

Self-Compassion as a Mediator of Social Support and Psychological Well-Being Among 12th Students

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Article History: Received: 06-10-2025, Revised: 21-12-2025, Accepted: 22-12-2025, Published: 23-12-2025

Abstract

The matter of psychological well-being (PWB) is of fundamental importance, especially for 12th grade students who frequently face increased academic pressures in conjunction with the difficulties of transitioning to life after graduation. By positioning self-compassion as a mediator, this research explores correlation between social support and PWB of students. The study utilized a quantitative path analysis design and featured selective sampling of 133 12th-grade students from SMA X in Wonogiri Regency. The instruments used included Neff's Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) consisting of 26 items, Zimet's Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) with 12 items, and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (RPWB) comprising 18 items. Analysis showed a notable connection between social support and PWB, with self-compassion acting as a key mediating factor. The R^2 value of 0.363 indicates that social support and self-compassion together are able to explain 36.3% of the variation in students' PWB, factors beyond the scope of this research model account for the remaining 63.7% of the variation. However, the R^2 value is still considered quite good in psychological research, as PWB is known to be influenced by many complex internal and external factors. Thus, this research model can be considered valid and successful in explaining the relationship between variables according to theoretical expectations. These findings underscore that efforts to enhance students' PWB should not only focus on strengthening social support within their environment but also on cultivating self-compassion as an attitude of kindness toward oneself, enabling students to better manage academic and personal developmental challenges in a healthy and balanced manner.

Keywords:

psychological well-being; self-compassion; social support; students

Abstrak

Masalah kesejahteraan psikologis memiliki arti yang sangat krusial, khususnya bagi siswa kelas 12 yang sering menghadapi tekanan akademik yang meningkat bersamaan dengan kesulitan dalam transisi ke kehidupan setelah lulus. Adapun tujuannya dari penelitian ini guna menyelidiki korelasi antara dukungan sosial maupun kesejahteraan psikologis, dengan belas kasih diri (self-compassion) sebagai variabel mediator. Penelitian ini mengadopsi desain analisis jalur kuantitatif dan melibatkan sampling selektif terhadap 133 siswa kelas 12 dari SMA X di Kabupaten Wonogiri. Instrumen yang digunakan meliputi Skala Empati Diri Neff (SCS) yang terdiri dari 26 item, Skala Dukungan Sosial Multidimensi Zimet (MSPSS) dengan 12 item, dan Skala Kesejahteraan Psikologis Ryff (RPWB) yang terdiri dari 18 item. Analisis mengungkapkan hubungannya yang signifikan antara dukungan sosial maupun kesejahteraan psikologis, dengan empati diri berperan sebagai mediator yang krusial dalam hubungan tersebut. Nilai koefisien determinasi (R^2) yakni 0.363 menunjukkan bahwasanya dukungan sosial maupun belas kasih diri bersama-sama mampu menjelaskan 36,3% variasi

dalam kesejahteraan psikologis mahasiswa, sementara tersisa 63,7% dipengaruhi oleh berbagai faktor lain di luar model temuan ini. Namun, nilai R^2 ini masih dianggap cukup baik dalam penelitian psikologis, karena kesejahteraan psikologis diketahui dipengaruhi oleh banyak faktor internal dan eksternal yang kompleks. Oleh karena itu, model penelitian ini dapat dianggap valid dan berhasil dalam menjelaskan hubungan antara variabel sesuai dengan ekspektasi teoretis. Temuan ini menekankan bahwa upaya untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis siswa tidak hanya harus berfokus pada penguatan dukungan sosial di lingkungan mereka, tetapi juga pada pengembangan belas kasih terhadap diri sendiri sebagai sikap kebaikan terhadap diri sendiri, sehingga siswa dapat mengelola tantangan akademik dan perkembangan pribadi dengan cara yang sehat dan seimbang.

