

The Role of Self-efficacy, Self-esteem and Attitude in Predicting Writing Performance of Students in Ethiopian Context

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate students' self-efficacy, self-esteem, and attitude as determinants of their writing performance. The participants for the study were 373 South Gonder Zone Preparatory School students who were chosen using multistage sampling technique. Questionnaire and writing test were employed to gather data. Pearson's Correlation technique was used to analyze the associations among the variables of this study. A standard multiple regression technique was used to check the combined effect of the students' self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude on the writing performance of students; a Stepwise regression technique was used to check the effect that each predictor variable could have on the students' writing performance. Also, ANCOVA was employed to compute the independent effects of the students' self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude on the students' writing performance after age and gender were adjusted. The study revealed that (1) the variables were significantly and positively correlated to each other; (2) the combined effect of the independent variables on students' writing performance was $R^2 = .222$ which means that 22.2% of the variation in the students' writing performance was explained by the composite impact of self-esteem, attitude and self-efficacy of writing; (3) the independent effects of the three predictor variables on writing performance were found to be significant although attitude was identified as the only predictor of writing performance when age and gender were controlled. The study concludes that self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude have significant roles in predicting performance of writing though attitude takes the lion's share in determining the latter.

Keywords: Writing self-efficacy, writing self-esteem, attitude, writing performance, predictor variables

Introduction

Learning EFL writing is both a psychological and a cognitive act. According to Harmer (2004), in spoken communication a speaker chooses what he/she should say based on the feedback he/she receives from a listener, but in written communication, a writer cannot receive immediate verbal and non-verbal reactions from the reader; the writer acts as both a writer and a reader which creates psychological problems on him/her. These psychological problems become worse in EFL writing contexts where students learn both writing strategies and English language. Also, Hedge (2005) states that writing needs a high degree of organization of the ideas, correct grammar, use of appropriate punctuation marks, etc. which are demanding, particularly for EFL learners. That is, learning EFL writing results in a unique challenge; L1 writers, face difficulties in relation to fluency of writing, but EFL writers come across challenges of linguistic aspects and writing strategies.

Also writing as a cognitive requires a writer to have the ability to compose a text clearly and precisely (McLaren, 2003),, and for to pass through the different phases of writing (Ramage,

Bean & Johnson, 2003),. Thus, as Langan (2005) argues, writing is a complex and a recursive process of creating ideas.

In short, writing act is cognitively demanding and psychologically exasperating, and students may believe that they are incapable to do it and they might not prepare themselves for attending writing lessons; this belief ruins their opportunities to develop their writing skills (Langan, 2005). In other words, students may come to EFL writing classes with self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude that could block their success in learning EFL writing.

Review of Literature

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy means one's confidence to accomplish a specific activity. Williams and Burden (1997) defines it as a belief system a learners holds about his/her capability to accomplish particular activities. Accordingly, writing self-efficacy, as used in this study, means the preparatory school students' confidence to write a (150-200 words) composition in English.

A student who believes that he/she is capable of writing in English is likely to attend writing lessons, do writing tasks, and practice writing and thus become a good writer. According to Dornei (1996), an individual's self-efficacy belief influences the type of task he does, the amount of effort he/she puts on it, and the persistence he/she shows in accomplish it. A person with a high self-efficacy can design his/her own objective and pus his/her effort to achieve it (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001). This implies that the EFL learners' writing confidence could have an impact on their decision and commitment to practice writing.

Attitude

Attitude refers to an inclination to react positively or negatively an event. According to Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart and Roy (2003), attitude means a tendency an individual shows towards events, and it involves cognitive, affective and behavioral components. It has also an evaluative element which elicits likes or dislikes (Wenden, 1991); for instance, learners who hold the belief that writing is useful for them may enjoy attending writing classes whereas those students who believe in the contrary may show less inclination to attend writing lessons. But knowing the value of writing may not be a guaranty, for there might be learners who think that writing is valuable but may dislike it (Doig, 1983).

In short, attitude towards writing can refer to the learners' readiness to attend writing lessons and accomplish writing tasks, and it could involve beliefs which instigate students to get ready for practicing composing skills.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem means the estimation one makes about how worthy he/she is (Bernstein, et al, 2003; Woolfolk, 2005); an individual's self-esteem can be developed by getting approval and admiration from others as well as achievement, and specifically, an individual with a high need for achievement seeks to master tasks and gets satisfaction from doing so; he/she employs excessive efforts to meet his/her purpose and feels confident when meeting it (Bernstein, et al, 2003). Also according to Myers (2002), self-esteem can be associated with academic achievement.

