

Investigating the correlation of EFL students writing apprehension and writing performance: Dire Dawa University in focus, Ethiopia

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Received: 09 March 2022 | Accepted: 12 May 2022 | Published: 26 May 2022

Abstract: The main objective of the research was to examine the correlation between university students' writing apprehension and performance level, particularly among first-year undergraduate students at Dire Dawa University, Ethiopia. Specifically, the study examined whether or not any statistically significant correlation exists between students writing apprehension and writing performances level, the degree to which students feel writing apprehension, and their level of writing apprehension influences students' writing performance. To achieve this objective, a descriptive-correlational design was employed. Then, questionnaires, interviews and writing tests were used for data gathering. Accordingly, the collected data was analyzed by quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research revealed that students had moderate writing apprehension and low writing performances level. In addition, the research findings show a modest negative correlation between students writing apprehension and their performance level. However, the correlation was found insignificant. Besides this, the research findings show students' writing performances are not significantly influenced by the factors (students' negative view of their writing ability, fear of evaluation and avoidance of writing activities) or level of writing apprehension. And at the end, recommendations were given in order to bring to attention about the relationship and the influence of students' level of writing apprehension on their writing performances when writing in English at tertiary level.

Keywords: EFL Students, Students' writing apprehension level, Writing apprehension, Writing performance, Writing skill

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1. Introduction

The current research examined the correlation between university students' writing apprehension and writing performance level in an EFL setting at Dire Dawa University, Ethiopia. Although different research have been conducted on students' writing problems, students are yet not proficient in it, and the problem is a concern to teachers, students and researchers. Therefore, the current study intended to ask new question focusing on examining the correlation that exists between students writing apprehension and performances level in Ethiopian Higher Education situation so as to deal with students' writing problems.

Currently, the English language is the dominant means of communication in every area of life. For example, Mohamadsaid and Rasheed (2019) explain that the English language is used as ESL/EFL plays great role for the development of Science, Media, Technology, etc. Additionally, the English language in general and writing skill in particular have a paramount of significance at different educational levels. As a result of all these facts, English is the language studied most as a second/foreign language worldwide. The English language also plays an important role in

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the Ethiopian educational system. As the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (1994:24) states, the English language serves as a means of communication at different educational levels in the country.

In addition, in Ethiopia, the English language is used for communication purposes in different sectors and organizations such as banks, airlines, and international organizations. Especially, when the issue of students' academic performance is raised, it is inevitable that the role writing skill play weighs more. At any educational level, the proficiency level of English language skills in general and writing skill in particular requires special attention to succeed academically. For instance, a language researcher (Mesfin, 2013) argues that the more students are efficient in written skills, the better they perform academically. In line with this, it is expected that the Ethiopian higher education students English language proficiency is good since they have learned the English language for more than twelve years. However, researchers argue that most students cannot write effective English texts using adequate basic structures of the language they have learnt. For example, Animaw (2011:2) reported that different instructors at Addis Ababa University seriously complained that students in different fields or departments manifested low levels of English.

Challob et al. (2016) also argue that both new and experienced EFL/ESL students commonly develop a negative attitude towards writing skills, understood as writing apprehension. They further explain that writing apprehension can cause low writing performance. Similarly, Abbas (2016) states that writing apprehension is the most influential variable which has a debilitating effect on students' performance. Moreover, Daly and Miller (1975) define writing apprehension as an inclination of a person to ignore the writing activity, mainly when it is to be evaluated somehow. In this case, the highly apprehensive individuals find writing as a futile attempt. Accordingly, the current researcher thought that students' level of writing apprehension in English language learning is one of the less researched areas in Ethiopian higher education institution contexts; that is why this study investigates whether the writing apprehension level of students relates with and influences students writing performances level.

