



# Self-Criticism of Vocational High School Students in Semarang: A Descriptive Study

Mulawarman Mulawarman<sup>1</sup>, Eni Rindi Antika<sup>1</sup>, Sigit Hariyadi<sup>1</sup>, Mayang T. Afriwilda<sup>1</sup>, Kristin Melliwati Benu<sup>1</sup>, Nilna Aula Niswah<sup>1</sup>, Yasmin Meilana Tsani<sup>1</sup>, Alvia Ainil Lathifah<sup>1</sup>, Nawang Purbo Aji<sup>1</sup>, Vira Mulyawati<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia  
mulawarman@mail.unnes.ac.id

**Abstract.** Self-criticism can have a positive impact on the self as material for self-evaluation. However, excessive self-criticism can have a negative impact on an individual's mental health. This study was conducted to determine the level of self-criticism of vocational students in Semarang City. The method used in this research is descriptive quantitative with cross sectional survey design. A total of 1813 vocational high school students in Semarang City became subjects in this study selected by simple random sampling method. The results of the reliability and validity tests resulted in the reliability value of the scale measured by Cronbach's alpha being 0.90 for the inadequate self component, 0.86 for the self-criticism component, and 0.84 for the self- confidence component. To analyze descriptive quantitative data in this study using the IBM SPSS program. The results showed that in general the level of self-criticism of vocational high school students in Semarang City was in the high category. Based on the results of the study, it is necessary to provide services that can reduce the negative attitude of self-criticism of students provided by Guidance and Counseling teachers or school counselors.

**Keywords:** Self-criticism, Vocational Student, Descriptive study

## 1 Introduction

According to (Gilbert et al., 2004), self-criticism refers to an individual's feeling of self-blame for a failure that is not accepted in the context of real life. This situation causes individuals to feel unsuccessful in achieving set goals and places responsibility for the failure on themselves. Self-criticism involves persistent negative self-evaluations, an overly critical attitude towards personal behavior, an individual's inability to feel satisfied with their work, excessive anxiety regarding potential mistakes, and negative responses to failure. (Löw et al., 2020). Self-criticism includes self-critical thoughts and feelings, dissatisfaction with the work produced, excessive anxiety related to potential mistakes, and negative responses to failure situations.

The view of self-criticism is often considered negative, even though this term can include evaluations that can be positive or negative about various aspects of the self, such as behavior, physical appearance, intellectual abilities, personality, and emotions.

© The Author(s) 2023

E. Munawaroh (ed.), *Proceedings of the 2nd Semarang International Conference on Counseling and Educational Psychology (SICCEP 2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 814,  
[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-184-5\\_13](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-184-5_13)

(Ramadani et al., 2022). Self-criticism can be useful in reflecting on self-development and improvement, however, when excessive and negative, it can result in high self-criticism and negatively impact an individual's self-esteem and mental health. In a broader sense, self-criticism can have implications for an individual's mental well-being and increase the risk of developing psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety.

The importance of understanding compassion for adolescents who also act as students cannot be separated from the context of the problems faced by them. (Neff, 2003) explains that compassion is a form of empathy and self-care when facing various challenges in life, and believes that failure, mistakes, suffering, and limitations are integral elements in life experience. Students face a variety of complex problems, including academic pressures and issues arising from family and social environments. Data revealed by KPAI in 2022 showed 226 cases of physical, psychological violence, including bullying. (Masyhud, 2023).

Previous research by (Suprihatin, 2011) has identified a number of problems commonly faced by high school/vocational school students in Semarang city, including violations of school rules, academic problems, personal and family problems, and social problems. Findings related to the phenomenon in one of the vocational schools in Semarang by (Palupi, 2022) described the existence of obstacles in the academic and social fields, such as lack of confidence when giving speeches and excessive anxiety. This type of self-criticism also induces a general sense of self-depreciation and a feeling of inadequacy to cope with life's challenges. Therefore, (Golestaneh et al., 2017) revealed that such individuals create unfavorable reaction patterns when faced with problematic situations.

Self-criticism has a role in student problems. (Hasmarlin & Hirmaningsih, 2019) linked the ability to manage adolescents' emotions with their tendency to face problems such as anxiety and depression. Self-criticism, which often involves negative reactions to oneself, can affect mental well-being. In addition, (Dinger et al., 2015) noted that individuals with high levels of self-criticism tend to self-direct, become cold, and avoid social interactions.

