



ESL Writing Anxiety and its Effects on Writing Performance of College Students in an Academically Disadvantaged Context of Pakistan: A Case Study



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Abstract: This study investigated the levels of ESL writing anxiety and its effects on the writing performance of 161 (85 male and 76 female) college students of Balochistan with a non-probability sampling. For data collection, the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) of Cheng (2004) was used in addition to an essay writing task completed by the participants. The SLWAI results indicated that overall ESLWA was significantly high ($M=2.99$, $SD=.67$). Somatic anxiety (SA) was the most prevailing one ($M=3.39$, $SD=.90$). The second most significant type was cognitive anxiety (CA) ($M=3.11$, $SD=.82$), whereas, the avoidance behaviour (AB) was the third in level ($M=2.45$, $SD=.87$). The statistical analysis of writing tasks revealed an adverse association between the WA and WP of the college students of Balochistan.

Key Words: ESL Writing Anxiety, Cognitive Anxiety, Somatic Anxiety, Avoidance behaviour, Writing Performance

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Introduction

Acquiring competency in the English language has always been the dream of the students. The majority of students, as well as youth from different professions, are attracted towards language centres where they try to quench their thirst for learning the English language. Consequently, the learners have improved their listening, speaking and reading but cannot acquire the desired skills in academic writing. It has been observed

that many of the learners become the victim of English writing anxiety (EWA) and cannot do well. Writing anxiety is a state of nervousness that puts a writer in a situation where he/she does not want to begin writing or avoids writing. Syarifudin (2020) argued that WA possesses adverse connotations. It arouses nervousness, worry and fear. In writing, it is a feeling of apprehension in which one is captivated by fear and cannot focus on the task. When WA is related to a

foreign or second language (FL/SL) learning situation, it is labelled as foreign or second language writing anxiety (FLWA/ SLWA). The influences of SLWA are undeniable. It causes either a negative or positive impact on a learner's writing performance (WP). However, it is observed that its negative impacts are more effective than its positive ones.

Writing skill, though very important, is a difficult stage of language learning. Despite many years of English learning, the students face difficulties writing English. In the case of Balochistan, students come to college after five, or ten years of studying English in government or public schools respectively. Nonetheless, their English writing competence is not up to the mark. Besides, the other factors, EWA is a significant cause, which blocks the abilities of the students. Thus, their WP is not developed as it is desired. Di Loreto and McDonough (2013) posited such affective factors which influence the writing of the learners. Among them, anxiety is also considered to be consequential. Its influence can be positive or negative on the learners, depending on their performance. It is important to explore to what degree WA affects the English WP of college students.

This study, therefore, focuses on the relationship between EWA and WP of the students in Balochistan. The researcher has experienced that even very bright students in specific situations where they want to undergo writing: they are confused; they mix up the ideas; they procrastinate writing. In such mentioned cases, the impact of WP is considerably unavoidable. It influences the performance of the students. Hence, there is a dire need for such a study to find the facts regarding the ESLWA and WP relationship. If the students' lack of confidence and avoidance of English writing is due to ESLWA, these issues may be addressed appropriately.

Literature Review

Kara (2013) argued that anxiety is one of the factors that affect the learning process. It is a mental state of unpleasant reaction against an uncomfortable and threatening situation; it has some particular characteristics compounded with emotional, physical, cognitive and behavioural indications. It is a response against some unfavourable circumstances, and mobilizes the organism; consequently, assists to defend offence tactfully or avoid an anxiety impulse.

Anxiety is a feeling of uneasiness. In the view of Scovel (1991), anxiety is a psychological concept that psychologists often define as a feeling of worry, a vague fear that is not directly related to an object. American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2016) defined anxiety as a condition in which the sufferer is worried about a future event that he/she is not sure about. It is a situation of visualization of some threatening events resulting from some real or imaginary situations. Spielberger (1972) defined anxiety as a displeasing state dominated by emotions. It has distinguished characteristics of subjective feelings of unrest, agitation, fear and suspicion. It is a subjective feeling, linked with the nervous system. Anxiety can haunt the learners in the different related domains and be associated accordingly.

