World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol:12, No:1, 2018

A Descriptive Study of Self-Compassion in Polytechnic Students in Indonesia

Emma Dwi Ariyani, Dini Hadiani

Open Science Index, Humanities and Social Sciences Vol:12, No:1, 2018 publications.waset.org/10008435/pdf

***Abstract*—**This article reports the descriptive analysis of self-compassion in polytechnic students. It has been long believed that self-compassion can improve students' motivation in completing their studies. This research was conducted with the aim to see the degree of self-compassion in polytechnic students in Indonesia by using Neff's Self-Compassion Scale (short form) measurement tool consisting of 12 items. The research method used was descriptive study with survey technique on 255 students. The results showed that 78% of students had low self-compassion and 22% had high self-compassion. This revealed that polytechnic students still criticize themselves harshly, make a poor judgment and bad self-appraisal, and they also cannot accept their imperfection and consider it as a self-judgment. The students also tend to think that they are the only ones that experience failure and suffering. This can lead to a sense of isolation (self-isolation). Furthermore, the students are often too concerned with aspects that are not liked both in themselves and in life (over-identification). Improving the students' level of self-compassion can be done by building an educational climate that not only criticizes the students but provides feedback as well. This should focus on the students' real behavior rather than the students' general character.

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

I. Introduction

BANDUNG Polytechnic for Manufacturing (Polman Bandung) is a state polytechnic that is engaged in vocational education specifically in the manufacturing world. In terms of teaching and learning program, Polman Bandung employs 60% practice and 40% theory. This is done for the purpose of producing students who are skillful and competent in hard skills in relation to their mastery in technical competence. Likewise, the mastery of soft skills which are believed to be important to support the hard skill is also given in form of strict coaching through extracurricular program and other activities. For polytechnic students, completing their studies appears to be very demanding. This is evidenced by the rigorous schedule of lectures which requires them to take 110 credits in 3 years for diploma 3 programs and 140 credits for diploma 4 programs. During their studies, the students must accomplish several theoretical assignments and practices, fulfill some responsive tasks, and do other activities which require a very careful time management. In addition, the adoption of some strict academic rules, for example the drop out (DO) system for students who are not able to get the minimum required score, seems very tough for them. In other words, to be able to complete the study period well and on time, the polytechnic students must have high motivation to overcome the various academic demands and obstacles that arise.

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

As it was previously stated, motivation is considered as low aspect of soft skills experienced by the students. This can lead to problems since motivation is needed to achieve the students' academic performance [3]. This can be seen from how the students choose their specific learning tasks, how they put some efforts to be successful academically, and how they can handle problems during the process of learning. It can be said that motivation is very important to support the students' success of learning. A study conducted by [4] reports on the relationship between self-compassion and reaction to academic failure among students who received unsatisfactory midterm grade scores. The results of the study showed that self-compassion positively correlated with positive and negative coping emotion. It can be inferred that the students' responses on their failure can show the level of their self-compassion.

Another study conducted by [5] has proved that self-compassion can increase motivation in a person. The study found that the student with high level of self-compassion was able to face the difficulties and mistakes without criticizing himself. It means that in completing his studies the student requires confidence in his own ability and perseverance to complete each task. When faced with academic difficulties students must be able to pass through and have endurance to

E. D. Ariyani and D. Hadiani are Lecturers in the Socio Manufacture Department, Bandung Polytechnic for Manufacturing, Indonesia (phone: 620222500241; e-mail: emma@polman-bandung.ac.id, dinibhs@polman-bandung.ac.id).

Open Science Index, Humanities and Social Sciences Vol:12, No:1, 2018 publications.waset.org/10008435/pdf

overcome the problems. It is therefore necessary for students to have high self-compassion. Self-compassion focuses on the degree of individual in terms of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness [6]. Students with high self-compassion will be able to control self-doubt and academic anxiety better. Students will be stronger and can face obstacles in the education process. Self-compassion is needed to help students complete their studies well according to the demands of the institution without sacrificing their mental health.

