



The Role of Self-Compassion in Flourishing Among First-Year Students

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Abstract

First-year university students are vulnerable to experiencing stress due to the transition to academic life, which can undermine their well-being or flourishing. Prior research has shown that greater self-compassion is associated with higher flourishing, but evidence among Indonesian first-year students remains limited. We hypothesized that self-compassion would be positively related to flourishing and to each of its components. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 203 Indonesian first-year university students aged 18–20 years ($M = 18.59$, $SD = 0.64$), of whom 76.4% were female ($N = 155$). Participants completed the Skala Welas Diri (SWD) and the Indonesian adaptation of the PERMA-Profiler. Pearson correlations and multiple regression analyses were used to assess associations. Results showed that self-compassion was positively and significantly associated with overall flourishing ($\beta = .512$, $p < .001$) as well as with each of its dimensions ($\beta = .344-.456$, $p < .001$). These findings support the development of a self-compassion program as one option that universities can offer to first-year students to enhance their flourishing.

Keywords: *first-year students, flourishing, self-compassion*

1. INTRODUCTION

Transition Stress in First-Year University Students

First-year students face significant events in their lives, including the transition and change to the world of college, which requires them to adapt to various aspects of their lives (Klingensmith, 2010). According to Arnett (2000), first-year students are in the emerging adulthood developmental stage from 18 to 25. Experiencing this stage is an additional challenge for first-year students because they must be responsible for their own lives without the help of others or with limited life experiences (Arnett, 2016). The emergence of various changes and demands, as well as the adaptation process that they must undergo, makes first-year students vulnerable to feeling stress (Wang, 2018).

Due to their vulnerability, many first-year students experience significant stress, which can have negative impacts on their overall well-being (Denovan & Macaskill, 2016). Research has shown that high stress levels among students are prevalent, with rates reaching 77.11% (Wahyudi et al., 2015) and 72.6% (Augusti et al., 2015). Chronic stress not only affects students' psychological health (Denovan & Macaskill, 2016) but also directly undermines their ability to experience flourishing by diminishing positive emotions, reducing engagement in meaningful activities, and weakening social relationships—key components of well-being (Seligman, 2011). Without flourishing, students may struggle with academic demands, social integration, and overall mental health, further exacerbating their stress. Given these challenges, addressing flourishing among first-year students is crucial, as it may serve as a protective factor against the negative

effects of stress, fostering resilience, long-term well-being, and successful adaptation to university life.

Conceptualizing Flourishing: The PERMA Framework

To better understand how flourishing can serve as a protective factor against stress, it is essential to examine its key components and their contributions to student well-being. Seligman (2011) defines flourishing as a state in which individuals live optimally, experiencing both emotional well-being and effective life functioning. This is conceptualized through the PERMA model, which encompasses five core dimensions: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Each of these elements represents a pathway to well-being, working together to foster life satisfaction, resilience, and psychological health (Effendy, 2016; Goodman et al., 2017; Lestari & Mujiasih, 2020). Together, these dimensions serve as fundamental components that contribute to overall flourishing.

Flourishing plays a crucial role in the lives of first-year students because flourishing supports their optimal self-development (Knoesen & Naudé, 2017; Volstad et al., 2020). With growing, first-year students can understand themselves, have adaptive coping strategies, be optimistic, achieve remarkable academic achievement, build great social relationships, and live well. According to Knoesen and Naudé (2017), successfully passing the first year motivates students to continue working hard in the following years. This success is more accessible if students have achieved flourishing in their lives. Without flourishing, first-year students have a high tendency to experience academic burnout and psychological distress, which can lead to decreased academic performance and even dropping out of college (Chattu et al., 2020; March-Amengual et al., 2022; Zając et al., 2023). Therefore, flourishing is an essential condition for first-year students.

As part of the emerging adult age group, there are several ways to improve the flourishing of first-year students, ranging from external factors to internal factors. External factors that impact the development of flourishing are the social environment and family (Eraslan-Capan, 2016; Schotanus-Dijkstra, 2016; Padilla-Walker et al., 2017; Mastura & Hudaniah, 2022). The existence of good relationships and support obtained by individuals from their surrounding environment can improve their quality of life and general well-being. Internal factors include self-efficacy and grit (Amalia & Sari, 2022; Mastura & Hudaniah, 2022) which can help individuals to regulate themselves well, even in difficult times. Among these internal factors, self-compassion—a modifiable resource that enhances coping—plays a particular role in emerging adults' flourishing (Verma & Tiwari, 2017).

