

ANALYZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTIVATION, ANXIETY AND WRITING PERFORMANCES AMONG EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article explores the relationship between motivation and writing performance, as well as anxiety and writing performance among English students at the University of Islam Malang in the eighth semester. The research approach used was quantitative with a correlational design. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling, with a total sample size of 65 students. Data were collected through the Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire (AWMQ) by Payne (2012), the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) by Cheng (2004), and writing score. To analyze the data, the researcher used SPSS version 25. The results showed that students' motivation tended to be moderate, with a mean score of 3.34, anxiety levels were low, with a mean score of 49.5, and writing performance also tended to be high, with a mean score of 83.48. Using correlation analysis, the researcher found that there is a positive correlation between motivation and writing performance, and a negative correlation between anxiety and writing performance. This indicates that the higher the motivation and the lower the anxiety, the better the students' writing performance tends to be.

Key Words: Motivation, anxiety, writing performance, EFL students

INTRODUCTION

As a world language, English has become prevalent and widely used in the contemporary world. Its presence extends not only in formal communication, such as

business and academia, but also takes root in daily interactions, social media, and various fields of life. In learning English, several skills must be mastered, namely, grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to Hamer (2001), effective written communication requires a writer to possess sufficient language elements, including grammar, vocabulary, and spelling, to convey their thoughts, experiences, ideas, and emotions. Therefore, writing is important to learn because it is a valuable communication skill. The ability to write allows one to convey one's thoughts and ideas clearly and helps improve overall communication skills.

Furthermore, writing skills play a central role in shaping the ability of second language (L2) learners to communicate effectively, both in academic and professional domains. The importance of this skill highlights the need to pay more profound attention to developing written communication skills. A study conducted by Bhowmik (2021), suggests that teaching writing in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context differs significantly from teaching in an English as a Second Language (ESL) context. Such differences involve several factors, including the specific demands of the learning context, the unique needs of students, institutional mandates, and different curricular goals. Understanding these different learning contexts is thus crucial to designing more effective teaching strategies that suit the needs of the learners.

The importance of writing in English for students cannot be overstated, as it is an essential and profound communication skill. English, as a global language, provides access to international information and opens up opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration. The ability to write in English allows students to articulate ideas, express thoughts effectively, and present arguments. The writing process also strengthens critical and analytical thinking skills, teaching students to design and organize information with logic. In addition, English writing skills play a crucial role in preparing students for success in the academic and professional world, where the ability to communicate effectively through writing is a valuable asset.

In addition, several aspects, such as internal and external factors, can be essential in developing writing skills. These internal factors include affective and cognitive dimensions, which are crucial in shaping one's writing skills. Affective factors, such as motivation, interest, and attitude toward writing, significantly impact how effectively one can express themselves through writing. On the other hand, these cognitive factors consist of critical thinking skills, grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and knowledge about a topic; this is in line with a study conducted by Toba et al. (2019), which found that the ability to writing aspects influences writing ability; substance, structure, word choice, language rules, and technical accuracy. However, certain individuals encounter challenges in writing stemming from various factors, including limited writing practice, aversion to the writing process, writing anxiety, negative perceptions about writing, low motivation for writing, insufficient time for writing, and inadequacies in the writing instruction provided by their lecturers.

In addition, motivation is also one of the factors that have a significant impact on students' writing ability. According to Bernaus and Gardner (2009), motivation is an internal state that prompts individuals to engage in specific activities with the aim of accomplishing goals that are actualized in behavior to obtain a target. There are two functions of motivation in learning, namely integrative motivation (communicating with the language-speaking community) and instrumental motivation (gaining practical benefits). Motivation, which falls under the category of affective factors along with self-confidence, anxiety, and interest, forms the psychological aspects that influence the learning process of writing. This concept aligns with the results of research conducted by Kurniasih et al. (2022), who concluded that affective factors, particularly motivation, can contribute significantly to students' writing performance. High motivation may be the primary driver to overcome challenges in writing, increase perseverance, and lead to better writing results. In contrast, other affective factors, such as anxiety, self-efficacy, and attitude, did not significantly impact or contribute to students' writing performance.

As discussed earlier, anxiety can also be categorized as one of the affective factors that have the potential to influence students' writing ability. This anxiety includes feelings of discomfort, doubt, or uncertainty that may arise when students face a writing task. This is also discussed in a study conducted by Syarifudin (2020), revealing that the most dominant type of writing anxiety is cognitive anxiety. The second most prevalent type of anxiety is somatic anxiety, and avoidance behaviour is the third. Furthermore, a study conducted by Hartono and Maharani (2020), revealed that anxiety plays a crucial role in language learning success. The results confirmed that most Indonesian learners experience high levels of writing anxiety, with cognitive anxiety being the most dominant type.

