



Effect of self-compassion and gratitude towards prosocial behavior of junior high school students in Semarang city

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Article Info	Abstract
Keywords: Self-compassion, gratitude, prosocial behavior.	Self-compassion, gratitude, and prosocial behavior take a role as pivotal qualities that students should ideally foster. This study aims to provide empirical evidence on the effect of self-compassion and gratitude on prosocial behavior among junior high school students in Semarang City. The research employs an ex post facto method, involving a sample of 268 junior high school students from Semarang City. The data analysis was conducted using hierarchical regression techniques. The results indicate that self-compassion has a significant impact on prosocial behavior ($R = 0.583$, $p < 0.01$), and similarly, gratitude significantly influences students' prosocial behavior ($R = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, self-compassion and gratitude together exert a combined influence on prosocial behavior ($R = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$). This study highlights the impact of self-compassion and gratitude on the prosocial behavior of junior high school students in Semarang City. This evidence base aims to inform school counselors and guidance educators, encouraging a proactive focus on fostering self-compassion and gratitude as a means to enhance students' prosocial behavior and address underlying developmental needs comprehensively.

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Introduction

Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) shows that 2017 reveals that 75% of students have engaged in violence at school, while 40% of students aged 13-15 have experienced physical violence from peers (Setiawan, 2017). In addition, the study conducted by Putri & Noviekayati (2015) on adolescents aged 14-17 in Islamic boarding schools further illustrates that adolescents exhibit limited prosocial behaviors. This is evidenced by behaviors that comes indifference toward maintaining the cleanliness of their dormitory environment, a lack of concern or care for peers from different groups, as well as instances of bullying and theft. Such behaviors are contrary to fundamental human values. Fundamentally, humans are created as both individual and social beings (Stray et al., 2024). One of the unique qualities of humans as social creatures is the inclination to offer assistance and extend a helping hand to family, groups, or communities—even to unknown individuals from different ethnicities or nations, without expecting anything in return. Helping behavior reflects humanity's non-egoistic and generous nature, demonstrating a genuine

capacity for concern for others' well-being and a sense of self-efficacy in providing support to those in need (Wardani & Trisnani, 2015)

Along with this fact, an adolescence is closely associated with peer relationships within friendship groups. These groups introduce adolescents beyond their personal experiences, providing a broader perspective. Within such groups, adolescents engage in a variety of activities, where both conscious and unconscious processes serve as platforms for sharing information, learning social interactions, building social connections, assuming social roles, and developing problem-solving skills (Priyadarshini et al., 2025). This pattern of interaction and behavior is referred to social behavior. Social behavior in adolescents reflects their competence in social and communal life. Adolescents' social behavior is observable through their adaptability, ability to blend in, form interactions with others, and the degree of social acceptance they receive (Myers in Sarwono & Meinarno, 2009). This social behavior leads to the prosocial behavior the adolescents. Prosocial behavior is fundamental to human life as social beings, who inherently require assistance and cannot thrive in isolation. Humans maintain interconnected relationships within their environments, where positive social surroundings can foster individual growth. Therefore, adolescents are encouraged to demonstrate strong prosocial behavior, which requires sensitivity to emotional and affective conditions. Such behavior is an indicator of healthy prosocial development, and its absence may signify underlying issues (Crone & Achterberg, 2022).

According to Sullivan (2009), antisocial behavior is the opposite of prosocial behavior. Many experts suggest that pathological behavior often results from disruptions in typical developmental processes. Research from Kusumaningrum et al. (2014) observed low levels of prosocial behavior among several seventh-graders at SMPN 21 Semarang. In each class, 5 to 6 students demonstrated limited prosocial behavior, resulting in a total of 40 students across VII A to VII J classes exhibiting insufficient prosocial tendencies. For instance, when their classmates fell ill in class, these students displayed indifference. In addition, they were unable to offer encouragement or support when a classmate experienced the death of a parent (Levkovich & Elyoseph, 2023). If this lack of prosocial behavior toward others continues to develop, it could negatively impact the formation of attitudes within individuals.

Research on prosocial behavior is more frequently conducted in Western countries. Prosocial behavior, as a social behavior influenced by sociocultural factors, benefits from exploration across diverse countries and regions (Graf, 2024). It enriches relevant research and multicultural perspectives. In addition, Li et al. (2023) further suggest that future studies examine the relationship between prosocial behavior and emotional well-being. This emotional well-being is influenced by multiple factors, one of which is self-compassion. Moreover, Yang et al. (2021) indicate that self-compassion is associated with enhanced interpersonal functioning. Researchers have found that self-compassion positively correlates with other-oriented traits, such as perspective-taking, empathic concern, and altruism, particularly among adult mediators and communities. Such other-oriented attentiveness and caring attitudes can foster greater prosocial behavior, defined as actions intended to benefit others.

