EFL students' anxiety in writing journal manuscripts: An analysis of levels and causes

[1]Inayatul Ulya*, [2]Sarlita D. Matra, [3]M. Fajru Sidqi
[123]English Language Education, Teachers Training and Education Faculty
Pekalongan Univeristy, Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author
Email: inayatul.fkipunikal@gmail.com

Abstract

Writing anxiety represents a critical affective variable in English as EFL academic context, associated with challenges in written language production. This study investigates the writing anxiety experienced by Indonesian EFL students, specifically examining its levels and underlying causes. Writing anxiety is a prevalent barrier to effective written expression, particularly in second language academic contexts. Employing a mixed-method approach, the research integrated both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. A purposive sample of 58 sixth-semester students from the English Language Education at Pekalongan University (UNIKAL) Central Java, Indonesia, was selected, focusing specifically on those who passed the Writing for Academic Purpose course. Data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) and supported by semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire measured three types of writing anxiety: cognitive, somatic, and avoidance behavior. Results revealed moderate levels of cognitive anxiety (M = 2.68), somatic anxiety (M = 2.81), and avoidance behavior (M = 2.83). Students expressed concerns about negative judgment, fear of making errors, and physical symptoms such as tension under time constraints—factors that contributed to procrastination and avoidance. Qualitative findings echoed these results, identifying fear of evaluation, limited writing experience, and low self-confidence as major contributors to writing anxiety. Notably, although students perceived writing tasks as challenging, their anxiety levels remained moderate, indicating a persistent but manageable affective barrier. It is recommended that future researchers and educators consider addressing cognitive, somatic, and behavioral dimensions of writing anxiety when designing EFL writing instruction, particularly by incorporating strategies that reduce fear of evaluation and build students' writing confidence.

Keywords: *anxiety; cognitive; manuscript; somatic; writing*

INTRODUCTION

Writing anxiety among students appears to be significantly influenced by their level of experience with second language (L2) writing assignments. Widagdo et al. (2022) observed that anxiety is shaped by both internal and external factors. Intrinsic determinants, such as age, role, self-concept, and treatment

experience, as well as extrinsic factors like medical conditions, educational attainment, access to information, and socioeconomic status, all play a role in influencing anxiety. Rezaei and Jafari (2014) found that a significant degree of writing anxiety, with cognitive anxiety being the most prominent, is often caused by performance obsession, high expectations, low self-esteem, inadequate language proficiency, and fear of negative teacher feedback. ELbashir (2023) observed that when writing, students often struggle with word choice, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, verb tenses, and sentence structure. In addition, Dianastiti et al., (2024), found out that regarding more precisely academic text writing abilities, the challenges that students face include: (a) creating coherent sentences, (b) creating paragraphs, (c) using paraphrasing strategies, (d) producing academic texts in compliance with linguistic standards, and (e) creating references.

Additionally, explicit instruction and structured support, such as paraphrasing guidelines, can enhance writing skills, particularly for non-native speakers (Yahia & Egbert, 2023). Overall, academic writing is not only a technical skill but also a dynamic process influenced by personal, social, and cognitive factors, where strategies like peer feedback, genre awareness, and community-based writing initiatives can play crucial roles in developing competence (Fisher et al., 2023;Aitken & Graham, 2023)(Fisher et al., 2023; Aitken & Graham, 2023).

Dianastiti et al., (2024) describe academic writing as a structured, formal process, emphasizing precision in word choice, clarity, and a factual perspective grounded in objective, often experimental evidence. They highlight the importance of a well-defined structure, a formal tone free of colloquial language, and an analytical, deductive reasoning approach that logically develops the argument. They further note the necessity for a clear focus on the research question and a methodical strategy that eliminates uncertainty. This description of academic writing aligns with the emphasis on structure and clarity seen in other research, such as Masrul et al., (2024), who focus on the impact of feedback on writing, noting how interactional feedback can improve writing length, accuracy, and effectiveness. Nurisma et al., (2024) extend this view by arguing that the publication process plays a key role in academic writing, offering students the opportunity to reach a wider audience and refine their writing skills. Similarly, Soh (2022) explores how task complexity and peer discussion, particularly dyadic peer discussion, influence students' perceptions and confidence in writing tasks. These studies collectively suggest that while academic writing requires precision, structure, and clarity, external factors such as feedback, peer discussion, and publication also play critical roles in shaping the quality and development of written work. Comparing these perspectives, it becomes clear that effective academic writing is not only an internal process of logical reasoning and structure but is also shaped by external influences like feedback, peer interaction, and the potential for publication.

