THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING ANXIETY (SLWA) AND GENDER AMONG ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS IN JEMBER

Febriani Triwulandari[1], Mochamad Hatip[2], Kristi Nuraini[3]
febrianiisani221@gmail.com[1]
Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember

ABSTRACT

Writing is an essential skill in second language learning that involves cognitive and linguistic processes. However, many students face challenges that lead to writing anxiety, which can affect their writing performance and motivation. Writing anxiety is influenced by various factors, including gender differences, which have been widely debated in language learning research. This research investigates whether there is a significant correlation between second language writing anxiety (SLWA) and gender among English education students in Jember. This study employed a quantitative research method with a point-biserial correlation to analyze the relationship between these two variables. The sample consisted of 100 students from semesters 4 and 6 at the University of Jember and Muhammadiyah University of Jember. Data were collected using a writing anxiety questionnaire. The findings revealed a significant correlation between second language writing anxiety and gender (r = 0.253, p < .05), indicating that gender plays a role in students' writing anxiety levels. Although the correlation is weak, the results suggest that gender differences contribute to variations in writing anxiety among students. Based on these findings, it is important for educators to consider gender differences when addressing writing anxiety in second language learning. Developing targeted strategies that accommodate students' needs based on gender-related differences can help reduce writing anxiety and enhance their writing performance.
Keywords: Second Language Writing Anxiety, Gender, English Education Students.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill that plays an essential role in various aspects of life, from education to professional settings. It is not merely a tool for conveying information but an active process of generating, refining, and communicating ideas. According to Graham and Perin (2007), writing is crucial for organizing thoughts, constructing logical arguments, and enhancing cognitive processes. It helps individuals structure their ideas systematically, allowing them to communicate more effectively, reflect deeply, and engage in critical thinking. These abilities are particularly significant in academic contexts where writing is central to learning and assessment.

Writing is an essential skill for students, particularly in second-language (L2) learning, as it facilitates critical thinking, idea organization, and effective communication. However, writing anxiety often becomes a barrier for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

Despite its importance, many students face challenges in writing, one of which is writing anxiety. Writing anxiety is a psychological condition characterized by fear, apprehension, and stress experienced during the writing process. This condition can negatively impact students' ability to write effectively, reducing the quality of their work and hindering their academic progress. Rezaei and Jafari (2014) emphasized that writing anxiety has a significant negative correlation with students' writing performance, and as anxiety levels increase, the quality of their written output tends to decline. Contributing factors such as pressure from lecturers, high expectations, and fear of negative evaluation play a crucial role in the development of writing anxiety (Harmer, 2004; Horwitz & Cope, 1986).

The issue of writing anxiety among English education students in Indonesia highlights that many students experience stress and anxiety when asked to write in English. Jawas (2019) identified in-class essay assignments as a major factor contributing to writing anxiety among Indonesian EFL students. This research emphasizes the negative impact of anxiety on students' writing performance. Similarly, Wahyuni et al. (2019) found that writing anxiety is a common challenge faced by Indonesian EFL college students, with contributing factors including limited vocabulary, difficulties with grammar, and fear of negative evaluation. These challenges significantly affect students' ability to write effectively in English.

Several factors contribute to writing anxiety, including perfectionism, lack of self-confidence, negative feelings, and the difficulty of starting a writing task. Studies by Bulqiyah et al. (2021) and Harmer (2004) emphasize that negative self-comparisons and low self-esteem can exacerbate writing anxiety, while Hyland (2003) notes that perfectionism leads students to excessively revise their work, further increasing anxiety levels. In addition, the lack of mastery over English grammar and vocabulary, time pressure, and the absence of positive feedback from instructors can also contribute to students' anxiety (Luthfiyati et al., 2023; Qashoa, 2014).