This time demands proficiency of English language skills in general and writing skill in particular. However, the present researcher's experience in teaching writing courses at higher institutions and the informal discussions that he held with English language instructors have revealed that EFL students have been found to have an inadequate proficiency in English language skills in general and writing skill in particular. In this regard, Alamirew (2005), for example, states that "This problem is especially clear in the students' inability to express themselves in English writing" (P: 14). Academic success of students may depend on many factors. English language proficiency in general and English writing skill in particular of the students are the most important factors in their academic success. However, from personal experience, the researcher has noticed that the majority of EFL students do not do well even in answering the questions of writing on examinations. They either do the writing part carelessly or they do not answer it totally. The idea supported by Zewdu (2012:5) that "Currently, many EFL teachers of higher education institutions in Ethiopia are complaining that preparatory graduates lack the required command of English even to express themselves, by the time they start their tertiary studies."

To the current researcher's best knowledge, how EFL students writing apprehension level relates to and influences students' writing performances is undiscovered area in Ethiopian tertiary levels. In other words, research in this regard is lacking in the Ethiopian university's context when the issue of students' deficiency in English writing is raised. Qadir et al. (2021), for example, claim that although many studies have investigated writing apprehension among students of different education levels during the last decades, several of its aspects have remained uninvestigated in different contexts.

To date, however, relatively few studies have explored the relationship and influence of students' level of writing apprehension on their writing performances, particularly in Ethiopian higher education contexts. As the current researcher reviewed literature, the current work differs from the following research. Firstly, the current study is different from Huwari and Abd-Aziz's (2011) study, which investigated the writing apprehension of students focusing on Jordanian postgraduate. The research findings revealed that many of the Jordanian postgraduate students felt a high level of writing apprehension. Secondly, it differs from Teshome and Sree's (2016) study that state the relationship between tertiary students writing self-efficacy, writing apprehension and writing performance. The study results show that the majority of the students showed poor writing performance, and students' perceived writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy responses had a strong relationship to their writing performance. Another study by Qadir et al. (2021) has also reported that there is a significant relationship between writing apprehension and low quality writing texts. Daly (1978) has also demonstrated that apprehensive writers tend to have short and low quality papers containing less developed language and sentence structure. Thus, it is apparent that writing apprehension is a serious problem that needs to be diagnosed. Its relationship and influence on students writing performance needs to be investigated.

However, the above studies have not investigated the extent to which students' level of writing apprehension relates to and influences the level of students' writing performances in an EFL setting in Ethiopia. Thus, the main aims of the current research differ from the aims and purposes of the studies above. In addition, the current research differs from the above research since it covered the Ethiopian higher education situation focusing on first year undergraduate students. Accordingly, it was thought that there is a research gap that needs attention. Thus, this research was designed to address this gap. Consequently, the results of the current work will add something valuable to English writing research. Besides, EFL students, English language teachers and researchers in the field will benefit from this study's results.

1.1. Objectives of the study

This study is carried out with three specific objectives. These are to:

1. see how EFL students feel writing apprehension when writing in English;

2. identify if any significant correlation exists between students writing apprehension and writing performance level;
3. check which factors of writing apprehension level (negative view, fear of evaluation or avoidance of writing activities) have a strong influence on students writing performance.

1.1. Research questions

This research article intended to answer the following questions:

1. To what level EFL students feel writing apprehension while writing in English language?
2. Is there any statistically significant correlation between students writing apprehension and writing performance?
3. Are factors of writing apprehension (negative view, fear of evaluation or avoidance of writing activities) significant predictors of students writing performance?

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of writing and its nature

A large number of language scholars have attempted to define writing. For instance, Hanane, (2015) describes that writing is an artistic way of conveying and sharing thoughts that require many things to be effectively fulfilled. Afrin (2014) also added that writing is a challenging activity even for ESL students at tertiary level. And such kind of student writing deficiency impacts not only students' English language skills achievements but also the overall achievements of all students' courses. Furthermore, Graham and Perin (2007: 23), citing Needels and Knapp (1994), state that the role of writing, particularly in the contexts of education, is very important.