The studies reviewed collectively highlight the challenges and solutions related to academic writing skills among students in different educational contexts. Arifin & Ilyas (2022) explored the effectiveness of learner-guided study in improving students' analytical exposition writing skills, finding that guided

lessons outperform unguided ones in achieving learning goals. Similarly, Suwandi (2022) emphasizes the importance of academic writing, nothing that while Indonesian university students have sufficient skills, continuous improvement is necessary for higher academic performance. In contrast, Adrefiza et al. (2021) focused on the role of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF), showing that students appreciate and benefit from feedback, particularly direct feedback, which enhances their writing skills in areas like grammar and vocabulary. Meanwhile, Bram & Angelina (2022) identified common academic writing difficulties, such as issues with grammar, coherence, and referencing, and advocate for improved teaching strategies and feedback. Rosita & Halimi (2023) introduce mind mapping as a prewriting strategy, showing its positive impact on students' ability to develop ideas in argumentative writing. Finally, Nenotek et al. (2022) explored students' challenges in writing academic essays, particularly in areas like content development and organization, underscoring the need for targeted instructional support. Collectively, these studies emphasize the necessity for guided instruction, feedback, and strategic interventions to improve students' academic writing, suggesting that a combination of methods, such as learner-guided study, WCF, and prewriting strategies, can address these persistent challenges.

Writing anxiety is a common challenge faced by EFL students, significantly affecting their ability to express ideas clearly and effectively in writing tasks. This anxiety can stem from a variety of factors, including fear of making errors, concerns over insufficient vocabulary, and the pressure to meet academic standards in a second language. Such emotional and cognitive barriers often hinder EFL students' confidence and overall performance in writing.

Al-Saidat et al. (2023) emphasized that anxiety is an emotional response closely linked with the learning process, which can make foreign language learning more difficult and contribute to anxiety during communication. Furthermore, Wahyuni et al. (2019) argued that there is no clear correlation between students' academic standing and their level of writing anxiety, noting that students with moderate anxiety levels are more common than those with high or low levels of anxiety across various academic levels. The study also identified key factors contributing to students' writing anxiety, including challenges with topic selection, language barriers, and a lack of writing experience.

Several previous studies focused on understanding writing anxiety among EFL and ESL learners, yet they differ in terms of research scope, population, methods, and findings. A notable similarity across most studies is the high to moderate levels of writing anxiety experienced by students (Ariyanti, 2017; Ekmekçi, 2018; Pratiwi, 2016; Yayli & Genç, 2019). Cognitive anxiety was consistently identified as the dominant form (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Pratiwi, 2016; Jebreil et al., 2015), while several studies highlighted somatic anxiety as more prevalent in specific contexts (Min, 2014; Kurniawati & Anam, 2023). Causes of writing anxiety were frequently linked to linguistic difficulties, lack of feedback, time pressure, and fear of negative evaluation (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Yayli & Genç, 2019; Pratiwi, 2016). Some studies explored demographic differences, such as gender-based anxiety variations, with inconsistent

findings—Salem and Al Dyiar (2014) reported no gender differences, while Jebreil et al. (2015) and Maruthavanan (2018) found males exhibited more anxiety. Notably, the impact of interventions was also explored: Khalil (2022) and İpek & Karabuğa (2022) reported that strategy instruction significantly reduced anxiety, indicating the effectiveness of explicit writing techniques. In contrast, studies like Kurniawati and Anam (2023) found no significant impact of anxiety on writing achievement. Furthermore, while many used SLWAI (e.g., Cheng, 2004) as a measurement tool, others included additional instruments (e.g., CWAI, WAS). Finally, Naufina and Putro (2025) offered a unique perspective by analyzing anxiety across the writing process stages and school types, contributing to a more dynamic understanding of writing anxiety's complexity. Collectively, these studies underscore that writing anxiety is a multifaceted issue shaped by cognitive, emotional, instructional, and contextual factors.

The writing anxiety levels and types found in some previous researches. Anthoney & Wilang (2023), found that the students in international universities experience high anxiety in specific writing situations, with anxiety levels vary based on nationality and locality. The researcher also observed changes in writing anxiety over time, suggesting that interventions may help reduce anxiety. In addition, Rezaei & Jafari (2014) focused their study on cognitive anxiety, linked to performance obsession, high standards, low self-esteem, and fear of negative evaluation, especially within the Iranian educational context. Moreover, Yu, (2017) identified avoidance behavior as the primary manifestation of writing anxiety and found a negative correlation between writing anxiety and writing performance, aligning with other research suggesting anxiety impairs writing performance.

