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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FIFTH GRADE STUDENT'S WRITING ANXIETY AND BLOCKING WITH THEIR WRITTEN EXPRESSION SKILLS

Research article

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Abstract

In this study, the relationship between writing anxiety and blocking of middle school fifth grade students and their written expression skills was examined. The study group, which was formed by the simple random sampling method conducted with the relational screening model, consisted of 482 fifth grade students attending schools in the city center of Aksaray. Writing Anxiety Scale and Writer's Block Scale were used to collect data. The compositions written by the students were evaluated with the Writing Skills Analytical Rubric. As a result of the statistical analysis, it was determined that the students had a medium level of writing skills and a low level of anxiety. Writer's block was sometimes or occasionally observed in a significant part of the students. It was found that the higher the writing success was, the less writing anxiety and writer's block they had. It was determined that writer's block had a negative and significant effect on writing success. A significant and positive relationship was found between writing anxiety and writer's block. As the writing anxiety increases, the writer's block level also increases significantly. Moreover, it was also examined within the scope of the study whether students' writing anxiety, writer's block and written expression success differed significantly in terms of various variables. The findings obtained were discussed in light of the literature.

Keywords: Turkish education, written expression success, writing anxiety, writer's block, fifth-grade students

1. Introduction

One of the main goals of mother tongue education is to provide students with the skills and habits of expressing what they see and think and to correctly and effectively design these in oral and written form (Kavcar, Oğuzkan, & Sever, 2005, p.5). In this context, written expression, is one of the most effective tools for individuals to communicate and to express themselves correctly in line with their purpose (MEB, 2006, p.7; MEB, 2019, p.3; Özbay, 2014, p. 122.; Tekşan, 2013a, p.1). The act of writing is one of the most effective ways for the individual to express his/her thoughts and desires, and to communicate understanding of the thoughts and requests of the other party. However, for an individual to be successful in writing, it is not enough for him/her to have advanced skills in one field, but other skills must also be developed (Göğüş, 1978, p.23; Sever, 1998, p.60). The success of an individual in the field of learning to write depends on his/her gaining language and mental skills related to listening, watching, speaking, and reading. This is because the development of one contributes to the development of the other. Writing contributes to the development of many skills as it is intertwined with mental processes as well as language skills. In particular, it helps students expand their thoughts, organize their knowledge, use language, enrich their knowledge, and improve their mental dictionaries (Günes, 2014, p.159). According to Bağcı (2011, p.88) writing is an important skill that includes all the acquisitions in the field of language skills of the individual.

Writing is defined as the "expression of the feelings, thoughts, desires, and events in our minds with various symbols following certain rules" (Güneş, 2014, p.157), and "expressing what we hear, think, see and experience in written form" (Sever, 2000, p.21). Nauman (2007) defines writing as a productive process that requires making observations, analyzing the observations made, and arranging and transcribing them at the same time. When we look at the definitions made, writing appears to be an interactive process based on making meaning between the reader and the author. According to Özdemir (1991, p.121), writing consists of a series of interconnected intellectual activities such as choosing and limiting the subject, linking it to a purpose, and transforming the plan into writing. It is known that writing is a skill that includes mental and physical processes. The systematic structure of writing and the high number of units it is associated with make it a difficult language skill to acquire and learn (Bayat, 2019, p.4). Being a language skill that requires multi-dimensional, interwoven sub-skills causes it to cover a later and longer process. This can be explained by factors such as strict adherence to grammar rules in the writing process and the fear of making mistakes about them; inability to list feelings and thoughts; and underdeveloped insufficient development of cognitive thinking processes or the inability to put them in order. Inadequate practice activities and assessment studies aimed at improving the writing skill at every stage of the teaching process, over time, causes negative attitudes and erroneous perceptions towards writing among students that expressing oneself in writing is a special skill that not everybody has (Karatay, 2011, p. 22). Students' negative attitude towards writing also causes them to have writing anxiety over time. Writing anxiety is one of the important factors that hinder the development of writing skills.

While gaining the writing skill, which has a very important place in the life of the individual, or while using this skill, the individual may experience some concerns. These concerns create situations that the individual can only sometimes overcome (Zorbaz, 2011, p. 2273). According to Yalçın (2018, p.372), one of the important psychological thresholds that we encounter during the use of writing skills is anxiety and its control. The skill of writing, which is accepted to be more difficult in terms of acquisition compared to other language skills, causes individuals to develop a negative attitude towards writing and therefore have writing anxiety, considering the difficult processes it involves. According to Zorbaz (2011, p.2272), writing anxiety is a reaction against writing. This reaction against writing manifests itself emotionally in the form of sadness, anger or fear in cases where writing is compulsory such as a writing assignment, a writing activity in a lesson, or writing an essay for exam purposes, or, at a higher level, physically in the form of developing various cramps. According to Daly and Miller (1975, cited by Tiryaki, 2012, p.15), some factors are effective in the basis of the formation of writing anxiety. They divided these factors into three. The first of these factors is the negative comments on the product that the writer creates, its evaluation by other people, and finally the idea of failure in the writing class.

