

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP-BASED INTERVENTIONS IN ENHANCING SELF-COMPASSION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Wulantika Wulantika¹

¹Universitas Negeri Semarang

Corresponding Email: wulantika24@students.unnes.ac.id

Article Information

Received : October 10, 2025

Revised : October 29, 2025

Accepted : November 8, 2025

Abstract

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage marked by rapid biological, psychological, and social changes that require adaptive coping and emotional regulation. Limited self-compassion during this period is often linked to self-criticism, anxiety, and challenges in achieving developmental tasks, potentially undermining mental well-being. This study conducted a systematic review to examine the effectiveness of group interventions in enhancing self-compassion, with emphasis on adolescents. Using a qualitative library research design guided by PRISMA, the review involved topic selection, database searches, screening through PICOS criteria, data extraction, and content analysis. Five relevant studies were identified, encompassing diverse group-based approaches such as Gestalt group counselling, Modified Mindful Self-Compassion (MMSC), gratitude-based group therapy, and online self-compassion psychotherapy. The findings consistently showed that group interventions improve self-compassion, which in turn fosters emotional regulation, self-acceptance, and psychological well-being. Programmes integrating mindfulness, spirituality, and digital delivery demonstrate adaptability across cultural and practical contexts. This review contributes to the field by synthesising evidence from varied intervention models and underscoring their relevance in educational and clinical settings. It highlights the value of accessible, structured group-based strategies to promote mental health in adolescents and other vulnerable populations. Future research with larger experimental designs is recommended to strengthen empirical validation and extend generalisability.

Keywords: : *self-compassion, group counseling, mindfulness-based intervention, adolescent mental health, systematic literature review.*

Introduction

Adolescence is a pivotal transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, distinguished by rapid biological, psychological and social changes (Hurlock, 1980). This developmental stage necessitates the adaptation of adolescents to new values, attitudes and interests, which are required to facilitate coping with the multifarious demands of development. Santrock (2011) divides adolescence into two categories: early adolescence (12–17 years) and late adolescence (18–25 years). The age of 17, which demarcates the transition from early to late adolescence, corresponds with the period of high school education (Izzani et al., 2024). During this stage, individuals encounter academic pressure, social demands, and intricate emotional challenges.

A significant factor that contributes to the success of adolescents in adapting to these demands is self-compassion. In the context of Burhan's (2023) theoretical framework, Neff conceptualises self-compassion as a disposition that encompasses the capacity to exhibit kindness, understanding and care towards oneself in circumstances involving

failure or adversity. This concept is comprised of three fundamental components: self-kindness (the act of being benevolent towards oneself rather than being unduly critical), common humanity (the recognition that challenges are an inherent part of the universal human experience), and mindfulness (the acceptance of negative emotions without becoming excessively engrossed in them). Individuals who exhibit high levels of self-compassion tend to demonstrate enhanced resilience, effective emotional regulation, and adaptive coping skills in the face of life stressors (Burhan, 2023). Conversely, low self-compassion has been shown to be associated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, maladaptive perfectionism, and obstacles in achieving developmental tasks (Haryani et al., 2014; Haryani et al., 2023).

A plethora of studies have demonstrated the efficacy of group interventions in enhancing self-compassion. The group environment facilitates the sharing of experiences, the provision of social support, and the realisation that personal challenges are not isolated experiences but rather part of the broader human experience. The effectiveness of these approaches is demonstrated through various methodologies, including Gestalt-based group counselling (Burhan, 2023), Modification Mindful Self-Compassion (MMSC) (Haryani et al., 2014; Haryani et al., 2023), gratitude therapy (Jarnawi et al., 2024), and online group psychotherapy based on self-compassion (Uneno et al., 2024). The efficacy of these interventions is evidenced by a number of positive outcomes, including the enhancement of emotional regulation, the reduction of self-criticism, and the promotion of self-acceptance.