Haregewain (2008) also reported that writing is a challenging activity for ESL students since they are supposed to develop texts which show strong background knowledge required in EFL writing contexts. According to Graham and Perin (2007: 445), in America, it was observed that many people are unable to meet the standard of writing expected of them for different purposes. Schools are raised as one factor for the youngsters' writing deficiency since schools pay less attention to teaching writing skills. In this light of thought, Graham and Perin (2007:3) also reported that writing skill is an indicator of academic attainment and a necessary skill to take part in the international communication and social life. Thus, effective writing is considered a necessary thing for people.

2.2. The current status of english language teaching in Ethiopia

Most scholars agree that English has been the number one expanded language worldwide (Cha, 2007, cited in Berhane, 2019: 1434). Therefore, being fluent in English and speaking this language is nowadays seen as better social status (Ibid). The case of Ethiopia is also not out of this trend. In Ethiopia, English language plays a crucial role in the educational system. Researchers, for instance, explained that English language plays an important role in the educational system of different countries. Like in Ethiopia, the language also plays an important role in the educational system of Cameroon (Nyamkoh, 2022). In brief, the English language is used for communication purposes in different sectors and organizations such as banks, airlines, and international organizations. Indeed, newspapers such as the Ethiopian Herald, the Reporter, and the Fortune are written and published in English.

As the English language has been taught for various purposes globally, it has also been taught in Ethiopia for different purposes. In Ethiopia, as Haregewain (2008), for instance, states several people need to study English language as it is being used for different purposes in the country. Similarly, Damkor and Terna (2021), citing Babajide (2001) state that English is the medium of interaction in most situations in Nigeria. The language is employed by different people in all kinds of communication being it official or unofficial, cordial or casual. For example, it serves as a very important means of communication in Ethiopian higher education institutions. Therefore, in higher education, students are expected to develop the mastery of English language skills which help them succeed academically. However, in Ethiopia, poor English Language proficiency and communication skills have been reported by many researchers at different times. According to Alamirew (2005), for example, the decline of students' ability in using English at both high school and higher levels of learning in Ethiopian education is a concern for both teachers and researchers. This problem is especially clear in the students' inability to express themselves in writing (P: 14). In addition, although the language is used as a medium of communication in secondary and tertiary levels, different studies show that after twelve years of schooling, most of the students cannot write correctly, and they have low writing ability about what is expected of them (Geremew, 1999; Zewdu, 2012).

2.3. The teaching of writing skills in Ethiopian schools context

English writing skill serves many purposes in the ELT classroom. For instance, (Haregewain, 2008) explains that the ability to share one's ideas in writing is an important aspect for the educated people. In addition, Hanane (2015) commented that writing is an artistic way of conveying and sharing thoughts that require many things to be effectively fulfilled. Moreover, it is considered a difficult task be it first language or not for people. Writing is a demanding skill since it requires managing different aspects of writing, such as content, vocabulary, organization, grammar, etc.

2.3.1. Teaching of writing in high schools

Researchers argue that students get more exposure to practicing the English language in the classroom (Haregewain, 2008). In addition, Tsegaye (2006) cited in Zeleke (2018:45) argued that students who have completed grade twelve could not construct a single effective sentence, let alone an extended text. Moreover, Abiy (2013: 51) citing Solomon

(2001), states that Ethiopian students manifest a serious language deficiency at different educational levels, particularly English writing. Furthermore, Alamirew (2005) and Haregewain (2008) criticize that teachers usually disregard the value of writing tasks in the teaching materials in teaching the English language at the high school level. They do not pay attention to teaching the skill. In addition, Alamirew (2005) reported that in Ethiopian high schools, language teachers do not give focus on teaching the skill.