Self-Compassion as a Modifiable Coping Resource

Self-compassion entails being receptive to and emotionally affected by one's suffering, rather than evading or detaching from it, and fostering a desire to ease this suffering and heal oneself with kindness (Neff, 2003b). It also includes providing a nonjudgmental understanding of one's pain, shortcomings, and failures, recognizing that such experiences are part of the broader human condition. These core aspects of self-compassion are conceptualized within three main components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff, 2003a; Neff, 2003b). Each of these components has a corresponding opposing construct that may hinder self-compassion respectively—namely, self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification. As an attitude that individuals show towards their lives, self-compassion has been found to facilitate individuals' efforts in developing well-being throughout their life span because self-compassion can promote

a more positive outlook towards life (Yildirim et al., 2022; Njotowibowo & Engry, 2023). Specifically, in first-year students, self-compassion plays a role in their adaptation process to college (Hope et al., 2014). This is because self-compassion helps them to respond to the changes and failures they experience in a more positive, objective, and adaptive manner. Self-compassion can also help first-year students regulate their emotions effectively and develop adaptive problem-solving techniques when facing difficulties (Adlani, 2022; Naidoo & Oosthuizen, 2023; Pangarak et al., 2023). According to Zulfa and Prastuti (2020), positive and adaptive emotions, thoughts, and behaviors toward life indicate that individuals have reached flourishing. Therefore, it is vital to understand the dynamics between self-compassion and flourishing because it provides many benefits and plays a crucial role in developing individual well-being or flourishing, especially for first-year students.

Past Findings on the Connection Between Self-Compassion and Flourishing

Previously, several studies have examined the dynamics of self-compassion and flourishing in college students (Satici et al., 2013; Verma & Tiwari, 2017; Zulfa & Prastuti, 2020). Verma and Tiwari (2017) found that self-compassion is a predictor of the level of flourishing in college students because self-compassion is associated with an increased ability of students to feel well-being, both emotionally and in life functioning. This finding is also supported by Satici et al. (2013), who found that self-compassion is associated with various psychological benefits, such as positive affect, achievement, and social relationships, indicating student flourishing. Furthermore, Zulfa and Prastuti (2020) found that students with self-compassion can understand and accept themselves consciously, even in imperfections and failures. This ability can help them adapt and make peace with themselves, making them more capable of experiencing and flourishing.

Self-compassion may contribute to the development of flourishing among students by enhancing emotional intelligence (Zessin et al., 2015). One proposed mechanism is cognitive reappraisal, through which individuals reinterpret negative experiences as opportunities for growth rather than as personal failures. This adaptive strategy fosters a more constructive mindset, reduces self-criticism, and promotes resilience, thereby supporting overall psychological well-being. Neff and Knox (2017) similarly suggest that self-compassion may promote flourishing by reinforcing emotional resilience. Individuals with high levels of self-compassion tend to view suffering and failure as part of the shared human experience and respond with self-kindness, allowing them to engage in personal growth rather than being overwhelmed by adversity. This perspective enhances their ability to manage stress and emotional fatigue and may help reduce the risk of anxiety and depression (Neff & Knox, 2017; Crego et al., 2022).

In other studies, self-compassion was also found to be related to an individual's ability to experience positive emotions and find meaning in life (Fatima & Jamal, 2019; Njotowibowo & Engry, 2023). Fatima and Jamal (2019) found a relationship between self-compassion and one dimension of flourishing, namely positive emotion. Their study indicated that individuals with self-compassion tend to focus on positive experiences and can regulate negative emotions more effectively. As a result, this regulation supports the cultivation of positive emotions. Similarly, Njotowibowo and Engry (2023) found that self-compassion is associated with the meaning dimension of flourishing, as it fosters productivity and prosocial attitudes—both key indicators of meaningfulness in life. Together, these findings highlight the connection between self-compassion and two key dimensions of flourishing: positive emotion and meaning.

Identifying Gaps: Limitations of Past Research and the Need for the Present Study

Based on previous studies, self-compassion has been positively associated with flourishing among college students (Satici et al., 2013; Verma & Tiwari, 2017; Zulfa & Prastuti, 2020). However, these studies present limitations that highlight the need for further investigation, particularly among first-year students. One key concern is the cultural context of existing research. Indonesia is a predominantly collectivist society, where values such as social harmony, interdependence, and community orientation strongly influence emotional and psychological development (Abbott, 2017). In contrast, Turkey blends collectivist and individualist tendencies due to its position between Eastern and Western cultures (Yildirim, 2022), while India, though also collectivist, emphasizes hierarchical relationships and traditional norms that can constrain emotional expression (Pew Research Center, 2022). These cultural differences may shape how self-compassion is experienced and how flourishing is defined, suggesting that findings from other cultural contexts may not fully apply to Indonesian students. As Satici et al. (2013) emphasized, cross-cultural research on self-compassion and flourishing is essential for developing interventions that are relevant and effective across diverse populations. Therefore, focusing on Indonesian first-year students is critical to generating culturally specific insights into this relationship.