However, despite the abundance of research on the effectiveness of group interventions on self-compassion, there has been no systematic review that comprehensively compiles and analyzes the evidence. The paucity of research syntheses in this area is a significant research gap that must be addressed, particularly in terms of mapping the consistency of findings, identifying factors contributing to intervention success, and identifying opportunities for future program development.

The present study aims to undertake a systematic review of the extant literature concerning the effectiveness of group interventions in enhancing self-compassion, with a specific focus on the adolescent population. The findings of this review are expected to contribute to the scientific corpus by synthesising evidence that can serve as a foundation for developing more structured and relevant self-compassion-based group counselling programmes tailored to the needs of the target population. In addition to theoretical benefits, this research also has practical benefits, namely the provision of references for the guidance and counselling of practitioners, educators, and other stakeholders in the design of effective interventions to support the mental health and psychological well-being of adolescents and the broader community.

Research Questions

- RQ1 : How can group counseling services be used as a self-compassion intervention for adolescents?
- RQ2 : What approaches are used to increase self-compassion in adolescents?

Method

The present study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) design, in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The research process was conducted in a systematic, explicit, and replicable manner to identify, evaluate, and synthesise research results relevant to the topic of the effectiveness of group counselling services in increasing self-compassion.

The research stages were conducted in the following manner:

1. The formulation of the problem is as follows:

The researcher formulated specific and focused research questions in line with the study objectives. The research questions focused on the effectiveness of group counselling services in enhancing self-compassion, particularly among adolescents.

2. A comprehensive review of the extant literature was conducted.

The article search was conducted on online databases, namely Google Scholar and SpringerLink. The formulation of keywords was conducted using Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT), with subsequent adjustment for each database. The following keywords were used in the search: The following terms are to be considered: "konseling", "konseling kelompok", "self-compassion", "compassion", "group counseling", "mindful self-compassion" and "self-compassion intervention".

3. The selection of literature

The articles that were identified were subjected to a two-stage screening process. The initial stage entailed a screening process that was conducted on the basis of titles and abstracts, which was then followed by a subsequent full-text screening. The following inclusion criteria were utilised in the process: The following criteria are to be met by the studies to be considered:

- (a) The studies must be empirical in nature and must evaluate the effectiveness of group counselling on self-compassion.
- (b) The studies must involve adolescent populations or equivalents.
- (c) The studies must be available in Indonesian or English.
- (d) The studies must have full-text access. The exclusion criteria encompassed non-empirical articles, studies that did not report outcomes pertaining to self-compassion, and publications lacking the full text.

The following essay will provide a comprehensive overview of the relevant literature on the subject.

4. The following article is the subject of a quality assessment.

The articles that successfully passed the selection stage were then subjected to a quality assessment. This assessment was carried out using a quality assessment checklist that had been customised to align with the specific research design of each study. The assessment process was conducted by two researchers independently, and any discrepancies in results were resolved through discussion.

5. The process of extracting data.

Data from each article that met the specified criteria were extracted using an extraction table format. This included information on authors, year of publication, country of study, participant characteristics, intervention methods, duration, self-compassion measurement instruments, and main findings.

6. The analysis and synthesis of data

The collected data were analysed descriptively and synthesised narratively. The synthesis of the research results was performed by grouping them according to the following criteria: intervention type, participant characteristics, and main findings related to self-compassion.

The entire process was carried out to ensure that the study results were scientifically accountable, transparent, and replicable by other researchers.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria in Table 1 of this literature review are as follows:

Table 1 *Inclusion and Exclusion*

CRITERIA	INCLUSION	EXCLUSION
Population	Studies focusing on adolescents	Studies that do not focus on adolescents
Intervensi	A study discussing group counseling techniques provided to adolescents to increase self-compassion	Studies that do not discuss group counseling techniques provided to adolescents to increase self-compassion
Comparators	The comparison intervention group used and the group that was only observed without being given any intervention	In addition to interventions provided through group counseling services
Outcomes	A study discussing the effectiveness of group counseling services in improving self-compassion	Does not discuss the effectiveness of group counseling services in improving self-compassion
Study design and publication type	Experimental quantitative research	In addition to experimental quantitative research
Year of publication	2022 and beyond	Before 2022
Language	Indonesian and English	In addition to Indonesian and English
Data base	Google Scholar, and SpringerLink.	In addition to Google Scholar, and SpringerLink.
Subject area	Counseling, Guidance Counseling	In addition to Counseling, Guidance Counseling

