

Writing Anxiety in Academic and Second-Language Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review of Sources, Factors, and Strategies for Reduction

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ABSTRACT

Writing anxiety represents a significant affective challenge in academic and second-language writing, influencing learners' confidence, engagement, self-regulation, and writing performance. This systematic literature review synthesizes current evidence on the sources, associated factors, and strategies for reducing writing anxiety, while accounting for the growing influence of technology- and artificial intelligence (AI)-mediated writing environments. Guided by the PRISMA framework, studies were identified through Scopus and Web of Science, with 149 records initially retrieved and 21 studies ultimately included following screening and eligibility procedures. The thematic synthesis identified three overarching themes: sources of writing anxiety, factors associated with writing anxiety, and strategies for reduction. Sources encompassed linguistic difficulties, limited vocabulary, fear of negative evaluation, insufficient writing practice, time pressure, low confidence, and emerging concerns surrounding AI, authorship, surveillance, and academic integrity. Psychological and contextual factors included self-efficacy, motivation, writer's block, procrastination, social support, engagement, and writing performance, with self-efficacy emerging as an important protective factor. Pedagogical evidence, although comparatively limited, indicates that EAP instruction, task readiness, manageable task complexity, repetition, rehearsal, scaffolding, and constructive feedback may contribute to anxiety reduction. Overall, the review conceptualizes writing anxiety as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by interactions among learner characteristics, instructional conditions, and evolving technological environments. The findings underscore the need for more longitudinal and intervention-based research examining anxiety-sensitive pedagogies and responsible AI-supported writing practices.

Keywords: academic writing anxiety; second-language writing; writing self-efficacy; pedagogical strategies; AI-mediated writing

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Academic writing is an essential component of higher education and second-language learning; however, it can generate considerable anxiety that influences learners' engagement, confidence, and writing performance. Evidence synthesized in this review indicates that writing anxiety is multidimensional and context-dependent, involving linguistic difficulties, limited vocabulary, fear of negative evaluation, insufficient writing practice, time pressure, low confidence, and perfectionism. Khatami et al. (2025), Sabti et al. (2024), Quvanch and Na (2022), and Rasool et al. (2023), for example, highlight linguistic limitations and evaluative concerns as prominent sources of anxiety. Moreover, contemporary writing environments have introduced new dimensions through generative

AI, automated writing evaluation, Google Docs, and multimodal feedback, which may either alleviate or intensify anxiety depending on feedback design, learner characteristics, surveillance perceptions, and ethical concerns.

Statement of Problem and Research Gap

Despite growing attention to writing anxiety, the literature remains dispersed across psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, and technological perspectives. Existing studies examine determinants such as self-efficacy, motivation, writer's block, procrastination, social support, engagement, and writing performance, while comparatively fewer studies investigate pedagogical interventions for anxiety reduction. Indeed, only two of the 21 reviewed studies focus primarily on pedagogical approaches, including EAP instruction, task readiness, task complexity, rehearsal, and repetition. This imbalance reveals a need for an integrated synthesis that connects sources, influencing factors, and reduction strategies, while incorporating emerging technology- and AI-mediated writing environments. Accordingly, this SLR systematically consolidates these dimensions to clarify current knowledge and identify directions for pedagogical practice and future research.

Research Questions

Research questions are important to a systematic literature review (SLR). The questions provide the foundation and direction for the entire review process. A well-defined research question ensures that the literature search is exhaustive and systematic, covering all relevant studies that address key aspects of the topic (Kitchenham, 2007). The research questions in this SLR are formulated based on the PICO framework. This framework is a mnemonic style used to formulate research questions, particularly in qualitative research, proposed by Lockwood et al. (2015). PICO stands for Population, Interest, and Context. This SLR is done to answer the three research questions below;

RQ1: What are the major sources and triggers of writing anxiety among learners in academic and second-language writing contexts, including technology- and AI-mediated writing environments?

RQ2: What personal, psychological, behavioural, and contextual factors are associated with writing anxiety among learners in academic and second-language writing contexts?

RQ3: What strategies and pedagogical approaches have been used to reduce writing anxiety among learners in academic and second-language writing contexts?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), introduced by Bandura (1986), provides a useful theoretical foundation for explaining both the triggers of writing anxiety and anxiety arising in technology-mediated writing environments. SCT proposes that human functioning is shaped by reciprocal interactions among personal factors, behaviour, and environmental influences, with self-efficacy playing a central role in determining individuals' responses to challenging tasks. In writing contexts, personal factors such as low self-efficacy, limited confidence, and fear of failure may interact with behavioural factors such as avoidance and insufficient writing practice, as well as environmental triggers such as negative evaluation, demanding tasks, and teacher feedback, to intensify writing anxiety. The reviewed studies similarly identify linguistic difficulties, negative evaluation, inadequate practice, and low self-confidence as important anxiety triggers. SCT is also applicable to technology-mediated writing, where interactions with digital tools, automated feedback, and generative AI may influence learners' confidence, engagement, and anxiety. Technology can reduce anxiety through supportive, immediate feedback, but may also

generate anxiety through perceived surveillance, cognitive overload, uncertainty, or concerns about AI-generated writing and authorship.