Moreover, none of the previous studies focused specifically on first-year college students, a group that is particularly vulnerable to stress, identity confusion, and emotional instability during their transition from high school to university life (Wang, 2018). These emotional challenges can hinder their ability to flourish during this critical adjustment period. While the earlier studies address general college populations, they overlook the nuanced dynamics of this transitional stage. Targeted research on first-year students can provide a more precise understanding of how self-compassion supports flourishing when students are navigating the psychological demands of new academic and social environments.

Another important limitation lies in the measurement tools used. Zulfa and Prastuti (2020) designed a self-developed scale; Verma and Tiwari (2017) used the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form (MHC–SF) (Keyes et al., 2008); and Satici et al. (2013) employed Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010). These instruments vary significantly in their theoretical orientation and scope. The MHC–SF focuses broadly on emotional, social, and psychological well-being but omits key elements of flourishing defined in Seligman’s PERMA model. Similarly, Diener’s scale offers a unidimensional view of flourishing without addressing specific components such as accomplishment or engagement. In contrast, the PERMA framework conceptualizes flourishing through five interconnected domains: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Effendy, 2016). The methodological inconsistencies across these studies limit comparability and leave a gap in capturing a multidimensional understanding of flourishing. Using a PERMA-based instrument would allow for a more robust and theoretically grounded analysis of how self-compassion relates to each flourishing domain.

Lastly, there is limited analytical depth regarding the specific relationships between self-compassion and each PERMA domain. To date, only Verma and Tiwari (2017) have examined the overall role of self-compassion in flourishing among college students, while other studies have focused on individual elements—such as positive emotion (Fatima & Jamal, 2019) and meaning (Njotowibowo & Engry, 2023). However, no research has been found that thoroughly investigates the relationship between self-compassion and each of the five specific dimensions of flourishing as defined by the PERMA model. These fragmented approaches prevent a comprehensive understanding of whether self-compassion supports flourishing holistically or only in part. Given

that self-compassion has been identified as an effective strategy for enhancing well-being (Chan et al., 2022; Crego et al., 2022), it is necessary to examine its relationship with each PERMA domain in a single, integrated study. In addition to analyzing the overall link between self-compassion and flourishing, the present study also aims to explore the role of self-compassion across all five individual PERMA dimensions. Since previous findings have shown associations with two of these dimensions—positive emotion and meaning—it is reasonable to hypothesize that self-compassion may also be related to the remaining three. Therefore, multiple regression analyses will be conducted to test these potential relationships in greater depth. Doing so would provide more actionable insights for designing interventions that support student well-being.

Current Study

Based on the limitations of previous research, this study aims to examine the role of self-compassion in flourishing and each of its PERMA dimensions among first-year college students in Indonesia. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) Does self-compassion play a positive and significant role in the overall flourishing of first-year students? and (2) Does self-compassion play a significant and positive role in each of the five PERMA dimensions—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—among first-year students? Based on prior findings, we hypothesize that:

H1: Self-compassion will significantly and positively predict overall flourishing.

H2: Self-compassion will significantly and positively predict each of the five PERMA dimensions—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

This study is expected to contribute theoretically by expanding our understanding of the specific mechanisms linking self-compassion and flourishing in a culturally specific context. Practically, the findings may inform how universities could offer targeted programs—such as self-compassion-based workshops or trainings—to support the emotional well-being and adjustment of first-year college students in Indonesia.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional correlational method to examine the extent to which self-compassion contributes to overall flourishing and its PERMA dimensions among first-year university students. As this was a non-experimental study, no variables were manipulated. The aim of this research was to identify the relationships between variables as they naturally occur, without any intervention or treatment applied to the participants. Accordingly, this design allows the researchers to obtain an accurate picture of the contribution of self-compassion to flourishing within the real-life context of first-year students in Indonesia.

2.2. Participants

This study involved first-year undergraduate and vocational students in Indonesia, aged between 18 and 20 years. This age range was selected because it typically reflects the age of first-year students (Silvastiani, 2021), and this population is known to be more vulnerable to stress, anxiety, loneliness, and emotional instability due to the significant transition from high school to university (Wang, 2018). The upper age limit of 20 was set to reduce the likelihood of including students who had taken extended gap years, as those individuals may have developed greater self-awareness and coping skills that could influence their adjustment to university life (Cline, 2013).

Participants were recruited using a non-probability sampling method with a convenience sampling technique, which allowed researchers to collect data based on accessibility, participant availability, and suitability (Gravetter & Forzano, 2016). The required sample size was determined using G*Power analysis (Faul et al., 2007), specifying a medium effect size of 0.30 (Cohen, 1998), a 95% confidence level, and a one-tailed test. The analysis indicated a minimum of 111 participants was needed.

Based on the data collected, the participants of this study consisted of 203 individuals, comprising females (76.4%, $N = 155$) and males (23.6%, $N = 48$), aged between 18 and 20 years ($M = 18.59$, $SD = 0.641$). The data were gathered from various provinces in Indonesia, with the largest proportion of participants coming from DKI Jakarta (35.5%, $N = 72$). All participants were first-year students enrolled in undergraduate education programs (79.3%, $N = 161$) and vocational education programs (20.7%, $N = 42$) at various universities. The highest number of participants were students from Universitas Indonesia (50.7%, $N = 103$).