Study Selection

Articles were defined using keywords through Google Scholar, and SpringerLink databases. From the entire data base, 117. 246 results were obtained after the articles were analyzed according to the research theme and checked for duplication from all data bases, 9331 articles were obtained. The complete journal articles assessed for eligibility were 54 articles, but after reassessing the quality of the study, 12 articles were found that focused on group counseling as an intervention in increasing self-compassion. The journal articles reviewed after being eliminated and adjusted to the topic based on relevant keywords were 4 articles.

The *framework* used as a reference in preparing the *systematic review* uses *PRISMA for Systematic Review* which is a method to improve the quality assurance of the completeness of the *systematic review* structure and process. The description for the framework is as follows:

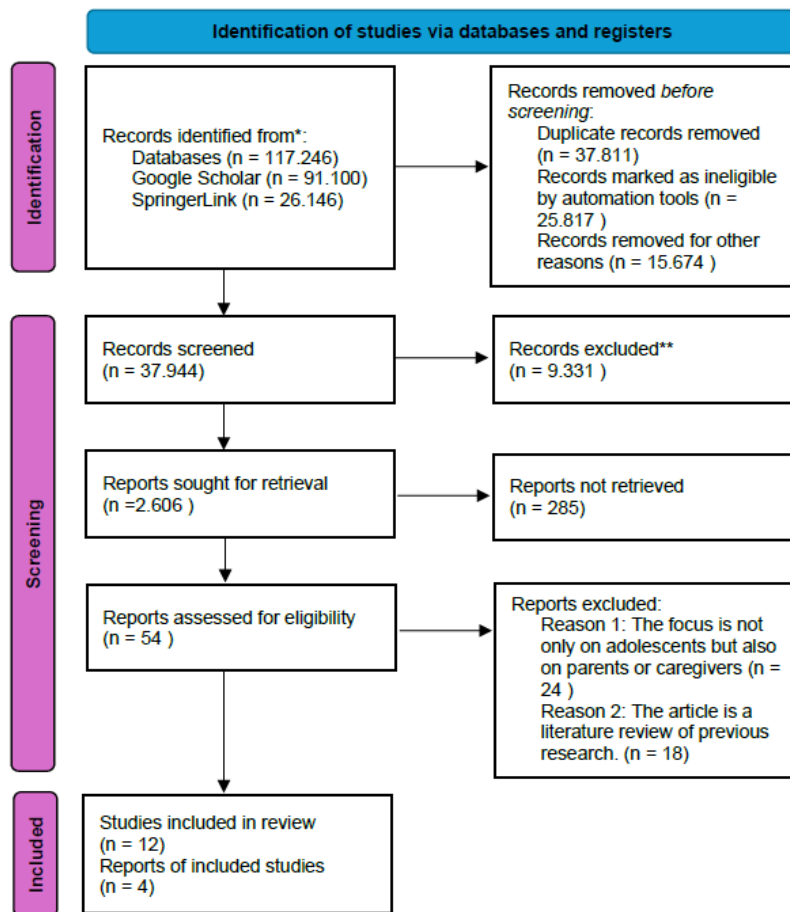


Figure 1 Article study selection chart

After the article is obtained and selected through the PRISMA method, it is summarized in the form of a summary table. The table includes the author's name, year of journal publication, research title, method and summary of findings. The next step is that the selected articles are analyzed, synthesized and written in the form of a narrative by comparing, identifying similarities and differences between the selected published articles.

