

Parental Criticism and Emerging Adult Identity Confusion: The Moderating Role of Self-Compassion




Anni. Kröger¹, Marc. Hölling², Feray. Perchec^{3*}

¹ Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany

² Institute of Psychology, University of Mainz, Wallstrasse 2-5, 55112 Mainz, Germany

³ Department of Psychology, University of Mainz, Mainz, Germany

* Corresponding author email address: feray-perchec@uni-mainz.de

E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Chiedu Eseadi  Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria chiedu.eseadi@unn.edu.ng	Reviewer 1: Kamdin Parsakia  Department of Psychology and Counseling, KMAN Research Institute, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada. Email: kamdinparsakia@kmanresce.ca Reviewer 2: Ali Khodaei  Department of Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Payam Noor University, Tehran, Iran. Email: alikhodaei@pnu.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, the sentence “Parental criticism—the persistent perception of being judged, devalued, or controlled—has emerged as a risk factor for identity confusion” could conflate criticism with psychological control. Provide clear conceptual boundaries and consider citing definitions or measures that separate these constructs to strengthen construct validity.

In the Methods section, the phrase “Participants were recruited through online university platforms, social media groups, and community networks” lacks clarity on who these participants were. Indicate how the recruitment strategy captured a range of education levels, cultural backgrounds, and non-student young adults to avoid sample homogeneity.

The description of the DIDS instrument mentions only the confusion subscale. Explain why other identity dimensions were excluded and whether omitting them could limit understanding of the identity construct.

The text says “the criticism and rejection dimension is derived from the PBI’s care subscale”. Explain whether the wording was culturally adapted or translated and if any pilot testing or psychometric verification was done for the German context.

Because all measures were self-reported and collected online, discuss how common method bias was mitigated or acknowledge this as a limitation (e.g., through procedural remedies, randomizing items, or Harman’s test).

The Methods state “to examine the moderating role of self-compassion” but do not describe how moderation was operationalized within SEM (latent interaction terms, multi-group approach, or product indicators). Provide statistical detail to ensure reproducibility.

After reporting “Parental Criticism $M = 26.47$, $SD = 6.83$ ”, indicate how these levels compare to normative data or cut-off ranges for moderate vs. high criticism to aid interpretation.

The Results section reports an indirect path $\beta = -.16$ but calls it “partial mediation.” Clarify why the sign is negative, what partial mediation means in this context, and how it relates to the moderation claim.

When recommending “self-compassion–focused interventions,” specify recognized programs such as Mindful Self-Compassion training or Compassion-Focused Therapy and how they could be adapted for emerging adults with critical parental backgrounds.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

When stating “understanding these dynamics is especially critical in European contexts such as Germany”, provide a stronger rationale for choosing Germany. Explain how cultural parenting norms or migration diversity influence the meaning of criticism and self-compassion, so the sample’s context is theoretically anchored.

The paragraph describing “internalization of parental messages about worth and competence” should explicitly connect to major identity frameworks (e.g., Erikson, Marcia) to explain why criticism disrupts exploration and commitment. This would deepen theoretical integration.

Where the manuscript notes “narrative disruptions have been associated with increased vulnerability to psychological distress”, expand by referencing contemporary narrative identity theory (e.g., self-event connections, autobiographical reasoning). This would modernize and sharpen the theoretical argument.

In Figure 1, labeled “Model with Beta Coefficients,” specify whether betas are standardized, add significance markings, and improve readability (e.g., color-coding direct vs. indirect paths, showing error terms).

The Discussion begins with “parental criticism remains a salient predictor of identity confusion”. Emphasize that the cross-sectional design prevents firm causal conclusions and recommend longitudinal work to confirm directionality.

The cultural section briefly compares findings to Asia but overlooks heterogeneity within Europe. Discuss how immigration status, collectivism/individualism balance, or regional parenting traditions may shape experiences of criticism and self-compassion.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.