2.3.2. Teaching of writing at tertiary level

In Ethiopia, most students who join university study other subjects through the medium of English language. Tewodros (2016) argues that for students to cope with the academic challenges at the tertiary level, they are supposed to have strong knowledge of English language skills. However, in Ethiopia, it is repeatedly reported that several instructors from English language department and other disciplines are often heard complaining about the decline of university students' English language proficiency. It was reported that the English language incompetence of the students is worsening from time to time (Haregewain, 2008). Similarly, Niguse (2013) complained that despite the status English has and the different efforts made to make students proficient in the English language at schools and universities, students of different levels and graduates lack the expected command of the English language almost in all skills. Besides, regarding the overall deterioration of the quality of English in Ethiopia, Zewdu (2012:5) argues that students lack essential command of English even at the tertiary level because of the lack of adequate training at high schools.

2.4. The concept of writing apprehension

Daly and Miller (1975) identified the concept of writing apprehension in their focus of dealing with the relationship of attitudes towards writing and other factors. They introduced the concept of writing apprehension to brief that it is the inclination of a person to approach or ignore the writing activities, especially when a text is to be evaluated. They further explain that students writing performance and their activity selections can be negatively influenced by their writing apprehension level. As to their observation, a negative feeling toward writing usually reveals writing apprehension.

Moreover, as Daly (1978) and Huwari and Abd-Aziz (2011) state, when students feel writing apprehensiveness, it affects their writing performances differently. For example, apprehensive students mostly feel about the risk of failure, imperfect writing, unable to develop an error-free text, redundancy and incomplete construction. In addition, Amiri and Saeedi (2017) pointed out that highly apprehensive writers write poor and small texts when compared to their non-apprehensive counterparts. Harmer (1998: 84) also added that in writing, students are demoralized when they get back written feedback covered in red pen and required them re-write it again. In this case, students consider their English writing is very bad.

Writing apprehension is also defined as ignorance of activities that involve writing and anticipation of negative evaluations of writing performance (Daly & Miller, 1975). Furthermore, Abbas (2016:34), citing Pimsarn (2013:101) states that the writing apprehension level seriously influences students' writing performances. It made students reluctant to write and develop negative feelings toward the skill. Besides, Singh and Rajalingam (2012), citing Hanna (2010), describe that usually, when students write poor compositions, are unwilling to do writing activities and delayed compared to others, it is because of feeling high writing apprehension. There are three ranges to determine about writing apprehension levels in which the score ranges from 26 to 130. These writing apprehension levels are: high, unusual or average, and low (Daly & Miller, 1975).

2.4.1. Influences of students' writing apprehension on their writing performance

Evidence shows that writing apprehension is a nervous emotion that a writer feels when writing and which influences one's writing activity (Teshome & Sree, 2016). In describing different behaviors that highly apprehensive students manifested, Daly (1978) noted that highly apprehensive students write less proficiently, use so simple language, make small writing compositions using very few words and develop inappropriate texts. Therefore, researchers argue that apprehensive students perform poorly than non-apprehensive students (Daly, 1978; Singh & Rajalingam, 2012).

Moreover, as identified by Singh and Rajalingam (2012: 42), students writing apprehension negatively affects their writing performances and the quality of their compositions. So, it is argued that when students writing apprehension is high, their writing is identified to be weak and full of errors (Hettich, 194: 375; Abbas, 2016). Nevertheless, students with low writing apprehension are seen to construct extended paragraphs when they are ordered to do using adequate words in their texts. Besides this, low apprehensive students are seen to be cooperative to take part in any writing activities (Daly & Miller, 1975). Many prior studies recommend that, for example, Diana and Justine (1992), researchers in the field should examine different contexts to more deal with students' writing apprehension levels.