Result and Discussion

Analysis of the five articles reviewed showed consistency that group interventions are significantly effective in increasing *self-compassion* in various populations, including adolescents, university students, santri, and individuals facing bereavement (Burhan, 2023; Haryani et al., 2014; Haryani et al., 2023; Jarnawi et al., 2024; Uneno et al., 2024). This finding addresses the research objective of identifying and synthesizing empirical evidence on the contribution of group interventions to improving *self-compassion*.

Table 2. Mapping of Research Findings

No	Title/ Year/ Country/ Language	Authors/ Country/	Purpose	Variety of Intervention	Population and Sample	Result
1.	Title: Effectiveness of Compassion-focused Group Therapy to Increase Self-compassion and Forgiveness in High School Students Authors: Kristin Melliati Benu, Mungin Eddy Wibowo, Mulawarman Year: 2023 Country: Indonesia Language: English		Testing the effectiveness of group therapy focused on increasing self-compassion in adolescents	<i>Compassion Focused Group Therapy</i> (CFGF)	16 students from Giovanni Kupang State High School with low self-compassion and forgiveness scores (purposive sampling).	CFGF is considered effective because it trains students to develop compassion, self-acceptance, and reduce self-criticism. Group interaction allows for emotional support and a sense of belonging, which ultimately improves the ability to forgive oneself and others. This study recommends the implementation of a similar model in schools to support adolescent mental health, as well as further research to test its effectiveness in different populations and contexts.
2.	Title: The Effectiveness of Enhanced Cognitive-Behavioural Group Therapy on Negative Perfectionism, Self-Criticism, and Self-Compassion Authors: Kiana Hadian Hamedani, Rozita Amani, Mosayeb Yarmohamadi Vassel Year: 2023 Country: Iran Language: English		Understanding the effectiveness of CBT-based group counseling in improving students' self-compassion.	<i>Cognitive Behavioral Therapy</i> (CBT)	all students who had low levels of self-compassion at the school where the research was conducted, totaling 16 students	CBT is considered successful in increasing self-compassion because it can identify and change maladaptive thinking patterns, accompanied by emotional support from group dynamics. This study recommends the application of a similar model in schools to support adolescent mental health, as well as further research to test its effectiveness in different populations and contexts.
3.	Title: <i>Pengaruh Konseling Kelompok dengan Terapi Syukur terhadap Peningkatan Self Compassion Santri SMP di Pondok Pesantren Al-Manar</i> Authors: Jarnawi, Rofiq Duri, Syaiful Indra, Hermida Pitri P		To determine the level of self-compassion among junior high school students and to examine the effect of group counselling with gratitude therapy on	Gratitude therapy	The population consisted of 225 eighth-grade students, with a sample of 11 students.	Group counselling with gratitude therapy helps students develop self-care, acknowledge imperfection as normal, and accept failure as part of God's love. This approach combines psychological and spiritual aspects,

	Year: 2024 Country: Indonesia Language: Indonesian	increasing self-compassion.			making it effective in the context of Islamic boarding schools.
4.	Title: <i>Konseling Kelompok Modification Mindful Self-Compassion (MMSC)</i> pada Peserta Didik Madrasah Aliyah Author: Ninik Haryani, IM Hambali, Arbin Janu Setiyowati Year: 2024 Country: Indonesia Language: Indonesian	To determine the effectiveness of Modification Mindful Self-Compassion (MMSC) group counselling in increasing self-compassion among students.	<i>Modification Mindful Self-Compassion (MMSC)</i>	The population of this study consisted of 207 Madrasah Aliyah students, with a sample of 10 students with low self-compassion scores.	The MMSC approach is effective because it integrates mindfulness with compassion, helping students manage negative emotions and develop a positive view of themselves.

Benu, Wibowo and Mulawarman (2022) conducted research testing the effectiveness of Compassion Focused Group Therapy (CFGF) on high school students with low levels of self-compassion and forgiveness. The results showed significant improvements in both areas, with a stronger effect on forgiveness. This success was attributed to the strengthening of self-compassion and acceptance of personal shortcomings, as well as the social support created through group interaction. These findings suggest that self-compassion impacts not only self-acceptance, but also the restoration of interpersonal relationships through forgiveness.

