

Delving Into Writing Anxiety of Rural College EFL Learners: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety in foreign language writing burdens EFL learners before, during, and after producing scientific written texts. This current research aimed to explore the types, levels, and causes of anxiety toward writing research reports and the final thesis of rural college EFL learners, and the emerging causes of their writing apprehension. 103 EFL learners in two rural colleges in Indonesia participated in the quantitative study by employing the Second Language Writing Inventory (SLWAI) and the Causes of Writing Anxiety Inventory (CWAII). The results reveal that cognitive anxiety was the highest type and level of rural college EFL learners' writing apprehension. Independent t-test shows that female EFL learners dominate male learners regarding writing anxiety. Furthermore, junior learners were more anxious than seniors. The learners with writing training had lower anxiety than those without writing experiences. Moreover, the learners taking the Research Method course were anxious about writing a research report. However, no significant difference was found between each variable. The most dominant emerging factors deal with problems with linguistic matters, fear of lecturers or supervisors' negative feedback, self-regulation in writing, writing evaluation, and inadequate training in writing. In conclusion, current classroom practice in rural colleges needs to be aware of and take academic action towards such circumstances.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Interest in writing in second/ foreign language education is increasing due to higher needs for writing such as article writing, thesis project, or essay writing as academic tasks. Writing instructors in higher education contexts struggle to improve English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' writing competence. In addition, writing is an integral part of EFL learners' development in learning, including the ability to analyze, synthesize, and make inferences (Abas & Abd Aziz, 2018; Arifin, 2020; Cheung, 2021). However, several negative emotions, such as worry, anxiety, and fear, are found during the writing process in second language education (Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017; Toba et al., 2019). Such negative emotions lead to anxiety in second language writing, speaking, and listening, which causes apprehension and tension (Sabti et al., 2019).

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The current study was proposed to discuss anxiety experienced by rural college EFL learners in writing research reports and final thesis. Regarding negative emotions, the study is considered to be paramount for several reasons. To begin, anxiety, as experienced by EFL learners, influences their learning goals, such as achievement in writing a scientific article or successfully writing on various topics. Researching types, levels, and factors of such anxiety may result in findings that will allow learners to adapt to appropriate learning strategies to reduce such learning anxiety. Various strategies enable learners to determine proper solutions to keep learning without or with lower intensity of anxiety (Jawas, 2019; Tran, 2020; Wilby, 2020). Besides, learning English in a rural context challenges many learners regarding negative emotions such as learning anxiety. The learning situation in a rural context differs from that of an urban college. For example, rural EFL learners suffer from lower worldwide understanding due to limited access to the internet (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). This challenging issue harms rural learners' knowledge levels for better learning. Another related issue in the rural context is the lack of facilities, and teachers with low competencies in teaching influence learners' goals in learning English. Competencies and facilities are two interrelated elements that enable learners to be academically developed. In addition, the challenges of learning English in a rural context result in the emergence of learning anxieties, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing anxieties.

Writing anxiety is believed to be the fear and unwillingness to write (El Shimi, 2017). Among many kinds of anxieties, writing is considered the most significant anxiety as it requires EFL learners to think deeply and emotionally through cognitive thoughts (Y. Cheng, 2002). Advanced-level EFL learners face difficulties in making inferences or synthesizing ideas in writing; meanwhile, beginner EFL learners struggle to construct basic sentences to create paragraphs or essays in the writing process (Maznun et al., 2017). Similarly, writing anxiety contributes to being academically tested and solved by developing learners' writing and allowing them to be indulged in self-regulated writing under the supervisor's control and appropriate strategies in writing (Wilby, 2020). Avoidance in writing refers to a type of negative anxiety that leads learners to circumvent any possible activity in writing (Qadir et al., 2021). The reason for writing avoidance is that writing is always followed by an evaluation which causes anxiety or fear of writing (Rudaz et al., 2017).

Many previous studies have been conducted in terms of writing anxiety, for instance, relationships between writing anxiety and other factors (Huerta et al., 2017; Kassem, 2017; Lu et al., 2018; Stewart et al., 2015; X. Zhang, 2019), impacts on writing anxiety (Abdullah et al., 2018; Sabti et al., 2019; Tsao et al., 2017; Yastıbaş & Yastıbaş, 2015), qualitative study on writing anxiety (Aripin & Rahmat, 2021; Huang, 2015; Miri & Joia, 2018; Nazari et al., 2019; Qashoa, 2014; Wynne et al., 2014). However, a focused study on emerging factors, types, and levels of writing anxiety in a rural college through a quantitative study has not yet been investigated. This current research sought to explore the types and levels of writing anxiety and emerging factors that influence the levels through a questionnaire study. Demographic variables such as gender (e.g., male), grade (e.g., freshman), training (e.g., receive writing course), and course (e.g., Research Method course) are paramount in determining the learners' writing anxiety among EFL learners in Indonesian rural colleges. More specifically, this current study was undertaken to pursue the questions as follows:

