

Self-Criticism as a Predictor of Anxiety among Senior Secondary Students

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ABSTRACT

Self-Criticism is one of the personal characteristics that led to the inability to communicate properly with others, and as a result of this feeling, people blame themselves constantly. The present study aims to investigate the relationship between self-criticism and anxiety among Senior Secondary Students. The sample consists of 150 students (75 male, 75 female) were selected from the Senior Secondary Schools for boys and girls, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. The age of students ranged between 17-19 years. In the study the tools used for assessment were Self-Criticism scale developed by Gilbert et al. (2004), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI, 1988). Self-criticism has three dimensions; inadequate self, hated self, and reassured self. Regression analysis was applied in order to analyze the data. The results of regression analyses revealed that, hated self and inadequate self were the best predictor of anxiety. However, hated self and inadequate self were significant predictors in male students whereas inadequate self reassure self were found significant predictors in female students.

Keywords: *Self-criticism, Anxiety, Adolescents*

Anxiety is a psychological state characterized by cognitive, somatic, emotional, and behavioral components. These components combine to create an unpleasant feeling that is typically associated with uneasiness, apprehension, fear, or worry. Anxiety is a generalized mood condition that can often occur without an identifiable triggering stimulus. As such, it is distinguished from fear which occurs in the presence of an observed threat. Additionally, fear is related to the specific behavior of escape and avoidance, whereas anxiety is the result of threats that are perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable.

Mandler and Watson (1966) have proposed that anxiety occurs when an individual is interrupted in the course of executing a desired behavior sequence and has no alternative course of action available. The result of the interruption is an emotional helplessness and disorganization which we call anxiety. Competence, then, is the ability to control or prevent interruption.

Alpert and Haber (1960) have proposed that anxiety may facilitate or impair performance in evaluative situations depending on its nature. Wine (1971) and Sarason (1972) proposed that anxiety be viewed primarily as an attentional phenomenon. The highly anxious person is one

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who attends to evaluative cues, to self-generated concern about ability to do well enough, and to feelings of physiological arousal. The low anxious person attends to the task at hand and to the operations required for dealing with it effectively. Wolpe (1966) regards anxiety as a conditioned emotional response that may be unlearned through such counter-conditioning procedures as deep muscle relaxation.

Self-Criticism (or auto-critique) refers to the pointing out of things critical / important to one's own beliefs, thoughts, actions, behavior or results; it can form part of private, personal reflection or a group discussion. It is an essential of critical thought. Most people regard self-criticism as healthy and necessary for learning, but excessive self-criticism as unhealthy.

Most theoretical models of the origin of self-criticism focus on early parent-child interactions as the source of this style. Self-criticism has been defined differently by different experts. According to (Blatt & Homann, 1992) self-criticism involves "constant and harsh self-scrutiny and evaluation and a chronic fear of being disapproved of or criticized and of losing the approval and acceptance of significant others". Zuroff and Fitzpatrick (1995) indicated that "self-critics are ambivalent about interpersonal relationships because while they desire approval, respect, and admiration, they fear disapproval and loss of control and autonomy".

Yamaguchi & Kim (2013) tried to investigate the effects of self-criticism and its relationships with depression. The participants consisted of 642 undergraduates- 200 of them studying in Japan, and 442 of them studying in the United States. The results indicated that independent self-construal in the U.S. and Japan is negatively associated with comparative self-criticism, which bolstered college students' taking criticism personally and, in turn contributed to a high level of depression among participants. However, interdependent self-construal in Japan is positively associated with internalized self-criticism, which bolstered college students' taking criticism personally and, in turn contributed to a high level of depression among participants.

Cunha & Paiva (2012) examined the test anxiety in relation to self-criticism and acceptance and mindfulness skill among adolescents. A sample of 449 high school students, 211 boys and 238 girls, with mean age of 16.28 years. Participants completed a battery of self-report questionnaires composed by the Portuguese Version of Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI), Child Acceptance and Mindfulness Measure (CAMM), Forms of Self-Criticising/Attacking and Self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS), and the Social Anxiety and Avoidance Scale for Adolescents (SAASA). Results showed that gender, Self-criticism and competencies for acceptance and mindfulness had a significant and an independent contribution on the prediction of text anxiety. The comparative study revealed that adolescents with high test anxiety score significantly higher in negative forms of self-criticism, social anxiety and lower in self-reassurance, and mindfulness, when compared to those with low text anxiety.

