SUPERVISEE-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP INFLUENCES SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING ANXIETY IN POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATION WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Since it is a social affair as it is cognitive, collaboration with supervisor is a central aspect of postgraduate dissertation writing. In this view, the research intends to offer insights on the underlying social transaction between supervisee and supervisor and how this may influence supervisee's second language writing anxiety when writing. In this qualitative study, three Malaysian postgraduate students were asked to complete Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (henceforth, as SLWAI) before they were interviewed. The findings were generated using thematic analysis on the data of 91 interview questions and 22 items in the SLWAI, in which the self-assessment provides information on their tendencies for cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behaviours. The findings showed that the participants exhibited low-self-esteem, emotional distress, underdeveloped research ownership, negative self-perceptions, and negative perceptions towards dissertation writing, when exposed to anxiety-salient conditions such as receiving negative comments, perceiving external locus of control, and lacking rapport with supervisor. Under those circumstances, the participants appear to perceive their supervisors as examiners and as potential threat to their writing goal. In effect, the supervisors' manipulation of anxiety to provoke performance and the perceived social distance tend to exacerbate their writing anxiety. Therefore, the study significance lies in its efforts to improve supervision, student's motivation and performance in dissertation writing by promoting greater understanding of writing anxiety and supervisee-supervisor relationship. Thus, highlighting the interrelationship between the affective phenomenon and the social aspect of dissertation writing, the study also discusses theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical implications.

Keywords: dissertation writing; qualitative study; postgraduate; second language writing anxiety; supervision

HUBUNGAN PELAJAR-PENYELIA MEMPENGARUHI KEGELISAHAN PENULISAN DALAM BAHASA KEDUA DALAM PENULISAN DISERTASI PASCASISWAZAH

ABSTRAK

Memandangkan ia adalah urusan kognitif dan sosial, kerjasama dengan penyelia adalah satu aspek utama penulisan disertasi pascasiswazah. Oleh itu, kajian ini membincangkan transaksi sosial yang mendasari hubungan antara pelajar dan penyelia dan bagaimana ia mempengaruhi kegelisahan penulisan dalam bahasa kedua. Dalam kajian kualitatif ini, tiga pelajar pascasiswazah diminta untuk melengkapkan Inventori Kegelisahan Penulisan dalam Bahasa Kedua (Cheng, 2004) sebelum ditemu bual. Menggunakan kaedah analisis "*thematic*", dapatan kajian dijana menggunakan 91 soalan temu bual dan 22 item inventori, mengandungi maklumat tentang kecenderungan mereka terhadap kegelisahan kognitif, kegelisahan somatik, dan tingkah laku mengelak. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan para peserta menunjukkan rasa rendah diri, tekanan emosi, pemilikan penyelidikan yang kurang berkembang, persepsi kendiri yang negatif, dan persepsi negatif terhadap penulisan disertasi, apabila terdedah kepada situasi yang mengundang kegelisahan penulisan seperti menerima komen negatif, mempersepsikan "*external locus of control*" dan kurang hubungan rapat dengan penyelia. Dalam keadaan tersebut, para peserta menganggap penyelia sebagai pemeriksa dan ancaman terhadap matlamat penulisan mereka dimana manipulasi kegelisahan untuk memprovokasi prestasi dan penjarakan sosial yang disengajakan cenderung untuk memburukkan lagi kegelisahan dalam menulis. Oleh itu, kepentingan kajian terletak pada usahanya untuk meningkatkan mutu penyeliaan, motivasi dan prestasi pelajar dalam penulisan disertasi dengan menggalakkan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang kegelisahan penulisan dan pengaruh hubungan pelajar dan penyelia. Justeru, mengetengahkan perkaitan antara fenomena afektif dengan aspek sosial penulisan disertasi, kajian ini turut membincangkan implikasi teori, metodologi dan pedagogi.

