

Writing anxiety among ESL learners in the Philippines: A scoping review

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Abstract

Writing anxiety is a persistent affective barrier that undermines the writing performance and academic achievement of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. While numerous studies have examined this phenomenon in the Philippine context, findings remain dispersed across educational levels and research settings. This scoping review sought to consolidate the existing literature on writing anxiety among Filipino ESL learners published between 2013 and 2025 by identifying the educational levels most frequently studied, the dominant dimensions of writing anxiety, methodological patterns, contributing and mitigating factors, and research gaps. Guided by the [Arksey and O'Malley \(2005\)](#) framework and reported in line with PRISMA-ScR guidelines, the review systematically searched Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, Philippine E-Journals, and other open-access databases. Of the 67 records identified, 10 empirical studies met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed. Results showed that research has concentrated on senior high school students (50%), followed by tertiary (30%) and junior high school learners (20%). Cognitive anxiety—marked by fear of failure, negative evaluation, and concern over writing performance—emerged as the most prevalent dimension, while somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviors appeared less frequently. Most studies employed quantitative descriptive-correlational designs and utilized Cheng's Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) as the primary instrument. The review further highlighted linguistic challenges, fear of evaluation, classroom pressure, and socioeconomic status as major contributors to writing anxiety, whereas explicit writing instruction, supportive teacher communication, writing self-efficacy, and collaborative learning strategies were found to reduce anxiety. Despite the expanding body of literature, notable gaps persist, particularly the limited focus on junior high school learners, the scarcity of longitudinal and intervention-based studies, and the reliance on cross-sectional quantitative methods. These findings provide a comprehensive synthesis of current evidence and offer valuable implications for ESL pedagogy, curriculum development, language policy, and future research aimed at fostering supportive learning environments that alleviate writing anxiety and strengthen learners' writing competence.

Keywords: ESL learners; PRISMA-ScR; scoping review; Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI); writing anxiety



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INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental component of academic success and an essential means of communication in educational, professional, and social settings (Vacalares et al., 2023). Among the five fundamental language skills—listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating—writing is considered one of the most complex because it is a productive skill that requires learners to transform their linguistic knowledge into coherent written communication (Zhang, 2023). Unlike receptive language skills, writing demands the simultaneous use of vocabulary, grammar, organization, discourse competence, and critical thinking. It also requires learners to plan, draft, revise, and monitor their ideas while maintaining accuracy and coherence. These multiple cognitive demands make writing particularly challenging for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, who must generate ideas while managing the linguistic requirements of a language they are still developing (Biri, 2022; Guvendir & Uzun, 2023).

Because writing is cognitively demanding, many ESL learners struggle to develop confidence in their writing abilities. Limited language proficiency, insufficient writing strategies, and ineffective instructional approaches often make it difficult for learners to produce quality written work (Zhang, 2023). Repeated difficulties and low writing performance may reduce learners' writing self-efficacy, create negative attitudes toward writing tasks, and discourage active participation in writing activities. Consequently, many learners begin to associate writing with fear, uncertainty, and frustration rather than with learning and self-expression.

Among the psychological barriers that influence second language writing, writing anxiety has emerged as one of the most widely studied affective factors. Writing anxiety refers to the feelings of fear, tension, worry, and apprehension that learners experience when engaged in writing tasks, often preventing them from demonstrating their actual writing ability (Biri, 2022). According to Cheng (2004), writing anxiety is a multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behavior. Cognitive anxiety involves excessive concern about making mistakes and receiving negative evaluation; somatic anxiety refers to physical symptoms such as nervousness and tension; while avoidance behavior is reflected in learners' tendency to postpone or avoid writing tasks altogether. Research consistently shows that writing anxiety affects learners cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally, leading to lower writing performance, reduced confidence, and decreased motivation (Tsiriotakis et al., 2017; Putra et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2024; Yu & Zhou, 2022).