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

II. Theoretical Review

A. Self-Compassion

Compassion involves sensitivity to the experience of suffering, coupled with a deep desire to alleviate that suffering [7]. This means that someone must recognize the pain to understand the meaning of compassion. For example, when you meet a sick person at the hospital, you can try to figure out that he is suffering. You cannot be an ignorant person; at least you can show your sympathy to others [8]. Self-compassion is the ability to entertain and care for oneself when he experiences suffering, failure and imperfection instead of doing self-criticism. Self-compassion consists of three main components i.e. self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness

B. Self-Kindness

Self-kindness is the individual's ability to understand and accept oneself as well as to give tenderness rather than to hurt and judge oneself, where most individuals see it as something normal. Individuals acknowledge problems and shortcomings without self-assessment. When this reality is received with kindness then the individual will generate positive emotions of goodness and help overcome them [9]. To be able to have self-kindness requires an individual understanding of weaknesses and obstacles without judging oneself (self-judgment). Having self-kindness can alleviate and soothe the troubled minds, and it can create peace by offering warmth, gentleness and self-sympathy.

C. Common Humanity

Common humanity is the situation where individuals realize that they should perceive difficulties, problems and challenges which are parts of human life and these are things that everyone experiences and not just experienced by himself [9]. Common humanity links the individual weaknesses to the human condition in general. Having a good sense of common humanity will make someone able to see his deficiency as a part of life. He will experience that everyone sometimes encounters a failure. If he cannot perceive problems and he sees them as his disappointment, it can create a sense of isolation (self-isolation) in which the individual focuses on the deficiency so that he cannot see anything else and feel himself weak and worthless.

D. Mindfulness

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

III. Research Methodology

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

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

The following is the framework of the research:

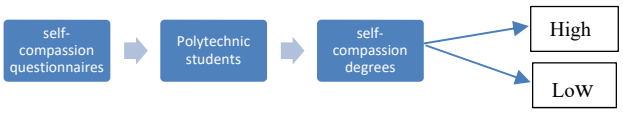


Fig. 1 The framework of the research

The data analysis technique uses the average value of the total score on each self-compassion component to determine the high and low categories. Self-compassion is high if the three components are in the high category. On the other hand, if one of the components is in low category, it is considered as low self-compassion.

IV. Result and Discussions

The description of research subjects by sex and distribution by level of study can be seen in Tables I and II.

The research result shown in Table III presents the description of students’ level of self-compassion. There are 78% of the participants that represent 199 students belong to the low category of self-compassion. The other 22% of the

participants that represent 56 students belong to the high category of self-compassion.

TABLE I
DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS BASED ON GENDER

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

TABLE II
DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS BASED ON LEVEL OF STUDY

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

TABLE III
DESCRIPTION OF STUDENTS' SELF-COMPASSION

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

Based on the findings in Table III, it can be interpreted that in general the students have low self-compassion degree. It can be said that the students still do self-criticisms. They criticize themselves harshly against the mistakes they do and the weaknesses they have. They are likely to make a poor judgment and give bad self-appraisal on themselves. As a result, they cannot accept their imperfection and regard it as a self-judgment. Students also tend to be subjective and focus on their deficiencies, so they feel weak and worthless. They think that they are the only people who experience a failure and suffering, and therefore it can lead to a sense of isolation (self-isolation). Students are often overwhelmed by their problems, and it seems that they concern too much on aspects that they do not like. They are likely not aware of experiences that should be confronted by a balanced and positive attitude, and always try to see experiences in subjective perspective (over-identification). It means that the students tend to see themselves negatively as they always consider themselves as poor and helpless.

Concerning the main components of self-compassion which are self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness can be seen in Table IV. The table shows the description of the degree of each component of self-compassion.

TABLE IV
DESCRIPTION OF DEGREE OF SELF-COMPASSION COMPONENTS

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

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

In summary, it can be said that students are more self-criticizing and they view themselves as individuals who have many weaknesses and imperfections. Students with low self-kindness can lower the degree of common humanity and mindfulness components. Students who always do self-criticism and who perceive that they do not have good academic skills when they confront some difficulties during their study will tend to withdraw themselves from the environment, and they will center their attention to the negative thoughts and feelings. This situation will drive them to show the excessive emotions. On the other hand, students with a low degree of common humanity will appear to be individuals who exhibit the most miserable feelings. They tend to exaggerate the extent of their personal suffering. They assume that they are the only persons who experience the academic difficulties and failures. While students who have a low degree of mindfulness will regard the experience they face with a subjective perspective. They cannot accept thoughts, feelings and circumstances as they are without pressure and denial.