Kata kunci: penulisan disertasi; kajian kualitatif; pascasiswazah; kegelisahan penulisan dalam bahasa kedua; penyeliaan

INTRODUCTION

As documented in past studies, the connection between writing anxiety and writing performance appears stronger in a second language setting (e.g., in Abdel Latif, 2015; Badrasawi, Ainol Zubairi, & Faizah Idrus, 2016; Tsao, Tseng, & Wang, 2017; Limpo, 2018). Apprehensive student-writers have been observed to produce underdeveloped, shorter and less clearly written research proposals than their less apprehensive peers (Rungruangthum, 2011; Badrasawi, Ainol Zubairi, & Faizah Idrus, 2016). They seem to struggle to write critically, and to organize, as well as to express their ideas effectively (Noriah Ismail et al., 2010; Badrasawi, Ainol Zubairi, & Faizah Idrus, 2016). In this view, writing anxiety could be a factor influencing non-native student-writer's writing performance.

Manifesting into physiological and psychological effects (Choi, 2013), writing anxiety may disrupt the writing process (Rankin-Brown, 2006; Martinez, 2011) and it may also recur when facing writing situations (Woodrow, 2011). Existing literatures have attributed the affective phenomenon to a number of individual and contextual factors such as language proficiency, past writing experience, self-perception, writing skills, time constraint, task

conditions, and instructional practices. However, in the context of dissertation writing, interactions with supervisors may contribute to the emergence of writing anxiety, since it is a social affair just as it is cognitive (e.g., in Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015; Nazari, Farnia, Ghonsooly, & Jafarigohar, 2019). For example, apprehensive student-writers have identified their supervisor's criticism and corrective feedback as sources of their writing anxiety (Erkan & Saban, 2011; Rungruangthum, 2011; Tsao, Tseng & Wang, 2017). Hence, apart from individual and contextual factors, interactions in the social environment of dissertation writing may also present as anxiety-salient conditions for writing anxiety.

Although student-writers generally expect and want to be given corrective feedback to improve performance (Ferris & Roberts, 2001), they appear to be susceptible to writing anxiety when facing negative comments (Grombczewska, 2011; Rezaei, Jafari, & Younas, 2014; Ho, 2016; Nazari, Farnia, Ghonsooly, & Jafarigohar, 2019). Apprehensive student-writers in general, often express fear of negative comments (Rezaei, Jafari, & Younas, 2014; Abdel Latif, 2015; Ho, 2016), fear of making mistakes (Tsao, Tseng, & Wang, 2017), fear of receiving feedback (Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015), and also, fear of being evaluated (Rezaei, Jafari, & Younas, 2014; Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015; Landman, 2016). Therefore, it is important that we understand the dynamics in supervisee-supervisor relationship that could contribute or influence student-writer's writing anxiety because not only does it influence student-writer's writing performance, but issues in supervision is one of the prevalent causes for delayed completion and attrition among postgraduate students (McCormack, 2005; Jeyaraj, 2018). Thus, by providing comprehensive descriptions on the participants' second language writing anxiety experiences and the underlying social processes involved when supervisee interacts with supervisor, it is hoped that the findings could improve existing understanding of the complexity of this affective phenomenon and its link to social environment of dissertation writing and writing performance.

METHODS

As aforementioned, writing anxiety could stem from individual- and contextual-specific factors and the effects often vary from one student-writer to another (Jawas, 2019); some may experience intense psychological effects (Rezaei, Jafari, & Younas, 2014; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017), while some may demonstrate intense physiological reactions (Lau & Nurhazlini Rahmat, 2014). For this reason, quantitative research method may not be appropriate since it relies heavily on linear attributes, measurements, and statistical analysis (Stake, 2010). Correspondingly, since the research aims to provide a comprehensive view on the student's second language writing anxiety experience and the underlying social processes involved when a supervisee interacts with a supervisor, qualitative research design that could address a constellation of interacting factors as the research unfolds appears more effective to document how the participants interpret their experiences and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, qualitative methods are seen as more suitable to address the nature of the phenomenon and social interactions under study.