Mills et al. (2007) conducted study paranoid beliefs and self-criticism in students. A total sample 131 students were given a series of scales measuring paranoid ideation, forms and functions of self-criticism, self-reassurance, self-compassion and depression. Test scores were subjected to correlation and hierarchical regression analyses to explore the relative contribution of study variables to paranoid beliefs. Results showed that paranoid beliefs were associated with forms and functions of self-criticism, especially self-hating and self-persecution. Paranoid beliefs were negatively correlated with self-kindness and abilities to

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be self-reassuring. These variables were also associated with depression (as were paranoid beliefs). A hierarchical regression found that self-hatred remained a predictor of paranoid ideation even after controlling for depression and self-reassurance. Paranoid beliefs seem to be associated with a critical and even hating experience of self.

Ongen (2006) examined the relationships between self-criticism, submissive behavior and depression among adolescents. Subjects were 235 high school students and 157 university students who completed The Levels of Self-Criticism (LOSC) the Submissive Act Scale (SAS) and the Beck Depression Inventory. Multiple regression analyses showed that Comparative Self-Criticism and submissive behavior are independent predictors of depression in both high school and university students whereas no such relationship was demonstrated for Internalized Self-Criticism. These findings provide support for sensitivity to external standards rather than internal ones in middle and late adolescence being relevant to depression.

These are the findings which give us guidelines for the further exploration of the research in this area.

Objectives:

- To find out the relationship of self-criticism and anxiety among overall students.
- To find out the relationship of self-criticism and anxiety among male and female students.

Hypotheses:

- There will be significant relationship of self-criticism and anxiety among overall students.
- There will be significant relationship of self-criticism and anxiety among male and female students.
- It is expected that self-criticism will differ significantly among male and female students.
- It is expected that anxiety will differ significantly among male and female students.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects: The total sample consists of 150 students (75 male, 75 female) were selected from the Senior Secondary Schools for boys and girls, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Tools:

- **Self-criticism Scale:** Gilbert et al. (2004) developed this 22-item scale to measure the forms and styles of people's critical and reassuring self-evaluative responses to a setback or disappointment. Participants respond to a probe statement 'when things go wrong for me . . .' on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 0 = not at all like me to 4 = extremely like me) to a series of questions designed to tap self-criticism and self-reassurance. Self-critical items include 'I am easily disappointed with myself'; 'there is a part of me that puts me down'; 'I have become so angry with myself that I want to hurt myself'. Factor analysis suggested that the self-critical factor could be separated into two sub-factors; one that focuses on feeling inadequate and defeated, called 'inadequate self' (nine items; Cronbach alpha = 0.90), while the other focuses more on a sense of disgust and anger with the self and was called 'hated self' (five items; Cronbach alpha = 0.86). Self-reassurance items of this scale focus on thoughts

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of self-reassurance that include 'I am able to remind myself of positive things about myself'; 'I encourage myself for the future'. This is an eight item, one-factor scale referred to in this study as self-reassurance (Cronbach alpha = 0.86).

- **Beck Anxiety Inventory:** Beck Anxiety Inventory was designed by Beck, Epstein, Brown, Steer (1988). This self-report scale has been shown to document level of symptoms in a valid and consistent manner. BAI contains 21 items, each answer being scored on a scale value of 0 to 3. Each symptoms items has four possible answer choices: not at all; Mildly (it did not bother me much); Moderately (it was unpleasant but I could stand it), and; severely (I could barely stand it), the following value is assigned to each responses: Not at all=0, Mildly=1; Moderately=2; and Severly=3. The values for each items are summed yielding an overall or total score for all 21 symptoms that can ranged between 0 and 63. A total score of 0-7 is interpreted as a Minimal level of anxiety, 8-15 as Mild, 16-25 as Moderate and 26-63 as "severe" level of anxiety. Internal consistency alpha=.92 to .94 for adults and test-retest (one week interval) reliability is .75.