In the context of life, when faced with situations that do not meet expectations or mistakes are made, there is often negative reflection and critical analysis of oneself. This phenomenon illustrates an evaluative framework that leads to adverse self-judgments, including perceptions of worthlessness, helplessness, and low self-esteem (Gilbert et al., 2004). (Gilbert et al., 2004). Studies by (Gilbert et al., 2004) (Gilbert et al., 2004) has developed a self-assessment construct that includes self-criticism and self-design dimensions that provide confidence. There are 3 components that can assess self-criticism, namely inadequate self, reassure self, and hated self.

The component is intended to measure the way individuals interact with themselves in coping with failure or the experience of loss of personal and social status. Within this framework, two main forms of self-evaluation can be identified: first, as the "inadequate self," which highlights the incompetence and low self-esteem that arise from personal failures and setbacks. Meanwhile, the second form of self-evaluation is the "hated self," which embodies an attitude of disgust and a negative sentiment towards oneself, often associated with a desire to mistreat or harm oneself.

The importance of a supportive self attitude is also reflected in the enlightened relationship form known as the "reassured self." This form represents a positive alternative to internal interactions, reflecting acceptance, sympathy and understanding of imperfections and failures as natural components of the human condition. The "reassured self" form focuses on the positive components of the self, including constructive memories and past achievements, and demonstrates the ability to deal with vulnerabilities and weaknesses in a stable and tolerant manner.

High levels of self-criticism, involving feelings of worthlessness, inferiority, failure, and guilt (Warren, R., Smeets, E., & Neff, 2016). High levels of self-criticism, which involve feelings of worthlessness, inferiority, failure, and guilt (Warren, R., Smeets, E., & Neff, 2016), are potentially detrimental to adolescents' mental health and may increase the risk of disorders such as depression and anxiety. Therefore, it is important for adolescents to develop self-compassion, which can influence the quality of their social relationships and interpersonal interactions. Efforts to reduce the negative impact of self-criticism and encourage more positive self-understanding have important implications in promoting psychological well-being and improving their quality of life.

This study asks questions about the level of self-criticism among students at the senior high school level, particularly at vocational schools in Semarang City. Along with the current condition of the younger generation, efforts to overcome these problems are not only the responsibility of schools, but also families, communities, and even countries. With good collaboration, it is hoped that the future portrait of the Indonesian nation will be a brighter story and provide hope for the development of future generations.

## 2 Methods

In this study, a descriptive quantitative method was used. This quantitative research method involves measuring quantitative data and objective statistics using scientific calculations based on respondents' responses to a series of questions (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of this method is to describe and present the data found (Mishra et al., 2019). The research design used was a cross-sectional survey, where data were collected at one time to describe the level of self-criticism of vocational students in Semarang City. By using descriptive quantitative analysis, researchers only obtain a description of the data needed without making conclusions or predictions.

A total of 1813 students at the SMK level in Semarang City. The technique used to obtain data in this study is a data collection instrument in the form of a psychological scale. The psychological scale used in this study is the self-criticism scale (Gilbert et al., 2004). This scale consists of 22 items that measure the various ways people think and feel about themselves when something goes wrong with them with scores ranging from 1 to 4 (very inappropriate to very appropriate). To measure self-criticism using the self-criticism scale which consists of 3 components namely inadequate self, reassure self, and hated self. (Gilbert et al., 2004). The reliability of the scale as measured by Cronbach's alpha was 0.90 for the inadequate self component, 0.86 for the reassure self component, and 0.84 for the hated self component. Descriptive quantitative method

for data analysis was used with IBM SPSS application. Students' self-criticism was categorized into three categories: high, medium, or low.

### 3 Results and Discussion

Based on the results of descriptive quantitative statistical analysis of self-criticism measurement data consisting of 3 components, namely inadequate self, reassure self, and hated self, it is obtained that out of 1813 vocational students there are 5 people or as much as 0.28%, in a low self-critical condition, 1573 people or as much as 86.78% in a moderate self-critical condition and the remaining 235 people or as much as 12.96% are in a high self-critical condition. Based on the above results, the condition of students' self-criticism based on self-criticism indicators is obtained as follows:

**Table 1.** Profile of self-criticism level of vocational students in Semarang City

Indicator	<i>Inadequate Self</i>		<i>Reassure Self</i>		<i>Hated Self</i>	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Low</b>	131	7.23%	24	1.32 %	482	26.59%
<b>Middle</b>	1235	68.12 %	863	47.60 %	1247	68.78%
<b>High</b>	448	24.60%	926	51.07 %	84	4.63%

