

# Self-compassion and Satisfaction with Life: A Preliminary Study on Indonesian College Students

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**Abstract.** This preliminary study examined the relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction in college students. This study tested the hypothesis that self-compassion has positive correlation with life satisfaction. One hundred (77 men and 23 women) Universitas Islam Indonesia students, ages 18-23, completed measures on self-compassion and satisfaction with life. The result indicates that students' ability to kindly accept oneself while suffering is significantly associated with life satisfaction. The research findings, limitations and recommendations are discussed.

**Keywords:** Self-compassion, Life Satisfaction, and College Students

## 1. Introduction

Life satisfaction (LS) is the most important and stable component of a person's subjective well-being (SWB), in addition to affective component (Kim-Prieto *et al.*, 2005). An individual who has positive life prosperity is reported to have high level of life satisfaction and positive mood and emotional condition (Suldo & Huebner, 2005). Proctor *et al.* (2008) in "*Youth Life Satisfaction: A Review of the Literature*" concludes that life satisfaction is beneficial for the children and teenagers' life, and it plays an important role to support the negative effects of stress and psychological problems and disorder.

The preliminary research data (Fajrina dan Kurniawan., 2012) shows the problems on life satisfaction of college students. There were only 3.1% of the students who responded "always" think that their lives were closed to ideal, and 31.6% of the students responded "sometimes" their lives were very good. 3.1% of the students responded "always" thought to do a lot of changes in their lives, and 48% "sometimes" thought that they had already got what they wanted in life. 4.1% of the students answered "always" satisfied with their lives, and 30.6% answered "sometimes" to do a lot of changes in their lives. The students' response in the category "always" is lower than the category "sometimes". So, the further study on college students' life satisfaction is necessary.

Life satisfaction define as person's subjective evaluation of the degree to which his or her most important needs, goals, and wishes have been fulfilled (Frisch, 1998; Valois *et al.*, 2004). Diener discusses some aspects in his journal entitled *Subjective Well Being: Three Decades of Progress* (1999). He states that in the life satisfaction there are some components such as desire to change life, satisfaction with current life, satisfaction with past, satisfaction with future, and significant others' views of one's life.

The previous research (like Neely *et al.*, 2009; Barnard & Curry, 2011) indicate that people with more self-compassion have higher level of life satisfaction, social relationship, emotional aptitude and happiness and have lower scores on anxiety, depression, discomfiture, fright or failure and anger. Self-compassion creates an individual who is more intelligent and gentle toward himself in facing difficulties or feeling the flaws and admitting that suffering, failure and flaws are parts of human condition, and that all people, including him, deserve to get compassion (Neff, 2003b; Neff, Kirkpatrick & Rude, 2007; Akin, 2009).

An individual with high level of self-compassion will always love himself even though he experiences many unfortunate conditions, will not blame on the conditions or even blame on himself. The individual will consider that all the conditions facing him are usual and acceptable and can be solved well. Therefore, the individual will be satisfied for all he has although he is in the middle of unfortunate situation. By having the high level of self-compassion, the individual is also able to have high level of life satisfaction. In other words, self compassion is an individual toughness in facing an unfortunate condition.

The practical benefit of this research is to add each individual's knowledge, especially the college students, on self-compassion. It is expected that when the individual is able to understand what self-compassion is and how to apply it in his daily life, the individual will be more grateful for what he has. Thus, life satisfaction will be surely obtained. The proposed hypothesis is there is a positive relation between self-compassion and life satisfaction of the college students.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participant

This research is a quantitative research carried out in several faculties of Universitas Islam Indonesia (Islamic University of Indonesia). The number of the research subject is 100 (one hundred) students from batch 2008-2011 including male and female.

### 2.2. Instrument

The dependent variable on this research is Life Satisfaction, and the independent variable is Self-compassion. The measurement tools used are SWLS which is Life Satisfaction Scale (Diener *et al.*, 1985), Self-compassion Scale (Neff, 2003), and Social Desirability from Reynolds Short Forms of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form A (Reynolds & Gebasi, 1982). Those three scales are scales which are adapted by the writer.

### 2.3. Data Analysis Method

The data analysis method is used to test the research hypothesis. In this research the life satisfaction variable does not apply normal distribution, in which the hypothesis test is carried out using non-parametric statistics.

