



Overview of the Level of Feelings of Insecurity in Vocational High School (SMK) Students

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Abstract

Feelings of insecurity can influence an individual's self-assessment and their confidence in meeting academic and social demands. This study aimed to describe the levels of insecurity among students at SMKN 10 Makassar to serve as a basis for determining their guidance and counseling needs. A descriptive quantitative approach was employed, involving 116 eleventh-grade students. Data were collected using an insecurity questionnaire covering four aspects: fear of failure and criticism, fear of social interaction, ability to assert oneself, and ability to say no. The data were analyzed using frequency distributions and percentages. The results revealed that 13.79% of the students fell into the low category, 58.62% into the moderate category, and 27.59% into the high category; thus, 86.21% of the students fell within the moderate-to-high range. These findings indicate that the majority of students experience moderate to high levels of insecurity, highlighting the need to address their psychological development through guidance and counseling services tailored to their specific needs.

Keywords: *insecure; individual psychology; students; guidance and counseling.*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology has transformed patterns of social interaction as well as the way adolescents perceive themselves. Social media provides a platform for adolescents to openly view the achievements, appearances, and lifestyles of others, thereby increasing the likelihood of social comparison. The habit of comparing oneself to others can influence self-perception and potentially diminish self-confidence (Wahyuni, 2020). Exposure to depictions of idealized lives can also lead adolescents to feel inferior to others (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Persistent self-assessment can evolve into a negative evaluation of one's own abilities and self-worth (Prastika et al., 2023). This issue warrants attention during adolescence, a phase characterized by identity formation, shifts in self-perception, and a heightened need for social acceptance. Negative self-thoughts and feelings of worthlessness can be linked to various psychological problems experienced by adolescents (Tjandrarini et al., 2025). These conditions indicate that feelings of insecurity constitute a psychological aspect requiring attention in adolescent development.

Submitted: 08-09-2026 Approved: 08-09-2026. Published: 20-10-2026

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ISSN: Print 2722-1504 | ONLINE 2721-1002

<https://ejournal.uika-bogor.ac.id/index.php/jpg/index>

Feelings of insecurity may manifest as self-doubt regarding one's abilities, anxiety about others' judgments, a tendency to compare oneself to others, and difficulty accepting one's own shortcomings. Doubting one's own capabilities is a characteristic associated with insecurity (Harnata et al., 2023). The tendency to compare oneself to others can also lead individuals to feel they fall short of certain standards (Ria et al., 2023). Anxiety regarding the judgments of others and difficulty with self-acceptance can further reinforce feelings of insecurity (Nelwan et al., 2023). Such conditions can develop into feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness, as well as doubts about one's own potential (Farsya et al., 2023). Feelings of insecurity do not arise in isolation from one's environment; social pressures, peer influence, and social comparisons can all exacerbate this condition (Kamaruddin et al., 2022). Furthermore, a competitive environment can heighten concerns about the judgments of others, leading individuals to withdraw from social interactions (Masi et al., 2025). Thus, insecurity is a psychological state that affects an individual's confidence in assessing their own abilities, interacting with others, expressing opinions, and facing social evaluation.

This issue is particularly relevant for Vocational High School (SMK) students, as their education focuses not only on academic achievement but also on mastering vocational competencies and preparing for the workforce. Practical learning and field internships (PKL) provide students with hands-on experience to develop skills in communication, collaboration, responsibility, and workplace adaptation. These demands can pose challenges for students who doubt their own abilities, especially when faced with the prospect of making mistakes or receiving criticism. Fear of failure and criticism are aspects closely linked to feelings of insecurity (Harnata et al., 2023). Difficulties in social interaction and a lack of confidence in demonstrating one's abilities can also manifest as symptoms of this condition (Nelwan et al., 2023). Therefore, assessing feelings of insecurity among SMK students is crucial, as this psychological state is linked to competency development and student readiness to meet the demands of both education and the workforce (Frahidayah et al., 2024).

Student insecurity can be understood through the lens of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, specifically the concept of "feelings of inferiority." Fundamentally, an awareness of one's own limitations can serve as a driving force for personal growth and the attainment of a better state (McCluskey, 2021). However, when these feelings develop maladaptively, individuals may view themselves negatively, feel inadequate, and doubt their own potential (Amani et al., 2024). A tendency to compare oneself to others and difficulty accepting one's own shortcomings can also be linked to the emergence of feelings of insecurity (Wulandari et al., 2024). Social pressures and environmental demands can further reinforce these feelings of inferiority (Kamaruddin et al., 2022). Thus, the Adlerian perspective provides a basis for understanding that feelings of insecurity can arise when individuals negatively evaluate their own limitations, leading them to feel incapable of meeting environmental demands.

