

Self-Compassion in Polytechnic Students: “Does Gender Count?”

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Self-Compassion in Polytechnic Students: “Does Gender Count?”

Emma Dwi Ariyani, Dini Hadiani

Abstract—Self-compassion is the ability to entertain and care for oneself when suffering, failure and imperfection rather than self-criticism. Self-compassion consists of three main components; self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. Why this research about self-compassion needs to be done cannot be separated from the importance of self-compassion for someone. Several studies have proved that self-compassion can increase motivation in a person, in this case, the student to face the difficulties and mistakes without self-criticism. In completing their studies, the students are required to have confidence in their own ability and perseverance to complete each task. When faced with academic difficulties, they must be able to pass through and have the endurance to overcome the problems. As a consequence, students need to have a high self-compassion. This research was conducted with the aim to see the degree of self-compassion in polytechnic students in Indonesia by using Neff's Self-Compassion Scale (short form) measurement tool from Raes, et.al. consisting of 12 items. The research method used was descriptive study with survey technique on 255 students. The results showed that 78% of students had low self-compassion and 22% had high self-compassion. This revealed that polytechnic students still criticize themselves harshly, make a poor judgment and bad self-appraisal, and they also cannot accept their imperfection and consider it as a self-judgment. The students also tend to think that they are the only persons that experience failure and suffering. This can lead to a sense of isolation (self-isolation). Furthermore, the students are often too concerned with aspects that are not liked both in themselves and in life (overidentification). Some measures to improve self-compassion can be done, for example, by building an educational climate that not only criticizes but also provides feedback that focuses on real behavior rather than the students' general character.

Keywords—Descriptive study, polytechnic students, Indonesia, self-compassion

I. INTRODUCTION

BANDUNG Polytechnic for Manufacturing (Polman Bandung) is a state polytechnic that is engaged in vocational education specifically in the manufacturing world. It is shown by the system or pattern of education that leads to the manufacturing process similar to manufacturing industry. In terms of teaching and learning program, Polman Bandung employs 60% practice and 40% theory. This is done for the purpose of producing students who are skillful and competent in hard skills in relation to their mastery in technical competence. Likewise, the mastery of soft skills which is believed to be important to support the hard skill is also given

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in form of strict coaching through extracurricular program and other activities. For polytechnic students, having rigorous schedule of lectures which requires them to take 110 credits in 3 years for diploma 3 programs and 140 credits for diploma 4 programs, completing several dense theoretical assignments and practices, fulfilling responsive tasks, and doing other activities require a very careful time management. In addition, the adoption of some strict academic rules, for example the drop out (DO) system for students who are not able to get the minimum required score, and also a warning letter if students violate the rules that effects the termination of their studies seem very difficult to go through. In other words, to be able to complete the study period well and on time, the polytechnic students must have high motivation to overcome the various academic demands and obstacles that arise.

The previous studies found that the general description of the soft skills index of students has a median value of 3.11 from the scale of 4 [1]-[2]. This shows that Polman Bandung students have high soft skills in supporting the success of their studies. There are eight dimensions of soft skills measured, namely motivation, flexibility, willingness to learn, integrity, relationship building, teamwork & cooperation, leadership and communication skills. Dimensions of willingness to learn (3.25) i.e. willingness and ability to always want to learn is the aspect most controlled by participants than other aspects. Teamwork & cooperation dimension that is the ability and willingness to cooperate with others cooperatively (3.22) is the second dimension that dominates students' soft skills. However, although the overall index of student soft skills is high, leadership (2.96) and motivation (2.99) are two aspects of skills received the lowest attention compared with other aspects, although the values are still within a good range [2]. The results of this previous study provide opportunities as well as homework for researchers to overcome these problems.

As it was previously stated, motivation is considered as low aspect of soft skills experienced by the students. This can lead to problems since motivation plays a major role in students' academic work and in their achievement [3]. It reflects in students' choices of learning tasks, in the time and effort they devote to them, in their persistence on learning tasks, in their coping with the obstacles they encounter in the learning process. It can be said that motivation is very important to support the students' success of learning. This phenomenon is also supported by another study about the relationship between

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self-compassion and reaction to academic failure among students who received unsatisfactory midterm grade scores which showed that self-compassion positively correlated with positive and negative coping emotion focused strategies with a focus on negative emotions [4].