Using purposeful sampling method, three doctoral candidates from two local universities were chosen as research participants in this qualitative study. They are addressed using pseudonyms as Farra, Raisha, and Anna, as part of the ethical considerations to protect their identities. In addition, the research has also received research ethics clearance from University of Malaya Research Ethics Committee (UMREC). At the beginning of the study, the participants were briefed before they were presented with the consent form. The form includes information regarding the research and their rights as participants. Hence, ethical considerations were taken into account when planning and conducting the research protocol for the benefits and protection of the participants as the provider of the data in this study.

For data collection, in-depth interview provided the main data source. In-depth interview allows the researcher to explore and document the participants' writing anxiety reactions (such as cognitive and somatic anxiety) and their interpretations, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and goals that are not observable (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009). The questions were constructed based on the findings of past studies and the internal and external writing components of writing as highlighted in Hayes' (1996) Social-Cognitive Model of Writing. The questions revolve around four main themes: (1) the participants' second language writing anxiety experiences in dissertation writing; (2) the effects of writing anxiety on dissertation writing; (3) the contextual factors affecting their writing anxiety; and (4) their perceive sources of writing anxiety in dissertation writing. Although this article is limited to the social environment of dissertation writing, specifically the supervisees' interactions with their supervisors, it was necessary to form an expansive research parameter since writing anxiety is individual- and contextual-specific. It became necessary to situate the framework of the study against a robust model like Hayes' (1996) model.

TABLE 1: SLWAI Dimensions and Classifications

Dimensions:	Items:	Descriptions:
Cognitive Anxiety	1, 3, 7, 9, 14, 17, 20, and 21	Cognitive dimension of writing anxiety including fear of negative evaluation, negative perception and expectation
Somatic Anxiety	2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 19	Physiological reactions including increased heart-rate and breathing, stomach discomfort, sweaty and shaky hands
Avoidance Behaviours	4, 5, 10, 12, 16, 18, and 22	Observable behaviours such as procrastinating, not acting on feedback, and avoiding writing situations

Moreover, two supporting instruments were also used in this study. The participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (henceforth, as SLWAI) before the interview sessions commenced. The demographic questionnaire collects information regarding the participants' dissertation writing progress, academic writing experience, and writer's block experience, whereas the 22 items in the SLWAI gathers information on the different dimensions of their writing anxiety: (1) Cognitive Anxiety; (2) Somatic Anxiety; and (3) Avoidance Behaviours. With the Cronbach's coefficient for reliability estimate of .91 and for each of the subscales with .82 and .83 for Cognitive Anxiety, .85 and .88 for Avoidance Behaviours, and .87 and .88 for Somatic Anxiety (Cheng, 2004), SLWAI has been used in past studies to describe the student-writers' trait writing anxiety levels (e.g., in Rungruangthum, 2011; Lau & Nurhazlini Rahmat, 2014; Dar & Khan, 2015; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Jalil & Shahrokhi, 2017; David, Hazita Azman, & Thang, 2018; Zabihi, 2018; Nazari, Farnia, Ghonsooly, & Jafarigohar, 2019). Hence, as presented in Table 1, the SLWAI is used in the study to gather information regarding the participants' cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and behavioral avoidance tendencies.

Overall, the data collection took four weeks to complete. Considering the extensive number of interview questions (a total of 91 questions) and the mental stamina needed to go through all of them, the researcher arranged for two separate sessions with each participant in the second and the third week. The participants were allowed to take breaks during each session and no session took longer than 90 minutes. Also, follow-up interviews were conducted in the fourth week to cover the new topics that had emerged during previous interview sessions, in order to ensure that all participants had answered the same set of questions.

Furthermore, the data analysis was also conducted concurrently with the data collection process. Along with the data from the supporting instruments, the interview data was analyzed immediately within the first four weeks. Then, in week 8 (four weeks after the data collection and the initial data analysis were completed), the researcher recoded the data again, to check for consistency (Mackey & Gass, 2016). The study followed Stake's (2010) data analysis procedure for qualitative research where (1) the profiles and the contexts of each participant were described, (2) the relevant instances or meanings that emerge from the data were categorized and interpreted, (3) the patterns between categories for each and all participants were established, and (4) the abstraction was created to holistically view the writing anxiety in the social environment of dissertation writing.