1. What types and levels of writing anxiety are experienced by rural college EFL learners?
2. Are there significant differences in writing anxiety among rural college EFL learners based on gender, grade, training, and course variables?
3. What factors influence EFL learners' anxiety in writing a research report and final thesis?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Second Language Writing Anxiety

Learners with high anxiety levels tend to avoid attending writing classes and aspects related to academic writing (Y. Cheng, 2002). Tsao et al. (2017) mentioned that learners with high anxiety are disposed to write low-standard text with brief and basic structures. Meanwhile, learners who lack apprehension toward composition can build better writing compared to those whose apprehension in writing is higher (Ariyanti, 2017). Furthermore, Cheng created, tested, and used a questionnaire in 2004 to measure anxiety in writing. It was called the questionnaire of Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), and it showed how cognitive composition anxiety affected writing processes and attitudes. After that, 65 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Taiwan were tested to see if the scale was trustworthy and reliable. The survey is now used to determine if the person has writing anxiety.

Writing anxiety is the sense of apprehension that arises from generating written content, which impacts one's ability to write well. According to El Shimi (2017), the act of evaluating one's writing during the process hinders the ability to write effectively. This is because EFL learners struggle with the task of avoiding the negative impact of their native language (L1) on English (L2). It is believed that writing in a second language is much different from L1 regarding linguistic, rhetoric, and strategic understanding and process (Saeli & Cheng, 2019). Research has shown that writing anxiety negatively impacts learners' writing competence, for instance, pressure to deal with the word composition and its entire steps (Sabti et al., 2019). The worst impact of writing anxiety leads to an unwillingness to attend a writing course and the desire to enter a class with little or no writing tasks (Rabadi & Rabadi, 2020).

SLWAI consists of three categories: cognitive apprehension, somatic apprehension, and avoidance attitudes (Cheng, 2004). Cognitive apprehension is mainly about mental aspects experienced by learners with anxiety. It includes negative beliefs, performance that affects thoughts, and distress about others' views (Tsirirotakis et al., 2017). Cognitive anxiety refers to the process in the brain that causes apprehension during anxiety experience. Huerta et al. (2017) state that anxiety burdens self-cognition, which has negative impacts on learners' failure feelings (e.g., I will never be able to deal with this), self-disapprobation (e.g., I am just bad at this), self-avoidance (e.g., I wish this was not happening).

Somatic apprehension is a person's recognition of anxiety's psychological impacts, which is realized in an increasingly autonomous encouragement and irritating feeling such as apprehension and emotion (Cheng, 2004; Tsirirotakis et al., 2017). Somatic anxiety is a kind of anxiety that causes physical problems such as trembling, sweating, headaches, and increased heartbeat. Avoidance attitude is a behavioral aspect that occurs during anxiety experience (Cheng, 2004). This behavior encourages EFL learners to avoid English instead of their first language or mother tongue. The EFL learners with such behavior tend to figure out ideas that enable them to use their first language more than English. Moreover, the learners struggle to find ways of attending a writing course without any writing activity. Anxiety is of three categories, namely trait apprehension as a personality attribute, state apprehension as feedback to specialized apprehension-provoking impetus such as a paramount exam, and apprehension under specific circumstances (Shen et al., 2018) as anxiety triggering specific circumstances and considered as the significant kind of apprehension toward composition.

There have been many previous studies that focus on writing anxiety. For example, the research findings of (Çocuk et al., 2016) showed that writing anxiety among Turkish students was affected by gender difference, grade level, and attitude toward EFL writing. In this case, anxiety toward writing and writing dispositions were interrelated. Both aspects of writing proved that students with a higher interest in Turkish subjects have higher anxiety levels. Furthermore, female students exhibited better performance compared to male students in relation to degrees of writing anxiety. Similarly, Jebreil, Azizifar, and Gowhary (2015) examined the interplay between writing anxiety, performance, and gender effects among EFL students in Iranian high schools. This study employed Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory and a test to measure writing performance. In this finding, male EFL learners experienced higher anxiety levels than female learners. Besides, male learners also suffered from a higher level of cognitive anxiety during writing class. Fortunately, both male and female EFL learners have similar somatic anxiety and avoidance behavior levels. As for linguistic matters, a group of male learners encountered problems applying grammatical rules in writing.

Wahyuni, Oktavia, and Marlina (2019) examined EFL students' anxiety toward writing in English as a foreign language. Using the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory, it was found that the students had moderate anxiety. The students' proficiency level was not correlated with their levels of writing anxiety or their performance in writing classes. Causes of Writing Inventory (CWAI) was employed to find out the factors of writing anxiety. The result shows that the students did not undertake sufficient practice in writing. To solve the problems, the students performed several strategies, such as self-prepared writing, favorable consideration, and peer evaluation. Another solution is to empower written corrective feedback to ensure that learners' writing is developed over time. Direct feedback from teachers enables EFL learners to increase their understanding of the written work they implement. This method reduces higher anxiety levels toward writing (Tran, 2020).

