

Research Article

The Relationship between Self-Compassion Ability and Stress Levels of Adolescents at SMP Negeri 3 Gondangrejo, Karanganyar

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Abstract. The developmental transition of adolescence in 9th-grade students is frequently accompanied by heightened psychosocial pressures, such as academic workloads and anxiety regarding continuing higher education. To mitigate the risk of mental health disorders, internal capacity in the form of self-awareness and self-acceptance (self-compassion) becomes a crucial aspect to explore. Objective: This study aimed to analyze the relationship between self-compassion capabilities and stress levels among adolescents at SMP Negeri 3 Gondangrejo Karanganyar. Methods: The research design utilized a quantitative approach with a census method (total sampling) involving 95 respondents from 9th-grade students. Data collection was conducted from March to April 2026 using questionnaire instruments. Univariate analysis was applied to describe demographic characteristics, while bivariate analysis employed the Spearman's Rank (ρ) correlation test. Results: The majority of respondents were female (53.7%), fell within the age range of 15 years old (47.4%), and lived with their parents (76.8%). Univariate analysis indicated that most students possessed a high level of self-compassion (85.3%) and experienced low levels of stress (74.7%). Based on the Spearman's Rho correlation test, the correlation coefficient was -0.310 with a significant p-value of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$). Conclusion: There is a significant negative relationship with a moderate correlation strength between self-compassion and stress levels in adolescents. Higher self-compassion capabilities in students correspond to lower experienced stress levels. These findings imply the importance of integrating self-compassion-based psychoeducation within educational institutions and optimizing community psychiatric nursing care to maintain the psychological stability of adolescents.

Keywords : Adolescents; Community Psychiatric Nursing; Self-Compassion; Stress Level; Well-Being.

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1. Background

Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, marked by rapid biological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this phase, adolescents begin to develop their identity, increase their independence, and face increasingly complex academic and social demands. These simultaneous changes make adolescents vulnerable to psychological problems if they lack adequate adaptive skills (Kasmianti, 2021; Ruimassa, 2023). This situation demonstrates that adolescent mental health is a crucial aspect that requires attention from families, schools, and healthcare professionals.

In the school environment, final-year junior high school (SMP) students, particularly ninth graders, face higher academic pressure than those in previous grades. They are required to complete various school assignments, prepare for final assessments, face academic competition, and determine their choice of continuing education to senior high school (SMA) or vocational high school (SMK). These various demands can be a source of stress if students' coping skills have not developed optimally (Debyo et al., 2024). In addition to academic pressure, conflicts with peers, family relationship dynamics, and emotional changes that occur during adolescence also increase the risk of psychological stress (Astuti et al., 2024; Diorarta, 2020).

Mental health issues in adolescents have become a global concern due to their increasing prevalence. The World Health Organization reports that approximately one in seven adolescents aged 10–19 years experience a mental disorder, with depression, anxiety, and conduct disorder being the most common. Mental health disorders in adolescence contribute to a decline in quality of life, academic achievement, and social relationships, and even increase the risk of dangerous behavior if not addressed early (World Health Organization, 2021). In Indonesia, the results of the Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS) indicate that approximately 34.9% of adolescents experienced mental health problems in the past 12 months, and approximately 5.5% met the criteria for a mental disorder. These findings demonstrate that adolescent mental health is an issue that requires serious attention through promotional and preventive efforts starting in the school environment.

Stress is one of the most common psychological responses experienced by adolescents when faced with demands perceived as exceeding their ability to cope. If persistent, stress can lead to impaired concentration, decreased motivation, sleep disturbances, behavioral changes, and even an increased risk of developing anxiety disorders and depression (Setiorini et al., 2024). For school-age adolescents, the ability to manage stress is a crucial factor in supporting academic success and maintaining psychological well-being.

From a positive psychology perspective, one protective factor proven to increase psychological resilience is self-compassion. According to Kristin Neff (2003), self-compassion is an individual's ability to treat themselves with kindness when facing failure, difficulties, or painful experiences. This concept consists of three main components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Individuals with high levels of self-compassion tend to be able to accept negative experiences more adaptively, are less likely to blame themselves, and have better emotional regulation when facing life's stresses (Neff, 2003).

Various studies have shown that self-compassion is linked to adolescent mental health. Research by Aziz et al. (2023) demonstrated that self-compassion plays a role in strengthening adolescent mental health by increasing self-acceptance and managing emotions. Research by Giyati and Whibowo (2023) also found that individuals with high levels of self-compassion tend to have lower stress levels due to their ability to regulate their emotions more effectively. Similar findings were reported by Zahroo and Febrieta (2024), who stated that self-compassion is an important protective factor in maintaining psychological well-being during adolescence. Furthermore, research by Yudhianto (2023) showed that self-compassion contributes to reducing students' anxiety when facing academic pressure.

Biologically, adolescents' vulnerability to stress is also influenced by the immaturity of the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain involved in decision-making, impulse control, and emotional regulation. As a result, adolescents tend to respond more intensely to social and academic pressures than adults (Ruimassa, 2023). Therefore, strengthening emotional regulation skills through the development of self-compassion is a potential strategy for promoting and preventing adolescent mental health.

Although the relationship between self-compassion and mental health has been extensively researched, most studies have focused on college students or adolescents in general. Research specifically examining the relationship between self-compassion and stress levels in ninth-grade junior high school students, particularly in Karanganyar Regency, is relatively limited. This is despite the fact that the developmental characteristics, academic demands, and social environments of junior high school students differ from those of older age groups, making the results of previous studies less generalizable.