This anxiety arises due to linguistic challenges, fear of evaluation, difficulty starting, negative feelings, lack of self confidence, and perfectionism. Rezaei and Jafari (2014) highlighted that writing anxiety negatively affects students' performance, reducing their ability to express ideas effectively. Gender differences further influence writing anxiety, as studies suggest that female students often experience higher anxiety levels than their male counterparts (Cheng, 2002; Martinez et al., 2011; Pajares & Valiante, 2001)

Moreover, gender differences play a significant role in the experience of writing anxiety. Research by Cheng (2002) suggests that female students tend to experience higher levels of writing anxiety than their male counterparts, with societal pressures and expectations contributing to this disparity. Studies by Pajares and Valiante (2001) further suggest that female students often face greater pressure to perform perfectly, leading to increased feelings of anxiety and lower self-esteem when writing. These gender differences are important to consider, as they can influence how students respond to academic pressures, including writing assignments.

Several theories underpin the understanding of writing anxiety, providing a comprehensive framework for analyzing its impact on students' writing performance. Cheng (2004) identified three primary components of writing anxiety: somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance behavior. Somatic anxiety involves physical symptoms such as increased heart rate or sweating when facing writing tasks. Cognitive anxiety pertains to negative thought patterns, including fear of failure and self-doubt about writing abilities. Avoidance behavior, on the other hand, reflects the tendency to procrastinate or evade writing tasks altogether. These components illustrate the multifaceted nature of writing anxiety and its ability to hinder students performance.

In addition to these components, Pajares and Valiante (2001) emphasized the role of gender in shaping students writing experiences. They argued that societal and cultural expectations often influence self-confidence and anxiety levels, with women frequently experiencing higher anxiety due to gender stereotypes and greater sensitivity to criticism. The primary objective of this research is to investigate whether there is a significant correlation between second-language writing anxiety (SLWA) and gender among English Education students in Jember.

This research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on writing anxiety by examining its correlation with gender in the second language (L2) context. It is expected

to provide practical benefits for various stakeholders.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the correlation between second language writing anxiety (SLWA) and gender among English language education students in University of Jember and Muhammadiyah University of Jember, Indonesia. This study seeks to enhance understanding of the factors influencing students writing anxiety, particularly in the context of writing in English as a second language. The study focuses on students in the 4th and 6th semesters, aiming to explore how writing anxiety may differ between male and female students and the underlying factors contributing to this difference.

The population in this research consists of 4th and 6th-semester English Education students enrolled in the two universities in Jember, namely the University of Jember and Muhammadiyah University of Jember. The total population involved in this study is 327 students, comprising different gender and semester groups. 4th Semester 118 female students and 37 male students. 6th Semester 124 female students and 48 male students.

The researcher used a proportional sampling technique to select a sample that represents the population based on the proportion of male and female students in each semester. This technique was chosen to ensure that the selected sample accurately reflects the gender composition of the population. In this method, the sample was chosen based on the proportion of students in each gender and semester group, aiming to ensure that every subgroup in the population is proportionally represented in the sample.

The researcher determined the number of students to be taken from each subgroup based on the population composition. In this study, the total sample taken was 100 students.

The collected data were then analyzed using point-biserial correlation, a statistical method suitable for examining the relationship between a continuous variable (SLWA) and a dichotomous variable (gender). The null hypothesis (H0) posited no significant correlation between SLWA and gender, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) proposed a significant correlation. Data analysis was performed using SPSS to ensure accuracy and reliability.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 100 students, comprising 74 female and 26 male students from the English Education programs at the University of Jember and Muhammadiyah University of Jember.

To collect data on writing anxiety, the researcher used a questionnaire adapted from Cheng's (2004) study, which identifies three main components of writing anxiety: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance anxiety. These three components are considered the main factors influencing students levels of anxiety in writing in a second language. The questionnaire contains 22 items that measure students'writing anxiety in each of these components. A 22-item questionnaire, adapted from Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), was used to assess writing anxiety. The instrument measured three dimensions of writing anxiety: somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance behavior, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). The questionnaire was distributed both in person and online to accommodate all participants. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, and responses were collected anonymously to ensure honesty and reduce bias.