Rabadi and Rabadi (2020) undertook a study to investigate EFL learners' writing anxiety in terms of its levels, types, and causes. Cross-sectional research with surveys via online application was employed by using Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI). The scale Causes of Writing Anxiety Inventory (CWAI) was used through a semi-structured interview protocol to determine the factors of such writing anxiety. The research findings show that the EFL learners were overwhelmed with a higher level of anxiety toward writing. In this case, the participants suffered from cognitive experiences of anxiety as the most dominant type. Several problems emerged as the main factors of the anxiety toward writing, including lack of linguistic abilities, lack of practice in writing, lack of writing confidence, and apprehension toward writing exams. The results from the interviews supported the previous findings. In addition, the findings are needed to design writing lessons.

2.2 Factors of Composition Apprehension

In a study, Younas, Subhani, and Arshad (2014) found several emerging factors that trigger writing anxiety among EFL learners. The rising characteristics include anxiety around receiving unfavorable assessments for their writing, infrequent engagement in language writing, inadequate writing skills, and insufficient recognition of writing subjects. Moreover, other supporting factors include linguistic issues such as diction, grammar, and vocabulary, burdening tasks towards perfect writing, time load, and less confidence in writing.

El Shimi (2017) reported that apprehension toward negative evaluation is an essential issue in EFL learners' L2 activity in writing class. Anxious feeling burdens EFL learners to write a composition and be evaluated by their writing lecturer or classmates. In many cases, the anxiety of another evaluation leads to embarrassed feelings due to critical comments about their writing before their classmates. The EFL learners are unconsciously forced to write a perfect composition unless they are ready to receive a negative evaluation. Consequently, worse writing is deemed to be ridiculed by their classmates. Writing anxiety occurs when EFL learners have an issue with L2 linguistic competence. As the EFL learners are responsible for writing a composition in good grammatical patterns, they are, as a consequence, distressed by a lack of competence in using language skills such as diction, vocabulary, and grammar in L2. Their anxiety levels in writing are also determined by appropriate writing techniques and sufficient training in writing (Zhang & Zhong, 2012).

Although several researchers (El Shimi, 2017; Younas et al., 2014; Zhang & Zhong, 2012) concerned with emerging factors in composition apprehension were previously investigated, it has not been identified what levels, kinds, and causes of writing apprehension based on related demographic variables such as grade, gender, and training are figured out. Consequently, this research describes the kinds, levels, and emerging factors that cause writing apprehension across grades, gender, training, and course.

On the other hand, in a study by Al-Khairi (2013), it was found that students at undergraduate levels had low ability in terms of academic writing performance. It lacked engagement in advanced sentence levels and extended paragraph writing. To solve this, it is necessary to increase writing practices in or outside the classroom. Another strategy was empowering EFL teachers to implement various techniques in writing that can motivate the students in writing.

Jawas (2019) aimed to identify the factors contributing to anxiety related to essay writing and explore effective coping techniques for managing anxiety among EFL learners. The most dominant cause of anxiety was the compulsory essay tasks for each learner. To cope with this problem, the EFL learners were asked to work collaboratively with their classmates to reduce their anxiety. EFL learners are expected to figure out solutions to their writing anxiety by giving them some chances to determine self-managed strategies in writing. One of the appropriate strategies to reduce writing anxiety is implementing creative writing in EFL classrooms. Creative writing motivates students to increase their writing competencies and critical thinking skills (Dai, 2010). In addition, Tok and Kandemir (2015) found that creative writing has positive impacts on reducing writing anxiety and developing writing skills. Writing allows learners to increase their writing dispositions needed for their writing development. The learners can improve their writing dispositions through writing, which is necessary for their writing development.

2.3 Facilitating and Debilitating Impacts of Anxiety

Regarding the writing process, two inseparable impacts of anxiety that debilitate or facilitate EFL learners must be considered. Debilitating anxiety refers to the negative feeling that leads to severe fear of given tasks (Liu & Wu, 2021). For example, learners face several impacts of debilitating anxiety, including apprehension during a test, lack of knowledge on a topic, lack of learning focus under time pressure, and distress about facing instructions. Most EFL learners cannot easily avoid such anxiety during the writing process as they are not used to accomplishing writing tasks with various situations such as determining topics,

time pressure, complicated instructions, and high achievement. To deal with such impacts of anxiety, EFL learners need to be knowledgeable about every step of writing, its types, and various writing topics. Moreover, regular exercises in writing enable the learners to develop their knowledge about how to start and accomplish writing with better results.

Meanwhile, unlike the previous impacts of anxiety, facilitating anxiety motivates learners to accomplish tasks with high enthusiasm (Lowe, 2018). For some learners, this anxiety affects their focus on working with a task such as writing more positively. For example, learners can create favorable situations in a given task, including effectual results under time pressure, positive thoughts toward apprehension, better accomplishment, and high interest in task challenges. The facilitating impacts of anxiety are precious for EFL learners' writing development. Learners with enthusiasm have productive chances to start and accomplish writing tasks without any negative feelings, which cause failure to write or reduce their writing quality.

