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The Influence of Social Anxiety on Self-Compassion in Students Who Have Experienced Social Rejection

Nurul Hasanah[a], Nurul Dinni Octavia[b]
[a,b]*Departemen of Guidance and Counseling, STKIP Budidaya Binjai*
Corresponding Author:
[a]*octavianuruldinni@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT
Experiences of social rejection in the school environment often trigger deep interpersonal anxiety in students, which in turn is predicted to erode their ability to treat themselves with compassion. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the influence of social anxiety on self-compassion in students who have experienced social rejection. This study uses a quantitative approach with a simple linear regression method. The research sample consisted of 73 11th-grade students from SMA Negeri 2 Binjai, selected using purposive sampling from classes XI-3, XI-6, XI-8, and XI-10, with the criteria of having been identified as having experienced social rejection by peers at school. Data were collected using two psychological scales: a social anxiety scale adapting aspects from La Greca and Lopez, and a self-compassion scale developed based on aspects from Neff. The regression analysis results show a significant influence of social anxiety on student self-compassion ($p = 0.000$). The coefficient of determination (R Square) of 0.262 indicates that social anxiety contributes 26.2% to influencing students' self-compassion levels, while the remaining 73.8% is influenced by factors outside this research model. These findings emphasize the importance of developing guidance and counseling services that are responsive to students' emotional conditions to reduce social anxiety and restore their self-acceptance after rejection.

Keywords : Social Anxiety, Social Rejection, Students, Self-Compassion.

INTRODUCTION

In adolescence, the need to be accepted and to be part of a peer group is a crucial aspect that influences the formation of identity and self-esteem (Agustina et al., 2019). However, not all adolescents receive the expected acceptance in the school environment. Experiences of social rejection—such as being excluded, ignored during group work, or being teased—can cause serious emotional and psychological impacts on students (Agustina et al., 2019). These negative experiences not only disrupt interpersonal relationships but also trigger intense fear of negative evaluation, which gradually develops into social anxiety (Haryati et al., 2025; Morin & Rahardjo, 2021). This anxiety-filled psychological state, in turn, influences how students respond to their own conditions when facing pressure through the dynamics of self-compassion (Wahyuni et al., 2022).

High social anxiety resulting from a history of rejection at school tends to influence students' emotional response mechanisms. Field phenomena show that many students post-rejection choose to withdraw, become passive during discussions, and experience intense anxiety when they have to perform in front of their peers for fear of being judged again. This condition

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demands strong emotional regulation so that students are not trapped in negative self-evaluation of their own abilities (Ferrari et al., 2018; Wahyuni et al., 2022). Various literatures generally examine how interpersonal anxiety dynamics interact with self-acceptance, where anxious emotional conditions are strongly suspected to be a factor predicting self-compassion levels in adolescents (Wahyuni et al., 2022).

Although research on social anxiety and self-compassion in adolescents has been widely conducted, most previous studies have focused on macro or general relationships without considering specific social experience backgrounds, such as a history of interpersonal rejection. Therefore, this study has novelty as it specifically examines the influence of social anxiety on self-compassion in a group of 11th-grade students at SMA Negeri 2 Binjai who have a history of social rejection. This study is expected to provide real empirical contributions regarding the direction of influence between these variables based on real field data, as well as serve as a scientific foundation for Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers in designing responsive individual counseling intervention programs tailored to students' emotional needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Anxiety

The first variable in this study is social anxiety, defined as intense feelings of anxiety and discomfort when an individual is in certain social situations (Farihah & Rachman, 2017). This emotional state arises from the fear of negative evaluation from the environment during interactions or performance demands in public (Sigarlaki & Nurvinkania, 2022; Haryati et al., 2025). In the context of interpersonal relationships, social anxiety triggers fear, worry, and nervousness due to negative evaluations from others (Riyanti, 2020). This psychological state arises when an individual feels threatened in the context of interpersonal interactions (Morin & Rahardjo, 2021), manifesting as a form of obstacle in social relationships such as feelings of nervousness and pressure when in social situations (Badriyah, 2020).