Feelings of insecurity have also been observed among students at SMKN 10 Makassar. Interviews with a guidance and counseling teacher on January 26, 2026,

revealed students exhibiting self-doubt and signs of insecurity. These findings were subsequently corroborated by questionnaire-based measurements conducted on February 9, 2026. The questionnaire employed was an adaptation of the short version of the Insecurity Questionnaire developed by Albani et al. (2006) based on the instrument by Ullrich and Ullrich de Muynck with indicators adjusted to suit the characteristics of vocational high school (SMK) students. The instrument was used to map feelings of insecurity across four aspects: fear of failure and criticism, fear of social interaction, the ability to assert oneself, and the ability to say no.

The current state of research on insecurity indicates that prior studies have largely focused on helping individuals manage or alleviate this psychological condition. Psychoeducation has been utilized to boost the self-confidence of students experiencing insecurity (Rasyid et al., 2024). Cognitive counseling approaches incorporating mindfulness techniques have also been applied to help individuals manage negative thoughts associated with insecurity (Puspitasari et al., 2025). Meanwhile, expressive writing therapy via digital media has been used to help adolescents express emotions and reduce tendencies toward negative self-evaluation (Fadilah et al., 2023). These three studies illustrate the evolution of research on insecurity within the realms of intervention and psychological condition management.

The research gap addressed by this study lies in the scarcity of research providing a specific empirical overview of insecurity levels among vocational high school students based on measurable aspects. Previous studies have emphasized interventions, whereas information regarding students' baseline conditions which serves as the foundation for planning guidance and counseling services has not been a primary focus. Yet, assessment is essential for gathering information on student conditions and needs, ensuring that the services provided can be tailored to the specific issues identified. Mapping these feelings is increasingly important for vocational high school (SMK) students, given that their educational experience entails a unique blend of academic demands, vocational competency requirements, social interactions, industrial internships (PKL), and preparation for the workforce.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific mapping of insecurity levels among SMK students based on four dimensions of the Insecurity Questionnaire: fear of failure and criticism, fear of social interaction, self-expression skills, and the ability to say "no." By focusing on students at SMKN 10 Makassar, the study yields a contextual, empirical picture of insecurity within a vocational education setting. Such mapping serves as a foundation for guidance and counseling teachers to identify student needs and design services tailored to the specific issues identified. Furthermore, utilizing these four dimensions provides a more targeted understanding of the specific forms of insecurity experienced by students, as opposed to a generalized view of insecurity (Albani et al., 2006).

Based on this rationale, the study aims to describe the levels of insecurity among students at SMKN 10 Makassar and to gain insight into their insecurity status across the four measured dimensions. The findings are expected to contribute empirical data to the

study of insecurity among SMK students and serve as a reference for guidance and counseling teachers in identifying needs and designing services that align with the developmental characteristics and demands faced by these students (Sukmadiningsih & Herdi, 2025).

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive method to describe the level of insecurity among students. The research was conducted at SMKN 10 Makassar, Makassar City, South Sulawesi Province, involving 116 eleventh-grade students as respondents. Data were collected through interviews with guidance and counseling teachers on January 26, 2026 (serving as supporting data) and via questionnaires administered to students on February 9, 2026 (serving as primary data). The instrument used was an adapted short version of the Insecurity Questionnaire by Albani et al. (2006) based on the instrument by Ullrich and Ullrich de Muynck which covers aspects such as fear of failure and criticism, fear of social interaction, assertiveness, and the ability to say "no."

