



Compassion Culture of Javanese Adolescents in Yogyakarta

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Abstract: The background of this research focuses on the culture of compassion, which includes feelings of affection, empathy and concern for others, especially in helping or alleviating their suffering. This culture includes genuine concern and action for the well-being of others without expecting anything in return. The purpose of this study is to understand and analyze the extent to which the culture of compassion is applied by Javanese adolescents in Yogyakarta. This study used a quantitative approach with quantitative descriptive research methodology, where the sample taken consisted of 150 students. The results showed that most Javanese adolescents in the Yogyakarta have a high level of compassion culture, with 57% showing a strong empathetic attitude. A total of 33% showed a moderate level of affection culture, and 10% showed a low level. The conclusion of this study is that most adolescents in this area still maintain high values regarding affection, although there are differences in the level of application of this culture which is influenced by family factors, education, and the influence of technology. The contribution of this study is to provide insight into the culture of affection among adolescents and the factors that influence its implementation.

Keywords: compassion; culture

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. Adolescents experience many changes both physically and emotionally. Adolescents often show rebellious reactions or go against the rules and consider the decisions of peer groups more. During this time, many adolescents experience dissatisfaction, feelings of depression, and anxiety. Adolescents develop cognitive abilities, enabling them to accept other people's perspectives. Adolescents develop imaginary audiences, which describe the ability of adolescents to differentiate between their thoughts about themselves and their thoughts about other people's thoughts (Khumas et al., 2019). Adolescents are in a period of rapid physiological, cognitive, and social interaction changes, and their high level of self-concern and introspection leads to a perceived discrepancy between the current self and the ideal standard, which in turn is prone to mental health problems. Compassion, as a protective dimension of mental health, can regulate adolescents' negative attitudes toward themselves and others, which is conducive to the development of adolescents' mental health (Wu & Zhang, 2023). Research conducted over the past decade has consistently found that self-compassion is related to well-being, not only in adults but also in young people (Neuenschwander & Gunten, 2024). Adolescents need to be able to apply the values and norms that exist in society, such as attitudes of helping, working together, empathy, and caring for others. These attitudes can also be referred to as prosocial behavior (Amara et al., 2024).

One of the essential characteristics that students must possess in the era of Society 5.0 is the character of compassion. Compassion is defined as a form of concern for oneself when facing various problems that occur in life, and having the belief that failure, mistakes, suffering, and shortcomings are inevitable aspects of life. Compassion is positive self-acceptance of various unexpected events. Furthermore, a person with a compassionate character exhibits characteristics such as being attentive, open to their own suffering, kind, and non-judgmental, and has the awareness to share stories that reduce suffering (Nugroho & Afriwilda, 2024). Compassion is a new construct that has the potential to affect positive self-growth and well-being. It is a component that reflects aspects of the self in addition to self-concept, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-regulation. Previous research has shown that compassion has several advantages and good effects on an individual's life, including the ability to reduce stress and depression. It is also viewed as a component that can bring emotional stability, as well as enhance positive and subjective well-being (Khatib, 2023). Compassion grows with increased ethical awareness. This is also why individuals motivated by cold logic and reasoning tend to do more to help people than those driven by empathic feelings (Wang et al., 2023).

Compassion is often used interchangeably with empathy, sympathy, caring, and altruism, but these terms do not fully capture the essence of compassion. Empathy and sympathy involve understanding and

sharing others' feelings, while compassion elicits explicitly a desire to alleviate or reduce suffering. Compassion is central to the core teachings of most religions, particularly in Buddhist philosophy. Compassion is "an openness to the suffering of others with a commitment to relieve it" (Kotera et al., 2024). Compassion has been found to weaken the link between several psychological factors and mental illness in adolescents. Specifically, it has been found to weaken links between perfectionism and depressive symptoms, perceived stress and internalising symptoms, academic difficulties and depressive symptoms, and body dissatisfaction and suicidal ideation. Early studies evaluating compassion-based interventions, such as the Mindful Compassion Intervention for adolescents, show promise in enhancing psychological well-being by increasing mindfulness and compassion in adolescents (Li et al., 2024). In addition to shaping how people express compassion (i.e., how the "senders" of compassion convey compassion), it is essential to understand what people consider comforting and compassionate when they are the "receivers" of compassionate responses (Birgit et al., 2024).