In studies on writing anxiety, it was revealed that the reaction developed against writing negatively affected the quality of the writing and writing success (Hettich, 1994; Cheshire, 1984; Matthews, 2001, Cited by Özbay & Zorbaz, 2011). Similar results were obtained in studies from primary education to university level in our country, and it was determined that high-level anxiety negatively affected written expression skills (İseri & Unal, 2012; Karakaya & Ülper, 2011; Tiryaki, 2011; Yaman, 2010; Zorbaz, 2010). However, writing anxiety does not have a completely detrimental and inhibiting effect on writing success (Güneş, 2016, p. 165; Yalçın, 2018, p.373). It is important that anxiety is present to a certain extent and is activated in terms of motivating students. Aşılıoğlu and Özkan (2013) state that writing anxiety plays an important role in the development of writing skills in terms of determining, limiting, and arranging one's feelings and thoughts, provided that it is at a moderate level. To eliminate

excessive anxiety that negatively affects students' writing skills, writing activities should be given importance in line with the process-based approach, and students should be encouraged to write (Karakoç Öztürk, 2012). Teachers should provide directive feedback in written expression studies (Deniz & Demir, 2019, p.521), writing methods, strategies, and techniques should be planned and implemented in a way that helps students control their anxiety (Yalçın, 2018, p.373). According to Turkben (2019), a program to be prepared in this direction will also positively affect students' attitudes towards writing and motivate them to the lesson. Besides, it is observed that teachers giving feedback, verbal motivation, spending regular time for writing, being liked by their students, and using different methods are effective in students' gaining writing habits (Tok, Rachim, & Kus, 2014).

Writer's block is one of the affective factors that inhibit students' written expression. Rose (1984, p.3) refers to writer's block as the "failure or inability to start or continue writing due to the lack of basic skills or unwillingness and disbelief". Rose (1983, p.3) states that students with high writer's block spend half or even two-thirds of the time given to them thinking and planning before writing. According to Zorbaz (2010), writer's block can be seen at the beginning of writing as well as during the writing process. This situation, which is seen as wanting to write but not being able to write at the beginning of the writing, may come as a complete halting of writing during the writing process. Baştuğ (2015) points out that writer's block may arise due to lack of subject and content knowledge, time limitation, and external influences such as criticism and examination, and emotional reasons. Writer's block may cause the individual to experience writing anxiety.

How to improve writing skills, which is a high-level cognitive skill, is being discussed intensively all over the world. It is known that many studies have been conducted on written expression skills in our country. However, although there are studies on writing anxiety (Karakaya & Ülper, 2011; Uçgun, 2011; İşeri & Ünal, 2012; Karakoç Öztürk, 2012; Tiryaki, 2012; Sevim & Özdemir Erem, 2013; Aşılıoğlu & Özkan, 2013; Yaman, 2014; Bayat, 2014; Özsoy, 2015) and writer's block (Çecen & Başkan, 2015; Özbay & Zorbaz, 2012; Zorbaz, 2010) having an affective effect on written expression skills, they are not at a sufficient level. It is seen that the majority of the studies are conducted at the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades of primary education or at the university level. However, the studies conducted at the 5th grade level of secondary school are limited. It is important to determine the writing skills of students beginning a new education level and to measure their affective responses to writing. It is thought that the findings obtained from the current study will contribute to this area, where there are a limited number of studies in our country.

1.1.Purpose of the Research

In this study, it was aimed to examine the relationship between writing anxiety and blocking of middle school fifth grade students and their written expression skills. In line with the purpose of the study, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the levels of writing anxiety, writer's block, and written expression success of fifth-grade students?
2. To what extent do fifth-grade students' gender, parents' educational status, family income, and diary-keeping habits affect students' writing anxiety, writer's block, and writing success?
3. What is the relationship between fifth-grade students' written expression success and writing anxiety and writer's block?
4. Is there a significant relationship between writing anxiety and the level of writer's block of fifth-grade students?

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

This research was carried out by the relational screening model to determine the relationship between writing anxiety and writer's block of fifth-grade students and their written expression success. "Screening models are research approaches that aim to describe a past or present situation as it exists" (Karasar, 2017, p.77). The research that examines relationships is often referred to as relational research (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2015, p.23).

2.2. Study Group

The study group consists of 482 fifth grade students from 11 schools randomly determined in Aksaray city center in the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. 232 female students and 250 male students participated in the study. The participants were selected using the simple random sampling method. Fifth-grade students are those who have just finished primary school and have started secondary school. The reason for choosing this group is that they are the first step of the secondary school curriculum, with the 4+4+4 education system regulation implemented in the 2012-2013 academic year. At this stage, if the writing anxiety and detention levels of students are determined, these students will have the opportunity to do various studies in more advanced classes to reduce their writing anxiety and stiffness.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

In this study, the writing skill analytical rubric, the writing anxiety scale, the writer's block scale, and personal information forms were used as data collection tools. Information on validity and reliability studies of these scales are given below.

Writing Skill Analytical Rubric: This rubric for evaluating writing skills was developed by Sezer (2005). A rubric is the evaluation of student performance expected at the end of a certain teaching process by dividing it into different dimensions and levels. The achievements that students are expected to exhibit in their writings are divided into five dimensions and performance definitions for four different performance levels are given for each dimension. The scores corresponding to these performances are also shown. With the help of this tool, it will be easier to evaluate a student's writing and give feedback to him/her. In order to determine the reliability of the evaluation form, the reliability coefficient of the data collection tool on the sample was calculated. The reliability coefficient of the Writing Skills Analytical Rubric tool according to the student texts was found to be .92. In addition, the method of harmonization between coders was used. Student texts were scored independently by two experts. The correlation coefficient between the scores given by the raters was examined through the Pearson Correlation analysis. The correlation coefficient between the two raters was calculated as 0.81. Since this result is above 0.70, it can be said that the evaluation form is reliable.