The questionnaire data were processed through completeness checks, scoring, tabulation, and descriptive statistical analysis specifically frequency distributions and percentages. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to describe the research data (Pandang & Anas, 2019). The percentage for each category was calculated using the formula $P = (f/N) \times 100\%$, where P represents the percentage, f the frequency, and N the total number of respondents. The analysis results are presented in frequency distribution and percentage tables based on levels of insecurity and the four aspects of the instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Result

Based on the results of distributing questionnaires to 116 students of SMKN 10 Makassar, a picture was obtained regarding the level of students' feelings of insecurity as measured through four aspects, namely fear of failure and criticism, fear of social interaction, ability to assert oneself, and ability to say no. These four aspects are used to describe the condition of students' feelings of insecurity in terms of fear of failure and criticism, anxiety in social interactions, ability to express oneself, and ability to say no. The results of the data analysis were then grouped into three categories, namely low, medium, and high. The distribution of the overall level of students' feelings of insecurity is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Levels of Feelings of Insecurity

Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Low	16	13.79%
Currently	68	58.62%
Tall	32	27.59%
Amount	116	100%

Based on Table 1, of the 116 students who responded, 16 students (13.79%) were in the low category, 68 students (58.62%) were in the medium category, and 32 students (27.59%) were in the high category. The medium category was the category with the largest number of students, namely 68 students (58.62%). Meanwhile, 32 students (27.59%) were in the high category and 16 students (13.79%) were in the low category. Furthermore, the distribution of feelings of insecurity based on the four aspects of the questionnaire is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Insecure Feelings Based on Four Aspects

Aspect	Low (F)	Medium (F)	Height (F)	Amount (%)
Fear of failure and criticism	5	16	10	31 (26.72%)
Fear of social interaction	3	19	5	27 (23.28%)
Ability to assert oneself	4	17	9	30 (25.86%)
Ability to say no	4	16	8	28 (24.14%)
Amount	16	68	32	116 (100%)

Based on Table 2, students' feelings of insecurity were measured through four aspects: fear of failure and criticism, fear of social interaction, ability to assert oneself, and ability to say no. These four aspects describe forms of insecurity related to fear of failure and criticism, anxiety in social interactions, the ability to express oneself, and the ability to say no.

In the aspect of fear of failure and criticism, there are 5 students in the low category, 16 students in the medium category, and 10 students in the high category, with a total of 31 students. In the aspect of fear of social interaction, there are 3 students in the low category, 19 students in the medium category, and 5 students in the high category, with a total of 27 students. Furthermore, in the aspect of ability to assert oneself, there are 4 students in the low category, 17 students in the medium category, and 9 students in the high category, with a total of 30 students. Meanwhile, in the aspect of ability to say no, there are 4 students in the low category, 16 students in the medium category, and 8 students in the high category, with a total of 28 students.

Overall, the distribution results for the four aspects show that the medium category has the largest frequency, namely 68 students, while the high category has 32 students and the low category has 16 students. Thus, the combined results of the four aspects show that as many as 16 students (13.79%) are in the low category, 68 students (58.62%) are in the medium category, and 32 students (27.59%) are in the high category.

These results indicate that students' feelings of insecurity are predominantly in the moderate category. This is evident in the dominance of the moderate category across the four measured aspects. However, the presence of students in the high category also

indicates that some students experience stronger feelings of insecurity, both in facing failure and criticism, engaging in social interactions, expressing themselves, and saying no. Therefore, these four aspects are important to consider in understanding students' feelings of insecurity and can serve as a basis for determining the need for guidance and counseling services.

B. Discussion

The results of the study showed that most students of SMKN 10 Makassar were in the medium to high category in feelings of insecurity, namely 100 students (86.21%), while 16 students (13.79%) were in the low category. The medium category was the category with the largest proportion, namely 68 students (58.62%), followed by the high category of 32 students (27.59%). These findings indicate that feelings of insecurity are still found in most students, although the levels vary. These results are in line with the characteristics of insecurity which are characterized by feelings of insecurity and doubts about one's abilities (Harnata et al., 2023). Ria et al. (2023) also explained that individuals who experience insecurity tend to compare themselves with others and feel unable to meet certain standards. Thus, the distribution of research results shows that feelings of insecurity are a condition that requires attention in students' psychological development.

The proportion of students in the moderate to high category indicates a tendency towards less positive self-evaluation in some students. Nelwan et al. (2023) explain that individuals experiencing insecurity tend to feel anxious about others' judgments and have difficulty accepting themselves. In line with this, Farsya et al. (2023) state that insecurity is related to feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness, and doubts about one's potential. Feelings of insecurity in vocational high school students also need to be viewed in the context of the characteristics of vocational education, which requires students to prepare for the workforce. Students face not only academic demands but also demands for skill mastery, practical experience, and readiness for the work environment.