Self-esteem is a very crucial academic construct in the teaching learning process of language, in general and writing, in particular. According to Jordan and Kelly (1990), learners with high self-esteem could perform better in examinations. By contrast, learners who possess low self-esteems could get low scores on examinations, for they might not actively participate in

the teaching-learning processes (Ahmed, Zeb, Ullah & Ali, 2013). This implies that students with low self-esteem of writing may not show willingness to participate actively in the writing classes, and thus might get low scores in the writing examinations.

High self-esteem can be obtained from success in accomplishing tasks whereas low self-esteem could come from negative judgments (Harter, 1990). Also, Ahmed, et al, (2013) explain that low self-esteem individuals believe that they are incapable and deficient, and they do not try to give solution to their educational challenges.

To summarize, the affective and cognitive factors can determine learning in such way that the emotional reactions to learning serve as the bases for the instigation of the mental processes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) which call for both humanistic and cognitive theories where according to Williams and Burden (1997), the former is concerned with the learners' feelings and emotions while the latter's worry is the learners' cognitive involvement. For cognitivists, students will learn a given lesson best when they actively think about it, but according to the humanistic view, learners can use their cognitive capacities effectively in a lesson if they have the motivation to do so first.

Thus learning writing as a psychological and cognitive act could take the humanistic and the cognitive learning theories as its insights; the students' emotional reactions to writing skill could determine their engagements in writing classes which in turn affect their performance of writing. These relationships could be illustrated graphically as shown below.