In addition, several steps were taken in order to improve the trustworthiness of the research findings such as the inclusion of (1) review panels, (2) member checking, and (3) preliminary study (Stake, 2010). The interview questions and the supporting instruments were reviewed by panels before they were used in the preliminary study and the actual study. The preliminary study was conducted to assess and to improve the effectiveness of the research protocols and instruments, to ensure that they will provide the necessary data for the study. Once the initial data analysis was completed, it was subjected to member checking where the researcher went through some of the coding and sought feedback on its interpretation with each respective participant. Thus, after the data analysis process was completed, the final report was organized according to the themes and subthemes emerged.

MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the survey, the three participants appear to have different progress in dissertation writing and different experiences in academic writing and writer's block. Despite being proficient in the English language, they expressed experiencing writer's block when working on their dissertations; writer's block has been reported as reciprocally related to writing anxiety (Lee, 2005; Landman, 2016). Although Anna has had experience in academic writing, unlike the other two participants who had none, she experienced the most frequent writer's block. This seems peculiar considering that her trait writing anxiety level is the lowest out of the three participants. Her score in the SLWAI categorized her as moderate, whereas both Farra and Raisha had scored high. But surprisingly, it was Farra who managed to make the most progress in her dissertation writing.

As previously mentioned in the introduction, writing anxiety often stems from language proficiency (Ho, 2016; Sabariah Abd Rahim et al., 2016) and past writing experiences (Kara, 2013; Ho; 2016; Huerta, Goodson, Beigi, & Chlup, 2017). However, in the context of this study, these two factors do not appear to be key. Based on the participants' progress in dissertation writing and frequency of writer's block, it seems that their trait writing anxiety levels may not reflect their actual state experience of writing anxiety in dissertation writing. When interviewed, the participants appear to have experienced a much intense state writing anxiety due to several anxiety-salient conditions that could be traced to their interactions with their supervisors.

The participants' perceptions towards their supervisors' different roles in supervision, appear to have influenced their appraisals of feedback, present writing situations, and future outcomes, which in turn, may have contributed and/ or influenced their writing anxiety experience in dissertation writing.

Supervisors as the Reader

Supervisors are their supervisees' first readers. They are knowledgeable about their supervisees' research since they usually provide feedback and contribute mental resources in order to guide their students to complete their dissertations; from the research conceptualization to the final stage of reporting. However, in the case of apprehensive student-writers, they could perceive their supervisors more as examiners when they are frequently given negative comments on their work. As a result, they could develop a fear of receiving feedback, and fear of writing:

> "If it's just a feedback through email, I will probably feel sad if I feel like she's shouting with a lot of caps lock in her comments? I can hear her shouting in my ears, but I will also tell myself that I'm so fortunate that this did not happen face-to-face. It's just a written feedback. But I do get scared when she said to come and see her to discuss the feedback."
>
> (Farra)

> "Till today I still have the fear to write…I still don't have the confidence in what I write and I am still…whatever I am doing now, I still don't have the confirmation in terms of what I am doing and things – I am still just hanging."
>
> (Anna)

Likewise, negative comments may also affect their self-confidence. Not only do they become doubtful of their own writing ability, but the emotion experience could influence their writing anxiety. Even in their supervisors' absence, the fear alone could trigger state writing anxiety during writing (Ree, French, MacLeod, & Locke, 2008). Hence, supervisors as the readers could affect student-writers emotionally as well as psychologically.