Language Anxiety

Anxiety, when linked with learning another language rather than the learners' first language, is called second or foreign language anxiety SLA/ FLA. SLA/FLA is a commonly found intricacy wherever SL or FL is learnt. Language anxiety is a specific set of thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and actions that reflect how a person experiences and responds to the language learning process in the classroom (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 128). MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) affirmed that learners with anxiety are

simultaneously worried about the demands of the assigned task and about their own responses regarding the assigned task. Similarly, the views of the language experts sketched by Young (1992) about FLA as “a complicated psychological phenomenon peculiar to language learning” (p. 157). Foreign language anxiety has been a significant factor and an interesting field for research. It has been important from the perspective that it weakens the learning of foreign language and second language learners (Hurd & Xiao, 2010; Woodrow, 2011). FLA is a potent factor that affects learners' performance. The studies on FLA have brought to light that FL learning is negatively affected by FLA.

The effects of FLA can be observed as performance inadequacy among learners (Hurd & Xiao, 2010; Shao, Ji & Yu, 2013). Different studies have indicated that anxiety interacts with a number of variables during foreign language learning. These variables with which FLA interacts, are gender, age, and motivation, (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Gregersen, Meza, & MacIntyre, 2014; Lu & Liu, 2011; Shao et al., 2013). It has been explored that a considerable number of students undergo foreign language anxiety. According to Horwitz, Tallon, and Luo (2010), around 33% of the students who study FL experience at least a moderate level of FLA.

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), analogized FLA with a disorder that has its apparent symptoms, characteristics and indications like any other type of anxiety. The most prominent symptoms are lack of concentration, uneasiness, forgetfulness, worry, fear, and avoidance behaviour. Hashemi and Abbasi (2013), diagnosing the FLA among the learners mention that the victims of FLA show the signs of blushing, sweating, weariness, tiresome, stammering in speech, cracking their knuckles and twisting their fingers while speaking. Their performance is also negatively affected.

Woodrow (2011) stated that when students learn a new language, they may feel FLA that is different from other anxieties. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), FLA is a specific combination of how students ponder, perceive and conduct in the language classroom, which results from the unique characteristics of learning a language. Muhammed (2015) discussed the negative relationship between FLA and the motivation of Saudi Arabian college students. According to Muhammed, students were eager to learn English to meet their professional needs; however, they could not ignore the consequences of FLA such as stress, headaches, and demotivation.

Writing Anxiety

Second/foreign language writing anxiety being an influential complexity has attracted the interest of researchers. Various studies have investigated the effects of anxiety on the WP of learners. WA, a significant factor, impedes the process of writing. When this complexity is associated with SL writing, is termed as a second language writing anxiety. Daly and Wilson (1983) defined WA as an individual difference that depends on the situation and the topic. It involves a person's tendency to either approach or avoid writing situations that they think will be evaluated by others. According to Cheng (2004) and Daly and Miller (1975a, 1975b) WA frequently haunts and overwhelms L1, SL and FL writers.

Factors of Writing Anxiety

Anxiety exhibits varying characteristics. On the basis of these variations, Cheng (2004), classified it into three dimensions (subsections): somatic anxiety (SA), cognitive anxiety (CA) and avoidance behaviour (AB). These dimensions have specific distinguishable characteristics. SA, for example, has psychological effects. Its symptoms include shivering, sweating, panting, tense muscles, stomachache,

headache etc. Though this type of anxiety is very common in speaking, it is prevalent in writing as well. The learners' mental aspect is associated with CA. It results from concerns, of the fulfilment of the expectations of the others. AB is the type of anxiety in writing when the learner avoids facing writing. The sufferers of avoidance behaviour try their utmost level to escape from writing and whenever they try to accomplish a task of writing in the target language (English), they cannot accomplish the task because their minds become void of ideas. These three types of anxieties have varying effects on ESL learners' WP.

Causes of ESL/EFL Writing Anxiety

Studies have explored some causes of ESL and EFL learners' anxiety. The results indicate that negative evaluation, nervousness, writing practice deficiency, insufficient knowledge of the target language, complexity of the assigned task, and the learners' lack of belief in their abilities are the main causes behind ESL/EFL writing anxiety. Some recent studies found that negative evaluation is a significant cause of ESL writing anxiety. It negatively influences the English writing performance of ESL learners. The affectees of such anxiety were unable to focus on the task assigned (Cheng, 2004; Zhang, 2011).