Control-Value Theory of Achievement

The Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions (CVT), proposed by Pekrun (2006), provides a relevant theoretical foundation for explaining the psychological and contextual factors associated with writing anxiety. The theory posits that achievement emotions are primarily influenced by individuals' appraisals of control over an academic activity and the value they attach to its outcomes. In academic writing, anxiety is therefore more likely to emerge when students consider a writing task important but perceive limited control over their ability to perform successfully. This perspective helps explain several factors identified in the reviewed studies, including low writing self-efficacy, limited confidence, motivation, procrastination, writer's block, and concerns about writing performance. For instance, writing self-efficacy was negatively associated with psychological writing anxiety, suggesting that greater perceived competence may reduce anxiety. Similarly, academic procrastination was found to influence writing performance through the mediating role of L2 writing anxiety. Thus, CVT provides a useful framework for understanding how learners' perceptions of competence, control, task demands, and achievement importance interact to shape writing anxiety and subsequent writing behaviour.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), provides a valuable theoretical foundation for understanding pedagogical approaches that support students in academic writing and reduce writing anxiety. SDT proposes that effective learning and intrinsic motivation are strengthened when three fundamental psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are fulfilled. In academic writing, autonomy can be promoted by providing students with meaningful choices and opportunities to take ownership of writing tasks, while competence can be strengthened through appropriate scaffolding, achievable writing activities, constructive feedback, and opportunities for repeated practice. Relatedness can be fostered through supportive teacher–student relationships, peer collaboration, and an encouraging writing environment. These principles are reflected in the reviewed studies, where teacher and peer support were associated with lower writing anxiety, stronger self-efficacy, and greater writing engagement. Similarly, collaborative learning and active writing activities were found to reduce anxiety and strengthen students' self-efficacy and engagement. Therefore, SDT supports learner-centred pedagogical approaches that enhance motivation, confidence, participation, and psychological safety in academic writing.

Conceptual Framework

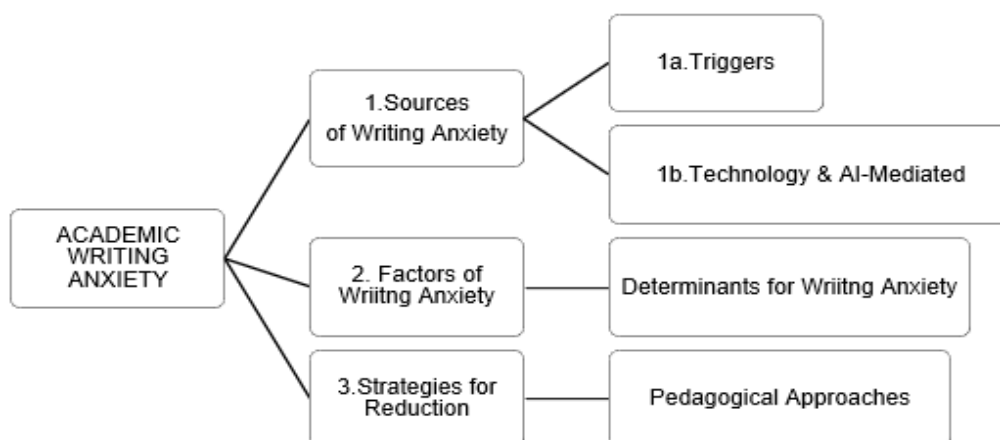


Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the SLR

The conceptual framework for this systematic literature review is presented in Figure 1 above. This framework conceptualizes academic writing anxiety through three interconnected themes: sources of writing anxiety, factors associated with writing anxiety, and strategies for its reduction. The first theme is anchored in Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which explains writing anxiety through reciprocal interactions among personal, behavioural, and environmental conditions. This perspective supports two sub-themes. First, triggers of writing anxiety encompass its causes, levels, manifestations, contextual triggers, and coping responses, including linguistic difficulties, fear of evaluation, inadequate writing experience, and low confidence. Second, technology- and AI-mediated writing anxiety captures emerging sources associated with generative AI, automated writing evaluation, Google Docs, multimodal AI feedback, technology-supported writing, and concerns surrounding identity, authorship, and academic integrity. SCT is particularly relevant because technological environments may interact with learners' beliefs, behaviours, and self-efficacy to either intensify or alleviate writing anxiety.

