

The Role of Self-Compassion in Psychological Well-Being Among Young Adults from Single-Parent Families

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Abstract: Entering young adulthood involves significant role transitions and increasing responsibilities that require effective psychological adaptation. For individuals raised in single-parent families, limited parental support and the absence of one parental figure may pose additional challenges to psychological well-being. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of self-compassion in promoting psychological well-being among young adults from single-parent families. This study employed a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional design, with data collected through self-report questionnaires and analyzed using simple linear regression. A total of 130 young adults from single-parent families participated in the study through purposive sampling. The findings reveal that self-compassion significantly contributes to psychological well-being ($p < 0.05$), with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.481, indicating that self-compassion accounts for 48.1% of the variance in psychological well-being. Both self-compassion and psychological well-being were found to be at moderate levels among participants. These results suggest that fostering self-compassion may serve as an effective internal resource to support psychological well-being in young adults facing family-related adversities. The originality of this study lies in its focus on young adults raised by a single parent due to parental loss, highlighting self-compassion as a key protective factor within this specific population and contributing empirical evidence to the growing literature on positive psychological resources in vulnerable family contexts.

Keywords: *Early adulthood, Self-compassion, Psychological well-being*

INTRODUCTION

The family is the smallest social unit in society and serves as the primary environment for the development of individual values, character, and psychological well-being. Through interactions within the family, children learn fundamental social norms, emotional regulation, and coping strategies that shape their later development. However, in contemporary Indonesian society, not all individuals grow up in intact families with the presence of both parents. One increasingly prominent social phenomenon is the rise of single-parent families, primarily resulting from divorce and the death of a spouse. This phenomenon has become a significant social issue due to its potential long-term impact on individual development and social well-being.

National statistics indicate a substantial increase in family disruption in Indonesia over recent years. Data from Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik) show that divorce cases reached 447,743 in 2021 and rose to 516,344 in 2022, followed by 463,653 cases in 2023. In addition, records from the Religious Courts compiled by Statistics Indonesia reported 394,608 divorce cases in 2024. Beyond divorce, parental loss due to death has also affected many families. National mapping conducted by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in collaboration with UNICEF revealed that since the COVID-19 pandemic, 25,430 children in Indonesia have lost one of their parents. Furthermore, data from the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2022 recorded more than four million children categorized as orphans, motherless, fatherless, or parentless. These figures illustrate that growing up in a single-parent family has become a widespread social reality with potential implications extending into young adulthood.

Previous research has demonstrated that growing up in a single-parent family may result in diverse developmental outcomes. Several studies have reported positive adaptive capacities, such as increased independence, resilience, and responsibility among individuals raised by single parents (Sarah et al., 2025; Chavda & Nisarga, 2023). Research by Leininger and Ziol (2008) found that children raised by single fathers often experience more stable economic conditions, whereas children raised by single mothers tend to show better emotional adjustment (Asriyani et al., 2023). These findings suggest that single-parent family structures do not uniformly lead to negative outcomes and may foster certain adaptive strengths depending on contextual and relational factors.

Conversely, a substantial body of literature highlights the potential negative psychological and social consequences of parental loss or family disruption. Children and adolescents from single-parent families have been found to experience prolonged grief, emotional insecurity, social withdrawal, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Masi, 2021; Massa et al., 2020). Hasanah (2020) reported that young adults who grew up in divorced families are more likely to experience socio-emotional and psychological problems compared to those raised in intact families. Despite these findings, much of the existing literature remains concentrated on children and adolescents, with limited emphasis on how these early family experiences shape psychological adjustment during young adulthood a developmental stage characterized by identity formation, increased autonomy, and complex social transitions.

An individual's ability to navigate developmental challenges is closely related to psychological well-being. Ryff (1989, 1995) conceptualized psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Individuals who experience difficulties in managing developmental transitions often exhibit self-blame, emotional distress, and impaired social functioning. Preliminary observations among young adults raised in single-parent families due to parental death indicate recurring patterns of self-criticism, emotional vulnerability, and challenges in social relationships. Nevertheless, some individuals demonstrate adaptive coping and continued personal growth, suggesting the presence of psychological protective factors that support well-being despite adverse developmental experiences.

