

## **EXPLORING THE LEVELS AND CAUSES OF WRITING ATTITUDE AND ANXIETY AMONG INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed at exploring the levels and causes of writing attitude and writing anxiety in the 8<sup>th</sup> semester students of English Education at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara by using the theory of Ismail for writing attitude, and Cheng and Younas, et al for writing anxiety. Quantitative research was applied, with a total 60 students by using Sugiono's theory. The researcher applied random sampling with 32 samples. A questionnaire was prepared with 31 questions. The data included descriptive statistics and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test. Somatic anxiety type with a medium level of anxiety and linguistic difficulties were the most common causal factors. The correlation coefficient between Writing Anxiety and Writing Attitude were 0.484 indicating a significant relationship between Writing Anxiety and Writing Attitude, with a correlation value 0.593, it meant that the correlation between the effects was in the Coefficient Interval range 0.400-0.600 with Fair Correlation level.

**Keywords : Quantitative Correlative Research, Writing Attitude, Writing Anxiety.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a means to convey the information. It can also be reviewed both internal and external. The external review deals with factors outside the language related to the use of language; like the mental condition of the users of the language (Juni Artha & Irawan, 2020). One of the factors is attitude. Heryanti, Rasyid & Wahyuni (2022) state that attitude in writing covers a complicated sentence structures which must be explored since it deals with the students' skill in writing. It is also someone's reaction or response which is related to a stimulus or object. Students' attitude creates the effect to the motivation in their writing and success (Gocen, 2019). In this research attitude is related to the students' writing when learning English. Indonesian EFL students will definitely find many new things that must be mastered when learning English as Foreign Language. Since English is a second language, so teaching students skills can be challenging, especially for those who lack the fundamental prior of English language skills to succeed in this course (Manurung & Tussa'diah, 2019). Writing has complex nature related to insufficient vocabulary in the writer's repertoire and low mastery of English grammar, as conveyed by Bailey S. (2003) that the most complex and challenging skill to acquire is writing. According to Fox (1993) that writing is an activity of channeling ideas, feelings and opinions in expressing ideas in

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Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

“Human Resource Transformation and Collaborative Innovation to Build Independent and Competitive Business in the Digital Era”

the mind in written form. One of the factors that hinders students in mastering writing skills is the emergence of anxiety in writing. Horwitz (1986) holds the view that anxiety can be described as a subjective sense of tension, fear, uneasiness, and worry associated to the waking of the autonomic nervous system. Anxiety here also means a mental disease caused by the feeling of helplessness in the form of the coming peril (Guo, Xu, & Liu, 2018). MacIntyre & Gardner (1994) explains that second language anxiety In writing, there are three categories that represent a persons’s anxiety category; high anxiety, moderate anxiety, and low anxiety (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014). It is defined as "a sense of tension and understanding that is explicitly tied to the context of the second language" when speaking, listening, and writing in the context of a second language. Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert (1999) explains that there are five weaknesses, including quality of the message to be communicated, a person's real attitude in writing, the appearance of their writing, readiness to write or desire to take advanced courses to develop writing skills and the jobs they choose to hold. By using research findings conducted by Cheng Y. S, the sort of writing anxiety experienced by students can be identified to ascertain the level of writing anxiety among Indonesian EFL students and then analyze the level of writing anxiety among Indonesian EFL students. There are three subscales that become determining factors, namely cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior. Then, using the findings of research conducted by Cheng, it was possible to determine the type of writing anxiety students experience in order to examine the level of writing anxiety among Indonesian EFL students and have created The Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) , which takes into account three sub-scales; cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior.

### METHOD

This research was a quantitative correlative method with the intention of testing predetermined hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2020). To analyze the level and causes, it was necessary to analyze the types of writing anxiety which were divided into three types, namely; cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and avoidance behavior experienced by students as a first step. The survey would be evaluated in order to ascertain whether participant replies would yield any conclusive findings and to assess the data collection procedure (Hussein, 2020). Whereas correlative method related to discover the connection that occurred between writing attitudes and writing anxiety.

### RESULTS

The following explanations was the findings found after analyzing all the data:

#### Students’ Types of Writing Attitude

No. Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.
					Deviation
1. I always need help when I write in	32	1.00	4.00	2.5625	.75935

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Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

“Human Resource Transformation and Collaborative Innovation to Build Independent and Competitive Business in the Digital Era”

English.

2.	I prefer to work with the teacher during a writing activity.	32	1.000	4.000	2.4685	.802592
3.	I prefer to work with the teacher during a writing activity.	32	1.00	4.00	2.5312	.76134
4.	I can write better when I work with other students.	32	1.00	4.00	2.5313	.91526
5.	I would like to learn all language skills except writing.	32	1.00	4.00	1.9062	.99545
6.	Writing is not a very important skill for me.	32	1.00	3.00	1.6875	.73780
7.	I do not enjoy writing in English because it is a very difficult skill for me.	32	1.00	3.00	2.0000	.80322
8.	I do not practice writing in English because it is not very important for my academic study.	32	1.00	3.00	1.6250	.79312
9.	I only write in English during the English for Specific Purpose class.	32	1.00	4.00	2.5625	.80071
10.	The English for Specific Purpose writing class is useful for my	32	2.00	4.00	3.3750	.60907

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Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

“Human Resource Transformation and Collaborative Innovation to Build Independent and Competitive Business in the Digital Era”

academic study

11. I feel the Academic Writing Course helps me improve my writing skill more than Level 3 Writing Course	32	2.00	4.00	3.3125	.64446
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The highest average value was 3.3750, because it had the lowest standard deviation (STD) value, namely 0.60907, which meant that students felt learning writing skills greatly improved their abilities in the academic ability.