Table 1
Demographic Information of Participants

Characteristics	N	%
Gender:		
Female	155	76.4%
Male	48	23.6%
Age:		
18	100	49.3%
19	86	42.4%
20	17	8.4%
Place of Residence:		
DKI Jakarta	72	35.5%
West Java	47	23.2%
Centre Java	20	9.9%
East Borneo	14	6.9%
East Java	11	5.4%
Others	39	19.1%
Current Education Level:		
Bachelor's degree	161	79.3%
Diploma	42	20.7%
University		
Universitas Indonesia	103	50.7%
Universitas Gadjah Mada	15	7.4%
Politeknik Negeri Samarinda	12	5.9%
Universitas Padjadjaran	8	3.9%
Politeknik Negeri Jakarta	6	3.0%
Others	59	29.1%

2.3. Procedures

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional (BRIN) under reference number 2002202400002. The ethical approval ensures that all procedures complied with established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Data were then collected through an online self-report questionnaire using Google Forms, which was distributed across various student forums and social media platforms. The questionnaire included: (1) an informed consent form, (2) demographic information (initials, gender, age, place of residence, education level, and university), and (3) two psychological instruments: the Skala Welas Diri (SWD) to measure self-compassion and the PERMA-Profilier to assess flourishing across five domains—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

As a result of the questionnaire distribution, resulting in 458 participants completed the questionnaire. Participants were excluded if they did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria—being a first-year university student in Indonesia aged 18–20—or if they failed to pass the attention check item (e.g., *“Pada pernyataan ini, silakan menandai pilihan jawaban pada urutan ke-3 yang berbunyi [Kadang-Kadang]”* — *“For this item, please select the third response option labeled [Sometimes]”*). Incomplete responses were also excluded. After data cleaning, 203 participants were retained for analysis, which was conducted using IBM SPSS version 27.

2.4. Instruments

Flourishing is measured by The PERMA-Profilier (Butler & Kern, 2016), is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure individuals' flourishing across five dimensions—positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—along with an overall individual's general condition. The scale consists of 23 items rated on an 11-point Likert scale (0 = “never” to 10 = “always”); 15 items assess the five PERMA dimensions, while eight measure individual's general condition. The scale was validated for Indonesian population by Elfida et al. (2021). All factors achieved average variance extracted (AVE) values above .50, and one engagement item (item 17) was excluded from scoring due to poor psychometric properties. Scores were computed by summing 14 core items for a total well-being score, with each PERMA dimension scored by summing its constituent items—higher scores indicate greater flourishing. Example items include *“Secara umum, seberapa sering Anda merasa bahwa apa yang Anda lakukan ini bermakna dan berharga?”* (“In general, how often do you feel that what you do is meaningful and worthwhile?”) and *“Seberapa sering Anda mencapai tujuan-tujuan penting yang telah Anda susun untuk diri Anda?”* (“How often do you achieve important goals that you have set for yourself?”). In the present sample, the scale showed excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$ overall; α s = .76, .69, .73, .84, and .67 for the PERMA subscales, respectively).

Self-compassion is measured using the Skala Welas Diri (SWD) (Sugianto et al., 2020), an Indonesian adaptation of the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Neff (2003a). The SWD is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess six components of self-compassion, comprising three positive components (self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness) and three negative components (self-judgment, isolation, and overidentification). The scale consists of 26 items rated on an 5-point Likert scale (1 = “almost never” to 5 = “almost always”). The scale was validated for the Indonesian population by Sugianto et al. (2020), with validity testing yielding significant results ($p < .001$). SWD uses the same scoring method as SCS, where the harmful components of self-compassion (self-judgment, isolation, and overidentification) are reverse-scored (Neff, 2003a; Sugianto et al., 2020). SWD scoring will be carried out by calculating the average of each

component and then summing them into a total average. Referring to Neff (2003a), the interpretation of the SWD score is divided into three categories, namely high (score 3,51-5), medium (score 2,5-3,5), and low (score 1-2,49). Example items include “*Saya bersikap toleran terhadap kelemahan dan kekurangan saya*” (“I am tolerant of my own flaws and shortcomings”) and “*Saya tidak menerima dan menghakimi kelemahan dan kekurangan saya*” (“I do not accept and judge my flaws and shortcomings”). In the present sample, the SWD showed good internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$ overall; $\alpha_s = .72$ for self-kindness, $.67$ for common humanity, $.56$ for mindfulness, $.68$ for self-judgment, $.75$ for isolation, and $.70$ for overidentification).