Feelings of insecurity can be influenced by the interaction between internal and external factors. From an internal perspective, Prastika et al. (2023) explain that negative self-assessment can make individuals more likely to doubt their abilities and self-worth. Meanwhile, external factors can include academic pressure, peer influence, and social comparison, which contribute to shaping individual self-evaluation (Kamaruddin et al., 2022). For vocational high school students, these demands can be further complicated by the presence of Field Work Practices (PKL), which require students to adapt to the work environment, communicate, collaborate, and demonstrate competence. Research by Frahidayah et al. (2024) shows that PKL experience, self-confidence, and soft skill mastery are related to vocational high school students' work readiness. This provides context that doubts about their abilities can be relevant experiences for students when facing the demands of practice and preparing to enter the workforce. However, this study did not directly measure PKL anxiety or employability skills, so these relationships are used as context in understanding the research results.

The characteristics of vocational high school students are also related to the demands of job readiness and competition after graduation. In addition to technical competencies, students need to develop communication, collaboration, adaptation, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills that support job readiness. Frahidayah et al. (2024) found that internship experience, self-confidence, and soft skill mastery positively contributed to vocational high school students' job readiness. Efendi (2025) research also showed that internships play a role in increasing students' understanding of the world of work and skill development, although in practice there are still challenges such as limited practice locations and difficulty adapting. These conditions can be a context that differentiates the dynamics of insecurity among vocational high school students from those of high school students, because vocational high school students are closer to the transition process to the world of work. Concerns about self-efficacy, success in internships, meeting competency demands, and competitiveness after graduation can conceptually be related to the emergence of self-doubt.

The findings of this study can also be understood through Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology perspective, specifically the concept of inferiority feelings. Adler viewed feelings of inferiority as emerging when individuals recognize their limitations or shortcomings and can essentially serve as a driving force for growth. However, when these feelings are not managed adaptively, individuals can develop negative self-evaluations and increasingly doubt their abilities. Wulandari et al. (2024) explain that this condition can develop into feelings of insecurity when individuals find it difficult to accept their shortcomings and tend to compare themselves with others. In the context of vocational high school students, feelings of inferiority can arise when students compare their abilities, skills, or readiness with those of their peers or the demands of the workplace. Thus, the dominance of the moderate to high categories in this study can be understood through the tendency for negative self-evaluations related to inferiority feelings as well as the demands of students' vocational development.

The findings of this study also align with previous research showing that feelings of insecurity are related to various psychological conditions in adolescents. Rasyid et al. (2024) found that psychoeducation can help increase the self-confidence of students experiencing insecurity. Puspitasari et al. (2025) showed that cognitive counseling using mindfulness techniques can help individuals manage negative thoughts related to insecurity. Meanwhile, Fadilah et al. (2023) showed that expressive writing therapy through digital media can help adolescents express emotions and reduce the tendency to make negative self-assessments. These findings reinforce that the treatment of insecurity needs to be directed at strengthening self-evaluation, confidence in one's abilities, and the ability to manage psychological experiences.

Based on these findings, the description of the level of insecurity among students at SMKN 10 Makassar has implications for the implementation of guidance and counseling services in schools. The proportion of students in the moderate to high category indicates the need for services that support self-acceptance, confidence in abilities, and more positive self-evaluation. In the context of vocational schools, these

services can also be directed at preparing for internships, strengthening interpersonal skills and employability skills, managing fears of failure, and increasing courage in interacting and expressing oneself. Thus, guidance and counseling services can help students not only manage feelings of insecurity but also build self-confidence to face the demands of vocational education and the transition to the world of work.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a study of 116 students of SMKN 10 Makassar, it can be concluded that most students have a level of insecurity in the medium to high category. A total of 68 students (58.62%) are in the medium category, 32 students (27.59%) in the high category, and 16 students (13.79%) in the low category. The results based on four aspects, namely fear of failure and criticism, fear of social interaction, ability to assert oneself, and ability to say no, show that feelings of insecurity include aspects of fear of failure and criticism, anxiety in social interactions, the ability to express oneself, and the ability to say no. This condition indicates that feelings of insecurity are one aspect that needs attention in the personal and social development of vocational high school students. The characteristics of vocational education that require mastery of competencies, PKL experience, development of employability skills, and readiness to enter the world of work are important contexts in understanding the dynamics of insecurity in vocational high school students. Therefore, the results of this study can be a basis for schools, especially guidance and counseling teachers, in designing services that support self-acceptance, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and students' readiness to face the demands of education and the world of work.

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