

## An Analysis of Social Anxiety of the Students' EFL Writing Skill

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### Abstract:

The aim of this research is about an analysis of social anxiety of the students in writing skill. The participant of this research were 45 students of English Education Study Program at IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. A qualitative research design was used in this research. The questionnaire was given to collect the data related to the types of students' anxiety of the participants. The result showed that the mean of writing anxiety range from 17,3 to 22. The average score for avoidance behavior is 17,3, somatic anxiety is 20, and cognitive anxiety is on average 22. This study educates teachers about three aspects of student writing anxiety, including its forms as well as the variables that contribute to it. In order to help students reduce or eliminate their writing anxiety, this study also suggests that teachers act as the students' prompter and tutor in the classroom. By doing this, the students' writing skills will improve.

### Keywords:

*Anxiety, EFL, writing skill.*



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## INTRODUCTION

One of the language skills that is frequently taught at the college level is writing (West et al., 2019). As an illustration, students are required to create a variety of written works, such as essays, on a variety of subjects, including education, language, sociology, health, and biotechnology, among others. People can share their thoughts and feelings, as well as persuade and convince others, through writing. People may write for different reasons besides their own satisfaction. Writing abilities are specialized skills that enable authors to communicate their ideas in meaningful ways and engage readers on a deeper level. Different linguists have several definitions of writing that they have put forth. Writing is a crucial component of a broader activity when the emphasis is on something else, such as speaking, acting out, or language practice.

An essay that demonstrates the veracity or falsity of a claim is known as an argument. The author of the argument text employs a number of techniques or rhetorical tactics to persuade the reader as to whether the assertion is true or not. A persuasive essay argues against or supports a particular viewpoint, stance, or concept. Arguments, or facts and justifications that can persuade readers that the beliefs expressed are true, must be included in argumentative essays (Latifi, et. al., 2020). In addition, Robertson (2014) said that although teaching students to write essays is the best

approach to develop their reasoning skills, teachers are frequently unhappy with the arguments students present in their writing. The weak supporting arguments offered are to blame for this. The claim must be supported by arguments, logic, facts, or data in a good scientific argumentative essay, and if necessary, the opposing argument must be presented to support the author's position (Tsemach & Zohar, 2021). Strong arguments must be used when writing argumentative essays. This argumentative strategy is frequently overlooked by students when they write. The low capacity of pupils to create argumentative essays suggests that professors should provide more assistance to students in order to help them produce better argumentative essays (Hadianto, et. al., 2022).

Argumentation is a type of rhetoric that aims to sway people's attitudes and convictions so that they believe and, ultimately, behave the way the author desires. The writer can demonstrate the truth or falsity of a claim by putting together the facts in an effective manner through argumentation. Argumentative writing's foundation is critical and logical reasoning. As a result, logical facts are the basis for argumentative writing. An argumentative essay's foundation must be reason. A mental process called as reasoning aims to link established facts or supporting data with a prediction, attempting to make connections in order to draw a logical conclusion. Evidence is defined as all actual facts, testimonials, information, or other authority that are related to prove a claim to be true. The argumentative essay is a form of essay that is used to express an opinion and attempt to persuade others of the validity of that opinion, according to the explanation provided above. The author uses reasoning and facts to support his claim that his opinion is true.

Students' responses, in which they said that writing, especially in English, was such a difficult task to complete, revealed that the writing activity in the classroom was not really that good. This could have happened for a number of reasons, including a lack of drive, anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or even a lack of knowledge on how to write an effective paragraph. Writing is challenging and frequently highly complex since it differs greatly from talking. Because "writing skills are highly complex," even kids in senior high school are unable to simply pick up the linguistic framework necessary. Meyer (2005) stated that there are a number of reasons why students lack the ability to write argumentative essays, including the fact that many still do not understand the qualities of a good argumentative essay and still struggle to put them into practice due to a lack of experience. Because nearly all academic scientific publications demand strong arguments, this makes it challenging for students to complete the requirements of lecture assignments. Teachers must be able to help students create strong persuasive essays in this circumstance (Lephalala & Pienaar, 2008).