There have been few studies that have examined adolescent compassion from a multi-dimensional perspective. Compassion may hold particular relevance in adolescence and may promote greater resiliency in the face of disappointments. As individuals transition from childhood to adolescence, adolescents become increasingly self-conscious, incorporating both their successes and their failures into their self-appraisals. Compassion is lower during adolescence compared to other stages of life, and this has been linked to negative self-worth perceptions in 13- to 14-year-olds (Talwar et al., 2023). Individuals with greater compassion are more likely to experience higher life satisfaction, stronger social relationships, personal growth, adaptive coping with failure, and a greater sense of happiness. They are less likely to experience anxiety, depression, thought suppression, and perfectionism (Phuoc & Nguyen, 2020). Compassion is often viewed as an individual effort rather than a more systemic response to suffering within organizations, and as a result, it cannot match the scale of the problem (Paakkanen et al., 2024).

Compassion is linked to self-care practices, such as seeking professional help when needed, being proactive, or maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The literature suggests that the absence of self-care can lead to higher perceived stress levels, and those with a lower mental health status are found to be less likely to engage in self-care activities (Maricic et al., 2023). Compassion is related to life satisfaction, emotional intelligence, social connectedness, learning goals, wisdom, personal initiative, curiosity, happiness, optimism, and positive affect. Compassion was found to be correlated with neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness. Compassion predicts well-being by controlling for neuroticism. High compassion is associated with low depression and high life satisfaction (Khumas et al., 2019). Nevertheless, self-compassion is understood to play a crucial role in cultivating compassion for others, as it views failure and suffering as part of the human experience, allowing others' failures and suffering to be recognized as "shared human fallibility" (Kotera & Van Gordon, 2021).

Compassion also teaches adolescents to perceive that problems are something normal that people in general experience. People facing problems often think their issues are too heavy and that others have never experienced them. Conversely, if someone thinks that problems are usual and others have also experienced them, they tend to be calm and able to think clearly. Adolescents with compassion reduce feelings of guilt and oppressive conditions. Ultimately, challenging and unpleasant conditions become the best lessons for developing experiences and life (Prabawa et al., 2023). An individual with compassion is more open to accepting experiences, while not avoiding or punishing themselves; therefore, they are capable of facing problems with an affectionate attitude towards themselves. An individual with compassion will respond to a problem in a way that is more adaptive to the unpleasant life event (Meilasari & Utami, 2022). A fear of giving compassion to others or receiving it from others can prevent individuals from effectively using their natural emotional regulation systems through social interactions, leaving them susceptible to mental health issues (Aydin & Deniz, 2024).

Compassion may be especially relevant for adolescents because of the developmental tasks and associated stressors that are faced by adolescents in, for example, the school and social environment. An important developmental task is forming one's own identity, gaining autonomy (increased independence from parents), and belonging to the peer group, which is often accompanied by a tendency to continuously evaluate and compare oneself to others (Tali et al., 2023). Compassion helps individuals feel calm, cared for, and connected to others, thereby promoting happiness. Individuals with higher compassion levels reported being happier than those with lower compassion levels. Compassion is linked with feelings of competence, connectedness, independence, and self-determination. Inam et al. (2021) believed that compassion develops throughout infancy and stems from the individual's interaction with their caregiver and attachment style. However, little is known about childhood compassion and its development about other aspects of social and emotional well-being (Karakasidou et al., 2021). Compassion was considered a reasonable intervention target based on consultations with young people as well as evidence supporting its utility with this target group. Compassion is an adaptive way of relating to oneself during difficult experiences, characterized by a tendency to respond with compassion rather than apathy (Jones et al., 2023). Compassion is essential in caring for vulnerable individuals. Being compassionate involves recognizing and responding to a vulnerable individual with

