

MAKING PEACE WITH ANXIETY THROUGH WRITING THE ROLE OF SELF-REFLECTION AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN INCREASING SELF-AWARENESSRisa Kusuma Ningrum¹¹ Universitas Negeri Islam Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia**Corresponding Author:**

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Abstract

The feelings of anxiety experienced by an individual are often related to the inability to express and manage emotions appropriately. This study aims to examine the role of writing as a medium for self-reflection and emotional regulation in helping individuals come to terms with their feelings. The method used was a qualitative approach with a literature study through various sources relevant to the concepts of emotion and self-awareness. The results of the study indicate that writing can be an effective means of catharsis in channeling emotions, reducing overthinking, and helping to understand and accept emotional conditions. Writing also acts as a dialogue with oneself that encourages increased awareness and emotional stability.

Keywords: Emotional Regulation, Expressive Writing, Self-Awareness, Self-Reflection



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INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, there are many phenomena of individuals feeling confused, overthinking and emotionally unstable, which is quite worrying. The Indonesian National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS), the first national mental health survey to measure the incidence of mental disorders in teenagers 10-17 years old in Indonesia, shows that

one in three Indonesian teenagers has a mental disorder. This figure is equivalent to 15.5 million and 2.45 million teenagers. Adolescents in this group are adolescents diagnosed with mental disorders in accordance with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), which is a guide for diagnosing mental disorders in Indonesia (gloriabarus, 2022).

An individual's tendency to harbor emotions is often influenced by fear of social judgment and limited safe space for expressing feelings. Conditions like this cause negative emotions to not be channeled adaptively, thus potentially causing psychological pressure such as stress, anxiety and overthinking. In this context, individuals who do not have appropriate coping strategies will experience difficulty in dealing with the negative emotions that arise (Nabila et al., 2024). Apart from that, the need to express feelings that are difficult to express verbally is important, because pent-up emotions will worsen mental health conditions if they are not channeled through the right media (Nurdin et al., 2024).

Emotions that are not channeled healthily will have various negative impacts on psychological conditions, such as increased stress, anxiety and even mental fatigue. When an individual tends to suppress or ignore his emotions, psychological stress will accumulate and trigger emotional imbalance. In one study, it was stated that emotional burdens that are not managed effectively have a significant influence on the emergence of stress and anxiety (Ningtyas et al., 2024). In addition, ongoing emotional stress will develop into emotional and mental exhaustion (burnout), which is characterized by psychological fatigue, decreased motivation, and disruption in daily functioning (Sari & Aprilia, 2025).

Writing can be a simple and easy alternative to express emotions that are difficult to express directly. In psychological studies, writing is an activity that involves expressing thoughts, feelings and emotional experiences in written form as a form of catharsis. This activity is not only easy to access, but can also be done by anyone in various conditions and without requiring direct professional assistance. A study states that writing is a constructive form of channeling emotions, where a person can express their inner thoughts and feelings freely (Isrosa, 2022). Writing is also known as a simple and effective self-healing approach in helping someone manage stress and improve mental health (Belangi, 2024)

Writing not only expresses emotions, but is also a process of understanding the meaning behind existing feelings. This process plays a role in increasing self-awareness, so that you can recognize, accept and manage emotions adaptively. Writing also helps organize thoughts that were initially unstructured to become clearer and more focused. Therefore, writing not only functions as a means of expression but also as an emotional regulation strategy so it is worthy of further discussion.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a literature review as its research design. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon, especially those related to human experiences, emotions, and personal meanings. In this study, the qualitative approach was considered appropriate for exploring emotional experiences and examining the role of writing as a medium for self-reflection and emotional regulation.

Literature study, also known as library research, is a method that relies on written sources as the primary data for analysis and interpretation. According to Rizal (2024), literature studies are conducted by collecting and reviewing various relevant sources to obtain comprehensive information regarding the research topic. This method allows researchers to synthesize existing knowledge and develop a conceptual understanding based on previous scholarly findings.

The data in this study were collected from various sources, including scientific journals, books, articles, conference proceedings, and previous research reports related to emotions, self-awareness, reflective writing, and emotional regulation. The selected sources were carefully chosen based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to the discussion of the research problem. By utilizing diverse references, the study aimed to provide a broad and comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon being investigated.

After the relevant literature had been collected, the researcher conducted a systematic review and analysis of the data. The analysis involved identifying key concepts, comparing findings from previous studies, and synthesizing the information into coherent themes related to the emotional benefits of writing. Particular attention was given to studies discussing writing as a form of emotional expression, catharsis, self-dialogue, and a strategy for reducing emotional distress and overthinking.