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

It is also believed that self-compassion will be low if the student continuously receives negative criticism. It does not build their positive characters. In fact, it raises the student's negative perception of himself. Moreover, as it is proposed, providing compassion feedback can be done by giving attentive advice focuses on apparent behavior rather than general student characters [9]. Feedback is given to the behavior shown, so the student knows his mistakes and knows what to fix. In addition, feedback is also given to the emotions behind the behavior of the problem, so that students understand the feelings and emotions experienced as the cause

Open Science Index, Humanities and Social Sciences Vol:12, No:1, 2018 publications.waset.org/10008435/pdf

of his behavior, and know what behavior should be improved. This can improve the mindfulness of students that will ultimately impact on improving the student's self-kindness and common humanity. It can be said that the higher the degree of the three components of self-compassion, the higher will be the students' self-compassion. By having high self-compassion, the students are expected to be able to complete their studies well in accordance with the demands of the institution without sacrificing their mental health.

V. Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of the study have revealed the description of polytechnic students' degree of self-compassion and the factors influence it. It is found that in general polytechnic students have low degree of self-compassion. This means that the students still judge and assess themselves negatively. They tend to isolate themselves from the environment because they feel that they are the only humans who experience difficulties, failures, and inadequacies. The students also appraise the experience they encounter during their study subjectively, so they focus on their weaknesses and shortcomings. The results also show that self-kindness is the lowest component of self-compassion shared by the students. This is somewhat influenced by adult criticism that makes students judge themselves negatively.

In conclusion, there are some internal and external factors that influence the low level of polytechnic students' self-compassion. This consequently may influence their study accomplishment. Based on the results, the improvement effort that can be done is to build an educational climate that may give the students some criticisms, and it also provides some feedback that focuses on the students' visible behavior. It is expected that the students understand what aspects of their behavior should be improved.

Acknowledgment

This research was supported by Polman Bandung Research Grant 2017.

References

[1] E. D. Ariyani, "Studi Deskriptif mengenai Soft Skills pada Mahasiswa di Polman Bandung," in *Jurnal Sosiohumaniora*, vol. 15, J. no.2, July 2013, pp. 151–157.

[2] S. Sadikin, E. D. Ariyani, A. Muhammad, "Analisa Hasil Implementasi Model Pengukuran Soft Skills pada Mahasiswa Polman Bandung", *Prosiding seminar nasional hasil penerapan penelitian dan pengabdian masyarakat III*, 2016, pp. B -436–443.

[3] C. Peklaj, M.P. Levpuscek, "Students' Motvation and Academic Success in Relation to The Quality of Individual and Collaborative Work during a Course in Educational Psychology". *Proceedings of the 31st Annual ATEE Conference*, 2006, pp. 147-161

[4] K. D. Neff, Y. Hseih, K. Dejitthirat, "Self-compassion, achievement goals and coping with academic failure". *Self and Identity*, 4, 263-287

[5] J. G. Braines, S. Chen, "Self-compassion increases self-improvement motivation", *Personality and social psychology bulletin*. DOI: 10.1177/0146167212445599

[6] K. D. Neff, "Development and validation of scale to measure self-compassion", Self and Indentity, 2, 2003a, pp. 223-250

[7] J. L. Goetz, D. Keltner, E. Simon-Thomas, "Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review", *Psychological Bulletin*, 136, 2010, pp. 351-374

[8] K. D. Neff, K. A. Dahm, "Self-Compassion: What it is, what it does, and how it relates to mindfulness", New York: Springer

[9] R. Missiliana, R. R. Polla, "Peningkatan self-compassion pada mahasiswa fakultas psikologi universitas x", *Prosiding seminar nasional psikologi UNISBA*, 2013, pp. 143-150

[10] K. D. Neff, *Self-compassion: Stop beating yourself up and leave insecure behind,* 2011, New York: HarperCollin Publisher.

[11] F. Raes, E. Pommier, K. D. Neff, and D.V. Gucht, "Construction and Factorial validation of a short form of self-compassion scale, Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, 17, 2010, pp.250-255

Emma Dwi Ariyani is a Lecturer of Bandung Polytechnic for Manufacturing, Indonesia, possesses a Master Degree in Psychology from Padjajaran University (Indonesia). She is currently a teaching staff in Socio Manufacture Department. She has been handling such courses as Industrial psychology, professional communication and management. Her research interests are in the field of industrial psychology, management, and social sciences.

Dini Hadiani is a Lecturer of the Socio Manufacture Department, Bandung Polytechnic for Manufacturing, Indonesia. She possesses a Master Degree in English Education from University of Education (Indonesia). She has been handling such courses as English for Engineering (Technical English) and Academic Writing. Her research interests include language teaching methodology, applied linguistics, and social sciences.

Open Science Index, Humanities and Social Sciences Vol:12, No:1, 2018 publications.waset.org/10008435/pdf