# Writers' Block in Academic Writing: A Systematic Literature Review of Types, Causes & Intervention

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## ABSTRACT

Writer's block is a common issue in academic writing that has implications on productivity, quality of writing, and dissemination of research in educational settings and fields. Writer's block is a common condition that has long attracted scholars' attention; however, the literature on writer's block continues to be fragmented, with little integration of its types, etiology, and treatment. The purpose of this systematic literature review is to synthesise and critically evaluate the extant research on academic writer's block with reference to how it has been conceptualised, its causes, as well as ways in which it can be diagnosed and treated. According to the PRISMA protocol, a structured search was performed through two of the prominent academic databases: Web of Science and Scopus. We used a Boolean operator to search for additional articles, which included clusters of three keywords: types of writers' block, causes of writers' block, and identification and intervention of writers' block. After predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, screening and eligibility process, we identified 21 articles for the final analysis. The results suggest that academic writer's block is a multidimensional category consisting of cognitive, linguistic, affective, and motivational dimensions that engage with contextual issues that rarely function in isolation. The reasons are invariably associated with poor academic writing skills, cognitive overload, anxiety, fear of assessment judgment, institutional demands, and a lack of instruction. Among the intervention strategies found in the literature are structured writing support, prewriting and cognitive-behavioral methods, peer- and supervisor involvement, as well as increased use of technical and IT-based tools for idea generation (i.e., mindmaps) and to aid in text production management. The review suggests the importance of looking to intervention as well as preventive or supportive approaches for managing writer's block in academic settings. By integrating sparse evidence into an integrative framework, the review aims to deepen comprehension of writer's block and offer relevant considerations for educational practice and academic support systems, including guidelines for future research.

**Keywords:** writer's block, academic writing challenges, cognitive and affective factors, writing interventions, and systematic literature review.

## INTRODUCTION

Writer's block is a pervasive issue in academic writing, affecting students and researchers alike. It manifests as an inability to begin or continue writing, often leading to significant delays and stress. This phenomenon is not merely a matter of discomfort but can have profound implications on academic success and career progression (Chubko, 2025; Rose, 2009). The issue of writer's block is significant that warrants attention as it impacts students and academicians in different ways. Firstly, when students have writer's block, their work gets postponed, and this may affect their academic performance. Secondly, for academicians, the need to produce academic papers and then not being able to fulfil that need causes stress.