2.5. Data Analysis

Three statistical analysis techniques were conducted in this study. First, descriptive analysis techniques were carried out to obtain an overview of the variables and the demographic characteristics of the participants. Second, a correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between self-compassion, overall flourishing, its PERMA dimensions, age, and gender. The type of correlation technique that will be conducted depends on the data distribution, where the Pearson correlation technique is used when the data is normally distributed (Gravetter & Forzano, 2016), and the Spearman correlation technique is used when the data is not normally distributed (Bishara & Hittner, 2015). Lastly, a multiple regression analysis technique was conducted to assess the extent of self-compassion's role in predicting flourishing and its PERMA model among first-year students.

3. RESULTS

This study investigates whether self-compassion is positively associated with overall flourishing and each of its PERMA dimensions among first-year students in Indonesia. The findings presented include descriptive, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression of the relevant variables.

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Based on the descriptive analysis, it was found that among the flourish dimensions, the positive emotion dimension had the highest average score of 21.18 (SD = 4.41). In contrast, the engagement dimension had the lowest average score of 14.95 (SD = 2.71). The self-compassion descriptive statistics showed that the average score for self-compassion among first-year students in Indonesia is 3.20 (SD = 0.358). Referring to Neff (2003a), first-year students in this study have a moderate level of self-compassion (2.5-3.5). First-year students' self-compassion scores range from 2.08 to 4.53 (on a scale of 1-5). Based on the results of descriptive analysis, it was found that first-year students had higher scores on the main components of self-compassion, namely self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, compared to the scores of the harmful components, namely self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification. Among the six components of self-compassion, common humanity has the highest average score of 3.77 (SD = 0.704), while isolation has the lowest average score of 2.70 (SD = 0.94). Further details of descriptive statistics of every dimension can be found in Table 2.

Table 2*Results of Descriptive Analysis of Variables (N = 203)*

Variabel	Mean	Min	Max	SD
<i>Flourishing</i>	98.44	51.00	132.00	17.05
<i>Positive Emotion</i>	21.18	8.00	28.00	4.41
<i>Engagement</i>	14.95	6.00	20.00	2.71
<i>Positive Relationship</i>	20.62	6.00	30.00	5.01
<i>Meaning</i>	20.96	4.00	30.00	5.39
<i>Accomplishment</i>	20.73	9.00	30.00	3.97
<i>Self-Compassion</i>	3.20	2.08	4.53	0.52
<i>Self-Kindness</i>	3.51	1.80	5.00	0.67
<i>Self-Judgment</i>	2.86	1.20	5.00	0.72
<i>Common Humanity</i>	3.77	2.25	5.00	0.70
<i>Isolation</i>	2.70	1.00	4.75	0.94
<i>Mindfulness</i>	3.60	1.75	5.00	0.64
<i>Over-Identification</i>	2.74	1.00	5.00	0.83

3.2. Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis presented in Table 3 indicates that self-compassion is positively and significantly associated with flourishing ($r = .520, p < .01$). and its among first-year students ($r = .336 - .461, p < .01$). This finding suggests that individuals with higher self-compassion are more likely to experience greater levels of flourishing, positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Among the components of self-compassion, self-kindness ($r = .480, p < .001$), common humanity ($r = .298, p < .001$), and mindfulness ($r = .332, p < .001$) also demonstrated significant positive correlations with flourishing. Conversely, the negative components of self-compassion—self-judgment ($r = -.383, p < .001$), isolation ($r = -.359, p < .001$), and over-identification ($r = -.333, p < .001$)—were negatively correlated with flourishing, indicating that students who engage in self-judgment, feel isolated, or over-identify with negative emotions tend to experience lower levels of well-being. As defined by Gravetter and Forzano (2016), the correlation strength between self-compassion and each flourishing dimension falls within the moderate range (.30–.50).

3.3. Regression Analysis

In this study, multiple regression analysis techniques were carried out, so it is necessary to test the classical assumptions first to ensure that this regression model can be used to predict flourishing variables. Based on linearity and homoscedasticity scatterplot, the model is said to be fit and expected, so it is suitable for further processing. The model's suitability can also be assessed from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, where a significance value of $p = 0.242$ was found, indicating that the data is normally distributed.

