

# Relationship between Personality and Foreign Language Anxiety among Public University Students in Sabah, Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** - This study was conducted to identify the level of foreign language anxiety (FLA), as well as the relationship between personality and level of FLA among public university students in Sabah. The study was conducted at the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) branch in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. I

**Methodology** - A set of questionnaire was administered randomly to a total of 358 students, consisting of 104 males and 254 females. The respondents were approached at various places at both universities and after agreement sought in participating in this research, they were directed to a link to the survey. Upon completion of the survey they were given some tokens of appreciation. Data were then analysed using Pearson correlation method.

**Findings** - The level of FLA among public university students in Sabah is moderate. Personality dimensions of extraversion ( $r = -.210$ ), conscientiousness ( $r = -.197$ ), and openness to experience ( $r = -.209$ ) correlated negatively with the students' FLA. In addition, this study also revealed that there is a positive relationship between the neuroticism ( $r = .309$ ) and FLA. Finally, no relationship was found between agreeableness ( $r = -.003$ ) and students' FLA level.

**Novelty** – Such correlational studies on foreign language anxiety and personality has not been addressed yet in the Borneo, specifically in Sabah.

**Significance** - The findings of this study can provide a deeper understanding and clarity to the students, lecturers, and the university about the FLA issue that often occurs among students in the north part of Borneo.

**Keywords:** foreign language anxiety, university students, personality, Big Five.

## INTRODUCTION

After television dramas and movies from foreign countries such as the United States, Korea, Japan and China began to attract the attention of the majority of Malaysians, interest in mastering foreign languages has increased dramatically. People sought to learn foreign languages and master them well because of the high demand in the job market for workers who are able to master foreign languages such as English, Mandarin, Japanese and Korean. Therefore, various efforts have been implemented to increase interest and ensure that all students in higher education institutes have skills in foreign languages. One of these efforts is to make foreign language subjects a core subject of universities throughout Malaysia.

However, it cannot be denied that there are many challenges that need to be overcome during the process of learning a foreign language. Speech and grammar that are different from the native language used in everyday life cause difficulties in mastering a new language. Students can experience stress and anxiety because of the difficulties experienced. Although the anxiety experienced by students in the process of learning something new is considered a normal thing, but as the level of difficulty increases, it can also cause an increase in the level of anxiety and this anxiety of students reached a worrying level (Wan Zarina et al., 2007).

According to Horwitz et al. (1986), anxiety can affect the process of learning a foreign language. This is because anxiety can prevent information from reaching the part of the student's brain related to language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). According to past studies that have been conducted, anxiety can have a negative effect on foreign language learning (Horwitz et al., 2010; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre, 1999; Marwan, 2016). Meanwhile, Horwitz and Young (1991) also stated that there is an increase in the number of students experiencing anxiety while in foreign language classes, and this situation is very worrying from time to time. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the level of FLA among public university students in Sabah.

### **Problem Statement**

The difficulty of communicating using a foreign language among university students is a matter of great concern. This situation arises due to anxiety in speaking a foreign language, which is caused by various factors such as personality. Numerous previous studies have shown that students' personality traits are related to the foreign language anxiety (FLA) they experience. The Big Five personality traits include neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience.

Most previous studies show that neuroticism has a positive relationship with FLA (Hussain et al., 2022; Vural, 2019; Huda & Zaini, 2018; Bialayesh et al., 2017; Gargalianou et al., 2015; Khouya, 2018; Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010). For instance, students with high levels of neuroticism also exhibit high levels of FLA. Additionally, previous studies have indicated a negative relationship between extraversion and FLA (Hussain et al., 2022; Vural, 2019; Huda & Zaini, 2018; Bialayesh et al., 2017; Gargalianou et al., 2015). However, some studies suggest a positive relationship between FLA and extraversion, where students with high extraversion traits also exhibit higher levels of FLA (Khouya, 2018; Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010).

