# Students' Writing Self-Efficacy, Writers' Block, and Academic Writing Performance: An Empirical Study in Eastern Indonesian Students

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| Article Info | Abstract |
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| | This study was conducted to explore the students' perception related to the variables of writing self-efficacy, writers' block, and perceived academic writing performance. The researcher collected data from a University located in Papua Province. This research used an online questionnaire by employing simple random sampling. This study enrolled 280 students as respondents. The researchers used SPSS 23 to conduct a descriptive statistical analysis to determine the proportion of respondents based on the frequency of responses. The findings of this study revealed that the respondents of this study have low perceived levels of writing self-efficacy and academic writing performance. Additionally, students believe they face hurdles that contribute to the issue of writers' block. Further action needs to be taken regarding the findings to enhance the variables related to academic writing performance. The empirical findings from this study can be utilized as the foundation for future research to generate policy to solve issues relating to students' academic writing abilities.. |

**Abstrak**

| | Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi siswa terkait dengan variabel efikasi diri menulis, writers block, dan persepsi kinerja menulis akademik. Peneliti mengumpulkan data dari salah satu Universitas yang berada di Provinsi Papua. Penelitian ini menggunakan kuesioner online dengan menggunakan simple random sampling. Penelitian ini melibatkan 280 siswa sebagai responden. Peneliti menggunakan SPSS 23 untuk melakukan analisis statistik deskriptif untuk menentukan proporsi responden berdasarkan frekuensi tanggapan. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa responden penelitian ini, memiliki persepsi tingkat efikasi diri dan kinerja menulis akademik yang rendah. Selain itu, responden percaya bahwa mereka menghadapi rintangan yang berkontribusi pada masalah halangan menulis. Tindakan lebih lanjut perlu diambil mengenai temuan untuk meningkatkan variabel yang terkait dengan kinerja menulis akademik. Temuan empiris dari penelitian ini dapat digunakan sebagai landasan untuk penelitian masa depan untuk menghasilkan kebijakan untuk memecahkan masalah yang berkaitan dengan kemampuan menulis akademik mahasiswa. |

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## INTRODUCTION

Academic writing competence is essential for all students, but it is crucial for those pursuing a degree at the university level. Academic writing skills are inextricably linked to educational activities, shaping investigation(Bacha, 2002). Academic writing is also highly significant because it serves as a basis for academics to pursue successful future jobs in their respective fields (Cameron, Nairn, & Higgins, 2009). Academic writing abilities can also be used as a beginning point in the publication of works to express the writers' interests to the public (Chou, 2011). Students require assistance with academic writing, particularly to prepare them to write scientific publications. Academic writing ability is required for practically all student projects. It is crucial for students who wish to write a thesis because it is the most critical requirement for this skill. Students will face many obstacles to writing academic text due to their poor academic writing skills, negatively impacting their learning results. Additionally, if students have poor academic writing skills, it will delay the graduation process as it forms "the bottleneck" problem for the university.

Academic writing skills are tied to academic writing genres that it has distinct characteristics compared to the other written genre. Scientific writing, in particular, has a distinct target audience, goal, structure, and writing style that can convey information to readers to get new insight and new enlightenment in the field of science (Day, 2018). It is essential that scientific writing convince readers through logical structures, valid viewpoints, and coherence (Lin-Siegler, 2017). Communication effectively through high-quality scientific writing can be a significant source of knowledge for researchers and academic community members who have specialized discourse markers (Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2006). Academic writing abilities are essential for students to master, especially if they want to succeed in academia. The style of assignments frequently takes the shape of a scientific writing assignment. Additionally, academic writing abilities will assist students in completing their thesis writing within the specified time frame.

Recently, there has been a significant increase in the amount of research being conducted, notably in academic writing. According to various prior studies conducted throughout the world, college students require significant assistance in order to develop their academic writing skills(Ariyanti, 2016). While this is going on, there is also much interest in the topic of academic writing in Indonesia, including research into critical thinking skills in academic writing (Aunurrahman et al., 2020), the importance of technological literacy in academic writing (Supriyadi et al., 2020), and the difficulties that students face when it comes to academic writing (Furqan, Nur, & Athifah, 2021). Regarding the previous studies, there was limited research exploring students' academic writing competence by employing a self-assessment approach using a survey strategy, especially in Papua province. Papua province has the lowest Human Development Index compared to other Indonesian provinces. Thus this current research will be beneficial for faculty to take further action or policy.