Writing Anxiety Scale: The Writing Anxiety Scale, which was developed as a 26-item scale by Daly and Miller (1975), became a valid and reliable 21-item scale as a result of adaptation, validity, and reliability studies into Turkish by Özbay and Zorbaz (2011). As a result of the principal components factor analysis conducted to determine the factor structure of the scale, five items (items 6, 7, 8, 11 and 21) that did not fit the structure of the scale, or were loaded on more than one factor, were removed from the original scale consisting of 26 items. It was observed that the remaining 21 items formed a structure with four sub-factors with an eigenvalue above 1. Accordingly, the first factor of appreciation consists of 5 items; the second factor, prejudice, consists of 7 items; the third factor, evaluation anxiety, 6 items; and the fourth factor, sharing what is written, 3 items. It was determined that these four factors together explained 53.04% of the variance regarding the scale. According to the results of the reliability

studies of the Writing Anxiety Scale, it was found that the item total test correlations were above 3, the internal consistency coefficient obtained for the whole scale was 0.90, and were 0.84, 0.79, 0.68, 0.68 for the sub-factors, respectively. It can be said that the findings obtained indicate that the measurement tool is quite reliable. It can also be said that writing anxiety increases with lower scores obtained from the scale, and decreases with higher scores. In the present study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient calculated to determine the reliability of the scale was found to be 0.90 for the total scale.

Writer's Block Scale: The items of the scale measuring writer's block (9 items), which was developed by Mike Rose (1981), were adapted into Turkish by Özbay and Zorbaz (2012) with the addition of one extra item. The scale is a 5-point Likert type scale having the options of "almost always", "often", "sometimes", "occasionally", and "almost never". During the adaptation, the rotated principal components factor analysis was used to obtain information on the validity of the scale on the data obtained. As a result of the factor analysis, it was determined that these items consist of a single factor explaining approximately 43% of the total variance. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient calculated to determine the reliability of the scale was found as 0.84. The data obtained with the Writer's Block Scale was entered into the computer with the following scores: the expression "almost always" was scored as 1 point, "often" 2, "sometimes" 3, "occasionally" 4, and "almost never" as 5 points. According to this, scores between 10-18 indicate writer's block is "almost always" seen, scores between 19-26 indicate it is "often" seen, scores between 27-34 indicate it is "occasionally" seen, scores between 35-42 indicate it is "sometimes" seen and scores between 43-50 indicate that writer's block is "almost never" seen in individuals. Writer's block increases as the scores obtained from the scale decrease, and decreases as the scores increase. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient calculated to determine the reliability of the scale was found to be 0.86. The result shows that the scale is reliable.

Personal Information Form: Information such as students' age, gender, parents' income and education levels, and diary-keeping habits were obtained through the "Personal Information Form".

2.4.Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each scale in analyzing the data for the first research problem. At this stage, total scores from three scales were analyzed in terms of group distributions. Accordingly, the group's arithmetic means, median, standard deviation, variance, skewness and kurtosis coefficient, range, minimum and maximum values, and standard error of the arithmetic mean were calculated at each grade level.

For the second research problem, the predictive powers of the independent variable on each scale score were calculated and a multiple linear regression analysis was performed. For the third and fourth problem of the study, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was calculated in a binary way for all scale scores.

3. Results and Comments

In this section, answers to the research problems are given in order.

3.1. What are the levels of writing anxiety, writer's block, and written expression success of fifth-grade students?

In order to find an answer to the first problem of the study, descriptive statistics results were analyzed based on the total scores obtained from the scales of writing anxiety, writer's block, and written expression skills. Detailed statistics regarding these results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistical results of 5th grade written expression skill, writer's block, and writing anxiety scales total scores 1

Participant	Written Expression Skill	Writer's Block	Writing Anxiety	
	Number	482	482	482
	Lost Data	0	0	0
Mean	10.65	39.26	90.66	
Median	10	41	92	
Standard Deviation	3.38	8.08	16.39	
Variance	11.40	65.29	268.47	
Skewness	0.61	-1.26	-0.51	
Kurtosis	-0.14	1.58	0.42	
Range	15	36	89	
Minimum	5	14	33	
Maximum	20	50	122	
Standard Error	0.15	0.37	0.75	

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistical results from the total scores obtained by middle school 5th-grade individuals in written expression skills, writer's block, and writing anxiety scales. Accordingly, when the mean, median, skewness, and kurtosis values are examined together, the written expression skill and writing anxiety scores of secondary school 5th-grade individuals vary between -1 and +1. Hence, it is seen that these groups have a normal distribution. However, writer's block scores do not have a normal distribution according to the coefficients of skewness and kurtosis. The scores of this scale show a skewed distribution to the left.

3.2. To what extent do fifth-grade students' gender, parents' education level, family income level, and diary-keeping habits predict students' written expression success, writer's block, and writing anxiety?

A multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to determine the extent that middle school 5th-grade students' gender, parents' educational status, family income, and diary-keeping habits predicted students' written expression skills, writer's block, and writing anxiety. Accordingly, the predictive power of each variable on written expression skill, writer's block, and writing anxiety scale scores were examined. The results of this analysis are given in Tables 2, 3 and 4 below.

Table 2. Regression model for written expression skill scores²

Model	R	R ²	Standard Error of Estimation	Degree of Freedom-1	Degree of Freedom-2	p
1	0.43	0.18	3.08	5	474	0.000**

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

Examining Table 2, it can be seen that the multiple linear regression model established for written expression skill scores was found to be significant. Accordingly, independent variables (gender, education status of the mother, educational status of the father, family income, and diary-keeping habits) significantly predict 18% of the dependent variable (written expression skill). Variance analysis results for the regression model are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *The Analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model3*

Model	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F	p
Regression	991.65	5	198.33		
Error	4484.32	474	9.46	20.96	0.000**
Total	5475.97	479			

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 3 is examined, the regression model established seems significant. The coefficients and significance of the independent variables in the regression model are given in Table 4.