Regarding conscientiousness, studies have reported mixed findings: some show a positive relationship (Gargalianou et al., 2015), others a negative relationship (Hussain et al., 2022; Vural, 2019; Bialayesh et al., 2017), while some found no relationship with students' FLA levels (Khouya, 2018; Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010). Similarly, agreeableness has been linked to FLA through negative relationships (Hussain et al., 2022; Bialayesh et al., 2017; Khouya, 2018), positive relationships (Vural, 2019), and no relationship at all (Gargalianou et al., 2015; Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010). Lastly, studies on openness to experience show varying findings, including negative relationships (Hussain et al., 2022; Vural, 2019; Khouya, 2018), positive relationships (Bialayesh et al., 2017), and no relationship with students' FLA levels (Gargalianou et al., 2015; Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010).

Several studies on foreign language anxiety have been conducted on students learning foreign languages in Malaysia (Subatira Balakrishnan et al., 2020; Noor Adawiyah et al., 2021; Yeo et al., 2017; Ramiza Darmi & Peter Albion, 2014; Siew & Wee, 2017; Wan Zarina et al., 2007; Afandi Yusoff et al., 2019; Kamal Badrasawi et al., 2020). However, these studies were limited to Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak, with no studies on FLA conducted in Sabah. Moreover, studies investigating the relationship between personality and FLA in Malaysia are very limited. Only two studies on personality and FLA have been conducted in Malaysia, both at universities in Peninsular Malaysia, namely Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (Huda & Zaini, 2018; Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010).

Thus, significant gaps remain in the existing literature on personality traits and FLA among students. This study not only aims to identify the level of foreign language anxiety among public university students in Sabah but also seeks to obtain clearer results on the relationship between the Big Five personality traits (neuroticism,

extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) and FLA levels among public university students in Sabah, Malaysia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Foreign Language Anxiety

Horwitz et al. (1986) defined foreign language anxiety as a complex perception of oneself, beliefs, feelings and different behaviors that arise during a foreign language learning class. The study conducted by Horwitz covers three main domains namely test anxiety, communication anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. In the first domain, which is test anxiety, students show anxiety about the academic assessment of their foreign language (Brown, 2000). Horwitz also noted that students are likely to experience anxiety because of academic assessments or tests that are considered.

In addition, the domain of communication anxiety explains that students feel anxious to start a conversation and give an opinion because they are worried that their opinion will be considered immature or the explanation is not clear because they are not fluent in using a foreign language to communicate. It is also associated with feelings of fear and embarrassment to communicate with others using the newly learned language whilst the domain of fear of negative evaluation refers to students' worries if they fail to give a good impression of the surrounding community and try to prevent themselves from being looked down upon by others.

This is evident when there are students who can show excellent performance in other academic education, but experience anxiety when learning a foreign language. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) used nine anxiety scales in their study to test the dimensions of anxiety in relation to different types of learning. As a result of the study, they found that foreign language anxiety is not the same as the general anxiety that exists in students. In addition, Chen and Chang (2004) also believe that foreign language anxiety is an anxiety that occurs in specific situations only.

### Personality and Foreign Language Anxiety

There are many previous studies that discuss the personality with foreign language anxiety (FLA). A study conducted by Hussain et al. (2022) on 400 university students in Pakistan have shown that the characteristics of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience have a negative relationship with the level of FLA among students. This is because, this study found that students who have positive qualities such as honesty, selflessness, empathy and love are said to have no or only a low level of anxiety. While the characteristic of neuroticism has shown a positive relationship with the level of FLA students. Daronkolaine and Taghsara (2024) re-confirmed these findings through a structural equation modelling analysis on a sample of college students where they found negative associations between all the positive personality traits and a positive relationship between neuroticism and speaking anxiety.

The study conducted by Vural (2019) involved the relationship between personality and English language anxiety among students in Turkey. This study involved a total of 1845 4th year students from 31 different universities in Turkey. The results of this study have shown that the characteristics of extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experience have a negative relationship with the level of FLA among students. However, there is a positive relationship between neuroticism and agreeableness. This study also stated that most students involved in this study have the characteristic of agreeableness and this has explained the reason why most Turkish students fail to master English well.

