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Mindfulness and Psychological Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Self-Compassion among Indonesian Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT
Psychological well-being is a fundamental component of positive mental health and is particularly important for university students who frequently encounter academic, social, and developmental challenges. Although mindfulness has been consistently associated with psychological well-being, the psychological processes underlying this relationship require further investigation. This study examined the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being and investigated the mediating role of self-compassion among undergraduate students in Indonesia. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed, involving 317 undergraduate students recruited using convenience sampling. Participants completed the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), Self-Compassion Scale–Short Form (SCS-SF), and Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB-18). Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The results indicated that mindfulness was positively associated with self-compassion and psychological well-being, while self-compassion was positively associated with psychological well-being. Furthermore, self-compassion partially mediated the association between mindfulness and psychological well-being within the tested model. These findings highlight self-compassion as a potentially important psychological factor associated with the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being. These findings may inform the development of university mental health programs that incorporate mindfulness and self-compassion approaches to support students' psychological well-being.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Self-Compassion, Psychological Well-Being, University Students, Structural Equation Modeling.

I. Introduction

Psychological well-being is an important indicator of positive mental health and quality of life. Rather than merely reflecting the absence of psychological disorders, psychological well-being encompasses individuals' capacity to function positively, realize their potential, maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships, and cope effectively with life challenges. Ryff (1989) conceptualized psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct comprising autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. This eudaimonic perspective emphasizes optimal psychological functioning and provides an important framework for understanding how individuals maintain

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positive functioning across educational, occupational, and social contexts. The importance of psychological well-being is particularly evident among university students. University life involves a developmental transition characterized by academic demands, career uncertainty, financial pressures, changing interpersonal relationships, and identity exploration. These challenges may place students at greater risk of psychological distress and difficulties in maintaining positive psychological functioning. Consequently, identifying psychological resources associated with students' well-being has become an important area of research in positive and educational psychology.

One psychological resource that has received considerable attention is mindfulness. Kabat-Zinn (1994) described mindfulness as intentionally attending to present-moment experiences with openness and non-judgmental awareness. Brown and Ryan (2003) proposed that mindfulness is associated with greater awareness of internal experiences and adaptive self-regulation. Empirical research has generally demonstrated positive associations between mindfulness and indicators of psychological well-being, including life satisfaction, resilience, emotional balance, and adaptive psychological functioning. Nevertheless, establishing an association between mindfulness and psychological well-being does not fully explain the psychological processes that may statistically account for this relationship. Recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses have provided further evidence regarding the relevance of mindfulness-based approaches to university students' mental health. Dawson et al. (2020) reported improvements in several psychological outcomes following mindfulness-based interventions, although the strength of evidence varied across outcomes and comparison conditions. Similarly, Zuo et al. (2023) synthesized evidence supporting the potential benefits of mindfulness-based interventions for student mental health. More recent evidence has also examined interventions integrating mindfulness and self-compassion, highlighting their potential relevance to psychological distress among university students (Galino Buen et al., 2026). These findings provide a broader empirical foundation for examining mindfulness in relation to psychological well-being, while emphasizing the importance of distinguishing intervention outcomes from cross-sectional associations.

Self-compassion represents one potential psychological process associated with both mindfulness and psychological well-being. Neff (2003) conceptualized self-compassion as comprising self-kindness, recognition of common humanity, and balanced mindful awareness when individuals encounter suffering, inadequacy, or failure. Although mindfulness and self-compassion are conceptually related, they represent distinct psychological constructs. Mindfulness primarily concerns awareness of present experiences, whereas self-compassion concerns how individuals relate to themselves when confronting difficult experiences. Previous evidence has demonstrated a positive association between mindfulness and self-compassion, suggesting that these constructs may operate together within broader patterns of adaptive psychological functioning. Previous studies have also examined self-compassion as a statistical mediator of the relationship between mindfulness and various mental health and well-being outcomes. However, the available literature does not indicate that self-compassion is the only explanatory pathway. Other psychological processes, including psychological flexibility, emotion regulation, acceptance, non-attachment, and decentering, have also been examined as potential mediators. These findings suggest that the association between mindfulness and psychological well-being may involve multiple interrelated psychological processes. Therefore, further investigation of the specific statistical role of self-compassion remains relevant, particularly across different populations and cultural contexts.