The significance of writing anxiety extends beyond classroom performance because foreign language writing plays an important role in academic achievement, workplace communication, and many high-stakes examinations (Tang, 2024). Studies have identified several factors contributing to writing anxiety, including fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, limited language competence, cultural influences, procrastination, and learners' beliefs about writing. These factors interfere with learners' cognitive processes, inhibit idea generation, reduce motivation, and ultimately affect writing performance. However, previous research also suggests that moderate levels of writing anxiety may sometimes motivate learners to exert greater effort and complete writing tasks more efficiently. These contrasting findings demonstrate that writing anxiety is a complex phenomenon whose effects depend on learners' individual characteristics and learning contexts (Tang, 2024).

Recent studies further explain that writing anxiety influences not only learners' emotions but also the cognitive processes necessary for successful writing. Li (2022) reported that heightened writing anxiety weakens learners' self-regulation, lowers writing self-efficacy, and decreases their willingness to engage in challenging writing tasks. Instead

of concentrating on generating and organizing ideas, anxious learners become preoccupied with avoiding grammatical errors and negative evaluation, resulting in weaker fluency, coherence, and overall writing quality. Similarly, learners who possess stronger future academic goals and experience greater enjoyment in writing generally report lower levels of writing anxiety and achieve better writing outcomes, emphasizing the close relationship among cognitive, emotional, and motivational factors in second language writing development (Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021).

The issue of writing anxiety is particularly relevant in the Philippine context, where English serves as one of the official languages and is widely used as the medium of instruction across different educational levels (Bernardo & Madrunio, 2015). From junior high school through higher education, Filipino ESL learners are expected to produce essays, reports, reaction papers, and research papers despite varying levels of English proficiency. These increasing academic expectations often expose learners to greater writing pressure, making them more vulnerable to writing anxiety. Recent international research likewise emphasizes that reducing writing anxiety requires not only improving learners' linguistic competence but also strengthening their writing self-efficacy, metacognitive regulation, and supportive classroom environments to lessen cognitive overload during writing tasks (Li, 2022; Sun et al., 2024; Yu & Zhou, 2022).

Despite the importance of this issue, current research findings on writing anxiety among Filipino ESL learners remain highly fragmented. There is an urgent need to synthesize the available evidence to understand the full scope of the problem. This study uses a scoping review to map different educational levels, identify commonly reported dimensions of anxiety, examine methodological patterns, and pinpoint existing research gaps. By integrating these scattered findings into a single, comprehensive overview, this study will directly strengthen ESL writing pedagogy, support evidence-based language instruction, and guide future research in the Philippines.

To address this gap, the present study undertakes a scoping review of empirical research on writing anxiety among ESL learners in the Philippines published between 2013 and 2025.

Specifically, the review aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Which educational levels (secondary, senior high school, tertiary) are most frequently studied?
2. What dimensions of writing anxiety (cognitive, somatic, avoidance) are reported?
3. What research designs, instruments, and theoretical frameworks are commonly used?
4. What factors contribute to or help reduce writing anxiety among Filipino ESL learners?
5. What gaps and future research directions are evident in the literature?

This study is significant as it consolidates scattered studies on writing anxiety among Filipino ESL learners into a unified and accessible framework. By mapping recurring themes, gaps, and critical concerns, it enriches understanding of learners' challenges while offering practical insights for educators, policymakers, and scholars. In doing so, it supports the creation of more adaptive teaching strategies and evidence-based language policies that empower learners to overcome writing anxiety and succeed academically.