A frequent mental health issue that can range from mild distress to severe disability is social anxiety. The mildest kind may manifest as passing social anxiety brought on by frequent social-evaluative circumstances, whereas the more severe form is characterized by crippling, chronic fear and avoidance (Liebowitz, 2003; Velale, 2003). According to Schlenker & Leary (1982), when someone tries to project a positive public image but has worries about their capacity to do so, social anxiety develops. Such uncertainty may be fueled by internalized shame and a low sense of self-worth (Gilbert & Procter, 2006). Moreover, Amringen, et. al., (2003) added that these factors have the potential to negatively affect one's identity, interactions with others, mental health, and academic progress due to social anxiety.

According to Karasewich and Kuhlmeier (2020), feeling anxious and having an overwhelming fear of other people's presence are two signs of social anxiety. This emotion then coexists with actions and vocal expressions that assess other people's presence. According to psychological research, social anxiety is frequently equated with shyness, introversion, or social anxiety disorder (Hezel & McNally 2014; Hoffman 2010). But there is no doubt that social anxiety varies substantially in terms of the intensity and underlying causes of the anxiety triggers. In fact, according to McNeil's research (McNeil, Porter, Zvolensky, Chaney, & Kee, 2000), genetic and biochemical factors can also cause social anxiety. In its most prevalent form, anxiety can be described as a mood disorder with detrimental repercussions and physical tension symptoms in which a person has feelings of worry about the likelihood of impending danger or bad luck (Barlow, H.D., & Durand, 1995). Based on this idea, social anxiety can be seen as fear of socializing or fear of joining other groups (Lestari, 2012). This idea also forms the basis for defining the traits of social anxiety, specifically: The anxieties that people have when engaging in social interactions with other people and groups are the first aspect of social anxiety. Second, social anxiety develops as a result of a variety of factors, including worries about the future, concerns for one's safety, and the creation of sentiments of being negatively regarded by others and groups.

According to Furmark (2002), lifetime prevalence rates for social anxiety in adults and adolescents range from 7 to 13 percent. Furthermore, the initial symptoms usually appear in the middle to late stages of adolescence, when many adolescents are enrolled in full- or part-time school. Similar prevalence percentages in higher education have been found in recent studies by Russell and Shaw (2009) and Tillfors and Furmark (2007), who found that 10–16% of students in the UK and Sweden, respectively, had clinically significant levels of social anxiety.

In addition, because they are preoccupied with negative ideas, anxious persons find it difficult to concentrate on what others are saying, according to Rapee and Heimberg (1997). Additionally, they will be more conscious of their behaviors, body language, expressions, and internal thoughts, which will manifest physically in the form of excessive blushing or perspiration. Because people with social anxiety disorder will be more conscious of the physiological arousal known as the "Feedback Mechanism," self-focused attention may rise in these individuals (Vertue, 2003). As a result, people frequently fail to focus on crucial information, which hinders the success of subsequent exchanges (Hope, 1987). Based on the explanation above, this research aims at investigating the types of students' social anxiety in writing skills.

## **METHOD**

This research was a qualitative research design. The selection of study subjects is based on matters of ethics and informed permission, and the decision is made after taking into account a number of factors, including: 1) Prospective participants are informed so they are aware of their role as a subject; 2) Prospective participants give consent, which includes a clear declaration that he understands and consents to participate in the research; and 3) the individual decision to participate is something that is made voluntarily, without physical pressure (violence, physical coercion), or psychological pressure, such as manipulation or lying. The subject of this research was the fourth semester students at English Education Study Program IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. There was 45 college

students in EFL Writing class. In this research, the researchers gave a students' anxiety questionnaire to take the data. In order to ensure that the data used in the research are legitimate and can be used to address the research question under consideration, it is crucial that the researcher choose more than one instrument (Birmingham, P., & Wilkinson, D. 2003).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The researcher used a Cheng (2004) questionnaire that was adopted. The mean score for each category was examined during the data analysis. Based on the Cheng questionnaire, the researcher categorized the students' writing anxieties into three categories: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior.