According to Tsiriatakis (2013), such students avoided English writing and that resulted in an obstacle to writing improvement. Zhang (2011) argued that the topic and difficulty of the target language caused WA among ESL and EFL learners. Kara (2013), regarding the students of a Turkish University "Anadolu University", mentioned the unfamiliarity of the students with writing, hence, they experienced WA. Golda (2015) confirmed the issue of WA to the utmost degree. He found cognitive anxiety the most prevailing one. He also discovered that limited contact with the target language (TL), inadequate writing

drills in TL, bad reading habits, and lack of knowledge about the topic were the chief triggers of ESLWA/FLWA. However, a few students faced self-confidence problems. Kara (2013), enumerating the difficulties of the learners, pointed out that the learners believed that their ability to write skills such as planning, researching and synthesizing ideas was limited. Furthermore, they felt their English competence was insufficient for the communication of their ideas clearly. He further argued that the learners experienced WA because they lacked writing practice, even though they were used to test taking. Rezaei and Jafari (2014), identified the agents behind WA among Iranian English foreign language students. The main factors were inadequate knowledge of the English language, lack of confidence and negative criticism from the instructors on their performance. They also argued that when the teachers are authoritative in the classrooms, the students cannot express themselves and only want to get good marks in the examination. Latif (2015) discovered that deficiency in the application of proper language, the inadequacy of writing skills, communication disability and the learners' poor writing performance background were the significant causes of FLWA among Egyptian and Malaysian learners

Self-esteem has a strong impact on the learning of language skills. Dornyei (2005) believed that learners with high self-esteem have brighter chances of learning; they know very well about their goals and achieve them very successfully. Hashemian (2012) found a striking favourable relationship between ESL learners' competency level and their self-esteem level. He mentioned the learners' confidence level increased as their language skills improved.

Tuppang (2014) found that lack of writing drills, fear of poor performance, negative evaluation by the teachers and time restriction caused EFL writing anxiety. In a study regarding Turkish students, Kirmizi &

Kirmizi (2015), discovered similar reasons behind WA among Turkish students. He identified and ranked the main factors that contributed to WA based on their importance, including time constraints, negative feedback by the teachers, inadequate English writing practice in the institutions, and the pursuit of perfection in English writing.

According to Ningsih (2015), Indonesian students in the English department experienced EWA because they lacked and had writing practice, faced challenges with the target language, and had weak writing techniques. However, for first-semester students, the reason for WA was not "weak writing techniques" but "the time pressure". The other two causes were similar in both groups of students. Al-Khasawneh (2010), explored that the main sources of FLWA among Arab students were deficiency of the required vocabulary, misspellings, incoherence, grammatical errors and reference problems.

Different aspects of SLA/FLA have been the focus of some research studies. Rezaei and Jafari (2014) discovered a considerable degree of anxiety among Iranian EFL learners. They also indicated that CA was the most prevalent type of anxiety. According to them, cynical comments, uncertainty and low language proficiency were the primary factors that contributed to EFL anxiety.

In their study regarding final-year engineering undergraduate students at the University of Putra Malaysia, Min and Rahmat (2014) examined how much the students felt about WA. They found that the majority of the students they studied had experienced SA. In another Malaysian setting, Iskan and Halim (2018) conducted experimental research. According to the results both the experimental and controlled group participants reflected the utmost degree of CA. Avoidance behaviour (AB) was at the lowest level among the participants. Wahyuni, Oktavia and Marlina (2019) also

investigated EFLWA among Indonesian college students. They identified the main sources of EFLWA as difficulties with topic selection, language problems, lack of writing practice and pressure for flawless work.

Writing Anxiety and Writing Performance Relationship

The researchers have discovered an important connection between students' WA and WP. Generally, one's WP is adversely affected by one's WA. However, there is a lack of research, particularly in the Pakistani context, with regard to how foreign language anxiety influences EFL learners' writing performance at the college level. According to a considerable body of studies WA and WP are negatively correlated. Erkan and Saban (2011) acknowledged that the work produced by anxious writers was of below standard, and also was not of adequate length; their work was also lacking cohesive devices than the texts produced by the writers who did not have the problem of writing anxiety. They further mentioned that second language writers were more anxious about the language usage rather than the contents and ideas of their writings. Studies indicated that WA enfeebled learners' WP.