Why this research about self-compassion needs to be done cannot be separated from the importance of self-compassion. A research conducted by [5] has proved that self-compassion can increase motivation in a person, in this case, the student to face the difficulties and mistakes made without criticizing himself. In completing his studies the student requires confidence in his own ability and perseverance to complete each task. When faced with academic difficulties students must be able to pass through and have endurance to overcome the problems. It is therefore necessary for students to have high self-compassion. Self-compassion focuses on the degree of individual in terms of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness [6]. Students with high self-compassion will be able to control self-doubt and academic anxiety better. Students will be stronger and can face obstacles in the education process. Self-compassion is needed to help students complete their studies well according to the demands of the institution without sacrificing their mental health.

Based on the above description, this study aims to get a picture of the degree of self-compassion of Polman Bandung students and the factors that influence it. It is expected that the result of the research can provide data to find solution of handling and guiding students more precisely in terms of self-compassion.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Self-compassion

Compassion involves sensitivity to the experience of suffering, coupled with a deep desire to alleviate that suffering [7]. This means that in order to experience compassion, you must first acknowledge the presence of pain. Rather than rushing past that homeless woman as you're walking down the busy street, for example, you must actually stop to consider how difficult her life must be. This involves pausing, stepping out of your usual frame of reference, and viewing the world from the vantage point of another [8]. Self-compassion is the ability to entertain and care for oneself when suffering, failure and imperfection rather than self-criticism. Self-compassion consists of three main components i.e. self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness

B. Self-kindness

Self-kindness is the individual's ability to understand and accept oneself as well as to give tenderness rather than to hurt and judge oneself, where most individuals see it as something normal. Individuals acknowledge problems and shortcomings without self-assessment. When this reality is received with kindness then the individual will generate positive emotions of goodness and help overcome them [9]. This requires an individual understanding of weaknesses and obstacles not to judge oneself (self-judgment). Having self-kindness can

alleviate and soothe the troubled minds, and it can create peace by offering warmth, gentleness and self-sympathy.

C. Common Humanity

Common humanity is the situation where individuals realize that they should perceive difficulties, problems and challenges which are parts of human life and these are things that everyone experiences and not just experienced by himself [9]. Common humanity links the individual weaknesses to the human condition in general, so that the deficiency is seen as a whole not just a subjective view which sees only ones who experience failure in life. This can create a sense of isolation (self-isolation) in which the individual focuses on the deficiency so that he cannot see anything else and feel himself weak and worthless.

D. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to see clearly, accept and face reality without judging what is going on in a situation [9]. Individuals need to see things as they are no more and no less to respond to situations with compassion and effective means [10]. Mindfulness is the condition where individuals are aware of the experience that occurs with a clear and balanced attitude so as not to ignore or think of aspects that are not liked in self and life too much (overidentification). Mindfulness refers to actions to see things experienced with an objective perspective.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this research is descriptive study that is a method used to give description about a state at the time of research. This research uses survey method with questionnaire that is collecting data from a number of units or individuals at the same time to know the description of the individual, which in this research to know the degree of self-compassion of students .

The purposive sampling in the research participants is used in the process of selecting the subject that fits in the best position to provide the required information. In this study, the subjects of the study are students of grades I, II and III as many as 255 people. To collect data, the measuring tool used is the Neff's Self-Compassion Scale (short form) [11] which consists of 12 statements to measure the degree of the main components of self-compassion which are self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. Subjects are asked to give a mark on one of the columns ranging from 'never' up to 'always'.

The following is the framework of the research:

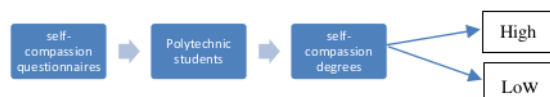


fig.1. The framework of the research

The data analysis technique uses the average value of the total score on each self-compassion component to determine the high and low categories. Self-compassion is high if the three

components are in the high category. On the other hand, if one of the components is in low category, it is considered as low self-compassion.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The description of research subjects by sex and distribution by level of study can be seen in table 1 and table 2 below.

TABLE I
DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS BASED ON GENDER

Sex	Quantity	Percentage
Male	211	83%
Female	44	17%
Total	255	100%

TABLE II
DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS BASED ON LEVEL OF STUDY

Year	Male	Female	Quantity	Percentage
I	93	34	127	50%
II	40	3	43	17%
III	78	7	85	33%
Total			255	100%

The research that has been done on 255 students resulted in 78% of students was included in the low category, whereas 22% of students was included in the high category, so that the results showed the general picture degree of self-compassion in students as seen in table III below.