METHOD

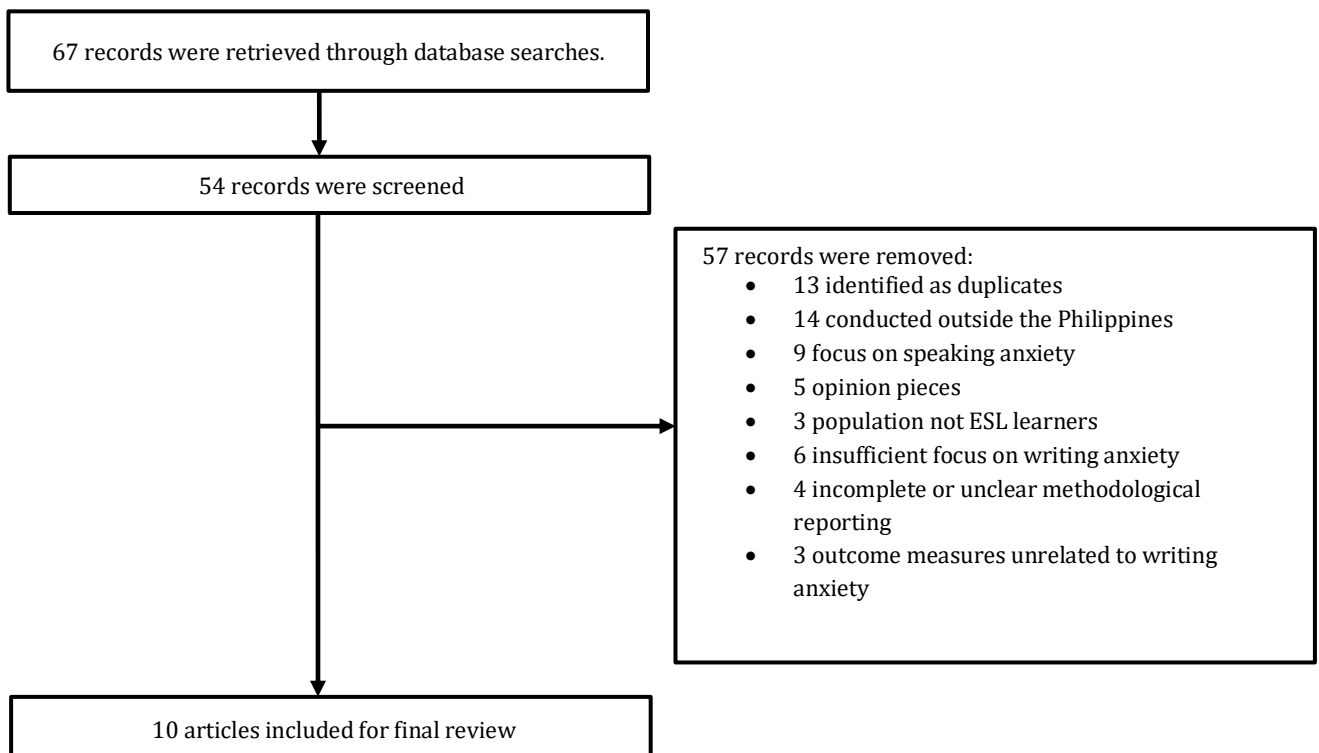
Research design

The study followed the [Arksey and O'Malley \(2005\)](#) framework and the PRISMA-ScR guidelines, which offer a structured but adaptable way to bring together research in areas that are new or fragmented. Using this approach made it possible to identify trends, common methods, and gaps in the literature on writing anxiety in the Philippine ESL context. This framework was used to collect and summarize existing research about writing problem among Filipino students learning English as a second language. A scoping review was chosen because the existing studies vary widely in terms of participants, methods, tools, and school settings. Unlike systematic reviews, scoping reviews are more flexible. They include different types of studies and aim to show the overall scope and nature of the research rather than judge how effective certain teaching methods are.

Furthermore, the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews) guidelines give researchers a clear set of rules for writing scoping reviews. They make sure these studies are reported in a consistent and transparent way, while keeping the methods reliable. Because scoping reviews are meant to explore a topic broadly, PRISMA-ScR highlights the importance by clearly stating the study's goals, what sources were included or excluded, where information was gathered, how searches were done, how studies were screened, and how data was organized.

Figure 1

PRISMA Diagram on the Screening for Included Studies



The PRISMA flow diagram shows the step-by-step process used to find, screen, and select the studies included in this scoping review. At first, 67 records were collected from databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, Philippine E-Journals, and other open-access sources. During the first screening, 13 duplicate records were removed. The remaining studies were checked by looking at their titles and abstracts to see if they were relevant to writing anxiety among ESL learners in the Philippines. At this stage, 57 records were excluded because they were done outside the Philippines, focused on speaking or general language anxiety instead of writing anxiety, involved non-ESL groups, were opinion-based, or did not clearly explain their methods.