Kata Kunci:

dukungan sosial; kesejahteraan psikologis; siswa; welas asih diri



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Introduction

The problem of psychological well-being for adolescents is getting worse and needs more care, both in the global and national contexts. Within the age group of 10 to 19 years, the prevalence of mental disorders reaches one in seven adolescents, as estimated by the World Health Organization (WHO). The most common causes of psychological disability in this group are depression and anxiety. Furthermore, people aged 15 to 29, mortality patterns show that this cause has emerged as third leading contributor to death, emphasizing that mental health issues are not only related to quality of life but also to the survival of the younger generation (WHO, 2024). This condition is also reflected in Indonesia, as shown by the 2024 National Adolescent Health Survey, which states that around one-third of adolescents, or around 15.5 million people, experience mental health problems, while one in twenty adolescents, or around 2.45 million, have been diagnosed with mental disorders (UNICEF, 2024). This fact indicates a high level of psychological vulnerability among Indonesian adolescents, requiring a more systematic response and efforts from various relevant parties.

In the perspective of positive psychology, mental health is not only defined as the absence of psychological disorders, but also as a state of optimal psychological functioning. A key part of this condition is psychological well-being (PWB). Ryff describes PWB as a concept that has many different parts. It shows how well someone can grow and find meaning in their life. PWB encompasses six main dimensions, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1995). Psychological well-being plays a very important role in late adolescence, especially for 12th grade students who are in the transition phase to early adulthood. At this stage, adolescents face various developmental demands, such as academic pressure and preparation for the future after graduation. Hurlock explains that failure to adjust to developmental demands can trigger various psychological problems such as emotional pressure and feelings of inadequacy (Hurlock, 1980). Therefore, understanding the factors that strengthen adolescent psychological well-being is very important, especially for 12th grade students.

One external factor that plays an important role in supporting adolescent PWB is social support. Zimet defines social support as an individual's perception of the

availability of emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance obtained from their immediate social environment, include peers, family, and other significant people (Zimet et al., 1988). Research indicates The presence of strong perceived social support in adolescents corresponds with more optimal PWB and lower stress and emotional difficulties (Hellfeldt et al., 2020; Rizqullah & Ansyah, 2024). The social support obtained by students can develop their prosocial behavior (Mooduto et al., 2023). If individuals have a stronger perception of social support, it can also be associated with better PWB (Wilson et al., 2020). This means that a supportive social environment can help adolescents develop adaptive skills in coping with academic stress and life pressures.

However, an individual's internal psychological mechanisms also determine how social support is perceived and internalized. One important internal factor that influences this process is self-compassion. Neff describes self-compassion as being gentle with oneself during tough times, recognizing that struggling is a natural part of life, and being clearly aware of one's situation without criticizing oneself. This concept includes three key parts: mindfulness self-kindness, and common humanity. People who have a strong sense of self-compassion are usually better at handling negative feelings, adjusting to setbacks, and keeping their mental health stable (Neff & McGehee, 2010). Research also shows that self-compassion is connected with better mental health and helps reduce anxiety and stress among teenagers (Liu, 2021; Yousefi, 2021). In addition, self-compassion can contribute to building adaptive abilities in adolescents (Fauziah & Rofiqoh, 2023). Individuals who possess self-compassion tend not to blame themselves excessively (Naini et al., 2024).

Although, correlation between social support, self-compassion, and PWB has been studied on its own in many research papers, there is still not much work that puts all three together in one model, especially when it comes to high school students in Indonesia. Evidence from previous studies underscores self-compassion as a key contributing in linking academic stress to psychological well-being among these students. However, this particular study did not use social support as the main factor it was trying to predict (Edlyn et al., 2025). In fact, social support is a highly relevant external factor in the lives of adolescents and has the potential to influence psychological well-being through internal mechanisms such as self-compassion. This limitation indicates a research gap that needs to be further explored.

This study introduces a new perspective by exploring how self-compassion acts as a mediator between social support and PWB, using path analysis as the method. In terms of concept, the research combines both external influences, such as social support, and internal factors, like self-compassion, to explain PWB of adolescents. This approach offers a broader understanding of protective factors that contribute to mental health in 12th grade students.