*Table 1. The students' type of writing anxiety*

Types of writing anxiety	Number of students	Total score	Mean
Cognitive (perception aspect)	45	976	22
Somatic (psychological aspect)	45	903	20
Avoidance (behavioral aspect)	45	778	17,3

The mean scores for several types of writing anxiety range from 17,3 to 22, as seen in the above table. The average score for avoidance behavior is 17,3, somatic anxiety is 20, and cognitive anxiety is on average 22. According to these ratings, avoidance anxiety has the lowest score, followed by physical anxiety and cognitive anxiety. This indicates that among the other two categories of writing anxiety, cognitive anxiety has the highest mean score. Thus, when writing English compositions, the students were impacted by the perception and expectations of others.

The English Education Study Program IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro's fourth semester students' efforts to identify the three different forms of writing anxiety among them revealed that one of them had emerged as the predominate type. The mean scores show that cognitive anxiety has the greatest scores, with a 22 average. Furthermore, somatic anxiety (20) and avoidance behavior (17,3) had the other two mean scores for the two different types of writing anxiety. It can be inferred that the majority of English Education Study Program IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro fourth-semester students experienced cognitive anxiety as their form of writing anxiety. Cognitive anxiety is a negative emotion that causes pupils to have low expectations for their performance and to worry about how other people will see it. Additionally, somatic anxiety is a symptom of anxiety that manifests as tension and jitteriness in the body. Somatic anxiety is an emotionality element, it might be said. The second sort of anxiety is avoidance behavior, which is characterized by a bad attitude toward writing tasks as a result of anxiety experiences.

The students struggled with cognitive anxiety because they were so worried about how other people would interpret and respond to their writing. According to the research review, cognitive anxiety refers to the unfavorable aspects of anxiety experiences, such as unfavorable expectations, performance obsession, and worry about other people's judgments. It demonstrates how students'

writing of English compositions was influenced by the impression and expectations of others. Based on the finding that cognitive anxiety is the most common type of writing anxiety experienced by fourth semester English Education Study Program IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro students, it is clear that students are worried about professors' expectations and perceptions. The pupils may believe that their writing is poor because of their background, which lacks writing experiences.

Additionally, they believe that the view and expectations of other people regarding their writing outcomes may detract from the quality of their compositions. As a result, they may receive negative feedback and receive low writing ratings. As a result, individuals have writing anxiety because they worry about how others will perceive their work and because they have low expectations for it. The opinions and advice of others are desperately needed to improve the fourth semester English Education Study Program IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro students' writing skills in order to pass their writing test. Perhaps it comes from their teacher. Students will consequently be more concerned with other people's perceptions than their own. Some students are motivated to update their writing assignment and learn more in writing by the perception and expectations of other people. They should do well on their writing test, hopefully. Demotivated students, however, won't pay attention to their writing test results. They will make excuses for not writing and not rewriting. They will therefore require more time to complete their essay.

The sort of writing anxiety that was identified explained why the findings agreed with those of two earlier studies. The most prevalent form of writing anxiety, according to Rezaei and Jafari (2014), is cognitive anxiety. 42.5% of the respondents to their study reported that their form of writing anxiety was cognitive. Furthermore, Wahyuni and Umam's study (2017) found conclusions that concurred with those of this study. At the Islamic State College in East Java, researchers also looked into the writing anxieties of Indonesian EFL students. They discovered that the most prevalent form of writing anxiety in the region of their investigation was cognitive anxiety. This is in line with the findings from Rohmah and Muslim (2020) stated that the least anxious learner showed better writing performance than those who showed higher levels of anxiety.

## Discussion

Writing anxiety, defined by Daly and Wilson (1983), is a situation- and subject-specific individual difference connected to a person's propensities to approach or avoid situations that they believe would necessitate writing, together with some degree of perceived evaluation. Writing anxiety, according to Takahashi (2009), is more of a fear of the writing process than a worry of the potential benefits of being able to write. The students were able to compose or complete their writing assignment in this situation, although there were numerous factors that could undermine the students' confidence or distract them from their focus during writing tasks.

Students thought that the quality of their work was the only factor considered while determining their grades and that the perceived effort put into producing the works was not taken into account (Rahim, et. al., 2016). This resulted from the product-oriented character of education, where students' written work served as the sole basis for grades. This was because high class sizes may have made it impossible for teachers to evaluate every step of the writing process.