empathy while maintaining the dignity of those receiving care and providing care (Alkhaqani, 2022). Compassion can also be interpreted as an attitude to do good to oneself when faced with difficulties, as individuals will do good to a friend when they are experiencing difficulties. Compassion is relevant when individuals struggle with their own mistakes, failures, or individual shortcomings. Compassion consists of three components that are experienced in different ways but interact with each other. These components are self-kindness vs. self-judgment, common humanity vs. isolation, and mindfulness vs. over-identification. Conceptually, each component has differences but can also affect one another (Yustika & Widyasari, 2021).

Compassion has been defined as comprising three core behaviors: mindfully acknowledging one's own suffering, practicing self-compassion in the face of suffering, and recognizing that suffering is a common experience shared by all humanity. Compassion is more weakly correlated with traits such as narcissism, anger, and public consciousness than self-esteem. Moreover, compassion has been shown to predict unique variance in outcomes such as anger, public self-consciousness, and rumination, beyond the effects of self-esteem. As such, compassion has been framed as an alternative to the pursuit of self-esteem (Donald et al., 2018). The Compassion Culture of Javanese Adolescents refers to the caring behaviors and values influenced by Javanese culture, which often reflect harmony, empathy, and respect for others. In this context, Javanese adolescents tend to internalize cultural values such as *tepa selira* (tolerance of differences), *gotong royong* (cooperation), and *andhap asor* (humility). These values shape their mindset and behavior in socializing, helping others, and maintaining good relationships within the family, school, and community. This culture is also often supported by traditional teachings, such as *unggah-ungguh* (good manners), which reinforce compassion and care for others (Farooq et al., 2021). Compassion, on the other hand, is a concept that is not always understood and is relatively unknown today. It is the ability to empathize with another person's suffering, along with the readiness to help and promote that person's well-being and to find a way to alleviate their distress (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Nugroho and Afriwilda (2024) emphasize the concept of self-compassion and cultural values among adolescents in Java, but do not delve deeply into how Javanese culture shapes compassion towards others in the social context and interactions between adolescents. In contrast to our research, this study focuses on "Compassion Culture of Javanese Adolescents in Yogyakarta," with a greater emphasis on how Javanese cultural values, such as *tulung tinulung* (mutual assistance) and *ngajeni* (respect), shape adolescents' empathetic behavior in their daily social interactions. In addition, this study is more specific to Yogyakarta, with a more in-depth methodology that provides a more contextualized picture of how compassion translates in the lives of adolescents in the region. Previous research has discussed the concept of compassion in a global context, the influence of religion, and individual psychology. However, very few have addressed how local cultures, such as those in Javanese society, influence the development of compassion among adolescents. An apparent gap in previous studies is the lack of understanding of how specific cultural values, such as *tepa selira*, *gotong royong*, and *andhap asor*, can shape empathy and compassion among adolescents, especially in the context of more traditional societies that are strongly tied to cultural values. Based on this gap, the purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the development of compassion culture among Javanese adolescents in Yogyakarta. The study aims to understand the role of local culture in shaping attitudes of affection that are linked to pre-existing cultural values in Javanese society, as well as its impact on adolescents' social relationships and mental well-being. Thus, this study aims to provide a new perspective in adolescent developmental psychology by examining the interaction between local culture and mental development, which is often overlooked in previous studies.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to understand and analyze compassion culture among Javanese adolescents in Yogyakarta, within the context of the influence of local culture on the development of their empathy and social relationships. Most existing studies tend to highlight compassion in a global context or the influence of specific religious teachings. However, few focus on understanding local cultural values, such as *tepa selira*, *gotong royong*, and *andhap asor*, which become the foundation in shaping the character of Javanese adolescents. This research offers insights into how adolescents internalize such cultural values, contributing to the development of empathetic attitudes and positive social relationships. The contribution of this research to science lies in its deeper understanding of the role of culture in shaping the development of a compassionate character in adolescents, particularly in the context of a culturally rich society such as Yogyakarta. This research offers a new perspective in adolescent psychology by examining the interaction between local culture and mental development, as well as how cultural values can serve as a basis for designing culture-based character education programs. The findings of this study can also serve as a reference for educational and social policies at the local level, which aim to strengthen caring attitudes towards others in the face of increasingly complex challenges posed by globalization.

