

THE EFFECT OF SELF COMPASSION ON LONELINESS OF FEMALE PRISONERS IN CLASS IIA WOMEN'S PRISON IN MEDAN



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the effect of self-compassion on loneliness in female prisoners at the Medan Class IIA Women's Correctional Institution. In a correctional environment, female inmates often face social and psychological challenges that can exacerbate feelings of isolation and loneliness. Self-compassion, which includes an attitude of self-love and acceptance of one's shortcomings, as well as coping with pain without self-judgement, is expected to help reduce loneliness in inmates. This study used the regression analysis method to examine the relationship between self-compassion and loneliness, the results showed that self-compassion has a significant influence on reducing loneliness levels, with a variance explained of 5.8%. The findings indicate that increasing self-compassion in female prisoners can help them cope better with the challenges of prison, make them more productive, and make them better able to manage emotional distress. This study recommends that prison programmes integrate self-compassion approaches, such as mindfulness training and psychological support, to support the rehabilitation process and improve the mental well-being of female prisoners. This effort is expected to help them face their time in prison more positively and resiliently.

Keywords: Self Compassion; Loneliness; Woman Prisoners



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INTRODUCTION

Crime is behaviour that goes against social ethics and causes harm to society (Edwart & Azhar, 2019). Crimes involving women as perpetrators, such as assault, theft, abortion, fraud, and drugs, indicate the importance of proper guidance programmes within the prison system for effective rehabilitation of inmates. However, life in a correctional institution has its own challenges. Women prisoners are often faced with limited social interaction and strict prison situations, making them vulnerable to social isolation which can trigger loneliness (Juniartha et al., 2012). This condition of loneliness is a serious problem for women prisoners because it can affect their emotional and mental health conditions.

Loneliness is a psychological condition in which a person feels disconnected from others, even in the midst of a crowd. This condition is often accompanied by feelings of depression, helplessness, and low social satisfaction (Russell, 1996). Based on the results of interviews with officers at the Medan Class IIA Women's Correctional Institution, there are female prisoners who experience a decrease in psychological well-being due to limited social interaction and lack of emotional support. Social isolation experienced in a correctional environment often leads to mental disorders (Gussak, 2009).

Self-compassion is an attitude that includes compassion for oneself, understanding that failure is part of the human experience, and the ability to remain calm in suffering (Neff, 2011). Factors that influence self-compassion include gender, culture, age, personality, and parental role (Neff & McGehee, 2010). On the other hand, loneliness can result from a mismatch between expectations and reality or the inability to maintain adequate social support relationships (Russell, 1996). Factors that influence loneliness include low satisfaction in relationships, desire for change in relationships, low self-esteem, and unhealthy and unresponsive interpersonal attitudes (Brehm et al., 2002).

To overcome loneliness in female prisoners, self-compassion can be an effective strategy. Self-compassion is the attitude of loving oneself when facing difficult situations by accepting shortcomings without self-judgement (Neff, 2003). Previous research shows that self-compassion can help reduce loneliness in various groups, including adolescents in pesantren (Elfaza & Rizal, 2020), university students (Pratiwi et al., 2019), and depressed patients (Krieger et al., 2013). Self-compassion includes three dimensions: self-kindness (kindness to oneself), common humanity (understanding that failure is part of the human experience), and mindfulness (the ability to remain calm in the midst of suffering). Through self-compassion, individuals are expected to build self-resilience and view difficult situations in a more positive way, so that they are able to face various challenges better (Ruga, 2017).

The conceptual framework of this study shows the relationship between self-compassion as the independent variable (IV) and loneliness as the dependent variable (DV). Previous research revealed a negative relationship between self-compassion and loneliness, suggesting that self-compassion may be an important mechanism in reducing the level of loneliness in individuals who are in stressful environments, such as correctional institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

In prison, women prisoners face unique psychological and social challenges that significantly impact their mental health, particularly feelings of loneliness. Loneliness is defined as a psychological condition in which a person feels disconnected from others, often accompanied by feelings of depression, helplessness and low self-esteem (Russell, 1996). Research shows that social isolation in prisons exacerbates these feelings, leading

to serious mental health problems for prisoners (Gussak, 2009). In Medan's Class IIA Women's Prison, limited social interaction contributes to a decline in psychological well-being among female prisoners, as noted by correctional officers.

