to depression and anxiety. Despite gender differences, studies have shown that females generally exhibit lower levels of self-compassion compared to males, while being more compassionate toward others. This is attributed to a greater tendency among females to focus on negative past experiences. Consequently, females are said to be more prone to higher levels of depression and anxiety than males.

Linda (2021) states that individuals from dysfunctional families, or those who have lost one or both parents, tend to experience higher levels of anxiety and engage in frequent self-critical behavior. Research indicates that individuals raised by parents who were often critical during childhood tend to internalize those criticisms and become self-critical in adulthood. Parental behavior that model self-criticism in the face of challenges or failure can shape individuals to respond in similar ways, resulting in low levels of self-compassion.

Based on these facts and theories, the researcher concludes that individuals who lack self-compassion tend to blame themselves when facing difficult situations. Moreover, the role of parents is vital in modeling positive behavior, providing appropriate guidance and affection, and supporting the mental well-being of adolescents.

Identification of adolescents' mental health after the self-compassion therapy intervention

Based on the research findings, the characteristics of respondents after receiving the self-compassion intervention showed that 8 respondents (50%) were categorized as normal, 6 respondents (37.5%) as borderline, and 2 respondents (12.5%) remained abnormal. Of 5 respondents who were initially categorized as

abnormal before the intervention, 2 respondents still remained in the abnormal category.

According to individual data, these respondents often experienced anxiety and restlessness, as previously explained. General data also indicates that females are more likely to experience mental health issues. Women tend to have more sensitive and complex thought processes than men, which makes them more prone to depression and anxiety. Additionally, both of the respondents who remained in the abnormal category had lost their parents since childhood.

A study on self-compassion conducted by Derang (2022) showed that 80% of students in the study had a high level of self-compassion. This indicates that these students demonstrated strong self-kindness, allowing them to accept themselves as they are and reduce excessive self-criticism when facing unpleasant situations. According to Aziz et al. (2023), individuals who practice self-compassion when confronting personal shortcomings tend to have greater motivation to improve their behavior. When facing problems, self-compassion helps individuals understand and care for themselves, thereby facilitating effective problem-solving. Self-compassion also reduces feelings of hopelessness, making individuals more open to facing difficulties or failures and more receptive to support from their environment or others.

Self-compassion is a key factor in determining an individual's mental health. When someone possesses self-compassion, they do not excessively judge or criticize themselves for their flaws. Instead, they offer themselves understanding and acknowledge that problems, suffering, and failure are natural parts of every human life (Karinda, 2020).

Analysis of the effect of self-compassion therapy on improving adolescents' mental health

Based on [table 4](#), the results of the T-test statistical analysis on adolescents before and after receiving the self-compassion intervention showed a p -value of 0.002. Since $p < 0.05$, it can be concluded that H_0 is rejected, indicating that self-compassion therapy has a significant effect on improving adolescent mental health.

Individuals with a high level of self-compassion tend to demonstrate greater empathy. Self-compassion guides individuals to consistently pay attention to their own needs. When someone truly seeks to maintain their happiness, they will take actions that support their well-being. Self-compassion also provides individuals with the

confidence to acknowledge their weaknesses and take steps toward self-improvement. It involves showing kindness, care, and attentiveness toward oneself, and being open when facing difficulties—viewing hardship as a natural part of life. It means offering oneself understanding and kindness when facing problems, recognizing both strengths and weaknesses, and realizing that struggles, suffering, and failure are universal human experiences (Andayani et al., 2022).

Self-compassion therapy has been shown to improve mental health. When conducted twice a week, self-compassion therapy has proven effective in enhancing the mental well-being of participants.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on the effect of self-compassion therapy on improving adolescent mental health at Hasyimiyah Orphanage, Bandung, Jombang, it can be concluded that prior to the intervention, most respondents' mental health scores in the pre-test fell into the borderline category. After the implementation of self-compassion therapy, the majority of respondents showed improved mental health, with post-test results falling into the normal and borderline categories, although a few respondents still remained in the abnormal category. Overall, the findings indicate that self-compassion therapy has a significant effect in improving adolescent mental health.

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Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was not required.

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization: A.L.Y. Methodology: A.L.Y. Data Collection: A.R. Data Analysis: A.L.Y. Writing –

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Abbreviations

Not applicable.

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