Anxiety has sometimes been considered a positive alarm for learners in writing since it warns EFL learners to pay attention to every single element of writing, because of which writing failure is identified. However, widespread impacts of anxiety toward writing performance have been identified as unexpected problems during the writing process (Cheng, 2004). Facilitating impacts are needed to empower EFL learners to select writing strategies to motivate and encourage themselves to accomplish given writing tasks. Such impacts are paramount so that the learners can overcome writing problems resulting from the debilitating impacts of writing anxiety.

2.4 English Learning in Rural and Urban Contexts

Learning English has been considered an important activity for most EFL learners. However, such activity has a different phenomenon resulting from EFL learners' experiences in rural and urban contexts. In the rural context, for example, several problems have been faced by EFL learners in developing their English skills, including writing skills, such as limited access to learning resources, lack of competent teachers, lack of facilities, lower learning motivation, socioeconomic status, and monotonous classrooms (Gong et al., 2014; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Saiful & Triyono, 2018; Starrett et al., 2021; Sullivan et al., 2018). Amongst the problems, limited access to the internet as a learning resource has been challenging for learners in this 21st century. The learners cannot access English learning materials, such as authentic materials in learning how to write in English. Updated learning resources are needed for EFL learners to upgrade their understanding and knowledge of English skills. Moreover, as competent teachers are unwilling to choose rural colleges, many colleges are left with less competent teachers, affecting the EFL learners' learning development. In short, rural EFL learners have higher anxiety during their English learning (Hussain et al., 2011), and they need some solving strategies to cope with it.

These problems are unique in that EFL learners need to be creative to overcome possible challenges during their English learning. The learners require higher enthusiasm to keep learning and improve learning strategies. Intensive guidance from EFL teachers is paramount in developing learners' writing skills in terms of vocabulary, content, and writing organization (Jalaluddin et al., 2011). For example, in developing writing skills, EFL learners can practice by describing nature, people, and routines. It is noticed that self-practice has a better impact on learners' learning competence and allows learners to explore their interests and talents in learning (Samruayruen et al., 2013). In addition, regular practices

also help the learners increase their understanding of a subject, leading to higher motivation and reducing anxiety in learning English.

Unlike in a rural context, learning English in an urban context has been popular because of its availability of learning resources such as the library and online learning materials. Easy access to the learning resources enables EFL learners to develop their English writing skills and reduce their anxiety as they have various materials to consult. Regarding teachers, colleges in urban contexts are overwhelmed with competent English teachers whose tasks are to ensure that the EFL learners' English skills are intensively developed (McHugh et al., 2013). Moreover, the advancement of technology utilized in urban colleges, such as language laboratories and the Internet, helps EFL learners to practice their English more intensively. Combining learning materials, competent teachers, and ICT in the urban context is considered a helpful factor in influencing EFL learners' successful English learning and reducing anxiety in learning such as writing. In short, learning English in urban schools can be more beneficial because they have more excellent beliefs in successful learning than in rural schools (Gobel et al., 2013).

3. METHOD

A quantitative approach investigated EFL learners' writing anxiety in rural contexts. The focus was to determine the types, levels, and emerging factors influencing the rural EFL learners' anxiety toward writing. To achieve this purpose, this study was designed by determining the EFL learners as the participants, selecting appropriate scales, preparing strategies for collecting data, and demonstrating procedures for analyzing data. Each element in this research method is interrelated, and one part supports the others.

3.1 Participants

Several EFL learners ($n = 103$) from rural state-owned colleges were selected based on the research consent distributed to each participant and the availability of samples. Of 119 invitations sent via online applications, only 103 EFL learners completed the scales and returned their online applications. The age range for the participants was 20 to 22 years, and the mean was 21 years. A significant number of female EFL students ($n = 67$) and a small number of male EFL students ($n = 36$) participated in this study. 62.1% of junior and 37.9% of senior EFL students were selected to complete the questionnaires to determine their writing anxiety. However, 14 senior students out of 39 were taking the Research Method course due to administrative matters and course requirements. Therefore, 78 junior and senior EFL students took the Research Method course, while 25 EFL senior students took the Final Research Project. In addition, the participants were also divided into a group with training in a research report or thesis writing (65%) and without training in writing a research report or thesis writing (35%). This training was undertaken by the end of semester four before the Research Method course began and by the end of semester six or before the Final Research Project commenced.

Table 1
Demographic Variables of the Participants

Variables		%	n
Gender	Female	65	67
	Male	35	36
Grades	Junior	62.1	64
	Senior	37.9	39
Training	With Training	65	67
	Without Training	35	36
Course	Research Method Course	75.7	78
	Final Research Project	24.3	25

Concerning participants' ethical issues, the researchers prepared informed consent to be sent and filled by the participants. The informed consent was sent via internet applications such as *Google form, Email, WhatsApp, and Facebook*. The consent contained the EFL learners' readiness to become participants. It also described the detailed purposes of the study along with its general procedures. Having read and comprehended the informed consents, 119 EFL learners signed the written consents and sent them back via the website or online application. The EFL learners decided themselves as the study participants and agreed to participate in every data collection. In addition, the consent also stated that their grades on the course were not affected, and they were shown as anonymous participants in the research report.