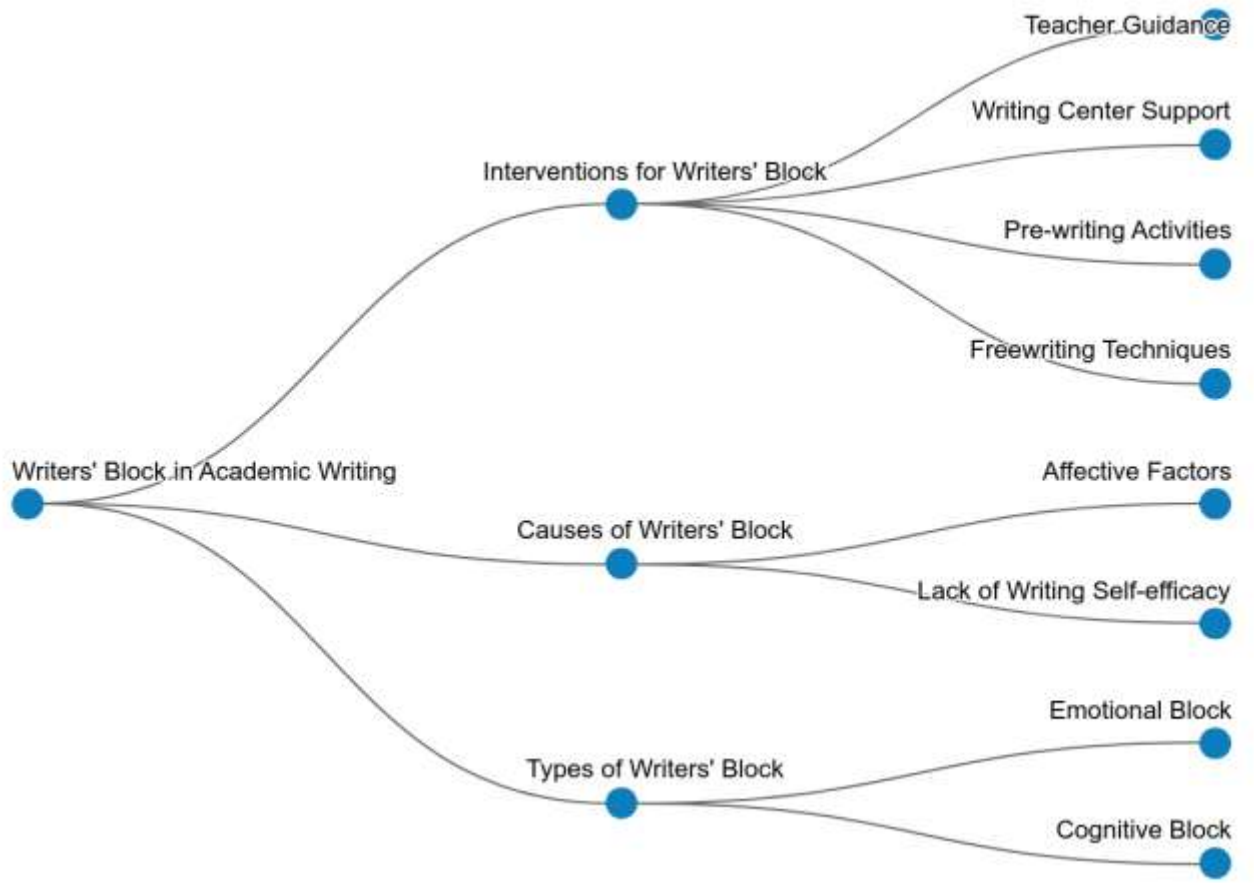


Figure 1- Writers' Block in Academic Writing

Writer's block can be categorised into several types. The first type is a physiological block**.** This includes physical conditions that impede writing, such as fatigue or stress (Ahmed & Güss, 2022). The next type is a motivational block. A lack of motivation or fear of failure can prevent writers from engaging with their work (Ahmed & Güss, 2022). The third type is cognitive block**:** This involves mental barriers such as perfectionism, inflexible rules, and conflicting planning strategies ("Know Yourself as a Writer," 2023; Rose, 2009). The last type is a behavioral block**.** Procrastination and poor time management are common behavioral issues that contribute to writer's block (Horwitz et al., 2018; "Know Yourself as a Writer," 2023).

Writers' block is known to stem from several sources. Firstly, it can be caused by academic stress for writers**.** High expectations and pressure to perform can lead to anxiety and self-doubt, exacerbating writer's block (Chubko, 2025; Nurkamto et al., 2024). The second cause is a lack of writing skills**.** Insufficient proficiency in academic writing can significantly impact a student's ability to write effectively (Nurkamto et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2026). The third cause is a negative classroom environment**.** Criticism, lack of support, and inadequate teaching methods can create a hostile environment for writing (Bastug et al., 2017). The last cause is psychological factors where fear of criticism, anxiety about grades, and a lack of confidence are significant psychological barriers (Bastug et al., 2017; "Know Yourself as a Writer," 2023).

To reduce writers' block, the institutions of learning can plan interventions. Firstly, structured writing programs are orograms like "Shut Up & Write!", using techniques such as the Pomodoro method can help students focus and complete writing tasks (Chubko, 2025). Next, non-verbal learning methods have been done by incorporating body movements and other non-verbal techniques can help students overcome mental blocks (Horwitz et al., 2018). Thirdly, pre-writing activities, are activities such as freewriting, looping, and word association, can help reduce the fear of starting a new writing task (Evdash & Zhuravleva, 2020). Lastly, individualized support**:** Personalized interventions, including regular meetings to address specific writing issues, can build confidence and improve writing skills (Evdash & Zhuravleva, 2020).

In conclusion, understanding the types and causes of writer's block is crucial for developing effective interventions. By addressing both the psychological and practical aspects of writing, educators can help students

and researchers overcome these barriers and achieve their academic goals (Ahmed & Güss, 2022; "Know Yourself as a Writer," 2023; Nurkamto et al., 2024; Rose, 2009) . The purpose of this study is to explore the types, causes, and interventions for writer's block in academic writing. By understanding these elements, educational practitioners can develop effective strategies to mitigate writer's block and enhance writing productivity among students and researchers.

### Research Questions

This SLR is done to answer the following research questions (RQs). These questions are formulated using the PICo framework (Population, Interest, Context)**.** The research questions are;

**Research Question 1:**

What types and forms of writer's block are reported among students and academics during academic writing activities in higher education and research contexts?

**Research Question 2:**

What cognitive, affective, linguistic, and contextual factors are identified as causes of writer's block among students and academic writers in academic writing contexts?

**Research Question 3:**

How is writer's block identified, and what intervention strategies are reported to address writer's block among students and academic writers in academic writing and research environments?

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Identification

In selecting several suitable papers for this report, the systematic literature review(SLR) process comprises three main phases. The phases are (i) Identification, (ii) Screening, and (iii) Eligibility. The last section discusses Data abstraction and Analysis.

The first step is keyword recognition and the quest for linked, similar terms based on the thesaurus, dictionaries, encyclopedia, and previous studies.

In the first step of the systematic review process, the present research work successfully retrieved 247 papers from both databases. Of the 247 articles found, 173 were found in Scopus, and 74 were found in Web of Science (WoS).

### Screening

The next stage is screening. At this stage, the authors limit the search on Scopus and WoS using the criteria shown in Table 1 below. Only English articles were chosen. The timeline is 10 years. Only journal articles that were in the final stages were taken.

**TABLE 1 The selection criterion is searching**

| Criterion | Inclusion | Exclusion |
|---|---|---|
| Language | English | Non-English |
| Time line | 2016 – 2026 | < 2016 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Literature type | Journal (Article) | Conference, Book, Review |
| Publication Stage | Final | In Press |

Accordingly, after all the relevant keywords were decided, search strings on Scopus and Web of Science (see Table 2) databases have been created.