According to La Greca & Lopez (as cited in Pebriani & Kusuma, 2021), the characteristics of social anxiety manifest through interrelated core components, namely the fear of negative evaluation from the environment, a tendency to avoid social situations, and the emergence of intense distress when interacting with unfamiliar individuals or navigating everyday social contexts. The emergence of anxiety in interpersonal situations is theoretically influenced by a variety of genetic factors, critical parenting styles, traumatic social experiences such as being humiliated, neurochemical imbalances in the brain, and thinking styles filled with worry (Imaddudin et al., 2023).

Self-Compassion

The second variable in this study is self-compassion, which is generally defined as a form of kindness and acceptance towards oneself when facing difficulties, failures, or life suffering (Karinda, 2020). This cognitive process forms a positive mindset to understand personal flaws without being overly critical through attention, understanding, and a tendency not to judge oneself when making mistakes (Theresia & Kartasasmita, 2018), expressed through non-judgmental acceptance and care for the self (Sugianto et al., 2020). As a form of feeling

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of care and an effort to provide support to oneself when facing problems or pressure (Henny & Yendi, 2021), self-compassion acts as an adaptive emotion regulation strategy to help individuals manage negative emotions and free themselves from the cycle of harmful emotional reactions (Swaraswati et al., 2019).

Conceptually, the construct of self-compassion comprises three pairs of contrasting yet simultaneously operating dimensions. These components include the integration of self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and the balance between mindfulness and over-identification (Marsh et al., 2018). The level of self-compassion in adolescents empirically varies based on factors such as gender, cultural background, age maturity, personality dimensions, supportive parenting roles, and has a real contribution predicted by the degree of interpersonal anxiety experienced by students following social rejection in the field (Wahyuni et al., 2022).

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design to test the influence of social anxiety on student self-compassion. Correlational research is conducted to observe the direction and extent of the relationship and influence between variables in the field (Sugiyono, 2019).

Sampling

The context of this research was carried out at SMA Negeri 2 Binjai, located at Jalan Padang No. 8, Rambung Dalam Village, South Binjai District, Binjai City, North Sumatra. The target population in this study was all 11th-grade students for the 2025/2026 Academic Year. The sampling technique used purposive sampling based on specific inclusion criteria: active 11th-grade students from classes XI-3, XI-6, XI-8, and XI-10 who were identified as having a history of having experienced social rejection by peers at school and were willing to be respondents. Through this technique, a real sample size and unit of analysis of 73 students were obtained.

Data Collection

The data collection process in this study used a closed questionnaire method distributed directly to respondents. The instrument format used multiple-choice based on a Likert scale model with five alternative answer choices: Never (TP), Rarely (P), Sometimes (KK), Often (S), and Very Often (SS).

Measurement

The social anxiety variable was measured using an instrument adapted from the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A) by La Greca and Lopez with a total of 30 statement items. Meanwhile, the self-compassion variable was measured using the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) adapted into Indonesian by (Sugianto et al., 2020) based on Kristin Neff's Self-Compassion Scale with a total of 26 statement items. All collected numerical data were tested for hypotheses through simple linear regression analysis assisted by the SPSS program. The

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framework of this study, which illustrates the relationship between the independent variable (social anxiety) and the dependent variable (self-compassion), is presented in Figure 1.

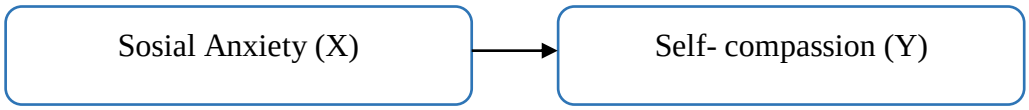

Figure 1. Independent and Dependent Variables

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This study involved 73 11th-grade students. All participants met the established inclusion criteria. The distribution of respondents by gender and class is presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

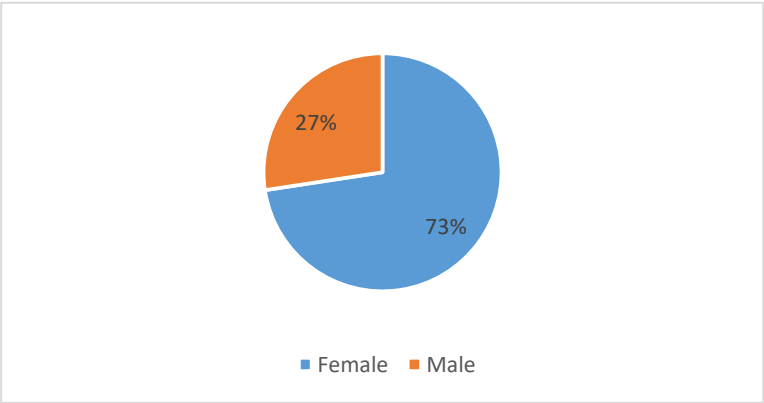

Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by gender

As seen in Figure 2, the majority of respondents were female at 73% (53 students), while male students accounted for 27% (20 students).