Further, a study carried out by Huda and Zaini (2018) on 104 students of the Faculty of Economics and Management (FEP) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) has found that only two personality traits are involved in this study, namely extraversion and neuroticism. Therefore, the results of this study show that extraversion has a negative relationship and neuroticism has a positive relationship with the level of FLA among FEP students at UKM.

The study of Bialayesh et al. (2017) has been done in language institutions in Iran. A total of 250 students were involved in a study conducted to find the relationship between personality and FLA. The results of this study have shown that the characteristics of neuroticism and openness to experience have a positive relationship with FLA, i.e., when students have a high level of these two personality traits, then their level of FLA is also high. While the characteristics of neuroticism, extraversion and agreeableness show a negative relationship with the students' FLA level.

Next, a study conducted by Gargalianou et al. (2015) on 320 university students in the Netherlands stated that the characteristics of neuroticism and conscientiousness have a positive relationship with the level of FLA among students. Meanwhile, extraversion shows a positive relationship with FLA. However, there are also personality traits that are said to have no relationship with the student's FLA level, namely agreeableness and openness to experience.

A study conducted by Khouya (2018) on 345 university students in Morocco has shown that the personality characteristics of agreeableness and openness to experience have a negative relationship with the level of FLA students. However, the characteristics of neuroticism and extraversion have a positive relationship with FLA. This is because students who have high neuroticism tend to be anxious because they often observe their emotional state and conversation, which can affect their attention to foreign language learning. However, this study also stated that the characteristic of conscientiousness has no relationship with the level of FLA among students.

In a study conducted by Nor Haliza and Khaidzir (2010) on 160 students aged between 18 and 25 years at the National University of Malaysia, it is shown that the personality traits of neuroticism and extraversion have a positive relationship with the level of FLA students. Those who belong to this personality trait have reactive emotions and act more emotionally towards something or an event that others see as normal. Their reaction to this is more stressful than normal people. Due to these negative emotions occurring over a long period of time, this group is usually in a state of depression all the time. In addition, this study also shows that the personality characteristics of openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness have no relationship with the level of FLA students.

The findings by Dong, Chan, and Tseng (2024) on a meta-analysis on 22 primary studies from 1996 to 2023, establish the positive correlation found between neuroticism and language anxiety. They also discovered that neurotic individuals would not achieve well in a language test if they have already developed language anxiety, indicating the significant role of language anxiety here as a mediator.