This led to an initial elimination of 176 articles, leaving only 71 combined articles (58 articles from Scopus and 13 articles from WoS). The 71 articles were then checked for duplication, and 6 duplicates were found, leaving the total number of articles for the next stage as 65 articles.

**TABLE 2: The search string.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Scopus | ( "writer's block" OR "writer block" OR "writing block" OR "creative block" OR "blocked writer" OR "writer's block causes" OR "causes of writer's block" ) AND ( study OR research OR investigation OR analysis OR examination OR "case study" )FEB 2026 |
| WebofScience | ( "writer's block" OR "writer block" OR "writing block" OR "creative block" OR "blocked writer" OR "writer's block causes" OR "causes of writer's block" ) AND ( study OR research OR investigation OR analysis OR examination OR "case study" ) and Open Access and 2026 or 2025 or 2023 or 2024 or 2022 or 2021 or 2020 or 2018 or 2017 or 2016 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) FEB 2026 |

**Eligibility**

This third stage is the eligibility stage. This stage began with 65 articles combined. The authors carefully read through each of the articles' abstracts. All articles' titles and key content were thoroughly reviewed at this stage to ensure that the inclusion requirements were fulfilled and fit into the present study with the current research aims. Hence, 15 articles from Scopus and 5 article wer finally left (see Figure 2)-a total of 20 articles.

**Data Abstraction and Analysis**

An integrative analysis was used as one of the assessment strategies in this study to examine and synthesize a variety of research designs (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods). To develop themes, the authors carefully analyzed 20 publications for relevant material related to the study's topics. They examined the methodology and research results of significant studies on the topic of this SLR.

The authors collaborated to develop themes based on the evidence presented throughout the study. They kept a log of their data analysis process to document relevant perspectives, analyses, or ideas. The authors ensured consistency in theme design by comparing the results and discussing disagreements between themselves. Before undergoing analysis selection, the co-authors were selected based on their expertise in the chosen topic. The authors reviewed and refined the themes for consistency and ensured their validity. This expert review phase established the validity of each subtheme by ensuring clarity, importance, and suitability.

**Quality of Appraisal**

According to the guidelines proposed by Kitchenham (2007), the appraisal began after the primary studies were selected. The selected primary studies for this SLR is 20 (Figure 2).This stage is where the authors analsyed the articles to comply to the six qualities (six Questions) by Abouzahra et al.(2020). The scoring procedure for

evaluating each criterion involves three possible ratings: "Yes" (Y) with a score of 1 if the criterion is fully met, "Partly" (P) with a score of 0.5 if the criterion is somewhat met but contains some gaps or shortcomings, and "No" (N) with a score of 0 if the criterion is not met at all.

• QA1. Is the purpose of the study clearly stated?

• QA2. Is the interest and the usefulness of the work clearly presented?

• QA3. Is the study methodology clearly established?

• QA4. Are the concepts of the approach clearly defined?

• QA5. Is the work compared and measured with other similar work?

• QA6. Are the limitations of the work clearly mentioned?

Table 3 outlines a quality assessment (QA) process used to evaluate a study based on specific criteria. Three experts assess the study using the criteria listed, and each criterion is scored as "Yes" (Y), "Partly" (P), or "No" (N). Here's a detailed explanation:

1. **Is the purpose of the study clearly stated?**

- This criterion checks whether the study's objectives are clearly defined and articulated. A clear purpose helps set the direction and scope of the research.

2. **Is the interest and usefulness of the work clearly presented?**

- This criterion evaluates whether the study's significance and potential contributions are well-explained. It measures the relevance and impact of the research.

3. **Is the study methodology clearly established?**

- This assesses whether the research methodology is well-defined and appropriate for achieving the study's objectives. Clarity in methodology is crucial for the study's validity and reproducibility.

4. **Are the concepts of the approach clearly defined?**

- This criterion looks at whether the theoretical framework and key concepts are clearly articulated. Clear definitions are essential for understanding the study's approach.

5. **Is the work compared and measured with other similar work?**

- This evaluates whether the study has been benchmarked against existing research. Comparing with other studies helps position the work within the broader academic context and highlights its contributions.

**6. Are the limitations of the work clearly mentioned?**

Each expert independently assesses the study according to these criteria, and the scores are then totaled across all experts to determine the overall mark. For a study to be accepted for the next process, the total mark, derived from summing the scores from all three experts, must exceed 3.0. This threshold ensures that only studies meeting a certain quality standard proceed further.