Procedure

First of all the investigator prepared the list of students studying in Senior Secondary, with the help of attendance registers and selected the sample through lottery method.

A good rapport was established with them before requesting them to fill up the questionnaires. Then questionnaires were distributed individually to the subjects. The items were explained in an easier way to make them understood. Great care was taken to remove any misconceptions regarding the proposed study. Further subjects were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and requested to extend their co-operation. The average time taken by each subjects was 30 to 40 minutes.

Finally, the questionnaires were collected from all the respondent and further analysis was carried on.

RESULTS

Table 1: Showing Step-wise multiple regression analysis of Self-criticism as predictor of Anxiety in overall sample (N=150).

Table 1a: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics R Square Change
1	.455 ^a	.207	.202	.207
2	.517 ^b	.267	.257	.060

b. Predictors: (Constant), HS, IS

Table 1a shows the model summary indicating two predictors of the model. Multiple correlation (R) is found as .455 for hated self and .517 for inadequate self. Further R², which represents the contribution of criterion variable to the predictor variable, is also seen. Here we have considered R² change, that is, the actual contribution of criterion variable to the predictor variable. Hence the real covariance, the magnitude of independent variable which contributed to the dependent variable (anxiety) came out as 20.7 % for hated self and 6 % for inadequate self respectively.

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Table 1b: shows details of Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	sig	Correlation Partial
	B	Std. Error				
1(Constant)	13.28	1.09		12.12	.000	
HS	.889	.143	.455	6.22	.000	.455
2(Constant)	9.45	1.53		6.17	.000	
HS	.626	.157	.321	3.67	.000	.312
IS	.401	.166	.279	3.45	.001	.274

a. Dependent Variable: Anxiety

Above table clearly indicates that Self-criticism influences Anxiety (criterion). As the statistical value given in the table indicates that $t=3.67$ for Hated Self; $t=3.45$ for inadequate self respectively. By having a look at t-values, we may conclude that t-values are significant for both the predictors indicating a relationship between the predictors and criterion variable (anxiety).

The partial correlation is $r=.45$ for Hated Self; $r=.274$ for inadequate self respectively, showing that predictors significantly influences the degree of anxiety. From the results it may be interpreted that anxiety significantly predicted by Hated Self and Inadequate Self, so the hypothesis (H_1) that it is expected that Self-criticism will predict Anxiety significantly among overall students is accepted.

Table 2: Showing Step-wise multiple regression analysis of Self-criticism as predictors of Anxiety in male sample (N=75).

Table 2a: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics R Square Change
1	.538 ^a	.290	.287	.290
2	.584 ^b	.341	.335	.051

b. Predictors: (Constant), HS, IS

Table 2a shows the model summary indicating two predictors of the model. Multiple correlation (R) is found as .538 for hated self and .584 for inadequate self. Further R^2 , which represents the contribution of criterion variable to the predictor variable, is also seen. Here we have considered R^2 change, that is, the actual contribution of criterion variable to the predictor variable. Hence the real covariance, the magnitude of independent variable which contributed to the dependent variable (anxiety) came out as 29 % for hated self and 5.1 % for inadequate self respectively.

Table 2b: shows details of Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	sig	Correlation Partial
	B	Std. Error				
1(Constant)	9.847	.795		12.37	.000	
HS	1.290	.135	.538	9.53	.000	.538
2(Constant)	6.300	1.148		5.48	.000	
HS	.929	.157	.388	5.92	.000	.369
IS	.383	.092	.272	4.15	.000	.269

a. Dependent Variable: Anxiety

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Above table clearly indicates that Self-criticism influences Anxiety (criterion). As the statistical value given in the table indicates that $t=5.92$ for Hated Self; $t=4.15$ for inadequate self respectively. By having a look at t -values, we may conclude that t -values are significant for both the predictors indicating a relationship between the predictors and criterion variable (anxiety).

The partial correlation is $r=.53$ for Hated Self; $r=.26$ for inadequate self respectively, showing that predictors significantly influences the degree of anxiety. From the results it may be interpreted that anxiety significantly predicted by Hated Self and Inadequate Self, so the hypothesis (H_2) that it is expected that Self-criticism will predict Anxiety significantly among male students is accepted.