The results of a preliminary study conducted by researchers on January 19, 2026, at SMP Negeri 3 Gondangrejo Karanganyar showed that out of 95 ninth-grade students, 30 were indicated to be experiencing relatively high levels of stress. Based on the interview results, this condition was influenced by the accumulation of academic demands, conflicts with peers, family problems, parents' economic conditions, and confusion in determining educational choices for high school or vocational school. These findings indicate that ninth-grade students face various stressors that have the potential to disrupt mental health if not balanced with good psychological adaptation skills.

Based on the above description, self-compassion is seen as an internal factor that has the potential to help adolescents manage psychological stress more adaptively, thereby reducing their stress levels. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze the relationship between self-compassion and stress levels in ninth-grade adolescents at SMP Negeri 3 Gondangrejo Karanganyar. The results of this study are expected to provide a scientific basis for the development of mental health promotion programs in schools through self-

compassion-based psychoeducation, as well as provide input for Guidance and Counseling teachers, community nurses, and school administrators in designing preventive interventions to improve adolescent psychological well-being.

2. Theoretical Study

The adolescent transition period in ninth-grade students is theoretically characterized by role ambiguity and emotional instability that increase vulnerability to stress due to accumulated academic demands and self-identity crises (Kasmianti, 2021; Ruimassa, 2023). In overcoming this psychological distress, *self-compassion*, built on the pillars of *self-kindness*, *common humanity*, and *mindfulness*, acts as a psychological *buffer* and an adaptive non-pharmacological emotional regulator (Sugianto, 2020; Anisah et al., 2025). This foundation is strengthened by previous empirical studies by Raden Ajeng Santi Nuraini H. (2025) on a population of ninth-grade students and Tiara Rizki (2023), which consistently found a significant negative correlation between *self-compassion* and stress levels, where individuals with high self-compassion are able to suppress cortisol hormone production when facing pressure (Setiorini et al., 2024). Through theoretical synthesis and empirical evidence, this study is based on the premise that increasing the capacity of self-compassion in ninth grade adolescent students at SMP Negeri 3 Gondangrejo Karanganyar will directly minimize the degree of stress they experience.

3. Research Methods

Study Design This study uses a quantitative correlational design to analyze the connection between self-compassion and stress levels without any intervention. **Population** The study population consists of all ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Gondangrejo Karanganyar. **Sample** The sample was selected using simple random sampling. **Instrument** The data collection instrument is a questionnaire structured according to the Indonesian version of the *Self-Compassion Scale* (SCS), which has been tested as valid and reliable (Sugianto, 2020). **Data Collection** Data were collected using the SCS questionnaire. **Data Analysis** The data were analyzed using simple linear regression. For testing the research model $Y = a + bX$, where Y is the dependent variable (stress level), a is a constant, b is the regression coefficient, and X is the independent variable (*self-compassion ability*). The classical assumption test and coefficient significance test (t-test) were conducted by referring to general statistical procedures without explaining the mathematical formula in detail, where the interpretation of the results of the instrument validity and reliability test on the initial data was declared valid based on the value significance. And coefficient *Cronbach's alpha* was met threshold limit empirical.

4. Results And Discussion

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Category.

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	71	74.7
Moderate	23	24.2
High	1	1.1
Total	95	100.0

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Category.

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	1	1.1
Moderate	13	13.7
High	81	85.3
Total	95	100.0

The results of the univariate analysis showed that the majority of respondents had self-compassion abilities in the High category, namely 81 students (85.3%). In line with this, the respondents' stress levels were generally in the Low category, namely 71 students (74.7%).

Table 3. Spearman's Rank Correlation Between Self-Compassion and Stress Level.

Variable	Self-Compassion	Stress Level
Self-Compassion	1.000	−0.310**
Stress Level	−0.310**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.002
N	95	95

Based on the Spearman's Rank correlation test, the correlation coefficient (r_s) was obtained at -0.310 with a p-value of 0.002 ($p < 0,05$). This result indicates a significant negative relationship with a moderate strength between self-compassion and stress levels in ninth grade adolescents at SMP Negeri 3 Gondangrejo Karanganyar.

Spearman's Rho () $r = -0,310; p = 0,002$ test results empirically prove that the higher a student's *self-compassion*, the lower their stress levels. *Self-compassion* serves as a buffer for mental health by reducing destructive self-criticism. Amidst the high national mental health problems of adolescents based on data recorded by I-NAMHS (1 in 3 adolescents), community mental health nursing interventions through self-compassion-based psychoeducation programs are highly recommended for implementation in school environments.

5. Conclusion And Suggestions

Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion in this study, it can be concluded that the majority of ninth-grade adolescents at SMP Negeri 3 Gondangrejo Karanganyar have high *self-compassion abilities* (85.3%) and *relatively low stress levels* (74.7%). The results of the Spearman's Rho correlation test showed a significant negative relationship with a moderate correlation strength ($r = -0,310; p = 0,002$) between the two variables. This indicates that the higher the *self-compassion abilities* possessed by students, the lower the stress levels experienced in facing the academic pressure of graduation. This finding emphasizes the importance of integrating *self-compassion-based psychoeducation programs* in educational institutions and optimizing community psychiatric nursing care to maintain the psychological stability of adolescents.

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