Similarly, Haryani's (2024) study, which applied group counselling based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to students with high levels of self-criticism, also resulted in a significant increase in self-compassion. However, CBT is more focused on cognitive restructuring to change negative thoughts and dysfunctional beliefs. Unlike CFGF, which focuses on emotions and deep self-acceptance, CBT emphasises adaptive thinking skills as a means of developing self-compassion.

Anisa's (2021) study used group counselling incorporating gratitude therapy with junior high school students in pesantren. This approach succeeded in increasing self-compassion by strengthening gratitude and encouraging acceptance of imperfections as part of God's love. A significant difference in this approach is the integration of religious and cultural values relevant to the environment of the research subjects, increasing emotional involvement and internal motivation in the counselling process.

The Mindful Self-Compassion Modification (MMSC) approach is an innovative method that combines mindfulness and compassion, while adapting the content to suit the participants' characteristics. Hidayat's (2022) research proved that MMSC effectively improves the self-compassion of Madrasah Aliyah students, with outcomes including decreased self-criticism, increased emotional awareness and acceptance of self-weakness. The advantage of MMSC lies in its ability to be adapted to various educational and cultural contexts. Furthermore, Fitri's (2022) research showed that MMSC impacted not only self-compassion but also reduced academic burnout. This result indicates that strengthening self-compassion plays a dual role: as well as increasing self-acceptance, it reduces emotional exhaustion and strengthens learning engagement. This confirms the reciprocal relationship between mental health and academic motivation.

From the comparison, it can be concluded that, although all approaches aim to increase self-compassion, each method has a different focus. CFGF prioritises emotional

and interpersonal dimensions; CBT emphasises cognitive changes; gratitude therapy incorporates spiritual elements; and MMSC combines mindfulness with flexible contextual adaptation. These differences provide practitioners with the opportunity to select or combine the most relevant approaches for the characteristics and needs of the participants. This study is novel in that it compiles various forms of group intervention in a single systematic review. The results demonstrate that self-compassion is a psychological concept that can be integrated into various therapeutic frameworks, including cognitive, spiritual, and technology-based approaches. Additionally, this study provides recent empirical evidence confirming the versatility of self-compassion as an intervention target applicable to various populations and cultures, including adolescents, university students, *santri* and bereaved individuals. The findings broaden the perspective that self-compassion development can be tailored to the specific needs of the target group and different intervention media, whether face-to-face or digital.

The results of this study significantly contribute to scientific development, particularly in educational and counselling psychology. It provides a theoretical basis and empirical evidence for developing a more structured, contextualised, self-compassion-based group intervention model. In practice, it serves as a reference for counsellors, psychologists and educators when designing effective group programmes to improve psychological well-being, reduce self-criticism and strengthen emotional regulation. Furthermore, this study has social implications, as it increases access to affordable, adaptable mental health intervention services suited to the needs of vulnerable populations, such as adolescents and individuals who find it difficult to access face-to-face services. Thus, the results of this study provide both academic contributions and direct benefits for improving mental health in the community.

Conclusion

The synthesis of evidence from the reviewed studies demonstrates that group-based interventions represent a powerful and adaptable approach to enhancing self-compassion across diverse populations and cultural contexts. By facilitating shared emotional experiences, promoting mindfulness, and cultivating empathy within a supportive social environment, such interventions foster deeper emotional regulation, greater self-acceptance, and improved psychological well-being. This review highlights that approaches like Gestalt group counseling, Modified Mindful Self-Compassion (MMSC), gratitude-based group therapy, and online self-compassion psychotherapy are not merely therapeutic modalities, but transformative educational experiences that can be meaningfully integrated into school-based and clinical programs.