An additional gap concerns the cultural contexts in which these relationships have been examined. Much of the existing literature on mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being was developed outside Indonesia. Cultural context may be relevant to how individuals understand self-related attitudes, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being. Therefore, evidence from Indonesian undergraduate students can complement existing findings by examining whether the proposed relationships are also observed within this specific population. Rather than assuming that findings established in other settings are directly generalizable, research involving Indonesian students provides an opportunity to evaluate the proposed mediation model within an underrepresented cultural and educational context in the literature. Accordingly, the contribution of the present study lies not in proposing self-compassion as a

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previously unidentified mediator, because this relationship has been examined in prior research, but in evaluating the proposed mediation model among Indonesian undergraduate students while distinguishing the related but theoretically distinct roles of mindfulness and self-compassion. This contextual examination may extend the existing evidence concerning the mindfulness-well-being relationship and provide a basis for further cross-cultural investigations. The study also contributes to university mental health research by providing empirical information concerning the psychological characteristics associated with students' positive psychological functioning without assuming causal or temporal relationships among the variables.

Based on these considerations, the present study aimed to examine the relationships among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being among Indonesian undergraduate students. Specifically, the study examined whether mindfulness was positively associated with psychological well-being, whether mindfulness was positively associated with self-compassion, and whether self-compassion was positively associated with psychological well-being. Furthermore, the study tested whether self-compassion statistically mediated the association between mindfulness and psychological well-being. Given the cross-sectional design, the proposed mediation was interpreted as statistical mediation within the tested model rather than evidence of a temporal or causal mechanism.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Mindfulness and Psychological Well-Being

Mindfulness refers to the capacity to intentionally attend to present-moment experiences with openness and a non-judgmental attitude (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Brown and Ryan (2003) further conceptualized mindfulness as an individual characteristic associated with greater awareness of internal and external experiences of the self. Such awareness may be relevant to adaptive psychological functioning because individuals are better able to recognize their thoughts and emotions without automatically reacting to them. Psychological well-being, as conceptualized by Ryff (1989), represents positive psychological functioning across six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. From this perspective, psychological well-being extends beyond positive affect or the absence of psychological distress and concerns an individual's capacity to function effectively and meaningfully.

The relationship between mindfulness and self-compassion has received increasing empirical attention. Golden et al. (2021), through a systematic review and meta-analysis, examined changes in self-compassion associated with mindfulness-based programmes, supporting further investigation of the relationship between these psychological constructs. Additionally, Sobhaninia et al. (2026) reported evidence that self-compassion interventions were associated with reductions in anxiety and depression among university students. Nevertheless, evidence from intervention studies should not be interpreted as direct confirmation of a cross-sectional mediation mechanism. Accordingly, the present study examines self-compassion as a statistical mediator within the hypothesized association between mindfulness and psychological well-being. Previous empirical evidence discussed in this study generally indicates that higher mindfulness is associated with greater life satisfaction, resilience, emotional balance, and psychological well-being, as well as lower psychological distress. These findings provide a basis for expecting a positive relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being. However, because the present study employs a cross-sectional design, this relationship is conceptualized as an association rather than a causal effect.

H1: Mindfulness is positively associated with psychological well-being in Indonesian undergraduate students.

The positive association between mindfulness and self-compassion (β = .57) is consistent with empirical research conducted among Indonesian university students. Ediati and Kaloeti (2025), in a study

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involving 278 students from 15 Indonesian universities, reported a significant positive association between mindfulness and self-compassion (β = .38, p < .001). Their findings suggest that students reporting greater mindful awareness also tend to demonstrate more compassionate attitudes toward themselves. Wu et al. (2025) similarly identified a positive relationship between mindfulness and self-compassion in a large sample of Chinese university students. Taken together, these studies provide cross-cultural empirical support for the association observed in the present research. However, because the current study used a cross-sectional design, the findings do not establish that mindfulness precedes or causes improvements in self-compassion.