3. Research methodology

The current study was aimed to examine the correlation between first-year undergraduate students writing apprehension and writing performances level in an EFL setting in some selected departments from the College of Social Sciences and Humanities at Dire Dawa University. Therefore, the quantitative method was used for closed ended questionnaires and writing tests, whereas the qualitative method was used for semi-structured interviews. According to Creswell (2014), mixed methods research involves collecting and integrating quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. In addition, mixed methods research is often chosen for its influential methodological triangulation (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007).

3.1. Design of the study

As Creswell (2012: 293) writes, research design generally includes specific procedures employed in the processes of data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. Therefore, in the current study, a descriptive-correlational data analysis strategy was used mainly for two purposes: to explain the correlation between students writing apprehension and writing performance level and examine the degree of influence of students' writing apprehension on their writing performance.

3.2. Participants and sample size

The participant students involved in the study belong to one college (Social Sciences and Humanities) and three departments at Dire Dawa University in Dire Dawa City Administration, East of Ethiopia. They are the first year undergraduate students selected purposively from departments of English, Psychology and Political Science and International Relations. The selection of the college and departments was also purposive. There are 95 students (whose ages range from 18-25 years) in the departments. Accordingly, the researcher included the entire population purposively through total population sampling technique by thinking that the number of students was small. However, only 90 students responded effectively. Before approaching the participants for data collection, ethical consent was approved by concerned individuals to do the research at the university.

3.3. Tools of data gathering

In this study, three data gathering tools were employed: questionnaire, interview and writing test. The writing test and questionnaire were administered to 90 EFL students, while the interview was conducted with 5 EFL students (purposively selected from the sample respondents). Then, the data collection instruments were employed accordingly: questionnaire, interview and writing test. It is believed that multiple data gathering tools can support one another, provide a rich body of data, and increase the rationality and trustworthiness of the data (Zohrabi, 2013).

3.3.1. Students' questionnaire

This study used the writing apprehension testing questionnaire, which was adapted from Daly and Miller (Daly & Miller, 1975). The tool has been extensively used with different kinds of research participants at different times. Daly and Miller (1975) suggested a simple formula for the tool, which was intended to identify the writing apprehension level of students as high, medium or low. The given formula is: Writing Apprehension = $78 + \text{Positive Scores} - \text{Negative Scores}$ (where 78 is the mean). According to Daly and Miller (1975), the main purpose of the development of writing apprehension testing was to isolate apprehensive students from non-apprehensive students through efficient and reliable measurement. The writing apprehension test questionnaire consisted of 26 questions using the 5-Likert scale type ranging from "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (5)". The questionnaire has been widely used in writing studies and confirmed by previous research that it is reliable and valid in ESL/EFL research since it has got 0.90 Cronbach alpha. In the current study, this questionnaire also has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.71, which is reliable and indicates that the instrument has good internal consistency.

In the current study, the main reason for using a writing apprehension test standardized questionnaire for data collection is: based on the literature review; the researcher was convinced that the instrument is helpful to measure students level of writing apprehension (as also used in several international pieces of research). Its reliability coefficient (as measured in the current study), shows that the instrument is reliable, which means that the instrument is free of measurement error and consistent despite repeated several times. Similarly, Muijs (2004:73) and Cohen et al. (2007) clearly state that reliability greater than 0.7 is generally believed to keep accepted reliability for research aims.

3.3.2. Students' interview

Semi-structured interviews were employed with 5 EFL students. The researcher got critical comments from his PhD supervisor to achieve the interview's validity. Some of his classmate PhD candidates regarding language structure, content and organization and their comments were duly incorporated. Accordingly, six interview questions were prepared and conducted with key student informants. Then, the interview was conducted with five students to identify their views on their writing apprehension level and their writing performance. The interviewer (the researcher) recorded the respondents' responses using a Digital Camera for future analysis during the interview sessions. The Student key Informants have been given the interviewees code numbers from 01-05 (SKI 01-SKI 05). The interview data was analyzed through the following major steps: transcribing audio data, identifying and grouping related issues for data coding, sorting related content issues, and interpreting the results.

