The Impact of Core Self-evaluation on Self-criticism

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Abstract The present study investigated whether the dimensions of core self-evaluation and gender significantly predicted internal self-criticism and comparison based self-critical behavior, which are the dimensions of self-criticism. The study group included 336 students attending Adnan Menderes University during the 2017-2018 academic year. The study group included 243 female and 93 male students. Self-Criticism and Core Self-evaluation scales were used in the study. Multivariate regression analysis was used to analyze the study data. In the study, it was determined that the locus of control (LC) and neuroticism (NEU) sub-dimensions significantly predicted comparative self-criticism (when one considers others superior in comparison to one's self) and internalized self-criticism (assessment of one's self with own standards) dimensions of locus of control (LC) self-efficacy and neuroticism (NEU) sub-dimensions.

Keywords Core Self-evaluation, Self-criticism, University Students

1. Introduction

Core self-evaluation, which includes the basic assessments of the individual about herself or himself and the environment, continues to attract the attention of the researchers. Core self-evaluation is a concept that includes how an individual recognizes and defines herself or himself, her or his evaluations of her or his values, abilities and capacity, and how the individual perceives and assesses the events [11]. Core self-evaluation is the assessment of the individual's functionality, and the state where the individual considers herself or himself successful and valuable and included the dimensions of high self-esteem, high self-efficacy, low neuroticism (emotional stability) and internal locus of control [11].

a. Self-esteem: It is the self-appraisal of an individual. It is the totality of one's emotions and behavior. An individual with self-esteem recognizes his/her strengths and other aspects that he/she believes that he/she could improve and has a positive and constructive attitude towards herself/ himself.

b. Self-efficacy: It is defined as the belief of an individual when fulfilling a task with success and would perform efficiently in other situations; the state where the individual considers herself/himself competent.

c. Internal Locus of Control: It is the responsibility of an individual for his or her behavior and the individual's belief that she/he has control over the events. Individuals with internal locus of control believe that they have control over their lives, and they can take high levels of responsibility. Individuals with external locus of control attribute the events to external factors and consider coincidences and other environmental factors to be more significant.

d. Neuroticism (low emotional stability): It is a characteristic that occurs when a stressful life event is faced and it is accompanied by negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. Individuals with high neuroticism (low emotional stability) utilize passive and incompatible strategies as a coping strategy against stress and assign negative meanings to events. Individuals with low neuroticism (emotionally stable) face the events with emotional stability and utilize effective coping strategies.

Judge, Locke and Durham [11] introduced the concept of core self-evaluation and it has been the topic of several studies in recent years. Some students conducted about core self-evaluation, such as perceived stress among Spanish young adults and life satisfaction [27]; core self-evaluation and life satisfaction [10,24]; emotional intelligence and core self-evaluation [1,15].

In Turkey, core self-evaluation studies were conducted with employees in various businesses and institutions and these studies focused on variables such as core self-evaluation and professional satisfaction in lawyers [29]. Core self-evaluation, coping strategies and psychological health variables were investigated in a sample of college students[13,23], business life [9,24,2], and core self-evaluation and self-regulation at vocational high school students [22]. It is desirable that an individual's

self-evaluation is high. Individuals with high core self-evaluation consider themselves as more positive towards life, self-confident, effective and compliant individuals. Individuals with low core self-evaluation tend to avoid difficult and complex tasks since they think that they would not succeed and do not trust their abilities [28]. The core self-evaluation could be the precursor of several behavioral variables. The present study aimed to contribute to the literature by investigating the impact of self-criticism on core self-evaluation.

Self-criticism is a form of negative self-evaluation that includes thoughts and emotions such as self-hate and self-humiliation experienced in case of inability to achieve self-imposed standards [8]. Self-criticism has two sub-dimensions.

a. Comparative self-criticism: Considering others better in self-comparison and animosity against self.
b. Internal self-criticism: Comparison of self by self-imposed standards [31]. The individual judges herself/himself in a punitive harsh manner.

In interdependent and collectivist societies such as Japan, there is a greater tendency to self-criticism when compared to individualist societies such as Europe and America. These societies believe that self-criticism provides personal achievement awareness that would help identify the required improvements for a harmonious life within the group. Shame, self-judgment and isolation are considered as requirements for development [14].