After this process, 10 full-text articles met all the criteria and were included for detailed review. These studies were then analyzed and combined to answer the research questions about educational levels, types of writing anxiety, research designs, and contributing factors. The review followed five key stages: (1) identifying the research questions, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) study selection, (4) charting the data, and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results.

Identifying the research questions

These reflect the key domains and concepts that will be examined throughout this scoping review. 1) Which educational levels (secondary, senior high school, tertiary) are most frequently studied? 2) What dimensions of writing anxiety (cognitive, somatic, avoidance) are reported? 3) What research designs, instruments, and theoretical frameworks are commonly used? 4) What factors contribute to or help reduce writing anxiety among Filipino ESL learners? 5. What gaps and future research directions are evident in the literature?

Identifying relevant studies

A systematic search was conducted to gather relevant studies on writing anxiety among ESL learners in the Philippines. Databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, Philippine E-Journals, and selected open-access journals were used, focusing on publications from January 2013 to December 2025. Search terms included “*writing anxiety AND (ESL OR ‘English as a Second Language’) AND Philippines*”.

This scoping review was carried out under well-defined parameters to ensure both relevance and consistency. It focused on studies published between 2013 and 2025, written in English, and situated within the Philippine context. The review encompassed peer-reviewed journal articles, academic theses, and scholarly conference papers that utilized quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches. All included works fell within the field of English and examined Filipino ESL learners across junior high school, senior high school, and tertiary (college or university) levels. In terms of scope, the review specifically addressed research on writing anxiety, writing apprehension, and other affective factors directly linked to ESL writing.

Study selection and exclusion

After identifying relevant studies, the selection process continued by applying a systematic, step-by-step screening guided by explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they were published between 2013 and 2025, examined writing anxiety in ESL contexts, and were conducted in the Philippines or involved Filipino ESL learners. Eligible works were empirical in nature, using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods designs, and were published as peer-reviewed journal articles, academic theses, or scholarly conference papers.

Studies were excluded if they were published before 2013, focused on general language anxiety without specific attention to writing, or were conducted outside the Philippine context. Non-scholarly outputs such as opinion articles or editorials were also removed. In addition, articles without accessible full texts were excluded to ensure adequate analysis and reliability of the reviewed literature. This systematic screening process ensured comprehensive, transparent, and reliable coverage of the existing literature while maintaining consistency with the study's scope and objectives.

Charting the data

Table 1
Summary of Included Studies

Author (Year)	Level	Design	Instruments	Key Findings	Recommendation
Abdon (2018)	Tertiary	Quantitative	SLWAI (Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory)	Cognitive anxiety most dominant	No time pressure writing; repeated feedback cycles; organized brainstorming activities; reduce grade focus; drafting cycles
Banagbanag & Libarra (2019)	Junior High	Quantitative	Modified FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale)	Time pressure and evaluation increase anxiety	Scaffolded writing activities
Kabigting, et al. (2020)	Grade 10	Descriptive-Correlational	Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) and a written test	82% of learners had high writing anxiety, with cognitive being the leading type. A low, negative correlation was found between writing anxiety and writing performance, indicating that higher anxiety results in lower achievement.	As the study has limited participants, use results of the current to study more and different factors that may affect ESL learners writing ability such as the causes, teaching strategies and motivation in writing.
Cruz (2021)	Grade 11	Descriptive-Correlational	Standardized questionnaire on physical/psychological symptoms of anxiety	Most respondents experienced a moderate level of anxiety, with "fear of failure" and "lack of focus" as top symptoms. No correlation was established between writing grades and anxiety levels.	Future researchers might wish to conduct a similar study focusing on a different type of respondents using the findings of this study as reference