Writing self-efficacy is the first variable contributing to students' academic writing competence. The variables of individual choices, goals, motivation and expected results all correlate with self-efficacy (Schunk & Pajares, 2010)In addition, those variables contribute considerably to academic accomplishment, particularly in writing (Bandura, 2001). A personal view of one's own competence to carry out specific tasks in the field is defined as self-efficacy in a conceptual sense (Bandura, 1999). Several prior researchers have demonstrated that writing self-efficacy is associated with good adaptive writing learning outcomes, such as usefulness, mastery, and pleasure in writing, among other things (Collie, Martin, & Curwood, 2016). Additional research reveals a substantial association between self-efficacy in writing and student performance in writing assignments, which is extremely important, especially for students' success in writing proposals or undergraduate thesis as the requirement for graduation (Zumbrunn et al., 2020). As a result, to improve students' writing competency, faculty members must focus on the cognitive aspect and the non-cognitive aspect, including self-efficacy.

The writing barrier or writer's block is a significant problem that needs to be addressed seriously during the academic writing process. It is common for researchers to experience writers' block that makes writing more challenging, especially for completing the writing assignments. This phenomenon happens during the writing process, and writers' block is the source of the researcher's that stimulates the inability to write (Adams-Tukiendorf, 2008). According to a previous study, the influence of attitudes, dispositions, and a lack of ability to create are the root causes of writers' block (Baştuğ, 2015). On the other hand, writer's block is influenced by a variety of factors, including fear, perfectionism, self-criticism, and external pressure (Salem, 2018). Several other studies have concluded that writer's block has no impact on one's ability to produce (Bastug et al., 2017; Lee, 2020). Students in Indonesia, in particular, are believed to have had writers' block, which has resulted in them being late in completing their thesis writing tasks.

The process of writing an undergraduate thesis becomes a more complex problem, especially for EFL students who not only have to master English but also have to master the academic writing genre(Phakiti & Li, 2011). Furthermore, academic writing is viewed as a burden due to a lack of information about research methodology and academic writing, difficulties in getting references and a lack of quality feedback on the research writing process, among other factors (Sidhu, Kaur, Lim, & Chan, 2016). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that poor mastery of academic writing abilities results in late completion of studies, ultimately leading to dropouts (Cotterall, 2011).Other research findings also indicate that students rarely develop academic writing abilities in the formal context (in-class learning), which is exacerbated by the lack of resources available to assist students with their writing (Tremblay-Wragg, Mathieu Chartier, Labonté-Lemoyne, Déri, & Gadbois, 2021). Students' ability to acquire academic writing abilities is essential, especially if they want to succeed in their academic careers. This novel research has a strategic position since it was investigated the variables related to students' academic writing skills. The research finding could be developed into teaching materials for assisting students in improving their academic writing competence.

Academic writing has a long and illustrious history in English language acquisition. Academic writing falls under the purview of English for Specific Purpose (ESP), which is intended to provide a more focused learning strategy when compared to English for General Academic Purpose (EGAP). EGAP was created as a response to the enormous number of professional immigrants and international students that arrived in English-speaking countries at the time (Basturkmen, 2020). Learners from various cross-disciplinary professions have different requirements, and ESP training continues evolving to meet those demands. Academic writing, particularly in the field of English for Research Publication Purpose (ERPP), has become a popular approach for writing theses and dissertations, as well as for increasing the professionalism of lecturers by writing research(YousafZai & Fareed, 2019). However, in the Indonesian context, there may be limited resources regarding implementing the ERPP course in the university. Based on the importance of ERPP, faculty members must consider developing the curriculum as the students urgently need this subject.