The importance of these findings extends beyond theoretical interest: they affirm the vital role of accessible, culturally sensitive, and evidence-based mental health strategies in addressing the emotional needs of adolescents and other vulnerable populations. By bridging traditional face-to-face and digital modalities, group-based self-compassion programs provide scalable pathways for preventive and developmental counseling. Nevertheless, to strengthen the scientific robustness of this field, future research should employ larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal and experimental designs, and comparative analyses with other psychological intervention models. In doing so, the discipline of guidance and counseling can move toward more holistic and contextually grounded practices that not only alleviate distress but also nurture enduring emotional resilience and self-kindness.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Semarang, for providing academic support throughout the research process. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and mentors in the Guidance and Counseling Department for their insightful feedback and encouragement during the preparation of this manuscript. The author also acknowledges the contribution of journal editors and reviewers whose constructive suggestions greatly enhanced the quality and clarity of this paper.

Author Contributions Statement

WW conceptualized the study, conducted the systematic literature review, and performed the data synthesis. WW was also responsible for drafting, revising, and finalizing the manuscript. All sections of the article were completed under the sole authorship of WW, who approved the final version for publication.

References

- Anisa, R. (2021). *Pengaruh konseling kelompok dengan terapi syukur terhadap peningkatan self compassion santri smp di pondok pesantren al-manar*.
- Benu, K. M., Wibowo, M. E., & Mulawarman. (2022). *Efektivitas terapi kelompok berfokus pada belas kasih untuk meningkatkan belas kasih dan pemaafan pada siswa sma*.
- Beshai, S., et al. (2020). The efficacy of brief and web-based mindfulness-based interventions for reducing stress and anxiety: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 76(6), 1014–1030.
- Burhan, F. (2023). *Pengaruh konseling kelompok berbasis Gestalt terhadap peningkatan self-compassion pada remaja*. Jakarta: Pustaka Psikologi.
- Fauzi, R., dkk. (2020). Layanan konseling kelompok untuk meningkatkan self-compassion siswa SMA. *Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling*, 11(2), 89–97.
- Fitri, N. (2022). *Konseling Kelompok Modification Mindful Self-Compassion (MMSC) pada Peserta Didik yang Mengalami Academic Burnout*.
- Hamedani, K. H., Amani, R., & Vasel, M. Y. (2023). The effectiveness of enhanced cognitive-behavioral Group Therapy on negative perfectionism, Self-Criticism, and Self-Compassion. *International Journal of Cognitive Therapy*, 16(3), 375–389.
- Haryani, N., Hambali, I. M., & Setiyowati, A. J. (2024). Konseling kelompok Modification Mindful Self Compassion (MMSC) pada peserta didik Madrasah Aliyah. *G-COUNS: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling*, 8(3), 1825–1830. <https://doi.org/10.31316/gcouns.v8i3.5446>
- Hurlock, E. B. (1980). *Developmental psychology: A life-span approach* (5th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Izzani, M., Putri, A., & Nugroho, R. (2024). Tugas perkembangan remaja pada masa sekolah menengah atas. *Jurnal Pendidikan Remaja*, 9(1), 55–67.
- Jarnawi, R., Setiawan, D., & Amalia, R. (2024). *Terapi syukur untuk meningkatkan self-compassion remaja*. *Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling*, 16(2), 45–58.
- Neff, K. D. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2(2), 85–101.
- O'Hare, T., & Gemelli, K. (2023). Group-based mindful self-compassion: A short-format intervention. *Mindfulness-Based Interventions Journal*, 12(1), 45–59.

- Rizal, A., Purwoko, P., & Hariastuti, R. (2020). Peningkatan self-compassion siswa SMA melalui layanan konseling kelompok. *Jurnal Konseling Pendidikan*, 8(1), 12–20.
- Santrock, J. W. (2011). *Adolescence* (14th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Uneno, Y., Takahashi, M., & Kato, K. (2024). *Online group psychotherapy for self-compassion enhancement*. *Asian Journal of Counseling*, 31(1), 14–28.

Copyright Holder

© Wulantika, W.

First Publication Right

COUNSENEsia: Indonesia Journal of Guidance and Counseling

This Article is Licensed Under