Canada Jr. & Miralles (2022)	1st Year College (GE 2)	Quantitative Descriptive-Predictive	Adopted standard questionnaires on teachers' writing instruction, students' strategies, and writing anxiety	Explicit teacher instruction and the active use of student writing strategies significantly predict a reduction in English writing anxiety.	Employ effective writing instruction (such as teaching factual, formal, and informal texts) and strategies (like resourcing) to alleviate anxiety and improve writing outcomes.
Lumakang & Miralles (2023)	College (Research 1 & 2)	Quantitative Descriptive-Predictive	Adapted standard questionnaires on L2 writing anxiety, teacher's communication behavior (TCB), and research self-efficacy (RSE)	Students showed moderate writing anxiety, high RSE, and rated TCB as high. Specific dimensions of writing anxiety (cognitive, somatic) and TCB (challenging, encouragement) significantly predict research self-efficacy.	Students should look for active, practical ways to enhance their confidence when performing tasks related to research papers.
Amarillo & Bagamano (2024)	Grade 11	Qualitative (analyzed with descriptive statistics)	SLWAI (Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory) and Writing rubric	Participants experienced moderate writing anxiety across avoidance, somatic, and cognitive types. Anxiety did not vary by sex, but students from poor and low-income classes experienced greater anxiety than middle-class peers.	Social class should be acknowledged as a determinant of language anxiety among learners.
Combong (2025)	Senior High School (SHS)	Descriptive-Correlational	Validated questionnaires on writing apprehension, learning styles, and academic performance	Students showed a modest degree of writing anxiety but remarkable academic performance. Writing apprehension had a weak <i>positive</i>	Teachers should use peer reviews, guided writing projects, mentoring programs, and cooperative learning to properly challenge writing apprehension.

					correlation with performance, serving as a challenge that drives effort rather than a barrier.
Tello (2025)	Grade 12 (HUMSS)	Mixed-Methods (Descriptive-Correlational)	Analytical structured questionnaires, and open-ended questions	rubric, and	Learners showed high proficiency in structure and organization, but noted a lack of self-motivation, confidence, and classroom pressure as challenges. Writing skills significantly correlated with attitudes and problems encountered. Implement targeted, interactive teaching interventions addressing motivational and confidence-related barriers, and provide individualized student feedback.
Ochoa (2025)	Senior High School (SHS)	Correlational	Adapted questionnaires for Writing Anxiety, Writing Efficacy, and English Writing Skills (EWS)	SHS students have a moderate level of Writing Anxiety, Writing Efficacy, and EWS	Implement targeted intervention programs that enhance writing efficacy, including structured feedback formulation, goal-setting strategies, and confidence-building exercises.

Table 1 gives an organized summary of the 10 studies included in this review. It shows the education level of the learners, the research methods used, the tools applied, the main results, and the recommendations from each study. Most of the studies used descriptive-correlational and quantitative predictive designs alongside standard diagnostic tools like the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) and relied on standard measures of anxiety. The table also points out that Filipino learners generally experience a moderate level of writing anxiety, with cognitive anxiety and a "fear of failure" acting as its primary drivers.

Table 2
Distribution of Studies by Educational Level

Educational Level	Number of Studies	Percentage
Junior High	2	20%
Senior High	5	50%
Tertiary	3	30%
Total	10	100%

Table 2 shows how the studies are divided by school level. The data indicate that 50% focus on senior high school and another 30% on college students, while only 20% look at junior high school learners. This uneven distribution highlights the lack of research on early secondary students and confirms the gap in understanding writing anxiety at that stage.

Table 3

Dominant Dimensions of Writing Anxiety Reported

Dimension	Frequency of Appearance	Typical Manifestations
Cognitive	Most common	Intense mental stress, a pervasive fear of failure, preoccupation with poor performance grades, or a heightened worry regarding negative evaluation from teachers and peers.
Somatic	Moderate	Physiological distress, lack of focus, and general psychological symptoms of nervousness or physical tension when facing a writing task.
Avoidance	Moderate	Deliberate avoidance of writing tasks, procrastination, a distinct lack of self-motivation or confidence, and finding assignments like essay writing highly unenjoyable.

Table 3 outlines the main types of writing anxiety found in the studies. The most common is cognitive anxiety, especially the fear of being judged negatively and worries about grammar. Physical (somatic) symptoms and avoidance behaviors also appear, but less often. Overall, the findings show that pressure from evaluation and concerns about language accuracy are the key features of writing anxiety among Filipino ESL learners.