Rezaei, Jafari, and Younas (2014) discovered that WA of a higher level compels the students to take refuge in shorter and simpler structures when they write their assignments. Generally, the previous studies brought to light that SLA is a specific type of anxiety. Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert (1999) discovered that SLWA is different from foreign language classroom anxiety. Some studies, nevertheless, revealed a resemblance between second language writing anxiety and other kinds of SLAs, for example, avoidance behaviour. According to Madigan, Linton and Johnson (1996). Second language anxiety hindered writing performance by making writers feel miserable and reluctant.

The studies found that WA and WP in SL

were negatively related. Learners who had low levels of anxiety wrote more and better than their peers who had high levels of anxiety, according to Hassan (2001). WA contributed worse effects under time pressure, as the studies indicated (Kean, Glynn & Britton, 1987). Cheng (2004) described how writing anxiety negatively affected writing processes and behaviours, such as pressure, interference and avoidance. He also indicated a strong negative correlation between WA and WP. Al-Sobh and Al-Abed Al-Haq (2012) considered writing anxiety a serious issue that hampered learners' performance in both languages whether they composed in their languages or in foreign languages.

Negari and Rezaabadi (2012) attempted to discover the connection between WA and WP of the learners. However, their findings indicated that the learners with higher anxiety levels scored good grades in writing on the final tests. Their findings verified WA as a facilitating agent for the students. They maintained that the majority of the learners required anxiety to some extent to make their work easier. Tsiriatakis (2013), however, did not agree with the conclusion that anxiety is a facilitating factor, instead, he mentioned that it is a debilitating factor and affects writing performance and writing achievement. Similarly, Naghadeh et al. (2014) also found that WA hinders the ability to write narratives proficiently.

Kurniasih (2017), Fitrinada et al. (2018) discovered a glaringly negative correlation between learners' WA and WP. It proved that the nervousness of the learners negatively affected their performance and they produced lower-quality of writing; hence, their performance was adversely affected. Although other researchers found that ESL anxiety had positive or negative impacts on the writing performance of the learners, Hartono (2012) and Septiani (2020) mentioned that there was no notable interrelationship between these two

variables.

Effects of EFL/ESL Writing Anxiety

The effects of EFLWA/ESLWA on English learners are either positive or negative. A basic negative effect of WA is procrastination (Martinez, Kock, & Cass, 2011) and writing avoidance (Zorbaz, 2015). Azizifar, Gowhary, Jamalinesari and Jebreil (2015) conducted a study on Iranian EFL students of Islamic Azad University and found that high anxiety was the main factor that discouraged them, reduced their ability and made them avoid participating in classroom activities.

Many college students aspire to achieve writing ability. According to Hodgson and Hodgson & Harris (2013), some students of honour classes claimed that "writing is the only thing that matters" (p. 6). According to Anderson et al. (2017), one of the most important benefits of a college education is to write well. However, when the students ponder negatively regarding their WA, their increased WA causes dissatisfaction and ultimately their performance declines in college (Daly, 1978). This negative effect is not the same in all the students but its variation depends on the person and the grade (Cocuk, Yanpar Yelken, & Ozer, 2016).

WA arises when learners face situations that expose their writing weaknesses. Writing tests that measure their writing skills are challenging for learners with higher writing anxiety. They perform poorly in writing tests that measure their writing skills. They also avoid writing situations (Daly, 1978). WA and writing skills are correlated and influence each other. Kilgore, Cronley, and Amey (2013) verified that writing difficulty aggravated writing anxiety. They identified the difficulties that triggered writing anxiety. The most prominent difficulties were the lack of knowledge to comprehend the course content and how to write about it (Kilgore et al., 2013).

