

Self-compassion and Psychological Well-Being among Non-Local Students: The Mediating Role of Resilience

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Abstract

Psychological well-being is one of the most essential aspects of the life of non-local students. To improve psychological well-being, students should have a positive attitude toward themselves and good resilience with the aim of living a life with good mental health and well-being. Therefore, this research aims to determine the role of resilience in the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being among nonlocal students in Indonesia. This study used the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS-18), the Indonesian Version of the Self-Compassion Scale, and the Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ) on data from 142 nonlocal students. The results prove that resilience partially mediates the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being. This indicates that increasing resilience leads to an increase in self-compassion and affects the development of psychological well-being. Nonlocal students who love themselves and accept their weaknesses and failures tend to be able to cope with stress and survive in every difficult condition experienced in their lives, which will lead them to reduce psychological distress.

Keywords: *Psychological well-being, self-compassion, resilience, nonlocal students*

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Introduction

Students generally face various academic and life challenges (McKenna et al., 2017) that can affect their mental health. The level of mental stress among students is much greater than that among the general public (Naylor, 2022). According to international WHO studies of 13,984 students, one-third of first-year students experience mental health disorders (Upsher et al., 2022; Auerbach

et al., [2018](#)). Moreover, research in Indonesia conducted on 532 students revealed that 22.2% experienced depression symptoms and 48.1% experienced anxiety, 3.0% and 8.1% of whom reported very severe depression and anxiety, respectively (Ramadianto et al., [2022](#)).

Nonlocal students have burdens and challenges that are slightly greater than those of general students. Nonlocal students who study outside their area experience serious obstacles because they experience culture shock when adapting to a new culture, in terms of language and academics, loneliness, relationships with other people, different routines, and homesickness, which cause students to feel frustrated (Ernofalina, [2017](#)). The high level of burnout among students is also caused by adjusting to cultural differences (Kloping et al., [2021](#)) and the challenges of living independently without family (Kloping et al., [2021](#); Bergmann et al., [2019](#)). Research has shown that 73.5% of nonlocal students feel bored with their lives, and 14% always feel lonely and afraid (Hafiz et al., [2023](#)). Students who cross cultural boundaries to continue their studies tend to experience significant changes in their lives, which can negatively impact their psychological well-being and mental health (Holliman et al., [2022](#)).

The accumulation of various stressors over time for nonlocal students depletes their physical and psychological resources, resulting in a lack of capacity to cope with life and academic demands (Redfern, [2016](#)). Mental stress can have a negative impact on academic activities and students' experiences in living life during college. Therefore, it is important to study and understand how to support and improve students' psychological well-being (Dodd et al., [2021](#)).

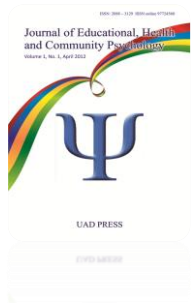
Psychological well-being is an increase in positive mood states and life satisfaction followed by a decrease in the frequency of negative mood states (Hicks et al., [2022](#); Diener et al., [2009](#)). Psychological well-being consists of emotional well-being, where someone experiences positive emotions more often than negative emotions, and cognitive well-being, which is an individual's assessment of their life satisfaction (Saud et al., [2021](#); Marcionettiet & Rossier, [2016](#)). Another opinion states that psychological well-being describes a state characterized by the presence of positive indicators and the absence of negative indicators, which include personal fields such as

self-esteem, social fields such as social connectedness and loneliness, emotional fields such as anxiety and depression, and cognitive fields such as life satisfaction (Yang et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Choi & Lim (2016) stated that psychological well-being emphasizes a focus on positive relationships with other people, personal growth, autonomy, and purpose in life, or in other words, a condition where individuals fully respect themselves.

Based on the definition of psychological well-being, nonlocal students are expected to have a good level of psychological well-being so that they can develop, feel happy and satisfied with their lives, build positive relationships with other people, and have clear life goals. It obviously has a positive impact on student life. Students who have good psychological well-being can create a positive and balanced life (Laksmidara & Nashori, 2022). Students' well-being is positively related to academic commitment (Kotera et al., 2022). Low well-being has a negative impact on student achievement and academic completion, and conversely, students with high levels of well-being tend to achieve better well-being and be able to complete their studies (Boulton et al., 2019).