Table 3*Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis of Self-Compassion, Flourishing, Age, and Gender*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Flourishing	-													
2. Positive Emotion	.819***	-												
3. Engagement	.735***	.603***	-											
4. Positive Relationship	.776***	.571***	.416***	-										
5. Meaning	.850***	.595***	.562***	.522***	-									
6. Accomplishment	.752***	.467***	.516***	.443***	.591***	-								
7. Self-Compassion	.520**	.461**	.378**	.336**	.438**	.444**	-							
8. Self-Kindness	.480***	.381***	.380***	.309***	.377***	.476***	.167**	-						
9. Self-Judgment	-.383***	-.361***	-.281***	-.287***	-.301***	-.279***	-.552***	-.483**	-					
10. Common Humanity	.298***	.213**	.242***	.153*	.292***	.289***	.488***	.388***	-.083	-				
11. Isolation	-.359***	-.347***	-.170*	-.295***	-.283***	-.285***	-.674***	-.327***	.578	-.066	-			
12. Mindfulness	.332***	.256***	.286***	.142*	.301***	.359***	.273***	.613***	-.276***	.482***	-.280***	-		
13. Over-Identification	-.333***	-.355***	-.260***	-.201**	-.291***	-.209**	-.589***	-.375***	.577***	-.118	.646***	-.401***	-	
14. Gender	-.090	-.119	-.122	.004	-.071	-.078	.091	-.035	.036	.058	.158*	-.094	.076	-
15. Age	.097	.040	.140*	-.026	.119*	.148*	.020	.186**	-.069	-.055	-.026	.142*	-.068	-.174

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

The regression analysis conducted to examine the role of self-compassion in predicting flourishing, while controlling for age and gender to test Hypothesis 1. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 199) = 24.97, p < .001$, accounting for 27.3% of the variance in flourishing ($R^2 = .273$). Self-compassion was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .512, p < .001$), indicating that higher self-compassion scores were associated with higher flourishing scores. However, neither age ($\beta = .040, p = .512$) and gender ($\beta = -0.037, p = .551$) were significant predictors of flourishing. These findings support the first hypothesis, indicating that self-compassion plays a positive and significant role in flourishing among first-year students (see Table 4).

To test Hypothesis 2, multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine whether self-compassion significantly and positively predicts each of the five PERMA dimensions—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—while controlling for age and gender. As shown in Table 4, the regression models for all five dimensions were statistically significant ($p < .001$), with self-compassion emerging as a significant positive predictor in each model. Specifically, self-compassion significantly predicted positive emotion ($\beta = .456, p < .001$), engagement ($\beta = .362, p < .001$), relationships ($\beta = .344, p < .001$), meaning ($\beta = .429, p < .001$), and accomplishment ($\beta = .432, p < .001$). In contrast, neither age nor gender were significant predictors in any of the models. These results support Hypothesis 2, indicating that self-compassion plays a significant and positive role in all dimensions of flourishing among first-year students.

4. DISCUSSION

Descriptive Insights into Flourishing and Self-Compassion Among First-Year Students

Researchers conducted a descriptive analysis of the flourishing variable. Results showed the highest average score in the positive emotion dimension and the lowest in engagement. High positive emotion suggests that first-year students frequently experience uplifting emotions, possibly due to social support and progress toward meaningful goals in their academic journey. This aligns with research highlighting the essential role of positive emotions in promoting well-being and flourishing (Fredrickson, 2001; West & Fredrickson, 2020). The low engagement score may be partly due to measurement limitations, as it had fewer items than other dimensions. A validity study by Elfida et al. (2021) found that one engagement item failed to capture the construct adequately, and its removal may have affected scores. Practically, low engagement may also reflect students' ongoing adjustment to university life and new responsibilities, which may prevent them from feeling fully engaged or immersed in their daily academic and social activities.

Descriptive analysis of the self-compassion variable revealed that first-year students in Indonesia had moderate self-compassion, according to Neff (2003a). This suggests that students generally show a balanced level of self-compassion, demonstrating some capacity for self-kindness and emotional resilience, though there remains potential for growth. Among these, common humanity had the highest mean score, suggesting that students recognize their struggles as shared, which fosters a sense of connection and understanding toward others (Neff, 2012). This may be influenced by the female-majority sample, as women tend to show greater interdependence and empathy (Verma & Tiwari, 2017). The low isolation score further supports this, indicating students feel less alone in their challenges. This aligns with Mitchell et al. (2021), who suggest that emerging adulthood—a time of exploration, identity formation, and relationship-building—can reduce feelings of disconnection and enhance mindfulness and connectedness.

Tabel 4*Results of Multiple Regression Analysis of Self-Compassion on Flourishing and PERMA Dimensions*

	Flourishing			Positive Emotion			Engagement			Relationship			Meaning			Accomplishment		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
(Constant)	26.14	30.98	-	11.86	8.31	-	2.14	5.29	-	17.88	10.04	-	-4.43	10.29	-	-1.31	7.52	-
Self-Compassion	16.72	1.99	.51***	3.85	0.53	.46***	1.88	0.34	.36***	3.30	0.64	.34***	4.42	0.66	.43***	3.28	0.48	.43***
Age	1.08	1.64	.040	-0.13	0.44	-.18	0.39	0.28	.91	-0.43	0.53	-.55	0.62	0.54	.07	0.63	0.40	.10
Gender	-1.47	2.46	-.37	-0.84	0.66	-.81	-0.47	0.42	-.73	0.29	0.80	.25	-0.25	0.82	-.20	-0.20	0.60	-.22
R^2		.27			.22			.16			.12			.20			.21	
$F(3,199)$		24.97***			18.61***			12.49***			8.79***			16.34***			17.52***	

