



STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY AND CRITICAL THINKING IN ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

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Received: March 2025

Accepted: March 2025

Published: March 2025

DOI:

Abstract : This study aims to examine the correlation between students' self-efficacy and critical thinking in argumentative writing. Employing a quantitative correlational research design, the study investigates how students' confidence in their writing abilities influences their capacity to construct logical, well-supported arguments. The findings reveal a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.01$) between self-efficacy and critical thinking, suggesting that students with higher self-efficacy tend to engage more effectively in analytical reasoning and evidence-based argumentation. Additionally, a paired t-test indicates a substantial improvement in both self-efficacy (mean difference = 15.88, $p < 0.001$) and critical thinking (mean difference = 17.22, $p < 0.001$) following targeted writing interventions. These results highlight the importance of integrating self-efficacy-enhancing strategies into writing instruction to foster students' confidence and critical thinking skills. Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges limitations related to sample size ($N = 32$) and external influencing factors. Future research should explore broader and more diverse student populations to validate these findings further.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy; Critical Thinking; Argumentative Writing

Abstrak : Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji korelasi antara efikasi diri mahasiswa dan pemikiran kritis dalam penulisan argumentatif. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian korelasional kuantitatif, penelitian ini menyelidiki bagaimana kepercayaan diri mahasiswa dalam kemampuan menulis mereka memengaruhi kapasitas mereka dalam membangun argumen yang logis dan berbasis bukti. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan korelasi positif yang kuat ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.01$) antara efikasi diri dan pemikiran kritis, yang mengindikasikan bahwa mahasiswa dengan efikasi diri yang lebih tinggi cenderung lebih efektif dalam melakukan penalaran analitis dan argumentasi berbasis bukti. Selain itu, hasil uji-t berpasangan menunjukkan peningkatan yang substansial dalam efikasi diri (rata-rata perbedaan = 15.88, $p < 0.001$) dan pemikiran kritis (rata-rata perbedaan = 17.22, $p < 0.001$) setelah dilakukan intervensi penulisan yang terarah. Hasil ini menegaskan pentingnya mengintegrasikan strategi peningkatan efikasi diri dalam pengajaran menulis untuk meningkatkan kepercayaan diri serta keterampilan berpikir kritis mahasiswa. Meskipun penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi yang berarti, terdapat keterbatasan terkait ukuran sampel ($N = 32$) dan faktor eksternal yang dapat memengaruhi hasil. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk melibatkan populasi mahasiswa yang lebih luas dan beragam guna memvalidasi temuan ini lebih lanjut.

Kata Kunci : Efikasi Diri; Berfikir Kritis; Menulis Argumentatif

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking in argumentative writing is an essential skill that enables students to construct well-reasoned, logical, and evidence-based arguments (Chatfield, 2022; Grand, 2020; Liu, Zhong & Nesbit, 2024; Morris, Deehan & MacDonald, 2024; Moschella-Schuller, 2023). In higher education, argumentative writing serves as a crucial medium through which students develop and express their ideas analytically and persuasively (Cottrell, 2023; Hyland, 2013). This writing process requires students to engage in advanced cognitive tasks such as critically analyzing information, evaluating multiple perspectives, and synthesizing arguments to form a coherent and convincing stance. According to Meyer (2024), the ability to think critically in argumentative writing allows students not only to present their viewpoints effectively but also to challenge opposing perspectives with well-founded reasoning. However, despite the significance of critical thinking in argumentative writing, many students encounter difficulties in developing strong arguments due to a lack of confidence in their writing abilities, which is often linked to low self-efficacy. Such difficulties highlight the need for instructional strategies that build foundational thinking habits alongside writing practice (Bean & Melzer, 2021; Deane et al., 2008; Hyland, 2015; Moore, 2014; Taye & Mengesha, 2024).