### Research Framework

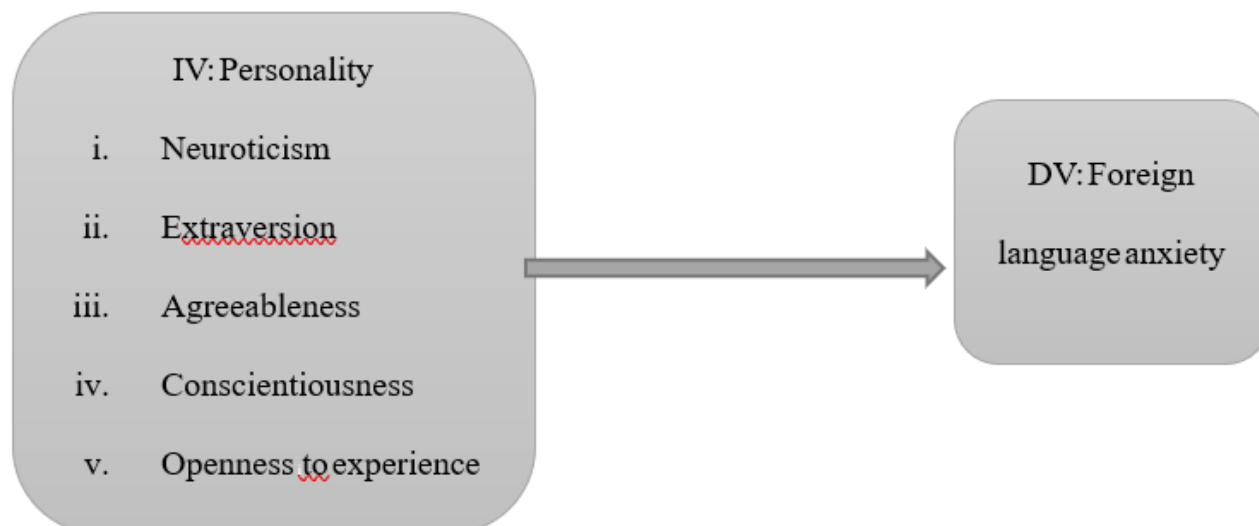


Figure 1. Research Framework for Independent Variable (IV) and Dependent Variable (DV)

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## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study uses a quantitative method based on survey research. The use of a survey research design is the best method to answer the research questions raised. This is because the use of quantitative data is one of the most appropriate ways to collect temporary facts that the researcher needs (Ebel, 1980). In addition, survey methods can also be used for large population samples and situations that occur in the real world and allow researchers to draw conclusions based on certain basic facts (Allen et al., 2009). Not only that, Wimmer and Dominick (2003) also stated that survey research methods can help researchers to categorize variables more accurately and measure the attitudes, behaviours, and characteristics of research respondents.

### Research Sample

This study was conducted in public universities around Sabah. The public universities in Sabah consist of the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Kota Kinabalu branch. This study was conducted in Sabah because there has not yet been a study involving the level of foreign language anxiety among public university students in Sabah, whereas there have been many such studies conducted in public universities in Peninsular Malaysia. The sample for this study consists of university students who are still in the study session. The researcher has specialized the study sample to include students who are continuing their studies at the bachelor's degree level regardless of the year or field of study.

The total number of respondents who participated in this study are 358 respondents consisting of 104 male respondents and 254 female respondents. Respondents can be divided into three different age groups, namely 100 respondents aged 21 years and below, 220 respondents aged 22 to 23 years, and a total of 38 respondents aged 24 and above. Next, a total of 234 respondents were students from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and 124 respondents from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Kota Kinabalu branch, Sabah. A total of 75 respondents are in the 1st year of study, 113 respondents are in the 2nd year, 125 respondents are 3rd year students, and 45 are in the 4th year of study. The respondents comprise Malays (126), Chinese (19), Indians (6), and others (207).

### Research Instrument

This study uses a questionnaire as a research instrument. This research questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part includes the respondent's demographic information such as gender, age, university name, year of study, and race.

The second part consists of questions to measure the level of FLA of the respondents. The researcher has used the measurement scale presented by Horwitz et al. (1986), which is the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). However, the researcher has adapted the FLCAS questionnaire, which has been translated into Malay by Wan Zarina et al. (2007). The FLCAS questionnaire contains a total of 33 items that include three subscales, namely Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. FLCAS uses a Likert scale with five answer options ranging from 'strongly disagree' (scale 1) to 'strongly agree' (scale 5).

The third part consists of questions to measure the respondent's personality. The researcher has used the measurement scale presented by John et al. (1991), which is the Big Five Inventory (BFI). However, the researcher has adapted the BFI questionnaire, which has been translated into Malay by Janet Ho Siew Ching (2006). The BFI questionnaire contains a total of 44 items that include five subscales, namely Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. The BFI uses a Likert scale with four answer options ranging from 'strongly disagree' (scale 1) to 'strongly agree' (scale 4). This is because, based on a pilot study conducted by Janet Ho Siew Ching (2006), most respondents tended to choose the third

answer option, which is 'Uncertain.' Therefore, the five-point Likert scale has been changed to a four-point Likert scale.