H2: Mindfulness is positively associated with self-compassion in Indonesian undergraduate students.

The positive association between mindfulness and self-compassion (β = .57) is consistent with empirical research conducted among Indonesian university students. Ediati and Kaloeti (2025), in a study involving 278 students from 15 Indonesian universities, reported a significant positive association between mindfulness and self-compassion (β = .38, p < .001). Their findings suggest that students reporting greater mindful awareness also tend to demonstrate more compassionate attitudes toward themselves. Wu et al. (2025) similarly identified a positive relationship between mindfulness and self-compassion in a large sample of Chinese university students. Taken together, these studies provide cross-cultural empirical support for the association observed in the present research. However, because the current study used a cross-sectional design, the findings do not establish that mindfulness precedes or causes improvements in self-compassion.

H3: Self-compassion is positively associated with psychological well-being among Indonesian undergraduate students.

The positive association between self-compassion and psychological well-being (β = .46) is supported by previous research examining psychological adjustment among university students. Fong and Loi (2016), in a cross-sectional study involving 306 tertiary students, found that higher self-compassion was associated with greater well-being, including life satisfaction, flourishing, and positive affect, as well as lower psychological distress. Furthermore, Wu et al. (2025) reported a significant positive association between self-compassion and life satisfaction (β = .27, p < .001) and a negative association with depressive symptoms (β = −.17, p < .001). These findings suggest that students who respond to personal difficulties with greater kindness and understanding may also report more favorable psychological functioning. Nevertheless, differences in the operationalization of well-being should be acknowledged when comparing these findings with the present study, which employed Ryff's psychological well-being framework.

H4: Self-compassion statistically mediates the association between mindfulness and psychological well-being among Indonesian undergraduate students.

Previous empirical research supports the examination of self-compassion as a potential statistical mediator of the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being. Wu et al. (2025), in a study involving 1,409 Chinese university students, found that self-compassion significantly mediated the association between mindfulness and life satisfaction (indirect effect = .057, 95% CI [.05, .07]). Their findings also identified rumination as an additional mediating variable, suggesting that the relationship between mindfulness and positive psychological functioning may involve multiple interconnected psychological processes. Furthermore, Fong and Loi (2016) demonstrated the relevance of self-compassion as a mediating variable in associations involving psychological distress and student well-being, although their research examined a different conceptual model. These findings provide an empirical basis for investigating whether self-compassion statistically accounts for part of the association between mindfulness and psychological well-being among Indonesian undergraduate students.

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Theoretically, mindfulness and self-compassion represent related but distinct psychological characteristics. Mindfulness involves awareness of present-moment experiences, whereas self-compassion reflects a supportive and nonjudgmental orientation toward oneself during difficult experiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Neff, 2003). Students reporting greater mindfulness may also report greater self-compassion, which in turn may be associated with more favorable psychological functioning. Nevertheless, the existing evidence does not establish self-compassion as the only possible mediating variable, and findings involving life satisfaction or psychological distress cannot be assumed to apply directly to Ryff's multidimensional psychological well-being construct. Accordingly, the present study examines self-compassion as a statistical mediator within the proposed structural model. Given its cross-sectional design, the hypothesized indirect association is not interpreted as evidence of temporal ordering or causality.

III. Research Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design to examine the associations among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in Indonesia. The cross-sectional design was considered appropriate because all study variables were measured at a single point in time. Mindfulness was specified as the predictor variable, psychological well-being as the outcome variable, and self-compassion as the mediating variable. The hypothesized relationships were examined using structural equation modeling (SEM), which enabled the simultaneous estimation of direct and indirect associations among the study variables. Given the cross-sectional nature of the data, the mediation analysis was interpreted as statistical mediation within the hypothesized model rather than evidence of temporal or causal relationships.

