

Twitter, Rant Account, and Loneliness: The Role of Self-Criticism in Loneliness

Zizi Zahra Zalyanti Maridin, Vania Zahra Anisa Salvi, Moh Harun Ar Rosyid Musa,
Yuliana Mukti Rahmawati*

Universitas Al azhar Indonesia Jl. Sisingamangaraja, Kota Jakarta Selatan, DKI Jakarta, Indonesia

*Penulis korespondensi, Surel: yuliana.rahmawati@uai.ac.id

Abstract

Amid the increasingly diverse challenges of life, social media often becomes an outlet for releasing overwhelming stress. Some individuals choose platform X (formerly Twitter) due to its text-based format, which makes it easier for users to share emotional expressions in written form. This phenomenon can be seen from the emergence of various types of accounts, such as a rant account. This study aims to investigate the contribution of self-criticism to loneliness. The population in this study consists of active rant account users aged 18–25, selected using purposive sampling. A total of 96 participants were involved. The instruments used in this study include adaptation of the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the Forms of Self-Criticizing/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS), both of which were adapted into Indonesian. The results indicate a significant influence of self-criticism on loneliness, specifically 15.9%. This finding is particularly relevant in understanding the factors that affect individuals' mental well-being on social media. Future research needs to consider different ages that represent different patterns of social media behavior and recommend conducting longitudinal studies to understand how the influence of self-criticism and loneliness evolves, and to explore the possibility of other variables influencing this relationship.

Keywords: loneliness; self-criticism; social media; twitter

Abstrak

Tantangan hidup yang semakin beragam membuat media sosial seringkali menjadi wadah untuk mengeluarkan stress. Beberapa memilih Twitter karena format teksnya yang membuat pengguna lebih mudah untuk membagikan ekspresi emosinya dalam bentuk tulisan. Hal ini sejalan dengan banyaknya akun yang bermunculan di Twitter, salah satunya akun mengeluh. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti kontribusi *self-criticism* pada kesepian. Populasi pada penelitian ini merupakan pengguna aktif akun mengeluh (rant account) berusia 18-25 tahun yang dipilih dengan teknik *purposive sampling* dan terpilih 96 orang. Kesepian diukur melalui adaptasi UCLA *Loneliness Scale* dan adaptasi *Self-criticism* diukur menggunakan *Forms of Self-Criticizing/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale* (FSCRS). Hasil penelitian ini menemukan pengaruh *self-criticism* terhadap kesepian secara signifikan, sebesar 15,9%. Penelitian ini penting untuk memahami faktor yang mempengaruhi kesehatan mental individu dalam menggunakan media sosial. Penelitian selanjutnya membutuhkan konsiderasi usia partisipan yang mungkin memiliki pola perilaku penggunaan media sosial yang berbeda serta direkomendasikan untuk meneliti menggunakan *design longitudinal* untuk melihat bagaimana pengaruh keduanya seiring waktu.

Kata kunci: kesepian; *self-criticism*; media sosial; twitter

1. Introduction

Amid increasingly diverse life challenges, social media is often used as an escape to vent stress that is difficult to maintain (Aulia et al., 2024). One social media platform that is widely utilized by the public is Twitter, a microblogging-based media that allows users to convey opinions, feelings, and experiences in the form of short tweets (Nasrullah, 2015). Over

time, the role of Twitter has evolved, not only as a means of communication and information dissemination but also as a place for personal and emotional self-expression (Fauziah, 2019).

This phenomenon can be seen from the emergence of various types of accounts with different characters and purposes, such as business accounts, fan accounts, study accounts, and rant accounts. Rant accounts - derived from the word “rant” which means to complain or verbally vent emotions - are a popular type of account among Twitter users because they provide a safer space free from social pressure. Unlike the main account, which tends to build a positive image, rant account users usually feel freer to express their unrest, frustration, and even self-criticism without fear of being judged by others (Ainunsiah et al., 2023).

By using a rant account, users can vent their frustrations, anxieties, and criticisms of themselves and their surroundings. The phenomenon of venting on Twitter seems to be happening more and more frequently, and there is a reason for this. This phenomenon shows that interaction in the digital world feels safer, more open, and more comfortable than direct interaction in the real world (Aggriany & Kustiawan, 2023). Research from Perlman & Peplau (1981) shows a link between these expressions and feelings of loneliness and a tendency to self-criticism. However, if individuals are unable to adapt or adjust to various changes in social life, the risk of experiencing loneliness will increase (Aviva & Jannah, 2023).

Loneliness can be defined as an emotional state that arises because a person's social conditions are not up to their expectations (Russell, 1996). According to Russell (2016), loneliness has three characteristics: (1) personality, where individuals feel lonely due to internal factors, such as fear and discomfort towards strangers; (2) social desirability loneliness, which is when individuals do not have social relationships in accordance with their expectations in the surrounding environment; (3) depression loneliness, in the form of feelings that are being experienced, such as sadness, depression, loss of spirit, and feeling worthless, so that individuals feel that whatever they do will lead to failure.