The second theme, factors of writing anxiety, is theoretically informed by Pekrun's (2006) Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions, which proposes that anxiety is shaped by learners' perceptions of control over writing activities and the value attached to their outcomes. Accordingly, self-efficacy, motivation, writer's block, procrastination, social support, engagement, and writing performance are conceptualized as important determinants of writing anxiety.

The third theme, strategies for reduction, is anchored in Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness, providing a foundation for pedagogical approaches that create supportive and motivating writing environments. Consequently, strategies such as EAP instruction, task readiness, appropriate task complexity, task repetition, scaffolding, feedback, and other instructional practices are conceptualized as mechanisms for strengthening competence and engagement while reducing anxiety. Together, the three theories provide an integrated framework for explaining where writing anxiety originates, what factors shape it, and how pedagogical interventions can mitigate it.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For conducting systematic literature reviews, the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach is a widely accepted standard that guarantees transparency, completeness, and consistency throughout the procedure by Page et al. (2021). guide how to systematically identify, screen, and include studies in their review. In the context of this SLR, the writers involved in this article act as researchers and work together to analyse the articles deemed relevant for the title. Two important databases, Web of Science and Scopus, were used in this analysis because of their wide coverage and robustness.

The PRISMA approach is organized into four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and data abstraction. In the identification phase, databases are searched to locate all relevant studies. The screening phase then involves evaluating these studies against predefined criteria to eliminate irrelevant or low-quality research. During the eligibility phase, the remaining studies are thoroughly assessed to confirm they meet the inclusion criteria. Finally, data abstraction focuses on extracting and synthesizing data from the included studies, which is essential for deriving meaningful and reliable conclusions. This structured method ensures that the systematic review is conducted with rigor, leading to trustworthy results that can guide future research and practice. The section below lists four main stages for analysis: (i) identification, (ii) screening, (iii) eligibility, (iv) data abstraction and analysis, as well as (v) quality of appraisal.

Identification

In accordance with the PRISMA framework, the identification phase represents a critical starting point in the systematic literature review process, as it is designed to ensure exhaustive coverage of relevant studies while reducing the risk of selection bias. In this study, a structured and comprehensive search was conducted across two

leading bibliographic databases, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), using the keywords “academic writing,” “academic anxiety,” and “higher education.” Table 1 below shows the search string.

These databases were deliberately selected because of their extensive multidisciplinary coverage, stringent indexing criteria, and strong representation of high-quality, peer-reviewed journals. The search process resulted in the retrieval of 102 records from Scopus and 47 records from Web of Science, yielding a combined total of 149 records prior to the removal of duplicates.

The higher number of results obtained from Scopus can be attributed to its broader inclusion of journals and stronger coverage in the social sciences, whereas WoS contributed a more targeted collection of highly cited and methodologically rigorous studies. As shown in Table 1, the identification of 149 records reflects the growing academic interest in writing within higher education and highlights the conceptual diversity of research spanning linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological perspectives. Employing multiple databases enhances the methodological robustness of the review by minimizing database-specific bias and increasing the likelihood of capturing diverse research traditions and geographical contexts.

Additionally, the use of carefully designed search terms ensured sensitivity to terminological variation while maintaining alignment with the review’s objectives. Overall, this transparent and systematic identification process establishes a strong foundation for subsequent screening and eligibility stages, consistent with PRISMA standards and expectations for rigorous, replicable research.

TABLE 1

The search string.

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("academic writing" OR "scholarly writing" OR "university writing" OR "higher education writing") AND (anxiety OR "writing anxiety" OR "academic anxiety" OR "test anxiety") AND (university OR "higher education" OR "college" OR "tertiary education"))
Web of Science	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("academic writing" OR "scholarly writing" OR "university writing" OR "higher education writing") AND (anxiety OR "writing anxiety" OR "academic anxiety" OR "test anxiety") AND (university OR "higher education" OR "college" OR "tertiary education"))
Extracted Aug 2026	

Screening

During the screening stage of the systematic literature review, potentially relevant studies were evaluated to ensure their alignment with the four established research questions. This phase focused on refining the initial pool of records by removing duplicates and applying predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Following the initial review, 75 publications were excluded for failing to meet the scope and relevance requirements of the study, leaving 74 (Scopus=57; WoS; 17) articles for further consideration, as outlined in Figure 2. The primary inclusion criterion was the type of literature, with priority given to scholarly sources that offer substantive and empirical insights. As a result, materials such as book reviews, book series, meta-syntheses, meta-analyses, conference proceedings, and book chapters not directly related to the core focus of the review were excluded. To ensure consistency and relevance to contemporary academic discourse, only peer-reviewed publications written in English and published between 2021 and 2027 were retained. Additionally, a duplication check led to the removal

of 1 repeated record across the databases. This systematic and criteria-driven screening process enhanced the focus and quality of the evidence base, ensuring that only the most relevant and methodologically sound studies progressed to the subsequent stages of analysis.