3.3.3. Students' paragraph writing test

A paragraph writing test was provided to student respondents to identify their actual writing performances. The researcher prepared the writing test in consultation with his PhD supervisor. Hence, students' paragraph writing test was used to triangulate whether there are gaps between students writing performance and their writing apprehension level. Thus, the current researcher thought the given topic was not beyond the student's capacity and easy to understand. The writing topic is "Write a paragraph about the positive and negative aspects of living away from your family/relatives/friends for your education." The duration of the paragraphs writing was one hour in total, with the request of 300 words. The researcher corrected all test papers. Each paper was re-corrected by a second person (a co-rater, a colleague and PhD candidate in ELT from Addis Ababa University). The test papers were marked by using

analytic marking criteria such as content, organization, vocabulary, etc. Different scholars also used the criteria (Jacobs et al., 1981; klimova, 2011; Bekele, 2011). Finally, the cumulative average of both raters was taken for further analysis.

3.4. Methods of data analysis

In this study, the data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Thus, questionnaire and writing test data were computed through descriptive and inferential statistics using the SPSS version 23. For the qualitative data (interview data), the researcher coded the data first and analyzed it by content analysis. The researcher typically used categories or codes to structure and shape the interview data. Cohen et al. (2007: 475) citing Weber (1990: 15), states that data reduction/content analysis is a process to achieve manageable and comprehensible data proportions.

4. Findings and discussions

In this study, the research findings are presented according to the arrangements of the study's questions. Therefore, the first research question (how do EFL students feel writing apprehension while writing in the English language) has been answered by computing the questionnaire data and by Daly-Miller's given formula. Thus, data from students' questionnaires supplemented by their interview data were analyzed and interpreted to get the possible answer for the given research question. Therefore, to identify whether or not students' level of writing apprehension is high, moderate or low, the writing apprehension test questionnaire results were calculated by SPSS and by following simple formula of Daly and Miller (Daly & Miller, 1975).

The results of the students questionnaire (as calculated by the given formula) revealed in 78 (i.e., $78 + 1170 - 1170$), where 78 is taken as a mean). This score (78) shows that students did not show significant writing apprehension level, but they manifested signs of writing apprehension, categorized as moderate level. In the same way, the result of the aggregated apprehension calculated by SPSS reveals (69.62) also proves that students writing apprehension is moderate. In this study, though students' level of writing apprehension is moderate, they did not perform well in the paragraph writing test. It was seen that most of the students performed low in the given writing test, and only 28 (31.11%) of them scored 50 and above, and the rest, 62 (68.88%) performed poorly.

In addition, many student respondents 40 (44.4%) agreed that they have a problem organizing their ideas when writing in English. In the same discourse, 45 (50%) of the respondents clearly showed that they felt writing apprehension due to fear of their English texts being evaluated by someone else. Similarly, 34 (37.8%) of students agreed that they did not feel confident in their writing performance. Nevertheless, a significant number of respondents, 43 (47.8%), replied that they did not incline to avoid writing in English. Although 25 (27.8%) of students replied that they did not have any problem if their English texts were read by someone else, 21 (23.3%) agreed that they did not like it if their friends read what they have written in English. In addition, 30 (33.3%) students felt nervous about writing in English.

In the same way, 32 (35.6%) of them replied that they were not good at writing in English. In this case, most of students (50.0%) responded that they are afraid or lack confidence when they know that their English texts are to be evaluated by someone else. In addition, 43.3% of them also claimed that they were unwilling to write paragraphs if they were informed that their texts would be checked by someone else. Similarly, in the interview conducted with the selected students, many students argued that they were afraid of writing when it appeared on their examinations; they did not enjoy it when their texts were evaluated by someone else. They avoided activities that contained writing due to the lack of ideas, vocabulary, motivation, etc. On another level of discourse, some students replied that they enjoy if their English texts are evaluated by someone else because they want to learn from their mistakes. Besides this, many interviewed students reported that writing is a challenging activity for them. The researcher saw (while evaluating students' writing test papers) plenty of errors in their paragraphs. They committed several language errors (both high order and low order skills) like organization, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. Although many students reported that their writing ability increased as their grade level increased, their actual writing performance was found low.