Study by Christina & Helsa, (2022) said that in Indonesia, research on the phenomenon of loneliness is still in its early stages because this problem continues to grow and has the potential to get worse. Loneliness arises when a person feels they have no one who truly understands their condition. When a person is at the lowest point in their life, feelings of loneliness often arise along with the absence of a figure who can understand their situation (Aviva & Jannah, 2023). Loneliness has a negative impact on an individual's mental state, both in terms of attitude, emotion, behaviour and cognition. All these aspects support each other and can cause severe stress, mental disorders, depression, and even social and emotional emptiness (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010; Diehl, Jansen, Ishchanova, & Hilger-Kolb, 2018; Aviva & Jannah, 2023). One of the main psychological mechanisms that explains how loneliness can lead to depression is through the emergence of the phenomenon of self-criticism.

Gilbert, et al. (2004) mentioned that self-criticism is a feeling of self-blame for something that is not accepted in real life, leading to criticism of one's own mind and causing depression. When something goes wrong in life or does not go as expected and individuals feel they could have done better, negative and self-critical thoughts and feelings often arise. This can take the form of feelings of worthlessness, uselessness, or low self-esteem. However, individuals can also try to provide support for themselves.

According to Dinger et al. (2015) individuals with high levels of self-criticism who experience difficulties in interpersonal relationships tend to be closed, keep their distance, and avoid social relationships. An overview of self-criticism shows that self-criticism is often associated with inner conflict and low self-confidence. Self-criticism also leads to feelings of humiliation, low self-confidence, and inability to deal with life's pressures (Ramadani, et al.,

2022). Different from previous research by Besser et al. (2003) stated that the relationship between self-criticism and loneliness is mediated by silencing the self which they investigated self-criticism associated with an emphasis on self-expression in direct interaction. This study aims to investigate the current digital context in which people nowadays have self-critical tendencies and show their expressions openly through Twitter accounts. It is important to emphasize that studies on the relationship between self-criticism and loneliness in the context of social media, especially rant accounts, are still very limited.

2. Method

3.1 Result

This research uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design, which aim to examine the contribution of self-criticism and loneliness in Twitter's rant account users. The population in this study was active rant account users on Twitter aged 18-25 years. Demographic data such as age, gender, and frequency of rant account use were also collected to complete the research analysis. The sample was taken by purposive sampling with the following criteria: active users of rant accounts on Twitter for at least 1 year, using Twitter and have a rant account, and using a rant account by posting at least 1 tweet a day. The number of samples involved in this study was 96 people.

This study uses two measurements which both of them was adapted using Beaton (2000) procedures. Self-criticism was assessed using the Forms of Self-Criticising/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS) developed by Gilbert et al. (2004), and Loneliness was assessed with the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale developed by Russell et al. (1980). According to Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona (1980), there are 3 dimensions of loneliness; 1) Personality, which determines the characteristics of behaviour and thinking, this is symbolized by feelings of inferiority, discomfort, anxiety, and passivity (example item: "I am a sociable person"), 2) Social desire, which is the individual's need to integrate and be accepted by the social environment, reflected in behaviour such as not feeling accepted in the surrounding environment, being ostracized by group members, and feeling bored (example item; "I feel in harmony with the people around me"), 3) Depressive, which is the individual's attitude and feelings characterized by feelings of worthlessness, lack of enthusiasm, depression, sadness and tendency to fail which is described by sad, gloomy, demoralized, self-blaming, empty behaviour, and leading to suicide (example item: "I am unhappy because I am too withdrawn"). This measuring instrument consists of 20 items divided into two positive items and negative items with a 4-point Likert scale; never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), and often (4). 11 items are stated negatively, namely items 1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15, 16, 19, and 20, while 9 items are stated positively, namely 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, and 18. Two additional factors related to the direction of the statement (positive/negative) are understood as method factors, not as different substantive dimensions (Russell et al., 1996). Meanwhile, Forms of Self-Criticising/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS) includes three main dimensions; 1) inadequate-self, which is feelings of inadequacy or disappointment with oneself (sample item: "I am easily disappointed in myself"); 2) hated-self, which is the desire to blame or punish oneself harshly (sample item: "I call myself bad names"); and 3) reassured-self, which is the ability to be compassionate and comforting to oneself (sample item: "I easily forgive myself"). This measuring instrument consists of 22 items with a 5-point Likert scale; not at all like me (0) to very like me (4) (Gilbert et al., 2004).

Both measurement instruments used have undergone reliability and validity testing. The instrument for the loneliness variable obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.881, with item-

total correlation values ranging from 0.302 to 0.638, which mean the loneliness scale is considered valid and reliable. Meanwhile, the instrument for the self-criticism variable obtained a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.916, with item-total correlation values ranging from 0.297 to 0.745, which means the self-criticism scale is also considered valid and reliable.

The data collection procedure was carried out in several stages. The preparation stage involved compiling an online questionnaire through Google Forms. The questionnaire distribution stage was carried out through Twitter, aiming rant account user group on Twitter. The data processing stage was carried out using Jamovi, with data analysis carried out using linear regression analysis to describe the data from the study.

