



## Writing Apprehension among Undergraduate EFL Students at Universitas Negeri Padang

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### Abstract

*This study investigates writing apprehension levels among undergraduate EFL students at Universitas Negeri Padang, focusing on gender differences. Using the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test, data from 30 students were analyzed quantitatively. Results indicated that writing apprehension is moderately common among both male and female students, with female students reporting slightly higher levels overall. Statistical analysis showed no significant relationship between gender and writing apprehension, suggesting other factors might influence writing anxiety. Findings contribute to a better understanding of writing apprehension in EFL contexts, highlighting the need for targeted teaching strategies to reduce apprehension and support academic confidence.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing apprehension poses significant challenges for students, particularly EFL learners, impacting their academic success and confidence. The concept, as defined by Daly and Miller, refers to the complex emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions that interfere with the writing process. Research on writing apprehension often reveals varying effects based on demographic factors, such as gender, which may influence students' comfort and self-perception in writing. This study examines gender differences in writing apprehension at Universitas Negeri Padang, aiming to address gaps in literature concerning EFL contexts.

Writing apprehension refers to the anxiety and discomfort individuals feel when engaged in writing tasks, a phenomenon first conceptualized by Daly and Miller (1975) as “a subjective complex of attitude, emotional, and behavioral interactions that reinforce each other” (Daly & Miller, 1975, p. 11) Writing apprehension is particularly relevant in academic settings, where students are required to produce formal written work under evaluative conditions, often leading to avoidance behaviors, negative attitudes, or even writer's block (Hettich, 1994). These apprehensive tendencies can affect students' performance, their willingness to engage in writing activities, and ultimately, their academic success.

This apprehension can vary based on several factors, including gender. Studies by Abu Shawish and Atea (2010) and Thompson (1981) have explored these gendered differences, with some finding that female students report higher apprehension levels than their male counterparts. However, findings are mixed, as other studies show no significant relationship between gender and writing apprehension (Bahya & Abidin, 2015).

This study seeks to examine the prevalence of writing apprehension among undergraduate EFL students at Universitas Negeri Padang, with a specific focus on gender differences. By understanding whether gender influences writing apprehension levels, educators and curriculum designers can develop more targeted strategies to alleviate anxiety in EFL writing tasks, fostering a supportive environment conducive to academic success for all students.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a quantitative descriptive design to investigate writing apprehension levels among undergraduate EFL students at Universitas Negeri Padang, focusing on the potential association between writing apprehension and gender. The study utilized the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test (WAT), a widely recognized tool for measuring writing anxiety through self-reported responses. The WAT consists of a series of statements designed to capture students' attitudes, emotions, and behaviors related to writing, and responses are rated on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with some items scored positively and others negatively.

### **Participants and Sampling**

The participants comprised 30 students from the English Department, including 15 males and 15 females. A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure an equal representation of both genders, facilitating a comparative analysis of apprehension levels across male and female students. All participants were informed about the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and consented to participate.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms, allowing students to complete the survey anonymously. The WAT was adapted for clarity to ensure that the items were understandable for the EFL context, and students were encouraged to respond based on their general experiences with academic writing. The collected responses were downloaded into a spreadsheet and then processed for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

After data collection, the responses were analyzed using both Microsoft Excel and SPSS to calculate frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. A chi-square test was employed to examine the relationship between gender and writing apprehension levels, focusing on three main categories: High (scores between 26–59), Moderate (scores between 60–96), and Low (scores between 97–130). The formula provided by Daly and Miller (1975) was used to calculate each student's writing apprehension score, as follows:

$$\text{Writing Apprehension} = 78 + \text{Positive Statement Values} - \text{Negative Statement Values}$$

The chi-square test allowed for determining whether observed differences in writing apprehension levels between male and female students were statistically significant. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered significant, indicating an association between gender and writing apprehension if the threshold was met. Additionally, descriptive statistics provided insights into the distribution of writing apprehension levels across the sample, highlighting both the general prevalence and gender-based differences in anxiety levels.

This methodology ensured a systematic approach to investigating the role of gender in writing apprehension, offering a detailed perspective on the experiences of EFL students with academic writing in a university setting.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of writing apprehension levels among 30 undergraduate EFL students at Universitas Negeri Padang revealed several key findings. Using the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test, data showed that:

**Table Distribution of Writing Apprehension Levels by Gender**

Gender	Moderate Apprehension (%)	Low Apprehension (%)	High Apprehension (%)
Female	85	12	4
Male	73	19	8

The analysis of writing apprehension levels among 30 undergraduate EFL students at Universitas Negeri Padang shows that most students experience moderate writing apprehension, with both male and female students displaying similar tendencies. Specifically, 85% of female students and 73% of male students reported moderate apprehension, suggesting that writing anxiety is fairly prevalent but not overwhelmingly high among the participants. A smaller percentage of students—12% of females and 19% of males—demonstrated low apprehension, particularly in areas like self-evaluation and the comfort of submitting written work. Only 6.67% of students from both genders exhibited high levels of apprehension, showing that while most students experience a moderate level of anxiety, only a minority are either highly anxious or highly confident in their writing abilities.