One protective factor that has received increasing attention in psychological research is self-compassion. Self-compassion refers to the ability to treat oneself with kindness, recognize shared human experiences, and maintain mindful awareness during times of suffering or failure (Neff & Costigan, 2014). Previous studies across diverse populations have consistently shown that self-compassion is positively associated with psychological well-being and contributes to emotional regulation, resilience, and adaptive coping (Neff et al., 2007; Homan, 2016; Syafrina & Farida, 2023). However, empirical studies that specifically examine the role of self-compassion in supporting psychological well-being among young adults raised in single-parent families remain scarce, particularly within the Indonesian cultural context. This gap is notable given that young adulthood represents a critical developmental period in which unresolved self-blame and emotional distress may persist or intensify without adequate psychological resources.

Based on the theoretical framework of psychological well-being and evidence from previous empirical studies, this study proposes a research hypothesis that self-compassion plays a significant role in supporting psychological well-being. Specifically, it is hypothesized that higher levels of self-compassion are positively and significantly associated with higher levels of psychological well-being among young adults who grew up in single-parent families.

RESEARCH METHOD

Analysis Unit

The unit of analysis in this study was individual young adults, both male and female, who were raised in single-parent families due to the death of one parent. The inclusion criteria were: unmarried individuals aged between 18 and 40 years, living with the surviving parent who had assumed the role of a single parent for a minimum duration of one year. This age range was selected based on the classification of young adulthood proposed by Noralisa et al. (2024), which identifies this period as a critical developmental stage characterized by significant psychological and social challenges relevant to the objectives of this study.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional design. The cross-sectional design was chosen because it allows for the examination of relationships and contributions between variables at a single point in time, making it appropriate for testing the proposed hypothesis regarding the contribution of self-compassion to psychological well-being. Given the focus on identifying statistical associations rather than causal effects, this design was considered suitable for addressing the research objectives efficiently. Accordingly, the findings of this study reflect the statistical contribution between variables and do not imply a definitive causal relationship.

Data Sources

The data used in this study were primary data obtained directly from respondents who met the specified inclusion criteria. Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling technique, in which participation was voluntary. Data collection relied on responses to an online survey distributed through accessible social networks, allowing the researchers to reach individuals who fit the study criteria effectively.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using structured self-report questionnaires administered online. Two standardized measurement instruments were employed. Psychological well-being was measured using the Psychological Well-Being Scale developed based on the six dimensions proposed by Ryff and Keyes (1995), namely self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, personal growth, and autonomy. The scale initially consisted of 18 items, comprising 10 favorable and 8 unfavorable

statements. After item analysis, 13 items were retained, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.784, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.70. An example item from this scale is: “Saya senang dengan bagaimana hidup saya berjalan hingga saat ini” (“I am satisfied with how my life has unfolded so far”).

Self-compassion was measured using the Self-Compassion Scale adapted into Indonesian by Sugianto, Suwartono, and Sutanto (2020), based on the three dimensions proposed by Neff (2003): self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification. The scale consisted of 26 items, including 13 favorable and 13 unfavorable statements. Following item validation, 18 items were retained, producing a reliability coefficient of 0.877, indicating high internal consistency. An example item from this scale is: “Saya sulit menerima dan menghakimi kekurangan saya sendiri” (“I find it difficult to accept and often judge my own shortcomings”).

All items in both scales were rated using a six-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The Likert scale was employed to capture respondents’ attitudes, perceptions, and self-evaluations regarding the constructs under study (Hidayat, 2021).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using simple linear regression to examine the extent to which self-compassion contributes to psychological well-being among young adults raised in single-parent families. Statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 25 for Windows. The regression analysis was chosen to test the proposed hypothesis and to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between the independent variable (self-compassion) and the dependent variable (psychological well-being).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Contribution of Self-Compassion to Psychological Well-Being

To examine the research hypothesis regarding the contribution of self-compassion to psychological well-being, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted involving 130 young adult respondents who were raised in single-parent families due to the death of one

parent. This analysis aimed to determine whether self-compassion significantly predicts psychological well-being and to quantify the magnitude of its contribution.

The results of the regression analysis revealed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being is statistically significant. Furthermore, the obtained F-value was 118.603, which exceeds the critical F-table value of 3.92. These results confirm that the proposed research hypothesis is accepted, demonstrating a significant contribution of self-compassion to psychological well-being.

The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.694 indicates a strong and positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being. This suggests that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with higher levels of psychological well-being among respondents. Additionally, the coefficient of determination (R Square) of 0.481 indicates that self-compassion accounts for 48.1% of the variance in psychological well-being. The remaining 51.9% of the variance may be attributed to other psychological, social, or contextual factors not examined in this study.