 $p < .001$

Exploring Self-Compassion as a Predictor of Flourishing

These studies indicate that self-compassion is a meaningful but moderate predictor of flourishing in first-year students. Thus, the ability of first-year students to extend warmth and compassion toward themselves significantly influences their personal growth, enabling them to develop optimally and lead a more fulfilling life. With self-compassion, first-year students are more likely to experience positive emotions, build deeper social relationships, fully engage in daily activities, achieve specific goals, and even discover deeper meaning in their lives. This suggests that self-compassion may play a role in supporting personal growth and well-being during the transition to university life. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that the core components of self-compassion—self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness—enable students to reframe negative experiences more positively and respond with greater emotional balance (Neff, 2012; Verma & Tiwari, 2017). By promoting self-acceptance and reducing feelings of disconnection, self-compassion acts as a buffer against emotional distress. Similarly, Chan et al. (2022) found that self-compassion enhances resilience and supports recovery from adversity, allowing students to grow and find meaning in difficult circumstances—key aspects associated with flourishing (Zulfa & Prastuti, 2020). However, as this study is cross-sectional, causal conclusions cannot be drawn, and the results may be influenced by shared measurement bias.

Self-compassion may support students in developing flourishing by improving emotional intelligence (Zessin et al., 2015). A mechanism associated with this relationship is cognitive reappraisal—the ability to reinterpret negative experiences as learning opportunities rather than failures. This strategy is linked to reductions in negative emotions, anxiety, and stress, while promoting greater psychological well-being. Cognitive reappraisal, which promotes flexible emotional responses to stress, is particularly beneficial for college students facing academic and social pressures, as it helps reduce self-criticism, foster an adaptive mindset, enhance resilience, and improve coping (Lin, 2022; Rehman et al., 2024).

Self-compassion may also serve as an emotional buffer, as found by Neff and Knox (2017), by reinforcing emotional resilience. Students high in self-compassion tend not to view setbacks and failures as personal shortcomings, but as opportunities for growth and self-improvement. This perspective provides internal support, enabling them to cope more effectively with stress and reduce emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, this approach aligns with the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), which posits that positive emotions—such as those nurtured by self-compassion—not only broaden individuals' thought-action repertoires in the moment but also build enduring psychological and social resources over time. From this perspective, self-compassion enhances psychological flexibility, promotes social connectedness, and supports a greater sense of life purpose—all of which are foundational to flourishing (Lin, 2022; Rehman et al., 2024). Moreover, self-compassion empowers students to regulate their emotions more effectively, which not only reduces stress and promotes a more balanced mindset but also fosters social connectedness, helping them feel less isolated during setbacks and better manage emotional exhaustion.

For first-year students in particular, self-compassion may function as a protective factor when adjusting to college life (Hope et al., 2014). It helps them respond to change and failure with greater calm and patience by recognizing that their struggles are common to others. Despite the pressures of academic and social demands, this mindset supports resilience, enhances daily satisfaction and positive emotions—laying a strong foundation for their overall well-being. Thus, self-compassion may play a meaningful role in fostering flourishing by cultivating self-

understanding and acceptance—both of which contribute to emotional satisfaction, a sense of purpose, and ultimately, the highest-level well-being.

The Limited Role of Demographics in Predicting Flourishing

While self-compassion may contribute to flourishing, age and gender do not appear to significantly influence it. Their impact is often outweighed by psychological factors like resilience, relationship satisfaction, metacognitive efficiency, emotional support, self-efficacy, and grit (Amalia & Sari, 2022; Mastura & Hudaniah, 2022; Fastame et al., 2024). External factors such as supportive family and social environments also took part, as positive relationships and surroundings might enhance well-being and life satisfaction (Eraslan-Capan, 2016; Schotanus-Dijkstra, 2016; Padilla-Walker et al., 2017; Mastura & Hudaniah, 2022). Supporting this, studies on adolescents and older adults show that socioecological influences—like parenting styles, family involvement, and community support—are more predictive of flourishing than demographic factors like age and gender (Kim et al., 2020). Although age may affect traits such as tenacity and stress tolerance, it does not directly correlate with flourishing, which reflects stable aspects of psychological well-being (López-Madrigal et al., 2021; Fastame et al., 2024). Similarly, gender-related patterns are inconsistent: older men may report slightly higher flourishing due to lower anxiety and depression (Fastame et al., 2024), but gender differences in coping styles do not significantly impact positivity among young adults (López-Madrigal et al., 2021). Overall, flourishing is shaped more by psychological and environmental factors than by demographic characteristics.