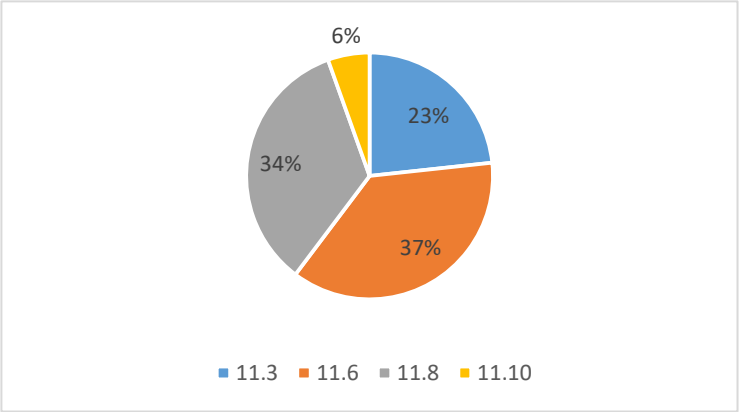

Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by class

As presented in Figure 3, the respondents were divided into four classes: class 11.6 was the largest group with 37% (27 students), followed by class 11.8 with 34% (25 students), class 11.3 with 23% (17 students), and class 11.10 with 6% (4 students).

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Research Findings

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Social Anxiety Categories

Kategori	Interval	F	Persentase %
Sangat Tinggi	X ≥ 94	4	5,5%
Tinggi	76 ≤ X < 94	15	20,5%
Sedang	58 ≤ X < 76	29	39,7%
Rendah	40 ≤ X < 58	17	23,3%
Sangat Rendah	X < 40	8	11,0%
Total		73	100 %

Based on the data analysis results presented in Table 1, the majority of respondents were in the moderate category, consisting of 29 students (39.7%). Furthermore, 17 students (23.3%) were in the low category, 15 students (20.5%) in the high category, 8 students (11.0%) in the very low category, and 4 students (5.5%) were in the very high category. This indicates that the level of social anxiety among most students at the school is in the moderate range.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Self-Compassion Categories

Kategori	Interval	F	Persentase %
Sangat Tinggi	X ≥ 102	3	4,1%
Tinggi	83 ≤ X < 102	14	19,2%
Sedang	64 ≤ X < 83	35	47,9%
Rendah	45 ≤ X < 64	19	26,0%
Sangat Rendah	X < 45	2	2,8%
Total		73	100 %

The data analysis results for the self-compassion variable presented in Table 2 show that the majority of respondents were in the moderate category, consisting of 35 students (47.9%). Additionally, 19 students (26.0%) were in the low category, 14 students (19.2%) in the high category, 3 students (4.1%) in the very high category, and 2 students (2.8%) were in the very low category. These findings indicate that students' self-compassion levels are generally in the moderate category.

Table 3. Correlation Test Results Between Social Anxiety and Self-Compassion

		Selfcompassion	Kecemasansosial
Pearson Correlation	Selfcompassion	1.000	.512
	Kecemasansosial	.512	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Selfcompassion	.	.000
	Kecemasansosial	.000	.
N	Selfcompassion	73	73
	Kecemasansosial	73	73

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Based on the Pearson correlation analysis results in Table 3, a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.512 was obtained with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This result indicates a significant relationship between social anxiety and self-compassion in students who have experienced social rejection. The positive correlation coefficient indicates that the higher the level of social anxiety experienced by students, the higher their tendency to practice self-compassion when facing rejection experiences. These findings indicate that social anxiety plays a role in shaping self-compassion patterns in students following social rejection. Furthermore, to examine the extent of the influence of the social anxiety variable on self-compassion, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted with the following results:

Table 4. Model Summary of the Influence of Social Anxiety on Self-Compassion

					Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.512[a]	.262	.252	14.460	.262	25.225	1	71	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Kecemasansosial

Based on Table 4, the coefficient of determination (R Square) of 0.262 was obtained. This shows that social anxiety contributes 26.2% to students' self-compassion, while the remaining 73.8% is influenced by other factors outside this research model.