Research on well-being shows that biological, psychosocial, and sociodemographic dimensions are related to psychological well-being (Voon et al., 2022). A factor that possibly influences psychological well-being is self-compassion, which is the kindness of oneself or the acceptance of failures, weaknesses and disappointments that someone has experienced in life (Homan, 2016). Self-compassion is defined as a positive attitude when people feel sick or experience difficulties or failure in life (Pandey et al., 2021). It does not avoid pain but embraces them with kindness and goodwill, which leads to the creation of prosperity in the experience of being a whole human being (Voon et al., 2022; Neff & Costigan, 2014).

People who are highly self-compassionate tend to have a positive attitude toward themselves, so they are very unlikely to develop negative attitude orientations, such as self-judgment, isolation, and overidentification (Sun et al., 2016). They will treat themselves with kindness and compassion so that they develop into individuals who are not afraid of failure and have increased motivation (Bluth & Eisenlohr-Moul, 2017). Self-compassion is known to be negatively related to negative life



experiences, hopelessness, and suicide risk (Hirsch et al., 2021). It is also associated with reduced psychological distress and increased psychological well-being (Whitehead et al., 2021).

In addition to self-compassion, resilience is one of the factors that influences psychological well-being. Resilience is known as a lack of vulnerability to stress triggers, the ability to cope with stress and good mental health outcomes despite facing various difficulties (Linden et al., 2022; Rutter, 2006). Resilience is an experience of positive adaptation in the face of risk or difficulty (Fenzel & Richardson, 2022). It is the ability to face and adapt to serious events or complex life problems (Rusandi et al., 2022; Reivich & Shatte, 2002). Moreover, Mitchell (2021) defined resilience as a "trait" or "process." As a trait, resilience is a stable individual characteristic that protects oneself from various stressors. In contrast, resilience as a process is a human-environment interaction that strengthens over time.

There are many psychological benefits of resilience, including reducing symptoms of depression (Mcdermott et al., 2020). People with a high level of resilience tend to have a high level of psychological well-being (Li & Hasson, 2020). Conversely, low levels of resilience have been proven to be associated with poor levels of psychological well-being (Labrague, 2021). Resilience is associated with reduced stress and psychological distress (Hartson et al., 2023). In other words, students' ability to overcome difficulties and recover after experiencing various problems is one of the predictors of improved psychological well-being.

This study views resilience as a mediating variable. Apart from influencing psychological well-being, few studies have shown that self-compassion is positively related to resilience (Kotera, Cockerill, et al., 2021; Kotera, Tsuda-mccaie, et al., 2021; Tang, 2019). This means that people with a high level of self-compassion tend to be able to overcome and adapt to the difficulties they face or can be said to be resilient individuals. With the various problems that have been described, this research will focus on nonlocal students. It is important to consider that psychological well-being is one of the most essential aspects of the lives of nonlocal students. This research provides an overview of nonlocal students' psychological well-being, which is triggered by self-compassion

and resilience. This research aimed to determine the role of resilience in the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being among nonlocal students in Indonesia.

Method

Participants

This research uses a quantitative survey approach. The population in this study included nonlocal students at one of the Catholic University in Yogyakarta. Because the population, which is the number of nonlocal students at this university, cannot be predicted, the researcher used accidental sampling. It was obtained by distributing online questionnaires. This sampling is based on chance, and anyone who meets the researcher can be used as a sample if the person met is suitable as a data source, which in this study is an non-local students. A total of 142 students completed the questionnaire.

The data were collected on October 19, 2023, and ended on October 31, 2023, using Google Form. Before continuing the questionnaire, respondents were required to read the attached informed consent form presented at the beginning of the Google Form. After agreeing to participate, respondents will be directed to access and complete the questionnaire.