## Pilot Study

A pilot study involving 34 students of Universiti Malaysia Sabah, consisting of 18 male students and 16 female students, was conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire used. From the results of the pilot study, the value of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the reliability of the FLCAS questionnaire is 0.92, with its three subscales, namely Communication Anxiety (0.83), Test Anxiety (0.80), and Fear of Negative Evaluation (0.76). Meanwhile, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value for the reliability of the BFI questionnaire is 0.66, with its five subscales, namely Agreeableness (0.54), Openness to Experience (0.68), Conscientiousness (0.76), Extraversion (0.79), and Neuroticism (0.86).

According to Hinton et al. (2004), Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values of 0.90 and above indicate excellent reliability, 0.70 to 0.90 indicate high reliability, 0.50 to 0.70 indicate moderate reliability, and 0.50 and below indicate low reliability. This explains that the reliability of the questionnaire for this study is at a moderate level to a very good and satisfactory level to be continued to the actual study. All 34 respondents for the pilot study were not involved in the actual study conducted.

## Research Procedure

Data for this study was collected using the Google Form platform. The researcher used two methods to distribute the questions to the respondents, namely through the sharing of Google Form links and the distribution of Quick Response (QR) codes. For the first method, Google Form link sharing was done through social media applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook. Meanwhile, for the QR code distribution method, it was done face-to-face, and the researcher first asked for the consent of the respondent before showing the QR code scan to answer questions on the Google Form platform. All respondents were given an initial order to answer all the questions asked honestly and based on their respective opinions. After the data collection process, data analysis can be carried out.

## Research Analysis

Data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 28.0 software. The process of analyzing data involves two types of analysis, namely descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to explain information related to the demographic profile of respondents and assess the level of FLA among public university students in Sabah. The statistics involved are frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The inferential analysis process is used to test the research hypothesis. In this study, correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between personality and FLA among students. Reverse-coded items will be recoded before analysis. For inferential analysis, the significance level was set at 0.05.

## RESULTS

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Total FLA Score

Total FLA score	FLA level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
33-66	Low	42	11.7
67-132	Medium	305	85.2
133-165	High	11	3.1
Total		358	100.0

Table 1 has shown that the level of foreign language anxiety among public university students in Sabah is at a moderate level. This is proven through the results of the study which show that as many as 85.2% of the total respondents obtained between 67 and 132 total scores for FLA.

Table 2. Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) of the FLCAS and BFI Subscales

Variable	M	SD
Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)		
Communication Apprehension	31.82	7.85
Test Anxiety	41.77	9.22
Fear of Negative Evaluation	22.43	5.14
Big Five Inventory (BFI)		
Extraversion	20.29	4.40
Agreeableness	26.50	3.59
Conscientiousness	24.06	4.09
Neuroticism	19.96	4.27
Openness to experience	27.91	4.12

Based on Table 2, the test anxiety factor reported the highest mean value (M = 41.77, SD = 9.22) compared to the communication anxiety factor (M = 31.82, SD = 7.85) and fear of negative evaluation (M = 22.43, SD = 5.14). Therefore, it can be concluded that the test anxiety factor is one of the main factors that influence the anxiety of public university students in Sabah in mastering a foreign language.

Table 2 has also shown that public university students in Sabah have the highest characteristics of openness to experience (M = 27.91, SD = 4.12), followed by agreeableness (M = 26.50, SD = 3.59), conscientiousness (M = 24.06, SD = 4.09), extraversion (M = 20.29, SD = 4.40), and neuroticism (M = 19.96, SD = 4.27).

Table 3. Pearson Correlation between FLA and BFI and Big Five Personality Traits

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 - FLA	—						
2 - Extraversion	-.210**	.644**	—				
3 - Agreeableness	-.003	.561**	.199**	—			
4 - Conscientiousness	-.197**	.622**	.385**	.335**	—		
5 - Neuroticism	.309**	-.029	-.323**	-.247**	-.422**	—	
6 - Openness to experience	-.209**	.643**	.261**	.191**	.238**	-.129*	—

\*k < .05. \*\*k < .01.