Self-Compassion as a Coping Strategy

Compassion, as defined by Neff (2003), refers to a person's ability to treat themselves well, understand that personal shortcomings are part of the human experience, and maintain calm in the midst of suffering. The concept consists of three main components: kindness (being gentle with oneself in difficult times), common humanity (realising that failure is a universal experience), and mindfulness (maintaining a balanced awareness of one's feelings without overly identifying with them). Various factors influence self-compassion, including gender, cultural background, and individual personality (Neff & McGehee, 2010).

Previous research has shown that self-compassion plays a protective role against loneliness in various populations. For example, studies of adolescents, university students, and individuals suffering from depression show that self-compassion helps reduce loneliness by fostering self-compassion and resilience in the face of adversity (Elfaza & Rizal, 2020; Pratiwi et al., 2019; Krieger et al., 2013). By promoting kindness and self-understanding, self-compassion assists individuals in overcoming feelings of inadequacy and social disconnection, which are common triggers of loneliness.

The Role of Self-Compassion in Correctional Settings

In environments such as prisons, where social support is limited, self-compassion can serve as a valuable coping mechanism for inmates. Research shows that inmates who practise self-compassion are more resilient, better able to manage emotional stress, and less likely to experience severe loneliness (Ruga, 2017). Furthermore, individuals with high self-compassion tend to exhibit greater psychological resilience and healthier responses to negative experiences, which are critical for navigating the restrictive and often isolating environment of correctional institutions.

In the context of Medan's Class IIA Women's Correctional Institution, self-compassion is hypothesised to be negatively correlated with loneliness in inmates. This means that inmates with higher levels of self-compassion may experience lower levels of loneliness. This study sought to build on previous research by exploring the relationship between self-compassion and loneliness in this particular population and assess whether interventions that promote self-compassion could be incorporated into correctional programmes to improve mental health outcomes for female inmates.

Hypothesis

Based on this, the authors developed the following research hypothesis:

Ho: Feelings of loneliness in female prisoners at the Women's Correctional Institution Class IIA Medan are not influenced by self-compassion.

Ha: Self-compassion has an impact on loneliness among female inmates at the Women's Correctional Institution Class IIA Medan.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative method with a simple linear regression approach. This approach was chosen to examine the effect of the independent variable, self-compassion, on the dependent variable, loneliness. The simple linear regression design allows researchers to find out the statistical relationship between variables, so as to measure the

extent to which self-compassion affects loneliness in female prisoners at Class IIA Medan Women's Prison.

The population in this study includes all female prisoners in Medan Class IIA Women's Prison. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, resulting in a sample of 251 female prisoners. A simple random sampling technique was applied to ensure each member of the population had an equal opportunity to be selected as the research sample.

The research instrument used a questionnaire consisting of two main scales: Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) and UCLA Loneliness Scale. The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) was used to measure the level of self-compassion, which includes three main dimensions: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Meanwhile, the UCLA Loneliness Scale was used to measure the level of loneliness, which includes the dimensions of social desirability and depression. Each item in the questionnaire uses a Likert scale, which allows respondents to indicate the frequency or degree of their agreement with a given statement.

Primary data was obtained by distributing questionnaires directly to respondents at Medan Class IIA Women's Prison. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to select answers that reflect their level of self-compassion and loneliness based on their experience in prison.

The collected data were analysed using simple linear regression test to test the research hypothesis. Validity and reliability tests were conducted first to ensure that the measurement instrument (questionnaire) provides consistent and accurate results. The test results showed that the questionnaire met the standards required for further statistical testing. After confirming the validity and reliability of the instruments, regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of self-compassion on loneliness among female inmates at Class IIA Women's Correctional Facility in Medan.

The following are the operational definitions in this study.

Table 1
Operational Definitions

No	Variable	Definition	Dimension	Measurement Tool / Method	Measurement Result	Measurement Scale
1	Self-Compassion	Being nice and compassionate to oneself and accepting of one's flaws makes it easier to deal with challenges (Neff, 2003).	1.Self Kindness 2.Common Humanity 3.Mindfulness	Questionnaire/ Observation	•Almost Never (AN) •Rarely (R) •Occasionally (O) •Very Often (VO) •Almost Always (AA)	Likert
2	Loneliness	Results from the incapacity to build and sustain connections, as well as a perceived discrepancy between expectations and reality (Russell, 1996).	1.Social Desirability 2.Depression	Questionnaire/ Observation	•Always (A) •Rarely (R) •Occasionally (O) •Never (N)	Likert

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Correctional Unit

Women's Correctional Institution Klas IIA Medan is a Technical Implementation Unit (UPT) under the Directorate of Corrections which is directly responsible to the Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of North Sumatra. It is located on Jalan Pemasarakatan, Tanjung Gusta, Medan, with a capacity of 800 inmates. Established in 1985, the institution is strategically located close to Medan city centre, providing easy access and proximity to public transport routes.