METHODS

The type of research used in this study is quantitative research, a systematic approach that aims to generate knowledge by collecting data in numerical form, which is then analyzed using statistical procedures (Leavy, 2017). Quantitative research focuses on objective, valid, and reliable measurements to understand

certain phenomena in a measurable way. The research method used is a descriptive method, which aims to describe or describe the conditions, phenomena, or characteristics of variables as they are without manipulating the data or conditions under study (Womack et al., 2023). This approach does not seek to identify cause-and-effect relationships but instead provides a detailed and in-depth description of a situation based on the collected data. This method is particularly suitable for research that aims to describe the level, pattern, or characteristics of a specific phenomenon, such as the culture of compassion among Javanese adolescents in Yogyakarta, thereby providing accurate insight into the actual situation without any intervention or change.

The descriptive method is an approach in research that aims to describe, explain, or describe a phenomenon, situation, or event as it is, based on data obtained objectively (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). In this method, the researcher does not manipulate or alter the data or variables being studied, ensuring that the results accurately reflect the actual conditions. This approach is used to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of a phenomenon, without attempting to influence or control the factors involved. In other words, the descriptive method serves as a tool to understand and document certain realities or circumstances, whether in the form of characteristics, patterns, or trends, based on the data collected. This method is beneficial for research that aims to provide basic information, such as photographing the social, behavioral, or cultural conditions of a community group, without involving experimental treatments or subject manipulation (Huang et al., 2023).

This research design on the Compassion Culture of Javanese Adolescents in Yogyakarta employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive type. This research aims to describe the culture of compassion among Javanese adolescents in Yogyakarta, without any data manipulation. The population of this study consists of Javanese adolescents aged 16 to 20 years living in the Yogyakarta area, which is expected to represent the characteristics of the local culture. The sample consisted of 150 students, selected using purposive sampling techniques based on specific criteria, including age, Javanese cultural origin, and residence in Yogyakarta. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which aim to describe the distribution of data, calculate means, percentages, and frequencies to provide a clear picture of the level of compassion culture among Javanese adolescents in Yogyakarta. This analysis does not aim to find cause-and-effect relationships, but to provide a clear description of existing conditions.

In analyzing the quantitative data for this study, several descriptive statistical techniques were used to provide a clear picture of the level of compassion culture among adolescents in Yogyakarta. First, a mean was calculated for each dimension of compassion measured, such as empathy, gotong royong, and tepa selira, to determine the overall extent to which adolescents exhibit compassionate attitudes. In addition, percentages were used to describe the distribution of respondents' answers to each item in the Likert scale, indicating the proportion of respondents who agreed or disagreed with the statements related to compassion. Finally, frequency distributions were used to identify patterns or trends in respondents' answers to each category in the scale, such as "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree", providing further insight into the variation or consistency in the level of compassion possessed by adolescents in Yogyakarta. By using these three techniques, the analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding of the strength of the culture of compassion among Javanese adolescents in Yogyakarta (Bland, 2014). Figure 1 presents the flowchart of this research.