## 3. Result

The researchers carried out some assumption tests to prove the given hypothesis. The first test was linearity assumption test. Linearity assumption test that is regression line testing between free variable and dependent variable. This linearity test is used to find the linear relationship between two variables in the research. The linearity test result showed the existence of the relationship between life satisfaction and self-compassion which formed a straight line with F Linearity = 7.823,  $p < 0.05$  and F Deviation from Linearity = 1.337,  $p > 0.05$ . Meanwhile, linearity test between life satisfaction and social desirability did not form a straight line with F Linearity = 2.365,  $p > 0.05$  and F Deviation from Linearity = 1.135,  $p > 0.05$ .

As seen in the correlation table below, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction of the college students. It can be seen from significance level  $p = 0.008$ , so  $p < 0.01$ , which means that the higher level of self-compassion, the higher life satisfaction of the students. On the other hand, the significance level between life satisfaction and social desirability shows no significant relationship between both of them which is showed by  $r = 0.122$ ,  $p > 0.01$ . However, there is a significant relationship between self-compassion and social desirability with  $r = 0.331$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .

Correlations				
			selfcompassion	lifesatisfaction
Spearman's rho	Selfcompassion	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.242**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.008
		N	100	100
	Lifesatisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	.242**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.008	.
		N	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The next correlation result is the influence of self-compassion and life satisfaction toward the level of subject's social desirability is. The subjects with low social desirability (social desirability < 0.05) show significant correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction ( $r = 0.482$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while the subjects with high social desirability (social desirability > 0.05) does not show the significant correlation between self-compassion and life satisfaction ( $r = 0.134$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ). This also means that subject's social desirability does not influence the result between self-compassion and life satisfaction.

### 3.1. Research Subject

The subject of this research is the students of Universitas Islam Indonesia (Islamic University of Indonesia) as many as 100 students which include 77 males and 23 females. The subjects are the students of Faculty of Law (35%), Faculty of Industrial Engineering, from study program of Industrial Engineering (25%) and Informatics Engineering (22%), and Faculty of Medicine (18%). The average age of the subjects is 22 years with allowance (per diem) Rp1,000,000,-.

### 3.2. Discussion

From the result above, it can be seen that there is a positive relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction on the college students. The result is in accordance with the proposed research hypothesis namely there is an existence of positive relationship between self-compassion and life satisfaction on the college student. Therefore, the higher self-compassion of the students is, the higher life satisfaction of the students will be. On the other hand, the lower self-compassion of the students is, the lower life satisfaction of the students will be.

Life satisfaction define as person's subjective evaluation of the degree to which his or her most important needs, goals, and wishes have been fulfilled (Frisch, 1998; Valois *et al.*, 2004). As what stated by Proctor *et al.* (2008) in "Youth Life Satisfaction: A Review of the Literature" that life satisfaction is beneficial for the children and teenage lives and plays an important role as support against negative effects of stress, psychological problems and disorders. Teenagers, in this case is the college students, who are satisfied with their life have a tendency to be able to overcome the psychological problems such as the ability to deflect their own emotions. Whenever they are able to fight their stress and emotions, the students will own good self-compassion. And, the students with good self-compassion will consider that all the occurrence they face is an usual thing that other must also face.

Life satisfaction is not significantly related to social desirability ( $r = -0.122$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ); nevertheless, social desirability is related to self-compassion ( $r = 0.331$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Social desirability is defined as a form of conformity of social stereotype since the subject wants to get an acceptance which will lead to the need for the community recognition (Chen, 1997). In the other words, social desirability is the subject need to be acknowledged in the community. Fredericksen (in Huang, 2001) shows that social desirability is related to the need for self protection, the attempt for avoiding criticism, social conformity and social approval. With the existence of the need for acknowledgement, an individual will try his best to improve himself to the better direction. Self improvement can make an individual takes himself the way he is and will act normally toward anything happens to him. In other words, the individual will be more self-compassionate toward himself whenever he wants to get social approval.

Another result from this research is that there is no relation between life satisfaction and monthly allowance of the students. However, after comparing, it is found that there is a difference between life satisfaction of the students with the monthly allowance less than Rp1,000,000,- and the students with the monthly allowance more than Rp1,000,000,-. This result is in relation with what is stated by Zullig *et al.* (2007) that the college students will be more satisfied with their whole lives than the students of the secondary schools. The reason why the college students are more satisfied with their lives is due to the social economic factor; however, this can also result from the higher level of education.

From all the explanation above, it can be concluded that self-compassion is positively related to life satisfaction of the college students. Nonetheless, the students' life satisfaction is not correlated with sex, and monthly allowance. The students who own life satisfaction are the ones who are self-compassionate, and they will never take seriously whatever, bad or good, they have experienced and have. Whatever they have will be considered as things they deserve to take and the condition that others will also experience.

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## 5. Reference

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