Eligibility

For the third step, known as eligibility, a total of 73 articles were prepared. 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. Therefore, 52 reports were omitted leaving a final 21 articles are available for review (see Table 3 & 5).

TABLE 2

The selection criterion is searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Time line	2021 – 2027	< 2021
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject Area	Academic Writing, Writing Anxiety	Besides Academic Writing, Writing Anxiety

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 73 publications for relevant material related to the study's topics. They examined the methodology and research results of significant studies on academic writing, anxiety, and university. 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. This expert review phase established the validity of each subtheme by ensuring clarity, importance, and suitability.

Quality of Appraisal

According to Kitchenham and Charters (Kitchenham, 2007), the researchers need to assess the quality of the research chosen. The next stage is applying quality assessment suggested by Abouzahra et al., (2020), which consists of six questions complying to a scoring procedure for evaluating each criterion. The possible ratings are

"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.

Table 3- Possible ratings for 6 question by Abouzahra et al., (2020),

No	Question
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?

Each writer independently assesses the study according to these criteria, and the scores are then totalled 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. The results are shown in Table 4.

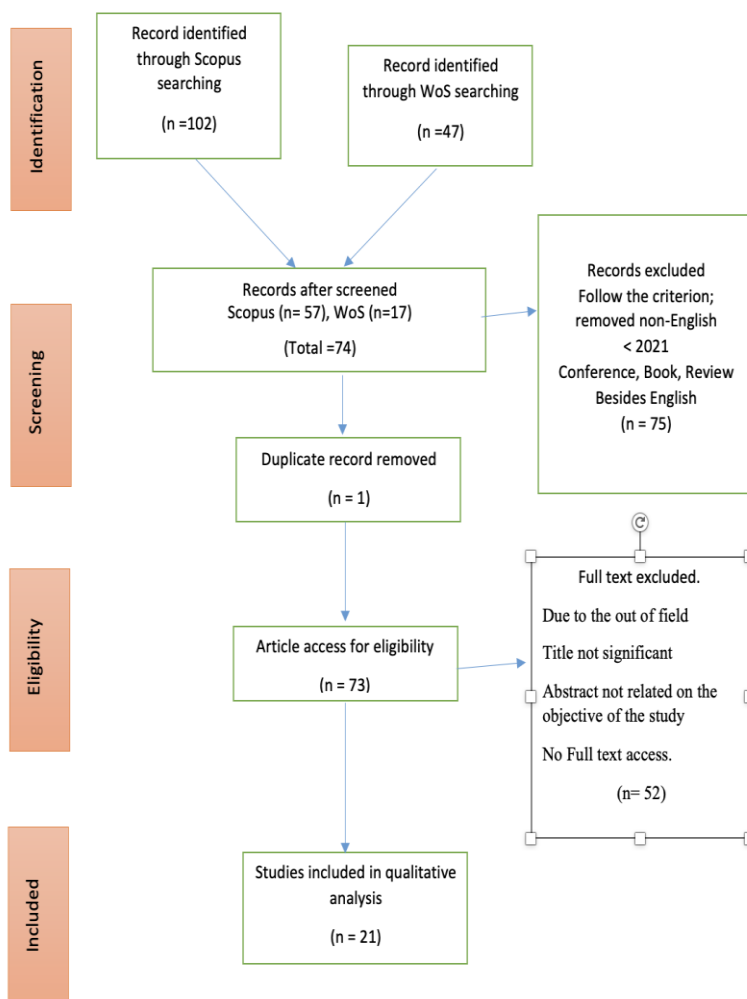


FIGURE 2. Flow diagram of the proposed searching study (Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, 2009)

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Quality of Assessment

After careful analysis of the final 21 documents, the researchers assessed the documents based on the quality of assessment in Table 4 below. It shows the result of the assessment performance for selected primary studies. The overall quality of the articles is as follows;

- **High quality ($\geq 80\%$):** Majority of studies
- **Moderate quality (60–79%):** Conceptual or descriptive studies
- **Lower quality ($<60\%$):** Primarily survey-only or exploratory abstracts