Table 4. *Coefficients of the independent variables in the regression model4*

Model	β	Standard Error	Standardized β	t	p
Constant	10.33	0.96		10.74	0.000**
Gender	1.89	0.30	0.28	6.30	0.000**
Mother's Education Level	-0.03	0.17	-0.01	-0.15	0.881
Father's Education Level	0.29	0.17	0.01	1.67	0.096
Family Income	-0.17	0.08	-0.11	-2.22	0.027*
Diary Keeping Habit	-1.56	0.31	-0.23	-4.98	0.000**

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

Examination of Table 4 shows that the regression equation created to predict the scores of the written expression skill, gender, family income status, and diary-keeping habit, which are among the independent variables, yielded significant results. Accordingly, the regression equation created for written expression skills is given below and it can be stated that the education level of the parents is not effective on students' written expression skills.

$$\text{Written expression skills} = 10.33 + (0.28 * \text{Gender}) + (-0.01 * \text{Mother's education level}) + (0.01 * \text{Father's education level}) + (-0.11 * \text{Family income}) + (-0.23 * \text{Diary keeping habit})$$

Figure 1. *Regression equation created to predict written expression skills1*

Table 5 shows the comparisons between averages for written expression skills, gender, family income, and diary-keeping habits.

Table 5. Comparison results between means of written expression skills, gender, family income, and diary-keeping habit⁵

Variable	Difference Between Means	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F or T-Test Results	P
Gender	-3.55	-	448	-	-11.99	0.000**
Family Income	Between-groups	220.59	6	36.77	3.32	0.003*
	In-group	5260.85	475	11.08		
	Total	5481.44	481			
Diary Keeping Habit	3.31	-	448	-	9.62	0.000*

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 5 is examined in terms of gender, written expression skills seem to be significantly more different in favor of female students. Also, a significant difference is seen in the written expression skills of the students according to the income of the family ($F(6-475)=3.32, p<0.05$). It was observed that the higher the income level was, the higher the written expression skill levels of the students were. When the table is analyzed in terms of diary-keeping habits, significant differences are observed in favor of diary keeping behavior. This finding shows that the habit of keeping a diary is effective in written expression skills.

The results of the regression model created to predict writer's block scale scores are given in Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8.

Table 6. The regression model for writer's block scores⁶

Model	R	R ²	Standard Error of Estimation	Degree of Freedom-1	Degree of Freedom-2	p
2	0.30	0.09	7.75	5	474	0.000**

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 6 is examined, the multiple linear regression model established for writer's block scores was found to be significant. Accordingly, the independent variables (gender, education status of the mother, educational status of the father, family income, and diary-keeping habit) significantly predict 1% of the dependent variable (writer's block). Variance analysis results for the regression model are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. The Analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model⁷

Model	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F	p
Regression	2908.42	5	581.69	9.69	0.000**
Error	28467.54	474	60.06		
Total	31375.97	479			

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 7 was examined, the regression model established was found to be significant. The coefficients and significance of the independent variables in the regression model are given in Table 8.

Table 8. Coefficients of the independent variables in the regression model8

Model	β	Standard Error	Standardized β	t	p
Constant	36.34	2.42		14.99	0.000**
Gender	3.25	0.75	0.20	4.31	0.000**
Mother's Education Level	-0.10	0.42	-0.02	-0.24	0.808
Father's Education Level	1.07	0.44	0.15	2.44	0.015*
Family Income	-0.31	0.19	-0.08	-1.63	0.104
Diary Keeping Habit	-2.09	0.79	-0.13	-2.65	0.008*

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 8 is analyzed, in the regression equation created to predict writer's block scores, the independent variables of gender, father's education level, and diary-keeping habits, were found to have yielded statistically significant results. According to the findings obtained, the education level of the mother and family income does not affect the writer's block level of the students. Accordingly, the regression equation created for writer's block is given below.

$$\text{Writer's block} = 36.34 + (0.20 * \text{Gender}) + (-0.02 * \text{Mother's education level}) + (0.15 * \text{Father's education level}) + (-0.08 * \text{Family income}) + (-0.13 * \text{Diary keeping habit})$$

Figure 2. The regression equation created to predict writer's block scores2

The comparisons between the means made for gender, father's income, and diary-keeping habits are given in Table 9.

Table 9. Results of comparison between the means of gender, father's education level, and diary-keeping habit for writer's block9

Variable	Difference Between Means	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F or T-Test Results	P
Gender	-3.94	-	480	-	-5.51	0.000**
Father's Education Level	Between-groups	1507.84	5	301.57	4.80	0.000*
	In-group	29896.26	476	62.81		
	Total	31404.10	481			
Diary Keeping Habit	3.35	-	478	-	4.56	0.000*

When Table 9 is analyzed, it is seen in terms of writer's block that the father's lack of education and diary-keeping habits create a positively significant difference in favor of girls in terms of gender. According to the analysis, it is seen that the education level of the father has an effect on students' writer's block level and that girls have less writer's block compared to boys. According to the data in the table, it was determined that students who did not keep a diary experienced writer's block more than those who kept a diary.

The results of the regression model created to predict writing anxiety scale scores are given in Tables 10, 11, and 12.

Table 10. *The regression model for writing anxiety scores*10

Model	R	R ²	Standard Error of Estimation	Degree of Freedom-1	Degree of Freedom-2	p
3	0.33	0.11	15.58	5	474	0.000**

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 10 was examined, the multiple linear regression model established for writing anxiety scores was found to be significant. Accordingly, the independent variables (gender, education status of the mother, educational status of the father, family income, and diary-keeping habit) significantly predict 1% of the dependent variable (writing anxiety). Variance analysis results for the regression model are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. *The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model*11

Model	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F	p
Regression	13744.45	5	2748.89		
Error	115117.88	474	242.87	11.32	0.000**
Total	128862.33	479			

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 11 is examined, the regression model established seems significant. The coefficients and significance of the independent variables in the regression model are given in Table 12.