Self-critical individuals are more focused on avoiding failure, thinking about disapproval more than others, having ruminations about their failure and tend to lose their self-esteem [25]. These individuals are sensitive to approval and criticism of others [3], and are judgmental and achievement-oriented towards others, and associated less with interpersonal goals [4]. Self-critical individuals enjoy their achievements less and analyze themselves with minute care. They are not satisfied with interpersonal relations and produce negative emotions as a consequence of difficulties in life. They are more responsive to fluctuations in their performances and have conditional self-esteem [25].

High self-critical individuals consider repeating cognitive tasks and behavioral experiences as boring and they are individuals with higher negative and lower positive emotions and more concerned with failure. Their potential self-criticism disrupts their implementation plans [16].

Recently, studies that focus on the self-criticism of university students samples gained momentum in Turkey. There exist studies such as, self-criticism and happiness [5], the relationships among self-absorption, self-criticism and perfectionism [21]. The main aim of present study is to contribute the literature through complementing the studies focusing on core self-evaluation and self- criticism.

The present study aimed to test whether the dimensions of gender and core self-evaluation are significantly predicted the self-criticism sub-dimensions of internal self-criticism and comparative self-criticism behavior. In this context, it was determined that the variables of gender and core self-evaluation were the predictor or independent variables. Core self-evaluation is discussed in four sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions were self-esteem (SES), locus of control (LC), self-efficacy (SEF), and Neuroticism (NEU). The sub-dimensions of the self-criticism variable are internal self-criticism (ISC) and comparative self-criticism (CSC). Based on the above-mentioned, the research problem was determined as follows: Do gender (G), self-esteem (SES), self-efficacy (SEF), locus of control (LC) and neuroticism (NEU) behavior significantly predict internal self-criticism (ISC) and comparative self-criticism (CSC) behavior?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. The Research Model

The present study is a correlational study, a quantitative research method, since it investigated the correlation between the relevant variables [11]. Correlational research aims to investigate the correlation between two or more variables [6, 12]. In the present study, predictive correlational research method was used. In predictive correlation studies, the relationships between the variables are investigated and an attempt is made to predict a variable based on the other variable.

2.2. The Study Group

The study group included 336 students studying at Adnan Menderes University during the 2017-2018 academic year. The study group included 243 female and 93 male students. The total number of students was 336, 158 of whom were attending Psychological Counseling department, 23 of whom were attending finance, 8 of whom were attending international relations, 40 of whom were attending social services, 65 of whom were attending Turkish language teaching, and 42 of whom were attending the classroom teaching departments.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments

Self-criticism and core self-evaluation scales were used in the present study. The self-criticism scale includes two dimensions: comparative self-criticism and internal self-criticism. The core self-evaluation scale includes self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism dimensions.

2.3.1. The Core Self-evaluation Scale

The core self-evaluation scale, developed by Judge, Erez, Joyce and Thoresen, [31] was adapted to Turkish language by Kisbu [13]. Self-efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control

and neuroticism dimensions is explained with 12 statements. In order to determine the construct validity of the Turkish version of the scale, descriptive factor analysis was initially conducted. In the factor analysis, it was determined that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sample value was 0.811. Bartlett Test result was 5154.844 and p <0.05. The scale included 12 statements under 4 factors (Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Locus of Control, and Neuroticism) and these factors explained 65.451% of the total variance. The validity of the five-factor construct obtained with the explanatory factor analysis was tested with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). It was found that the t values for the variables observed with CFA were between 8.06 and 18.34 and standardized analysis values were between 0.75 and 0.91. Furthermore, the normalized chi-square value (X^2 / df) based on the fact that $X^2 = 9.71$ and $df = 3$ was 3.24, RMSEA = 0.034, GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.89, and CFI = 0.98. The overall reliability of the scale was calculated as $\alpha = 0.754$.

2.3.2. Self-criticism Scale

The self-criticism scale, developed by Thompson and Zuroff [32] and Turkish language adaptation was conducted, and psychometric properties were determined by Öngen [20]. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale that includes two subscales: Comparative Self-criticism(CSC) and Internal Self-criticism(ISC). The students were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a five-point scale ranging from this is a very bad description of me to this is a very good description of me. : There are 12 CSC items (e.g., "If you are open with other people about your weaknesses, they are likely to still respect you." and, "I am confident that most of the people I care about will accept me for who I am.") and 10 ISC items (e.g., "I often get very angry with myself when I fail." and "I frequently compare myself with my goals and ideals."). The factor analysis revealed a two-factor construct that explained 37% of the total variance. It was determined that the correlation between the sub-scales was .45 (p <0.05). The internal consistency coefficient was .81 for the subscale of comparative self-criticism and .87 for the internal self-criticism sub-dimension. As a result of the factor analysis, a two-factor construct with eigen values that varied between 4.36 and 2.66 and explaining 32% of the total variance was obtained. The internal consistency coefficient for the comparative self-criticism dimension was .67, and the internal consistency coefficient for the internal self-criticism subscale was .77.