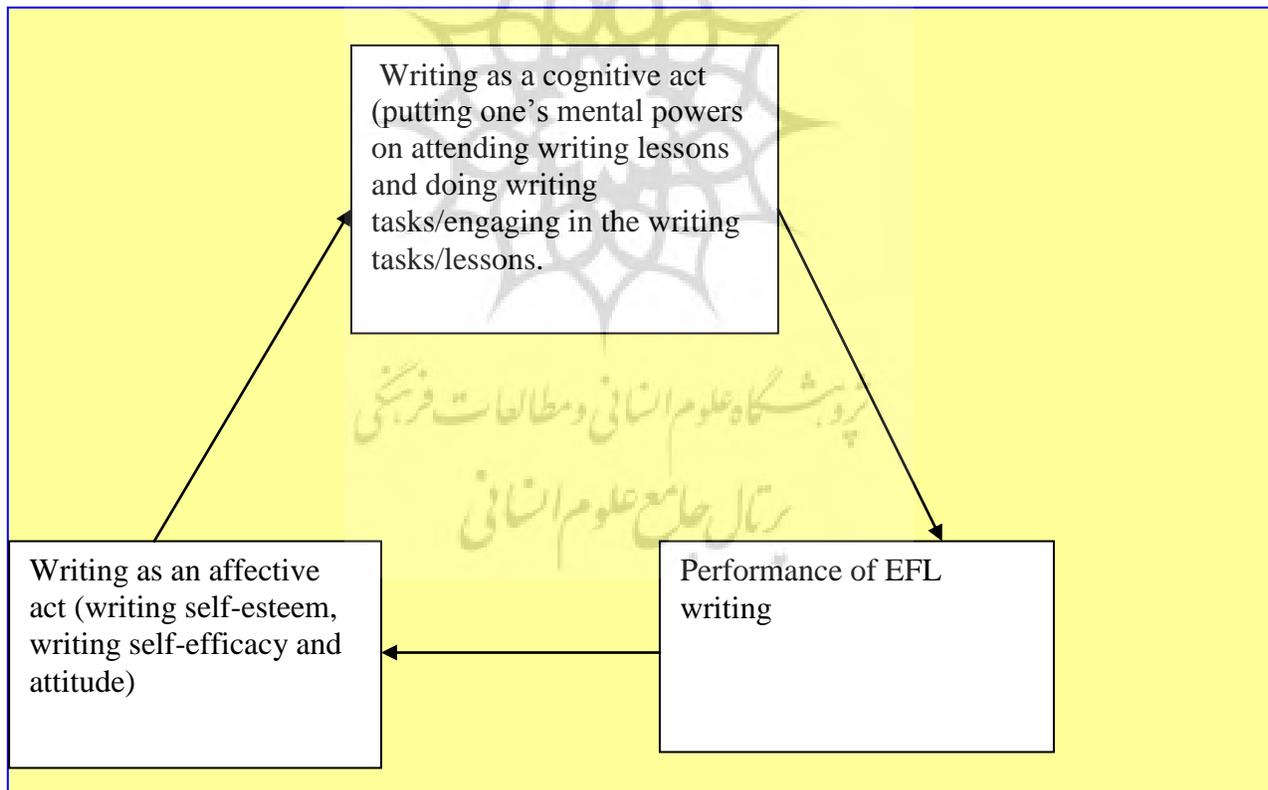


Figure 1. *Affective and cognitive factors as determinants of performance of writing*

Figure 1, shows that writing self-efficacy, writing self-esteem and attitude could determine the learners' cognitive engagement in EFL writing classes.

The Problem

Very few researches have been conducted on psychological factors as determinants of performance of productive skills of English language. For example, McCarthy, Meir and Rinderer (1985) investigated self-efficacy and writing aiming at showing the relationships that exist between the psychological variables and effective writing. The psychological variables including self-efficacy, anxiety, locus of control, cognitive processing and writing performance were the focus of the study. To gather data, questionnaires and writing tasks were provided for 135 students. The finding indicated that, out of the four likely predictors of performance, only the strength of perceived self-efficacy revealed a significant effect in the regression analyses. Also, Pajares and Johnson (1994) examined the association between the participants' writing confidence and competence. The study focused on the associations among participants' writing confidence, outcome expectation, writing apprehension, general self-confidence and writing performance among 30 undergraduate pre-service teachers. The finding revealed that participants' confidence of writing was significantly correlated with their writing performance.

Also very few local researches have been conducted on the possible relationships that could exist between the psychological factors and performance in productive skills (writing & speaking). For instance, Anteneh's (2005) studied the relationship between the students' self-confidence of writing and their writing performance in Adama University, Ethiopia, and he discovered that the two variables were significantly and positively correlated to each other. Furthermore, Bekele (2013) investigated the possible effects that speaking self-confidence, speaking self-esteem, and gender could have on speaking performance among first year university students. He used 128 Bahir Dar University students as participants and employed scales and a speaking test as data gathering tools. He also employed mean, standard deviation, t-test, Pearson's correlation, and Multiple Regression as data analysis techniques. His finding revealed that the variables were positively correlated and the independent variables significantly predicted the students' speaking performance.

But the aforementioned studies (1) focused on the relationships of the variables and did not address the group and independent effects of, specially, writing self-esteem and attitude on performance in writing; the independent effects of writing self-esteem, self-efficacy and attitude on the performance of writing were not examined, and (2), The studies used small sample sizes, or 30-135 participants who were selected using available and comprehensive sampling techniques, and hence, their results' lack conclusiveness. Thus, the current research investigated both the group effect and the independent effects of learners' attitude, confidence of writing and writing self-esteem on their performance of EFL writing involving 373 participants who were chosen randomly. Having this purpose in mind, the present researcher raised the subsequent basic research questions:

- Q1. Do students' self-esteem of writing, writing self-efficacy, attitude and performance in writing associate with each other?
- Q2. What is the combined effect of students' self-esteem of writing, writing self-efficacy and attitude on students' performance in writing tasks?
- Q3. What are the independent effects of self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude towards EFL writing on students' performance of writing?
- Q4. What are the independent effects of learners' writing self-esteem, self-efficacy and attitude on students' performance of writing after age and gender are adjusted?

Methodology

Research Design

The study aimed to investigate the role of self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude in predicting writing performance of students. The research design employed in this study was descriptive survey which aimed to get data about the current status of phenomena. Descriptive research focused on associations which could be observed between or among different constructs, and beliefs which individual might hold. Because the events have already occurred, the researcher simply selects the relevant variables for an analysis of their relationships (Best & Kahn, 2003).

Thus, in the present study, there were specific basic research-questions which the current study attempted to answer. To make it clear, the study aimed to examine the learners' self-efficacy of writing, self-esteem of EFL writing and their attitude towards writing, and it also aimed at investigating the combined and independent effects of these variables on learners' performances of EFL writing.