Measurements

Psychological well-being was measured using the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS-18) developed by Riff & Keyes (1995). This scale consists of 18 items that describe the six dimensions of PWB, namely, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. For example, "I have confidence in my own opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus", which translates to "Saya mempercayai pendapat saya sendiri, meskipun pendapat tersebut berbeda dari cara berpikir orang lain". The content validity was assessed using professional judgment. The item-total correlation on the scale ranged from 0.587 to 0.891. Moreover, the reliability test of the scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.714. The estimation scale used in this study is a

5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The Indonesian version of the self-compassion scale (Sugianto et al., 2020) was used to measure self-compassion. This scale consists of 26 items that describe six dimensions of SC, namely, self-kindness vs. self-judgment, common humanity vs. isolation, and mindfulness vs. overidentification. For example, "Saya bersikap toleran terhadap kelemahan dan kekurangan saya". Sugianto et al. (2020) showed that the total score was valid based on the CFA results (marginal fit; $\chi^2/df = 1.935$; RMSEA = .053; GFI = .893; CFI = .910; TFI = .882). The reliability test of the scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.872. The estimation scale used in this study is a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Resilience was measured using a measuring instrument adapted from the Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (NMRQ), which has 12 items. One example of a statement in the questionnaire is "I manage my stress levels well", which translates to "Saya mengelola tingkat stres saya dengan baik." Content validity was assessed using professional judgment. The item-total correlation on the scale ranged from 0.593-0.886. Moreover, the reliability test of the scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.878. The estimation scale used in this study is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Analyst

This study first conducted a Pearson correlation test, which aimed to determine the relationships between the research variables. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a classic assumption test as a prerequisite for regression analysis. The research data were analyzed using the PROCESS V4.0 macro (Hayes, 2018) in IBM SPSS ver 25. This test aimed to examine the role of resilience in mediating the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being. This study also conducted a descriptive analysis to determine the characteristics of the research participants.

Results

Table 1 describes the characteristics of the participants, including gender and age. The majority of participants were female, accounting for 60.6% of the participants, while the percentage of men was 39.4%. Moreover, 52.8% of the participants were 21-23 years old. A total of 38.7% of the participants were from East Nusa Tenggara, 32.4% were from Kalimantan, and 28.9% were from Sumatra. A total of 41.5% of the participants were aged 18-21 years, and 5.6% of the remaining participants were aged 24-25 years.

Table 1
Characteristics of the participants

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Man	56	39.4%
Woman	86	60.6%
Age		
18-20	59	41.5%
21-23	75	52.8%
24-25	8	5.6%
Student' Region		
Sumatra	41	28.9%
NTT	55	38,7%
Kalimantan	46	32,4%

N=142

Table 2 illustrates the statistical description of the research variables. The results of the analysis show that 14.8% of nonlocal students have low psychological well-being, 68.3% have moderate psychological well-being, and 16.9% have high psychological well-being ($M = 61.48$, $SD = 9.34$). Thirteen percent of the nonlocal students had low self-compassion, 70.4% had moderate self-compassion, and 16.2% had high self-compassion ($M=89.23$, $SD=10.20$). Moreover, 17.6% of the nonlocal students had low resilience, 62% had moderate resilience, and 20.4% had a high level of resilience ($M=45.82$, $SD=10.20$). It can be concluded that for these three variables, the majority of students are at a moderate level.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Variables

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Psychological Well-Being	35	86	61.48	9.34
Self Compassion	54	106	89.23	10.20
Resilience	24	60	45.82	9.179

Table 3 illustrates the results of the Pearson correlation test conducted to determine the relationships between each research variable. The results of the analysis show that self-compassion has a significant and positive relationship with resilience and psychological well-being. In addition, resilience also has a significant and positive relationship with psychological well-being. It can be concluded that mediation testing can be conducted.

Table 3

Correlation Test

	Self Compassion	Resilience	Psychological Well-Being
Self Compassion	-		
Resilience	0.564**	-	
Psychological Well-Being	0.544**	0.566**	-

** $p < .001$

Before conducting path analysis, researchers first conducted a classical assumption test. The results showed that the research data were normally distributed ($p=0.200$), there was no multicollinearity (variance inflation factor (VIF) = 1.467, tolerance = 0.682), and no heteroscedasticity problems were found. After the classical assumption test, the researchers conducted a path analysis test to determine the mediating role in this study. Path analysis revealed that self-compassion significantly affects resilience ($\beta=0.507$, $p=0.000$), resilience significantly affects psychological well-being ($\beta=0.386$, $p=0.000$), and self-compassion significantly affects psychological well-being. The mediation analysis is depicted in the following table.