The Role of Self-Compassion Across Flourishing Domains

The results of this study also indicate that self-compassion is positively associated with all dimensions of flourishing. In other words, the more compassionate first-year students are toward themselves, the better they tend to function in areas such as experiencing positive emotions, forming meaningful connections, engaging in daily activities, achieving goals, and finding purpose. Despite the challenges of transitioning to university life, self-compassion may play a role in helping students cultivate self-acceptance, mindful awareness, and emotional resilience.

This finding aligns with Fatima and Jamal (2019), who found that self-compassion is linked to greater positive emotions, as it enables individuals to focus on the positive and manage negative feelings. This may be influenced by the components of self-kindness and mindfulness, which promote emotional balance and awareness (Neff, 2012; Neff & Germer, 2017). Similarly, the link between self-compassion and meaning echoes findings by Njotowibowo and Engry (2023), who showed that self-compassion supports prosocial attitudes and a broader life perspective. This may be due to the common humanity component, which helps individuals recognize shared struggles and feel more connected, thus enhancing their sense of meaning (Hope et al., 2014).

While prior studies have not directly examined self-compassion in relation to engagement, positive relationships, and accomplishment, plausible explanations exist. Regarding engagement, Evers (2016) noted that self-compassionate individuals have a better understanding of their strengths and limitations, which can enhance focus and performance. Kotera et al. (2023) also found that self-compassion supports academic engagement by encouraging mastery-oriented goals. In terms of social connection, Neff and Beretvas (2013) showed that self-compassion contributes to secure romantic relationships, while Bloch (2018) associated it with improved social functioning. Being kind to oneself appears to foster empathy and deeper social bonds. Lastly, self-compassion may support accomplishment by building resilience, enabling students to pursue goals

despite setbacks (Neff & Costigan, 2014). Studies further suggest that self-compassionate individuals set high aspirations while embracing failure as a learning opportunity, contributing to both personal and academic growth (Hope et al., 2014; Knoesen & Naudé, 2017; Neff, 2023)

Implications, Strengths, and Limitations

This study contributes to the growing body of research on flourishing by examining self-compassion as a key influencing factor. The findings serve as a valuable resource for universities, mental health professionals, and policymakers in designing concrete strategies to promote flourishing among college students, particularly first-year students. One potential approach is implementing self-compassion-based training programs, which have been shown to reduce anxiety and depression while enhancing self-compassion and mindfulness skills (Crego et al., 2022). These positive changes can lead to increased happiness, reduced stress, and improved emotional regulation, ultimately fostering a greater sense of flourishing among first-year students.

This study has several strengths. First, research on self-compassion and flourishing is relatively new in Indonesia, making this study a valuable contribution. Additionally, it includes a more extensive and diverse sample than previous studies examining similar variables (Zulfa & Prastuti, 2020). Furthermore, it delves deeper into the dynamics between self-compassion and flourishing by exploring the role of self-compassion in flourishing and its relationship with each flourishing dimension. Another strength is the use of the latest measurement tool based on Seligman's theory of flourishing: The PERMA-Profil (Butler & Kern, 2016). This tool provides a more comprehensive assessment of flourishing compared to previous instruments such as the Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010) and the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF) (Keyes et al., 2008), which offer a less holistic perspective. By using The PERMA-Profil, this study provides valuable insights that researchers, readers, and policymakers can use as a foundation for developing flourishing interventions for first-year students, both in preventive and intervention-based approaches, primarily through self-compassion. Thus, this study contributes to advancing research on self-compassion and flourishing, paving the way for further in-depth studies on these variables.

However, the researchers are also aware of several limitations in this study. First, the sample was predominantly female and geographically clustered in Java, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all first-year students in Indonesia. Second, using an online self-selected sample may have introduced bias, as those who chose to participate might differ from those who did not. Additionally, the study relied on a single-method, self-report measure, which may be subject to response biases. Analytically, the study only controlled for age and gender, without accounting for other potentially influential factors such as socioeconomic status, academic performance, or mental health history. Furthermore, several socio-demographic variables known to influence the well-being of students are missing, including parental education levels, parental employment status, and family socioeconomic status. Lastly, it focused solely on the relationship between self-compassion and flourishing, without considering other relevant factors like social support or personality traits. Future research should address these limitations to yield more robust and generalizable findings.

Future research should consider a more balanced sample in terms of gender and geographic representation to improve the generalizability of findings to the broader population of first-year students. It is also important to address potential biases introduced by online self-selection by employing more diverse recruitment methods. In addition, future studies should consider using multiple methods of data collection to reduce the risk of response bias. Analytically, researchers

should include a wider range of covariates—such as socioeconomic status, academic performance, mental health history, social support, and personality traits. Additionally, incorporating key socio-demographic variables—such as parental education levels, parental employment status, and family socioeconomic status—will provide a deeper and more accurate understanding of the factors influencing student well-being. These enhancements will support a more comprehensive examination of the relationship between self-compassion and flourishing within a wider psychosocial context.

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Not applicable.