Table 3: Showing Step-wise multiple regression analysis of Self-criticism as predictors of Anxiety in female sample (N=75).

Table 3a: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics R Square Change
1	.545 ^a	.297	.294	.297
2	.633 ^b	.401	.393	.029

b. Predictors: (Constant), IS, RS

Table 3a shows the model summary indicating two predictors of the model. Multiple correlations (R) are found as .545 inadequate self and .633 reassure self. Further R^2 , which represents the contribution of criterion variable to the predictor variable, is also seen. Here we have considered R^2 change, that is, the actual contribution of criterion variable to the predictor variable. Hence the real covariance, the magnitude of independent variable which contributed to the dependent variable (anxiety) came out as 29.7 % for hated self and 2.9 % for reassure self respectively.

Table 3b: shows details of Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	sig	Correlation Partial
1(Constant)	7.654	1.298		5.89	.000	
IS	.842	.087	.545	9.70	.000	.545
2(Constant)	7.761	1.230		6.30	.000	
IS	.561	.099	.363	5.67	.000	.356
RS	.862	.168	.328	5.12	.000	.325

a. Dependent Variable: Anxiety

Above table clearly indicates that Self-criticism influences Anxiety (criterion). As the statistical value given in the table indicates that $t=5.67$ for IS and $t=5.12$ respectively. By having a look at t -values, we may conclude that t -values are significant for all the predictors indicating a relationship between the predictors and criterion variable (anxiety).

The partial correlation is $r=.356$ for IS and $r=.325$ for RS; and respectively, showing that predictors significantly influences the degree of anxiety. From the results it may be interpreted that anxiety significantly predicted by Inadequate Self and Reassure Self so the hypothesis (H_3) that it is expected that Self-criticism will predict Anxiety significantly among female students is accepted.

DISCUSSION

Current study sought to investigate, self-criticism as predictor of anxiety among students, this problem comprise of predictor variable is self-criticism i.e. inadequate self, reassure self and hated self. An important concern of psychology is to understand factors which are responsible for anxiety problems and also to suggest ways to manage them to the degree possible. In any empirical research, discussion has been given utmost importance. Discussion is the part where result is discussed under guideline of the objectives of the research in the light of previous empirical findings. In the present research, many new areas along with the old had been explored. So, in the present investigation the researcher will discuss the results with support of previous empirical findings.

In order to examine first objective investigator applied stepwise multiple regression analysis on senior secondary group it was found that hated self (self-criticism) was the most significant predictor of anxiety which raised senior secondary students' tendency to take self-criticism and, in turn, contributed to higher levels of anxiety among participants. The reason may be due to low self-esteem, immature dependence, parental pressure, competitions, they berate, criticize and blame themselves and experience intense feelings of shame, guilt, and worthlessness and they are unable to avoid these situations, then these situations pushes individual tend to be anxious and depress. Inadequate self was another significant predictor for anxiety and depression which focuses on a sense of personal inadequacy, Sandquist, Grenyer & Caputi (2009) suggested that self-criticism originates from a parental style characterized by low parental warmth and high parental control, with self-criticism and shame representing mediating variables between parental bonding and depression, Mongrain (2005) found that self-criticism significantly predicted internal entrapment and social comparison when controlling mood and levels of dependency. Substantial structural equation modeling (SEM) revealed that a factor of self-reported entrapment and social comparison mediated the effect of self-criticism on the number of previous episodes of depression; Kausar (2014) found that self-criticism i.e. inadequate self came out as the most significant predictor of depression.

Implications

Findings of the present study would be helpful for teachers, parents, educationist and psychologist to help university students by arranging facilities of counselling and intervention programs not only for students but also for parents to educate them how to handle family problems and helping youngsters at this crucial period of life, to overcome from these problems. This will automatically enhance mental well-being of students for good and enriched future life after entering the society, because they are expected to be elites of society.

Limitations of the study

As its clear that every research is simply a single step in that area, which provide some information and leads to certain limitations with suggestion. The present study included certain variables which can influence self-criticism. Secondly it comprises of only Senior Secondary students. Therefore, further studies in this area can be done cross cultural, including recent questionnaires and demographic variables.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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