### Students' Types of Writing Anxiety

**Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Types of Writing Anxiety and Its Scale**

No.	Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under time constraint.	32	1.00	4.00	2.8750	.65991
2.	While writing English compositions, I feel uneasy if I worried and know they will be evaluate d.	32	1.00	4.00	2.7500	.87988
3.	My mind often goes to blank when I start to work on an English composition.	32	1.00	4.00	2.7500	.91581
4.	I tremble or perspire. When I write English compositions under time pressure	32	1.00	4.00	2.3125	.99798
5.	If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor	32	1.00	4.00	2.7813	.70639

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Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

“Human Resource Transformation and Collaborative Innovation to Build Independent and Competitive Business in the Digital Era”

grade

6.	I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English.	32	1.00	4.00	2.0938	.85607
7.	I Often I panic WhenI write English compositions under time constraint	32	1.00	4.00	2.6562	.74528
8.	I am worry at all about what other people would think of my English compositions.	32	1.00	4.00	2.7187	.77186
9.	I’m afraid my English composition of being chosen as a sample to be discussed in class	32	1.00	4.00	2.5000	.84242
10.	Whenever possible, I would not use English to write compositions.	32	1.00	4.00	2.0313	.86077

**Table 4.3 The Dominant Value of Students’ Type of Writing Anxiety**

Type Of Writing Anxiety	Number of Student	Total Score	Mean
Somatic Anxiety	32	339.00	10.5938
Cognitive Anxiety	32	264.00	8.2500
Avoidance Behavior	32	212.00	6.6250
Valid N (listwise)	32		

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Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

“Human Resource Transformation and Collaborative Innovation to Build Independent and Competitive Business in the Digital Era”

Based on the table above, the average value of writing anxiety ranged from 6.6250 to 10.5938.

### Students' Level of Writing Anxiety

**Table 4.4 Distribution of Writing Anxiety Levels**

Group	N	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
High ( $M > 3$ )	6	19%	3.3333	.38297
Middle ( $2 < M < 3$ )	21	66%	2.5381	.26735
Low ( $M < 2 >$ )	5	16%	1.6400	.15166
Valid N (listwise)	32	100%	7.5114	0.8020

There were 6 students with a high level of anxiety (19%), average value 3.3333 and a standard deviation 0.38297. Students who had a medium anxiety level was 21 students (66%), and an average value 2.5381 and a standard deviation value 0.2673. There were 5 students having low level (16%) and an average value 1.6400 with a standard deviation 0.15166.

### Students' Cause of Writing Anxiety

**Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Causes of Writing Anxiety**

No.	Cause of Writing Anxiety	N	Mean	Interpretation
1.	The fear of teacher's negative comments	32	2.7813	Moderately-faced
2.	The lack of practice	32	2.8438	Moderately-faced
3.	The lack of writing techniques	32	2.7812	Moderately-faced
4.	The problem with topic choice	32	2.5625	Moderately-faced
5.	The linguistic difficulties	32	3.0000	Moderately-faced
6.	The pressure for perfect work	32	2.9063	Moderately-faced

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Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

“Human Resource Transformation and Collaborative Innovation to Build Independent and Competitive Business in the Digital Era”

7. The time pressure	32	2.9063	Moderately-faced
8. The lack of confidence	32	2.9063	Moderately-faced
9. The fear of writing test	32	2.8750	Moderately-faced
10. The high frequency of writing assignment	32	2.5625	Moderately-faced

It could be ranked that the cause of writing anxiety with the highest ranking was mean score 3,000 , 2.9063, 2.9063, 2.9063, 2.8750, 2.8438, 2.7813, 2.7812, 2.5625 and the last was 2.5625.

### The Correlation between Students' Writing Attitude and Writing Anxiety

**Table 4.6 The Correlation between Writing Attitude and Writing Anxiety**

		Writing Anxiety	Writing Attitude
X	Pearson Correlation	1	.593**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	32	32
Y	Pearson Correlation	.593**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	32	32

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There was a major connection between Writing Anxiety and Writing Attitude with correlation of 0.593.

**DISCUSSION**

Based on the data studied, the students' type writing attitude were positive writing attitude. This meant that students provided positive responses during the learning process. It was found that the type of the students' writing anxiety was somatic anxiety that was related to how one interpreted the psychological side-effects of associated with anger, such as tension and nervousness. 32 respondents showed medium level anxiety (66%), 6 respondents showed high level anxiety (19%), and 5 respondents showed a low level of anxiety (16%). The average students experienced causative factors. It was because of linguistic difficulties which included insufficient proficiency in vocabulary, problems with sentence structures, and grammar mistakes (Zhang, 2011). There was a correlation 0.593 which referred to fair correlation or there was a relation between writing anxiety and writing attitudes

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research conducted, it was found that The type of writing attitude which appeared among students was positive type. This could be proven by looking at the mean value and highest standard deviation of writing attitudes (M= 3.3750 and SD=0.60907). According to the outcomes of the Pearson Product Moment correlation test, the results of calculating the correlation coefficient between Writing Anxiety and Writing Attitude were 0.484 which revealed the existence of a substantial link between writing anxiety and writing attitude, with a correlation value 0.593, which meant that the correlation between the effects was in the Coefficient Interval range 0.400-0.600 with Fair Correlation level of correlation based on the indexes of correlation coefficient by Arikunto (2010).

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Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

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