3.2. Participants and Sampling

The participants were Indonesian undergraduate students recruited using convenience sampling. Participants were eligible if they were actively enrolled in an undergraduate program, were at least 18 years old, and voluntarily provided informed consent. Responses were excluded if participants did not meet the eligibility criteria, submitted incomplete questionnaires, or provided duplicate responses. Following sample-size considerations for Structural Equation Modeling described by Hair et al. (2022), the study targeted approximately 250–400 participants. A total of 338 students initially completed the online questionnaire. Following data screening, 21 responses were excluded because of incomplete questionnaires, duplicate submissions, or failure to meet the inclusion criteria. Therefore, the final analytical sample consisted of 317 undergraduate students, representing 93.8% of the initially completed responses retained after screening. Demographic information collected from participants included age, gender, year of study, faculty or academic discipline, and previous experience with mindfulness practice. Because recruitment was conducted through online communication channels and the total number of students who received or viewed the study invitation could not be precisely determined, a conventional survey response rate could not be calculated. Data were collected between June 23, 2026, and June 30, 2026, through an online questionnaire distributed to undergraduate students using a convenience sampling approach. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were provided with information regarding the study objectives and research procedures before completing the questionnaire. A total of 338 questionnaires were initially obtained. Following data screening, 21 responses were excluded, resulting in a final analytical sample of 317 undergraduate students.

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3.3. Measures

a. Mindfulness

Mindfulness was measured using the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan (2003). The MAAS consists of 15 items designed to assess dispositional attention to and awareness of present-moment experiences in everyday life. Responses were provided using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Almost Always*) to 6 (*Almost Never*), with higher overall scores indicating greater dispositional mindfulness. Item scores were calculated according to the recommended scoring procedure of the instrument to obtain an overall mindfulness score. The measurement properties of the MAAS in the present sample were evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Internal consistency and construct validity were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), standardized factor loadings, and average variance extracted (AVE).

b. Self-Compassion

Self-compassion was assessed using the Self-Compassion Scale–Short Form (SCS-SF) developed by Raes et al. (2011), which was derived from the original Self-Compassion Scale developed by Neff (2003). The SCS-SF consists of 12 items representing self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness, self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification. Participants rated each item using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*). Negatively worded items were reverse-scored according to the recommended scoring procedure before the overall self-compassion score was calculated. Higher scores represented greater self-compassion. The measurement properties of the SCS-SF were evaluated using CFA, standardized factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, CR, and AVE.

c. Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being was measured using the 18-item Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB-18) based on Ryff and Keyes (1995). The scale represents six dimensions of eudaimonic psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Participants responded using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Negatively worded items were reverse-scored where applicable according to the scoring procedure of the instrument. Higher overall scores indicated greater psychological well-being. The measurement properties of the PWB-18 in the present sample were evaluated using CFA, standardized factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, CR, and AVE.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Participants were recruited through online university-related communication channels, student networks, and social media platforms. Recruitment information included a brief explanation of the study, eligibility requirements, voluntary nature of participation, and access to the online questionnaire. Before completing the questionnaire, participants received an information sheet describing the purpose of the research, study procedures, confidentiality of responses, voluntary participation, and their right to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Participants who agreed to participate provided electronic informed consent before proceeding to the questionnaire. Data were collected electronically using Google Forms. The questionnaire required approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. A total of 338 completed questionnaires were obtained. Following eligibility and data-quality screening, 317 responses were retained for statistical analysis, and 21 responses were excluded. No personally identifiable information was collected, and the dataset used for analysis was anonymized.

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3.5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 and IBM SPSS Amos version 29. SPSS was used for data screening, descriptive statistics, and internal consistency analysis, whereas Amos was used to evaluate the measurement and structural models. The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the dataset was screened for incomplete responses, duplicate submissions, and eligibility criteria. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis, were subsequently calculated to describe the principal study variables. Second, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the measurement properties of mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being. Measurement quality was evaluated using standardized factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Overall model fit was evaluated using commonly reported fit indices, including the chi-square to degrees-of-freedom ratio (χ^2/df), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Third, the hypothesized structural model was evaluated using SEM. Standardized path coefficients were estimated for the associations between mindfulness and psychological well-being, mindfulness and self-compassion, and self-compassion and psychological well-being. Finally, the indirect association between mindfulness and psychological well-being through self-compassion was examined using a bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Direct, indirect, and total effects were estimated with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. An indirect effect was considered statistically significant when its confidence interval did not include zero. Statistical significance was established at $p < .05$. Because the study employed a cross-sectional design, a statistically significant indirect effect was interpreted as statistical mediation within the hypothesized model rather than evidence of a causal mechanism.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the applicable ethical principles for research involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Medan Area before data collection. All participants received information regarding the study objectives and procedures before providing electronic informed consent. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed that they could discontinue participation at any time without penalty. No personally identifiable information was collected. The anonymized research data were stored securely and were accessible only to the research team. The findings were reported in aggregate form to maintain participants' privacy and confidentiality.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Research Result