Some of the prison buildings date back to the Dutch colonial era and do not fully fulfil the standards set for Technical Implementation Units (UPT) within a restorative justice framework. The residential blocks at this prison consist of four female-only residential blocks.

Validity and Reliability Test

This is a summary of the validity and reliability test results presented in a table format.

Table 2
Validity and Reliability Test

No	Variable	Number Of Items	Validity Test Result	Number Of Valid Items	Reliability Test Result (Cronbach's Alpha)	Description
1	Self-Compassion	26	25 Valid Items, 1 Invalid Item	25	0.763	Reliable (A > 0.7)
2	Loneliness	6	All items valid	6	0.720	Reliable (A > 0.7)

Source: Data analyzed, 2024

Respondents Characteristics

Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of the research respondents based on age, ethnicity, case type, sentence length, and education level.

Table 3
Respondents Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage(%)
1. Age	21 - 40 Years	121	48,2
	41 - 65 Years	130	51,8
	Total	251	100,0
2. Ethnicity	Batak	147	58,6
	Jawa	54	21,5
	Melayu	32	12,7
	Tionghoa	18	7,2
	Total	251	100,0
3. Case Type	Narcotics	198	78,9
	Corruption	13	5,2
	Murder	8	3,2
	Child Protection Law	8	3,2
	Embezzlement	7	2,8
	Fraud	5	2,0
	Gambling	3	1,2
	Theft	3	1,2
	Robbery	3	1,2
	Human Trafficking	2	0,8
	Terrorism	1	0,4
	Total	251	100,0
4. Sentence Duration	1 - 3 Years	26	10,4
	4 - 6 Years	168	66,9
	7 - 10 Years	57	22,7
	Total	251	100,0
5. Education	SD	6	2,4
	SMP	67	26,7
	SMA	164	65,3
	D3 - S1	14	5,6
	Total	251	100,0

Source: Data analyzed, 2024

Descriptive Analysis

This is the descriptive analysis for variable self compassion and loneliness with age and ethnicity.

Table 4
Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive Analysis	Variable	Value	Sig.	Relationship
a) Age	Self Compassion	0,464	0,049	There is a Relationship(Sig < 0,05)
	Loneliness	0,329	0,016	There is a Relationship (Sig < 0,05)
b) Ethnicity	Self Compassion	0,604	0,686	No Relationship (Sig > 0,05)
	Loneliness	0,403	0,444	No Relationship (Sig > 0,05)

Source: Data analyzed, 2024

Table 4 summarizes the descriptive analysis results for the variables Self-Compassion and Loneliness based on age and ethnicity, and indicates whether or not there is a relationship between these variables.

Table 5
Self-Compassion and Loneliness Categorization

Categorization	Category	Scoring Guidelines	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Self Compassion	High	$X \geq (\mu + 1\sigma)$	39	15
	Medium	$(\mu - 1\sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 1\sigma)$	170	68
	Low	$X < (\mu - 1\sigma)$	42	17
	Total		251	100
Loneliness	High	$X \geq (\mu + 1\sigma)$	53	21
	Medium	$(\mu - 1\sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 1\sigma)$	161	64
	Low	$X < (\mu - 1\sigma)$	37	15
	Total		251	100

Source: Data analyzed, 2024

Table 5 summarizes the categorization results for Self-Compassion and Loneliness scores among research respondents, including the frequency and percentage for each category. The findings indicate significant variation in levels of Self-Compassion and Loneliness among female inmates. The relationship between age and these variables highlights the importance of considering demographic factors in designing interventions and support programs for inmates. Additionally, these results emphasize the need for programs aimed at enhancing Self-Compassion and reducing loneliness within correctional institutions.