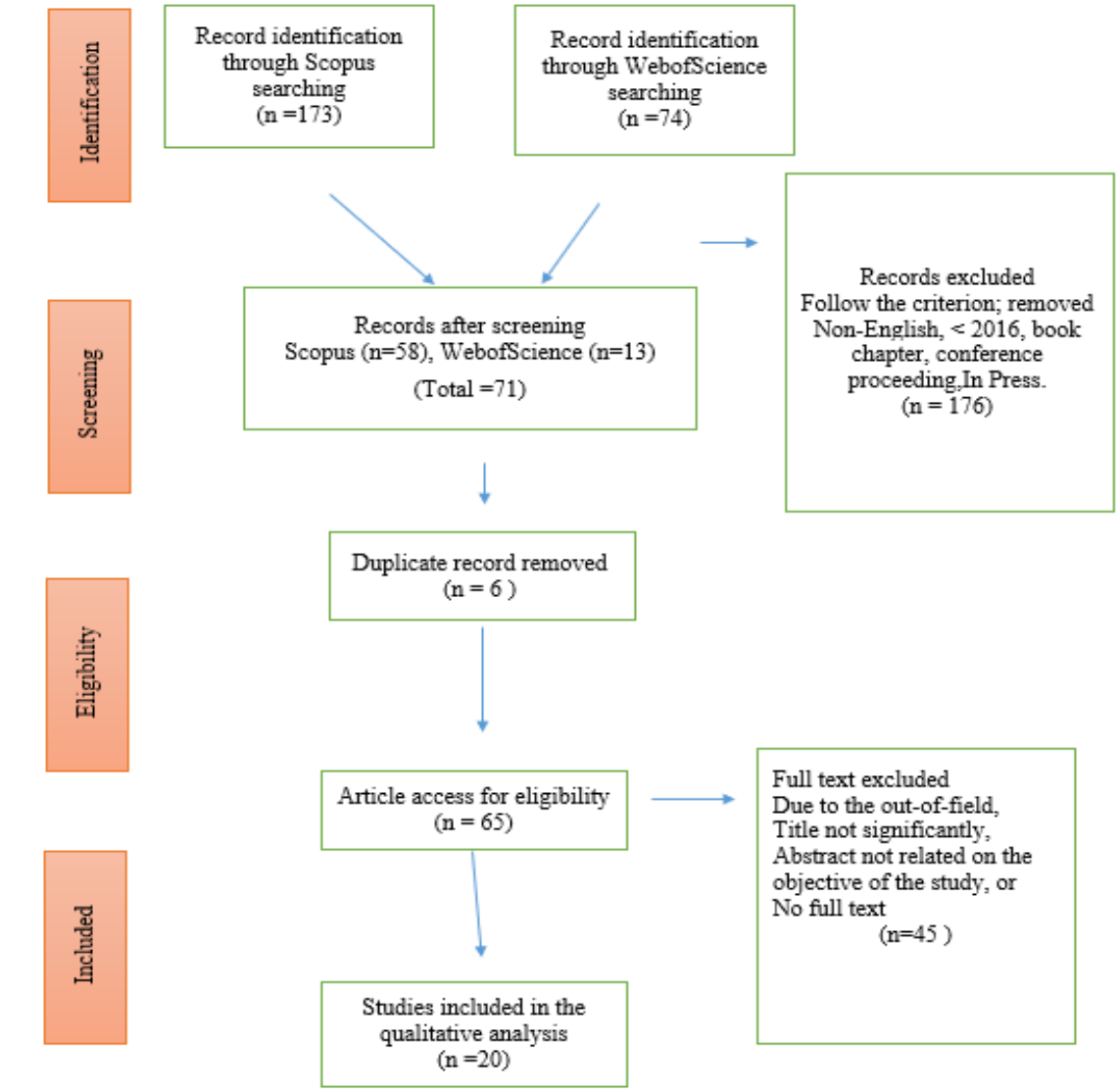


**FIGURE 2.** Flow diagram of the proposed searching study (Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, 2009)

## RESULT AND FINDING

### Quality Assessment

Based on quality assessment, Table 3 shows the result of assessment performance for selected primary studies.Overall, the majority of studies demonstrate **clear research purposes (QA1)**, **strong relevance and usefulness (QA2)**, and **well-defined conceptual frameworks (QA4)**, reflecting the maturity of research on AI-assisted academic writing. Methodological clarity (QA3) is generally adequate, though some qualitative and exploratory studies provide limited procedural detail at the abstract level. Comparisons with prior work (QA5) and explicit discussion of limitations (QA6) are less consistently reported in abstracts, which is typical but justifies further full-text scrutiny during data abstraction. Studies scoring above **80%** were prioritized as high-quality contributions informing the synthesis. In addition to that, articles scoring 50 and below would be deleted.