3.2 Instruments

Cheng (2004) developed the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI). It comprises 22 items and is categorized into three subfactors, namely Somatic apprehension (as represented in dissenting affection such as anxiety or stress), Cognitive apprehension (as represented in dissenting belief, engrossment with capabilities), Avoidance attitude (as represented in delusion toward composition). The questionnaire has been demonstrated to have higher reliability and validity regarding factor analysis and correlational study with Cronbach's alpha .91 (Cheng, 2004). This 5-Likert scale ranges from strongly agree to disagree strongly. The subscales of SLWAI are categorized into Cognitive anxiety (e.g., *While writing in English, I am not nervous at all*), Somatic anxiety (e.g., *My mind goes blank when I start to work on an English composition*), and Avoidance behavior (e.g., *Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write compositions*). To accommodate the EFL learners' comprehension of the meaning of each statement, the researchers asked three English professors in the English departments to convert the English into the Indonesian version.

Regarding the levels of writing anxiety subfactors (i.e., somatic, cognitive, and avoidance behaviors), Wahyuni and Umam (2017) categorized the levels into high, medium, and low groups. A high level of anxiety is determined by several more than 73.33 (73) on the Likert Scale. A low level of anxiety is directed by a total score of less than 58.67 (59). The total score on the Likert scale between 73 and 59 is in the medium category of anxiety.

The second questionnaire, the Causes of Writing Anxiety Inventory (CWA), was developed and validated by Younas et al. (2014). This questionnaire was adapted to

accommodate the objectives of the study. This scale was proposed to explore factors influencing the anxiety levels toward second language writing among rural college EFL learners. The factors include anxiety toward negative notes, inadequate training for writing, anxiety about writing exams, obstacles in selecting topics, problems with linguistic matters, a high number of writing tasks, negative confidence in writing, and high expectations of perfect writing (Cheng, 2002).

2.3 Data Collection

The data were collected by distributing the questionnaire to selected participants via Google Forms, Email, and WhatsApp. Such online applications were chosen due to the distance factor. The participants had two weeks to complete and return the questionnaire. Meanwhile, to maintain research ethics, the informed consent revealed their readiness to voluntarily participate in the survey study.

2.4 Data Analysis

A t-test was administered to answer whether there are statistical differences in levels and emerging factors of writing anxiety based on the demographic variables (i.e., gender, grades, training, and course). The data were analyzed by using SPSS 25. The first analysis was focused on determining the total score, the mean, and the standard deviation of scales 1 and 2 descriptively. It was done by calculating means and standard deviation and determining *the p-value* of each type of writing anxiety produced by the EFL learners. As for the causes of writing anxiety, the analysis was undertaken by determining the highest scores of the percentage of each statement within CWAI. Each highest score was compared with other high scores to determine the rank of EFL learners' composition apprehension.

4. RESULTS

This section focuses on answering three research questions as previously designed in the introduction section. The first subsection aimed to determine the types and levels of writing anxiety among rural college students. The second subsection attempted to answer whether there are significant differences in the learners' writing anxiety across gender, grade, training, and course variables. The last subsection investigated the factors influencing rural college learners' anxiety toward writing.

4.1 Types and levels of writing anxiety experienced by rural college EFL learners

Table 2 below presents the writing anxiety levels among rural EFL learners based on the writing anxiety questionnaire.

Table 2
The types and levels of writing anxiety among EFL learners

Types of Anxiety	n	Sum	M	SD
Cognitive	103	3220	31.26	2.034
Somatic	103	2242	21.77	1.190
Avoidance	103	2103	20.42	1.678
Total			73.45	

The above table shows that cognitive anxiety is the most dominant anxiety among EFL learners, with a total score of 3220. Somatic anxiety is the second highest type of anxiety, with a total score of 2242. Otherwise, the EFL learner's performance in avoiding writing anxiety is better than cognitive and somatic anxiety. It can be seen from the total score of 2103 for avoidance behavior. Meanwhile, the total score of Means is employed to determine the level of writing anxiety. 73.45 proved that the EFL learners have high anxiety toward writing a research report thesis as a final research project. In other words, the EFL learners' anxiety in writing a mini research report and writing a thesis includes cognitive, somatic, and avoidance behaviors with different ranges of levels.

4.2 Significant differences of writing anxiety among rural college EFL learners based on gender, grade, training, and course variables

Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 present the results of an independent t-test of writing anxiety, which shows whether there is no significant difference that emerges among the demographic variables (i.e., gender, grade, training, and course). Gender differences between female and male EFL learners do not significantly differ for all types of anxiety (Table 3). It revealed a slight mean score among somatic, cognitive, and avoidance factors.

Table 3

Independent t-test of writing anxiety based on gender difference

Types	Gender	n	M	SD	p
Somatic	Female	67	21.79	1.16	.781
	Male	36	21.72	1.25	
Cognitive	Female	67	31.25	2.08	.955
	Male	36	31.28	1.96	
Avoidance	Female	67	20.55	1.62	.268
	Male	36	20.17	1.76	

Another result of the independent t-test (Table 4) demonstrates a bit similar result if compared to that on gender difference. The result showed that each grade did not yield any significant difference.