Table 6
Univariate Analysis and Classical Assumption Testing

Asumption Test	Result	Decision Criteria	Conclusion
Normality Test	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.200	$\text{Sig} > 0.05 = \text{Normal distribution}$	Data is normally distributed
Autocorrelation Test	Durbin-Watson = 1.942, dL = 1.784, dU = 1.801	$dU < dW < 4-dU = \text{No autocorrelation}$	No autocorrelation
Heteroscedasticity Test	Asymp. Sig. = 0.760	$\text{Sig} > 0.05 = \text{no heteroscedasticity}$	No heteroscedasticity
Multicollinearity Test	Tolerance = 1.000, VIF = 1.000	$\text{Tolerance} > 0.10 \ \& \ \text{VIF} < 10 = \text{multicollinearity}$	No multicollinearity

Source: Data analyzed, 2024

1. Normality Test: The data show a normal distribution based on a significance value greater than 0.05, indicating that the normality assumption for regression analysis is met.
2. Autocorrelation Test: The Durbin-Watson test results indicate no autocorrelation, meaning the residuals of the regression model are uncorrelated.
3. Heteroscedasticity Test: No heteroscedasticity was detected, suggesting that the residual variance is consistent across observations.
4. Multicollinearity Test: There are no signs of multicollinearity among the independent variables, indicating that these variables are not significantly correlated with each other.

Table 7
Summary of Univariate Analysis

Test	Results	Conclusions
Correlation (Self Compassion & Loneliness)	Pearson Correlation = - 0.241, p = 0.000	There is a significant negative correlation; the higher the Self-Compassion, the lower the Loneliness level.
Correlation (Self Kindness & Loneliness)	Pearson Correlation = - 0.252, p = 0.000	There is a significant negative correlation; the higher the Self-Kindness, the lower the Loneliness level.
Correlation (Common Humanity & Loneliness)	Pearson Correlation = - 0.143, p = 0.024	There is a significant negative correlation; the higher the Common Humanity, the lower the Loneliness level.
Correlation (Mindfulness & Loneliness)	Pearson Correlation = - 0.200, p = 0.001	There is a significant negative correlation; the higher the Mindfulness, the lower the Loneliness level.
Regression Analysis	R = 0.241, R ² = 0.058; F = 15.396, p = 0.000	Self-Compassion significantly explains Loneliness (5.8% of the variance explained).
Regression (Self Kindness)	R = 0.252, R ² = 0.063	Self-Kindness contributes 6.3% of the variance in Loneliness.
Regression (Common Humanity)	R = 0.143, R ² = 0.020	Common Humanity contributes 2% of the variance in Loneliness.
Regression (Mindfulness)	R = 0.200, R ² = 0.040	Mindfulness contributes 4% of the variance in Loneliness.

Source: Data analyzed, 2024

The data meet the normality assumption, with no evidence of autocorrelation, heteroscedasticity, or multicollinearity, indicating that the regression model is appropriate for use.

Hypothesis Testing:

- Correlation: There is a significant negative correlation between Self-Compassion and Loneliness, as well as with each of its dimensions (Self-Kindness, Common Humanity, and Mindfulness). This suggests that an increase in Self-Compassion and its dimensions is associated with a decrease in Loneliness among female inmates.
- Regression Analysis: Self-Compassion significantly influences Loneliness, explaining 5.8% of its variance. Each dimension of Self-Compassion also contributes to reducing Loneliness, with Self-Kindness being the most influential dimension (6.3%).

Discussion

The research shows that Self-Compassion has a significant impact on reducing feelings of Loneliness among female inmates at the Women's Correctional Institution Class IIA Medan. The moderate level of Self-Compassion indicates a need for greater attention to improve the mental well-being of inmates.

Table 8
Table of Correlation and Regression Test

Dimension	Pearson Correlation	Significance (p)	Description	R	R Square	Regression Description
Self Kindness	-0.252	0.000	Correlated	0.252	0.063	Influential
Common Humanity	-0.143	0.024	Correlated	0.143	0.020	Influential
Mindfulness	-0.200	0.001	Correlated	0.200	0.040	Influential

Source: Data analyzed, 2024

Regarding the influence of the Self-Kindness and Mindfulness dimensions on Loneliness among female inmates at the Women's Correctional Institution Class IIA Medan, significant findings were observed. The Self-Kindness dimension showed the highest R and R Square values (0.252 and 0.063), indicating that Self-Kindness plays a major role in reducing feelings of loneliness. The concept of Self-Kindness, which involves being kind to oneself when facing challenges, helps female inmates accept their circumstances without excessive self-criticism.

In a context where they do not receive support from their families, inmates with high Self-Kindness are better able to cope with life difficulties and treat themselves kindly. The absence of escape or suicide cases in the last five years at this correctional facility suggests that inmates are able to maintain self-kindness, which is further strengthened by religious guidance activities that enhance their religiosity and psychological well-being.