Table 12. *Coefficients of the independent variables in the regression model*12

Model	β	Standard Error	Standardized β	t	p
Constant	87.59	4.87		17.97	0.000**
Gender	6.67	1.52	0.20	4.40	0.000**
Mother's Education Level	0.82	0.84	0.06	0.98	0.329
Father's Education Level	0.72	0.88	0.05	0.81	0.417
Family Income	-0.34	0.38	-0.05	-0.88	0.377
Diary Keeping Habit	-5.92	1.58	-0.18	-3.74	0.000**

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

Table 12 shows that the regression equation created to predict writing anxiety scores, gender and daily attitude habits, which are among the independent variables, was found to have yielded statistically significant results. According to the analysis results, the education level of the parents and the income status of the family do not affect the writing anxiety level of the students. Accordingly, the regression equation created for writing anxiety is given below.

$$\text{Writing anxiety} = 87.59 + (0.20 * \text{Gender}) + (0.06 * \text{Mother's education level}) + (0.05 * \text{Father's education level}) + (-0.05 * \text{Family income}) + (-0.18 * \text{Diary habit})$$

Figure 3. The regression equation created to predict writing anxiety scores³

The comparisons between the means of diary-keeping habit and gender are given in Table 13 for writing anxiety and.

Table 13. Results of the comparison between the means of gender and diary-keeping habit for writing anxiety¹³

Variable	Difference Between Means	Degree of Freedom	T-Test Results	P
Gender	-9.90	448	-9.51	0.000**
Diary Keeping Habit	11.44	448	9.98	0.000*

When Table 13 was examined, a significant difference was found in the writing anxiety of fifth-grade students in favor of girls according to the gender variable. According to the data in the table, it was determined that students who did not keep a diary experienced writing anxiety more than those who kept a diary.

3.3. What is the relationship between fifth-grade students' written expression success and writer's block levels?

To determine whether there is a relationship between fifth-grade students' written expression skills and writer's block scores, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient was calculated between the scores of the two scales. The findings regarding the calculated correlation coefficient are given in Table 14 below.

Table 14. The correlation coefficient between written expression skills and writer's block levels¹⁴

	Written Expression Skills	Writer's Block Level
Written Expression Skills	-	0.517**
Writer's Block Level	0.517**	-

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 14 was examined, a positive, moderate and significant relationship was found between written expression skills and writer's block ($r=0.517$; $p<0.01$). Accordingly, as the written expression skills increase, the writing anxiety scores of the individuals increase significantly. According to the scale analysis, as the writer's block scores increase, the writer's block levels decrease. In other words, as the writing skills of students increase, the writer's block levels of the students decrease. The relationship between these two variables can be seen in the scatter plot in Figure 4.

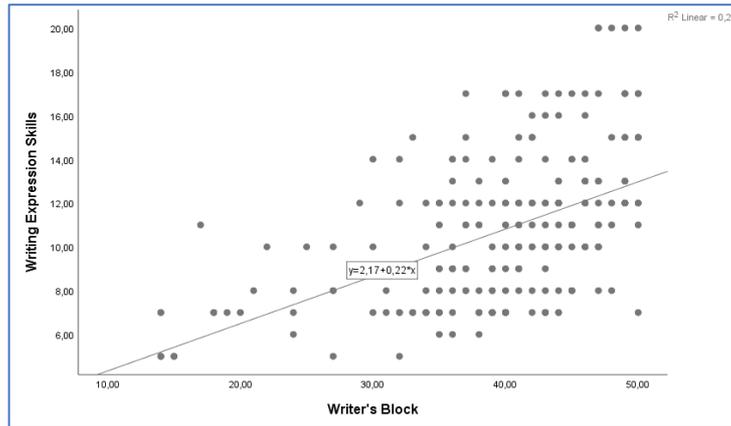


Figure 4. The relationship between written expression skills and levels of writer's block4

3.4. What is the relationship between fifth-grade students' written expression success and writing anxiety?

To determine whether there is a relationship between fifth-grade students' written expression skills and writing anxiety scores, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient was calculated between the scores of the two scales. The findings regarding the calculated correlation coefficient are given in Table 15 below.

Table 15. The correlation coefficient between written expression skills and writing anxiety scores15

	Written Expression Skills	Writing Anxiety
Written Expression Skills	-	0.418**
Writing Anxiety	0.418**	-

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 15 is examined, a positive, moderate and significant relationship was found between written expression skills and writing anxiety ($r=0.418$; $p<0.01$). Accordingly, as the written expression skills increase, the writing anxiety scores of the individuals increase significantly. According to the data analysis method, it can be said that writing anxiety increases as the scores obtained from the scale decrease, and vice versa. In other words, as students' written expression skill scores increase, their writing anxiety decreases. The relationship between these two variables can be seen in the scatter plot in Figure 5.

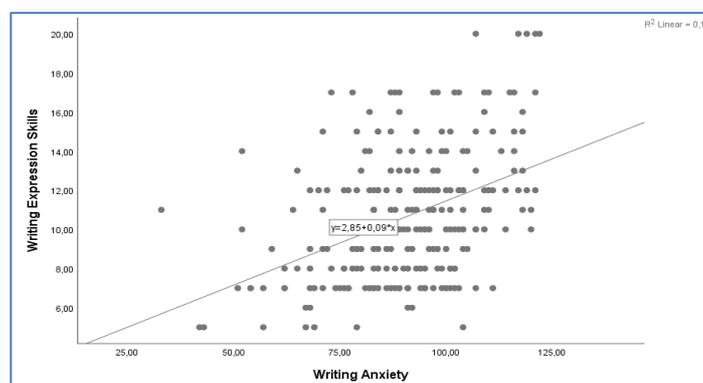


Figure 5. The relationship between written expression skills and writing anxiety5

3.5. What is the relationship between writing anxiety and writer's block level of fifth-grade students?

To determine whether there is a relationship between writing anxiety and writer's block scores of fifth-grade students, the Pearson Product-Moments Correlation coefficient was calculated between the scores of the two scales. The findings regarding the calculated correlation coefficient are given in Table 16 below.