Table 4

Methodological Trends in Included Studies

Category	Most Common Pattern
Research Design	Quantitative Descriptive-Correlational
Sampling Technique	Purposive and stratified random sampling
Instrument	Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI)
Data Analysis Approach	Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentages) paired with inferential statistics (Pearson <i>r</i> correlation and regression analysis) to interpret relationships and predict variances.

Table 4 shows the research methods used in the studies. Most of them rely on quantitative characterized by a heavy reliance on a descriptive-correlational approach aimed at measuring and cross-referencing student anxiety indices with performance outcomes. Half of the reviewed literature directly deploys Cheng's Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) alongside standard demographic and academic diagnostic surveys. One-time designs and use self-report tools like standardized anxiety scales. Very few studies follow learners over time or test teaching interventions, and many lack strong theoretical grounding. These patterns suggest that future research should use more varied and theory-based approaches.

Collating, summarizing, and reporting the results

The final stage involves consolidating and summarizing the key findings from the included studies in relation to the research questions. An analytical and thematic method is used to synthesize and present the results, which are then discussed along with their implications in the next section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part brings together the findings from the examined studies on writing anxiety among ESL learners in the Philippines. The discussion is structured according to the central research questions of the scoping review and incorporates evidence drawn from investigations at the secondary, senior high school, and tertiary levels.

The Educational levels (secondary, senior high school, tertiary) most frequently studied

The distribution of research shows a strong focus on the higher levels of the Philippine school system, mainly on students facing key academic changes. Half of the studies (50%) examine Senior High School learners in Grades 11 and 12, as shown in the works of [Amarillo and Bagamano \(2024\)](#), [Cruz et al \(2021\)](#), [Ochoa \(2025\)](#), [Tello \(2025\)](#), and [Combong \(2025\)](#). This stage is a main focus because secondary students suddenly face harder writing tasks to prepare for college or future careers. The college level is the next most studied group at 30%, with researchers like [Abdon \(2018\)](#), [Canada Jr. and Miralles \(2022\)](#), and [Lumakang and Miralles \(2023\)](#) looking at freshmen and undergraduates in general or research courses. In contrast, early secondary education is less studied, making up only 20% of the works. This small share includes the Grade 10 study by [Kabigting et al. \(2020\)](#) and the Grade 7 study by [Banagbanag and Libarra \(2019\)](#), showing a clear gap in tracking how writing anxiety begins in junior high school.

Dimensions of writing anxiety (cognitive, somatic, avoidance) reported

When evaluating the psychological structure of writing apprehension, the studies often use known multi-dimensional models to explain student struggles. Cognitive anxiety is the most common and strongest type, appearing in five of the reviewed works. As shown by [Kabigting et al. \(2020\)](#), [Abdon \(2018\)](#), and [Lumakang and Miralles \(2023\)](#), it mainly shows up as heavy mental stress, worry about low grades, and strong concern over poor judgment. [Cruz et al \(2021\)](#) adds that it is marked by a deep “fear of failure” and serious “lack of focus,” while [Amarillo and Bagamano \(2024\)](#) note that it causes equal strain for both male and female students. Somatic anxiety and avoidance behavior are secondary but still important forms. Somatic anxiety—described by [Amarillo and Bagamano \(2024\)](#), [Kabigting et al. \(2020\)](#), and [Abdon \(2018\)](#)—is a body reaction that makes students feel nervous tension and sudden mental blocks when asked to write. [Cruz et al \(2021\)](#) explains that these body signs often break the flow of writing. Avoidance behavior, on the other hand, is a coping style marked by delay and dislike of tasks. [Kabigting et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Abdon \(2018\)](#) show students avoiding writing tasks, while [Tello \(2025\)](#) sees it as weak drive, low confidence, and little interest in usual tasks like essay writing.

Research designs, instruments, and theoretical frameworks commonly used

The research methods across the selected studies demonstrate a strong preference for quantitative descriptive-correlational designs that examine relationships between writing anxiety and academic performance. Most studies utilized standardized self-report instruments, particularly [Cheng's \(2004\)](#) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), to measure cognitive, somatic, and avoidance anxiety.