In alignment with previous research, it was found that individuals with high self-compassion report greater prosocial intentions toward others (Cha et al., 2023). Yang et al. (2019) also demonstrated that individuals with self-compassion tend to provide support to their peers and close acquaintances. Despite growing evidence, Yang et al. (2019) recommended further research to clarify the relationship between self-compassion and prosocial behavior within adolescents. In addition, Oliveira et al. (2021) noted that individuals who receive assistance and experience gratitude are more likely to exhibit prosocial behavior toward benefactors or others in the future. Individuals with a tendency toward gratitude are similarly more inclined to engage in prosocial actions. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2021) observed that levels of self-compassion, gratitude, and prosocial behavior among adolescents decline over time, from seventh to ninth grade, showing a

trend similar to that of decreasing self-esteem in the same age group as identified in previous cross-sectional studies.

Based on this rationale, this research aims to examine the effect of self-compassion and gratitude towards prosocial behavior among junior high school students in Semarang City. The findings from this research are expected to provide valuable recommendations for the implementation of school counseling programs, particularly in the social domain.

Method

This research employs a quantitative research design, utilizing descriptive analysis and hierarchical regression analysis for data interpretation. The descriptive analysis aims to provide an overview of the research object and outcomes; while hierarchical regression analysis is used to examine the influence of the independent variables—self-compassion and gratitude—towards the dependent variable—prosocial behavior. The sample selection was conducted through cluster random sampling, with the sample size determined according to Isaac and Michael Table at a 5% margin of error. From a population of 34,608 students, a sample of 268 junior high school students in Semarang City was obtained. The research instruments included Likert scales covering prosocial behavior, self-compassion, and gratitude measurement items. The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), adapted from Neff (2011) and translated into Indonesian. The items consist of 26 numbers across six dimensions: self-kindness (5 items), self-judgment (5 items), common humanity (4 items), isolation (4 items), mindfulness (4 items), and over-identification (4 items). The scale reliability testing showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, confirming the validity of all items.

The Prosocial Behavior Scale was developed by the researcher. It includes 30 items based on aspects outlined by Mussen (1979), including: helping (6 items), cooperation (6 items), empathy (6 items), honesty (6 items), and generosity (6 items). Following validation, the prosocial behavior scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.880. Other than that, the Gratitude Scale was also developed by the researcher. It comprised 35 items based on McCullough and Emmons' gratitude dimensions, including: intensity (7 items), frequency (6 items), range (5 items), and density (7 items). All items were validated, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.916, thereby confirming the reliability of all three scales for use in this study. The collected data underwent prerequisite analysis. It was started with a normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov One Sample Test. Then, the test was followed by hypothesis testing through hierarchical regression analysis, conducted using SPSS software version 29.

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Prerequisite test results

		Unstandardized Residual
N		268
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	9.74867934
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.029
	Positive	.029
	Negative	-.024
Test Statistic		.029
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c		.200 ^d
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) ^e	Sig.	.875
	99% Confidence Interval	
	Lower Bound	.866
	Upper Bound	.883

Descriptive analysis was conducted to assess the levels of self-compassion, gratitude, and prosocial behavior among junior high school students in Semarang City. The results indicate that prosocial behavior falls within the high category ($M = 120$, $SD = 12.16$), self-compassion also scores in the high category ($M = 129$, $SD = 10.13$), and gratitude is similarly rated in high category ($M = 124$, $SD = 12.55$). The detailed descriptive aspects of each variable are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistical analysis

	Results		
	N	M	SD
Prosocial Behavior	268	120	12.16
Self-compassion	268	129	10.13
Gratitude	268	124	12.55

Hierarchical regression analysis reveals specific insights regarding the components of self-compassion. Notably, only self-kindness ($\beta = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$), self-judgment ($\beta = 1.84$), and mindfulness ($\beta = 0.87$) significantly predict prosocial behavior. Moreover, other aspects of self-compassion (e.i. common humanity and overidentification) do not significantly predict prosocial behavior. Additionally, within the gratitude variable, only Density ($\beta = 1.33$, $p < 0.01$) positively predicts prosocial behavior, while other components, namely intensity, frequency, and range, do not show significant correlations with prosocial behavior. Thus, self-compassion and gratitude significantly influence prosocial behavior ($R = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), with these predictors explaining 42% of the variance in prosocial behavior ($R^2 = 0.42$). The hierarchical regression analysis results are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression analysis model

