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The Effectiveness of the Self-Compassion-Based "Resilient Me" Program in Enhancing Resilience among Female Islamic Boarding School Students

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Abstract
Female santri living in Islamic boarding schools face adaptation challenges and academic pressures that require resilience. Self-compassion was selected as the foundation of the program because it helps individuals respond to difficulties with self-kindness, recognize that difficulties are part of the shared human experience, and regulate emotions more adaptively. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the self-compassion-based "Resilient Me" program in improving resilience among seventh-grade female santri. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with pretest and posttest measurements and a control group. The study included 40 female santri divided into an experimental group and a control group, with 20 participants in each group. The results showed that the mean resilience score in the experimental group increased from 70.30 to 93.40, whereas the mean score in the control group remained relatively stable, decreasing slightly from 70.05 to 70.00. The difference in resilience scores between the two groups was statistically significant ($t(38) = 24.383$, $p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that the "Resilient Me" program has the potential to serve as an alternative intervention for enhancing resilience among female santri. The program may also be considered by Islamic boarding school administrators and educators when designing psychological support activities to help female santri cope with the challenges of life in an Islamic boarding school.

Keywords: *intervention, Islamic boarding school, resilience, junior high school santri, self-compassion*

Introduction

Female santri entering junior high school at Islamic boarding schools face an adjustment process that involves not only changes in their educational environment but also adapting to daily life away from their families. A systematic review by Donaldson et al. (2023) indicates that school transitions are significant experiences that may be associated with the mental health and psychological well-being of children and adolescents. In the context of residential education, Reardon et al. (2023) explain that students face challenges in adapting to a new environment, being separated from their families, and meeting the demands of residential life. In Indonesia, Mulyati et al. (2023) found an association between adjustment and the psychological well-being of santri at Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah 2, Tangerang. These findings indicate that adjustment to the educational environment and residential life is relevant to understanding the psychological condition of santri.

One of the difficulties experienced by santri during the initial period of living in an Islamic boarding school is homesickness, or longing for home. This condition may arise when santri are separated from their families and must adjust to new routines and social environments. Female santri living in Islamic boarding schools face various demands, ranging from following rules and participating in learning activities to adapting to a new social environment. For newly enrolled santri, these changes may contribute to homesickness. A study by Shasra (2022) involving 191 newly enrolled santri aged 12–14 from several Islamic boarding schools in Agam Regency found that 68.6% of participants experienced moderate levels of homesickness, while 23% experienced high levels. Supriadi and Jalal (2024) also reported that 71% of 119 newly enrolled seventh-grade santri at Pondok Pesantren Modern Rahmatul Asri experienced moderate levels of homesickness. These findings illustrate that homesickness is one of the difficulties experienced by santri during the initial period of living in an Islamic boarding school. Although homesickness may occur during the adjustment process, santri are still required to participate in educational activities, build social relationships, and adapt to residential life. This situation requires santri to develop the ability to cope with difficulties while continuing to adjust to the boarding school environment.

Santri may respond differently to difficulties experienced during the adjustment period. Some santri are able to continue their educational activities and daily routines despite facing pressure, whereas others require additional support to adapt. These differences in the ability to cope with difficulties are related to resilience. Masten (2025) explains that resilience is associated with an individual's ability to adapt positively when facing adversity. For santri, resilience is important in helping them cope with difficulties in learning, social relationships, and daily activities without easily giving up. A study by Suryatiningsih et al. (2024) involving 291 santri at Pondok Pesantren Fadllillah, Sidoarjo, found that resilience and religiosity were associated with psychological well-being. These findings indicate that resilience is related to the psychological well-being of santri. Therefore, it is important to examine factors that may help santri develop resilience so that they can better cope with various challenges.

One factor that may contribute to the development of resilience is self-compassion. Neff (2003) describes self-compassion as an attitude of treating oneself with kindness when facing difficulties, recognizing that everyone can experience problems, and being aware of emerging feelings without excessively judging oneself. Self-compassion consists of three components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. When experiencing failure or pressure, individuals with self-compassion are expected to avoid continually blaming themselves. Self-kindness helps individuals respond to difficulties with a more supportive attitude toward themselves; common humanity helps them understand that difficult experiences are not unique to them; and mindfulness enables individuals to recognize emerging emotions without becoming excessively overwhelmed by them. These three components may help santri cope with difficulties encountered while living in an Islamic boarding school, such as longing for their families, difficulties adjusting, and the pressures of residential life. Thus, self-compassion may be one of the factors worth examining in efforts to improve resilience.