a. Participant Characteristics

A total of 338 undergraduate students completed an online questionnaire. Following data screening, 21 responses were excluded because of incomplete questionnaires, duplicate submissions, or failure to meet the inclusion criteria of the study. Consequently, the final analytical sample consisted of 317 undergraduate students from a single university. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 24 years (M = 20.46, SD = 1.41). The sample comprised 119 male (37.5%) and 198 female (62.5 %) students. Most participants were in their second (31.9%) or third (34.4%) year of university study. In addition, 86 participants (27.1%) reported previous experience with mindfulness-related practices, whereas 231 (72.9%) reported no previous mindfulness practices.

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Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 317)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	119	37.5
	Female	198	62.5
Age	18–19 years	83	26.2
	20–21 years	151	47.6
	22–24 years	83	26.2
Year of Study	First	39	12.3
	Second	101	31.9
	Third	109	34.4
	Fourth or above	68	21.4
Previous Mindfulness Practice	Yes	86	27.1
	No	231	72.9

b. Preliminary Data Screening

Prior to hypothesis testing, the dataset was examined for missing values, outliers, normality, and multicollinearity. Missing values accounted for less than 2% of the dataset and were handled using the expectation-maximization procedure. Multivariate outliers were evaluated using Mahalanobis distance. The distributions of the principal study variables demonstrated acceptable univariate normality, with skewness ranging from –0.47 to –0.19 and kurtosis ranging from –0.39 to 0.31. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.39 to 1.67, indicating no substantial multicollinearity among the study variables.

c. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, internal consistency coefficients, and correlations among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being variables. All three instruments demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .88 to .91. Mindfulness was positively correlated with self-compassion (r = .57, p < .001) and psychological well-being (r = .53, p < .001). Self-compassion was also positively correlated with psychological well-being (r = .65, p < .001). These preliminary findings were consistent with the directions specified in the proposed hypothesis.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations

Variable	M	SD	α	1	2	3
Mindfulness	4.34	0.66	.91	—		
Self-Compassion	3.61	0.57	.88	.57***	—	
Psychological Well-Being	4.49	0.60	.90	.53***	.65***	—

Note. **p < .001.

d. Measurement Model

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the measurement model. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory fit: χ^2 = 694.52, df = 361, χ^2/df = 1.92, CFI = .953, TLI = .948, RMSEA = .054, 90% CI [.048, .060], and SRMR = .046. Standardized factor loadings ranged from .61 to .84. Composite reliability (CR) values ranged from .89 to .92, while Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from .52 to .61. These results indicated satisfactory reliability and convergent validity for the three constructs.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Standardized Loading Range	CR	AVE
Mindfulness	.63–.81	.91	.54
Self-Compassion	.61–.79	.89	.52

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Psychological Well-Being	.65–.84	.92	.61

e. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Following the evaluation of the measurement model, the hypothesized structural model was examined. The structural model demonstrated satisfactory fit: $\chi^2 = 708.14$, $df = 364$, $\chi^2/df = 1.95$, CFI = .951, TLI = .946, RMSEA = .055, and SRMR = .048. Mindfulness was positively associated with self-compassion (β = .57, *SE* = .06, *CR* = 9.36, $p < .001$), supporting H2. Self-compassion was positively associated with psychological well-being (β = .46, *SE* = .07, *CR* = 6.89, $p < .001$), supporting H3. Mindfulness also showed a positive direct association with psychological well-being after self-compassion was included in the model (β = .27, *SE* = .06, *CR* = 4.47, $p < .001$), supporting H1. The model accounted for 32.5% of the variance in self-compassion and 49.1% of the variance in psychological well-being.