In the last decade, there has been a significant increase in interest in studying themes rooted in academic writing across the globe. According to previous research, academic writing skills are critical for higher education(Al Fadda, 2012). Furthermore, some recent studies have demonstrated that the ability to publish research publications is highly related to one's academic writing abilities (Yu & Jiang, 2020). Then, the previous researchers (Collins & Cook, 2017) pointed out the usefulness of workshops for improving academic writing abilities. Based on the previous research findings, academic writing competence is associated with academic achievement, especially in publishing qualified research articles; this competence can be developed effectively by conduction academic writing workshops.

Previous scholars in Indonesia have conducted studies on academic writing that have been published in peer-reviewed journals. Some of them are concerned with studying critical thinking skills through an academic writing method (Aunurrahman et al., 2020). In addition, another

research finding has revealed that the level of awareness of employing bibliography management is at a moderate level for academic writing activities(Setiani, Aditya, Wijayanto, & Wijaya, 2021). In addition, Supriyadi et al. (2020) stress the necessity of technical literacy to improve academic writing abilities and the overall quality of published work. Furthermore, it was found that the students encounter various obstacles, including their level of talent, motivation, technical difficulties, and lack of assistance from teachers in learning academic writing (Furqan et al., 2021). Based on the prior research related to the issue of academic writing, there is still limited study that focuses on conducting quantitative research in the form of a survey to study academic writing skills and their associated aspects through self-assessment to improve academic writing skills. Experimental data on academic writing skills are essential for investigation since it will serve as a reference for future research, particularly in developing learning tools to improve academic writing skills

## METHODS

This research was carried out using a quantitative approach. The quantitative data were collected through a survey strategy by employing an online questionnaire using a five Likert scale to grasp the empirical conditions in the field. The five Likert-scale questionnaires are beneficial for measuring students' competence, especially in a higher education setting(Delaney, Johnson, Johnson, & Treslan, 2010). The information was gathered from respondents who were students at Universitas Musamus in Papua. A simple random sample procedure was used to gather the students' population. The number of respondents who participated in this study was targeted to be 300.

In order to gather information, the researcher employed an online close-ended questionnaire by employing google form to gather students' responses information. The research instrument was derived from several previous studies and modified by the researcher. Specifically, the instruments utilized in this study included the dimensions of writers' block (Bastug et al., 2017), writing self-efficacy (Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim, & Zumbrunn, 2013) and perceived academic writing performance (Iwasaki et al., 2019). The questionnaire was adapted into a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was translated into Indonesian in order to make it easier for the respondents to complete the survey. In addition, face validity was employed by involving two experts of applied linguists to analyze the response items. A pilot study was also carried out on 50 respondents. Then, the researcher has analyzed the responses from the pilot study to measure the validity and reliability. The reliability test results show the Cronbach Alpha value of 0.845, the validity test results by obtaining r-value between 0.71-0.81 by 0.138 r-table. Thus, the questionnaire was categorized into valid and reliable. After the instrument had passed the validity and reliability tests, it was disseminated to respondents.

The author was using the descriptive statistical analysis, namely the frequency distribution, the quantitative analysis (Creswell and Clark, 2007) was carried out using the SPSS 23 program. The following stages were completed by researchers when conducting quantitative analysis, and they were as follows:

Data preparation: The study team incorporated data input from both online and offline sources into an excel spreadsheet. The data will be coded according to the dimensions/variables that have been defined. After that, the data will be re-checked/screened by the study team that has been involved. The researcher carried out initial data exploration, which looked for patterns and trends in the collected data. The author was analyzing descriptive data in the form of frequency, and the SPSS 23 program was utilized.

Data presentation: The results of the data analysis are then displayed in tabular form to make it easier for readers to understand the information being presented to them. Furthermore, data interpretation is carried out in accordance with trends and abnormalities in the data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Table 1. Perceptions of students' writing self-efficacy, writer's block, and perceived academic writing performance in the context of academic writing