Predictor	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	T	P	B	T	P
SK	0.72	2.77	< 0.5	0.48	1.92	> 0.5
SJ	1.84	5.23	< 0.5	1.76	5.23	> 0.5
CH	-0.28	-0.88	< 0.5	-0.54	-1.70	< 0.5
IS	0.44	1.40	< 0.5	0.34	1.13	> 0.5
MINDF	0.87	2.47	< 0.5	0.71	2.11	> 0.5
OVD	0.24	0.26	< 0.5	-0.07	-0.19	< 0.5
INTS				-0.16	-0.68	< 0.5
FRKNS				0.16	0.60	> 0.5
RTG				0.13	0.40	> 0.5
KRPTN				1.33	4.64	> 0.5
ΔR					0.71	
ΔR^2					0.87	
ΔF					9.79	
P					< 01	
ΔR		0.583			0.654	
ΔR^2		0.34			0.42	
ΔF		22.420			19.186	
P		< 01			< 01	

Notes: SK: self-kindness; SJ: self-judgment; CH: common-humanity; MNDF: mindfulness; OVD: overidentification; INTS: intensitas; FRKNS: frekuensi; RTG: rentang; KRPTN: kerapatan.

According to the findings of this study, it indicates that, within the six aspects of self-compassion (self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, mindfulness, and overidentification), the most influential on prosocial behavior are self-kindness, self-judgment, and mindfulness. In the domain of gratitude, encompassing four aspects (intensity, frequency, range,

and density), density is identified as the most impactful on prosocial behavior. The significant and positive influence of self-compassion and gratitude on students' prosocial behavior is evidenced by an explanatory power of 42%, with the remaining 58% attributed to other factors. These findings align with research by Liu et al. (2023), who identified a strong link between self-compassion and prosocial behavior. Adolescents who demonstrate warmth tend to exhibit high levels of prosocial behavior. This research's data underscore the importance of addressing social functioning within indifferent groups, as adolescents displaying indifference toward themselves are likely to extend this attitude toward others.

Furthermore, previous research by Yang et al. (2019) demonstrated the critical role of self-compassion in prosocial behavior among a sample of Chinese adolescents. From a theoretical perspective, this study's primary contribution is the positive relationship between self-compassion and adolescent prosocial behavior, with trust and connectedness as mediating factors. Practically, these findings are valuable for interventions aimed at promoting social development in adolescents. The hypothesis testing results also indicate a significant influence of self-compassion towards prosocial behavior. It suggests that self-compassion positively affects prosocial behavior among junior high school students in Semarang City. Specifically, higher levels of self-compassion correspond to higher levels of prosocial behavior among students, while lower levels of self-compassion are associated with reduced prosocial behaviors. The assertion that gratitude affects prosocial behavior is supported by the research from Zhang (2022). He demonstrated that gratitude has a significant positive impact on adolescent prosocial behavior. As a positive emotional trait, gratitude can encourage the expression of personal positive behaviors.

Similarly, research by Zhang (2022) found a significant relationship between gratitude and prosocial behavior. The determination coefficient test showed an R-squared value of 0.395, indicating that gratitude effectively explains 39.5% of the variance in prosocial behavior. Based on this finding, the proposed hypothesis is supported, establishing a positive relationship between gratitude and social behavior among IPNU-IPPNU members in Candipari Village. Another study supporting this research' findings towards the effect of self-compassion and gratitude on prosocial behavior is (Hasna et al. (2022). They demonstrated that gratitude and self-compassion together have a significant relationship with prosocial behavior among active university students in the 2019/2020 cohort at Universitas Sebelas Maret.

In addition, research by Yang et al. (2021) showed that both the Cross-Lagged Panel Model (CLPM) and the Random Intercepts Cross-Lagged Panel Model (RI-CLPM) indicate that self-compassion positively predicts gratitude and prosocial behavior over time. CLPM results suggest a bidirectional relationship between gratitude and prosocial behavior at the interpersonal level, while RI-CLPM did not find significant longitudinal associations between these variables at the interpersonal level. At the intrapersonal level, CLPM further indicates that gratitude mediates the longitudinal relationship between self-compassion and prosocial behavior, while prosocial behavior mediates the relationship between self-compassion and gratitude. This research is notable, as few previous studies have examined the combined impact of self-compassion and gratitude towards prosocial behavior. Therefore, it is crucial for school counselors and guidance teachers to foster these factors through guidance and counseling activities, whether in classroom, group, or individual settings, to enhance students' prosocial behavior and support their developmental tasks effectively.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, this research concluded that self-compassion and gratitude positively affect junior high school students' prosocial behavior. In other words, higher levels of self-compassion and gratitude are associated with higher levels of prosocial behavior among students. Therefore, it is recommended that school counselors or guidance teachers pay

greater attention to addressing the developmental challenges faced by their students, specifically considering aspects of self-compassion, gratitude, and prosocial behavior.

According to this research' results and limitation, future researchers are encouraged to expand this study to different populations, such as high school students, university students, boarding school students, or the general public. They can also differs the locations with larger sample populations.

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