Furthermore, Jawas (2019) highlighted that essay assignments in class were significant sources of anxiety for EFL students. The study also noted collaborative strategies like working in pairs or group to reduce anxiety. Other research conducted by Miri & Joia (2018) found out that writing anxiety in Afghan English learners was attributed to limited writing exposure. The study found that feedback, extensive reading, and writing practice were key coping strategies. In addition, Zhang (2019) investigated through qualitative case study found that students were able to overcome anxiety by using online resources and effective linguistic techniques. In line with those research, Abdullah, M.Y., Supyan & Shakir (2018) found that electronic feedback from peers and teachers helped alleviate anxiety. The positive effect of feedback on self-confidence was also highlighted. The last research conducted by Cui et al (2024) showed that self-regulation strategies could help manage anxiety, suggesting that anxiety negatively impacts writing performance, and self-regulation can mitigate this effect.

The research studies by Kawengian and Subekti (2023), Salikin (2019), Wahyuni et al. (2019) explored various aspects of writing anxiety experienced by Indonesian students, particularly in English writing. Kawengian & Subekti (2023), Salikin (2019) both report that students experience a moderate degree of anxiety related to writing in English, which aligns with the current study's finding of moderate levels of cognitive anxiety. Wahyuni et al. (2019) also found that students' anxiety levels were generally moderate, and that the majority of

students fall into the moderate anxiety category, similar to the moderate levels reported in the current study. Meanwhile, Salikin (2019) highlighted that female students tend to experience higher levels of anxiety that male students when writing English papers.

Meanwhile, the causes of writing anxiety were found in the previous studies. Rezaei & Jafari (2014) identified performance pressure, low self-esteem, fear of negative evaluation, and inadequate language skills as primary causes of writing anxiety. This reflects a deep cognitive concern about one's writing capabilities and performance. Yu (2017) found that avoidance behavior was identified as a key source of anxiety, which aligns with findings from Jawas (2019), where essay assignments in class contributed significantly to anxiety levels. In addition, Miri & Joia (2018) highlighted that a lack of writing practice and low self-confidence were identified as major causes of writing anxiety, echoing Rezaei & Jafari (2014). Moreover, Abdullah, M.Y., Supyan & Shakir (2018), offered feedback from peers and teachers was suggested as a potential way to reduce anxiety. Furthermore, Cui et al. (2024) found that self-regulation is crucial in managing anxiety, with high anxiety levels often linked to insufficient self-regulation strategies.

Several researches found the impact of writing anxiety on writing performance. Yu (2017) and Rezaei & Jafari (2014) both found a negative correlation between writing anxiety and writing performance, with higher anxiety levels linked to poorer performance. In addition, Jawas (2019) found that anxiety affected students' ability to focus and complete tasks efficiently. However, collaborative work was found to alleviate some of the effects of anxiety. Moreover, Cui et al., 2024) highlighted that writing anxiety hinders students' performance but found that self-regulation strategies helped to mitigate this effect, which was consistent with findings from Abdullah, Supyan & Shakir (2018), who noted that peer and teacher feedback reduced anxiety.

Researching writing anxiety among Indonesian students is of significant importance, given the growing emphasis on English proficiency within Indonesia's education system. As English become a vital skill for academic and professional success, Indonesian students are increasingly required to write in English, often leading to heightened level of anxiety. The unique cultural and educational context of Indonesia may contribute specific challenges, such as limited exposure to English outside the classroom, pressure to perform in high-stakes assessments, and the influence of local language structures on writing practices.

By investigating writing anxiety in particular demographic, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how such anxiety manifest in Indonesian students and find out the level and causes of the writing anxiety. Addressing this issue was crucial not only for improving the writing skills of Indonesian EFL learners but also for designing more effective pedagogical strategies that can reduce anxiety and foster a more supportive and productive learning environment. Through this research, educators and policymakers can gain valuable insight that will contribute to the development of targeted interventions to support students in overcoming writing challenges.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific investigation of the levels and

causes of anxiety among EFL students when writing journal manuscripts, a sub-skill of academic writing that is often overlooked in language anxiety research. Unlike most studies that focus on general writing anxiety or speaking anxiety, this research pinpoints a highly specialized and increasingly important academic task: preparing students to contribute to scholarly publication.

The objective of study was to investigate the writing anxiety experienced by Indonesian EFL students, specifically examining its levels and underlying causes. By focusing on this underrepresented area, the study contributes fresh insights into the nuanced challenges EFL learners face when engaging in high-stakes academic writing tasks. Addressing these issues may lead to more effective pedagogical strategies to support students in overcoming anxiety and enhancing their academic writing performance.