Supervisors as the Authority on Knowledge

In addition, supervisors are also recognized as authority on knowledge due to their experience and expertise in the field. Apprehensive student-writers in particular, tend to perceive their feedback as a reflection of their own level of knowledge and ability to complete the research and the dissertation. So, negative feedback usually has detrimental effects on their motivation and self-perception. For instance, Anna evaluated herself and her performance negatively after receiving her supervisor's feedback, stating that, "You are not being competent enough because you can't write anything after so many days. I feel useless. Those are the things, but that doesn't…I guess in that moment I do see myself…". In like manner, supervisor's feedback could also influence the student-writer's perception towards dissertation writing. In Farra's case, it became a challenge for her to write her chapter 2 after her supervisor cautioned her about preparing her literature review:

> "The moment when she said that for chapter 2, you have to read a lot, you have to write and be critical about it, I felt like chapter 2 is the most challenging and it has been a challenging chapter to write."
>
> (Farra)

In both contexts, the participants appear doubtful at own ability to complete their dissertation writing. According to implicit theories, individuals' approaches in facing challenges are influenced by their implicit beliefs regarding ability; they may perceive ability as either developing skills or documenting competence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Based on

this notion, student-writers whose views are fixed on ability as a stable trait (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), may perceive negative comments as confirmation of own inability to write well, which in turn, could contribute to their writing anxiety. Past studies have reported that less apprehensive student-writers are more likely to believe that practices and more efforts can actually improve their writing performance (Woodrow, 2011; Sabariah Abd Rahim & Kasma Mohd Hayas, 2014), but the highly apprehensive student-writers tend to believe that writing skills are innate abilities (Hayes, 1996). Therefore, based on this perspective, the participants may have perceived their supervisors' feedback as confirmation of their own inability to write well. As a result, they perceived themselves and their performance negatively and this may have influenced their writing anxiety experience in dissertation writing. Thus, supervisors as authority on knowledge, appear to have substantial influence on student-writers' perceptions.

Supervisors as the Self-Guide

Moreover, supervisors could also be their supervisees' self-guides; a standard for self or a specific image of how one ought to be. During interactions, the supervisees may have adopted valued attributes from their supervisors. For this reason, the supervisees tend to place high values on their supervisors' feedback or comments; that they tend to extend comments made on their dissertation or performance to themselves:

> "Because she is an experienced supervisor and she has read extensively. The field that I am doing is pretty much her expertise. I believe that when she says that this is not right, this is insufficient, I feel like it is the truth."
>
> (Farra)
>
> "Because it reflects me; my attitude. I did admit to her that I was not consistent because I don't know whether what I am doing is right or wrong."
>
> (Raisha)

Interactions with supervisors appear to stimulate or provoke self-reflection, which in turn, may have influenced the participants' self-concepts. Notably, apprehensive student-writers tend to experience emotional distress and intense writing anxiety when they receive negative comments from their supervisors (Ho, 2016; Tsao, Tseng & Wang, 2017). Because they extend the interpretation of such comments to themselves, negative feedback carries such a strong force than a positive comment that it may even undo past achievements (Leary, Terdal, Tambor, & Downs, 1995). Hence, criticism may have greater impact on apprehensive student-writers since it could even influence or change their self-concepts.

According to self-discrepancy theory, we are motivated to reach a state where our self-concept matches our personally relevant self-guides and a discrepancy between the two is often viewed as the most destructive; since it is associated with different motivational predispositions (Higgins, 1987). Based on this concept, perceiving their supervisors as self-guides, the participants may have felt great responsibility to uphold their supervisor's values and principles. This could explain their fear at failing to meet their supervisors' expectations:

> "I don't want to upset her. I'm so scared of upsetting and maybe, not being to meet her expectations, you know?"
>
> (Raisha)
>
> "I guess another fear would be meeting the expectations of my supervisor. Whatever I write is it up to her standards? Is it what she wants?"
>
> (Anna)

Therefore, the participants may have experienced discrepancies between their self-concepts and self-guides when they received negative comments from their supervisors. This

could have caused them to experience a degree of emotional distress, which may have influenced their writing anxiety. Thus, considering how the participants interpret their supervisors' negative comments as an extension of themselves, and how they fear failing to meet their expectations, they may have taken their supervisors as self-guides; recognizing them as individuals they aspire to be.