2.4. Data Analysis

The present study aimed to test whether the dimensions of gender and core self-evaluation are significantly predicted the self-criticism sub-dimensions of internal self-criticism and comparative self-criticism behavior. In this context, it was determined that the variables of gender and core self-evaluation were the predictor or independent variables. Core self-evaluation is discussed in four sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions were self-esteem (SES), locus of control (LC), self-efficacy (SEF), and Neuroticism (NEU). The sub-dimensions of the self-criticism variable are internal self-criticism (ISC) and comparative self-criticism (CSC). The multivariate regression analysis was conducted on two dependent variables and four independent variables, which are the sub-dimensions of self-criticism.

SPSS and LISREL software were used to test the analysis hypotheses and for multivariate regression analysis. For the regression analysis, missing data and outliers were examined. Multivariate normality, multilinearity and multicollinearity assumptions were tested.

In the data organization stage, missing data and outliers were tested. As a result of missing data and outlier analysis, it was observed that there was no missing data in the study group. Z values were determined when testing the outliers and it was checked whether there was any data that were outside the range of +3 – -3. Mahalanobis distances were calculated to determine multivariate outliers. No multivariate outliers were observed in the data.

Univariate and bivariate normality tests are used to test multivariate normality. In the present study, Kolmogorov Smirnov Test was conducted for univariate normality. Although it was determined that the variables were not distributed normally based on the result of KS test result, the distribution of skewness coefficients were between +1 and -1. It was determined that the distribution of the skewness coefficients calculated for SES (-.241), SEF (-.464), LC (-.276), NEU (.426), ISC (.083) and CSC (.534) variables were close to the norm.

Since multilinearity is the linearity of the correlation between the variable pairs, the scatter diagram matrix for bivariate normality was examined and it was observed that linearity existed between the variable pairs. Scatter diagram is presented in Appendix-1.

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values were examined for the control of multicollinearity hypothesis. In the present study, it was observed that the VIF values calculated for SES (1.863), SEF (1.632), LC (1.654), NEU (1.199), ISC (1.326) and CSC (1.169) met the criteria. The criteria were met for tolerance values (SES = .540, SEF = .613, LC = .605, NEU = .834, ISC = .754 and CSC = .855) as well.

Since gender was a categorical variable in the study, it was coded as dummy (1-0). Females were coded as 1 and males were coded as 0. Therefore, the study findings were interpreted based on the reference group 0. Furthermore, since different scales were used and the scales had different items and gradings, the raw scores were converted to t scores during the analysis. Multivariate regression analysis was conducted on these scores since the number of dependent variables was two.

Table 1. Self-criticism multivariate regression analysis findings, β, t and R^2 values

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	β	SH	t	R^2
G		-1.04	1.08	-.97	
SES		-.071	.065	-1.08	
SEF	ISC	-.012	.060	-.20	.15
LC		.24	.061	3.88	
NEU		-.46	.052	-8.89	
G		-2.16	1.14	-1.89	
SES		-.029	.069	-.29	
SEF	CSC	-.17	.064	-2.63	.25
LC		-.17	.065	-2.65	
NEU		-.18	.055	-3.18	
*p<.05					

3. Findings

In this section, the results of the analysis conducted for the solution of the research problem are presented in tabular form and analyzed. The analysis results are presented in Table 1.