Overall, these findings indicate that self-compassion plays a substantial role in shaping the psychological well-being of young adults from single-parent families. The relatively large proportion of explained variance suggests that self-compassion constitutes an important internal psychological resource for individuals coping with emotional challenges following parental loss.

Table 1. Hypothesis Test Results

Variable	R	R Square	F	Sig.
Self-Compassion → Psychological Well-Being	0.694	0.481	118.603	0.000

Levels of Psychological Well-Being and Self-Compassion

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine the general levels of psychological well-being and self-compassion among respondents. The analysis revealed that psychological well-being had an empirical mean score of 50.37, which falls within the moderate category. This finding suggests that, on average, respondents possess a reasonably stable level of psychological functioning, although it has not yet reached an optimal or high level.

Similarly, self-compassion demonstrated an empirical mean score of 50.97 and was also categorized as moderate. This indicates that respondents generally exhibit a moderate

ability to treat themselves with kindness, understanding, and acceptance when facing difficulties, yet still encounter challenges in managing negative emotions and self-judgment.

Taken together, these findings show that psychological well-being and self-compassion among young adults raised in single-parent families are relatively balanced and aligned. The moderate classification of both variables indicates that respondents have developed basic adaptive capacities but continue to experience emotional vulnerability related to their life circumstances.

Table 2. Empirical Mean of Psychological Well-Being and Self-Compassion

Scale	Empirical Mean	Category
Psychological Well-Being	50.37	Moderate
Self-Compassion	50.97	Moderate

Demographic Characteristics and Descriptive Patterns

Further descriptive analyses were conducted based on respondents' demographic characteristics to provide contextual insights into psychological well-being and self-compassion across different groups. The majority of respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years (96.2%), while a smaller proportion fell within the 26–30 age range. This indicates that the sample was largely composed of early young adults.

In terms of gender, female respondents constituted a larger proportion of the sample compared to male respondents. However, both male and female respondents demonstrated moderate levels of psychological well-being and self-compassion. Although minor differences in mean scores were observed, these differences did not result in distinct categorical classifications.

Analysis based on educational background revealed that respondents with high school/vocational education and those with bachelor's degrees also fell within the moderate category for both variables. Similarly, respondents across different occupational statuses—private employees, government employees, entrepreneurs, and students—exhibited comparable levels of psychological well-being and self-compassion. Descriptive analysis based on monthly income also showed moderate levels across all income categories.

Overall, these findings suggest a relatively homogeneous distribution of psychological well-being and self-compassion across demographic groups. It is important to note that these demographic analyses are purely descriptive, and no inferential statistical tests were conducted to assess group differences.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Data	Count	%	Psychological Well-Being	Self-Compassion
			ME	Category
Age				ME
18–25 years	125	96,2	50,55	Moderate
26–30 years	5	3,8	45,8	Moderate
Gender				
Male	21	16,2	51,86	Moderate
Female	109	80,8	50,08	Moderate
Education				
High School/Vocational	86	66,2	50,49	Moderate
Bachelor’s Degree	44	33,8	40,14	Moderate
Job				
Private Employee	17	13,1	51,06	Moderate
Government Employee	4	3,1	52	Moderate
Entrepreneur	4	3,1	52,75	Moderate
Student	105	80,8	49,94	Moderate
Income				
Income: 500,000–1,000,000	59	45,4	49,86	Moderate
Income: 1,000,000–1,500,000	29	22,3	51,48	Moderate
Income: >1,500,000	42	32,3	50,31	Moderate

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the contribution of self-compassion to psychological well-being among young adults raised in single-parent families due to the death of one parent. The results indicate that self-compassion has a significant and positive contribution to psychological well-being, explaining 48.1% of its variance. This finding suggests that self-compassion plays a substantial role as an internal psychological resource that supports well-being during young adulthood, particularly in the context of parental loss and family disruption.

The positive relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being can be understood through the core components of self-compassion, namely self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff, 2003). Individuals with higher self-compassion tend to respond to personal suffering with understanding rather than harsh self-judgment, recognize their difficulties as part of shared human experiences, and maintain balanced awareness of their emotions. These processes enable individuals to regulate negative emotions more effectively, which in turn supports key dimensions of psychological well-

being such as self-acceptance, purpose in life, and positive relationships with others (Ryff, 1989, 1995).