Several studies have examined the relationships of self-compassion with psychological experiences and resilience. Supriadi and Jalal (2024) found a negative relationship between self-compassion and homesickness among newly enrolled santri at Pondok Pesantren Modern Rahmatul Asri. This suggests that santri with higher levels of self-compassion tend to experience lower levels of homesickness. Among adolescents, Bluth et al. (2017) evaluated an eight-week mindful self-compassion program involving 47 adolescents. The results showed an increase in resilience over the measurement period, while changes in self-compassion were associated with changes in participants' resilience. However, the study did not use a control group; therefore, its findings cannot establish that the changes were entirely attributable to the program. Bluth et al. (2017) also discussed the potential of self-compassion to support adolescent resilience. These findings provide a basis for examining the role of self-compassion in coping with difficulties. However, further evidence is needed regarding the effectiveness of self-compassion-based programs in improving resilience among junior high school santri in Indonesia.

Previous studies have examined resilience among santri, the relationship between self-compassion and *homesickness*, and the potential of self-compassion to support adolescent resilience. However, further research is needed to directly examine the effectiveness of self-compassion-based programs in improving resilience among junior high school santri by comparing experimental and control groups. This study seeks to address this research gap through the Resilient Me program, which was delivered in four sessions. The program covers self-awareness and life in an Islamic boarding school, kindness toward oneself, understanding that everyone can experience difficulties, and strengthening the ability to cope with challenges. The novelty of this study lies in examining the effectiveness of the self-compassion-based Resilient Me program using a quasi-experimental design involving junior high school santri at Darunnajah 2 Islamic Boarding School in Malang Regency.

Based on this rationale, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the self-compassion-based Resilient Me program in improving resilience among junior high school santri living in an Islamic boarding school. Program effectiveness was evaluated by comparing changes in resilience scores between the intervention and control groups. Through this comparison, the study is expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Resilient Me program as an approach to improving resilience among santri in an Islamic boarding school environment.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest control group design. This design was used to examine the effectiveness of the self-compassion-based Resilient Me program in improving resilience among female santri in an Islamic boarding school. The study involved two groups: an experimental group that received the Resilient Me intervention and a control group that did not receive the intervention during the study period. Resilience was measured in both

groups before and after the intervention. A quasi-experimental design was used because the study involved pre-existing groups and did not randomly assign individual participants (Creswell & Clark, 2016).

Written reflections completed by female santri after participating in the program were used as supporting data to describe their experiences during the intervention. The reflection data did not serve as the primary basis for hypothesis testing, as the effectiveness of the program was determined by comparing resilience scores between the experimental and control groups. The Self-Compassion Scale was used to obtain an overview of participants' initial conditions and was not used as a basis for determining their eligibility to participate in the study.

Participants

The study was conducted at SMP Putri Darunnajah 2, Malang Regency, East Java, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The study population consisted of 63 female santri in Grade VII, divided into three classes: VII C, VII D, and VII E. The participants were Grade VII female santri who attended classes and lived at the Islamic boarding school.

The sample consisted of 40 female santri: 20 from Class VII C in the experimental group and 20 from Class VII D in the control group. Classes were selected based on their availability and the compatibility of the intervention schedule with school activities. These considerations helped ensure that the program could be implemented as scheduled and coordinated with the school. The experimental group participated in four sessions of the Resilient Me program, whereas the control group did not receive the intervention during the study period. Both groups completed the pretest and posttest using the same resilience instrument. The inclusion criteria were female santri who were registered as active Grade VII students in the classes involved in the study and who completed both the initial and final measurements.

Measures

Resilience was measured using the 25-item version of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25), developed by Connor and Davidson (2003). This scale measure an individual's resilience in the face of stress and adversity. It consists of 25 items measuring resilience across five aspects: personal competence, trust in one's instincts and tolerance of negative affect, positive acceptance of change and secure relationships, control, and spiritual influences. Each item is scored on a scale ranging from 0 to 4, with a score of 0 indicating that the statement does not correspond to the participant's experience at all, whereas a score of 4 indicates that the statement is true almost all of the time. Thus, the total score ranges from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating higher levels of resilience. The scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87 in this study.

As supporting data, this study used the Self-Compassion Scale–Short Form (SCS-SF), developed by Raes et al. (2011) based on Neff's (2003) original scale and adapted into Indonesian by Sugianto et al. (2020). This instrument consists of 12 items measuring six aspects of self-compassion: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. The scale was administered at the initial stage to obtain an overview of the female santri's levels of self-compassion as supporting

information for developing the Resilient Me program. Each item was scored from 0 to 4. Negative items were reverse-scored before all scores were summed. Thus, the total score ranged from 0 to 48, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-compassion. The scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.872 in this study. Data from this scale were used as supporting information.