Table 4
Path analysis

	β	SE	P	LLCI	ULCI
Path A					
Self Compassion → Resilience	0.507	0.062	0.000	0.383	0.631
Path B					
Resilience → PWB	0.386	0.081	0.000	0.226	0.547
Path C (Total Effect)					
Self Compassion → PWB	0.496	0.064	0.000	0.368	0.624
Path C' (Direct Effect)					
Self Compassion → PWB	0.300	0.073	0.000	0.156	0.444
Path A*B (Indirect Effect)					
Self Compassion → Resilience → PWB	0.196	0.046	0.000	0.112	0.291

Furthermore, [table 4](#) shows the direct effect of self-compassion on psychological well-being, with a value of $\beta = 0.300$ and $p = 0.000$. This means that self-compassion remains positively and significantly related to psychological well-being even though resilience does not play a role as a mediator. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no full mediation effect; in other words, the mediation effect in this study is partial mediation. Meanwhile, the results of the mediation test regarding the indirect effect ($\beta=0.196$, $p=0.000$) ranged between 0.112 and 0.291 (not passing 0). This means that resilience can play a role as a mediator in the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being. The hypothesis put forward in this study is accepted.

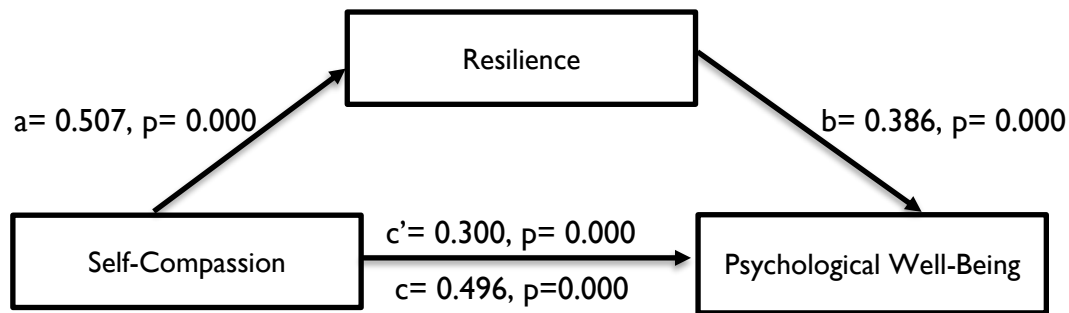


Figure 1. The Mediation Model

Discussion

Based on the results presented, the majority of nonlocal students have moderate psychological well-being. This means that nonlocal students have positive mood conditions and fairly good life satisfaction. This may be related to the other two variables, which are also at a moderate level. This study is similar to the results reported by Tranggono et al. (2022), who reported that the majority of nonlocal students can explore themselves and establish good relationships with other individuals from different cultures and environments. This is a positive thing that can lead nonlocal students to feel happier in living their lives. This finding is supported by Bano et al. (2019), who emphasize the influence of social integration on psychological well-being.

This study aimed to examine the role of resilience in mediating the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being in nonlocal students. The data analysis revealed that resilience can play a role as a mediator in the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being. This indicates that self-compassion can be a factor that causes resilience and ultimately leads to increased psychological well-being. Self-compassion has a positive effect on resilience, which is consistent with the findings of Tang (2019), Pérez-Aranda et al. (2021), and Voon et al. (2022). This means that nonlocal students who love themselves and accept their weaknesses and failures tend to be able to cope with stress and survive in every difficult condition experienced in their lives. This finding is supported by Ewert et al. (2021), who stated that self-

compassion can be a personal resource for handling difficult situations by treating oneself well and dealing with challenging emotions with balanced awareness.

Another finding of this study is that resilience significantly affects psychological well-being. This study is similar to the works of Ríos-Risquez et al. (2018) and Au et al. (2023), who examined psychological well-being in college students. Nonlocal students who have high resilience, instead of feeling lonely and stressed, can accept and view themselves positively, adapt to new environments, establish positive relationships with their surroundings, live an independent life overseas, be able to develop their potential, and have a strong belief in their life goals. When experiencing difficulties, nonlocal students who do not have a good level of resilience tend to feel defeated and hopeless, which leads to stress and even burnout. Fernández-Castillo & Fernández-Prados (2023) argue that lower levels of resilience are associated with high levels of burnout. These findings highlight the importance of resilience for individuals to effectively cope with various stressors (Cooper et al., 2020). Resilience can be a coping mechanism for students to reduce psychological distress (Emerson et al., 2023).