The urgency of this research is even greater in the context of 12th grade students at SMA X in Wonogiri Regency. Based on observations made by the researcher, in addition to academic burdens such as school exams and college selection, students are also faced with expectations to maintain the school's achievements and reputation, which has achieved various accomplishments, such as school accreditation and other national achievements, because this school is still relatively new. This condition has the potential to increase psychological pressure on students, so that existence of self-compassion and social support abilities become important factors in maintaining their PWB. The researchers have also coordinated with the

school, particularly the guidance counselors, to reinforce the importance of this research in proving the extent of self-compassion, social support, and PWB experienced by 12th grade students at SMA X in Wonogiri Regency.

The current study seeks to explore how social support influences PWB of 12th grade students, with a focus on self-compassion as the key factor mediator variable. By investigating self-compassion as a mediating factor, this study intends to enhance existing insights into its influence on students' PWB. Moreover, the findings are expected to assist educators and counselors, especially those working field of social sciences and within an Islamic guidance counseling framework, in creating more effective programs that focus on enhancing social support and promoting self-compassion, ultimately leading to better psychological outcomes for students.

Methods

A quantitative method was applied in this study to explore how self-compassion mediates association between PWB and social support. A senior high school in Wonogiri Regency, and there were no prior studies on these three variables in that area. All the 12th grade students at State Senior High School X were chosen as the group for this study, which is located in Wonogiri Regency. The researchers used selective sampling, which means they included all 12th grade students from the school, resulting in 133 participants. This method was chosen because 12th grade students often face more stress and pressure, which can affect their well-being. This pressure comes from things like preparing for practical exams, school exams, college entrance exams, and getting ready to start working. The data was collected directly by giving out paper questionnaires to every 12th grade student.

The researchers used a 5-point Likert scale and tools that had already been checked to make sure they were accurate and reliable. Neff's Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) served as the instrument to quantify participants' self-compassion levels, which has 26 questions (Neff, 2003). For social support, they adopt Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which has 12 questions (Zimet et al., 1988). To assess PWB, they used the Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (RPWB), which includes 18 questions (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

The researchers used data analysis methods called path analysis through the JASP version 0.95.4 software. Ghazali (2008) says that path analysis is a statistical tool used to check if there are cause-and-effect relationships between different factors. It does this by looking at path coefficients, which show how strongly one thing affects another, either directly or through another variable. Kline (2016) also mentions that path analysis is a simpler form of structural equation modeling (SEM), which helps test ideas about how different factors are related. In this study, path analysis was chosen because the researcher wanted to see how self-compassion, social support exerts both indirect and direct impacts on PWB. The investigation covered an evaluation of the direct path, the mediation path, and their combined total influence.

Result and Discussion

Research Result

An initial examination of the research variables social support, self-compassion, and psychological well-being was performed using descriptive statistics, in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic

	Psychological Well-being	Sosial Support	Self-Compassion
Valid	133	133	133
Mean	65.04	45.89	87.49
Std. Deviation	7.541	7.130	11.73
Skewness	0.773	-0.588	0.058
Std. Error of Skewness	0.210	0.210	0.210
Kurtosis	3.553	0.286	0.701
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.417	0.417	0.417
Range	57.00	36.00	70.00
Minimum	45.00	24.00	55.00
Maximum	102.0	60.00	125.0

Source: Research data, 2025

Looking at table 1, there were 133 people who answered. Their average score for PWB was 65.038, with a std. of 7.541. For social support, the average was 45.895, with a std. of 7.130. The average for self-compassion was 87.489, with a std. of 11.728. A Shapiro-Wilk test showed that PWB and social support did not follow a normal distribution ($p < .001$ and $p = 0.012$), but self-compassion was close to normal ($p = 0.171$). Even though the normality assumption wasn't fully met, path analysis was still used because the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimator is strong enough to handle non-normal data when the sample size is 100 or more.

The result of the direct effect test between research variables were analyzed using path analysis, and a summary of the result is presented in table 2 below.