TABLE III
DESCRIPTION OF STUDENTS' SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion	High Category		Low Category		Total	
	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage
	56	22%	199	78%	255	100%

Based on the findings of the research data in table III above, it can be interpreted that in general the students have low self-compassion degree. This shows that they are still self-criticizing harshly against their mistakes and shortcomings. They are likely to make a poor judgment and give bad self-appraisal on themselves. As a result, they cannot accept their imperfection and regard it as a self-judgment. Students also tend to be subjective and focus on their deficiencies, so they feel weak and worthless. They consider they are the only humans experience failure and suffering, and this can lead to a sense of isolation (self-isolation). Students are often overwhelmed by their problems, and it seems that they concerned too much on aspects that are not liked both in themselves and in life. They are likely not aware of experiences that should be confronted by a balanced and positive attitude, and always try to see experiences in subjective perspective (overidentification). It means that the students tend to see themselves negatively as they always consider themselves as poor persons and helpless.

If each component of self-compassion is examined more in some depth, then the degree of each component can be seen in table IV below.

TABLE IV
DESCRIPTION OF DEGREE OF SELF-COMPASSION COMPONENTS

Self-Kindness		Common Humanity		Mindfulness	
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
127	128	138	117	136	119
49.8%	50.2%	54.1%	45.9%	53.3%	46.7%

As it can be seen in table IV, more students have low self-kindness (50.2%) compared to component of common humanity (45.9%) and mindfulness (46.7%). Based on the result of the questionnaire, it can be said that in general the students tend to see themselves as negative creatures who are weak and full of problems. It was proved by the percentage of low self-compassion obtained. More than a half of the students were in low category of self-kindness. The students belong to this group tend to blame themselves if they encounter problems. Instead of finding solution, they are likely to be harsh on themselves. Similarly, almost half of the students placed the component of common humanity in low category. This evidences that the students tend to feel miserable when they face problems or difficulties without noticing that others also experience the similar things. The students belong to this group will be likely to think that they are the only humans experience problems. Finally, in terms of mindfulness, almost half of the participants of the study are considered in low category. They are likely to see something only from their own perspective. It will be difficult for them to accept reality that other people also encounter the same thing.

In summary, it can be said that students are more self-criticizing and view themselves have many weaknesses and shortcomings. Students with low self-kindness can lower the degree of common humanity and mindfulness components. Students who criticize and feel not have good academic skills when experiencing difficulties will tend to withdraw from the environment and will center on negative thoughts and feelings to display excessive emotion. On the other hand, students with a low degree of common humanity will display the most miserable feelings of feelings, assuming only those who experience the academic difficulties and failures. While students who have low mindfulness degree will see the experience with a subjective perspective. They cannot accept thoughts, feelings and circumstances as they are without pressure and denial.

It is stated that self-compassion can facilitate resistance to failure and difficulty in the educational process, the low self-compassion of students is very detrimental considering the academic demands in manufacturing polytechnics is very high. According to Neff, self-compassion is influenced by internal and external factors of sex, personality, adult criticism, attachment and modeling [9]. If efforts will be made to improve the level of self-compassion, the most possible step is to build an academic climate that not only criticizes the students, but also provides appropriate feedback that can help them overcome the problems.

It is also believed that self-compassion will be low if the student continuously receives negative criticism. It does not build their positive characters. In fact, it raises the student's negative perception of himself. Moreover, as it is proposed, providing compassion feedback can be done by giving attentive

advice focuses on apparent behavior rather than general student characters [9]. Feedback is given to the behavior shown, so the student knows his mistakes and knows what to fix. In addition, feedback is also given to the emotions behind the behavior of the problem, so that students understand the feelings and emotions experienced as the cause of his behavior, and know what behavior should be improved. This can improve the mindfulness of students that will ultimately impact on improving the student's self-kindness and common humanity. It can be said that the higher the degree of the three components of self-compassion, the higher will be the students' self-compassion. By having high self-compassion the students are expected to be able to complete their studies well in accordance with the demands of the institution without sacrificing their mental health.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The research has revealed the polytechnic students' degree of self-compassion and the factors influence it. Based on the results of research, it can be concluded that in general polytechnic students have low degrees of self-compassion. This means that students are still judging themselves and assessing themselves negatively. They feel that only they who are experiencing difficulties and failures that make them withdraw from the environment. Students also assess the experience subjectively and focus on weaknesses and shortcomings. This study also found that self-kindness is the component with the lowest degree of students. This is somewhat influenced by adult criticism that makes students judge themselves negatively. Based on the results, the improvement effort that can be done is to build an educational climate that not only criticizes but also provides feedback that focuses on the apparent behavior and not on the general character of the students, so that students understand what behavior should be improved.

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