The results of this study also prove that self-compassion positively affects psychological well-being. Nonlocal students experience various problems and difficulties, sometimes experiencing academic failure or other failures that must be faced in life that can make them stressed and depressed. However, by loving and treating themselves well, the frequency of negative emotions felt tends to decrease. This result is relevant to the findings of Ibrahim et al. (2022), who emphasize that self-compassion in nonlocal students can influence their personality, for example, their ability to adapt to a new environment and their ability to understand their potential to avoid various psychological pressures. Thus, self-compassion is one of the crucial factors that nonlocal students must have in reducing psychological stress to live a life with happiness and well-being. These findings are supported by those of Azila-Gbettor et al. (2021) and Whitehead et al. (2021), who mention that self-compassion is an important quality required to reduce psychological distress and improve psychological well-being.

However, through the use of resilience as a mediator, the role of self-compassion in influencing psychological well-being appears to decrease even though it is still significant. This means that increasing resilience leads to an increase in self-compassion and ultimately affects the development of psychological well-being. This explains why although self-compassion is needed to improve psychological well-being, power is more effective for resilient individuals.

Students who have higher levels of kindness toward themselves commonly use positive coping strategies when faced with stress or are able to recover from difficulties (Voon et al., 2022). Mindfulness in self-compassion leads students to have a sense of calmness and stability, spread positive energy, and tend to feel secure with themselves. Therefore, students tend to respond to difficulties in a constructive way rather than by brooding and reacting impulsively (Bluth et al., 2018). Thus, it is important for students, especially nonlocal students, to learn to overcome difficulties through flexibility and determination, and learning from every challenge and setback has been experienced in life (Fenzel & Richardson, 2022). These abilities provide confidence and a strong sense of self that empowers them to deal with stress and negative emotions effectively and thus play an important role in psychological well-being (Vinayak & Judge, 2018).

Another finding of this study was that there was no significant difference in psychological well-being between men and women. This finding is similar to that of Cobo-Rendón et al. (2020) but not similar to that of Matud et al. (2019), who analyzed differences in psychological well-being based on gender. Matud et al. (2019) reported that men receive higher scores on the dimensions of self-acceptance and autonomy, while for the dimensions of personal growth and positive relations with others, women receive higher scores than men. In addition, there were no differences between men and women in other variables, such as self-compassion and resilience. Our estimation is possible considering that every non-local students faces different challenges, regardless of gender.

This study has several limitations that need to be recognized. Psychological well-being was measured in general, not emphasizing the focus on each dimension specifically. The research

participants did not adequately represent the population of nonlocal students at Yogyakarta. The sampling technique in this study was accidental sampling, with the limitation that the research sample did not fully represent the population. In addition, there was a considerable imbalance between the number of male participants and the number of female participants. Therefore, future researchers should use a more accurate sampling technique and emphasize the specific focus of each dimension.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, the study of the role of resilience in the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being is new. This study proves that resilience partially mediates the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being. This indicates that self-compassion alone is still able to influence psychological well-being. However, both variables are essential factors that motivate the improvement of psychological well-being. Therefore, fostering positive attitudes in nonlocal students, such as kindness toward oneself, is crucial to developing resilience so that they can live a life with good mental health and well-being.

This finding is important given the large number of nonlocal students in Indonesia. With various challenges and difficulties in life, they should at least have a sense of love and kindness toward themselves. That attitude will lead them to have the ability to survive so that they can live happily in their new environment. This finding also provides insight into the campus environment for the design of educational programs that can provide a forum for students' mental health, especially for nonlocal students. Future research should examine in detail the dimensions of each variable. It is also important to look at the balance of gender as a comparison. In addition, future research must use a wide distribution of participants to represent the population. Other variables that affect the development of psychological well-being also need to be considered.

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