METHOD
Respondents
This study employed a mixed-method approach to examine writing anxiety. According to Creswell (2018), mixed-method research combines qualitative and quantitative data to enhance analysis and interpretation. In addition, the explanatory sequential mixed technique is used in this study. A strategy known as the explanatory sequential mixed method uses qualitative data after a quantitative base. Although the qualitative data collaborated the quantitative data, this method did not compare the two types of data.

Based on the objectives of the study, data were gathered throughout time in two stages. The researchers initially gathered and examined the quantitative data. In the second part of the investigation, the qualitative data was gathered and contrasted with the findings of the initial quantitative phase. The answers to the first research question, which were gathered through a questionnaire, were included in the quantitative data. In the meantime, the second research question was addressed through the interviews using the qualitative data. This approach was developed to help the researchers get better understanding about writing anxiety of research participants.

A purposive sample of 58 sixth-semester male and female students from the English Language Education at Pekalongan University (UNIKAL) Central Java, Indonesia, was selected, focusing specifically on those who passed Writing for Academic Purpose course. Purposive sampling was employed since they were important participants. Regarding that the research participants were the students who completed Writing for Academic Purposes subject and had experience in writing English manuscript that submitted in proceeding and or journal. Therefore, the participants were expected to offer reliable responses. The uniqueness of the research subjects was that they came from different cultural or regional contexts. Most previous studies, such as Yu (2017) and Cui et al. (2024), have also focused on students learning English, but with generalized student populations, including non-English major students or those from different disciplines (e.g., medical students in Cui et al. (2024)).

Instruments
The researcher used a questionnaire which was adapted from Second

Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) developed by Cheng (2004). The main variable of this questionnaire was writing anxiety. This instrument measure students' level of anxiety when writing in a second language. Somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance behavior anxiety are the three subscales of this measure. 5 Five-point Likert responses scale are used in the questionnaire: 1 for "strongly disagree", 2 for "disagree", 3 for neither agree, 4 for "agree", and 5 for "strongly" agree. The minimum score for SLWAI is 22, while the maximum score is 110. The questionnaire was modified to help participants understand the items and give accurate answers.

Another instrument used in this study was interview. The purpose of the interview was to explore how students deal with their writing anxieties when composing Manuscript. To gather information from the research participants in this study, the researchers employed a semi-structured interview that included open-ended questions and a conversation with the interviewee. The semi-structured interview was employed to explore students; personal experience and coping strategies related to writing anxiety, providing a richer understanding of the emotional and behavioral responses associated with cognitive, somatic, and avoidance-related anxieties identified through the SLWAI questionnaire.

In ensuring the validity of the data, the questionnaire used in this study was adapted from SLWAI developed by Cheng (2004), a well-established instrument widely used in previous studies on writing anxiety. The adaptation was made to improve clarity and comprehension for the participants, enhancing content validity by ensuring that the items accurately reflected the students experience and linguistic context. Furthermore, the alignment of interview questions with the SLWAI subscales strengthened the construct validity, as both instruments targeted the same underlying concepts.

In term of reliability, the SLWAI has demonstrated strong internal consistency in previous research, with reported Cronbach's alpha value typically exceeding 0.80, indicating high reliability. Although this study involved slight modifications to the questionnaire, the core structure and measurement scale remained unchanged, helping maintain its reliability. Additionally, the use of a five-point Likert scale ensured consistency in responses across items. Meanwhile, the semi structured interview contributed to data triangulation, enhancing credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. It enhanced convergent validity by confirming quantitative results with qualitative insights.

Data analysis
The quantitative data obtained from SLWAI questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to determine the levels of writing anxiety experienced by the participants. Mean scores were calculated for each of three subscales: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior. This enabled the researchers to identify the intensity and distribution of anxiety types among the students. Additionally, the frequency and percentage analyses were employed to interpret participants' responses across the five-point Likert Scale. The quantitative analysis provided a foundational understanding of the overall patterns and prevalence of writing anxiety in the sample, addressing the research question.

Following the quantitative phase, qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The qualitative findings were then used to explain, contextualized, and expand upon the quantitative results, in line with the explanatory sequential mixed-method design. This two-phase analysis enhanced the depth and credibility of the study's conclusions regarding the nature and causes of writing anxiety.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
RESULTS
Writing anxiety is a common issue for students, especially when writing in foreign language. This study found the level, types, and cause of anxiety. The research finding and its discussion is explained below.