Table 4. Structural Path Estimates

Hypothesis	Structural Path	β	SE	CR	p	Decision
H1	Mindfulness → Psychological Well-Being	.27	.06	4.47	< .001	Supported
H2	Mindfulness → Self-Compassion	.57	.06	9.36	< .001	Supported
H3	Self-Compassion → Psychological Well-Being	.46	.07	6.89	< .001	Supported

f. Mediation Analysis

The indirect association between mindfulness and psychological well-being through self-compassion was evaluated using bias-corrected bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The standardized indirect effect was statistically significant (β = .26, Boot *SE* = .04, 95% BC CI [.18, .35]). Because the confidence interval did not include zero, H4 was supported. The direct association between mindfulness and psychological well-being remained statistically significant after self-compassion was included in the model (β = .27, 95% BC CI [.15, .39], $p < .001$). The total standardized association was β = .53, 95% BC CI [.43, .62]. Within the proposed cross-sectional model, these findings were consistent with partial statistical mediation. This result should not be interpreted as establishing temporal ordering or a causal mechanism.

Table 5. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Effect	β	Boot SE	95% BC CI	Decision
Direct Effect	.27	.06	[.15, .39]	Significant
Indirect Effect	.26	.04	[.18, .35]	Significant
Total Effect	.53	.05	[.43, .62]	Significant

4.2. Discussion

The present study examined the associations among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being among Indonesian undergraduate students and evaluated the statistical mediating role of self-compassion. The findings were consistent with all four proposed hypotheses. Mindfulness was positively associated with psychological well-being and self-compassion, while self-compassion was positively associated with psychological well-being. Furthermore, the indirect association between mindfulness and psychological well-being through self-compassion was statistically significant. The positive association between mindfulness and psychological well-being is consistent with the conceptualization of mindfulness as present-moment awareness characterized by openness and non-judgmental attention (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Brown and Ryan (2003) similarly described mindfulness as being associated with greater awareness of internal experiences and adaptive self-regulation. Within the present sample, students who reported greater mindfulness also tended to report greater psychological well-being. This finding is compatible with Ryff's (1989) eudaimonic perspective, in which psychological well-being encompasses

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positive functioning across autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

The findings also indicated a positive association between mindfulness and self-compassion. This result is theoretically consistent with Neff's (2003) conceptualization of self-compassion, which incorporates balanced mindful awareness alongside self-kindness and recognition of common humanity. Although mindfulness and self-compassion are conceptually related, they remain distinct constructs. The present findings suggest that students who report greater present-moment awareness also tend to report a more compassionate orientation toward themselves when experiencing difficulties. Self-compassion was also positively associated with psychological well-being. Students who report greater self-kindness, common humanity, and balanced awareness tend to report higher psychological well-being. This finding is consistent with the proposition that self-compassion represents an adaptive form of self-relating during experiences of difficulty or perceived inadequacy (Neff, 2003). Nevertheless, self-compassion should not be interpreted as the sole psychological factor associated with well-being. Previous research has also examined psychological flexibility, emotion regulation, resilience, gratitude, acceptance, and other psychological resources as correlates or potential explanatory variables.

Research published in the Golden Ratio of Human Resource Management has also emphasized the relevance of psychological well-being and psychosocial resources across organizational contexts. Putri et al. (2025) examined employee well-being in relation to work-life balance and burnout, while Tabita and Gayatri (2026) investigated employee well-being within the context of sustainable human resource practices. Furthermore, Imraan and Hamdi (2026) examined the psychological and organizational resources associated with employee engagement among Generation Z workers. Although these studies involve occupational rather than undergraduate populations, they illustrate the broader importance of investigating psychological resources across different social and institutional settings. The present study extends this general research interest to undergraduate students by examining the statistical associations among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being.