Table 2. Direct Effect

		Estimate	Std. error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Sosial Support	→ Psychological Well-being	0.220	0.079	2.796	.005	0.066	0.375

Note. Estimator is ML.
Source: Research data, 2025

As indicated in table 2, PWB is considerably affected by the level of social support, as reflected by the coeff. estimation of 0.220, and the p-value is 0.005, this outcome demonstrates the statistical significance of the effect. The coefficient falls within the 95% confidence interval [0.066, 0.375], showing the effect is real and not due to chance. The standard error is small (0.079), which means the estimate is reliable. The results show that students with more social support usually have better PWB. In simple terms, having strong social support clearly and directly improves students psychological well-being as shown by the statistical analysis.

The analysis of the indirect effect, as shown in Table 3, reveals impact social support on PWB through self-compassion as a mediator variable based on the path analysis in the display below.

Table 3. Indirect Effects

							95% Confidence Interval	
			Estimate	Std. error	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
Sosial Support →	Self-Compassion →	Psychological Well-being	0.194	0.051	3.787	<.001	0.094	0.294

Note: Estimator is ML
Source: Research data, 2025

Looking at table 3, students' PWB is strongly influenced by social support. The estimated effect of 0.194, accompanied by a p-value lower than 0.001 and a 95% confidence interval of 0.094–0.294, which means the results are reliable and not likely to be zero. The low error rate of 0.051 shows the findings are consistent and not changing much. Self-compassion is a key factor that helps explain how social support affects PWB, with a high significance level (z-value = 3.787). It can be inferred that self-compassion acts as a bridge linking social support with PWB. Greater social support fosters higher self-compassion, which then leads to better PWB, and this relationship is statistically significant.

To find out a comprehensive picture of the influence between variables, a total effect test in the summary of table 4 below.

Table 4. Total Effects

						95% Confidence Interval		
		Estimate	Std. error	z-value	p	Lower	Upper	
Sosial Support	→	Psychological Well-being	0.414	0.084	4.911	< .001	0.249	0.580

Note: Estimator is ML

Source: Research data, 2025

Looking at table 4, the value is 0.414 with a p-value less than 0.001, students' overall PWB is evidently shaped by social support, as 95% confidence interval ranging between 0.249 - 0.580, showing the effect is real and not close to zero. The standard error is 0.084, meaning the results are reliable. When looking at both direct and indirect effects, the high z-value of 4.911 shows there's a strong correlation such as getting social support and students' mental health. Self-compassion, influenced by the amount of social support received, appears to guide relationship between social support and PWB.

The result of path coefficient estimation test to show the magnitude and direction of the influence between variables in the path analysis model being tested are presented in table 5 below.

Table 5. Path Coefficient

							95% Confidence Interval	
			Estimate	Std. error	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
Self-Compassion	→	Psychological Well-being	0.317	0.048	6.622	< .001	0.223	0.411
Sosial Support	→	Psychological Well-being	0.220	0.079	2.796	.005	0.066	0.375
Sosial Support	→	Self-Compassion	0.611	0.132	4.616	< .001	0.352	0.871

Note: Estimator is ML

Source: Research data, 2025

The results in Table 5 reveal that self-compassion significantly enhances students' PWB, indicated by a path coeff. of 0.317 and a p-value < 0.001, is statistically significant, as confirmed by 95% confidence interval of 0.223–0.411. Moreover, self-compassion mediates relationship between social support and PWB, showing a meaningful impact.

The coeff. of determination (R^2) was used to assess the strength of the structural model in explaining variance in PWB. The test results in table 6.

Table 6. R-Squared

	R^2
Psychological Well-being	0.363
Self-Compassion	0.138

Source: Research data, 2025

The R^2 value of 0.363 shows that self-compassion and social support together can explain 36.3% of the changes in students' PWB. The rest, which is 63.7%, is because of other factors that are not included in this study. But even though the R^2 value isn't very high, it is still considered good in psychological research. This is because PWB is affected by many different factors, both inside and outside a person. According to Ghazali (2008), an R^2 value between 0.20 and 0.50 is seen as acceptable for describing the link between different variables in social research. So, this study model is valid and useful in explaining how variables are connected based on theory. It also helps in understanding how self-compassion plays a role in how social support affects the PWB of grade XII students.

The causal relationship model between variables was tested using path analysis. The visualization of the structural model and estimated path coefficients is presented in the form of a path plot in figure 1 below.