Participants

The participants for the study were 373 South Gonder Zone Preparatory I (Grade 11) students. In South Gonder Zone, there were 3 Preparatory Schools (Grades 11- 12 only) and 17 General Secondary and Preparatory Schools (Grades 9-12) and a total of 20 Schools which involved Grade 11 students. And the participants were selected from Grade 11 students in the 20 schools.

To get the target sample, the researcher used multistage sampling technique. First, simple random sampling technique, especially a lottery method, was employed to select schools from the 20 schools (30%) which involved grade 11 students in South Gonder Zone. Following this, a simple random sampling technique was employed to select a representative amount of participants from each of the 6 selected schools.

Also, to determine adequate sample for current study, single population proportion formula was employed as follows.

$$\text{That is, } n = \frac{z^2 \alpha/2p(1-p)}{d^2}$$

Where n = the size of the sample

z = z statistic for the level of confidence

p = expected proportion (in proportion of one)

d = precision (in proportion of one)

Here the confidence interval was set at 95% which gave a corresponding z -value of 1.96. The value for the expected proportion (p) at precision (d) was set at 0.5 and 0.05, respectively (Naing, Winn & Rushi, 2006). Using the above formula, the sample size was 384. But only 373 students appropriately completed the three questionnaires and wrote the compositions correctly. Of the 373 participants, 208 students were male, and the remaining 165 participants were female. Also, the participants were at the age range of 16 to 28 which indicated that these age variations would result in differences in the target variables.

Data Gathering Instruments

Test

To investigate students' EFL writing capability, a performance writing test was employed, for it could help to assess the students' ability to communicate through EFL writing (McNamara (2000)). Topics for writing were adapted from topics used in IELTS tests. Before sitting for the writing test, participants of the study were provided with alternative topics, and

they were asked to choose a topic were interested in. Finally, the topic which was selected by the majority of the students was used as a topic for the writing examination. All sampled students wrote their compositions on one topic, for different topics would have different levels of difficulty, and that was not fair to measure and compare students' performance based on different issues. They were asked to write a composition (formal letter) having a range of 150 up to 200 words.

Also, each participant received two independent scorers for his/her piece of writing; the two raters used common evaluation criteria which were taken from a standardized Test of Written English (TWE) scoring guide (1986,1990) as cited in Reid (1993, pp 239-240), and modified so that they could match the setting of the current study. A student's composition was evaluated by two experienced and trained markers to minimize subjectivity and ensure reliability. Finally, the two markers' inter-rater reliability was computed as it is indicated in the next table.

Table 1. *Inter-rater reliability scores (N =373)*

	1	2
1. Rater 2	1	
2. Rater 1	.900**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As Table 1 shows, the two raters' reliability coefficient is 0 .900 which implies that the correlation is high indicating the low level of raters' subjectivity.

Moreover, it was attempted to ensure the validity of the test. The purpose of the writing test was to investigate students' ability to express their ideas in EFL writing. Accordingly, the scoring guide which was adapted from TWE and used by the raters focused on participants' ideas. Also, holistic scoring was employed, for it could help raters focus on the participants' communicative ability. Training was given to the raters about how they could employ the scoring guide for the purpose in hand.

Also, a scoring guide can help to accurately reflect and represent the aspect of writing being measured as part of a construct (Weigle, 2002); accordingly, the criteria used by raters for scoring students' written products were the same as those specific writing activities which were included in the writing self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude questionnaires.

Self-efficacy

The self-efficacy questionnaire was adapted from Pajares, Johnson and Miller (1999) self-efficacy scale which was employed on a study examining the existence of variations in learners' writing self-efficacy between boys and girls. The questionnaire provided students with items that showed the different levels of writing task demands, and it asked them to rate their degree of confidence to accomplish specific writing tasks by recording a number from 1 up to 6. For example, "I can correctly spell all words that I use in writing in English." And a high score, for example 6, indicates a high level of writing self-efficacy.

Attitude

Attitude questionnaire was adapted from Gardner (1985) and Doing (1983), and field tested by Ehabu (2013). The questionnaire had items in which each student rated his/her level of

agreement to each item involving a five point scale ranged from Strongly Agree (SA), to Strongly Disagree (SD). For instance, “I really enjoy learning writing lessons.”

Self-esteem

The self-esteem questionnaire was taken from Rosenberg Scale (1965) as cited in Woolfolk (2005) and was modified; a sample item was “I am able to write in English as well as most other students.” This is a widely used scale for various age groups of individuals.