Self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their capability to perform a specific task, plays a crucial role in academic success, particularly in writing proficiency. As stated by Warshawski (2022), students with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater motivation, persistence, and resilience when faced with challenges compared to those with low self-efficacy. In the context of critical thinking in argumentative writing, self-efficacy influences students' ability to construct logical arguments, organize their thoughts effectively, and revise their work based on feedback (Robillos & Thongpai, 2022; Teng & Yue, 2023). Students with high writing self-efficacy are more likely to approach argumentative writing with confidence, make substantial efforts to refine their arguments, and engage in critical analysis. Conversely, students with low self-efficacy often experience anxiety, avoid complex writing tasks, and struggle to develop well-supported arguments, ultimately hindering their ability to apply critical thinking effectively in their writing. This internal belief system can either empower or inhibit the student's overall academic expression.

The development of critical thinking in argumentative writing requires students to engage in cognitive processes that involve analyzing, evaluating, and creating, as outlined in the revised Bloom's taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). These higher-order thinking skills are essential for students to assess the validity and relevance of evidence, identify logical inconsistencies, and present well-supported claims. Furthermore, critical thinking in argumentative writing promotes intellectual independence, allowing students to question assumptions, recognize biases, and engage in reflective reasoning (Applin, 2024; Kaepfel, 2021). As stated by Haber (2020), without strong critical thinking skills, students may struggle to construct persuasive arguments and may rely on superficial reasoning rather than in-depth analysis. Thus, fostering critical thinking in argumentative writing is essential for developing students' overall academic literacy and reasoning abilities. Encouraging these skills not only improves writing quality but also cultivates habits of mind beneficial beyond the classroom (Elder & Paul, 2020; Facione, 2011; Fisher, 2013; Gurung, Chick & Haynie, 2023; Halpern, 2013; Kennedy, Fisher & Ennis, 2013; Sampson & Gleim, 2009).

While previous studies have examined self-efficacy and critical thinking separately within educational contexts, limited research has explored their interconnectedness in the

domain of argumentative writing. Understanding the correlation between students' self-efficacy and their critical thinking skills in argumentative writing can provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to writing success (Allagui, 2024; Hyytinen, Toom & Postareff, 2018; Limpo & Alves, 2017; Lin, Hu & Chiu, 2020; Schunk, 2023). If self-efficacy is found to significantly impact students' ability to engage in critical thinking while composing argumentative essays, it becomes imperative to integrate self-efficacy-building strategies into writing instruction. It aims to investigate the relationship between writing self-efficacy and critical thinking in argumentative writing, with the goal of identifying effective pedagogical approaches that can enhance students' writing performance. A clearer understanding of this relationship could help educators tailor interventions that address both psychological and cognitive dimensions of learning.

By examining the interplay between self-efficacy and critical thinking in argumentative writing, this study seeks to offer practical recommendations for educators in designing instructional methods that foster both confidence and analytical reasoning skills in students. If self-efficacy proves to be a determining factor in the development of critical thinking in argumentative writing, instructors can implement targeted interventions that emphasize confidence-building techniques alongside critical thinking training. Additionally, the findings of this study may serve as a foundation for curriculum development that integrates self-efficacy enhancement strategies with argumentative writing instruction. Ultimately, this research contributes to both theoretical discussions and practical applications in higher education, providing insights that can improve the teaching and learning of academic writing. This dual focus on skill and mindset offers a holistic approach to strengthening students' academic performance and lifelong learning capacity.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research methodology with a correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' self-efficacy and critical thinking in argumentative writing. Correlational research aims to determine the degree of association between two variables through statistical analysis (Ary et al., 2014). The participants were selected using convenience sampling, meaning they were chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate (Cohen et al., 2007). The study involved undergraduate students from the English Education Study Program at STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang, specifically those who had completed an argumentative writing course. To maintain consistency, students were selected from one class per session, all taught by the same instructor. A total of 32 students participated in the study, and completing the questionnaire.

In order to measure students' writing self-efficacy, the study utilized the L2 Writer Self-Efficacy Scale (L2WSS), which assesses confidence levels in writing based on three key dimensions: generating ideas (ideation), which refers to the ability to develop and organize ideas effectively; expressing ideas (conventions), which relates to the ability to use proper linguistic structures in writing; and managing writing (self-regulation), which focuses on the ability to independently regulate the writing process. To evaluate critical thinking skills in writing, two distinct rubrics were employed: The Criteria for Evaluating Critical Thinking (CT) in L2 Writing, which assesses the critical thinking aspects of students' writing, and the Rubric for Grading Scholarly Paper Assignment, which evaluates the overall quality of academic writing.