Level of Writing Anxiety
The cognitive level of writing anxiety experienced by the research participants when composing an English manuscript was presented on the table below. The responses to eight statements about their concerns and fears related to writing in English were recorded on a scale, with the mean score of all items being 2.68. Each items reflected different cognitive anxieties, such as the worry of being mocked and judged for the quality of their manuscript, fear of negative evaluations, and distress related to the prospect of their work being reviewed or graded. Notably, the highest individual score (3.3) appears for the statement, "When writing English manuscript, I feel distressed if I know they will be reviewed." Overall, the mean score of 2.68 indicates a moderate level of cognitive anxiety among students, highlight that, while anxiety was present, it might not be overwhelmingly high across all aspect of the writing process.

Table 1. Level of Students' Cognitive Anxiety

No	Cognitive	Level
1.	I feel worried if other readers would mock my English manuscript if they read it	2.6
2.	I am afraid of what readers would think of my English manuscript	2.6
3.	I feel worried if my English manuscript being chosen as a sample to be discussed	2.6
4.	I feel distressed that my English manuscript would be rated as very poor	2.6
5.	I feel nervous when writing in English	2.6
6.	When writing English manuscript, I feel distressed if I know they will be reviewed	3.3
7.	I feel worried if the content of my English manuscript is worse than others	2.6
8.	I feel distressed about getting a very poor grade if my English manuscript is to be evaluated	2.6
Total		21.5
Mean		2.68

While cognitive anxiety involves the mental worries and fears about writing in English, somatic anxiety refers to the physical symptoms that arises because of these concerns. The stress and apprehension associated with cognitive anxiety manifest in bodily reactions, such as tension, nervousness, or a racing heartbeat, which further impede students' ability to focus and perform

effectively in writing. The following section examined how these physical manifestations of anxiety influence students writing experience.

Particularly under time constrains or pressure, students experienced somatic levels of writing English manuscript. The responses to seven statements related to physical symptoms of anxiety, such as nervousness, trembling, sweating, and mental blockages, were recorded on a scale, with the total score being 19.7 and the mean score of 2.81. The highest individual score (3.4) is recorded for the statement, "When I write English manuscript under time constrain, I often feel nervous." Indicating that time pressure is a significant source of somatic anxiety for these students. Other symptoms, such as trembling, sweating, and mental blankness, also have moderate to low scores (ranging from 2.6 to 3.3), suggesting that while physical reactions to anxiety were present, they vary in intensity. The overall mean score of 2.81 reflect a moderate level of somatic anxiety, indicating that physical symptoms related to writing under pressure were common but not overwhelmingly severe for most students. This condition was presented on the table below.

Table 2. Level of Students' Somatic Anxiety

No	Cognitive	Level
1	I feel worried if other readers would mock my English manuscript if they read it	3.4
2	When I write English manuscript under time constrain, I became tremor and sweating	2.6
3	When I write an English manuscript under time pressure, I feel my heart beating more frequently	2.6
4	When I start to work on an English manuscript, my mind often has no idea	2.6
5	When I write English manuscript under time constrain, my thoughts become mingled	2.6
6	When unexpectedly asked to write English manuscript, I freeze up	3.3
7	When I write English manuscript, I usually feel my whole-body tense	2.6
Total		19.7
Mean		2.81

Somatic anxiety, characterized by physical symptoms like nervousness and tension, lead students to engage in avoidance behaviors to cope with the stress of writing tasks. The discomfort from these physical reactions motivated students to procrastinate, delay starting their work, or avoid writing tasks altogether to prevent further anxiety. In EFL writing contexts, somatic anxiety frequently manifests through autonomic arousal—such as trembling, sweating, stiffness, and racing heartbeat—especially under time pressure or evaluative conditions (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014). Among Indonesian EFL students aiming to publish, somatic anxiety scored moderately (M = 20.10, SD = 5.29), signaling its tangible impact beyond cognitive worry. Moreover, qualitative evidence from female ESL learners illustrates how physical panic and inability to think clearly can severely impair writing fluency (Aripin & Rahmat, 2021).

The assessment of the research participants' tendency to avoid writing English manuscript was presented on the table. The moderate avoidance behavior is evident from the overall mean score of 2.83, which was just slightly

below a neutral average level (3.0). Specifically, the items with a score of 2.6 suggested a consistent but moderate tendency to avoiding writing in English. Meanwhile, the items with a score of 3.3 indicate stronger avoidance behaviors in certain situations, such as trying to excuse oneself from writing an English manuscript (item 4) and avoiding the use of English whenever possible (item 6). Overall, the mean score of 2.83 indicated that the individual moderately avoids writing in English would prefer not to write in English unless absolutely necessary. However, this avoidance is not extreme, and the students still engage in English writing tasks when required or in certain circumstances. Students' avoidance behavior anxiety in writing English manuscript was presented on this table.