Analysis of the Table 1 demonstrated that the significant predictor of the internal self-criticism (ISC) dependent variable were the locus of control (LC) and Neuroticism (NEU) variables (t> 1.96). The gender (G), self-esteem (SES), and self-efficacy (OZ) variables were not significant predictors of ISC (t <1.96). When the beta values for the significant variables for the internal self-criticism variable were analyzed, it was observed that one unit change in the LC variable led to a .24 unit increase in the ISC variable. The NEU variable resulted in a .46 unit reduction. This meant that individuals with locus of control have higher levels of internal self-criticism (a .24 unit increase in each unit), while individuals with neurotic behavior have less internal self-criticism (.46 reduction in each unit change). These two variables explained 14% of the change in internal self-criticism variable (ISC) (R2 = .14). Regression equation was determined as follows:

$$ISC0.12*LC – 0.46*NEU$$

It was observed that self-efficacy (SEF), locus of control (LC) and neuroticism (NEU) variables were significant predictors of comparative self-criticism (CSC) variable (p> 1.96), while gender (G) and self-esteem (SES) were not significant variables. All significant variables were negatively correlated with CSC. One unit change in SEF and LC variables led to a .17 unit reduction, while one unit change in NEU variable led to a .18 unit reduction.

In other words, it could be interpreted that self-efficacy, locus of control and neuroticism traits led to .17, .17, and .18 units lower comparative self-criticism trait, respectively. It was determined that 25% of the CSC variable was explained by these variables. Regression equation can be written as follows:

$$CSC = -0.17*SEF – 0.17*LC – 0.18* NEU$$

4. Conclusions and Discussion

In the present study, it investigated whether the dimensions of the core self-evaluation dimensions and gender significantly predicted internal self-critical and comparative self-criticized behavior. In the study, it was determined that the locus of control (LC) and neuroticism (NEU). Sub-dimensions significantly predicted internalized self-criticism (assessment of one's self with own standards) dimension and locus of control (LC) self-efficacy and neuroticism (NEU). Sub-dimensions significantly predicted comparative self-criticism (when one considers others superior in comparison to one's self) dimension in self-criticism.

The locus of control is the belief that one's own behavior and responsibility is dependent on one's self, rather than external forces. Self-criticism is one of the dimensions of the comments that individuals with the locus of control trait make about themselves since these type of individuals comment about their behavior. There is a correlation between self-criticism and perfectionism [20] which supports the above-mentioned finding.

Low neuroticism (emotional stability) is defined as the calmness and self-confidence of an individual. In the present study, it was found that individuals with low neuroticism exhibited lower internal self-criticism, and individuals with high neuroticism exhibited higher internal self-criticism. The previous finding obtained in the study by Gilbert and Irons [7] that self-criticism increased vulnerability and emotional level of the symptoms and led to repetition was consistent with the present study findings. The finding that there was a negative correlation between self-criticism and self-expression and progression towards the goal [26] was consistent with the present study findings.

Individuals with high level of self-criticism are less consistent in achieving goals and experience more negative affections.

In the study, it was concluded that individuals with high locus of control and self-efficacy had lower comparative self-criticism levels. Self-efficacy is the belief of self-sufficiency that the individual would complete a task successfully and would perform well in different situations. In this study, it was found that individuals with high emotional stability had lower comparative self-criticism levels and individuals with low emotional stability had higher comparative self-criticism levels. This finding was supported by the findings of previous studies. For instance, self-critical individuals tend to consider their success in events negatively [17], have more intense negative emotions [29] and demonstrate reduced positive affection [17].

The finding obtained in the study was consistent with the findings that self-criticism increases depressive symptoms and is parallel to alleviated ruminative trends and procrastination behavior as determined by Powers et al. [25]. Self-critical individuals are more emotionally responsive to the perceived failure and experience higher negative affections [25]. The finding that self-criticism is correlated with depression [18] was consistent with the present study findings.

The present study has certain limitations related to the characteristics of the study group. These limitations should be considered when generalizing the findings. The present study is limited to the sample that included the students attending a state university in Aydın province, Turkey. It could be developed with studies in state and private universities in different cities and with different samples (employees in different institutions, adults, etc.). The individual's kindness towards herself or himself and self-acceptance offsets the negative effects of self-critical thinking [19]. For the field experts, to utilize in psychological counseling and guidance activities, detailed core self-evaluation could be conducted, and intervention programs could be developed to improve self-compassion and to effectively cope with self-criticism. These applications could be structured for preventive and therapeutic purposes. Students could be assisted by university psychological counseling centers and psychological health professionals through individual and group counseling. Personality traits are highly significant for self-criticism and core self-evaluation. The researchers focusing on these subjects could utilize these approaches in psychological counseling and guidance studies and several programs could be established to examine the personality characteristics of the individuals in detail. Such approaches could as well be structured for preventive and therapeutic purposes.

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