3. Result and discussion

This study involved 96 respondents, all of whom were users of rant accounts on the Twitter platform. Most respondents were female (96.9%), while only 3.1% were male. Based on age, the average age of respondents was 20.6 years with a relatively narrow age range (SD = 1.85), indicating that most participants came from the young adult age group. The table 1. below describes comprehensively the demographic data in this study.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency	%
Age	20.6	1.85		
Self-Criticism	44.9	16.27		
Loneliness	46.4	8.95		
Have a rant account on Twitter			96	100.0%
Frequency of Twitter account usage				
Rarely (less than once a week)			3	3.1%
Several times a week			22	22.9%
Everyday			71	74.0%
Gender				
Male			3	3.1%
Female			93	96.9%

In terms of Twitter usage, most respondents reported accessing their Twitter accounts every day (74%), while 22.9% used it several times a week, and only 3.1% used it rarely (less than once a week) (Table 1). These findings indicate that Twitter, especially rant accounts, is a social media platform that is actively used by the participants of this study to express their thoughts and feelings.

The average self-criticism score of respondents was 44.9 (SD = 16.27), with a median of 46, indicating a high level of self-criticism among respondents. Meanwhile, the level of loneliness was indicated to be quite high, with a mean value of 46.4 (SD = 8.95) and a median of 48. These

data suggest that research participants tended to experience relatively high feelings of loneliness along with significant levels of self-criticism.

Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to test whether self-criticism acts as a predictor of loneliness in users of rant account X (Twitter).

Table 3. Model Fit Measures

Overall Model Test						
Model	β	R^2	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.399	0.159	17.8	1	94	< .001

The results of the analysis showed that the regression model built was statistically significant ($D = 1.94, p < .001$), which means the model can significantly predict loneliness based on self-criticism. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.159$) shows that 15.9% of the variability in feelings of loneliness can be explained by the level of self-criticism possessed by the respondents. Although this figure is classified as moderate, it shows a significant influence. The regression coefficient value of 0.220 with a t value = 4.22 and $p < .001$, indicates that every 1-point increase in the self-criticism score is correlated with a 0.220 increase in the loneliness score. In addition, the standardized beta value ($\beta = 0.399$) shows that self-criticism has a moderate influence on loneliness.

3.2 Discussion

The results of the study showed that there was a significant contribution between self-criticism and loneliness in rant account users on Twitter ($p < .001$). This means that the higher a person's tendency to criticize themselves, the higher the level of loneliness they feel. With an R^2 value of 0.159, the self-criticism variable was able to explain 15.9% of the variation in respondents' feelings of loneliness. One of the factors that makes this relationship important can be understood through the psychological process in which loneliness can arise due to damage related to interactions between people triggered by high levels of self-criticism (Aviva & Jannah, 2023).

Continuous self-criticism by individuals will worsen their social relationships because individuals have a negative impression of themselves, so those who have high self-criticism will find it difficult to have good relationships with other individuals or with relationships in groups, which ultimately leads to feelings of loneliness. Self-critical individuals tend to have negative internal dialogues that can make them withdraw from healthy social relationships. This can strengthen feelings of loneliness. Respondents actively use rant accounts on Twitter as a space to express negative emotions, especially in the form of self-criticism. However, this kind of expression does not necessarily provide psychological relief to individuals who use rant accounts on Twitter. In fact, the habit of voicing self-blame in the digital realm can strengthen social isolation, especially if there is no support or positive response from others. This is in line with previous findings from Zaki & Williams (2013). They stated that loneliness is greatly influenced by the quality of interpersonal connections, not just the quantity of emotional expression. This finding is also relevant in the context of rant accounts, which are the type of accounts that are usually used to pour out one's heart, especially things that one does not dare to express openly (Martin, et.al, 2012). Although rant accounts serve as a medium for emotional

outbursts, users can still feel lonely due to the lack of real connections or meaningful interactions with the social environment (van der Nagel, E., 2018). This can lead to social disengagement, which is loneliness that occurs because individuals do not get the social life they expect in their environment (Ainunsiah et al., 2023). Additionally, there was a previous finding stating that individual cognitive process significantly influence their internet behavior (Rahmawati & Roebianto, 2025), implying that the probability of an individual facing missed interpretation or missed information from their interaction with social media could happen and interfere with their realm.

It's not uncommon for individuals to use social media to entertain themselves and reduce stress with social media Twitter, which provides a space for users to express thoughts and feelings, especially on personal rant accounts, allowing users to freely use their accounts. However, the way individuals use it and the content they share can lead to social comparison. This social comparison often triggers self-criticism. If it continues in the long term, it can have a significant impact on mental health (Setianingsih, Sianturi, & Devinatasya, 2025).

4. Conclusion

This finding is relevant particularly in understanding factors that affect individuals' mental well-being on social media. This study finds that self-criticism contribute to the emerging feeling of loneliness in rant account users on Twitter. Thus, highlight the important of healthy regulation of individual perceiving their surrounding so ranting on social media is no use. Further research is needed considering in example different age and different pattern of Twitter or social media use and recommend conducting longitudinal studies to understand how the influence of self-criticism and loneliness evolves over time, and to explore the possibility of other variables influencing this relationship.

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