Table 3 Level of Students' Avoidance Behavior Anxiety

No	Cognitive	Level
1	I am rarely writing down my thought in Englis	2.6
2	I habitually avoid writing English manuscript	2.6
3	Unless I have no choice, I would not us English to write manuscript	2.6
4	I would do my best to excuse myself if asked t write English manuscript.	3.3
5	I rarely seek every possible chance to joi English manuscript writing workshop	2.6
6	Whenever possible, I would not use English t write my manuscript.	3.3
Total		17
Mean		2.83

The result revealed that the average score for cognitive anxiety was the lowest, at 2.68. This suggested that, on average, students experienced relatively mild levels of cognitive anxiety when writing English manuscript. A score of 2.68 indicates that students generally did not feel excessively concerned or mentally overwhelmed during the writing process, but some mild unease was still present. In contrast, somatic anxiety had a slightly higher average score of 2.81. The score of 2.81 suggested that students experienced somewhat more physical symptoms of anxiety, but still at a relatively low to moderate level. This could mean that while students were not excessively anxious mentally, they had some degree of physical discomfort when engaging with the task of writing English manuscript. Next, avoidance behavior anxiety had an average score of 2.83, which means the highest of the three types of anxiety measured. A score of 2.83 indicates a moderate level of avoidance suggesting that students were somewhat likely to try to avoid English manuscript writing tasks, although this avoidance was not extreme. The relatively high score in this category might reflect and increased tendency to procrastinate or make excuse responses to the anxiety caused by the task, rather than a direct engagement with the writing process.

When taken together, the average score for these three types of anxiety—cognitive anxiety (2.68), somatic anxiety (2.81), and avoidance behavior anxiety (2.83)—suggested that overall anxiety levels of students while writing English manuscript fall within a range between low to moderate. This indicates that while students were not overwhelming anxious, they still experienced some level of discomfort, both mentally and physically, that however, was not severe enough to prevent from them attempting the task altogether, but it may have

led avoidance behavior. Finally, to provide a visual representation of this findings, a diagram or graph was used to illustrate students' anxiety levels in more detail, offering a clearer picture of the distribution of anxiety across different students and the specific areas (cognitive, somatic, and avoidance) where they experienced the most anxiety while writing English manuscript.
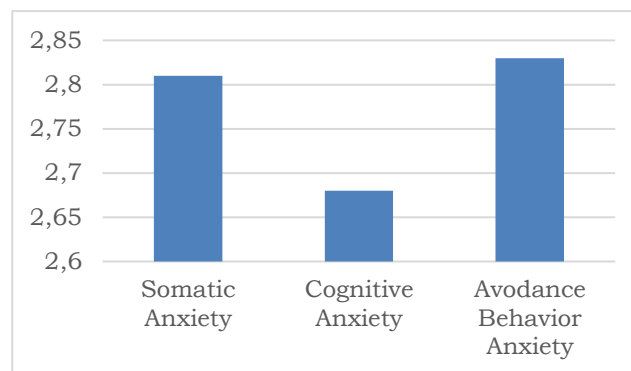

Diagram 1. Level of Students' Anxiety

Cause of Anxiety

In investigating the cause of anxiety, besides giving questionnaire, we interviewed the students to strengthen the result of questionnaire. For the cause of cognitive anxiety, several students reported anxiety related to their writing. Student 1 feared that her writing was unsatisfactory and worried about significant differences in opinion. Student 2 often overthought her writing, worrying about clarity, grammar, and whether her work would be understood and well-received. Student 3 felt anxious when writing under time constraints due to limited English proficiency and a lack of understanding of the topic, along with concerns about readers' perceptions. Student 4 frequently worried about the quality of his ideas, the clarity of his arguments, and whether his writing met readers' expectations. Student 5 feared negative judgment from peers and was concerned that her work wouldn't match others' quality. Student 6 also focused on the final result and doubted whether her writing would meet the required standards. The last student experienced nervousness, particularly when writing based on her own research, which affected her confidence.