It is necessary to note that each item in all the three instruments (self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude) has five alternatives ranging from strongly to strongly disagree which could involve scores from 5 up to 1 (with their respective reversals).

Adaptation and Validation of the Data Gathering Instruments

To ensure validity, firstly, experts in the field evaluated the data collections tools. Following this, they tried to see the cross-cultural equivalence of the Amharic (L1) versions and the English (L2) versions of the questionnaires. Also, a panel of experts evaluated the face validity and the content validity of both the questionnaires and the test. So the researcher could get comments from them and rephrased some of the items in the three questionnaires in the way the respondents could understand them easily and uniformly. Furthermore, the suggestions helped him to avoid items which could not contribute to the objective of the study

Then, a pilot test was conducted on 30 students. Participants for the pilot study were selected using convenient sampling technique from grade eleven in Dera Hamusit Preparatory school in the South Gonder Zone. The pilot study was used to test the strengths of the instruments for generating reliable and valid data and to check the overall strength of the research methodology. Accordingly, questionnaires on attitude, self-efficacy and self-esteem and a writing examination were administered during the pilot study. Then, the data gathered through the questionnaires and the writing examination were analyzed and discussed to see the direction of the main study and to improve the data gathering instruments. Specifically, firstly, the internal consistencies of the students' writing self-efficacy and self-esteem questionnaires were computed using Cronbach's alpha and their reliability were found to be very high ($r=0.92$) and average ($r=0.60$), respectively. Similarly, the internal consistency of the attitude questionnaire was computed using Split-half (adjusted) method, and its reliability was found to be moderate ($r=0.69$); according to Cohen, Manion, and Morison (2007) for Cronbach's alpha and Split-half method, the reliability coefficients $r > 0.90$, $r=0.80 - 0.90$, $r=0.70 - 0.79$, $r=0.60 - 0.69$ and $r=0.60$ are very high, high, substantial, moderate, and low, respectively.

Furthermore, the pilot study helped the present investigator to modify vague instructions, check the authenticity of the items, and ensure the psychometric properties of the data gathering tools.

Data Collection Procedures

Administration of the questionnaires for the study was performed after getting permission from school principals. Informed consent was also obtained from the students who participated in the study. The participants were informed to skip items or totally repudiate filling the questionnaires if they felt uncomfortable. Assistant data collectors together with the investigator briefed the students about the nature and purpose of the instruments in an attempt to make them feel relaxed. The administration of the questionnaires was made not to interfere with classroom sessions. In the schools, where it was convenient, participants were requested to sit down in their classrooms and were guided by the investigator and the assistant data collectors on how to fill in questionnaires. The Amharic (participants' mother tongue) versions of the questionnaires were

distributed to students so that they can understand the items and give valid and reliable information. After doing all these, the writing examination was administered. It took approximately one and half hours to administer the questionnaires and the writing test.

Data Analysis

To analyze the questionnaires and the writing test, the current investigator employed Pearson's correlation; multiple regression and ANCOVA. In other words, he computed the associations among the variables such as students' self-esteem, self-efficacy, attitude and writing performance applying Pearson's Correlation analysis method. Secondly, he used a standard multiple regression technique to see the combined effect which the independent variables could have on the dependent variable. Moreover, he applied stepwise regression technique see the independent effect of each of the independent variables. Lastly, he used ANCOVA to examine the independent effects of the same predictor variables on the writing performance of students after age and gender of students were controlled. To compute all of the aforementioned analyses techniques, SPSS version 20 was used.

Results

One of the objectives of the study was to find out the relationships among self-efficacy, self-esteem, attitude and performance of EFL writing. And the relations computed are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Correlation between attitude, self-esteem, self-efficacy and performance of writing

	1	2	3	4
1. Attitude to Writing	1			
2. Writing Self-efficacy	.377**	1		
3. Wiring Self-esteem	.364**	.433**	1	
4. Writing Performance	.393**	.335**	.351**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The students' writing confidence, attitude, and self-esteem of writing are positively associated with their performance of writing. In detail, the correlations between students' judgment regarding their writing capability and, their attitude towards writing, their writing self-esteem and attitude, and their writing performance and attitude were .377, .364, and .393, respectively. Similarly, the association between learners' writing self-esteem and writing confidence, performance of writing and writing self-efficacy, and performance and self-esteem of writing were .433, .335, and .351, respectively. Next, the researcher computed the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable as indicated below.