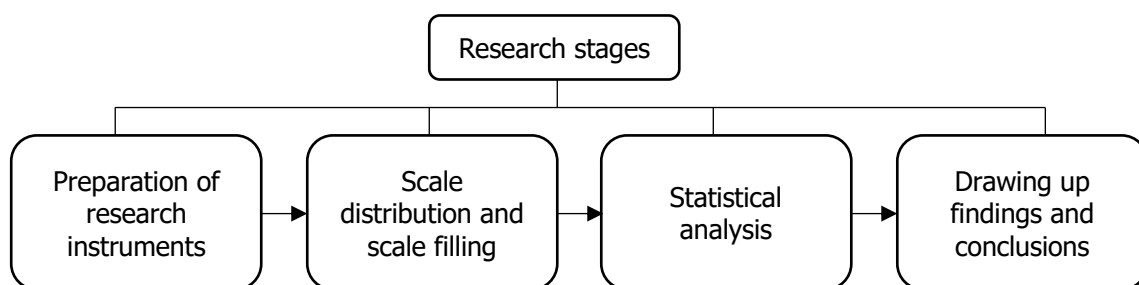


Figure 1. Flow of Research Stages

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This test provides quantitative data on the distribution of compassion within a given population, such as mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values. This information is useful for identifying patterns or dominant levels, measuring diversity, and finding individuals or groups that require further intervention. In addition, the description results can serve as a basis for further research or planning more effective compassion development programs, especially in educational, social, or professional contexts. The results of the research on compassion in students in Java as a whole are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Compassion Description

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Compassion	150	87,51	15,33	34	136

Based on the results of data analysis, the affection variable for 150 respondents shows an average (mean) value of 87.51 with a standard deviation of 15.33. This indicates a variation in the level of affection among respondents. The minimum value obtained was 34, while the maximum value reached 136, indicating a significant difference between respondents with the lowest and highest levels of affection. With a mean value close to the middle of the score range (34-136), it can be concluded that, in general, the respondents' level of affection falls within the moderate category. However, the wide variation in standard deviation indicates a significant spread of scores, reflecting the diversity of affection levels within this population. Thus, although most respondents showed moderate levels of compassion, there are significant differences in the application of a culture of compassion among Javanese adolescents in Yogyakarta. This illustrates the diverse levels of empathy and caring among adolescents that need to be considered in the development of compassion-based character education programs.

Table 2. Compassion Category

Interval	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High	85	57%	57%	57%
Medium	50	33%	33%	43%
Low	15	10%	10%	100%
Total	150	100%	100%	

Based on the categorized affection test results, the majority of students (57%) fall into the high category, indicating their ability to empathize, care for, and understand others very well. A total of 33% of students fall into the medium category, indicating a fairly good ability for compassion but still has potential for further improvement. Meanwhile, 10% of students fell into the low category, indicating a need for special attention or intervention to help them develop higher levels of compassion. Overall, this data shows that most students have a good level of affection, although a small group requires further attention to develop their affection ability. Compassion in students serves as a crucial foundation for character development, emotional well-being, and social relationships. By cultivating compassion, students can understand and respond to others' feelings with empathy, fostering harmonious and supportive relationships within the school environment. In addition, it helps students to care more about themselves, reduce stress, and increase resilience in facing academic and daily life challenges. In the context of learning, compassion also fosters cooperation, tolerance, and mutual respect, thereby creating an atmosphere conducive to both personal growth and collective success (Mascaro et al., 2020). Compassion is defined as a form of caring for oneself when facing various life problems and having the belief that failure, mistakes, suffering, and imperfections are part of life. Compassion can also refer to the positive self-acceptance of unexpected events (Nugroho & Afriwilda, 2024). Compassion has been shown to have higher self-esteem, and self-compassion can protect individuals from negative psychological distress caused by stressful life events. Psychology literature considers self-compassion both as a personality trait and as an acquired skill (Aydoğdu & Dirik, 2022).