Table 3-QUALITY ASSESSMENT TABLE

| **AUTHOR/ YEAR** | **TITLE** | **PS** | **QA1** | **QA2** | **QA3** | **QA4** | **QA5** | **QA6** | **Total** | **%** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Xu et al., 2026) | Writer's block in continuation task: Construct, causes, and link with task performance | PS1 | Y | Y | Y | Y | P | P | **5.0** | **83.3** |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Abdel Latif et al., 2025) | Teacher motivational strategies in Saudi university EFL writing classes: a qualitative study | PS2 | Y | Y | Y | P | N | P | **4.0** | **66.7** |
| (Yeung, 2024) | Is Citation Count a Legitimate Indicator of Scientific Impact? A Case Study of Upper (1974) "The Unsuccessful Self-Treatment of a Case of Writer's Block" and Its Derivatives | PS3 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | **6.0** | **100** |
| (Wise & Kenett, 2024) | Sparking creativity: Encouraging creative idea generation through automatically generated word recommendations | PS4 | Y | Y | Y | Y | P | P | **5.0** | **83.3** |
| (Enriquez & Vaughan, 2024) | Exploring Writer's Block as Embodied Experience Across the Grades | PS5 | Y | Y | P | Y | N | P | **4.5** | **75.0** |
| (Nurkamto et al., 2024) | A PLS-SEM analysis of the factors behind writer's block of EFL university students | PS6 | Y | Y | Y | Y | P | P | **5.0** | **83.3** |
| (Aydin et al., 2023) | Main barriers and possible enablers of academicians while publishing | PS8 | Y | Y | Y | P | N | P | **4.5** | **75.0** |
| (Ahmed & Güss, 2022) | An Analysis of Writer's Block: Causes and Solutions | PS9 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | P | **5.5** | **91.7** |
| (Gülay & Ungan, 2022) | Development of academic writing block scale (Awbs): A validity and reliability study | PS10 | Y | Y | Y | Y | P | Y | **5.5** | **91.7** |
| (Evdash & Zhuravleva, 2020) | Strategies for overcoming university researchers' writer's block; Стратегии преодоления писательского барьера при написании англоязычных научных текстов | PS11 | Y | Y | P | Y | N | P | **4.5** | **75.0** |
| (Bojner-Horwitz et al., 2018) | Writer's block revisited a micro-phenomenological case study on the blocking influence of an internalized voice | PS13 | Y | Y | P | Y | N | N | **4.0** | **66.7** |
| (Rosa & Genuino, 2018) | Correlating writer's block and ESL learners' writing quality | PS14 | Y | Y | Y | Y | P | P | **5.0** | **83.3** |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Bastug et al., 2017) | A phenomenological research study on writer's block: causes, processes, and results | PS15 | Y | Y | P | O | N | N | **3.5** | **58.3** |
| (Schantong et al., 2024) | Toward a theory on programmer's block inspired by writer's block | PS16 | Y | Y | P | Y | N | P | **4.5** | **75.0** |
| (Dix, 2020) | From Writer's Block to Extended Plot: Career Construction Theory and Lives in Writing | PS17 | Y | Y | Y | Y | P | P | **5.0** | **83.3** |
| (Gimeno-Ballester & Trigo-Vicente, 2024) | [Translated article] The role of artificial intelligence in scientific publishing: perspectives from hospital pharmacy | PS18 | Y | Y | P | P | N | N | **3.5** | **58.3** |
| (Beccone, 2020) | Creative thinking and insight problem-solving in Keats' When I have fears | PS20 | Y | Y | P | Y | N | P | **4.5** | **75.0** |
| (Martins Garcia, 2023) | Don't face writer's block alone | PS7 | P | P | N | P | N | N | **1.5** | **25.0** |
| (Moore, 2018) | Articulate walls: writer's block and the academic creative | PS12 | Y | P | P | P | N | N | **2.5** | **41.7** |
| (Dovidio, 2023) | Writing the Paper | PS19 | P | P | N | P | N | N | **1.5** | **25.0** |

The quality assessment results for all 2 articles (P1-P21) are presented in Table 3 above. Out of 20 articles, 3 (P7,12, 19) did not meet the stated criteria. They received 50% or less for the assessment. The authors of this paper read through all 20 abstracts. They stuck to the title "Writers' Block for Academic Writing". As a result, the 3 articles in Table 4 were found to be unrelated to the title.

The evaluation based on 6 prespecified criteria (QA1-QA6) is presented in the quality assessment table involving 21 included studies (PS1- PS20) in writer's block. In conclusion, the results demonstrate a moderate to high degree of methodological quality throughout the corpus with combined scores ranging from 1.5 (25.0%) to 6.0 (100%). The majority of the studies make explicit what is being investigated (QA1), specify how a character theory would be useful (QA2), and thus state that resources are well aligned with research objectives as set by writing and writer's block. Empirical and mixed-methods investigations. Empirical and mixed-methods research, especially using quantitative or qualitative research designs, does a good job in considering methodological clarity (QA3) and conceptual definition (QA4). Still, there are two recurring flaws. First, the comparison with related/similar studies (QA5) is often addressed only in part or not at all coherent; this is because many abstracts are configured just to communicate some findings and do not precisely place the created knowledge within an already existing context. When addressing study limitations (QA6), few papers explicitly mention limitations or methodological or contextual constraints. Top-scoring manuscripts are typically reports of large-scale empirical or systematic studies that operationally define constructs, use strong analytic methods, and interpret results with rigor. On the other end of the scale, reflective essays, opinion pieces or practitioner narratives usually score less as they do not have a clearly described methodology or evaluative comparison. In sum, the table shows that whereas the body of literature on writer's block is large and varied, more robust

comparative analysis and explicit mentions about limitations would improve both quality and transparency in subsequent research.

**Themes**

With reference to Figure 3 above, three main themes emerged from this SLR. The themes were formed by grouping the articles in Table 3 above. The authors analysed the abstracts of each of the articles to re-group them into themes. The themes are (a) types, (ii) causes of writer's block, as well as (iii) interventions. Below are detailed explanations of each theme. Each theme leads to answering the research questions.