Meanwhile, Mindfulness, with R and R Square values of 0.200 and 0.04, also shows a significant influence on Loneliness. Mindfulness helps female inmates not to exaggerate problems and accept reality with full awareness. Those who practice mindfulness tend to view difficult situations realistically and see failure as part of life, which helps them respond more effectively to challenges. By stopping negative responses and automatic thoughts, mindfulness contributes to stress reduction and improved mental health. Overall, these two dimensions play an important role in enhancing the psychological well-being of female inmates, helping them face challenges during their sentence and reduce feelings of loneliness.

In efforts to restore the mental and psychological condition of female inmates at the Women's Correctional Institution Class IIA Medan, various counseling and guidance activities are provided. These activities aim to help inmates adjust to the environment, both inside the facility and after release. Counseling uses Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques to help inmates understand good thought patterns and behaviors, enabling them to face problems wisely and reduce anxiety. Additionally, religious activities that focus on piety and legal counseling are conducted to enhance inmates' understanding of the law and develop social awareness.

Through these activities, female inmates learn to adopt positive thinking patterns and reduce feelings of loneliness. The Common Humanity dimension, which encourages individuals to accept imperfections and failures as part of life, also contributes to reducing feelings of loneliness. Personality development programs and independence activities, such as sewing, gardening, and art therapy, enhance Self-Compassion and help inmates go through their sentence more effectively. These activities not only improve the psychological well-being of inmates but also create a sense of humanity and mutual support among them, reducing the mental pressure faced during their incarceration.

The study shows that Self-Compassion has an impact on the feelings of Loneliness of female inmates at the Women's Correctional Institution Class IIA Medan by

5.8%, while 94.2% is influenced by other variables that remain unidentified. The results indicate that the higher the self-compassion, the lower the level of loneliness, and vice versa. Female inmates with high Self-Compassion tend to accept their sentence more willingly, view failure as part of the human experience, and are motivated to live a better life. Self-Compassion serves as an alternative to achieving a healthy psychological state and thinking positively without self-judgment, enabling individuals to gain wisdom from every problem faced. The UPT of the Women's Correctional Institution Class IIA Medan strives to improve Self-Compassion through personality development and independence programs, which help inmates improve their attitudes and behavior. These activities motivate inmates to change, express their feelings, and avoid feelings of loneliness. Inmates with high Self-Compassion can live without despair and handle difficulties or failures better, thus avoiding psychological issues like Loneliness.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the research results regarding the influence of Self-Compassion on Loneliness among female inmates at the Women's Correctional Institution Class IIA Medan, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. There is a negative correlation between Self-Compassion and Loneliness; the higher the Self-Compassion, the lower the Loneliness, and vice versa. Female inmates with high Self-Compassion are more able to love themselves and avoid feelings of Loneliness when facing failure or suffering.
2. The Self-Compassion of female inmates is mostly in the moderate category (68%), with 15% in the high category and 17% in the low category. Loneliness also falls in the moderate category (64%), with 21% in the high category and 15% in the low category, indicating a positive response to Self-Compassion.
3. Regression analysis shows that Self-Compassion contributes to 5.8% of the variance in Loneliness, while 94.2% is influenced by other unidentified variables that need further research.
4. There is a relationship between the dimensions of Self-Compassion—Self-Kindness, Common Humanity, and Mindfulness—and Loneliness, with significance values below 0.05.
5. Female inmates aged 41-60 years show higher levels of Self-Compassion and lower levels of Loneliness.

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. For Female Inmates: It is recommended that female inmates increase their sense of compassion and Self-Compassion to avoid Loneliness, which often arises from the disparity between expectations and reality. Inmates are encouraged to participate in personality development and independence programs, as well as engage in art activities to express their feelings and prevent loneliness.
2. For the UPT of the Women's Correctional Institution Class IIA Medan: It is recommended to innovate further in personality development, such as through forgiveness therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and art therapy. The rehabilitation programs should also be enhanced, especially for inmates with drug-related offenses, to promote well-being and prevent recidivism.
3. For Future Researchers: This study is expected to inspire further research. It is suggested that future research involve a broader range of subjects, including male inmates, detainees, or the elderly. Increasing the sample size and the reliability of

constructs should also be considered, along with the inclusion of additional variables to explore the conditions of inmates in Indonesia more deeply.

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