Table 3 shows that FLA has a negative and significant relationship with the personality trait of extraversion ( $r = -0.210$ ,  $k < 0.05$ ), conscientiousness ( $r = -0.197$ ,  $k < 0.05$ ), and openness to experience ( $r = -0.209$ ,  $k < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the higher the characteristics of extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience in students, the lower the level of FLA obtained.

Table 3 has also shown that FLA has a positive and significant relationship with neuroticism,  $r = 0.309$ ,  $k < 0.05$ . Therefore, the higher the neuroticism characteristic in the student, the higher the level of FLA obtained. Meanwhile, agreeableness has a negative but not significant relationship with FLA,  $r = -0.003$ ,  $k > 0.05$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that the agreeableness personality trait does not have a significant relationship with the level of FLA.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study have shown that the level of foreign language anxiety (FLA) among public university students in Sabah is at a moderate level. The results of this study are in line with the study conducted by Mary (2009) on secondary school students in Kuching who also stated that many students experienced a moderate level of FLA. A study conducted by Huda and Zaini (2018) on Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia students also found that most students reported a moderate level of FLA. This stems from the pressure on the need to learn grammar rules for the foreign language. However, students face high levels of FLA only at certain times and not continuously. For example, students' FLA level is at a high level only when they are instructed to speak using a foreign language without being given adequate preparation. However, it will return to a moderate level after the bitter event has passed.

The results of the study also clearly show that personality has a relationship with the level of FLA among public university students in Sabah. This can be proven through analysis that shows that the majority of Big Five personality traits have a significant relationship with FLA. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies (Hussain et al., 2022; Vural, 2019; Huda & Zaini, 2018; Bialayesh et al., 2017; Gargalianou et al., 2015; Khouya, 2018; Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010) which shows that personality has a relationship with FLA.

Next, the results of the study show that extraversion has a negative relationship with FLA. The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies (Hussain et al., 2022; Vural, 2019; Huda & Zaini, 2018; Bialayesh et al., 2017; Gargalianou et al., 2015) which show that extraversion has a negative relationship with FLA. Therefore, if the extraversion characteristic of a student is high, then their FLA will be at a low level (Hussain et al., 2022). This is because those who are extroverts are easier to get along with and more likely to build social relationships with people so that it helps them to be more motivated and happier. It is this quality that makes them more confident and do not feel severe anxiety when they want to speak using a foreign language (Vural, 2019). According to Huda & Zaini (2018), people who have extrovert characteristics are often spontaneous people, so it is unlikely that they will face anxiety in speaking.

The results of the study for the characteristic of conscientiousness also show a negative relationship with the level of FLA in students. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies (Hussain et al., 2022; Vural, 2019; Bialayesh et al., 2017) which show that conscientiousness has a negative relationship with FLA. Therefore, individuals who have high conscientiousness characteristics will experience low levels of FLA, and vice versa. This is because, the characteristic of conscientiousness involves an emphasis on thoroughness that can increase the level of attention, good emotional regulation and goal-driven behaviour. This feature also refers to a person who has an awareness that includes daily life and the environment and society around him (Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010). Therefore, individuals who have a conscientious attitude will always focus and usually do not experience anxiety (Hussain et al., 2022).

The results of the study for the openness to experience feature also show a negative relationship with the level of FLA students. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies (Hussain et al., 2022; Vural, 2019; Khouya, 2018) which show that openness to experience has a negative relationship with FLA. The



characteristic of openness to experience is closely related to affective factors such as confidence, self-esteem, and experience (Watson & Clark, 1992). Students who are high in this personality factor tend to have a higher sense of curiosity including in learning new things such as foreign languages (Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010). For them, foreign languages are considered skills that should be learned to explore the world (Khouya, 2018). Therefore, these students do not feel anxious in asking for help from their teachers or classmates.