Meanwhile, for the cause of somatic anxiety, some students experienced physical symptoms of anxiety, particularly under time pressure. One student reported asthma and tension, while another became preoccupied and anxious as deadlines approached. However, the other students did not describe specific physical symptoms but indicated that anxiety still affected their writing. Furthermore, the researcher also investigated the cause of avoidance behavior anxiety, several students engaged in avoidance behaviors due to anxiety. Student 1 found drafting the manuscript time-consuming and needed to unwind by doing other activities. Student 2 avoided writing because of a lack of experience. Student 3 was anxious about making mistakes and not meeting her expectations, leading to avoidance. Student 4 distracted herself with other activities instead of writing. Finally, Student 5 found it difficult to start or finish writing due to avoidance behaviors, which were linked to her anxiety. In summary, the study reveals that students' writing anxiety manifests in cognitive

concerns (self-doubt, fear of judgment), physical symptoms (somatic anxiety), and avoidance behaviors (procrastination and distraction). These anxieties significantly impacted their ability to complete writing tasks effectively.

Writing anxiety was primarily caused by lack of experience or insufficient writing practice (29.6 %). This factor is the most problem faced by the students in writing. As they lack of writing experience, it seems sense that students cannot produce good quality on writing until they have engaged in enough writing activities. Consequently, pressuring them to write manuscript may cause anxiety. Meanwhile, low self-confidence took the second place of writing anxiety cause, it was 22.2 %. The students have low self-confidence as a consequence of having lack writing experience. The next third place of students' anxiety placed by three factors that have same percentage (11.1 %), they were pressure for perfect word, they are time pressure, and fear of negative evaluation. Writing a manuscript requires sufficient time, the constrain of time prevent writers from producing perfect writing which makes them feel anxious of receiving poor review. Besides, the other factors of anxiety which had the same percentage were language difficulties and lack of topical knowledge, they were 7.4 %. For students, coming up with ideas for manuscript writing is difficult, which they experience anxiety. The students also experience anxiety as a result of their language barrier. However, not all the causes of anxiety were faced by the students. The figure 1 shows that the high frequency of assignment and inadequate writing technique were not cause of students' anxiety in writing. It means that having a lot of assignments was not problem for students. In addition, the students have adequate writing techniques, as a result they had no problems which were related to writing techniques. Those finding is presented on the figure below.
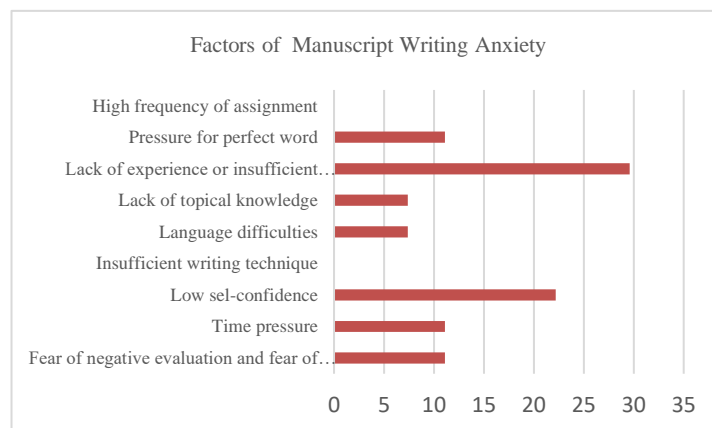

Figure 1 The descriptive statistic of CWAI

DISCUSSION

This research categorized writing anxiety into cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior anxiety. Students reported moderate cognitive and somatic anxiety, with avoidance behavior being the most prominent. The study revealed that anxiety was not overwhelming high but still present, leading to avoidance behaviors. The results align with prior studies in categorizing anxiety types (e.g., cognitive, somatic, avoidance), but

the moderate anxiety levels observed in this study (cognitive anxiety was 2.68, somatic anxiety was 2.81, and avoidance behavior was 2.83) suggest that the students in this study experienced a milder form of anxiety compared to those in studies like Jebreil et al., (2015), who found higher levels of anxiety.

In addition, it was found that the main causes of anxiety among students were lack of experience (29.6 %), and low self-confidence (22.2 %). Pressure for perfect writing, time pressure, and fear of negative evaluation (each at 11.1%) were also noted as significant contributors. The lack of writing experience as leading cause of anxiety directly correlates with Miri & Joia (2018) and Rezaei & Jafari (2014) who also found that low self-esteem and limited writing practice were central to writing anxiety. Furthermore, the fear of negative evaluation and time pressure are consistent with findings in Cui et al., (2024) suggesting a universal trend across context.