Table 3. The composite effect and the significant levels of the predictor variables

R = .471 ^a		df	F	Sig.
R ² = .222	Regression	3	35.034	.000 ^b
Std. error = .851	Residual	369		
	Total	372		

a. Independent variables: Writing *self-esteem*, Writing *self-efficacy* and *attitude*

b. dependent variable: writing performance

As shown in Table 3, R is .471 which implies that the overall correlation value of the independent variables with the dependent variable. Also, the same table indicates that the coefficient of determination (R^2) was .222 which means that 22.2% of the variation in the students' writing performance was explained by students' writing self-esteem, attitude, and self-efficacy of writing. This indicated the overall correlation between the independent variables and performance of writing.

Table 3 also shows that the independent variables significantly predicted students' performance of writing, $F(3, 369) = 35.034$, $p(000) < .05$ (i.e., the regression model is a good fit for the data).

The third research objective was to examine the independent effects of attitude, self-efficacy; and self-esteem of writing on students' performance of writing, and the computations are made as follows.

Table 4. *The separate effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable*

		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig
Step 1	(Constant)	-.634	.375		-1.690	.092
	Attitude	.913	.111	.393	8.228	.000
Step 2	(Constant)	-1.277	.388		-3.291	.001
	Attitude	.711	.116	.306	6.142	.000
	Writing self-esteem	.423	.088	.239	4.807	.000
Step 3	(Constant)	-1.256	.384		-3.267	.001
	Attitude	.621	.119	.267	5.229	.000
	Writing self-esteem	.331	.093	.187	3.571	.000
	Writing self-efficacy	.177	.061	.153	2.893	.004

a. Criterion variable : Writing performance of students

The magnitudes of the effects that the participants' attitude, self-esteem, and self-efficacy of writing could have on their performance of writing are indicated in Table 4. To illustrate, "attitude" as the single best predictor (step 1) had the value of $B = .913$ which means that a one unit increase in attitude resulted in .913 improvement in writing performance of students. And "writing self-esteem" as the next predictor (added) after 'attitude' was entered in the model (step 2), and the coefficients for "attitude" and "writing self-esteem" (the two best predictors of students' writing performance) were 0.711 and 0.423, respectively indicating strengths of the variations. Participants rated their degree of agreement or disagreement to items in the questioners in a five-point scale, and this means that a one unit (scale) increase in students' attitude to writing could increase students' performance of writing by 0.711 and a one unit increase in students' self-esteem of writing would improve learners' writing performance by 0.423.

Similarly, "writing self-efficacy" as the third predictor variable (added the most), after 'attitude' and self-esteem were entered into the model (step 3), coefficients of students' attitude, 'writing self-esteem, and writing self-efficacy are found to be .621, .331 and .177, respectively, and these values show the strengths of the variations which exist between the dependent variable and each of the three independent variables.

Also, the independent effects of the three predictors of students' performance of writing were computed after age and gender were controlled. In line with this, before conducting an

ANCOVA test, the interaction between the covariate(s) (age and gender) and each of the three variables-attitudes, self-efficacy of writing and self-esteem of writing-were tested. See the following table.

Table 5. *Interaction of attitude, self-efficacy and self-esteem with age and gender*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Attitude * Age * Gender	210.618	207	1.017	1.265	.058
Self-efficacy * Gender * Age	105.391	84	1.255	1.519	.006
Self-esteem * Gender * Age	92.298	59	1.564	1.951	.000

Dependent Variable: Writing performance of students

As shown in Table 5, the interaction among students' attitude', 'age' and 'gender' is $F(207, 164) = 1.265$, $p = 0.058$. That is, $p(.058) > .05$ which implies that the interaction was not significant. As the same table shows, the interaction among students' self-efficacy, age and gender was $F(84, 287) = 1.519$, $p = 0.006$. That is, $p(.006) < .05$ which implies the interaction was significant, and the results of the ANCOVA could not be meaningful and no need to conducted it. Similarly, the interaction among learners' self-esteem, age and gender is $F(84, 287) = 1.519$, $p = 0.006$. That is, $p(.000) < .05$ which means that the interaction was significant indicating needless of conducting an ANCOVA test on it.