Table 16. *The correlation coefficient between writing anxiety and writer's block level*

	Writing Anxiety	Writer's Block Level
Writing Anxiety	-	0.593**
Writer's Block Level	0.593**	-

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

When Table 16 is examined, a positive, moderate and significant relationship was found between writing anxiety and writer's block ($r=0.593$; $p<0.01$). Accordingly, as writing anxiety increases, the writer's block level of individuals also increases significantly. The relationship between these two variables can be seen in the scatter plot in Figure 6.

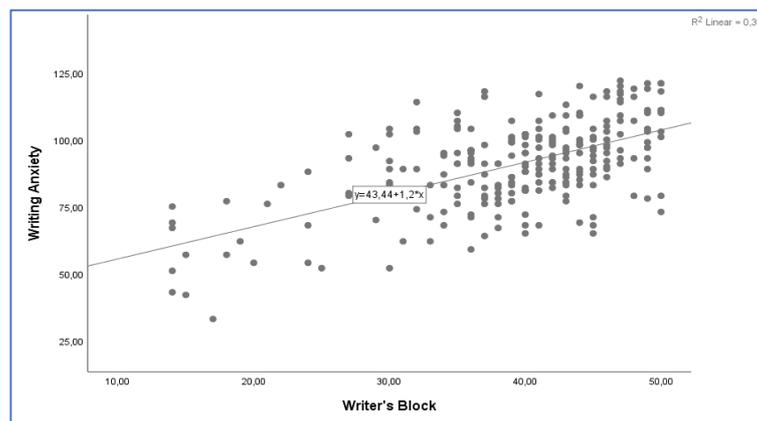


Figure 6. *The relationship between writing anxiety and writer's block level*

4. Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to determine the writing anxiety, writer's block and written expression success levels of middle school fifth-grade students according to various variables; and to examine the effect of writing anxiety and writer's block level on written expression success. According to the findings obtained from the research, it was determined that students' written expression success levels were at a medium level ($X=10.65$) and their anxiety levels were at a low level ($X=90.66$). According to the data analysis method, as the scores obtained from the writing anxiety scale decrease, writing anxiety increases, and as the scores increase, writing anxiety decreases. According to the research data, it is seen that the majority of the students "sometimes" or "occasionally" have writer's block ($X=39,26$). According to the analysis method, as the scores obtained from the scale decrease, writer's block increases, and as the scores increase, the writer's block level decreases.

According to the research findings, it is seen that the writing skills of the students are at a medium level. In other words, it can be said that the writing levels of the students are not at the desired level. There are also studies in the literature that show students' deficiencies in subjects such as sentence, paragraph, planning, spelling and punctuation, and putting a suitable title for

the article (Alkan, 2007; Bahşi & Sis, 2019a; Kırbaş, 2006; Ekinçi Çelikpazu, 2006; Sallabaş, 2007; Arıcı & Ungan, 2008; Uçgun, 2009; Demir, 2011; Ağın & Haykır, 2012; Başkan, 2019; Temel & Katrancı, 2019). When the literature is reviewed, it is accepted that an individual needs to receive education for a long time to develop and use writing skill effectively (Bağcı, 2011, p.89; Karatay, 2011, p.23).

Writing, which is a narrative skill, is a skill that students have the most difficulty to acquire and, accordingly, where they experience the most anxiety. In the present study, it was found that the anxiety level of the students was low. Yaman (2010), on the other hand, determined in his study, in which he examined the writing anxiety of primary school second-grade students, that students had a medium level of writing anxiety. Zorbaz (2010), in his study, in which he aimed to determine the writing anxiety and writer's block levels of secondary school students according to various variables, found that a significant portion of students had a low level of writing anxiety and the number of students with high writing anxiety was low. The findings obtained are broadly similar to those obtained from the present study. In a study conducted to determine the writing anxiety levels of gifted students ($X=70.96$, $sd=11.3$), it was found that students had a low level of writing anxiety (Özsoy, 2015). Writing skills are a high-level creative activity. To reveal this creativity, individuals need to feel free and a person with writing anxiety focuses on anxiety rather than thinking about how and what to write, resulting in unqualified writing products. Studies that show as the level of anxiety increases, the level of academic achievement decreases confirm this view (Aydın & Zengin, 2008; Harris & Coy, 2003; McCraty, 2003, cited by Yıldız, 2019). Consequently, Bacanlı (2011) also states that in cases where anxiety is too much or too little, the act of writing may not be performed successfully, but a moderate level of anxiety can sometimes lead the individual to success. Accordingly, the anxiety level should be at a rate that does not interfere with or distract from writing. Karatay (2011, p.23) states that the negative writing experiences of students in written expression lessons during the teaching process, and insufficient feedback to improve and develop their writing skills cause them to have a negative attitude towards writing over time. This feeling, which the individual experiences with the thought of being unsuccessful during the act of writing, causes writing anxiety. According to Aytan and Tunçel (2015, p.52), there are three factors based on writing anxiety: negative evaluations on writing, fear of self-evaluation, and failure in writing classes. It is stated that turning this into a positive situation in writing depends on continuity and improvement in writing.

Another affective factor associated with writing success is writer's block. Within the scope of the research, writer's block levels of the students were also determined. The majority of the students participating in the study ($X=39.26$) stated that they “sometimes” experienced writer's block. Similarly, Özbay and Zorbaz (2012) found in their study on second-grade students that a significant portion of the students (60%) sometimes or occasionally suffered from writer's block. The findings obtained coincide with the findings of the present study. According to the findings of the study conducted by Çecen and Başkan (2015) at the higher education level, it was determined that writer's block levels of the students studying in the first year of university were higher than the students studying in the second, third and fourth year. It is stated that students' being unfamiliar with the given subject or not having sufficient knowledge about the subject causes writer's block. Therefore, it is beneficial for students who have writer's block to address this problem by doing lots of writing activities.