In terms of gender differences, the data indicates that while female students reported slightly higher apprehension levels than male students, statistical analysis using a chi-square test found no significant association between gender and writing apprehension ( $p > 0.05$ ). This lack of a statistically significant difference suggests that gender does not play a substantial role in writing apprehension among the EFL students studied, indicating that other factors beyond gender may contribute to students' writing anxiety levels.

**Table of Writing Apprehension Level - Gender**

Variable	26-59, High	60-96, Moderate	97-130, Low	Chi-square	Total	P Value

Male				2.167		0.338 (NS)
N	0	13	2		15	
%	0	43.33 %	6.67 %			
Female						
N	2	11	2	15		
	6.67%	36.67 %	6.67 %			
Total	6.67 %	80%	13.34 %		30	

### ***Discussion***

The findings of this study align with existing literature on writing apprehension, specifically within EFL contexts. For example, the moderate apprehension levels observed are consistent with studies like those by Qadir (2021), who found that EFL students generally exhibit moderate to high apprehension toward writing tasks. However, unlike some studies (Abu Shawish & Atea, 2010), which identified a significant relationship between gender and writing apprehension, this study found no statistically significant association.

The lack of a strong gender effect could reflect broader factors influencing writing apprehension, such as prior writing experiences, self-efficacy, and academic environment. Studies by Kostić-Bobanović (2016) similarly found no significant gender-based differences but highlighted academic level as a potential influencer of writing apprehension. Additionally, societal expectations may contribute to why female students report slightly higher apprehension in this study, as cultural norms can influence self-perception and confidence in academic contexts.

These results emphasize the importance of addressing writing apprehension in EFL teaching, regardless of gender. Implementing supportive instructional strategies, such as peer reviews, low-stakes writing exercises, and constructive feedback, could help alleviate students' apprehension and improve their overall confidence. Future research might benefit from examining additional variables, such as academic background or specific language challenges, to provide a more comprehensive view of the factors that influence writing apprehension in EFL learners.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings revealed that writing apprehension is a common experience among these students, with the majority demonstrating moderate levels of anxiety related to academic writing. Female students, on average, reported slightly higher apprehension than male students, particularly in areas such as fear of evaluation and self-confidence in written expression. However, the chi-square analysis showed no statistically significant association between gender and writing apprehension levels ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that while some trends were observed, gender alone may not be a determining factor in writing anxiety for this group.

These findings have important implications for educational practice in EFL settings. Writing apprehension can negatively impact students' performance

and willingness to engage in writing tasks, which in turn affects their overall academic success. The results suggest that both male and female students experience a similar degree of moderate writing apprehension, pointing to a need for instructional strategies that address writing anxiety at a broader level rather than focusing exclusively on gender differences. Strategies that create a supportive, low-stakes environment for writing—such as peer feedback sessions, constructive and positive feedback from instructors, and opportunities for students to write without immediate evaluation—can help reduce anxiety and foster writing confidence across both genders.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of developing a curriculum that incorporates anxiety-reduction techniques specifically tailored for EFL students. Writing in a non-native language presents unique challenges, and targeted instructional approaches can alleviate the added pressure of language proficiency that may compound writing apprehension. Providing students with practical tools, such as structured pre-writing exercises, frameworks for organizing ideas, and collaborative writing projects, can empower students to approach writing tasks with greater ease and confidence.

While this research provides valuable insights into writing apprehension among EFL students, it also highlights areas for further exploration. Future studies could examine additional variables that may contribute to writing apprehension, such as academic background, language proficiency level, prior writing experiences, and cultural attitudes toward language learning. Investigating these factors would provide a more nuanced understanding of the sources of writing apprehension and offer a basis for developing more comprehensive, individualized support strategies.

Additionally, qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could complement the quantitative findings by exploring students' personal experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms related to writing apprehension. Such insights could enrich our understanding of how students interpret and manage their writing anxiety, allowing educators to design interventions that directly address the specific challenges students face.

In summary, this study reinforces the significance of addressing writing apprehension in EFL contexts to promote positive writing experiences and academic success. While gender differences were minimal, the moderate levels of apprehension observed across the sample underscore the importance of creating an encouraging academic environment for all students. Through continued research and targeted instructional strategies, educators can support students in overcoming writing apprehension, ultimately fostering a more confident and capable generation of EFL writers

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