Table 4- Quality Assessment

Study	Author & Year	Article Title	Q A 1	Q A 2	Q A 3	Q A 4	Q A 5	Q A 6	Total Mark	(%)
PS1	Sun, Yang, & Jiang (2025)	Effect of an EAP Course on Students' Writing Performance, Anxiety and Self-Efficacy: A Latent Profile Analysis	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.00%
PS2	Khatami et al. (2025)	Navigating Writing Anxiety: Sources and Coping Strategies of University Students in Bangladesh	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4.0	66.67%
PS3	Kim (2026)	From AI Anxiety to Strategic Regulation: How University Students Transform Generative AI into a Strategic Learning Resource	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.00%
PS4	Screti (2023)	Using Google Docs for Guided Academic Writing Assessments: Students' Perspectives	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P	5.0	83.33%
PS5	Kutluca Canbulat & Koparan (2026)	Academics' Subjective Well-Being: The Role of Academic Writing Anxiety, Academic Writing Block and Cognitive Appraisal of Writing Feedback	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4.0	66.67%
PS6	Ren et al. (2026)	Learning Styles, Engagement and Anxiety in AI-Mediated Writing: A Multimodal Feedback Study	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.00%
PS7	Delina & Del Rosario Rondilla	Struggling to Learn or Learning to Struggle? Student Identity, Anxiety, and Academic Integrity in AI-	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4.0	66.67%

	(2026)	Assisted Writing								
PS8	Damra et al. (2026)	Exploring the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Writer's Block, and Academic Writing Performance Among Higher Education EFL Students in Jordan	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4.0	66.67%
PS9	Abu-Gweder & Solomovich (2026)	Crossing the Threshold into Academia: Technological Learning and Academic Writing Experiences Among Bedouin Students in a Pre-Academic Program	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P	5.0	83.33%
PS10	Abdi Tabari & Farahanynia (2025)	Exploring the Interplay Between Task-Readiness Factors and Task Complexity in L2 Writing Performance and Anxiety	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	5.0	83.33%
PS11	Ozfidan, El-Dakhs, & Ibrahim (2026)	The Role of Motivation and Anxiety in Writing Strategy Use: Focus on Saudi EFL Learners	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4.0	66.67%
PS12	Sabti et al. (2024)	A Study of the Causes and the Effect of Writing Anxiety Components on Iraqi EFL Students' Attitudes	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	5.0	83.33%
PS13	Waked, El Alaoui, & Pilotti (2023)	Second-Language Writing Anxiety and Its Correlates: A Challenge to Sustainable Education in a Post-Pandemic World	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	5.0	83.33%
PS14	Gou et al. (2026)	Chain Mediating Role of English Writing Anxiety and English Writing Self-Efficacy Between Teacher Support, Peer Support, and English Writing Engagement Among Middle School Students in China	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	N	4.5	75.00%
PS15	Farooqi & Golzar (2025)	Uncovering the Roots of Writing Apprehension: Triggers and Effective Interventions	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.00%
PS16	Du & Nordin (2026)	The Impact of the iWrite Automated Writing Evaluation System on University EFL Students' Writing Performance and Writing Anxiety	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	5.0	83.33%
PS17	Zhang &	The Impact of Academic Procrastination on Second Language	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.00%

	Zhang (2022)	Writing: The Mediating Role of L2 Writing Anxiety								
PS18	Quvanch & Na (2022)	Evaluating Afghanistan University Students' Writing Anxiety in English Class: An Empirical Research	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	5.0	83.33%
PS19	Rasool et al. (2023)	Pre-Service EFL Teacher's Perceptions of Foreign Language Writing Anxiety and Some Associated Factors	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	5.0	83.33%
PS20	Li (2022)	Research on Correlation Between English Writing Self-Efficacy and Psychological Anxiety of College Students	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4.0	66.67%
PS21	Majeed et al. (2022)	The Impact of Writing Anxiety, Writing Achievement Motivation, Writing Self-Efficacy and Reading Habits on Pakistani Undergraduate English Major Students' Writing Performance	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	5.0	83.33%

Table 4 presents the quality assessment results for the 21 studies included in the systematic literature review based on six quality assessment (QA) criteria. Overall, the studies demonstrated moderate to high quality, with total scores ranging from 4.0 to 5.0 out of 6, equivalent to 66.67%–83.33%. All 21 studies fully satisfied QA1 and QA2, indicating that the research purposes and the relevance or usefulness of the studies were clearly presented. Similarly, almost all studies fulfilled QA3 and QA4, demonstrating generally clear descriptions of research methodologies and key concepts, although PS14 only partially met QA3. Greater variation was observed for QA5, which assessed whether the studies included appropriate comparison and measurement with similar work or conditions. Several studies fully satisfied this criterion, whereas others met it partially or not at all. QA6 emerged as the weakest criterion, as most studies did not explicitly report their limitations, while only PS4 and PS9 partially addressed this aspect. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the selected studies provide a reasonably strong evidence base for the review, particularly regarding research objectives, relevance, methodological clarity, and conceptual definition.