Recent international studies have expanded this methodological trend by incorporating additional constructs such as writing self-efficacy, metacognitive strategy use, and corrective feedback. [An and Li \(2024\)](#) employed structural modeling to examine the interaction between task-specific writing anxiety and self-efficacy under different feedback conditions, while [Zhang et al. \(2023\)](#) utilized a two-wave longitudinal design to investigate how metacognitive strategy use influences changes in writing anxiety over time. These methodological developments suggest a gradual shift from purely descriptive studies toward more explanatory and longitudinal investigations capable of identifying causal relationships among instructional variables, learner beliefs, and writing performance.

Factors contributing to or helping reduce writing anxiety among Filipino ESL learners

The factors that increase or reduce ESL writing fear are layered, covering social, personal, and teaching aspects. For worsening factors, [Amarillo and Bagamano \(2024\)](#) show that social class is a key cause of stress, since male and female students from poor and low-income groups feel much higher writing anxiety than middle-class peers due to fewer resources and privileges. On the teaching side, [Tello \(2025\)](#) points to strict teaching styles, heavy classroom pressure, lack of materials, and an unfriendly atmosphere as direct causes of student worry. [Banagbanag and Libarra \(2019\)](#) also prove that classroom issues, teacher actions, age, and sex are linked with stronger test and communication anxiety.

On the other hand, the studies highlight strong supports that ease language fear. [Ochoa \(2025\)](#) shows that while writing anxiety does not directly block writing skill, a student's inner writing confidence is a key factor for high skill. Teaching methods also matter; [Canada Jr. and Miralles \(2022\)](#) prove that clear teacher lessons on text types and active use of writing strategies lower anxiety. [Lumakang and Miralles \(2023\)](#) add that positive teacher talk—like praise and helpful challenges—predicts stronger research confidence. Lastly, [Combong \(2025\)](#) likewise suggested that moderate levels of anxiety may motivate students when accompanied by peer review, guided writing activities, mentoring, and collaborative learning.

Recent international research provides additional evidence supporting these findings. [An and Li \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that writing self-efficacy and writing anxiety are closely interconnected, with learners possessing higher self-efficacy responding more positively to written corrective feedback. Their study further revealed that corrective feedback becomes more effective when combined with pre-task planning and guided writing activities, enabling students to manage anxiety while improving the quality of their written output. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating structured feedback into ESL writing instruction rather than relying solely on error correction.

Similarly, [Zhang et al. \(2023\)](#) found that metacognitive writing strategies—including planning, monitoring, evaluating, and self-regulating the writing process—significantly reduce writing anxiety while strengthening learners' writing self-efficacy. Students who consciously monitored their writing progress and reflected on their writing strategies demonstrated greater confidence and experienced lower levels of cognitive anxiety. This suggests that writing instruction should explicitly teach metacognitive strategies alongside language skills to help learners manage the cognitive demands of writing tasks.

The relationship between writing anxiety and instructional support is likewise supported by recent studies examining cognitive processing during writing. Learners' anxiety compete for learners' limited working memory resources, reducing their capacity to generate ideas, organize information, and revise their texts effectively ([Guvendir & Uzun, 2023](#)). Instructional approaches that provide scaffolding, guided planning, and staged writing activities help reduce cognitive overload, allowing learners to allocate more cognitive resources to composing meaningful texts rather than coping with anxiety.

Furthermore, research on pre-service EFL teachers revealed that supportive classroom environments, constructive teacher feedback, collaborative learning, and continuous writing practice significantly reduce writing anxiety while improving learners' confidence (Rasool et al, 2023). The study emphasized that instructional interventions should extend beyond grammar instruction by fostering positive emotional experiences during writing, encouraging risk-taking, and providing opportunities for reflection and revision. Such learner-centered approaches are particularly relevant for Filipino ESL learners, where writing anxiety often stems from fear of negative evaluation and limited confidence in academic writing.