Next, this study also found that there is a positive relationship between the characteristics of neuroticism and the level of FLA among students. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies (Hussain et al., 2022; Vural, 2019; Huda & Zaini, 2018; Bialayesh et al., 2017; Gargalianou et al., 2015; Khouya, 2018; Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010) which shows that neuroticism has a positive relationship with FLA. Individuals with high neuroticism tend to experience mood changes, anxiety, restlessness, and sadness that ultimately affect foreign language learning (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Individuals with high emotional scores will experience significant anxiety in response to life stressors (Gargalianou et al., 2015). This shows that students who are more emotionally stable have lower levels of FLA, while students who have high neuroticism characteristics report higher levels of FLA (Dewaele, 2013). This is because individuals with high neuroticism will act more emotionally even if the event is normal in the eyes of others (Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010). In other words, this group cannot think logically.

Finally, this study also found that agreeableness has no relationship with the level of FLA among students. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies (Gargalianou et al., 2015; Nor Haliza & Khaidzir, 2010; Asmali, 2017; Ullah et al., 2022) which show that agreeableness has no relationship with FLA. The personality characteristics of agreeableness are such as being honest, selfless, having high empathy, and love (Asmali, 2017). Therefore, individuals who have high agreeableness characteristics will be easier to cooperate and cause this group to not have highly competitive nature (Ullah et al., 2022).

## CONCLUSION

All objectives for this study have been achieved. The results of the study show that the level of foreign language anxiety (FLA) among public university students in Sabah is at a moderate level. This study also shows that personality has a relationship with the level of FLA among public university students in Sabah. The results of the study also found that the characteristics of extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience have a negative relationship with the level of FLA students. In addition, this study also found that there is a positive relationship between the characteristics of neuroticism and the level of FLA among students. Finally, this study also found that agreeableness has no relationship with students' FLA level. Therefore, priority should be given to students who have high neuroticism during the process of teaching and learning a foreign language. An appropriate approach can also be implemented during teaching to overcome the problem of foreign language anxiety among students. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study can provide a deeper understanding and clarity to students, lecturers, and the university about the issue of FLA that often occurs among students.

## IMPLICATION

The first implication that can be obtained from this study is from the aspect of the students themselves. Students who realize that they are in a high-risk category for facing FLA can make efforts to improve their foreign language proficiency. Not only that, but the students can also understand the causes and symptoms of FLA experienced more deeply. With this knowledge, students can identify ways and strategies to overcome the FLA problems they face.

Furthermore, this study can also be used by lecturers as an intervention to reduce the level of FLA among students, especially for high-risk student groups. Among the examples of intervention that can be done is by creating a stress-free supportive environment, encouraging students to communicate in small groups or in pairs, as well as doing oral tests but not as a condition to pass (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020).

Finally, this study also provides positive implications for the university. The results of this study can help identify students who are at high risk of experiencing FLA. Not only that, this study can also help in the development of theory and design of foreign language teaching and learning materials for students. Therefore, the university can take appropriate action to overcome this problem among students.

## LIMITATIONS

Among the limitations of this study is limited generalizability. This is because this study was only carried out in public universities in Sabah, while there are still various other public and private higher education institutions in Malaysia. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized to all university students in Malaysia. The next limitation of the study involves the method of data collection, where this study only uses the questionnaire method. The last limitation is that this study uses a cross-sectional method. Therefore, this study cannot measure FLA in a long period of time.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the research recommendations that can be implemented in the future is to further expand the scope of the location and sample of the study to include public universities and other higher education institutions such as polytechnics, community colleges and also IPTS throughout Malaysia. In addition, data collection can also be diversified and not limited to one method only. Researchers in the future can use interview, questionnaire, and observation methods to diversify the sources of information obtained in relation to the FLA study that will be carried out. The last suggestion is to carry out a longitudinal study. This is because this method can collect data over a long period of time so that researchers can understand the development of FLA and its impact on learning more deeply.

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