Thus, ANCOVA test was conducted only on the independent effect of attitude on performance of students after age and gender were adjusted as shown below.

Table 6. *The independent effect of attitude on writing performance*

Source	df	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	74	1.738	.001
Intercept	1	47.165	.000
Gender	1	2.287	.131
Age	1	2.153	.143
Attitude	72	1.547	.006
Error	297		
Total	372		
Corrected Total	371		

a. $R^2 = .302$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .128$) b. Computed using $\alpha = .05$

df: Degree of Freedoms

Table 6 illustrates that there is a significant effect of attitude on students' performance of writing after controlling the effect of age and gender $F(72,297) = 1.547$, $p = .006$, at $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

Discussion

This study examined if the psychological variables including students' confidence to writing, their self-esteem and their attitude towards writing could significantly predict performance of EFL writing. And, the present researcher posed the subsequent research questions:

•Do students' writing self-esteem, self-efficacy, attitude and performance of writing relate to each other?

- What is the combined effect of students' attitude, writing self-esteem, and confidence of writing on learners' performance of writing?
- What are the independent effects of writing self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude on students' performance of writing?
- What are the independent effects of students' confidence to writing, self-esteem and attitude on their actual writing capability after age and gender are adjusted?

To answer these research questions, questionnaire and test were employed as data gathering tools. A correlation analysis technique was used to compute the relationships among students' self-efficacy, attitude, self-esteem and performance of writing, and the analysis revealed that they were positively correlated to each other. In brief, the correlations between the confidence students have to write in English and the attitude they hold towards EFL writing was found to be .377. Similarly, the associations between the participants' self-esteem of writing and their attitude towards writing as well as their correlations between their writing performance and their attitude were $r = .364$, and $r = .393$, respectively. Also, the associations between learners' writing self-esteem and confidence of writing, performance and confidence of writing, and performance and self-esteem of writing were $r = .433$, $r = .335$, and $r = .351$, respectively. For Best and Kahn (2003), a correlation coefficient (r) = .00 to .20 is negligible, (r) = .20 to .40 is low, (r) = .40 to .60 is moderate, .60 to .80 is substantial and .80 to 1.00 is high to very high; so almost all the correlation coefficients were found in the range of low which means that all the variables had weak associations to each other.

However, the correlation coefficient of writing self-esteem and confidence of writing was identified as moderate ($r = .433$) which implies that when a student's writing self-esteem increases, his/her writing confidence also shows reasonable improvement and the vice versa. Generally, the associations of the variables to each other were positive which imply that showing improvement in one of the variables might result in demonstrating progress in the other constructs of this study. But, it does not mean that the variables have cause-effect relationships.

But the result of the current study seems to be slightly different from the findings of other similar studies. For example, in this study, the correlations between the participants' writing attitude and writing performance, self-esteem and writing performance, and self-efficacy of writing and writing performance were .393, .351 and .335 which implies, in comparison to attitude and self-esteem of writing, self-efficacy of writing has the lowest correlation with writing performance. By contrast, For example, the finding of Pajares and Jonson (1994) revealed that, of the four constructs (outcome expectation, writing apprehension, general self-confidence and writing self-efficacy), only self-efficacy of writing was significantly associated with performance of writing which shows that writing self-efficacy was the only construct which showed significant association with writing performance.

Finally, the existence of correlation between the different variables of this study led this researcher to further examine if attitude, self-esteem and self-efficacy of writing could predict performance of writing.

Accordingly, both the joint effect and the independent influence of the three variables of the current study on students' performance of EFL writing were the focuses of the investigation. A multiple regression technique was used to check if self-esteem, attitude, and self-efficacy of writing could predict the students' performance of writing. Accordingly, these three independent variables were found to significantly predict the students' performance of EFL writing, $F(3, 369) = 35.034$, $p < .05$, $R = .471$ or $R^2 = .222$. To illustrate, the overall correlation (R) was .471. Also, the coefficient of determination was reported as .222 which implies that 22.2% of the variation in the students' writing performance was explained by students' writing self-esteem, attitude, and

self-efficacy belief of writing. Thus, all the three predictor variables contributed significantly to the prediction of performance of EFL writing.