Gaps and future research directions evident in the literature

A full review of the 10 studies shows clear limits in themes, groups, and methods that future works should aim to go beyond. In terms of groups, there is a clear lack of research on early junior high learners, with most studies focusing on Senior High School and college levels, leaving a gap in knowing how writing fear first develops in lower grades. In terms of methods, most studies use cross-sectional, quantitative self-report surveys, which give useful snapshots but cannot show how writing anxiety changes over time or across different writing types. Another gap is the lack of active intervention-based studies. While many scholars give strong teaching suggestions—such as Abdon (2018) calling for stress-free settings, Ochoa (2025) suggesting feedback and confidence-building, Tello (2025) urging interactive activities, and Combong (2025) promoting mentoring—almost none of the reviewed works actually test or apply a writing program. Future studies should therefore move toward long-term tracking, qualitative ethnographic designs, and experimental action-research to measure the real success of these classroom solutions.

CONCLUSION

This scoping review of studies on writing anxiety among Filipino ESL learners brings together key ideas about the cognitive, emotional, social, and instructional factors that shape second-language writing. The review of ten studies shows that writing anxiety is a common, multi-dimensional challenge experienced by Filipino learners across secondary and tertiary education. Cognitive anxiety—characterized by fear of failure, concern about negative evaluation, and excessive worry over writing performance—emerged as the most prevalent dimension, while somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviors also contribute to learners' writing difficulties. These findings affirm that writing anxiety is not simply an emotional reaction but a complex phenomenon that directly influences learners' writing confidence, engagement, and academic achievement.

In terms of educational levels, most Philippine studies have focused on Senior High School and tertiary students, while research involving Junior High School learners remains limited. This imbalance restricts a comprehensive understanding of how writing anxiety develops throughout learners' educational experiences. The review also highlights socioeconomic disparities, demonstrating that learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds tend to experience higher levels of writing anxiety because of limited educational resources and fewer opportunities to practice academic writing. Methodologically, existing Philippine studies rely heavily on cross-sectional quantitative approaches and standardized self-report instruments such as Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI). Although these studies effectively describe the prevalence and dimensions of writing anxiety, they provide limited evidence regarding how anxiety changes over time or how instructional interventions influence learners' long-

term writing development.

Recent international research further emphasizes the need to move beyond descriptive investigations toward longitudinal and intervention-based studies. Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrated that learners' metacognitive strategy use and writing self-efficacy develop gradually over time and significantly influence changes in writing anxiety, suggesting that longitudinal research is necessary to understand how instructional experiences shape learners' writing confidence and performance across different stages of learning. Such evidence supports the need for future Philippine studies that monitor learners over extended periods rather than relying solely on one-time survey data.

Similarly, Guo et al. (2025), in their systematic review of L2 writing anxiety and writing performance, concluded that evidence-based instructional interventions—including explicit strategy instruction, structured corrective feedback, collaborative writing, self-regulated learning activities, and confidence-building classroom practices—consistently reduce writing anxiety while improving writing achievement. Their findings reinforce the importance of designing intervention studies that evaluate the effectiveness of specific classroom strategies in authentic Philippine ESL contexts rather than merely documenting the existence of writing anxiety.

Despite these contributions, this review has several limitations. The analysis was limited to selected academic databases and a defined publication period, which may have excluded relevant unpublished studies and other scholarly works. As a scoping review, the study mapped existing evidence but did not evaluate the methodological quality or effectiveness of the included interventions. Therefore, future research should prioritize longitudinal, mixed-methods, and experimental designs that examine how writing anxiety evolves over time and how evidence-based instructional interventions influence learners' writing development. Greater attention should also be given to metacognitive strategy instruction, writing self-efficacy, and structured feedback mechanisms, as these have been consistently identified in recent international research as effective approaches for reducing writing anxiety and improving academic writing performance (Zhang et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2025).

In conclusion, addressing writing anxiety extends beyond reducing fear; it requires creating supportive, learner-centered environments that promote confidence, resilience, and effective writing practices. Through sustained instructional support, evidence-based pedagogical interventions, and continued research, Filipino ESL learners can be empowered not only to become competent academic writers but also to express their ideas with confidence, clarity, and independence.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Writing (original draft preparation and completing the manuscript), editing and proofreading, methodology.

Author 2: Conceptualization, data curation, investigation, supervision

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