Themes

Table 5- Analysis for Themes

MAIN THEME	Sub-Theme	Proposed Theme	Main Focus	Studies	No. of Studies
1 SOURCES OF WRITING ANXIETY	1a	Triggers of Writing Anxiety	Causes, levels, manifestations, contextual sparks, and coping with writing anxiety	PS2, PS12, PS13, PS15, PS18, PS19	6
	1b	Technology- and AI-	Generative AI, automated writing evaluation, Google	PS3, PS4, PS6, PS7,	6

		Mediated Writing Anxiety	Docs, multimodal AI feedback, technology-supported writing, identity, and integrity	PS9, PS16	
2 FACTORS OF WRITING ANXIETY		Determinants for Writing Anxiety	Self-efficacy, motivation, writer's block, procrastination, social support, engagement, and writing performance	PS5, PS8, PS11, PS14, PS17, PS20, PS21	7
3 STRATEGIES FOR REDUCTION		Pedagogical Approaches to Writing Anxiety	EAP instruction, task readiness, task complexity, repetition, and instructional strategies	PS1, PS10	2
		Total		PS1–PS21	21

Taken together (refer to Table 5 above) , the three main themes provide a progression from understanding what causes writing anxiety (Theme 1a), through explaining the psychological mechanisms associated with it (Theme 2), to identifying instructional approaches for managing it (Theme 2) and, finally, examining how contemporary technologies and AI reshape writing anxiety (Theme 1b). All 21 studies (PS1–PS21) are assigned to one primary theme, ensuring complete coverage of the final screened dataset. The synthesis indicates that writing anxiety is not a single-dimensional affective problem; rather, it emerges through interactions among linguistic competence, evaluation concerns, self-efficacy, motivation, procrastination, feedback, social support, task design, learning context, and increasingly, AI- and technology-mediated writing environments.

The distribution shows that Theme 2 is the largest category (7 studies; 33.3%), followed by Themes 1a and 1b with six studies each (28.6% each), while Theme 3 contains two studies (9.5%). This suggests that the literature places substantial emphasis on the psychological mechanisms associated with writing anxiety, alongside increasing attention to technology- and AI-mediated writing environments. The section below focuses the analysis by answering the three research questions presented above.

Theme 1: Sources of Writing Anxiety

Theme 1a: Triggers of Writing Anxiety

This section presents an analysis of data to answer research question 1: What are the major sources and triggers of writing anxiety among learners in academic and second-language writing contexts, including technology- and AI-mediated writing environments? In the context of this SLR, the sources are elaborated in terms of (a) triggers of writing anxiety, and (b) technology and AI-mediated writing anxiety

Table 6- Triggers

Study	Author & Year	Article Title	Thematic Focus
PS2	Khatami et al. (2025)	Navigating Writing Anxiety: Sources and Coping Strategies of University Students in Bangladesh	Sources of anxiety, linguistic challenges, fear of evaluation, low self-efficacy, and coping strategies

PS12	Sabti et al. (2024)	A Study of the Causes and the Effect of Writing Anxiety Components on Iraqi EFL Students' Attitudes	Somatic, cognitive, and avoidance anxiety; causes and gender differences
PS13	Waked et al. (2023)	Second-Language Writing Anxiety and Its Correlates: A Challenge to Sustainable Education in a Post-Pandemic World	English exposure, attitudes, dimensions of anxiety, and writing quality/quantity
PS15	Farooqi & Golzar (2025)	Uncovering the Roots of Writing Apprehension: Triggers and Effective Interventions	Writing-anxiety triggers, performance, and potential interventions
PS18	Quvanch & Na (2022)	Evaluating Afghanistan University Students' Writing Anxiety in English Class: An Empirical Research	Levels, types, causes, proficiency differences, and negative evaluation
PS19	Rasool et al. (2023)	Pre-Service EFL Teacher's Perceptions of Foreign Language Writing Anxiety and Some Associated Factors	Levels, types, gender, linguistic competence, and insufficient writing practice

This theme (1a) in Table 6 above encompasses studies primarily concerned with identifying the causes, levels, dimensions, manifestations, and contextual antecedents of writing anxiety, as well as strategies students use to cope with it. The abstracts reveal recurring factors such as linguistic difficulties, limited vocabulary, fear of negative evaluation, insufficient writing practice, time pressure, low confidence, perfectionism, and language-learning background.