The study followed a structured process consisting of multiple phases. First, a pre-test was conducted in which students were required to write an argumentative essay before any

instructional intervention. This was followed by an intervention phase, where students engaged in activities designed to enhance their self-efficacy in writing, focusing on idea generation, writing conventions, and self-regulation. After completing the intervention, students were given a post-test, which required them to write another argumentative essay to assess improvements. The L2WSS questionnaire was then administered to measure students' self-efficacy levels after the intervention. Additionally, qualitative data was collected through interviews with a subset of students to gain deeper insights into their perceptions of writing self-efficacy and critical thinking.

For data analysis, quantitative methods were employed to examine the effects of the intervention and the relationship between self-efficacy and critical thinking. Paired t-tests were conducted to compare students' performance before and after the intervention, determining whether there was a significant improvement in their writing self-efficacy and critical thinking skills. To further analyze the relationship between these two variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. In addition to the quantitative analysis, qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed thematically to explore students' experiences and perceptions regarding self-efficacy and critical thinking in writing.

Despite its strengths, this study has certain limitations. Since convenience sampling was used, the findings may not be fully generalizable to the broader student population. Additionally, external factors such as prior writing experience and individual skill levels could have influenced the results. Future research may consider employing a more diverse sampling method to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the findings and discussions derived from the study, and it elaborated based on the problem of this research.

1. Result

This section presents the findings of the study, including statistical analyses of students' self-efficacy and critical thinking in argumentative writing. The results focus on two main aspects: (1) the impact of the intervention on students' self-efficacy and critical thinking, and (2) the correlation between these two variables.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation of students' self-efficacy scores and critical thinking scores before and after the intervention.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Self-Efficacy and Critical Thinking Scores

| Variable | N | Mean (Pre-Test) | SD (Pre-Test) | Mean (Post-Test) | SD (Post-Test) |
|-------------------|----|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Self-Efficacy | 32 | 56.25 | 8.21 | 72.13 | 7.85 |
| Critical Thinking | 32 | 58.40 | 9.17 | 75.62 | 8.54 |

Based on the table above, students' self-efficacy scores increased from an average of 56.25 (SD = 8.21) in the pre-test to 72.13 (SD = 7.85) in the post-test. Similarly, their critical

thinking scores rose from 58.40 (SD = 9.17) in the pre-test to 75.62 (SD = 8.54) in the post-test. This suggests a substantial improvement in both self-efficacy and critical thinking skills following the intervention. The reduction in standard deviation in the post-test also indicates that students' scores became more stable, reflecting a general trend of improvement across participants. Therefore, it can be said that the results show an increase in both self-efficacy and critical thinking scores after the intervention.

Paired t-Test Analysis

To determine whether the improvement in self-efficacy and critical thinking was statistically significant, a paired t-test was conducted. The results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Paired t-Test Results

| Variable | t-value | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference |
|-------------------|---------|----|-----------------|-----------------|
| Self-Efficacy | 8.92 | 31 | 0.0001 | 15.88 |
| Critical Thinking | 10.45 | 31 | 0.0001 | 17.22 |

The p-values (< 0.05) indicate that the improvement in both self-efficacy and critical thinking scores is statistically significant. The mean difference for self-efficacy was 15.88, meaning students' self-efficacy scores improved by an average of 15.88 points after the intervention. Similarly, the mean difference for critical thinking was 17.22, indicating an even greater improvement in students' critical thinking abilities. In addition, since both t-values (8.92 for self-efficacy and 10.45 for critical thinking) are high and the p-values are less than 0.001, this suggests that the intervention had a strong and reliable impact on both variables. These findings support the hypothesis that targeted writing instruction can significantly enhance students' confidence and critical thinking skills in argumentative writing. Therefore, it suggests that the intervention had a positive impact on students' writing confidence and their ability to engage in critical thinking.

Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and critical thinking scores. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Between Self-Efficacy and Critical Thinking

| Variables | Self-Efficacy | Critical Thinking |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Self-Efficacy | 1 | 0.684 |
| Critical Thinking | 0.684 | 1 |

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a strong positive correlation between self-efficacy and critical thinking. This means that students with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to have stronger critical thinking skills in argumentative writing. Since the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$), this confirms that the relationship is statistically meaningful and reflects a genuine association between the two variables.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the significant correlation between students' self-efficacy and critical thinking in argumentative writing. The results of the paired t-test reveal a substantial improvement in both self-efficacy and critical thinking following the intervention, demonstrating that structured activities focusing on idea generation, writing conventions, and self-regulation effectively enhance students' confidence and analytical abilities. These findings align with study conducted by Golparvar & Khafi (2021) that highlights the crucial role of self-efficacy in academic writing. When students believe in their ability to write effectively, they are more likely to engage in the writing process with greater persistence and motivation, ultimately leading to improved writing performance and critical thinking skills. Besides, the effectiveness of teaching methods plays a crucial role in developing students' writing proficiency (Hidayat & Akillah, 2024; Mahmawati & Setiawan, 2024). Besides, the effectiveness of teaching methods plays a crucial role in developing students' writing proficiency (Hidayat & Akillah, 2024; Mahmawati & Setiawan, 2024). Additionally, cultural heritage influences students' cognitive development and intellectual engagement, enhancing their ability to construct well-reasoned arguments and think critically in academic writing (Nahidin & Faroid, 2024).

Moreover, the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.684$) indicates a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy and critical thinking. This finding supports the theoretical framework proposed by Hand, Chen & Suh (2021) and Teng, Qin & Wang (2022), which suggests that students with higher confidence in their writing abilities tend to engage in deeper cognitive processing, including analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information more effectively. The strong correlation observed in this study suggests that improving students' self-efficacy can have a direct and meaningful impact on their critical thinking skills. This aligns with previous research indicating that students who feel more capable in their writing tend to take greater intellectual risks, explore complex arguments, and demonstrate higher levels of metacognitive awareness in their writing process (Yuswandari & Fitriyah, 2024). As a result, fostering self-efficacy should be an integral part of academic writing instruction, as it not only enhances students' confidence but also strengthens their ability to develop well-reasoned and coherent arguments in their writing.

Despite these promising findings, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The use of convenience sampling means that the results may not be fully generalizable to a broader population of students in similar educational contexts. Additionally, external factors, such as students' prior writing experiences, motivation levels, and varying levels of exposure to critical thinking instruction, may have influenced their progress. Future research should consider employing a larger and more diverse sample to further validate these findings and explore additional variables that may contribute to the development of self-efficacy and critical thinking in writing. Moreover, incorporating qualitative methods, such as student reflections or interviews, could provide deeper insights into how self-efficacy influences their writing strategies and engagement with argumentative writing tasks (Yusuf, 2024). Nonetheless, the results of this study emphasize the importance of integrating targeted interventions that support self-regulated learning and writing confidence. By implementing structured activities that nurture students' belief in their writing abilities, educators can effectively enhance their critical thinking skills, ultimately fostering a more analytical and reflective approach to academic writing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study points out a significant correlation between students' self-efficacy and their critical thinking skills in argumentative writing. The findings suggest that students who possess higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to engage in deeper cognitive processes, allowing them to analyze, evaluate, and construct well-reasoned arguments more effectively. This relationship underscores the crucial role of confidence in writing, as it not only enhances students' ability to articulate their ideas but also fosters their capacity for logical reasoning and problem-solving. By developing self-efficacy through structured interventions that promote self-regulated learning, students can improve both their writing proficiency and critical thinking abilities. These findings emphasize the need for writing instruction that integrates strategies aimed at building students' confidence, ensuring they approach argumentative writing with a stronger sense of autonomy and analytical depth. Although further research is necessary to broaden the applicability of these results, this study reinforces the importance of self-efficacy as a key factor in academic writing success and reveals its role in shaping students into more reflective and independent thinkers.

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