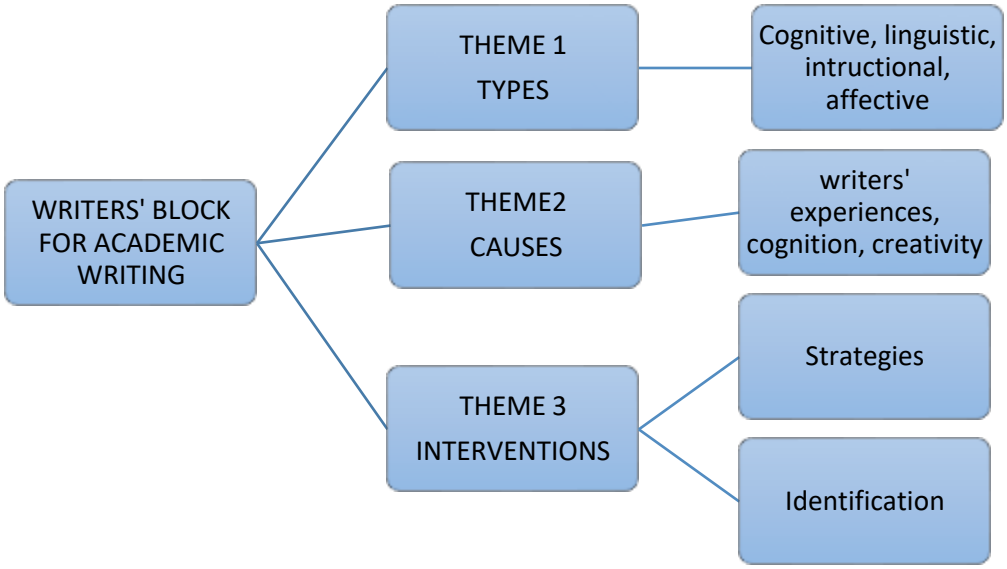


Figure 3- Summary of Emerging Themes from Primary Studies

**THEME 1: TYPES OF WRITERS' BLOCK**

This theme answers Research Question 1: What types and forms of writer's block are reported among students and academics during academic writing activities in higher education and research contexts? This theme (Table 5) explores the cognitive, linguistic, instructional, and affective aspects of writer's block. The chosen articles summarize this theme in terms of students, teachers, classrooms, EFL/ESL learning, and academic writing development.

Table 5- Theme 1

| PS | Authors | Title |
|---|---|---|
| PS1 | (Xu et al., 2026) | Writer's block in continuation task: Construct, causes, and link with task performance |
| PS2 | (Abdel Latif et al., 2025) | Teacher motivational strategies in Saudi university EFL writing classes |
| PS6 | (Nurkamto et al., 2024) | A PLS-SEM analysis of the factors behind writer's block of EFL university students |
| PS14 | (Rosa & Genuino, 2018) | Correlating writer's block and ESL learners' writing quality |
| PS15 | (Bastug et al., 2017) | A phenomenological research study on writer's block: causes, processes, and results |

Research on writer's block in academic and EFL writing consistently reports that the phenomenon emerges from an interaction of cognitive, linguistic, instructional, and affective factors. Large-scale and mixed-method studies highlight the structural nature of the problem. Xu, Yang, and Chen (2026) demonstrate that writer's block among secondary school learners is primarily shaped by content-processing and language-related difficulties, which directly influence task performance, while affective factors play a more indirect role. Similar patterns are observed at the tertiary level, where EFL university students experience writer's block due to limited academic writing competence, high academic stress, and weak self-perceived writing ability, as shown in the PLS-SEM analysis by Nurkamto et al. (2024). These findings suggest that writer's block is closely linked to insufficient mastery of academic discourse rather than being solely an emotional barrier. In ESL contexts, Rosa and Genuino (2018) further confirm that writer's block is widespread among learners, although its relationship with measurable writing quality indicators appears weak or uneven. Together, these studies indicate that writer's block functions as a multidimensional constraint that affects writing processes more strongly than final textual outcomes.

From a pedagogical and experiential perspective, qualitative studies emphasize instructional practices, motivation, and long-term educational experiences as central contributors to writer's block. Abdel Latif, Alghizzi, and Alshahrani (2025) identify writing demotivation, ineffective teaching strategies, and limited classroom engagement as recurring conditions associated with writer's block in Saudi university settings. Their findings align with phenomenological evidence from teacher candidates, where anxiety, fear of evaluation, and insufficient writing instruction since early schooling emerge as persistent causes of blockage (Baştuğ, Ertem, & Keskin, 2017; Bastug, Ertem, & Keskin, 2017). These studies collectively stress that writer's block is reinforced by institutional and instructional environments, rather than individual weakness alone. The reviewed literature also points toward intervention-oriented implications, suggesting that targeted pedagogical support, improved motivation strategies, and systematic development of writing skills can reduce the intensity of writer's block across educational levels.

## THEME 2: SOURCES OF WRITERS' BLOCK

This theme answers research question 2: What cognitive, affective, linguistic, and contextual factors are identified as causes of writer's block among students and academic writers in academic writing contexts? This theme (Table 6) summarises writers' experiences, cognition, and creativity. The causes of writer's block can be psychological, cognitive, and creative.