Although existing literature has explored the correlations between motivation, anxiety, and writing performance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, there are research gaps in the specificity of these correlations and their implications for writing outcomes. This research aims to address this gap by conducting a correlational study to systematically examine the relationship between motivation, anxiety, and writing performance in EFL students. Using statistical analysis, the author seeks to identify and measure the strength and direction of these correlations, offering a more concrete understanding of how motivational and anxiety factors correlate with writing outcomes in an EFL context. Therefore, this study aims to answer two Research Questions:

1. Is there any relationship between motivation and writing performance among EFL students?
2. Is there any relationship between anxiety and writing performance among EFL students?

METHOD

Research Design

The approach used in this research is quantitative with a correlation research design. This design was chosen to identify and analyze the relationship between

motivation and writing performance, as well as the relationship between anxiety and writing performance.

Participants

The population of this study were 8th-semester students in the English Education Department at the University of Islam Malang. Students at this semester were selected because they had completed the Writing 1 to Writing 4 courses and had also finished the Research on ELT 1 and 2 courses or were taking Thesis Writing Seminar courses. Then, to determine the number of samples, researchers used convenience sampling (samples were selected based on whether they were willing and available) to obtain a total of 65 students.

Instruments

Three questionnaires were employed in this study to gather data, which included a modified version of the Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire, the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), and writing score. Regarding the frequency of each item, especially concerning writing motivation, it is deemed high if the average score falls between 3.45 to 5.00, moderate if between 2.45 to 3.44, and classified as low if ranging from 1.00 to 2.44, Oxford (1990). Then, for measuring the anxiety levels, the research categorized the mean scores into three different levels: low (mean score < 55), moderate (mean score 55-65), and high (mean score > 65). Finally, for measuring writing performances levels, the criteria used are: scores of 0-69 are categorized as low performance, 70-79 as moderate performance, and 80-100 as high performance. These criteria are adopted from the assessment guidelines at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Islam Malang.

Data Collection

The questionnaire consisted of three parts: The first section covered the research title, purpose, and participant consent statement. The second section gathered demographic data from participants. The third section involved implementing the questionnaire through Google Forms, and distributed to participants

via WhatsApp messages. Each question in the questionnaire was translated into Indonesian to make it easier for participants to complete the questionnaire. It typically took respondents about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. For writing performances, the thesis seminar course scores are used to measure participants' writing performance. These scores are obtained from the course lecturers, who assess various important aspects of academic writing.

Data Analysis

Before conducting the statistical analysis, the data was initially tabulated in Microsoft Excel. Positive data from the writing anxiety measures was converted into negative values for easier analysis. First, statistical analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to classify categories of motivation level, anxiety, and writing performance. Correlation analysis was conducted to measure the relationship between motivation and writing performance. In addition, correlation analysis was also used to measure the relationship between anxiety and writing performance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Level of Students Motivation

The initial action taken by the researcher was to distribute questionnaires to determine the level of student motivation. The data from the questionnaire was then analyzed using descriptive statistics, with the following results:

Table 1. Writing Motivation Levels

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levels
Enjoyment	65	3.39	0.787	Moderate
Self-efficacy	65	3.31	0.876	Moderate
Belief	65	3.37	0.798	Moderate
Recognition	65	3.37	0.784	Moderate
Effort	65	3.24	0.892	Moderate

The data in Table 1 shows that the mean score of enjoyment is 3.39, self-efficacy is 3.31, belief is 3.37, recognition is 3.37, and effort is 3.24. Thus, the

motivation level of students is at a moderate level, which is relatively stable, with a mean score of around 3.34.

Level of Students Anxiety

The analysis used was descriptive statistics to determine the anxiety level of students. The first step taken by the researcher was to distribute a questionnaire containing three measurement points: somatic anxiety, avoidance behaviour, and cognitive anxiety. The results of the analysis of the questionnaire are as follows:

Table 2. Writing Anxiety Levels

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levels
Somatic Anxiety	65	21.3	4.992	Low
Avoidance Behavior	65	15.2	2.672	Low
Cognitive Anxiety	65	12.9	3.551	Low
Writing Anxiety	65	49.5	9.765	Low

The data listed in Table 2 demonstrates that the mean score of somatic anxiety is 21.3, avoidance behaviour is 15.2, and cognitive anxiety is 12.9. With an overall total of 49.5, it can be concluded that the anxiety level of students is at a low level, with the most significant anxiety occurring in somatic anxiety. This shows that students tend to experience somatic anxiety more than cognitive anxiety or avoidance behaviour.