Table 4

Independent t-test of writing anxiety based on grade difference

Types	Grade	n	M	SD	p
Somatic	Junior	64	21.72	1.06	.601
	Senior	39	21.85	1.38	
Cognitive	Junior	64	31.30	2.06	.826
	Senior	39	31.21	2.00	
Avoidance	Junior	64	20.23	1.65	.157
	Senior	39	20.72	1.68	

There are two types of training in writing, namely, mini-research report writing held by the end of semester four and final thesis writing held by the end of semester six. This variable showed a similar result as the two above variables. There was no greater statistical difference found between EFL learners with or without research and writing practices.

Table 5

Independent t-test of writing anxiety based on training difference

Types	Training	n	M	SD	p
Somatic	With Training	48	21.69	1.27	.529
	Without Training	55	21.84	1.11	
Cognitive	With Training	48	31.02	2.08	.263
	Without Training	55	31.47	1.98	
Avoidance	With Training	48	20.31	1.78	.556
	Without Training	55	20.51	1.58	

Table 6 shows that strategies to avoid writing have a higher p -value (.845). The last variable did not reveal any statistical difference between those attending the Research Method course and those with the Final Research Project.

Table 6

Independent t-test of writing anxiety based on course difference

Types	Course	n	M	SD	p
Somatic	Research Method course	78	21.85	1.15	.235
	Final Research Project	25	21.52	1.29	
Cognitive	Research Method course	78	31.29	2.04	.775
	Final Research Project	25	31.16	2.03	
Avoidance	Research Method course	78	20.44	1.71	.845
	Final Research Project	25	20.36	1.60	

4.3 Factors influencing EFL learners' anxiety in writing a research report and final thesis

Figure 1 presents the result summary of the CWAI questionnaire on rural EFL learners' emerging factors in terms of writing anxiety. The highest percentage of each item in CWAI was marked and enlisted into possible emerging factors of research report and thesis writing anxiety.

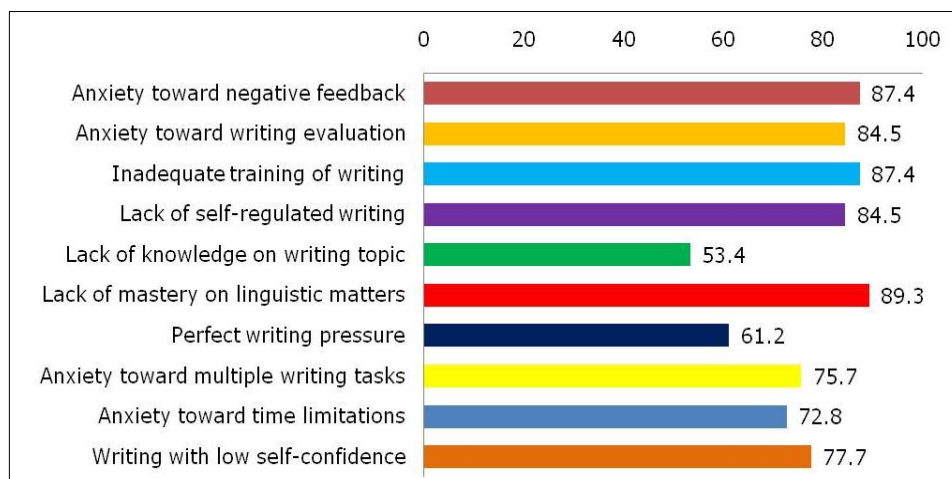


Fig. 1. Factors affecting towards writing anxiety

Figure 1 reveals that problems in terms of linguistic matters were the most dominant emerging factor of the research report and thesis writing (89.3%). Linguistic problems include errors and mistakes in building grammatical sentence structures, selecting proper vocabulary, and the like. Another dominant emerging factor was anxiety toward negative feedback from the lecturer in the research method course or supervisor in the final research project course (87.4%). The feedback can be oral or written, depending on the lecturer and supervisor's choice. Such feedback was not engaging for EFL students since they were ordered to follow every suggestion or rewrite every corrected part in their writings. In line with this, EFL students' inadequate training in either mini-research reports or thesis writing was also a dominant emerging factor (87.4%). In this study, there were two groups of training, namely, a group with training in writing (48%) and another group with no training (55%). The result shows that the students who did not attend any training in writing have higher writing anxiety than those who attended the training.

Another emerging factor was anxiety toward writing evaluation (84.5%). This factor is in line with negative feedback from the lecturer or supervisor. The students feared every evaluation of their writing due to negative comments as feedback. Writing an evaluation requires regular supervision from the lecturer or supervisor to help students accomplish better writing. Moreover, a similar result comes from the need for more self-regulation in writing a mini-research report and final thesis project (84.5%). Self-regulation helps EFL students to increase their motivation to write and accomplish their writing. A factor with lower scores is self-confidence in writing the mini-research report and final thesis (77.7%). This factor is similar to self-regulation, enabling students to write confidently.