Table 6- Theme 2

| PS | Authors | Title |
|---|---|---|
| PS5 | (Enriquez & Vaughan, 2024) | Exploring Writer's Block as Embodied Experience Across the Grades |
| P8 | (Aydin et al., 2023) | Main barriers and possible enablers of academicians while publishing |
| PS9 | (Ahmed & Güss, 2022) | An Analysis of Writer's Block: Causes and Solutions |
| PS13 | (Bojner-Horwitz et al., 2018) | Writer's block revisited: a micro-phenomenological case study |
| PS17 | (Dix, 2020) | From Writer's Block to Extended Plot: Career Construction Theory and Lives in Writing |
| PS20 | (Beccone, 2020) | Creative thinking and insight problem-solving in Keats' *When I Have Fears* |

The reviewed literature conceptualizes writer's block in academic writing as a complex phenomenon shaped by psychological, cognitive, social, and embodied dimensions. Several studies move beyond traditional views that frame writer's block only as a cognitive failure. (Enriquez & Vaughan, 2024) reconceptualize writer's block as an embodied experience, emphasizing that bodily sensations, emotions, and physical engagement play a central role in how blockage is experienced and expressed across educational levels. This perspective aligns with the micro-phenomenological findings of (Bojner-Horwitz et al., 2018), which show that internalized voices, mental imagery, and bodily movement interact to sustain or alleviate writer's block. Both studies highlight that blockage is not static but dynamically co-constructed through interaction with social, material, and emotional contexts. From a broader academic standpoint, (Aydin et al., 2023)further demonstrate that writer's block among academicians is intertwined with cognitive overload, affective strain, and institutional pressures, including fear of rejection and perfectionism. These findings collectively suggest that writer's block reflects a multidimensional condition rooted in both internal psychological states and external academic environments.

In addition to experiential and contextual explanations, several studies examine writer's block through the lenses of creativity, problem-solving, and coping strategies. Ahmed & Güss (2022) identify physiological and motivational factors as the most frequent causes of writer's block, while also documenting practical solutions such as task switching, enforced writing, and social discussion, indicating that blockage can be mitigated through behavioral and cognitive adjustment. (Dix, 2020) extends this understanding by framing writer's block within career construction theory, arguing that blockage often emerges during periods of vocational uncertainty and transition, rather than as an isolated writing difficulty. This long-term perspective resonates with Beccone, 2020) analysis of creative insight in literary writing, where moments of blockage are positioned as part of a broader problem-solving process that can precede creative breakthroughs. When considered together, these studies suggest that writer's block functions both as an obstacle and as a potential catalyst for reflection and restructuring of writing practice. The literature therefore supports a shift away from deficit-oriented interpretations toward a view of writer's block as a meaningful, though challenging, stage within academic and creative writing trajectories.

## THEME 2: INTERVENTION

This theme addresses research question 3: How is writer's block identified, and what intervention strategies are reported to address it among students and academic writers in academic writing and research environments? This theme can be seen from two dimensions. The first dimension explores intervention (i) strategies, while the second dimension looks at (ii) identification. This theme emerged from similar articles (Table 7) that suggest solutions such as AI tools and cross-domain applications.

Table 7- Theme 3

| PS | Authors | Title |
|---|---|---|
| PS4 | (Wise & Kenett, 2024) | Sparking creativity through automatically generated word recommendations |
| PS11 | (Evdash & Zhuravleva, 2020) | Strategies for overcoming university researchers' writer's block |
| PS16 | (Schantong et al., 2024) | Toward a theory on programmer's block inspired by writer's block |
| PS18 | (Gimeno-Ballester & Trigo-Vicente, 2024) | The role of artificial intelligence in scientific publishing |

### (ii)Strategies

This section addresses interventions in terms of strategies for writer's block in academic writing highlights both cognitive-based and practice-oriented strategies aimed at restoring productivity and creative flow. (Wise &

Kenett, 2024)demonstrate that creative block, closely associated with writer's block, can be alleviated through targeted semantic stimulation. Their findings indicate that automatically generated word recommendations help writers move beyond cognitive fixation by redirecting semantic memory pathways, thereby improving idea fluency and originality. This effect is shown to vary according to writing experience, suggesting that intervention effectiveness depends on individual cognitive profiles. Complementing this experimental approach, Evdash & Zhuravleva (2020) provide applied evidence from academic writing centers, showing that structured pre-writing activities and individualized consultations support researchers who struggle to initiate or complete texts. These interventions reduce fear of the blank page, increase awareness of writing processes, and foster confidence, particularly among second-language academic writers. Together, these studies suggest that writer's block can be mitigated through deliberate cognitive priming and sustained pedagogical support rather than spontaneous motivation alone.