Before using the questionnaire for research, the validity of the instrument was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which was previously conducted on Cheng's (2004) instrument. Based on the CFA results that showed the instrument is valid, the researcher did not need to conduct additional validity tests. Furthermore, the reliability of

the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which indicated an adequate level of internal consistency for measuring writing anxiety.

The data analysis was conducted to explore the correlation between gender and second language writing anxiety (SLWA). Female students generally reported higher writing anxiety levels compared to male students, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Writing Anxiety by Gender

Report		
	Female	Male
Mean	66.01	58.27
N	74	26
Std. Deviation	11.360	13.893

The research hypothesis in this study states that there is a significant correlation between second language writing anxiety and gender among English education students in Jember. To test this hypothesis, a point-biserial correlation analysis was conducted (see table 2). The results revealed a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.253$) between gender and writing anxiety. The p-value was 0.011, which is below the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, confirming that there is a significant relationship between gender and writing anxiety among English education students in Jember. This finding suggests that gender may play a role in influencing students' levels of writing anxiety, although the strength of the correlation remains weak.

Table 2. Results of Point-Biserial Correlation Analysis

Correlations		gender	writing anxiety score
gender	Pearson Correlation	1	.253*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N	100	100
writing anxiety score	Pearson Correlation	.253*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	100	100

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results of this study show that there is a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.253$) between gender and second language writing anxiety (SLWA). With a p-value of 0.011, which is below the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, this correlation is statistically significant. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, confirming that gender has a significant relationship with writing anxiety among English Education students at the University of Jember and Muhammadiyah University of Jember.

These findings align with previous research suggesting that female students tend to experience higher levels of writing anxiety than male students (Cheng, 2002; Martinez et al., 2011; Pajares & Valiante, 2001). The significant correlation observed in this study indicates that gender plays a role in influencing writing anxiety, though the strength of the relationship remains weak. Based on these findings, theories of second language writing anxiety that consider gender as a contributing factor remained relevant. This study demonstrated that although the correlation was weak, the relationship between gender and writing anxiety was statistically significant.

The results of this study had several important implications, both practical and theoretical. The finding that gender significantly influenced writing anxiety highlighted the need for tailored interventions to support students based on their specific needs. Educators should recognize that female students may experience higher levels of writing anxiety and,

therefore, require additional support. Instructional programs designed to strengthen writing skills and reduce anxiety through continuous practice and constructive feedback could be beneficial.

However, this study had certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample was limited to English Education students in Jember, meaning the results might not be generalizable to students from other programs or regions. Although the instrument used in this study was adapted from Cheng (2004) and had been validated in previous research, respondent bias could still have influenced the measurement of writing anxiety. Moreover, this study did not examine other variables that might impact writing anxiety, such as academic environment or previous learning experiences. Additionally, the relatively small sample size may have affected the statistical power of the analysis. Further research with a larger and more diverse sample is needed to ensure the reliability and generalizability of these findings. Since this study employed a correlational design, the results could not be interpreted as causal relationships. Future experimental or longitudinal studies are necessary to better understand the causal mechanisms between gender and writing anxiety.

CONCLUSION

The analysis results indicated that there was a significant correlation between gender and Second Language Writing Anxiety (SLWA) among English Education students in Jember. This finding suggested that gender played a role in influencing writing anxiety, although the correlation was weak. The statistical test showed a significant relationship, meaning that gender differences should be considered when addressing writing anxiety in students.

This study had several limitations, including a sample that only involved English Education students in Jember, making the results not generalizable to other populations. Additionally, while the study confirmed a correlation, it did not explore causal factors behind this relationship. The relatively small sample size may have also influenced the statistical power of the analysis.

Therefore, further research with larger sample sizes and more diverse populations is needed to validate these findings. Future studies should focus on exploring gender-related aspects of writing anxiety in different academic settings. Experimental or longitudinal research designs are also recommended to examine how gender differences in writing anxiety develop over time.

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