Supervisors as the Superior

Furthermore, supervisors can also be viewed as assessors since their approvals are often required in finalizing the selection of topic, setting the research parameter, making major decisions in research, preparing for proposal defense, organizing the final report, preparing for viva voce, etc. In this view, experiencing a degree of external locus of control is perhaps unavoidable for supervisees since they require guidance from their supervisors to complete their research and dissertation writing successfully. However, enforcing changes and taking lead in the supervisees' research could prevent them from developing research ownership and influence their evaluation of own progress:

> "In semester 2, there was a lot of changing topics, it's like I don't know what's going on…She said I have no progress. When I wanted to change the research question a bit, she became very upset. So, after a discussion, I reverted to what she gave me, what she had suggested…"
>
> (Raisha)

Issues concerning locus of control is prevalent when it involves apprehensive student-writers because they tend to accept negative comments and to give up more quickly under the excessive control of their supervisors (Jones, 2008). Considerable number of studies have associated writing anxiety with decreased self-efficacy (e.g., Ho, 2016; Huerta, Goodson, Beigi, & Chlup, 2017; Zabihi, 2018). Thus, under such circumstances, perceiving self as having less control over own research, not only inhibit their research ownership, but also contribute to their writing anxiety.

Additionally, this could be exacerbated when apprehensive student-writers perceive that they lack rapport with their supervisors. As a result, they tend to develop self-esteem issues and fear towards their supervisors. For example, the participants were scared of their supervisors that they could not even request for a consultation or comfortably ask questions. They described their experiences in consultations as strictly professional and devoid of "human touch":

> "Don't know whether I am on the right track or not and I'm scared to reach out to my supervisor. I am just worried and anxious of what she's going to say."
>
> (Raisha)
>
> "I don't think I've ever really had a heart-to-heart conversation with her. I don't really share much because whenever I see her, it'll be about me not meeting deadlines and things like that. So, whenever I try to share my personal reasons, she would say that is my personal thing and that work must go on."
>
> (Anna)
>
> "If I have a better relationship with my supervisor, if she could motivate me, I will not feel so tiny. I will not feel so small as a writer, to write my dissertation."
>
> (Farra)

The perceived superiority is so great that they view themselves as "small" and inferior. Therefore, student-writer's inability to establish a sense of control over own research and dissertation writing and struggling to communicate with their supervisors, could make it

challenging for them to maintain their self-confidence and perceived competence, as well as to mitigate their writing anxiety. Thus, apprehensive supervisees could experience a degree of external locus of control in their interaction with their supervisors. Although their relationships are often viewed as a collaboration, imbalance could influence their writing anxiety experience, especially when their supervisors practice acts of reaffirming authority and often utilize negative comments and anxiety to provoke writing performance.

In essence, their perceptions towards their supervisors' roles as the reader, the authority on knowledge, the self-guide, and the superior, seem to have influenced the social transactions that take place during consultations. In order to understand how this notion could influence student-writer's writing anxiety, it is important to examine what contributes to the change of state or relationship between the two parties.

Social Functions of Emotion

What was exchanged during the social transactions between supervisees and supervisors, also included an embedded layer of emotion content; there were traces of other emotions such as despair, sadness, humiliation, disappointment, and shame when exploring the participant's writing anxiety experience. In this view, the social interaction that takes place between a supervisee and a supervisor when negotiating ideas and meaning in dissertation writing, could trigger a myriad of other related emotions that could influence writing anxiety.

The social gap that the participants perceived their supervisors placed between them, serves a distancing function. It refers to the distancing or differentiating of the self from others and to compete with these others for social status or power (Fischer & Manstead, 2016) and this appears to be reflected in the supervisors' behaviours. They often reaffirm their authority, discourages personal communication and often utilizes negative comments to provoke performance. Therefore, under these circumstances, unable to establish rapport with their supervisors, the apprehensive participants experienced emotional distress and intense writing anxiety experience in dissertation writing. Over time, the constant excessive stress could aggravate their writing anxiety experience and cause detrimental effects (Amirkhan, 2012); it decreases productivity and may lead to attrition among postgraduate students (Jairam & Kahl, 2012; Sosin & Thomas, 2014; Levecque, Anseel, De Beuckelaer, Van der Heyden, & Gisle, 2017).