| No. | Item | Respond % | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **A** | **Self-efficacy in writing** | | | | | |
| 1 | For me, putting ideas into writing may be really tough at times. | 8,9 | 20,4 | 31,8 | 23,6 | 15,4 |
| 2 | It's challenging to write a research proposal/thesis with proper language. | 6,4 | 10,4 | 31,1 | 27,9 | 24,3 |
| 3 | I have difficulty concentrating for an hour on drafting a proposal/thesis. | 8,9 | 10 | 31,8 | 25 | 24,3 |
| 4 | When I'm writing a proposal/thesis, the irritation I experience frequently disrupts my attention. | 5,4 | 9,6 | 25 | 28,6 | 31,4 |
| 5 | I have difficulty writing consistently when confronted with challenges while creating a proposal/thesis. | 4,3 | 7,1 | 26,1 | 34,6 | 27,9 |
| **B** | **The writer's block** | | | | | |
| 1 | I'm not receiving as much motivation from instructors to enhance my scientific writing abilities. | 14,3 | 18,9 | 34,6 | 16,1 | 16,1 |
| 2 | Lecturers who establish high criteria for thesis writing occasionally cause me Anxiety. | 7,5 | 8,9 | 32,9 | 26,1 | 24,6 |
| 3 | I have not begun/continued my writing because it is sometimes difficult to grasp the structure of a thesis. | 12,9 | 12,1 | 31,4 | 23,6 | 20,0 |
| 4 | When I begin writing my thesis, I occasionally get fear/Anxiety. | 10,4 | 11,1 | 30,4 | 23,6 | 24,6 |
| 5 | My confidence in my ability to write a thesis has diminished. | 8,6 | 12,1 | 35,4 | 21,4 | 22,5 |
| 6 | I have difficulty writing because I am terrified/concerned about receiving a bad test result. | 10,4 | 13,2 | 34,3 | 18,9 | 23,2 |
| **C** | **Academic writing ability** | | | | | |
| 1 | I'll be perplexed if I'm required to conduct background research. | 7,5 | 14,3 | 33,2 | 25,7 | 19,3 |
| 2 | For me, writing research objectives is a difficult task. | 9,3 | 25,4 | 33,6 | 19,6 | 12,1 |
| 3 | For me, the framework for creating a research proposal/thesis is rather perplexing. | 12,9 | 17,5 | 33,2 | 20,7 | 15,7 |
| 4 | I object to the need that I create an outline/plan for the author of a research proposal/thesis. | 11,8 | 14,6 | 37,9 | 21,1 | 14,6 |
| 5 | Revision to reduce Turnitin levels is a difficult task. | 7,1 | 8,9 | 25,0 | 24,6 | 34,3 |
| 6 | I'm less confident in the chapter on the literature review that I wrote. | 7,5 | 17,5 | 41,4 | 20,0 | 13,6 |
| 7 | I would be perplexed if I were to write a chapter on research techniques. | 6,8 | 12,9 | 38,9 | 25,4 | 16,1 |

(Likert scale: 1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), 5 (Strongly agree))

Writing self-efficacy, writers' block, and perceived academic writing performance are all addressed in the following table, which indicates the respondents' perception regarding those variables. Based on the writing self-efficacy variable, converting ideas into written form remained a challenging activity uttered by 39% of respondents. The ability to use a proper language choice in writing is another issue that most students frequently encounter. Additionally, based on the

responses in the writing self-efficacy variable, students encountered several problems, including concentrating, avoiding distractions, and writing consistently that 57,2% of respondents averagely uttered.

According to the research findings on the self-efficacy variable, students tend to believe poor writing self-efficacy. Previous research highlighted that the same result of poor writing self-efficacy was derived because the inability of the students to express themselves verbally results in a lack of confidence in their capacity to understand and follow academic writing rules and their ability to self-regulate. Meanwhile, self-efficacy is an essential factor that significantly impacts the writing process, which is equivalent to the cognitive aspect of the process (Sidhu et al., 2016). The importance of writing self-efficacy, which impacts students' writing abilities, has been highlighted in other studies as well (Aydın, 2019). In Papua, students' low writing self-efficacy is related to the quality of education. Several prior surveys have revealed that Papua has the lowest ranking among all of Indonesia's provinces (Amalia, Nurpita, & Oktavia, 2018) related to the education infrastructures. Also contributing to a new concern is the discrepancy in educational quality between eastern and western Indonesia, which manifests in poor educational outcomes. On the other hand, it has been suggested that students' low writing-self efficacy is caused by a lack of exposure to writing activities (Daniels et al., 2020) ,which is in line with the findings in the researcher's context.