Compassion is not a single, easily defined entity, but rather is comprised of non-compassion elements. We were guided by a simplified model of compassion that includes three fundamental elements: cognitive appraisal (awareness of suffering), empathy (emotional resonance with the person suffering), and action (or at least the intent to act) to alleviate suffering or its causes (Addiss et al., 2022). Compassion can be viewed as a three-part process that involves noticing others' suffering, developing affective feelings toward the suffering, and then taking action. Compassion can help identify prosocial opportunities to alleviate the suffering of others in the context of kinship relations, thereby reducing personal suffering or protecting the welfare of individuals, groups, or organizations. Compassion can be viewed as the behavioral manifestation of voluntary actions to benefit others (Yitshaki et al., 2022). Compassion is a crucial human capacity that enables us to respond to suffering, and it has been demonstrated to be associated with decreased anxious and depressive symptomatology, improved coping with pain, and positive outcomes in terms of quality of life and well-being (García-Campayo et al., 2024). Compassion is intrinsically situated within particular social settings, and shaped by them; it is experienced, interpreted, and enacted differently in different circumstances. Patients and their families view compassion as essential in acute care settings, and it has been associated with lower rates of burnout among clinicians. Understanding the contextual landscape of compassion in healthcare and how clinicians adapt expressions of compassion according to context may advance compassion as a deliberate and mindful practice (Ordons et al., 2020). Compassion, or the heartfelt desire to alleviate the suffering of oneself and others, fosters social connection and is a significant predictor of overall quality of life and well-being (Vieten et al., 2024). compassion is conceptualized using three pillars: self-kindness, being kind and understanding toward oneself in instances of pain or failure rather than being self-critical; common humanity, perceiving one's

experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than seeing them as separating and isolating; and mindfulness, holding painful thoughts and feelings in balanced non-judgmental awareness rather than over-identifying with them (Cowand et al., 2024).

Compassion hangs together to form an overarching construct, which is important, both theoretically and practically. This is because we need to understand the construct and, based on that understanding, determine the best way to train and cultivate it (Montero-Marín et al., 2018). While compassion can also be associated with positive affect, negative affect is still generally present as well. Compassion is, after all, about suffering. Thus, because compassion likely involves a complex combination of multiple positive and negative emotions, love stands in clear contrast as a predominantly positive emotional state (Jazaieri, 2018). Compassion is a human quality that involves understanding the suffering of others and wanting to take action, using culturally appropriate and acceptable nursing/healthcare interventions that consider adolescents' cultural backgrounds (Papadopoulos & Pezzella, 2015). In contrast to many previous studies that focus more on individual factors or culture-specific approaches, this study highlights the important role of local values in shaping the character of compassion in adolescents. For example, 33% of students in the moderate category showed potential for further development in their compassion abilities. This opens up opportunities for further development in educational interventions or culture-based programs that can strengthen empathetic and caring attitudes among adolescents. Noting the presence of students in the low category (10%), this study confirms the importance of special attention or intervention in improving their compassion ability.

The impact of this study on science lies in providing a more holistic understanding of how local culture and character can enhance the psychological well-being of adolescents, particularly in terms of developing compassion. This study introduces a new model for examining the relationship between local culture and adolescent character development, highlighting the importance of character development grounded in local cultural values in character education. As such, the results of this study make significant contributions to adolescent psychology and character education in Indonesia, while also providing a foundation for further research in the context of comparative cultures. Overall, this research contributes to the understanding of the role of compassion in adolescents' social and emotional well-being and its potential application in educational and social policy. In the context of learning, compassion supports the creation of a more collaborative, tolerant, and respectful environment, which can promote personal growth and collective success. The results of this study can also be used to design programs that promote the value of compassion and empathy, which are not only relevant in schools but can also be applied in the context of adolescents' social lives, thereby improving their quality of life and reducing mental health problems such as anxiety or depression.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the majority of Javanese adolescents in Yogyakarta exhibit a good level of compassion, with 57% falling into the high category, reflecting their ability to empathize and care for others. Meanwhile, 33% fall into the medium category and 10% into the low category, indicating a need for more attention to develop compassion in this group. This research makes a significant contribution to understanding the role of local cultural values in shaping adolescents' compassionate character, with implications for the development of culture-based character education. The results also have significant implications for designing educational programs that support the development of empathy and compassion among adolescents, which can enhance their social, emotional, and mental well-being and foster a more collaborative, tolerant, and respectful environment.

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