For young adults raised in single-parent families, self-compassion may function as a protective psychological factor amid increased emotional vulnerability and role-related stress. The loss of a parent often requires individuals to assume additional responsibilities, adjust to altered family dynamics, and cope with unresolved grief. In such circumstances, self-compassion helps individuals reduce feelings of self-blame and emotional overload, allowing them to adapt more constructively to life challenges. This aligns with Ryff's conceptualization of psychological well-being, which emphasizes autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth as essential components of healthy psychological functioning (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous empirical research demonstrating the role of self-compassion in enhancing psychological well-being. Syafrina and Farida (2023) found that self-compassion significantly predicted psychological well-being, contributing 54.8% of its variance. Similarly, Mulyadi et al. (2024) reported a contribution of 45.9% among young adults experiencing a quarter-life crisis. Research conducted by Nasir and Rusli (2022) among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic also showed a strong influence of self-compassion on psychological well-being, with a contribution of 72.1%. Although the magnitude of contribution varies across populations and contexts, these findings consistently highlight self-compassion as a robust predictor of psychological well-being.

Descriptive findings in this study indicate that both psychological well-being and self-compassion among respondents fall within the moderate category. This suggests that while respondents possess basic adaptive capacities, they continue to experience emotional challenges such as sadness, stress, and feelings of loss. These experiences are consistent with previous studies indicating that parental loss during developmental stages can result in prolonged emotional adjustment and vulnerability during young adulthood (Zahira & Savira, 2024). The moderate level of self-compassion observed in this study indicates that respondents have begun developing self-acceptance but may still struggle with emotional regulation when facing ongoing life pressures.

Furthermore, the relatively homogeneous levels of psychological well-being and self-compassion across demographic categories suggest that internal psychological factors may play a more prominent role than demographic characteristics in determining well-being

outcomes. This finding is supported by Dreisoerner et al. (2023), who argued that self-compassion is primarily shaped by individual psychological processes rather than external factors such as occupation or income. Thus, cultivating self-compassion may be particularly important for enhancing psychological well-being regardless of demographic background.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study highlight the importance of incorporating self-compassion-based interventions into psychological support programs for young adults from single-parent families. Interventions such as mindfulness-based training, self-kindness exercises, and emotion regulation programs may help strengthen self-compassion and, in turn, improve psychological well-being. Future research is encouraged to explore additional contributing variables, such as resilience, social support, and emotion regulation, as well as to employ longitudinal designs to better understand causal relationships over time.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that self-compassion plays a significant role in supporting psychological well-being among young adults who were raised in single-parent families due to the death of one parent. The findings indicate that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with better psychological well-being, with self-compassion accounting for 48.1% of the variance in psychological well-being. In addition, the descriptive results show that both self-compassion and psychological well-being among the respondents fall within the moderate category, suggesting that young adults from single-parent backgrounds possess basic adaptive capacities while still experiencing ongoing emotional challenges.

From a scientific perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of psychological literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of self-compassion as a key internal resource for psychological well-being within the specific context of young adults raised by single parents. By focusing on individuals who experienced parental loss, this research extends previous findings on self-compassion beyond general or student populations and highlights its relevance in populations facing early-life adversity. The results reinforce the importance of incorporating self-compassion into theoretical frameworks and intervention strategies aimed at promoting mental health and well-being.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The use of a cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions regarding the relationship between self-

compassion and psychological well-being. In addition, the reliance on convenience sampling resulted in an uneven age distribution, with the majority of respondents in early young adulthood, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal designs, more diverse and representative samples, and additional variables such as resilience, social support, and emotion regulation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of psychological well-being among young adults from single-parent families.

SUGGESTION:

Based on the findings of this study, several concise recommendations are proposed. Young adults raised in single-parent families are encouraged to strengthen their psychological well-being by fostering self-acceptance, reducing excessive self-criticism, and allowing healthy emotional expression through reflective and supportive activities such as journaling, sharing with trusted individuals, and engaging in meaningful leisure activities. Cultivating self-compassion by responding to personal difficulties with kindness and understanding may further enhance psychological well-being.

At the societal level, communities are encouraged to promote a supportive and empathetic environment by reducing stigma, demonstrating understanding, and providing emotional support to individuals from single-parent families. For future research, it is recommended to employ more representative sampling strategies, expand age and educational diversity, and examine additional psychological and contextual variables—such as resilience, social support, and emotion regulation—to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of psychological well-being among young adults raised in single-parent families.

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