Anxiety toward writing tasks (75.7%) follows the self-confidence factor. In the research method course, writing tasks include a mini-research proposal and a final mini-research report. Their writings were evaluated in every meeting to ensure that they did good work. The tasks were more burdening for senior EFL students whose task was to write a thesis proposal and accomplish a final research report. They were asked to present perfect results of their thesis writing (61.2%). This factor was correlated with the time limitation factor (72.8%), which reduced the students' motivation to accomplish excellent work. Fortunately, the student's knowledge of finding a good topic for their writing was not a problem (53.4%).

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, the writing anxiety levels among rural EFL students who were writing a mini research report and final thesis vary by type. The levels range from cognitive, with the highest anxiety, followed by somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviors. Cognitive anxiety derives from anxiety when the students are evaluated under the lecturer or supervisor's writing control. In this case, Sullivan et al. (2018) stated that in a rural context, learners' writing anxiety is cognitively higher compared to that in an urban context, which is influenced by a lack of practices and control from teachers. It aligns with Jennifer and Ponniah (2017), who found that student writers produced higher scores on cognitive anxiety, followed by somatic anxiety and avoidance behavior. Another finding from Zhang (2011) also reveals that cognitive anxiety has become a dominant type of student writing anxiety among types of writing anxiety. This result is similar to Cheng's (2004) idea, which shows that as the most common anxiety in writing, students fear evaluation toward lower grades, grammar errors, and mistakes from their lecturers or supervisors. In the rural context, EFL learners face higher levels of cognitive anxiety toward writing skills as they are not contributed with full access to learning sources and appropriate teaching approaches performed by less competent teachers (Starrett et al., 2021; Sullivan et al., 2018). In the same vein, Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) believe that rural learning is much influenced by limited access to an organized learning environment, leading to more anxiety among learners.

As for gender difference, the results reveal that female EFL learners have higher anxiety than male EFL learners. In writing a mini research report and final thesis, cognitive anxiety becomes learners' most dominant type of anxiety. Interestingly, there is no gender difference between male and female EFL learners' somatic, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance behaviors. Along the same lines, Cheng's (2002) investigation proved that female Taiwanese learners experienced writing anxiety in the classroom. To support this, other previous studies, such as Çocuk et al. (2016), Jafari & Ansari (2012), and Mathew et al. (2013), mentioned that in terms of the fear of writing, female learners were more indulged than male learners. However, the opposite result in the studies of Rabadi and Rabadi (2020) and Jebreil et al. (2015) noted that male EFL learners experienced a higher anxiety level than female EFL learners. Regarding rural learning, it is noticed that gender difference that emerges in learning is affected by several factors, including levels of understanding of knowledge, learning habits and environment, and socioeconomic status (Gong et al., 2014; Sullivan et al., 2018).

Writing anxiety across grades reveals that junior EFL learners suffer more significant anxiety than senior learners. This is in line with the findings of Çocuk et al. (2016). They stated that fifth-grade learners experienced anxiety, such as cognitive, somatic, and avoidance behavior. The reason can be that junior learners are less experienced in writing research reports than senior learners. In a study, Berk and Ünal (2017) found that writing anxiety across grades is influenced by gender differences. The higher the grade, the higher the writing anxiety between junior and senior learners. It is in line with the finding of Jawas (2019), who found that junior learners experienced higher writing anxiety and ability in writing based on the primary challenge of writing. However, Wahyuni et al. (2019) mentioned that junior and senior EFL students had similar anxiety toward writing. As for rural EFL learners, different grade levels result in different types of anxiety. This

phenomenon occurs due to various learning strategies and attitudes toward learning as rural learners perform (Hussain et al., 2011).

Training in writing has been an essential strategy for reducing writing anxiety among learners. Tok and Kandemir (2015) proved that writing exercises involving several writing innovations help EFL learners develop their writing and avoid anxiety. The findings show that EFL learners with training in research reports or thesis writing experience a lower level of anxiety than the learners without any training. In the same vein, Dai (2010) mentioned that training and exercises in writing have a better impact on writing development, attitudes, and proper skills needed for encouraging excellent work. Although this study found that no significant difference emerges between the EFL learners' availability of training, it has become a truth that experiences in writing help learners to have better writing and avoid writing anxiety. Exercises in writing are essential to indulge learners in producing better writing. This means that the number of writing exercises leads to the active participation of the learners in writing activities (Limbu & Markauskaite, 2015). In addition, such writing competence emerges when there is an integration between practice and concept indulged into perceived writing skills (Prihandoko et al., 2022).

On the other hand, Rankin-Brown (2006) stated that students' lack of training in writing leads to fear of writing and different feelings during the writing process since their self-efficacy is decreased. In the same line, Gobel et al. (2013) stated that in a rural educational context, lack of exercise and training are predictors of EFL learners' higher anxiety in developing their writing skills. Another problem is that the rural EFL learners are not indulged in various training and exercises as their teachers are less competent in implementing various approaches in teaching.