Table 5. ANOVA Test Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5274.566	1	5274.566	25.225	.000[b]
	Residual	14846.064	71	209.099		
	Total	20120.630	72			

a. Dependent Variable: Selfcompassion
b. Predictors: (Constant), Kecemasansosial

Based on Table 5, the regression model is considered valid and significant, with an F value of 25.225 and a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).

Table 6. Regression Coefficients of the Influence of Social Anxiety on Self-Compassion

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations	Collinearity Statistics

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	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	43.388	6.108		7.104	.000					
Kecemasan sosial	.460	.092	.512	5.022	.000	.512	.512	.512	1.000	1.000

Based on Table 6, it is known that social anxiety has a significant positive influence on self-compassion with a regression coefficient (B) of 0.460, a t-value of 5.022, and a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This coefficient value indicates that every one-unit increase in the level of social anxiety will be followed by a 0.460-unit increase in the self-compassion score.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the relationship between social anxiety and self-compassion in students who have experienced social rejection. The data analysis results show that there is a significant relationship between social anxiety and self-compassion. This finding confirms that an individual's emotional condition, specifically anxiety in interpersonal situations, is a determining factor in how students view themselves.

In a theoretical framework, students with high social anxiety tend to get trapped in self-judgment, or the tendency to judge themselves harshly due to fear of negative evaluation from peers. This is in line with the findings of Farihah & Rachman, (2017) that fear of others' judgment is the main trigger for social anxiety behavior in adolescents. Furthermore, this phenomenon is reinforced by field findings that students post-social rejection often feel isolated and consider their failure to be unique, rather than part of the human experience in general (common humanity). When adolescents fail to recognize that life's hardships are common experiences shared by others, the capacity for self-kindness diminishes.

However, the positive correlation results in this study also provide an interesting perspective: self-compassion acts as an adaptive coping mechanism. In line with the argument of Theresia & Sandi Kartasasmita (2018), individuals who are able to practice self-compassion tend to have more stable psychological well-being despite being under social pressure. When students realize they are in a stressful social situation, they start using mindfulness to maintain a balanced awareness so as not to be lost in negative emotions (over-identification). According to (Swaraswati et al., 2019), this mindfulness process allows students to navigate the suffering post-social rejection towards healthier self-acceptance without being trapped in a cycle of self-criticism.

Additionally, these findings are in line with a meta-analysis conducted by Zessin et al (2016) and findings by Sirois (2020), which confirm that self-compassion consistently correlates positively with adolescent mental health. The managerial implications of these findings are crucial for Guidance and Counseling services at school. Given that students with a history of social rejection have high emotional vulnerability, BK teachers need to integrate

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interventions that focus on developing mindfulness and self-kindness. Individual counseling services should be directed towards changing students' mindsets so that they are able to reduce social anxiety through positive self-acceptance, which in turn will increase student resilience in the school environment.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between social anxiety and self-compassion in students who have experienced social rejection at SMA Negeri 2 Binjai. High levels of social anxiety in students are empirically correlated with self-compassion patterns used as a coping mechanism when facing interpersonal pressure. These findings indicate that the ability to be compassionate towards oneself becomes a crucial aspect in navigating rejection experiences, which is directly related to adolescent mental health.

Future research is suggested to involve a broader and more diverse population to improve the generalizability of findings. Additionally, exploring additional variables such as social support, school stress (parenting stress in the school context), and more specific coping strategies is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social anxiety and self-compassion in adolescents.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the limited sample size of 73 students from one research location (SMA Negeri 2 Binjai) limits the statistical power and the ability to generalize these findings to a broader student population. Second, although the measurement tools used have been adapted into Indonesian, the instruments are general and not specifically designed to measure the dynamics of the specific social rejection experiences in adolescents, so they may not have fully captured the variability of students' emotional experiences. These limitations affect the scope of the study's external validity, so the interpretation of these research results must be done by considering the specific characteristics of the respondents involved.

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