WA affects the intensity of the

expression. According to Daly and Miller (1975a), the learners who had high WA used mild and passionless language, while learners who had low WA expressed themselves in more forceful and passionate language. In this case, the learners' WA itself cast restrictions on their work and hence quality work is restrained. Second, some learners lacked knowledge of the writing process and could not comprehend how to develop and outline ideas (Kilgore et al., 2013). At the college level, the writing of the students is also assessed, this causes writing anxiety among students (Hodgson & Harris, 2013). Consequently, the students produced work with poor marks results in WA. The third difficulty behind high WA is the lack of confidence. The lack of confidence also results in low writing skills (Kilgore et al., 2013). When high anxiety and low writing skills are compounded together, results in low course performance. The ultimate result can be dropping out of the institution (Kilgore et al., 2013).

The studies confirmed that when WA rises, it affects the learners' skills. Consequently, their performance is affected. This effect is found both in male and female students. Martinez et al. (2011) discovered an influential negative relationship between grade point average (GPA) and WA. Some studies revealed that more females underwent WA as compared to males (Karakaya & Ulper, 2011; Kirmizi & Kirmizi, 2015; Martinez et al., 2011); however, some studies found higher anxiety in males (Liu & Ni, 2015; Zorbaz, 2015). It is apparent from the findings of studies that anxiety is not gender dependent. Higher anxiety is a dominant factor in decreasing skill learning and lowering the GPA of both gender learners. The effects of WA are not transient but long-lasting.

Participants

A total of 161 students in the intermediate

second year of the four colleges: GBDC Noshki; GGDC Noshki; GBDC Dalbandin and GGDC Dalbandin were taken as the sample for the study.

Table 1

College-wise Distribution of the Participants

Name of the College	Participants	Per cent
GBDC Noshki	49	30.43%
GGDC Noshki	40	24.84%
GBDC Dalbandin	36	22.36%
GGDC Dalbandin	36	22.36%

All the participants also volunteered to undertake the task of English essay writing that followed the questionnaire. However, some of them later on avoided writing essays and handed over their papers blank and even some of them had attempted the essays in Urdu language.

Instruments

In order to discover the type of anxiety and measure the level of WA among college students, we adopted Cheng's (2004) questionnaire as a research tool to identify the type of anxiety and to measure the levels of WA among college students. It was based on a five-point Likert scale (SD 1 to SA 5). It ranged from 1 to 5. On the scale 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= no strongly feeling either way, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. Statements with symbol (R) 1, 4, 17, 18 and 22 are scored negatively. We used the adapted questionnaire because the items were relevant and compatible with the needs of my study so they did not need to be modified, however, to facilitate the students and make the items were translated orally into Urdu and also into the local languages of the students i.e. Balochi and Brahvi. The questionnaire comprised 22 items in total.

English Writing Performance Test

To examine how EWA affected the learners' WP, the participants were selected on the

basis of those who had filled out the questionnaire with their consent to complete the essay writing task. The topics were taken from the Intermediate second-year syllabus and the previous papers of Balochistan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Quetta so that it might be according to the level of the participants.

Data Collection

The data was collected in two different phases. In the first phase of the data collection process, it was aimed to measure the level of anxiety among the participants. This phase started in January 2021 and involved a close-ended questionnaire that was adopted from Cheng's (2004) study. Ethical considerations were taken care of while collecting data with plain language statements shared with the participants. Moreover, the questionnaire was also explained in Urdu and local languages so that they might not face any difficulties to understand it. It took them approximately 50 minutes filling the questionnaire. In the next phase, a task of essay writing was assigned to the participants. They completed their assignment in around an hour. The same procedure of data collection was repeated in the four colleges one by one.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the analysis of the collected data. The aim was to gather information about the types of anxiety dimensions i.e., SA, AB and CA. It was also aimed to find out to what level the students experienced every specific type of anxiety while writing English with the following sequence.

The data and variables were registered in SPSS with the coding of the participants' colleges, languages, and gender followed by the items of the three types of anxieties i.e., SA, CA and AB separately categorized with

strongly agree, agree, no strong feelings either way, disagree, strongly disagree represented by 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. Descriptive statistics were used to find means, percentages, and standard deviations of the variables and to detect how WA influenced the WP of college English learners. Moreover, simple linear regression was performed in the SPSS.

Essay Data Analysis

For the sake of convenient scoring, 100 marks were allotted to the essay. Accuracy of the English language, appropriate vocabulary, coherence, organization of the content and relevancy to ideas was the main focus. The following table shows the focused items and the weightage of marks allotted to them.