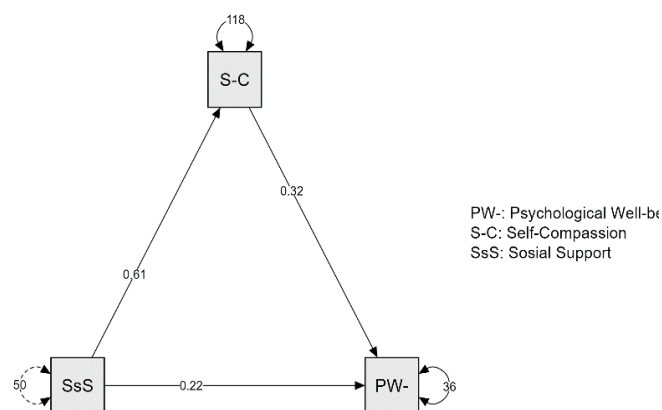


Figure 1. Path Plot

Figure 1 shows the theoretical model used in this study. The Social Support score for Self-Compassion has an estimate of 0.611 and a p-value < 0.001, which means social support as a big role in increasing self-compassion. This is supported by a 95% confidence interval between 0.352 and 0.871. Social support also directly

affects PWB with an estimate of 0.220, which is less than the total effect of 0.414. According to Table 5, students' PWB is strongly and positively affected by self-compassion, with p -value < 0.001 and path coeff. of 0.317.

The results are very trustworthy because all confidence intervals don't include zero, meaning the effects are real and not due to chance. Also, the standard errors across all paths are low, showing the results are reliable and consistent. All the p -values are below 0.05 (most are even below 0.001), proving the relationships between independent variables, mediators, and dependents are significant. So, the path analysis model gives a solid way to show how social support, self-compassion, and PWB are connected in 12th grade students.

Discussion

The data analysis shows that there is a positive and important connection between PWB and social support of grade XII students at SMA X in Wonogiri Regency. When students get more social support, their PWB also improves. Research found that higher perceived social support was associated with fewer anxiety symptoms and better PWB outcomes, which aligns with broader evidence that social support contributes to improved emotional adjustment and well-being (Purwaningsih et al., 2023). Students who have high PWB are usually more focused on their studies, use better ways to deal with stress, and can build positive relationships with friends and teachers. This helps them be ready to learn, handle exam stress better, and make good career choices (Suherlin et al., 2024). Peers are important in giving support through understanding, sharing study tips, and helping with homework to keep relationships strong and maintain students' mental health (Lidiya et al., 2024). Social support can be a helpful resource that helps students build self-esteem and positive feelings when they face challenges from school and social life (Mahendika & Sijabat, 2023). Among student-athletes, social support was associated with better coping with demands and improved PWB (Blando, 2024, preprint).

The self-compassion test with social support also proved a significant relationship, namely that when students receive high social support, their level of self-compassion will increase. When students feel that they receive sufficient support, they will tend to be aware of their high self-acceptance so that they are able to show compassion towards themselves. Evidence from prior research by Aulia & Fitriani (2024), which found a positive and statistically significant correlations perceived self-compassion and social support among students, implying that adolescents who perceive greater social support tend to exhibit higher levels of self-compassion. Through supportive social experiences, individuals will feel more understood and accepted by others, thereby forming an attitude of self-compassion. This attitude will develop when individuals feel that they have a supportive social environment, especially when they will recover from stress through the practice of self-compassion (Kaya, 2024).

This study's outcomes reveal self-compassion functions as a psychological pathway that channels the influence of social support on students' psychological well-being (PWB), consistent with previous findings that emphasize the role of self-compassion as an important mechanism through which external factors can influence mental health, where self-compassion and social support have been shown to have a significant relationship with levels of flourishing (Suharsono & Wismanto, 2023). In addition, self-compassion also acts as an adaptive mechanism in coping with life's

pressures, because active coping strategies alone are not enough to relieve academic and social stress without the ability to be kind to oneself (Bui et al., 2021). Elevated self-compassion may mitigate the effects of stress and improve PWB, thus having the potential as a preventive strategy against academic pressure in adolescents (Edlyn et al., 2025). Furthermore, the quality of social relationships also influences an individual's emotional state, which in turn affects behavior; therefore, self-compassion can serve as a strategic mechanism to reduce negative emotions and maladaptive behaviors in an academic context, such as procrastination (Yang et al., 2021).