Cognitive anxiety tends to dominate the apprehension of learners' writings. Somatic anxiety and avoidance behavior are of no high difference in scores. However, the learners who studied the Research Method course suffered more anxiety than those who studied the Final Research Project. The reasons that underlie this result may vary. For example, during the Final Research Project, the EFL learners receive training, exercises, consultation, and feedback about thesis writing many times. Karakaya and Ülper (2011) claimed that routines in writing lead learners to better and more enjoyable writing. On the other hand, junior EFL learners consider the writing of a mini-research report as an introduction to thesis writing. The finding of a study shows that writing difficulties emerge as it consists of complicated processes such as topic adaptation, forming an outline, combining sentences and ideas, editing drafts, and final checking (Klimova, 2014).

As for the emerging factors of writing anxiety, the result reveals that higher numbers of rural EFL learners experience linguistic matters in writing a research report. Linguistic matters include the complexity of grammatical rules, proper diction selection, and avoiding mistakes and errors. In the same line, Solikhah (2017) mentioned that problems in terms of linguistics in writing consist of syntactic organization, sentence building, grammatical rules, and consistency of every part within sentence structures. Zhang and Zhong (2012) stressed linguistic complexity, such as sentence rules and diction, as sources of writing anxiety because students cannot build good writing. To support this, Jalaluddin et al. (2011) stated that rural EFL learners face problems developing their writing skills and reducing their writing anxiety. For example, rural students are not indulged in developing their writing competencies due to the lack of learning resources, facilities, and less competent teachers that should support their writing development.

Moreover, Saiful and Triyono (2018) proved that in rural schools, the teacher-centered approach remains popular among teachers, leading to higher stress and anxiety in learning English. Other major emerging writing factors are fear of negative feedback and routine evaluation from the lecturer or supervisor during mini-research reports and thesis writing. In this case, Rankin-Brown (2006) claimed that EFL learners fear negative feedback and evaluation because their enthusiasm and performance are decreased during the writing process. El Shimi (2017) stated that negative assessment is a problem for EFL learners since they are worried about getting some negative feedback toward their writing.

Several strategies must be implemented to help rural college EFL learners with writing anxiety. Jalaluddin et al. (2011) believed that rural EFL learners' writing competencies could be developed by integrating regular writing practices in or outside the classrooms. Along the same line, Samruayruen et al. (2013) suggested that learners in rural schools need to be aware of the importance of self-regulated learning strategies that allow them to succeed in learning English skills. To support this, Al-Khairy (2013) stated that several essential strategies must be accommodated and triggered to reduce writing anxiety among EFL learners. The strategies include imposing every skill needed in writing, encouraging learners to work with English matters, and integrating technology into teaching writing. Haris, Pulukadang, Husain, Ilham, and Abdullah (2021) stated that regular evaluation and assessment of learners' work effectively collect evidence and formulate needed instructions. Tran (2020) claimed that written instructor feedback helps learners develop their writing and reduce their feelings about writing. Jahin (2012) promoted student-to-student evaluation or peer assessment to decrease the intensity of writing anxiety. In harmony with that, such evaluation by a writing partner better influences learners' high anxiety in writing. Communication strategies are highly needed to improve interaction in EFL classrooms, leading to practical linguistic understanding (de la Fuente & Flores, 2021). As for the lecturers and supervisors, the feedback given to the learners' writings should be followed by practical solutions that enable them to achieve better understanding and thus reduce their apprehension. For example, using proper written devices helps to encourage a sentence's grammatical meaning and semantic purpose of a sentence.

6. CONCLUSION

EFL learners' anxiety toward report and thesis writing emerges in forms of various types and levels across different variables. This current study proves that each type and level of learners' writing anxiety is unique, and it occurs in different classroom situations. It is much related to the impacts of rural areas in which college EFL learners learn writing courses. The absence of sufficient exposure has resulted in a deficiency in both self-confidence and skill, hence exacerbating writing anxiety. It leads to increased levels of anxiety when it comes to writing an English research report and final thesis. Meanwhile, writing anxiety is essential in EFL learners' writing development. Such development can be directly implemented into the learners across gender, grades, training, and research courses. It means that a slight difference in anxiety score gives no direct evidence that mere numbers determine EFL learners' levels and types of writing anxiety. Different results of types and levels depend on the EFL learners' attitudes toward writing. Various emerging factors influence attitudes. These factors must be considered helpful background to strengthen EFL learners' skills development and training in writing a research report and final thesis. Various consequences of writing emerge and transform into fear of writing.

Fortunately, each factor is interrelated, and the EFL learners are determined to solve the highest factor to reduce each remaining cause. To do this, the Research Method course and Final Research Project must be updated with new balanced strategies such as writing practices and supporting tools such as digital writing. Research report writing should be an integral part of primary and intermediate writing, which are taken in the beginning semesters in a university. The teaching of writing should be focused more intensively with a high frequency of training or tasks. This recommendation has to be under the academic consideration of stakeholders, lecturers, and supervisors in a rural college whose task is to enhance learners' competence in writing their research reports.

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Authors' Contribution

The author worked on the research and the main theoretical bases, accomplished the manuscript, and collected data.

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