The writer's block variable is the other variable studied by the researcher. The data indicate that the students in the preceding lecture process received sufficient encouragement from the speaker to enhance their writing skills by 33,2%. The high degree of writing quality, on the other hand, is believed to be one of the factors that contribute to writers' block uttered by 50,7% of respondents. In contrast, 43,6 % of students are discouraged from their undergraduate thesis writing since the structure is perceived as too complicated. In addition, Anxiety about writing, a lack of trust in one's writing abilities, and concerns about receiving poor results on thesis exams are all variables that influence students' perceptions of academic writing competence.

Personal competency and time management are two characteristics that can impact writer's block variables. The intriguing condition is that while students receive adequate encouragement from their lecturers to develop their academic writing skills, this encouragement is insufficient to overcome the writers' block that many students encounter, as a previous study was also highlighted (Yeung, 2019). According to the researchers, this condition is closely related to the respondents' hostile attitude toward independent learning. Several prior studies have found that autonomous learners are more likely to succeed in writing because they can assist in the targeting, planning, and self-monitoring of writing tasks, all of which are strongly correlated to students' cognitive and non-cognitive elements of learning (Mohammed Abdel-Haq, Taha Atta, & Ahmed Hammad Ali, 2020). In response to the survey, respondents stated that they found lectures may stimulate a stressful and uncomfortable writing atmosphere, and it may be contributed to students' decreased ability to function as independent learners. One of the most critical elements for students to become autonomous learners is their perception of learning as beneficial and enjoyable(Sulastri & Dewi, 2019). Educators must have a part in developing the character of an independent learner, which can be accomplished by increasing the variety of materials and evaluations available to students, which will support the development of independent learner characteristics (Duong & Seepho, 2017)

The final variable is the perceived academic writing performance. 45% of Students believe that producing a research background is difficult and time-consuming. Additionally, to reduce the similarity index, students consider conducting paraphrasing, which is also related to a difficult task that was uttered by the majority of respondents by 58,9%. Additionally, students reported that the undergraduate thesis writing format, a literature review, and research methods section were challenging to understand by an average of 37,16%. On the other hand, the students have a generally positive attitude about preparing outlines. In general, students find writing an introduction and lowering the similarity index challenging to conduct. The finding of this study differs from those of

prior studies, which have found that perfectionism is a contributing factor to the competence issues in academic writing (Lin, 2020). Specifically, the author contends that respondents' limitations in academic writing are influenced by characteristics such as learning experience, self-efficacy, and metacognition. Many prior studies have demonstrated the broader dimension that influences academic writing competence, including the learning experience (Brodie, Tisdell, & Sachs, 2021), self-efficacy (Shen, Bai, & Park, 2020), and metacognition(Teng, Qin, & Wang, 2021).

Based on the data analysis, most respondents were dealing with problems related to writing self-efficacy. Meanwhile, the respondents have encountered writers' block that most respondents stated the high writing quality demand contributed to this circumstance. In addition, most respondents were threatened by a higher similarity index in their undergraduate thesis writing. The study's findings may contribute to further research as preliminary research for developing a learning model to elevate self-efficacy, academic writing performance and reduce writer block.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the data reveals that students encounter the problem of writing self-efficacy. For example, 57,2% of respondents were threatened by the ability to concentrate and the ability to write consistently. Meanwhile, the respondents also encountered the circumstance of writers' block, which was contributed by the demand for high-quality writing by 50,7% and the complicated undergraduate thesis writing format by 43,6%. In addition, the respondents also suffered from their academic writing activity. For instance, most of the respondents were threatened by the high similarity index in their writing by 58,9%. Also, 45% of respondents perceived that writing a research background is a challenging and time-consuming activity. This study is limited to conducting data analysis by employing descriptive statistic analysis to obtain the frequency. Further research is suggested to develop the analysis into correlation analysis. Also, this research only includes research subjects in Papua, but it is expected to be expanded to include larger subjects in eastern Indonesia. In addition, policy studies at the university level to generate a breakthrough by generating a new curriculum can be developed for Papua province is suggested to be undergone for further research.

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