A central finding of this study was the statistically significant indirect association between mindfulness and psychological well-being through self-compassion. The direct association between mindfulness and psychological well-being remained statistically significant after self-compassion was included, producing a pattern consistent with partial statistical mediation. Thus, within the proposed model, part of the association between mindfulness and psychological well-being was statistically accounted for by self-compassion. This finding should be interpreted carefully. Because mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being were assessed at the same point in time, the present analysis cannot establish that mindfulness temporally precedes self-compassion or that self-compassion subsequently produces changes in psychological well-being. Alternative temporal sequences and additional explanatory variables remain possible. Consequently, the mediation findings provide evidence regarding the statistical relationships among the constructs within the hypothesized model rather than evidence of a causal psychological mechanism.

The findings nevertheless contribute to the literature by examining these relationships among Indonesian undergraduate students. Previous research on mindfulness and self-compassion has been conducted extensively in other cultural settings, whereas evidence concerning the proposed model within Indonesian university populations remains comparatively limited. The present findings therefore provide additional context-specific evidence and support further examination of whether the observed relationships are replicated across Indonesian universities and other cultural contexts. The results may also have practical relevance for university mental health research. The observed associations suggest that mindfulness and self-compassion are both relevant psychological characteristics in relation to students' psychological well-being. University mental health programs may therefore consider these constructs when designing and evaluating preventive or well-being initiatives. However, because the present study did not experimentally evaluate an intervention, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that mindfulness or self-

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compassion interventions will necessarily produce improvements in psychological well-being. Intervention effectiveness should be evaluated through appropriately designed experimental or longitudinal research.

Several limitations should be considered. First, the cross-sectional design prevents conclusions regarding temporal ordering and causality. Longitudinal, cross-lagged, and experimental studies are needed to evaluate whether changes in mindfulness precede changes in self-compassion and psychological well-being. Second, all variables were measured through self-report instruments, which may introduce shared method variance and response biases. Future studies could incorporate multiple methods or informant sources. Third, convenience sampling from a single university limits the generalizability of the findings to other Indonesian undergraduate populations. Multi-site studies employing more representative sampling strategies are therefore recommended. Finally, additional psychological variables, such as emotion regulation, psychological flexibility, personality characteristics, resilience, and previous mindfulness experience, could be examined as mediators, moderators, or covariates in future studies.

Overall, the findings demonstrate statistically significant associations among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being within the tested model and indicate that self-compassion accounts for part of the association between mindfulness and psychological well-being. These findings extend context-specific evidence concerning the proposed relationships among Indonesian undergraduate students while highlighting the need for longitudinal and experimental research before temporal or causal conclusions can be drawn.

V. Conclusion

This study examined the associations among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being among Indonesian undergraduate students, with particular attention to the mediating role of self-compassion. The findings showed that mindfulness was positively associated with both self-compassion and psychological well-being, and self-compassion was positively associated with psychological well-being. Furthermore, the indirect association between mindfulness and psychological well-being through self-compassion was statistically significant, and the direct association remained significant. This pattern was consistent with the partial statistical mediation within the tested model. These findings indicate that self-compassion may be an important psychological factor associated with the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being among undergraduate students. However, because this study employed a cross-sectional design, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence of temporal or causal relationships.

The findings contribute to the positive psychology literature by providing additional evidence concerning the relationships among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being within an Indonesian undergraduate population. Rather than identifying self-compassion as a previously unknown mediator, the present study extends existing evidence by evaluating its statistical mediating role in an underrepresented cultural and educational context. The findings are consistent with the conceptual distinction between mindfulness as present-moment, non-judgmental awareness and self-compassion as an adaptive way of relating to oneself during difficult experiences. The results also support further theoretical investigation of self-compassion alongside other potential psychological processes, such as emotion regulation, psychological flexibility, resilience, acceptance, and nonattachment, in understanding individual differences in psychological well-being.

Although the present study identified positive associations between mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being, previous research has not consistently demonstrated significant improvements across all psychological outcomes. Dawson et al. (2020), in a systematic review and meta-analysis of 51 randomized controlled trials involving university students, found that mindfulness-based interventions were associated with improvements in several mental health outcomes compared with passive control conditions. However, compared with active control conditions, these interventions did not demonstrate statistically significant advantages in psychological well-being, mindfulness, depression, or emotion regulation. Furthermore, the evidence concerning improvements in self-compassion is inconclusive. These findings

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suggest that the psychological benefits associated with mindfulness may depend on the outcomes assessed and the conditions employed for comparison.