Research Procedure

The study was conducted from April 6 to 15, 2026, at SMP Putri Darunnajah 2, Malang Regency. Before the study began, the researcher submitted a formal request for research permission to the school principal and obtained approval to conduct the study. Ethical approval was issued by the Institute for Research and Community Service (*Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat*, LP2M) at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang under certificate number 4143/LP2M/TL.00/10/2026. Before the intervention, the Resilient Me program module underwent expert review by the school principal, who holds a doctoral degree (PhD). The review was conducted to assess the program materials and implementation procedures before the intervention.

The study began with a resilience pretest on April 6, 2026, administered to both the experimental and control groups. At the initial stage, the Self-Compassion Scale–Short Form (SCS-SF) was also administered to obtain an overview of the female santri's self-compassion to inform the development of the program materials. This scale served as supporting data and was not used as an outcome variable to test the program's effectiveness.

The experimental group participated in the self-compassion-based Resilient Me program over four sessions, whereas the control group did not receive the intervention during the study period. Each session lasted 30 minutes, consisting of 15 minutes of material presentation and 15 minutes of written reflection. The total intervention duration was 120 minutes, or two hours, delivered across four meetings on April 8, 10, 13, and 15, 2026. Details of the sessions and their objectives are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Sequence of the Resilient Me Program intervention

Session and Date	Activity Theme	Activities	Session Objectives
Session 1 April 8, 2026	Myself and My Life at the Islamic Boarding School (Self-Adjustment and Introduction to Resilience)	Presentation of material on self-adjustment and an introduction to resilience, followed by completion of a reflection sheet to identify challenges encountered while living at the boarding school.	To help participants identify challenges in boarding school life and understand resilience in coping with difficulties.
Session 2 April 10, 2026	Being Kind to Myself (Self-Kindness)	Presentation of material on the importance of being kind to oneself, followed by completion of a reflection sheet on how participants treat themselves when facing difficulties.	To help participants treat themselves more kindly and reduce the tendency to judge themselves when facing difficulties.

Session and Date	Activity Theme	Activities	Session Objectives
Session 3 April 13, 2026	I Am Not Alone (Common Humanity and Social Connectedness)	Presentation of material on shared experiences of difficulty and the importance of social support, followed by completion of a reflection sheet to identify personal experiences and sources of social support.	To help participants understand that difficulties are part of the human experience and recognize the importance of social support.
Session 4 April 15, 2026	I Am Stronger Than I Think (Mindfulness and Resilience Strengthening)	Presentation of material on mindfulness and strengthening resilience, followed by a mindful breathing exercise to help participants calm themselves and recognize their emotional experiences. The session concluded with the completion of a reflection sheet and the administration of the posttest.	To help participants recognize their emotional experiences in a balanced manner and strengthen their ability to cope with difficulties.

After the fourth session on April 15, 2026, both the experimental and control groups completed the resilience posttest on the same day. Thus, the final measurement was conducted immediately after the intervention to assess short-term changes in resilience. Participants' written reflections were used as supporting data to describe their experiences during the program, while the effectiveness of the program was tested by comparing resilience scores between the two groups.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. The analyses included descriptive statistics, assumption tests, and hypothesis testing. Descriptive statistics were used to describe resilience scores before and after the intervention in the experimental and control groups, including the mean, standard deviation, and changes in resilience scores. Before hypothesis testing, normality and homogeneity of variance were assessed. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to examine the distribution of pretest scores, posttest scores, and resilience score changes (gain scores) in each group. Levene's test was used to examine the equality of variances between the experimental and control groups. The results of these assumption tests informed the use of the independent-samples t-test. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the independent-samples t-test to compare changes in resilience scores between the experimental and control groups. A comparison of posttest scores was also conducted as an additional analysis.

Participants' written reflections were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved repeatedly reading the data, assigning initial codes, grouping codes into themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and

preparing the report. This analysis aimed to identify participants' experiences during the Resilient Me program, particularly those related to self-acceptance, understanding difficulties, awareness of emotional experiences, and ways of coping with challenges. The findings from the reflection analysis were used to provide context for the quantitative results, rather than as the primary basis for determining the program's effectiveness.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis included resilience scores for the experimental and control groups before and after the implementation of the Resilient Me program. The means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum scores for both groups are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of the descriptive analysis

Group		N	M	SD	Min	Max
Pretest	Experimental	20	70.30	1.27	68	72
	Control	20	70.05	1.20	68	72
Posttest	Experimental	20	93.40	2.60	89	98
	Control	20	70.00	3.46	61	78

The two groups had similar mean resilience scores at pretest, with a score of 70.30 in the experimental group and 70.05 in the control group. Following the intervention, the mean resilience score in the experimental group increased from 70.30 to 93.40, whereas the mean score in the control group remained relatively stable. Descriptively, the increase in the mean resilience score was greater in the experimental group than in the control group.