(Dinger et al., 2015) noted that individuals with high levels of self-criticism tend to self-direct, become cold, and avoid social interactions. High self-criticism can also affect students' mental health conditions. Self-criticism is a negative attitude towards oneself by comparing oneself with others that leads to dissatisfaction with oneself. (Ramadani et al., 2022). Self-criticism arises when a person experiences failure and difficulty in living his life or in difficult situations, blames himself with anger, is filled with shame or even hates himself. Kotera et al (2019) stated that there is a significant influence between mental health, self-criticism, attitude, self-confidence, and self-compassion. Self-criticism and shame are believed to be predictors of problems in students' mental health. (Kotera & Maughan, 2020). Self-criticism can ultimately lead to self-reproach and self-criticism, feelings of shame, feelings of guilt and feelings of worthlessness (Ramadani et al., 2020). (Neff, 2003) stated that adolescence at school age in particular is a vulnerable period for self-criticism. Gender differences also determine the high level of self-criticism in a person. (Baião et al., 2015) from the results of the study found that self-criticism was highest in women than in men.

Inadequate self in individuals is shown by feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself because of the failures and mistakes they experience. This aspect is a part of the individual's self that feels inadequate where he feels internally rejected by himself and incapable because of the failures he has experienced (Gilbert et al., 2004). Individuals often judge themselves on the basis of other people's judgments about themselves by feeling that they cannot meet the ideal standards in their lives, continuing to feel inadequate and inappropriate. (Austin et al., 2021) state that everyone has their own experiences and ways of doing self-criticism such as criticizing appearance, lifestyle, social duties and changes in physical form. The results showed that the inadequate-self aspect of vocational students is in moderate condition, meaning that vocational students have inadequate aspects of themselves in moderate condition and meaning that vocational students still judge themselves from the views of others and feel that they do not meet the ideal standards of themselves and the ideal standards of their social environment.

Reassure self is one of the positive aspects of self-criticism. Some research suggests that reassure self is related to self-compassion. Reassure self is an individual's self-belief that reflects a positive attitude, warmth, acceptance of oneself, giving kindness to oneself and understanding that what they experience is human and everyone must experience it. (Zhang et al., 2019) state that individuals with high reassure self tend not to experience depression. Self-criticism is closely related to depressive symptoms, which means that high self-criticism will lead to depressive symptoms. (Zhang et al., 2019). The condition of reassure self in vocational students in Semarang City is in a high condition, meaning that vocational students have confidence in themselves. Students with high reassure self tend to find it difficult to provide self-compassion so that it can then lead to symptoms of depression which have a negative impact on the mental health of students at school, especially with the increasing demands in school, social and family environments.

Hated self is characterized by self-loathing such as being rude to oneself, hurting oneself or mistreating oneself. This aspect is a very dangerous aspect of self-criticism. When individuals experience a difficult situation, failure or helplessness then this aspect dominates them, it will be very dangerous. Individuals may criticize themselves harshly and eventually lead to self-hatred. The condition of SMK students in Semarang City is at a moderate level, meaning that SMK students in Semarang City tend to be hard on themselves and tend to show self-hatred when facing their helplessness. Self-criticism often involves negative reactions to oneself, which can affect mental well-being. One of the things that can be done to maintain mental well-being is to provide self-compassion. (Neff, 2003) states that giving compassion to oneself is by giving kindness to oneself, accepting one's shortcomings and limitations as a human being who will inevitably experience difficulties, not judging oneself, not blaming oneself and not hurting oneself. When there is acceptance of oneself and of the helplessness experienced, it is less likely for individuals to hate themselves.

The results show that the level of self-criticism of vocational students in Semarang City is at a high level, so intervention efforts are needed to reduce it. One of the alternative services that can be implemented to increase students' self-compassion and reduce the level of self-criticism of vocational students in Semarang City is through guidance and counseling services in schools. The services provided can be in the form of

individual counseling or group counseling that focuses on compassion or Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT). Based on the results of research (Alfath Hanifah Megawati; Adriana Soekandar Ginanjar, Imelda Ika Dian Oriza, 2019) CFT can reduce the intensity of the urge to self-harm, reduce the level of self-criticism, and reduce symptoms of negative emotions. Through the service efforts provided, it is hoped that vocational students in Semarang City can increase their self-compassion so that it helps to complete their developmental tasks optimally

## 4 Conclusion

The results showed that self-criticism of vocational students in Semarang City is in the high category. The data shows that vocational high school students in Semarang City generally have a high negative attitude of self-criticism. Based on the results of the study, there is a need for services to reduce the level of self-criticism of students provided by guidance teachers and school counselors. Especially in the aspect of Reassure Self. The services provided can be in the form of counseling services that focus on changing cognitive or behavior to increase compassion using Compassion Focused Therapy. The preventive way that guidance and counseling teachers can do at school is by providing classical or group guidance services regularly. This is very necessary to be able to form a strong generation and be able to realize the nation's hopes in the future.

## Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank all the teachers of MGBK SMK Semarang City and the Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M) of Semarang State University who have helped in the implementation of the research until it was completed. The author hopes that the results of this study can be used as a foundation in providing guidance and counseling services in schools.

## References

- Alfath Hanifah Megawati; Adriana Soekandar Ginanjar, Imelda Ika Dian Oriza, D. R. B. (2019). *Efektivitas compassion-focused therapy untuk menurunkan kritik diri dan gejala emosi negatif pada mahasiswa yang melukai diri sendiri*. Universitas Indonesia.
- Austin, J., Drossaert, C. H. C., Sanderman, R., Schroevers, M. J., & Bohlmeijer, E. T. (2021). Experiences of Self-Criticism and Self-Compassion in People Diagnosed With Cancer: A Multimethod Qualitative Study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(October), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.737725>
- Baião, R., Gilbert, P., McEwan, K., & Carvalho, S. (2015). Forms of Self-Criticising/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale: Psychometric properties and normative study. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 88(4), 438–452. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12049>
- Dinger, U., Barrett, M. S., Zimmermann, J., Schauenburg, H., Wright, A. G. C., Renner, F., Zilcha-Mano, S., & Barber, J. P. (2015). Interpersonal Problems, Dependency, and Self-

- Criticism in Major Depressive Disorder. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 71(1), 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22120>
- Gilbert, P., Clarke, M., Hempel, S., Miles, J. N. V., & Irons, C. (2004). Criticizing and reassuring oneself: An exploration of forms, styles and reasons in female students. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 43(1), 31–50. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466504772812959>
- Golestaneh, S. M., Dehghani, F., & Hoseini, F. S. (2017). Comparison of Self-Criticism in Obsessive- Compulsive, Major Depression Patients and Normal People. *Jentashapir Journal of Health Research*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.5812/jjhr.62161>
- Hasmarlin, H., & Hirmaningsih, H. (2019). Self-Compassion dan Regulasi Emosi pada Remaja. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 15(2), 148. <https://doi.org/10.24014/jp.v15i2.7740>
- Kotera, Y., & Maughan, G. (2020). Mental health of Irish students: Self-criticism as a complete mediator in mental health attitudes and caregiver identity. *Journal of Concurrent Disorders*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.54127/bhnm9453>
- Löw, A. C., Schauenburg, H., & Dinger, U. (2020). Self-criticism and psychotherapy outcome: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 75(November 2018), 101808. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2019.101808>
- Masyhud. (2023). *Cegah Kenakalan di Kalangan Pelajar*. <https://www.umm.ac.id/id/arsip-koran/bhirawa/cegah-kenakalan-di-kalangan-pelajar.html>
- Mishra, P., Pandey, C. M., Singh, U., Gupta, A., Sahu, C., & Keshri, A. (2019). Descriptive statistics and normality tests for statistical data. *Annals of Cardiac Anaesthesia*, 22(1), 67–72. [https://doi.org/10.4103/aca.ACA\\_157\\_18](https://doi.org/10.4103/aca.ACA_157_18)
- Neff, K. (2003). The Relational Compassion Scale: Development and Validation of a new self rated Scale for the Assessment of Self Other Compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2(3), 223–250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860390209035>
- Palupi, J. (2022). *Compassion Focused Group Therapy Untuk Mengurangi Kritik Diri Pada Individu Yang Mengalami Quarter Life Crisis*. Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang.
- Ramadani, D., Wahyuni, E., & Hidayat, D. R. (2022). Gambaran Kritik Diri (Self-Criticism) Pada Mahasiswa. *Jurnal Konseling Dan Pendidikan*, 10(1), 185. <https://doi.org/10.29210/176700>
- Suprihatin, T. (2011). Analisis Masalah Siswa SMA/SMK Di Kota Semarang. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Psikologi (SEMPSI) 2011 Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Semarang*, 28–34.
- Warren, R., Smeets, E., & Neff, K. D. (2016). Self-criticism and self-compassion: risk and resilience: being compassionate to oneself is associated with emotional resilience and psychological well-being. *Current Psychiatry*, 15, 18–28.
- Zhang, H., Watson-Singleton, N. N., Pollard, S. E., Pittman, D. M., Lamis, D. A., Fischer, N. L., Patterson, B., & Kaslow, N. J. (2019). Self-Criticism and Depressive Symptoms: Mediating Role of Self-Compassion. *Omega (United States)*, 80(2), 202–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222817729609>

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

