

CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing plays a pivotal role in academic settings, functioning not only as a means of communication but also a tool for critical thinking, problem-solving, and scholarly reflection. However, writing is often anxiety-inducing, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student who must manage grammar, vocabulary, citation rules, and formal academic structure (Defazio et al., 2010).

Final-year students are particularly vulnerable to writing-related stress due to the demands of completing their undergraduate theses. Internal factors, such as difficulties in choosing a research topic, formulating research questions, designing methodology, and analyzing data, contribute significantly to this stress (Wakhyudin & Putri, 2020). External pressures, including limited resources, tight deadlines, and high parental or institutional expectations, may exacerbate students' anxiety and lead to negative psychological outcomes like self-doubt, procrastination, or even burnout (Cahyani & Akmal, 2017).

Writing anxiety denotes apprehension linked to writing performances; it is often associated with fear of evaluation or perfectionism, rather than the writing product itself (Takahashi, 2009). Even students with strong writing abilities may experience anxiety that hinders their productivity.

Although many previous studies have examined writing anxiety from perspectives such as gender (Fajaryani et al., 2024), year of study, and prior experience (Hartono & Mega, 2020), few have focused specifically on final-year students in the process of writing their theses. This study addressed that gap by

exploring the levels and dimensions of writing anxiety among final-year English students at Jambi University using Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI).

1.2 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the levels of writing anxiety faced by final-year English students during thesis writing?
2. What is the most dominant dimensions of writing anxiety they experience?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The aims of this research are:

1. To determine the prevalence of low, moderate, and high levels of writing anxiety among final-year English students during thesis writing.
2. To identify the dominant dimensions of writing anxiety (cognitive, somatic, or avoidance) experienced by these students.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to final-year students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Jambi University, who are in the process of completing their undergraduate theses. This study specifically investigates the levels and types of writing anxiety using Second Language Writing Anxiety (SLWAI) developed by Cheng (2004). While SLWAI provides a structured

framework, future studies should explore cultural-specific anxieties in Indonesian context.

1.5 Significances of the Study

This study is expected to contribute in the ways that the findings may help students identify their own writing anxiety and develop coping strategies, such as cognitive reframing or relaxation techniques. The results may also guide the development of pedagogical interventions, such as writing workshops, counseling services, or instructional redesigns aimed at reducing writing anxiety, and serves as a foundation for future research on writing anxiety in specific groups or across different educational settings.

This study is exploratory and may not be generalizable to all student populations, but its focused scope, validated instrument, and clear insights can inform practical strategies for reducing writing anxiety in EFL contexts.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To clarify the key terms used in this study, some definitions are put forward.

1. **Anxiety:** A psychological condition characterized by feelings of tension, nervousness, or worry, and is often accompanied by physical symptoms such as sweating or increased heart rate. (Spielberger, 1972).
2. **Writing Anxiety:** A tendency to avoid writing situations perceived as evaluative (Daly and Miller, 1975).
3. **Thesis:** A substantial academic project written under supervision as a part of the requirement for a bachelor's degree (Rahyono, 2010).

4. **Cognitive Anxiety:** Negative self-perceptions and fear of evaluation that interfere with concentration and writing confidence (Cheng, 2004).
5. **Somatic Anxiety:** Physical symptoms such as trembling, sweating, or increased heart rate during writing tasks (Cheng).
6. **Avoidance Behavior:** The act of avoiding writing tasks, such as procrastinating or skipping meetings, due to fear or stress (Cheng).