The second research question's main focus is to identify if there is any statistically significant correlation between the level of writing apprehension and writing performance of EFL students. Therefore, students' writing apprehension test questionnaires data and paragraph writing test data were analyzed and interpreted. The relationship of the variables was obtained by computing Pearson's Correlation Coefficient as follows.

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficient of writing apprehension and writing performance of students Correlations

		performance that is expressed by test result	Aggregated Apprehension
performance that is expressed by test result	Pearson Correlation	1	-.183
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.084
	N	90	90
Aggregated Apprehension	Pearson Correlation	-.183	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.084	
	N	90	90

As indicated above in table 1, a modest negative correlation ($r = -.183$) exists between students' level of writing apprehension and performances. However, the correlation is insignificant for p-value reveals (.084), greater than (0.05).

Furthermore, the third research question sought to identify which factors of writing apprehension (negative view, fear of evaluation or avoidance of writing activities) have significant predictors of students writing performance. The degree of influence of the variable was obtained in regression analysis and indicated as follows.

Table 2: Which factors of writing apprehension level strongly influence students writing performance?

Coefficients ^a				
Model	Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	Beta			
(Constant)			7.473	.000
1	Negative View	-.150	-1.046	.298
	Fear	-.082	-.594	.554
	Avoid	.067	.570	.570

a. Dependent Variable: performance that is expressed by test result: (Constant) Aggregated Apprehension (R=.183, R Square=.034 & adjusted R Square=.023)

As indicated in table 2 above, none of the writing apprehension test factors significantly influence students writing performance levels. In addition, as shown in table 2 above, the correlation between the predictor and writing performance (the predicted) model summary is 0.034. Its adjusted value (0.023) indicated that the variance in writing performance can be positively predicted from the overall writing apprehension and students' writing apprehension level predicts students writing performances level.

Generally, the study's result shows that students had moderate writing apprehension (78 & 69.62) as well as their performance of writing was found to be low. In addition, the findings of the study show a modest negative correlation between students writing apprehension and their performances ($r=-.183$). However, the correlation is insignificant. Besides, the research findings show that students' writing performance is not significantly influenced by their negative view of their writing ability, fear of evaluation, and avoidance of writing activities.

5. Conclusion

The current research examined the correlation between EFL students writing apprehension and their writing performances level at Dire Dawa University, Ethiopia. The quantitative data analysis revealed that EFL students showed moderate apprehensiveness and poor writing performance. In addition, a moderate negative correlation was found between students writing performance and their writing apprehension level, but the correlation is insignificant. Additionally, the study revealed that students writing performance was not significantly influenced by their negative view of writing activities, their fear of writing evaluation and their avoidance of activities involving writing. Moreover, the interview results show that students are afraid of writing when it appears on their examinations, they do not enjoy it when their texts are evaluated by someone else. They avoid activities that contain writing due to the lack of ideas, vocabulary, motivation, many others.

6. Recommendation

Students writing apprehension level should be given greater attention in all English language skills classes, especially in writing skill classes. For instance, English language teachers of tertiary level should pay attention to the internal factors while dealing with students writing deficiency. Furthermore, students should consider the influence of their level of writing apprehension on their writing performances and try to develop good confidence in order to be good writers. In addition, researchers in the field should examine various ways to deal with students' writing deficiency.

7. Funding

The authors received no direct financial support for the publication of this article.

8. Acknowledgments

To all participants who contributed to this study, particularly my PhD supervisor, Dr. Seime Kebede, a wise counselor and tolerant advisor-Thank You Very Much!!

9. Conflicts of interest statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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