Assumption Testing

The Shapiro–Wilk normality test showed that the significance values for pretest scores in the experimental group ($p = 0.057$) and control group ($p = 0.117$), posttest scores in the experimental group ($p = 0.674$) and control group ($p = 0.210$), and resilience score changes in the experimental group ($p = 0.707$) and control group ($p = 0.125$) were all greater than 0.05. These results indicate that no significant departure from normality was detected based on the tests conducted.

Levene's test for homogeneity of variance yielded p values of 0.542 for pretest scores, 0.639 for posttest scores, and 0.399 for changes in resilience scores. All significance values were greater than 0.05; therefore, the tests provided no evidence of differences in variance between the experimental and control groups.

Hypothesis Testing

Differences in resilience scores between the experimental and control groups following the implementation of the Resilient Me program are presented in Table 3. The analysis included comparisons of posttest scores and changes in resilience scores (gain scores) between the two groups.

Table 3
Results of the independent-samples t-tests

Variable	*t*	df	Mean Difference	*p*
Posttest Resilience Scores	24.383	38	23.40	< 0.001
Resilience Gain Scores	24.738	38	23.15	< 0.001

The results showed a statistically significant difference in posttest resilience scores between the experimental and control groups, $t(38) = 24.383$, $p < 0.001$. The mean resilience score of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group following the implementation of the program. A statistically significant difference was also found in resilience score changes between the groups, $t(38) = 24.738$, $p < 0.001$. The experimental group showed a mean increase of 23.10 points in resilience scores, whereas the control group experienced a decrease of 0.05 points. These findings indicate that changes in resilience scores were greater among participants who took part in the Resilient Me program than among those in the control group during the study period.

Thematic Analysis Results

The analysis of participants' reflection sheets and assignments completed during the Resilient Me program yielded six main themes describing the santri's experiences of facing challenges in boarding school life and the perceived benefits of the program. The themes and subthemes identified through the analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Results of the thematic analysis of the Resilient Me program

Theme	Subthemes
Challenges in Adjusting to Boarding School Life	Missing family, difficulties adjusting, desire to return home
Sources of Stress in Boarding School Life	Academic difficulties, a demanding schedule, conflicts with peers, anxiety and overthinking
Protective Factors and Motivation to Persist	Support from parents, friends, and female religious teachers (ustadzah); educational goals; future aspirations
Development of Self-Compassion	Accepting mistakes, forgiving oneself, reducing self-blame, accepting personal limitations
Development of Emotion Regulation and Coping	Recognizing emotions, relaxation, mindfulness, positive thinking, problem-solving
Perceived Benefits of the Program	Feeling stronger, more resilient, more confident, and better prepared to face challenges

The thematic analysis showed that life in an Islamic boarding school presented participants with various adjustment challenges and sources of stress, particularly those related to missing their families, academic demands, and social dynamics. Nevertheless, participants also identified various protective factors that helped them persist, such as social support and motivation to achieve their educational goals.

In addition, participants reported positive changes after participating in the Resilient Me program. These changes were reflected in a greater ability to accept themselves, reduced tendencies toward self-blame, more adaptive emotion regulation, and the use of more constructive coping strategies when facing difficulties. Overall,

participants perceived the program as beneficial in helping them become more resilient and better prepared to face the challenges of life in an Islamic boarding school.

Discussion

The greater increase in resilience scores in the experimental group than in the control group indicates that the Resilient Me program has the potential to help santri cope with difficulties encountered while living in an Islamic boarding school. This four-session program provided participants with opportunities to identify adjustment challenges, reflect on personal experiences, and learn how to respond to difficulties without excessively blaming themselves. In residential settings, these abilities are relevant because santri need to adjust to structured routines, boarding school rules, and social relationships that differ from those in their family environment. Nevertheless, the observed score changes reflect measurements conducted immediately after the intervention and therefore cannot yet demonstrate the long-term sustainability of the program's benefits.