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the extent to which gender, parents' educational status, family income, and diary-keeping habits of secondary school 5th-grade students predicted students' written expression skills, writer's block and writing anxiety levels. Accordingly, the predictive power of each variable on written expression skills, writer's block, and writing anxiety scale scores were examined. In the study,

it was seen that independent variables predicted 18% of students' written expression skills. It was also determined that the education level of the parents did not affect written expression skills. However, in the studies conducted by Sallabaş (2007), Demir (2011), Yasul (2014), Çelik (2012), and Bahşi and Sis (2019), the total scores of the participating students differed significantly according to the education level of the parents. As the education level of parents increases, the written expression skills of the students increase. This finding conflicts with the findings obtained from the present study.

When the findings obtained from the study were analyzed in terms of the gender variable, it was seen that the written expression skill scores of the girls were better than those of the boys. While the writing skill levels of the students participating in the study conducted by Bahşi and Sis (2019) did not show a significant difference in terms of gender in 5th-grade students, it did show a significant difference in the 8th-grade students. Many studies have concluded that writing skills differed significantly in favor of girls by gender (Ağın Haykır, 2012; Arıcı & Urgan, 2008; Başkan, 2019; Belet & Yaşar, 2007; Bölükbaş & Özdemir, 2009; Canitezer, 2014; Doğan & Özçakmak, 2014; Karaca, 2019; Kaynaş, 2014; Takımcıgil Özcan, 2014; Tüfekçioğlu, 2010; Yörüsün, 2013). Contrary to these studies, in the studies of Coşkun (2006), Sallabaş (2007), Yılmaz (2008), and Yasul (2014), no significant relationship was found between students' gender and written expression skills.

In this study, a significant difference was determined in the written expression skills of the students by the family income variable ($F(6-475)=3.32, p<0.05$). It was observed that the higher the income level was, the higher the written expression skill levels of the students were. There are other studies supporting this finding (Arıcı & Urgan, 2008; Bahşi & Sis, 2019; Çelik, 2012; Sallabaş, 2007; Temur, 2006). According to these results, it can be stated that as the income level of the family increases, the educational opportunities they offer to their children also increase.

It was determined that written expression skills showed a statistically significant difference by the "diary-keeping habit" variable. When data were analyzed in terms of the diary-keeping habit, significant differences were observed in favor of diary keeping behavior. The studies conducted by Aktan (2013), Çelik (2012), and Bahşi and Sis (2019) show that the diary-keeping habit is effective on written expression skills. Uçgun (2014) also found that students' writing dispositions differed in favor of those who kept a diary in terms. In the study conducted by Sallabaş (2007, 2009), although the average score of written expression skills of primary school fifth-grade students who had diary-keeping habit was higher than the students who did not have the habit, no significant difference was found between written expression skills and diary-keeping habits. Zorbaz (2010), on the other hand, found in her research that the written expression achievement level of primary school second-grade students did not differ significantly by their diary-keeping status. However, it was determined that keeping a diary regularly, or even irregularly, made it easier to express feelings and thoughts in writing, and as a result, students who kept a diary had a low level of writing anxiety and writer's block and better written expression skills. For this reason, primary education second-stage students should be encouraged to keep a diary regularly.

The multiple linear regression model established for writer's block scores was found to be significant. Accordingly, the independent variables (gender, education status of the mother, educational status of the father, family income, and diary-keeping habit) significantly predict 1% of the dependent variable (writer's block). In the regression equation created to predict writer's block scores, gender, father's education level, and diary-keeping habits, which are independent variables, were found to have yielded significant results. The writer's block level of fifth-grade students varied significantly according to students' diary-keeping status.

Accordingly, it was determined that students who did not keep a diary experienced writer's block more than those who kept a diary. According to a study conducted by Özbay and Zorbaz (2012), the writer's block level of primary education second-stage students had a statistically significant variation depending on their diary-keeping status. Accordingly, it was determined that students who did not keep a diary experienced writer's block more than those who kept a diary. In the present study, when the writer's block levels of the students were examined by the gender variable, it was seen that girls experienced less writer's block than boys. In both the studies conducted by Özbay and Zorbaz (2012) on secondary school students and Çecen and Başkan (2015) on university students, when the levels of writer's block were examined by gender, it was found that girls experienced less writer's block than boys, but the difference between girls and boys was not statistically significant.

According to another finding obtained from the present study, the writer's block levels of students significantly varied by the education level of the father. As fathers' education levels increase, the writer's block levels of the students decrease. The study conducted by Ozbay and Zorbaz (2012) shows that the writer's block levels of primary school second-stage students do not change according to the education level and occupation of the parents, socioeconomic level, and the average monthly income of the family. In the study conducted by Çeçen and Başkan (2015) on university students, no significant difference was found between the education levels of the students' parents and their levels of writer's block. According to the current research findings, the education level of the mother and family income does not affect the writer's block level of the students.

Within the scope of the study, the multiple linear regression model established for writing anxiety scores was found to be significant. Accordingly, the independent variables (gender, education status of the mother, educational status of the father, family income, and diary-keeping habit) significantly predict 1% of the dependent variable (writing anxiety). In the regression equation created to predict writing anxiety scores, the variables of gender and diary-keeping habit, were found to have yielded significant results. It was determined that students who did not keep a diary experienced writing anxiety more than those who kept a diary. Zorbaz (2010) and Uçgun (2011) and Güneyli (2016) found that students who kept a diary had a low level of writing anxiety.