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

As shown in the study, individual's trait writing anxiety does not necessarily reflect his or her state writing anxiety experience. For instance, specific anxiety-salient conditions in the social environment of dissertation writing may have the effects of aggravating student-writer's state writing anxiety. Therefore, it is highly advisable to complement the use of research instruments, such as Cheng's (2004) SLWAI and Daly and Miller's (1975) Writing Anxiety Test, with qualitative research methods. Such instruments provide sufficient information on student-writer's trait writing anxiety, but they may not be able to address the various individual and contextual factors that could be present in the natural setting. Thus, future empirical efforts on second language writing anxiety should take into account the trait- and the state-like qualities of writing anxiety in the research design, in order to provide a comprehensive view of the affective phenomenon to further advance current understanding.

In terms of pedagogy, it is important for supervisors to be mindful when interacting with apprehensive student-writers as authority is reflected in the way language is used when communicating (Zanariah Ibrahim, Maslida Yusof, & Karim Harun, 2017). Since negative comments have the effect of averting the apprehensive student-writers' attention away from

dissertation, the structure and the delivery of the corrective feedback need to be carefully considered. Hyland (2018) has suggested to use hedges, interrogative form, and personal attribution to tone down the corrective feedback, in order to minimize possible threat to student-writers' self-image, and to avoid from discouraging them with negativity. For instance, in the context of a classroom, the teacher's way of communicating could improve students' motivation to learn which in turn, could influence their academic success (Farah Nur A. Hamid & Maslida Yusof, 2015). For this reason, it is important to provide mental support to student-writers by offering them words of encouragement as it will help boost their confidence (Mohd Asri Harun & Zulkifley Hamid, 2014). Moreover, in supervisee-supervisor relationship where the student-writer tends to perceive a degree of external locus of control, the imposed social distance and the acts of reaffirming authority may result in student-writer's psychological stress. Hence, it is important for supervisors to advocate safe social distances when interacting with student-writers. Such interactions not only encourage rapport and research ownership, it also serves as emotional support for student-writers, which could greatly mitigate the effects of their writing anxiety and benefit their development as independent researchers.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the social environment of dissertation writing may present as anxiety-salient condition in the context of supervisee-supervisor relationship, where it can influence the student-writer's state experience of writing anxiety. Social-contextual conditions such as receiving negative comments, lacking rapport with supervisor, and perceiving a degree of external locus of control, may cause emotional distress, inhibit research ownership, and influence self-esteem, as well as self-perceptions and perceptions towards dissertation writing. Under such circumstances, student-writers tend to perceive their supervisors mainly as examiners who could obstruct their writing goals. For this reason, the perceived social distance, acts of affirming authority, and provoking anxiety using negative comments, may aggravate the student-writers' writing anxiety. As a result, apprehensive student-writers tend to develop fear of receiving feedback, fear of writing, and fear towards their supervisors. To summarize, the nature of the supervisee-supervisor relationship may influence the supervisee to perceive the supervisor as the reader, the authority on knowledge, the self-guide, and the superior, which in turn, could influence the supervisee's writing anxiety experience.

Nonetheless, this study has its share of limitations. The findings are based on the reconstruction of only three postgraduate student-writers' writing anxiety experience; a bigger number of participants and inclusion of supervisor's voice could offer more compelling insights on the affective phenomenon. Additionally, in terms of data collection method, the inclusion of additional data sources for triangulation could improve the trustworthiness of the overall findings such as personal document analysis (e.g., supervisees' drafts, final dissertations and progress reports) and participants' daily journals. However, since the study focuses on the supervisee-supervisor relationship from the emic perspective of student-writers, the research findings are able to provide an in-depth description on the student's second language writing anxiety experience and the underlying social processes involved when a supervisee interacts with a supervisor. Therefore, for future research suggestions, the research design may take the form of a longitudinal study that will allow deeper exploration into the student-writers' writing anxiety experience and the research focus can be widened to include other physical dimensions of dissertation writing.

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