Table 2

Distribution of Marks for Essay Assessment

Items	Marks
Content	10
Structure of Essay	10
Thesis statement	10
Topic sentences	10
Evidence	10
Linguistics Items:	
Use of grammar	10
Vocabulary	10
Punctuation	10
Coherence	10
Relevance	10
Total	100

The writing performance of the participants when examined thoroughly, it was established that the EWA and WP of the students were negatively correlated. The higher the WA, the lower the WP.

Results and Discussion

The research questions were analysed by testing the following alternative and null hypotheses.

H₁: Writing anxiety significantly affects college English Language learners' writing performance.

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of writing anxiety on college English Language Learners' writing performance.

H₂: CA, SA and AB significantly affect college English Language learners' writing performance.

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of CA, SA and AB on college English Language learners' writing performance.

Analysis of the Research Question 1

The purpose of the first research question of the study, "What is the rank and order of writing-anxiety factors among college English language learners?" was to unravel the dimensions of students' writing anxiety. For this purpose, data collected from 161 students were analysed through descriptive statistics in which mean and standard deviations were calculated. Table 4.1 summarizes the overall results.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall Writing Anxiety	2.99	.67
Cognitive Anxiety	3.11	.82
Somatic Anxiety	3.39	.90
Avoidance Behaviour	2.45	.87

Table 3 delineates that students' overall writing anxiety was ($M = 2.99$, $SD = .67$) which is considered relatively high. Among the listed dimensions, somatic anxiety ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .90$) was the leading source of students' writing anxiety. The next acute dimension was CA ($M = 3.11$, $SD = .82$). Contrarily, AB ($M = 2.45$, $SD = .87$) emerged

to be the least source of students' writing anxiety. These overall results evidently highlight the actuality of writing anxiety in English language classrooms. The results are thoroughly discussed in the discussion part of this chapter.

Analysis of the Research Question 2(a)

Simple linear regression was performed in the SPSS to address the second research question of the study, "To what extent, if any, does writing anxiety affect college English language learners' writing performance?" Before performing the real test, some of the suggested assumptions were verified.

a. Multicollinearity and Singularity Issue

Table 4

Assumption of Multicollinearity and Singularity

No	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Overall Writing Anxiety	-			
2	CA	.788**	-		
3	SA	.823**	.513**	-	
4	AB	.716**	.293**	.402**	-

According to Pallant (2020), multicollinearity refers to a high correlation among variables - more than ($r = .7$ or above). If there is an existence of multicollinearity in the data, the highly correlated variables are combined into one that is called Singularity. It can be interpreted from Table 4.2 above that multicollinearity and singularity were viable.

a. Assumption of Normality

In the present research, the assumption of normality was assessed through skewness and kurtosis. The values of both skewness and kurtosis should fall within ± 1 (Pallant, 2020). According to what is given in Table 4.3 that the values of Kurtosis and Skewness of all the variables were well within the range (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Table 5*The Assumption of Normality*

Variables	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Overall Writing Anxiety	161	-.367	.191	-.443	.380
Cognitive Anxiety	161	-.474	.191	-.323	.380
Somatic Anxiety	161	-.713	.191	.015	.380
Avoidance Behaviour	161	-.342	.191	-.479	.380

After assessing the assumption for the regression analysis, the actual test was performed. Table 4.4 illustrates that the model explained 13.8% of the variance in English language learners' writing performance ($R^2 = .138$, $F(1, 159) = 25.36$, $p < .001$). Students' overall writing anxiety ($\beta = -.371$, $t = -5.036$) exerted a significantly negative effect on students' writing performance. These overall results signify that if the writing anxiety goes up, the writing performance goes down and vice-versa. These results are also critically discussed in the discussion part of the study.

Table 6*Effect of Writing Anxiety on Students' Writing Performance*

Model	β	T
Writing Anxiety	-.371	-5.036

Note: $F(1, 159) = 25.36$, $R^2 = .138$, $p < .001$

Analysis of the Research Question 2(b)

Multiple regression was performed in the SPSS to address the research question, "Is there any effect of CA, SA and AB on the writing performance of college English language learners?" Before running the test, the assumption of multicollinearity and singularity, and normality were assessed. These assumptions were tenable (See Tables 4.2 & 4.3).