Recent research also extends intervention frameworks beyond traditional writing contexts by integrating cross-domain strategies and digital technologies. (Schantong et al., 2024) reveal strong parallels between writer's block and programmer's block, indicating that difficulties in code production mirror challenges observed in academic writing. Their findings suggest that strategies traditionally used in writing, such as iterative drafting and externalization of ideas, can be transferred to programming tasks, reinforcing the universality of blockage mechanisms across knowledge domains. In parallel, (Gimeno-Ballester & Trigo-Vicente, 2024) emphasize the growing role of artificial intelligence in supporting academic writing processes. Their analysis shows that AI-based tools assist writers by enhancing literature search efficiency, improving linguistic accuracy, and supporting manuscript structuring, while also offering practical support in overcoming writer's block. However, ethical concerns related to bias, plagiarism, and critical oversight remain prominent. Collectively, these studies indicate that effective interventions for writer's block increasingly combine cognitive strategies, institutional support, cross-disciplinary insights, and responsible technological integration to address both immediate writing difficulties and long-term academic productivity.

**(ii) Identification**

This theme (Table 8) explores suggestions for identification through measurement. The articles chosen focus on assessment tools, validation, and meta-level analysis of research practices.

Table 8- Theme 4

| PS | Authors | Title |
|---|---|---|
| PS10 | (Gülay & Ungan, 2022) | Development of academic writing block scale (AWBS) |
| PS3 | (Yeung, 2024) | Is Citation Count a Legitimate Indicator of Scientific Impact? |

The meta-scientific and methodological literature on writer's block in academic writing highlights important issues related to both research evaluation and measurement precision. (Yeung, 2024) critically examines the use of citation counts through the case of Upper's (1974) intentionally blank article on writer's block and its subsequent derivatives. The findings reveal that high citation numbers do not necessarily reflect genuine intellectual influence, as a substantial proportion of citations were satirical, erroneous, or unrelated to the original content. This analysis demonstrates that writer's block can function not only as a psychological or pedagogical topic but also as a lens through which weaknesses in scholarly evaluation practices become visible. The study underscores that reliance on citation metrics alone may distort perceptions of academic impact, especially in niche or conceptually symbolic research areas such as writer's block. Complementing this critique of research assessment, Gülay & Ungan, 2022) address the methodological challenge of accurately identifying and measuring academic writing block. Their study reports the systematic development and validation of the Academic Writing Block Scale (AWBS), which demonstrates strong reliability and construct validity across

multiple statistical tests. The findings confirm that writer's block is a multidimensional psychological condition that can be empirically captured through well-designed instruments. Together, these studies emphasize the need for methodological rigor in both evaluating research influence and assessing writer's block itself. While (Yeung, 2024) calls attention to the limitations of simplistic bibliometric indicators, (Gülay & Ungan, 2022) provide a structured measurement framework that supports more precise investigation of academic writing difficulties. This combined evidence suggests that advancing research on writer's block requires careful alignment between conceptual clarity, valid measurement tools, and responsible evaluation of scholarly output.

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review was undertaken to synthesize existing research on writer's block in academic writing, with a specific focus on its types, causes, and intervention strategies. The review covered 21 peer-reviewed journal articles published within 2016-2026 and retrieved through structured searches in major academic databases such as Scopus and WoS, following explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria. The review aimed to address three guiding research questions concerning the forms of writer's block experienced in academic contexts, the underlying factors contributing to its emergence, and the approaches used to identify and mitigate its effects. By systematically organizing and analyzing empirical, qualitative, and mixed-method studies, the review addresses fragmentation in the literature and provides an integrated understanding of writer's block as a persistent challenge in higher education and research environments. The findings reinforce the broader significance of writer's block as an issue that extends beyond individual difficulty and reflects structural, pedagogical, and psychological dimensions of academic writing practice.

The synthesis of findings reveals several consistent patterns across the reviewed studies. Writer's block is commonly described as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing cognitive, linguistic, affective, motivational, and behavioral components. Causes frequently reported include limited academic writing competence, high cognitive demands, academic stress, fear of evaluation, perfectionism, and unsupportive instructional environments. Methodologically, the literature demonstrates a growing reliance on validated measurement tools, phenomenological inquiry, and statistical modeling, alongside traditional qualitative exploration. Intervention strategies show convergence around structured writing support, pre-writing activities, cognitive and behavioral techniques, peer and supervisory engagement, and emerging digital and technological tools. The review contributes to the field by synthesizing these diverse strands into a coherent framework that links types of writer's block with their causes and corresponding interventions. This integrative perspective advances understanding by moving beyond isolated explanations and highlighting the interconnected nature of writing difficulties in academic settings.

The practical implications of this review suggest that institutions, educators, and academic support units should adopt comprehensive and preventive approaches to address writer's block. Effective practices include early identification, explicit instruction in academic writing skills, supportive feedback mechanisms, and access to structured writing programs and technological assistance. Despite these contributions, the review is constrained by limitations related to database selection, English-language focus, and the defined publication period, which may restrict coverage of broader cultural and disciplinary perspectives. Future research is encouraged to expand cross-cultural investigations, employ longitudinal designs, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions across different academic disciplines. In conclusion, systematic literature reviews in this field play a crucial role in consolidating evidence, refining theoretical understanding, and guiding future empirical work. Evidence-based synthesis remains essential for advancing research quality and informing effective responses to writer's block in academic writing.

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**Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study.

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