When the writing anxiety levels of fifth-grade students were examined by gender, it was found that girls had less writing anxiety than boys. Other studies support these findings. Zorbaz (2010), Uçgun (2011), Aşlıoğlu and Özkan (2013), Güneyli (2016), and Deniz and Demir (2020) reported that girls had lower levels of writing anxiety than boys. Unlike the results of the current study, Tekşan (2013b) revealed that girls had lower levels of writing anxiety compared to boys. The studies conducted by Yaman (2010), Temel (2018), and Yılmaz (2019) could not detect a significant difference between the writing anxiety scores of male and female students. Karakaya and Ülper (2011), İşeri and Ünal (2012), Tiryaki (2012), Demir (2016), Kalaycı and Erdoğan (2017), and Demir and Çiftci (2019) who conducted studies on university students and teacher candidates, did not find a significant difference between female and male students in terms of writing anxiety. Although there are many studies on the level of writing anxiety in terms of the gender variable, many different results have emerged. Differences may have emerged depending on age group, intelligence level, study group, and schools.

According to the analysis results of the present study, the education level of the parents, and the income status of the family do not affect the writing anxiety levels of students. However, the findings of the research conducted by Temel (2018) and Yılmaz (2019) revealed that students whose parents had low education levels (who were not literate) had higher levels of writing anxiety. It is stated among the research findings of İşeri and Ünal (2012) that the writing

anxiety levels of Turkish teacher candidates did not differ by the monthly income of their parents. In the study conducted by Karakaya and Ülper (2011), it was found that writing anxiety of students did not show a significant difference based on the education status of the parents. According to the results of the research conducted by Özsoy (2015), the education level of the parents affecting the writing anxiety levels of gifted students was statistically significant.

A positive, moderate and statistically significant relationship was found between written expression skills and writer's block of fifth-grade students ($r=0.517$; $p<0.01$). Accordingly, as written expression skills increase, the writing anxiety scores of the individuals increase significantly. According to the scale analysis, as writer's block scores increase, writer's block levels decrease. In other words, as the writing skills of students increase, writer's block levels of the students decrease. Baştuğ (2015), in his study investigating the effect and size of writing disposition, attitude, and writer's block on primary school fourth-grade students' writing achievement, determined that writer's block negatively and significantly affected writing achievement. In the study conducted by Yıldız (2016) to determine the effect of writing attitudes and writer's block on writing achievement of Syrian students learning Turkish as a foreign language, it was found that writer's block negatively affected writing achievement. While some students experienced writer's block at the beginning of the writing process, others experienced it in the middle of the writing process. In a study conducted by Akpınar (2007), no significant relationship was found between writer's block and writing performance.

A positive, moderate and statistically significant relationship was found between fifth-grade students' written expression skills and writing anxiety ($r=0.418$; $p<0.01$). According to the data analysis method, it can be said that writing anxiety increases as the scores obtained from the scale decrease and vice versa. In other words, as students' written expression skill scores increase, their writing anxiety decreases. Accordingly, as written expression skills increase, the writing anxiety of the individuals decreases significantly. In the research conducted by Zorbaz (2010), it was determined that writing anxiety decreases as the achievement in written expression and Turkish class increases. This finding is in line with the findings of the current study. Writing anxiety is related to individuals' desire to write or their tendency to avoid writing (Faigley, Daly, & Witte, 1981). According to Holladay (cited from the study in 1981 by Tiryaki, 2011), those who have writing anxiety fear situations that require writing skills, are afraid of evaluation of their writings with the thought that they will be evaluated negatively, avoid writing as much as possible and feel destroyed and damaged when they are forced to write. Tighe (1987) states that students with high writing anxiety have low self-esteem lag in writing skills, and that writing anxiety inhibits the development of writing skills. He also states that students with a high level of writing anxiety avoid other lessons that can help them with writing.

A positive, moderate and statistically significant relationship was found between writing anxiety and writer's block levels of the students who participated in the study ($r=0.593$; $p<0.01$). Accordingly, as writing anxiety increases, the writer's block level of individuals also increases significantly. In a study conducted by Zorbaz (2010) on primary education second-stage students, a positive, moderate, and statistically significant relationship was found between writing anxiety and writer's block. It was determined that there was a positive, statistically significant but low-level correlation between writing anxiety and writer's block, and form, language, expression, spelling, and punctuation. The study conducted by Akpınar (2007) revealed a significant and positive relationship between writing anxiety and writer's block. Accordingly, as writing anxiety increases, the level of writer's block increases. This finding is in line with the current research findings.

Writing skill is a skill that should be considered important not only for Turkish lessons but also for all areas of life in students' academic life. In this respect, it is necessary to have primary school students, in particular, and secondary school students gain the ability to express their feelings and thoughts. It is necessary to devote more time to writing, which has an inherently complex and internal process, intending to make students consider writing as a necessity. Again, it is considered very important to improve the writing skill for the student to use his/her mother tongue effectively and to gain effective communication skills. For this, teachers should concentrate on practice-oriented activities rather than knowledge for students to gain writing skills and reach the desired level. Writing should be handled as a process consisting of various stages (preparation, drafting, review/arranging/development, editing, and presentation/publishing) and the activities to be done at every stage should be meticulously performed. Teachers should follow this development process closely, give constructive feedback, and motivate students to write. Writing practices should be carried out with other language skills. The writing process involves extremely intense and complex cognitive processes. Affective processes are necessary for these cognitive processes to be processed effectively and efficiently. Therefore, the effectiveness of cognitive and affective methods used to improve students' written expression levels should be further researched and developed.

5. Conflict of interests

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest.

6. Ethics committee approval

The author confirms that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in their country.

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