Writing anxiety, according to Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012), is a term used to describe a single or group of thoughts, feelings, or actions that make it difficult for a person to begin, continue, or complete a particular writing assignment that they are cognitively capable of accomplishing. Some students found writing to be a fun pastime, and they view the act of putting their ideas or thoughts on paper as fun exercise. Every time they are given a written work, pupils who have trouble expressing their ideas into words will find the writing activity to be extremely unpleasant and even terrifying. Students who struggle with writing may have experienced writing anxiety.

Cheng (2004) created a writing anxiety questionnaire and classified it into three categories: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior. According to Cheng (2004), cognitive anxiety refers to the mental components of anxiety experiences, such as unfavorable expectations, performance obsession, and worry about how others will see you. The term "somatic anxiety" contrasts with "generalized anxiety," which refers to one's impression of the physiological impact of the anxious experience as manifested in elevated autonomic arousal and unpleasant feeling states as jitteriness and tension. Avoidance behavior, on the other hand, deals with reflection through writing avoidance.

The researcher discovered that there are numerous ways, like thinking positively, reading a lot of books, getting adequate sleep, asking for help, and more. Strategies, according to Brown (2007), are distinct approaches to problems or modes of operation for reaching a certain plan or design for controlling and manipulating specific information. According to Kondo and Yin-Ling (2004), students can utilize the following five tactics to lessen their anxiety in the classroom: planning, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation.

According to the findings of research, there are many different ways for English department students to deal with their anxiety when writing in English. Some students try to unwind before writing, while others practice positive thinking, read a lot of books to expand their library, get enough rest, work hard, and ask for assistance. Students' tactics are influenced by a number of elements, including their own opinions, anxiety levels, and past experiences. Students in the English department can use the following techniques to reduce their writing anxiety:

### *1) Positive Thinking*

It is clear from the general definition above that positive thinking is a thinking activity that is done with the intention of developing and awakening positive aspects in ourselves, whether in the form of our potential, enthusiasm, determination, and self-confidence so that it gives rise to positive feelings and behaviors. Positive thinking has evolved into a system of thinking that directs and guides a person to leave negative things that can weaken the spirit of change in his soul.

### *2) Reading Books*

For instance, we can quickly obtain the same experience by spending a few hours reading a book that details a person's life events. Readers do not automatically imply being writers, although reading is a necessary habit for writers. Whether you like it or not, reading is a process that you must go through if you want to be a writer. If despite our best efforts, we have trouble writing and stop at

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the paragraph or even the first sentence, the issue may be that we lack sufficient prior knowledge.

### *3) Being more diligent*

When we put off doing something because we think it will take too long, our brains react by activating areas connected to worry and discomfort. This is a stressor for people. By directing your attention to things that are more intriguing and enjoyable, the brain tries to "stop" these unpleasant feelings. Delaying work or assignments is a typical issue, according to students. It appears to be a common occurrence and depends on a person's personality. But if you put off work repeatedly, it can have long-term impacts on your mood and other elements of your life.

From an educational perspective, students who are less confident in their English writing abilities will find it challenging to write their final thesis. The majority of them are uncertain about what they have written, question if it is correct or incorrect, and they are in need of guidance from others who are more informed about the subject. However, because they believe it will make them appear foolish, students frequently hesitate to ask for assistance. Cooperative learning can, of course, be utilized to prevent situations like this one by encouraging students to ask questions. Cooperative learning is a suitable teaching method that reduces anxiety and raises students' self-awareness of their learning processes, according to Powell and Enright (1990). It is supported with Keramati (2001) all students benefit from cooperative learning because they have equal opportunities, friendship replaces competition, the spirit of participation and cooperation is strengthened, and everyone has the right to be intelligent and creative.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has brought to light the necessity of improving pedagogical support for students who struggle with social anxiety. It is clear that learning activities, especially those involving writing, can create significant anxiety, and teachers must consider that for a small but significant number of pupils, developing self-confidence is a necessary skill. The most typical sort of writing anxiety experienced by children in the tenth grade, according to the research, is cognitive anxiety. The researcher discovers the four primary causes of students' writing anxiety after evaluating the components that lead to those outcomes. Language barriers, time constraints, worry about receiving a poor grade, and a lack of writing expertise or practice are the contributing causes.

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