The results of the multiple regression are summarized in Table 4.5. The overall model

approximately explained 23% of the variance in English language learners' WP ($R^2 = .231$, $F(3, 157) = 15.683$). As for the effects of these dimensions, avoidance behaviour ($\beta = -.449$, $t = -5.840$, $p < .001$) exhibited the highest significant and negative effect on students' writing performance followed by cognitive anxiety ($\beta = -.168$, $t = -2.045$, $p < .001$). On the contrary, somatic anxiety insignificantly affected students' writing performance ($\beta = .101$, $t = 1.176$, $p > .05$).

Table 7*Effects of the Three Dimensions of Writing Anxiety on Students' Writing Performance*

Model	β	t	P
Cognitive Anxiety	-.168	-2.045	.043*
Somatic Anxiety	.101	1.176	.241
Avoidance Behaviour	-.449	-5.840	.000**

Note: $F(3, 157) = 15.683$, $R^2 = .231$, $p < .001$

Note: ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

Discussion

The results concerning SA (comprising items 2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 19 on the questionnaire) exhibited that the students at the college level in Balochistan were overwhelmed with somatic anxiety (see Table 4.1) to the higher level during English essay writing. It was the most dominant one with a mean of 3.39. Hence, it could be described as the most prevalent form of anxiety among Balochistani college students. These findings are conforming to the results of Min and Rahmat's (2014) study, which showed that SA

was the highest dimension with a mean of 3.23 among participants of final-year engineering undergraduates at the University Putra Malaysia. However, some previous studies (see Golda, 2015; Iskan & Halim, 2018; Kirmizi & Kirmizi, 2015; Kusumaningputri, Ningsih, & Wisasongko, 2018; Ningsih, & Wisasongko, 2018; Rezaei & Jafari, 2014; Zhang, 2011) indicated the dominance of cognitive anxiety among ESL learners conforming the past literature that somatic anxiety is involuntary arousal of negative symptoms. These negative symptoms include headache, dry throat, shivering, tense muscles, and heart palpitating.

Statistical analysis of the data indicated that CA was the second most prevalent ESLWA with a mean of 3.11 among the participants. It could also be considered a significant figure which could not be neglected. Here, again the results of the present study corroborate with Min and Rahmat's (2014) study and are contrary to the findings of studies by Tuppang (2014), Kirmizi and Kirmizi (2015), Golda (2015), Wahyuni, Oktavia and Marlina (2019) which verified CA dominance among the participants. The main cause of cognitive anxiety could be attributed to the behaviour of the school teachers who always are waiting for a chance to make fun of their students for any trifle mistake they commit. Such negative behaviour is very common among government school teachers.

Avoidance behaviour with a mean of 2.45 was the third factor the participants encountered while writing English. Such a result was experienced by the participants of the majority of the studies; however, it was third in level. My study was in accord with the studies of Golda (2015), Iskan & Halim (2018), Kirmizi & Kirmizi (2015), Kusumaningputri, Ningsih, and Wisasongko (2018), Min and Rahmat (2014), Rezaei and Jafari (2014), Tuppang (2014), Wahyuni, Oktavia and Marlina (2019) and Zhang (2011), in this regard.

This result matches the observed behaviour of the participants as some of the participants left their task of English essay writing unaccomplished by exercising their writing without having to provide a justification. Some of the participants avoided writing the essays in English and tried writing in Urdu. The present study exhibited the rank and order of the occurrence of SA, CA and AB and they were matching with some claims from the past studies and differed from the results of some past studies as it has been mentioned in the above paragraphs.

Effects of English Writing Anxiety on the Writing Performance

The second objective was the discovery of a link between the students' ESLWA and WP. Table 4.4 explicitly exhibits a decline in writing performance with a rise in writing anxiety. It means that students perform poorly in writing when their anxiety levels are high learners have high intensity of anxiety, and they perform badly in writing. It verifies a negative correlation between WA and WP.

The findings of the investigation apparently exhibited, AB as the most significant factor having the biggest detrimental impact on the participants' performance. CA was the second most severe anxiety that had a detrimental impact on the students' writing ability ($\beta = -.168$, $t = -2.045$, $p < .001$). However, somatic anxiety insignificantly affected the learners' writing performance ($\beta = .101$, $t = 1.176$, $p > .05$). Previous studies related to FLA/SLA exhibited ESL writing anxiety both facilitating and debilitating to writing performance. They confirmed that both the variables (FLA/SLA and writing performance) were strongly correlated.