Collectively, these studies establish writing anxiety as a multidimensional and context-dependent phenomenon. For example, Khatami et al. (2025) identified linguistic challenges, fear of peer/teacher evaluation, and low self-efficacy, while students responded through planning, motivational regulation, emotional self-regulation, and sustained practice. Sabti et al. (2024), Quvanch and Na (2022), and Rasool et al. (2023) similarly demonstrate the importance of linguistic difficulties, inadequate practice, negative evaluation, and cognitive anxiety.

Theme 1b: Technology and AI-Mediated Writing Anxiety

Table 7- Technology and AI-Mediated

Study	Author & Year	Article Title	Thematic Focus
PS3	Kim (2026)	From AI Anxiety to Strategic Regulation: How University Students Transform Generative AI into a Strategic Learning Resource	AI anxiety, evaluative capacity, ethical awareness, and strategic regulation
PS4	Screti (2023)	Using Google Docs for Guided Academic Writing Assessments: Students' Perspectives	Digital guided assessment, anxiety, feedback, procrastination, and perceived surveillance
PS6	Ren et al. (2026)	Learning Styles, Engagement and Anxiety in AI-Mediated Writing: A Multimodal Feedback Study	AI feedback modalities, learning styles, engagement, anxiety, and performance

PS7	Delina & Del Rosario Rondilla (2026)	Struggling to Learn or Learning to Struggle? Student Identity, Anxiety, and Academic Integrity in AI-Assisted Writing	AI anxiety, identity, authorship, ethical reasoning, and academic integrity
PS9	Abu-Gweder & Solomovich (2026)	Crossing the Threshold into Academia: Technological Learning and Academic Writing Experiences Among Bedouin Students in a Pre-Academic Program	Technology-mediated learning, anxiety, self-efficacy, identity, and engagement
PS16	Du & Nordin (2026)	The Impact of the iWrite Automated Writing Evaluation System on University EFL Students' Writing Performance and Writing Anxiety	Automated writing evaluation, feedback, confidence, anxiety, and writing performance

Theme 1b (refer to Table 7) captures the emerging intersection between writing anxiety and digital technologies, including generative AI, automated writing evaluation, Google Docs, multimodal AI feedback, and mobile learning. These studies indicate that technology can both alleviate and generate anxiety depending on feedback design, learner characteristics, ethical concerns, surveillance perceptions, and pedagogical implementation.

A notable pattern is that technological support does not have a uniformly positive or negative relationship with anxiety. Kim (2026) shows that AI anxiety can stimulate verification and revision behaviors, while effective AI engagement requires evaluative judgment, ethical awareness, and responsibility for authorship. Delina and Del Rosario Rondilla (2026) likewise identify anxiety, self-doubt, social judgment, and uncertainty about AI detection as mechanisms influencing students' ethical reasoning and authorship practices. Conversely, Du and Nordin (2026) report that automated, immediate, and non-judgmental feedback contributed to lower writing anxiety and greater confidence compared with traditional teacher feedback.

Theme 2: Factors In Writing Anxiety

This section presents analysis of data to answer research question 2: What personal, psychological, behavioural, and contextual factors are associated with writing anxiety among learners in academic and second-language writing contexts?

Table 8- Determinants for Writing Anxiety

Study	Author & Year	Article Title	Thematic Focus
PS5	Kutluca Canbulat & Koparan (2026)	Academics' Subjective Well-Being: The Role of Academic Writing Anxiety, Academic Writing Block and Cognitive Appraisal of Writing Feedback	Writing anxiety, writer's block, feedback appraisal, and subjective well-being
PS8	Damra et al. (2026)	Exploring the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Writer's Block, and Academic Writing Performance Among Higher Education EFL Students in Jordan	Self-efficacy, writer's block, self-regulation, and writing performance
PS11	Ozfidan et al. (2026)	The Role of Motivation and Anxiety in Writing Strategy Use: Focus on Saudi EFL Learners	Motivation, anxiety, and writing-strategy use

PS14	Gou et al. (2026)	Chain Mediating Role of English Writing Anxiety and English Writing Self-Efficacy Between Teacher Support, Peer Support, and English Writing Engagement Among Middle School Students in China	Teacher/peer support, anxiety, self-efficacy, and engagement
PS17	Zhang & Zhang (2022)	The Impact of Academic Procrastination on Second Language Writing: The Mediating Role of L2 Writing Anxiety	Procrastination, writing anxiety, and writing performance
PS20	Li (2022)	Research on Correlation Between English Writing Self-Efficacy and Psychological Anxiety of College Students	Self-efficacy, motivation, and psychological anxiety
PS21	Majeed et al. (2022)	The Impact of Writing Anxiety, Writing Achievement Motivation, Writing Self-Efficacy and Reading Habits on Pakistani Undergraduate English Major Students' Writing Performance	Anxiety, motivation, self-efficacy, reading habits, and performance

Theme 2 (refer to Table 8) captures studies investigating writing anxiety in relation to self-efficacy, motivation, writer's block, procrastination, feedback appraisal, social support, engagement, reading habits, and writing performance. These studies conceptualize anxiety not as an isolated problem but as part of a broader psychological and self-regulatory system influencing writing behaviour and outcomes.