Previous research shows that level of social support perceived by individuals has a significantly positive impact on overall happiness, while stress originating from the school environment has a negative impact on happiness (Fadillah & Rahmah, 2025). Their research model explains more than half of the variation in happiness ($R^2 \approx 0.611$), confirming importance of social support in improving student well-being. Such outcomes are consistent with studies Candra et al. (2024), which shows that emotional support from schools and social environments has a direct positive impact on the PWB of vocational high school students. Additionally, a review conducted by Auliya & Setiyowati (2024) confirms that social support consistently plays a role in protecting and improving the PWB of adolescents. Based on this foundation, this study emphasizes that self-compassion has potential to act as a mediator that strengthens the positive effects of social support while reducing the negative impact of academic stress, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the PWB of 12th-grade students.

Self-compassion serves as the basis for building emotional regulation, developing positive thinking patterns, and self-acceptance in adolescents when facing pressure, which are important components of their psychological well-being. (Sibarani & Wahyuni, 2025). Studies show that having social support helps build resilience through self-compassion, allowing people to handle stress from school and emotions better (Khairunnisa et al., 2025). Also, how students see the support they get at school is closely linked to their mental well-being (Rahma et al., 2020). In fact, research across different cultures has found that being self-compassionate can make social support more effective in improving mental health, especially when cultural factors are considered (Tannous-Haddad, Barel, & Tzischinsky, 2024). Other studies also show that social support helps prevent burnout and keeps students motivated to learn, which is important for their mental health (Rehman et al., 2020). So, it's clear that being self-compassionate helps make social support more effective in improving psychological well-being for 12th grade students.

In summary, self-compassion functions as a bridge that channels the benefits of social support toward improved PWB in students. Supportive familial bonds play a substantial role in this process, peers, and teachers can foster self-compassion, which in turn enhances students' overall PWB. Thus, to help adolescents particularly 12th grade students—maintain healthy PWB, the researchers recommend interventions that focus on strengthening social connections and promoting self-compassion practices. It is hoped that this approach will have broad implications in the fields of psychology, guidance counseling, and counseling, as well as the development of educational programs that support students' PWB.

Conclusion

This study was empirically successful and theoretically valid, although the R^2 value was not particularly high. This finding also reinforces the view that, in the context of social science and psychology, measure of a model's success lies not only in the magnitude of the R^2 value, but also in the model's consistency with theory, the significance of the paths, and the empirical relevance of the research results to the phenomenon being studied. Self-compassion significantly mediates the association of social support with PWB, indicating that students perceiving high support from families, peers, and teachers tend to report stronger PWB. This positive connection becomes even stronger when students are able to embrace and practice self-compassion, allowing them to face challenges with kindness toward themselves and resilience in their daily lives. The tested path model demonstrates significance across both direct and indirect pathways, thereby confirming that self-compassion is not merely an additional factor but a central mechanism through which external social support is translated into internal psychological resilience. The mean scores, which fall within the moderate to high range, reveal that the majority of 12th grade students at SMA X in Wonogiri Regency possess relatively positive perceptions of the social support they receive and exhibit sufficient awareness of self-compassion, both of which serve as protective factors contributing to enhanced PWB. These findings suggest that interventions aimed at promoting student mental health should not only focus on strengthening external support systems but also actively cultivate self-compassion as an internal coping resource. From a practical perspective, schools, psychologists, and counselors are encouraged to design and implement programs that integrate psychoeducational approaches and supportive guidance practices to foster self-compassion among students. Such efforts are expected to reduce the detrimental effects of academic stress, strengthen emotional stability, and promote adaptive functioning for students.

Acknowledgments

Completion of this research would not have been possible without support and contributions of numerous organizations and individuals, to whom we are profoundly grateful.

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