According to some studies (see, for example, Al-Sobh & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2012; Cheng et al., 1999; Cheng, 2004; Fitrinada, Loeneto, & Fiftinove, 2018; Kurniasih, 2017;

Naghadeh et al., 2014; Rahmatunisa, 2014; Tsiriotakis, 2013) ESLWA affected WP negatively and that the higher anxiety reduced WP of the students. Similarly, this study confirmed a negative correlation between ESLWA and WP. Some studies, nevertheless found ESLWA rather facilitating. Negari and Rezaabadi (2012) found writing anxiety as a facilitating factor for the students but only in the final tests. They maintained that the majority of the learners required anxiety to some extent to make their work easier.

These findings of my study confirmed two variables negatively correlated, ESLWA and WP; consequently, it verified the alternative hypotheses. These findings of my study confirmed that two variables were negatively correlated: ESLWA and WP. Consequently, they verified the alternative hypotheses Ha₁ (Writing anxiety significantly affects college English Language learners' writing performance) and Ha₂ (CA, SA and AB significantly affect college English Language learners' writing performance). However, the Septiani (2020), denied any kind of relationship between the two mentioned variables.

Conclusion

The first question investigated the rank and order of the ESL writing anxiety factors among college language learners. The findings regarding ESL/EFL writing anxiety level indicated that the students experienced it. The most typical kind of anxiety was SA, which has physical effects. The second most prevalent type of apprehension, which affects the mind was CA. In this order, AB, which influences the behaviour or actions of the learners, was the third in effect. The second question examined the effects of ESLWA on the writing abilities of the learners. The findings supported a considerable negative association between ESLWA/EFLWA and English WP of college students of Balochistan. ESLWA acted as a barrier that

hindered the learners' development and forced them to avoid or procrastinate writing.

This research was focused to explore ESL writing anxiety factor levels and to see their effects on the students' writing performance. Its findings brought to light that some specific types of ESL writing anxiety existed among college students of Balochistan. Consequently, they could not perform well in essay writing. It was apparent that ESL writing anxiety was the main cause of procrastination and failure of the students. The findings demonstrated that the most prevalent form of ESL writing anxiety was somatic anxiety. It showed that the learners physically experienced the symptoms of anxiety. They perspired, and shivered; their hearts stopped beating under the overwhelming situation of writing anxiety. The mentioned physical conditions caused the blockage of the ideas. Consequently, the learners procrastinated writing or avoided writing.

Writing anxiety and lack of writing competency (inadequate linguistic competency, lack of writing practice, insufficient knowledge of English syntax) corroborate each other. Similarly, a learner who experiences writing anxiety, his/her performance ultimately is affected. A learner of ESL overwhelmed with such feelings would be the victim of ESL writing anxiety which eventually would affect his/her writing performance. The same is indicated in the findings of this research which indicate that WA has badly affected the students' WP.

Suggestions

This study confirms the existence of writing anxiety to a notable degree and that it negatively affects the writing performance of college students in Balochistan. Therefore, it is necessary that the teachers should be aware of this pertinent issue and be trained to support learners in reducing the intensity

of writing anxiety. Possibly, there are a variety of remedies. For example, teachers should not be harsh and ridicule the learners for committing mistakes. Teaching becomes effective in a fear-free environment and students participate in the learning process freely. Krashen (1981) in his hypothesis for acquisition suggested that input becomes comprehensible in low anxiety. Hence, the teachers should make the learning environment as friendly as possible because it facilitates the learners to work more confidently.

Moreover, peer feedback may be very

helpful in mitigating writing anxiety and arousing the confidence of the learners in writing. Tang and Tithecott (1999), and later on Ge (2011), found peer reviewing interesting, challenging and anxiety mitigating. Zhao (2014) discovered that peer reviewing provided social support because the knowledge gap between the learners is narrower than the gap between them and the teachers. It is suggested to the teachers that they should introduce the idea of peer review regarding English writing in the colleges that will encourage the students to express their views without any anxiety.

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