The evidence in this theme particularly emphasizes self-efficacy as a protective psychological factor. Damra et al. (2026) report a strong positive relationship between writing self-efficacy and performance, while Li (2022) identifies a significant negative relationship between self-efficacy and psychological writing anxiety. Other findings demonstrate that motivation and writing strategies are interconnected with anxiety, while procrastination can negatively affect writing through the mediating influence of writing anxiety.

Theme 3: Strategies For Reduction

Sub-Theme: Pedagogical Approaches to Writing Anxiety

This section presents analysis of data to answer research question 3: What strategies and pedagogical approaches have been used to reduce writing anxiety among learners in academic and second-language writing contexts?

Table 9- Theme 3

Study	Author & Year	Article Title	Thematic Focus
PS1	Sun, Yang, & Jiang (2025)	Effect of an EAP Course on Students' Writing Performance, Anxiety and Self-Efficacy: A Latent Profile Analysis	EAP intervention, writing performance, anxiety, self-efficacy, and learner profiles
PS10	Abdi Tabari & Farahanynia (2025)	Exploring the Interplay Between Task-Readiness Factors and Task Complexity in L2 Writing Performance and Anxiety	Task repetition, rehearsal, complexity, CALF performance, and writing anxiety

The third and final theme (refer to Table 9) encompasses research in which writing anxiety is investigated in relation to instructional interventions and writing-task design. Although it is the smallest theme, these studies are particularly important because they move beyond identifying predictors of anxiety toward examining approaches that may directly reduce it and improve writing performance.

Sun et al. (2025) demonstrate that a 12-week subject-specific EAP course significantly improved academic writing performance and reduced writing anxiety, although self-efficacy did not significantly improve. Abdi Tabari and Farahanynia (2025), meanwhile, demonstrate that task readiness and task complexity influence both writing performance and anxiety. Task repetition improved accuracy and lexical and syntactic complexity, whereas rehearsal promoted fluency; students also experienced lower anxiety under simpler and subsequent task-performance conditions.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is elaborated in terms of (a) summary of findings, and (b) implications for Future Research

Summary of Findings

This systematic literature review synthesized 21 studies on writing anxiety in academic and second-language

contexts and identified three interconnected themes: sources of writing anxiety, factors associated with writing anxiety, and strategies for its reduction. The findings demonstrate that writing anxiety is multidimensional and context-dependent, arising from linguistic difficulties, limited vocabulary, fear of negative evaluation, inadequate writing practice, time pressure, low confidence, and perfectionism. Khatami et al. (2025), Sabti et al. (2024), Quvanch and Na (2022), and Rasool et al. (2023) particularly highlight linguistic and evaluative concerns as recurring triggers. Technology has introduced additional complexities: AI-assisted writing, automated evaluation, and digital feedback may generate anxiety related to surveillance, authorship, identity, and academic integrity, yet appropriately designed automated feedback may simultaneously reduce anxiety and strengthen confidence. Moreover, self-efficacy emerged as an important protective factor, while motivation, writer's block, procrastination, social support, engagement, and writing performance were closely associated with anxiety.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The findings have important implications for educators and institutions, suggesting that writing anxiety should be addressed through both psychological support and pedagogical design rather than treated solely as an individual learner problem. Instructors should create supportive writing environments through scaffolding, constructive feedback, task preparation, manageable task complexity, repeated practice, and confidence-building activities. Evidence from Sun et al. (2025) indicates that EAP instruction can improve writing performance and reduce anxiety, while Abdi Tabari and Farahanynia (2025) demonstrate the potential benefits of task repetition, rehearsal, and appropriate task complexity. Future research should expand intervention-based and longitudinal investigations, particularly because pedagogical approaches constitute the smallest theme in the reviewed literature. Further studies should also examine how generative AI influences writing anxiety over time and across diverse cultural, disciplinary, proficiency, and educational contexts, while investigating how AI-supported pedagogies can reduce anxiety without compromising learner autonomy, authorship, and academic integrity.

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