The Resilient Me program's improvement in resilience can be understood through the self-compassion approach, which refers to an individual's ability to respond to difficulties more kindly without being excessively self-critical. Neff (2003) explains that self-compassion encompasses three main components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. In Islamic boarding school life, santri face various adjustment demands, including participating in daily activities, following rules, and building social relationships. When facing these difficulties, self-kindness may help santri reduce their tendency to blame themselves, while understanding that difficulties are part of the human experience may help them recognize that they are not facing challenges alone. In addition, mindfulness helps santri recognize their emotional experiences in a more balanced manner, allowing them to respond to problems more adaptively. Through these processes, self-compassion may serve as one psychological mechanism that supports santri in coping with pressure, adjusting to their environment, and recovering from difficulties.

The thematic analysis provides additional context for these quantitative findings, which revealed changes in participants' psychological experiences during the program. Before the intervention, many participants expressed difficulties adjusting to boarding school life, longing for their families, academic pressure, and a tendency to blame themselves when facing problems. After participating in the program, participants reported greater self-acceptance, reduced self-blame, better emotional awareness, and the use of more adaptive problem-solving strategies. These changes suggest that improvements in resilience were reflected not only in increased quantitative scores but also in changes in participants' thinking, emotion regulation, and interpretations of their experiences.

These findings are consistent with the qualitative study by Jalal (2025), which showed that santri's academic resilience develops through the process of adapting to the demands of boarding school life, the ability to manage academic pressure, environmental support, and the development of positive meanings associated with their

experiences. Thus, the findings of this study support the view that strengthening psychological aspects through the Resilient Me program can facilitate this adjustment process. This study is also consistent with Bluth and Eisenlohr-Moul (2017), who evaluated an eight-week mindful self-compassion program involving 47 adolescents. Their study found an increase in resilience during the measurement period, as well as an association between changes in self-compassion and resilience.

The improvement in resilience can be explained through the self-compassion theory proposed by Neff and Germer (2017). According to this theory, self-compassion helps individuals cope with unpleasant experiences through self-acceptance and kindness (self-kindness), recognition that difficulties are part of the shared human experience (common humanity), and balanced awareness of emotions (mindfulness). These three components enable individuals to reduce self-criticism, regulate emotions more adaptively, and become better prepared to cope with pressure. The activities in the Resilient Me program were designed around these three components, providing participants with opportunities to reflect on their experiences, understand their emotions, and develop a more positive perspective toward themselves.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that self-compassion plays an important role in improving adolescent resilience. Bluth et al. (2017), Sünbül and Güneri (2019), Park et al. (2024), and Eryılmaz et al. (2024) reported that self-compassion helps individuals develop more adaptive emotion regulation, enabling them to maintain resilience when facing stress or negative experiences. In addition, Prabawa et al. (2023), Rahman et al. (2025), and Kaya (2024) also showed that self-compassion is a protective factor positively associated with adolescents' adaptive capacity and psychological resilience. The consistency of these findings strengthens the conclusion of this study that developing self-compassion is a relevant approach to improving resilience.

Unlike most previous studies that employed correlational approaches, this study directly examined the effectiveness of the self-compassion-based Resilient Me program through a quasi-experimental design involving junior high school santri in an Islamic boarding school setting. These findings provide empirical evidence that self-compassion is not only theoretically associated with resilience but can also be implemented through a structured intervention program to help santri cope more adaptively with the various demands of residential life.

The findings of this study have practical implications for various stakeholders. For santri, the Resilient Me program may help improve their ability to cope more adaptively with academic and social pressures and the adjustment process in an Islamic boarding school environment. For psychologists, school guidance and counseling teachers, and school counselors, this program may serve as an alternative preventive and promotive intervention to strengthen adolescent resilience. Furthermore, for schools and Islamic boarding school institutions, the findings suggest that self-compassion-based programs can be integrated into guidance and counseling services or santri development programs to support students' psychological well-being.

Conclusion

The self-compassion-based Resilient Me program showed positive results in improving resilience among female junior high school santri in an Islamic boarding school. Santri who participated in the program showed greater improvements in resilience than those in the control group following the intervention. This study provides preliminary empirical evidence regarding the implementation of self-compassion-based interventions to support the development of resilience among santri in residential educational settings. One limitation of this study is that it involved female santri from only one Islamic boarding school, which limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the posttest was administered immediately after the intervention, so the sustainability of the program's effects in the medium and long term remains unknown.

The Resilient Me program may be considered an alternative psychological support activity for santri, particularly through guidance and counseling services or development programs in Islamic boarding schools. Its implementation should be adapted to participants' needs, institutional conditions, and facilitators' competencies. Future studies should involve santri from several Islamic boarding schools with more diverse characteristics, use an active control group, and conduct follow-up measurements to evaluate the sustainability of the program's benefits. Future studies should also measure self-compassion before and after the intervention to examine whether changes in this construct are associated with improvements in resilience.

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