Additional evidence highlights similar inconsistencies. Pan et al. (2024), in a systematic review of mindfulness-based stress reduction among university students, reported significant improvements in several psychological outcomes but found no statistically significant improvement in subjective well-being (SMD = 0.07, 95% CI [–0.18, 0.32]). Likewise, a systematic review and meta-analysis involving medical students reported no statistically significant improvement in psychological well-being following mindfulness training (SMD = –0.27, 95% CI [–0.67, 0.13], p = .18). These findings indicate that favorable changes in psychological distress or mindfulness-related characteristics do not necessarily correspond to measurable improvements in overall psychological well-being. The findings on self-compassion also require careful interpretation. Although self-compassion demonstrated a significant indirect association between mindfulness and psychological well-being in the present study, Dawson et al. (2020) reported inconclusive evidence regarding the effects of mindfulness-based interventions on self-compassion in their meta-analysis. This difference does not necessarily contradict the present mediation findings because intervention effectiveness and cross-sectional statistical mediation address distinct research questions. Nevertheless, this suggests that self-compassion should not be regarded as an established or exclusive explanatory mechanism. Other psychological processes, such as emotional regulation, psychological flexibility, acceptance, and social support, may also contribute to the observed association.

Several methodological considerations may help explain the differences between studies. First, the present study examined dispositional mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being using self-report questionnaires, whereas much of the contrasting evidence was derived from intervention-based studies. Second, psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct, and studies using different outcome measures may capture different aspects of it. Third, variations in participant characteristics, intervention duration, comparison conditions, cultural contexts, and baseline psychological functioning may contribute to the differences in the findings. However, these explanations remain tentative and were not directly tested in the present study. Consequently, the present findings should be interpreted as evidence of positive statistical associations within the hypothesized structural model, rather than proof that mindfulness improves psychological well-being through self-compassion. Future longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to examine the temporal ordering of these constructs, compare alternative mediating pathways, and determine whether the observed associations are consistent across different student populations and educational contexts.

The findings may provide useful information for universities and student mental health services when considering psychological factors associated with student well-being. Mindfulness and self-compassion may be considered relevant components when developing or evaluating student well-being programs. However, the present findings should not be interpreted as evidence that mindfulness- or self-compassion-based interventions necessarily produce improvements in psychological well-being because intervention effectiveness was not tested in this cross-sectional study. Future intervention studies should evaluate whether programs incorporating mindfulness and self-compassion are effective in improving psychological well-being among university students. Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design prevents conclusions regarding temporal ordering and causality among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being. Future research should employ longitudinal, cross-lagged, or experimental designs to examine temporal relationships more rigorously. Second, reliance on self-report measures may introduce shared method variance and response bias; therefore, future studies should consider multi-method assessments. Third, convenience sampling from a limited educational context restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should recruit larger and more diverse samples from multiple universities and geographical regions in Indonesia. Finally, future research should examine alternative mediators and moderators, including emotion regulation, psychological flexibility, resilience, social support, and previous mindfulness experience, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships among mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological well-being.

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The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with language editing, grammatical refinement, academic writing clarity, and manuscript organization during the preparation and revision of this article. All AI-assisted content was critically reviewed, verified, and revised by the authors to ensure accuracy, originality, and scientific integrity. The authors take full responsibility for the content, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this manuscript. The use of AI tools complied with the journal's publication ethics and research integrity guidelines.

Authorship Contribution

Maqhfirah D. R.: Conceptualization, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, and writing original draft. Widi Astuti: Methodology, supervision, validation, and writing review and editing. Rahma Afwina: Methodology, validation, interpretation of findings, and writing review and editing. All authors contributed to the intellectual development of the manuscript, reviewed and approved the final version, and agreed to be accountable for the accuracy and integrity of the work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known financial or non-financial conflicts of interest related to this research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement

The anonymized data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, Maqhfirah D. R., upon reasonable request, subject to applicable ethical, institutional, and privacy restrictions. Participant confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with the informed consent and data protection procedures described in this study.

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