The findings obtained from the literature were then interpreted descriptively to explain the relationship between writing, self-reflection, and emotional well-being. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how writing can function as an effective medium for helping individuals recognize, express, and accept their emotions. Furthermore, the literature review offers theoretical insights into the potential of writing as a practical strategy for achieving emotional stability and developing greater self-awareness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics of Confused Feelings

Anxiety is a state of confusion and hesitation in facing certain situations. It involves elements of uncertainty and an inability to decide on a clear direction. Psychologically, anxiety can be understood as a negative emotion involving uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, and uncertainty in facing situations. This condition contributes to the emergence of negative emotions that can affect thoughts, behavior, and well-being (Setiawati et al., 2025). In early adolescence, anxiety often arises from academic pressures, social relationships, and internal conflicts that trigger anxiety and overthinking (Mizan, 2025).

Anxiety arises from various psychological factors, such as mindset, experiences, and social relationships. From a cognitive perspective, negative thought patterns and overthinking contribute to anxiety and emotional discomfort. Individuals with negative thought patterns are more susceptible to anxiety due to their non-adaptive interpretation of situations (Faradiana & Mubarok, 2022). Life experiences such as academic pressure, personal conflicts, and life changes also contribute to negative emotions (Mizan, 2025). During adolescence to early adulthood, conditions like this become increasingly complex due to environmental demands and the process of searching for identity.

Writing as a Medium of Emotional Expression

Writing helps someone express their feelings through a process known in psychology as catharsis, which is the release of deep-seated emotions through a safe and constructive medium. When someone writes down their thoughts and feelings, they are indirectly transferring their emotional burdens into written form, making emotions that were initially difficult to express more structured and easier to understand. Writing also helps express feelings that are difficult to express verbally and reduces anxiety and stress levels due to the emotional release process through writing (Nurdin et al., 2024).

The Process of Coming to Terms with Feelings Through Writing

The process of coming to terms with feelings does not occur instantly, but rather goes through several psychological stages, from not understanding, to recognizing, and finally being able to accept the emotions they experience. In the initial stage, individuals are in a state of

emotional confusion, where the feelings they experience cannot yet be clearly identified. Through the activity of writing, individuals begin to express their thoughts and feelings freely, gradually leading to a growing awareness of the emotions they are experiencing (Nurhuda, 2017). Writing is also a form of dialogue with oneself. When someone writes, they are indirectly having a dialogue with themselves, expressing things that are difficult to convey to others. This process creates a safe and comfortable space for reflection, free from social pressure and judgment from the environment (Qolbi et al., 2025a).

Psychological Impact of Writing

Writing has various positive impacts on an individual's psychological state, particularly in managing complex thoughts and emotions. One of the main impacts is a reduced tendency to overthink. Through writing, individuals can express repetitive and unstructured thoughts into written form, thus helping to organize their thoughts to become clearer and more focused. Writing allows individuals to better understand their emotions, thereby reducing excessive cognitive load and decreasing anxiety caused by overthinking (Widjaja et al., 2024).

Writing plays a role in increasing self-awareness. When individuals write about their experiences, feelings, and reflections, the process helps them better recognize emotions, understand their causes, and view themselves more objectively. One study found that writing can improve self-disclosure, which is an indicator of developing self-awareness (Wahyu Eka Febriliyani, 2025).

Writing has also been shown to help regulate emotions. The process of writing helps individuals safely channel their deepest emotions and manage emotional experiences in a more structured way. Writing can significantly improve emotional regulation, allowing individuals to better recognize, control, and express emotions more appropriately (Qolbi et al., 2025b).

CONCLUSION

Writing is not just a routine activity; it can also be a simple healing tool. Through the writing process, individuals can express feelings that are difficult to express verbally, allowing pent-up emotions to be channeled in a healthier way.

Furthermore, writing is an activity that can help individuals understand and recognize emotions more deeply. This process helps individuals articulate unstructured thoughts and feelings more clearly, leading to a stage of emotional acceptance. Therefore, writing serves as a means of self-reflection that helps increase self-awareness and emotional regulation.

Ultimately, coming to terms with feelings doesn't have to involve complex methods. Instead, it can be quite simple, like writing. By making writing a reflective habit, individuals can build a more honest relationship with themselves and achieve emotional stability.

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