While the current study did not explicitly measure writing performance, the moderate anxiety levels (especially avoidance behavior) suggest that anxiety may still impact students' willingness to engage fully with writing tasks. Given that avoidance behavior was most pronounced, it can be inferred that students may delay or avoiding writing tasks altogether, which could harm their overall writing performance. Similar to Yu (2017), the avoidance behavior in this research suggests that writing anxiety leads to procrastination or reduce effort in writing, which negatively affect writing outcomes. This also in line with Rezaei & Jafari (2014) who pointed out that cognitive anxiety (related to performance and standards) affects students' performance.

This research did not explicitly discuss intervention, but the data presented that the students' moderate avoidance and cognitive anxiety levels suggest a need for strategies that encourages engagement and self-confidence. The reliance on self-regulation strategies (e.g. goal setting, time management) to manage avoidance behavior could be one way to help students manage anxiety. Similar to the previous studies, the need for feedback and self-regulation strategies as coping mechanism can be inferred from the findings of the currents study. However, the moderate avoidance behaviors in this study highlight that these strategies might need to be more personalized to the individual students' level on anxiety, aligning with findings from Yu (2017) and Cui et al. (2024).

The findings of the current study are consistent with much of the previous research in identifying writing anxiety as a key challenge for EFL students. Cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behaviors were common across studies, although the current study noted moderate anxiety levels compared to some of the more extreme levels found in earlier studies. The lack of writing experience and low self-confidence were identifies as the main causes of anxiety, echoing Miri & Joia (2018) and Rezaei & Jafari (2014). Furthermore, the moderate avoidance behaviors in this study point to a need for targeted interventions such as collaborative writing, feedback

from peers and teachers, and self-regulation strategies to help students reduce their anxiety and improve their writing performance, mirroring strategies proposed in studies by Abdullah, Supyan & Shakir (2018) and Cui et al. (2024). The current studies emphasizes the need for personalized approaches in addressing writing anxiety based on individual needs, drawing on cultural and contextual factors, as suggested by Anthoney & Wilang (2023).

Kawengian & Subekti (2023) and Salikin (2019), also found that students experienced moderate levels of writing anxiety, particularly in cognitive aspects. The moderate anxiety reported in this study aligns with these findings. However, this research added the dimension of somatic anxiety and its relationship to time pressure, something not heavily emphasized in earlier work. In addition, in Salikin's (2019) study, female students experienced higher anxiety than male students, but this was not specifically addressed in the current study. This indicates that gender-based differences in writing anxiety, highlighted in previous research, were not a focus in the present study, but it remains an interesting area for further exploration. Moreover, the causes of writing anxiety in this study are similar to those found in Wahyuni et al. (2019), where language barriers and insufficient writing experience were noted as major sources of anxiety. However, the present study offers a more detailed and quantified breakdown of anxiety causes, with a clear ranking of factors. Time pressure and fear of negative evaluation were given specific attention, which is a unique contribution compared to the more generalized findings of earlier research. Furthermore, Wahyuni et al. (2019) noted coping mechanisms such as relaxation, seeking social support, and giving up, while the current study does not explicitly explore coping strategies in depth. However, avoidance behaviors (procrastination, delaying writing tasks) were clearly identified as a coping mechanism linked to both cognitive and somatic anxiety.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study investigated the levels and causes of writing anxiety among Indonesian EFL students in the context of writing English journal manuscripts, categorizing the anxiety into cognitive, somatic, and avoidance behaviour types. The findings revealed moderate levels of cognitive and somatic anxiety, aligning with prior research, yet presenting slightly lower levels than reported in some earlier studies. The predominant causes of anxiety identified were lack of writing experience and low self-confidence, along with additional contributing factors such as pressure to produce perfect writing, time constraints, and fear of negative evaluation.

The study highlights that even moderate levels of avoidance-related anxiety may significantly impact students' willingness to engage in writing tasks, ultimately affecting their academic writing performance. These findings emphasize the necessity of implementing evidence-based strategies—such as constructive feedback, guided writing support, and peer collaboration—that have been shown in previous research to alleviate writing

anxiety.

Furthermore, the study underscores the value of adopting personalized approaches that consider individual differences in anxiety levels and cultural context. Although the research did not delve into gender-based differences or specific coping mechanisms, it provides important insights into the specific triggers of writing anxiety and offers practical directions for pedagogical intervention. Ultimately, the results contribute meaningfully to the growing literature on EFL writing anxiety by identifying both common and context-specific patterns, thereby offering valuable implications for future research and instructional practices.

AUTHORS' STATEMENTS

Inayatul Ulya contributed by designing the instruments, analyzing the data, drafting the findings and discussion sections, and wrote the article draft, **Sarlita D. Matra** wrote the method and proofread the article drafts several times before submission. **M. Fajru Sidqi** provided the sources and wrote the introduction.

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