Also, the independent effect that each predictor variable could have on the dependent variable (writing performance) was computed using stepwise regression, and accordingly, “attitude” was identified as the main predictor of the participants’ writing examination scores with $B = .913$ that implies a one unit increase in attitude results in .913 improvement in writing performance of students. Next, “writing self-esteem”, added after ‘attitude’ was included in the model, and the coefficients for “attitude” and “writing self-esteem were found to be 0.711 and 0.423, respectively, which indicate that a one unit (scale) increase in students’ attitude to writing could increase students’ performance of writing by .711 and a one scale increase in students’ self-esteem of writing possibly improves learners’ writing performance by .423. Then, “writing self-efficacy”, as a least predictor variable, added after ‘attitude’ and self-esteem were included in the model, and the coefficients of students’ attitude’, ‘writing self-esteem’ and writing self-efficacy were .621, .331 and .177. This means that a one scale increase in students’ attitude to writing could increase students’ performance of writing by .621, and a one point scale increase in students’ self-esteem of writing seemed to improve learners’ writing performance by .331, and one point scale increase in students’ self-efficacy of writing could enhance learners’ performance of writing by .177.

Finally, the independent effects of the three predictors on students’ performance of writing were computed after controlling age and gender, and for this purpose one-way ANCOVA was employed. Before conducting the ANCOVA test, an attempt was made to test the interactions of the covariate(s) (age and gender) with attitude, self-efficacy and self-esteem of writing). Out of the three interaction tests, only the interactions conducted among students’ attitude’, ‘age’ and ‘gender’ was found to be not significant, $F(207, 164) = 1.265$, $p = 0.058$, $p > .05$. Thus, ANCOVA test was conducted to test the independent effect of attitude on the writing performance of students after age and gender were adjusted. And the analysis showed that, of the three psychological variables of the current study, only attitude was identified as the significant determinant of students’ performance of writing after controlling the effect of age and gender on the dependent variable, $F(72,297) = 1.547$, $p = .006$, at $\alpha = 0.05$ level. Also, the partial Eta Squared value was .273 which indicated that the effect was moderate; according to Cohen (1988), for multiple correlation or regression, the effect size of .02 is small, .15 is moderate and .35 is high, and .273 is moderate.

The two predictors, writing self-esteem and writing self-efficacy could not predict students’ performance of writing if students’ gender and age are controlled.

The outcomes of the regression analysis indicated that the results of the current study seem to be inconsistent with other similar studies. This study identified self-efficacy of writing as the least predictor of writing performance or as a non-predictor of performance when gender and age were controlled. Contrary to this, McCarthy, Meir and Rinderer (1985) found that, out of four psychological variables (confidence of writing, writing anxiety, locus of control and cognitive processing), writing self-efficacy was found to be the only variable which could significantly predict students’ performance of writing.

Conclusions

The study aimed at investigating self-efficacy, self-esteem and attitude as determinants of learners’ performance in EFL writing. The results revealed that the students’ attitude, self-efficacy, self-esteem and performance of writing were significantly correlated to one another. Also, the students’ self-esteem, attitude, and self-efficacy of writing could jointly and

independently predict students' performance of writing. Specifically, the three independent variables composite effect on writing performance of learners was reported as R Square = .222 which means 22.2% of the learners' writing performance was accounted by their writing self-esteem, attitude and self-efficacy.

All the three predictors (students' attitude, self-esteem of writing and confidence of writing), together and independently, could significantly determine learners' performance of EFL writing. However, the students' attitude was found to be the only predictor of the learners' writing examination scores if age and gender are controlled. This confirms that the three affective factors understudy could influence the learners' cognitive engagement which, in turn, can influence their performance of EFL writing, and it is crucial, for EFL teachers, to give attention to these factors in the teaching learning process of writing. Specifically, attitude determines learners' performance of writing.

Thus, the current researcher believes that the EFL writing teaching material writers and the practitioners of EFL writing can be benefitted from the results of the current study. That is, based on the findings of the study, they can take the tenets of the Humanistic theory, which puts learners at the center of learning), as insights and apply them. In other words, this study supports the humanistic theory which views writing as a psychological act and gives priority to the learners' emotions and feelings. Particularly, teachers can improve their students' willingness to attend writing lessons and do writing tasks, by enhancing the latter's self-esteem and confidence of writing, and they can realize this, for example, by providing students with manageable writing tasks, giving positive feedbacks on learners' pieces of writings, respecting learners and approaching them friendly. Also they can improve the students' attitudes towards writing by raising the students' awareness regarding the value of writing for their academic success.

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