Level of Students Writing Performances

To ascertain the level of participants' writing performance, the researcher first collected the thesis writing seminar course scores of the participants. These scores were then processed and analyzed using SPSS software to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's writing performance. The results were as follows:

Table 3. Writing Performances Levels

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levels
Writing Performance	65	83.48	3.734	High

The data in Table 3 shows that the mean writing performance score is 83.48. This indicates that students are at a high level of writing performance. This high level of writing performance illustrates that students have good abilities.

Correlation between Motivation and Writing Performances

Correlation analysis was used to answer the first research question and ascertain if there is a relationship between motivation and writing performance among EFL students. The results of the analysis are as follows:

Table 4. Correlation between Motivation and Writing Performances

		Motivation	Writing Performance
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.392
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	65	
Writing Performances	Pearson Correlation	.392	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	65	65

Table 4 shows that motivation and writing performance have a significant positive correlation, with a significance value of .001 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates a strong relationship between writing motivation and students' writing performance. In other words, the higher the motivation, the better the writing performance, and the lower the motivation, the lower the writing performance.

Correlation between Anxiety and Writing Performances

In answering the second research question, correlation analysis was used to determine whether there is a relationship between anxiety and writing performance among EFL students. The results of the analysis are as follows:

Table 5. Correlation between Anxiety and Writing Performances

		Anxiety	Writing Performance
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	-.420
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	65	
Writing Performances	Pearson Correlation	-.420	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	65	65

Table 5 shows that writing anxiety and writing performance have a significant negative correlation, with a significance value of .000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that with higher anxiety, students' writing performance tends to decrease, and if the anxiety is low, their writing performance will increase. In other words, high anxiety related to writing can negatively affect students' writing ability

Discussion

This study aims to answer two research questions. First, this study revealed a significant relationship between motivation and writing performance. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Kurniasih et al. (2022), which showed that the most important influencing factor on students' writing performance is motivation. Highly motivated students with moderate self-efficacy, attitude, and anxiety tend to have high writing proficiency levels. Then, some studies (e.g., Weda and Sahril., 2018; Sugumlu et al., 2019; Andheska et al., 2020) found that writing motivation significantly impacts students' writing ability. Highly motivated students have good writing skills. However, this differs from research conducted by Ilahiyah et al. (2019), who found no significant correlation between motivation and writing performance. This indicates that there is no discernible relationship between a student's motivation to read and their writing performance, either higher or lower.

Then, the findings of the second research question discovered a negative correlation between writing anxiety and writing performance. This is in line with research conducted by Rohmah and Muslim (2020), which revealed that anxiety in academic writing by EFL students stems from a lack of writing practice and grammar application, which leads to decreased writing performance in students with high levels of anxiety. Several studies have also shown an exact result (Gibriel., 2019; Rehelmi., 2020; Kafryawan et al., 2021). This indicates that the lower the anxiety level of EFL students, the better their writing performances. However, this differs

from the research conducted by Kurniasih et al. (2023), who revealed that anxiety in writing does not contribute to students' writing ability.

Furthermore, research conducted by Soleimani et al. (2020), shows that students with low writing anxiety tend to have better writing performance, but writing motivation is also essential to facilitate and contribute to writing skills. And a study conducted by Wang (2021), which revealed that writing anxiety is negatively correlated with writing performance. Students who are less anxious when writing are better than those who are more anxious; although motivation significantly affects creative writing performance, they still need adequate writing skills.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Motivation and anxiety are often discussed in the English learning process. This study aims to answer two questions concerning the relationship between motivation and writing performance and the relationship between writing anxiety and writing performance. The analysis revealed that writing motivation and anxiety correlate equally with writing performance. Higher motivation and lower anxiety lead to improved writing performance. However, this study has some areas for improvement, such as the lack of population representation is a weakness, which could be due to factors like accessibility of participants, motivation to participate, or specific demographic characteristics influencing participation.

For future research, it is recommended to consider other affective factors such as self-efficacy, personality, attitude, and gender to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' writing performance. Including participants from different semester levels and study programs would offer a more thorough comprehension of motivation and anxiety in writing performance among EFL students. Combining qualitative research approaches, such as interviews or focus group discussions (FGDs), with questionnaires can provide deeper insights into the experiences, perceptions, and factors influencing students' writing performances.

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