



Barriers to engagement: Exploring avoidance strategies in EFL writing classes

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Abstract

This study examined EFL students' academic avoidance in English writing classes through an explanatory sequential mixed-method design. Quantitative data were collected from 358 students using the Avoidance Strategies Scale and the English Writing Motivation Scale. Subsequently, 32 students were selected through criterion sampling for semi-structured interviews to explain the quantitative findings. Of the 358 students, 216 (60.34%) exhibited moderate avoidance, 122 (34.08%) low avoidance, and 20 (5.59%) high avoidance. Avoidance was highest for novelty-related tasks and lowest for help-seeking. No significant gender differences were identified. However, class-level differences were found for help-seeking avoidance, avoidance of effort and challenges, and overall avoidance, with B1 students reporting the highest levels in the significant comparisons. Intrinsic motivation was negatively related to academic avoidance, whereas extrinsic motivation and amotivation were positively related; amotivation showed the strongest associations. The qualitative coding yielded 10 instances of active participation or task completion and 35 instances of difficulty in completing assignments. Help-seeking behaviours were coded as peer or teacher support ($f = 19$), technology-mediated support ($f = 32$), and self-reliance or independent learning ($f = 6$). These frequencies refer to coded responses rather than mutually exclusive participant counts, as individual responses could be assigned to more than one category. Additional barriers reported by the participants included lack of interest, fear of failure, low self-confidence, difficulties with time management, unclear task requirements, shyness, fear of negative feedback, peer influence, and language-related challenges. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of providing clear task instructions, accessible and supportive teacher guidance, and motivationally responsive writing instruction in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Academic avoidance; Classroom dynamics; EFL writing; Help-seeking behavior; Student engagement; Writing anxiety

1. Introduction

Avoidance is commonly conceptualized as a maladaptive behavioral response to fear and anxiety, because it can maintain distress by preventing individuals from confronting and reappraising threatening situations (Hofmann & Hay, 2018). From an emotion-regulation perspective, avoidance is often reinforced because it reduces negative affect in the short term, even though it can intensify difficulties over time by limiting coping opportunities and skill development (Wang et al., 2024). In educational settings, this short-term relief mechanism becomes especially salient when students face tasks that are cognitively demanding, evaluative, or personally threatening (e.g., tasks that may expose perceived weaknesses). Accordingly, students may disengage from academic activities, postpone participation, or withdraw effort when confronted with challenging or anxiety-inducing tasks (Nurmi et al., 2003).

In educational settings, avoidance can manifest in multiple forms, including avoiding help-seeking, withholding effort, or withdrawing from challenging and unfamiliar learning activities. Although such behaviors may temporarily reduce embarrassment and fear of negative evaluation, they can undermine learning by restricting access to feedback, reducing persistence in demanding tasks, and limiting students' opportunities to experiment with new strategies (Karabenick & Dembo, 2011; Ruihua et al., 2025). In addition, research highlights that fear of negative evaluation is a key affective mechanism shaping students' classroom participation and willingness to take risks in learning (Downing et al., 2020). These dynamics are especially relevant in foreign language writing, which is cognitively demanding, often publicly evaluated, and typically involves repeated drafting and revision—conditions that may intensify writing anxiety and, consequently, avoidance behaviors (Li, 2022; Waked et al., 2023).

Building on this perspective, the present study investigates avoidance strategies among EFL

students in writing classes, with specific attention to how motivational and self-regulatory factors shape help-seeking avoidance, effort withdrawal, and reluctance toward novel writing practices. Understanding these avoidance patterns is essential for developing targeted instructional supports that promote engagement, persistence, and writing development.

1.1. Avoidance Strategies in Academic Settings

Academic avoidance behaviors are influenced by students' perceptions of their abilities and their desire for self-worth. Covington (1992) emphasized that students often avoid tasks to protect their self-esteem, especially when faced with the risk of failure. Recent evidence also suggests that when academic performance becomes strongly tied to self-worth, students are more likely to adopt self-protective strategies such as self-handicapping and task avoidance under evaluative pressure (Fairlamb et al., 2022). Avoiding help-seeking, disengaging effort, and withdrawing from challenging tasks are widely recognized as self-protective avoidance strategies that help students manage perceived competence threats and preserve self-worth (Putwain et al., 2016).

Help-seeking, an essential component of self-regulated learning, is closely linked to academic success (Gonida et al., 2019). While adaptive help-seeking promotes learner autonomy and skill development as part of self-regulated learning (Karabenick & Dembo, 2011), many students avoid seeking help because they fear appearing incompetent or being judged by others (Thomas & Tagler, 2019). Recent review evidence further shows that stigma-related concerns and fear of negative evaluation remain among the most commonly reported barriers to help-seeking across educational contexts (Aguirre Velasco et al., 2025). In addition, social and cultural influences, together with perceived support from family and peers, also shape young adults' willingness to seek help (Seamark & Gabriel, 2018; Yıldız & Eldeleklioğlu, 2024). Previous research has shown that students' reluctance to seek help is often associated with fear of negative evaluation, concerns about appearing incompetent, beliefs emphasizing self-reliance, and concerns about confidentiality (Koutra et al., 2024).

Cultural expectations may also play an important role in framing help-seeking, particularly when norms emphasizing independence influence whether seeking assistance is perceived as acceptable or necessary (Arrafii et al., 2025). Rao (2025) argued that Asian students in multicultural academic settings may experience tension between collectivist values and the individual-centered assumptions of psychotherapy, which can heighten avoidance tendencies. Similarly, Çebi and Demir (2019) observed that in Türkiye, seeking psychological help may be interpreted as an admission of failure, reflecting cultural norms that emphasize self-reliance and emotional restraint. Such cultural scripts can discourage open emotional expression and position professional support as a last resort rather than a proactive resource. Beyond contextual factors, individual differences matter as well: higher self-stigma is linked to a reduced likelihood of acknowledging and admitting the need for help, even when support is readily available (Hardinugraha & Zulkaida, 2021). Students often avoid effortful tasks to protect self-worth, increasing the risk of underperformance (Banguit et al., 2026). Effort avoidance limits engagement with challenging tasks critical for skill development, while avoiding novel approaches stifles creativity and adaptability (Bjork et al., 2013; Patzelt et al., 2019).

The use of avoidance strategies is shaped by an interaction among task-related, contextual, and individual factors. Students may be more likely to withdraw effort or reduce their participation when academic tasks feel overwhelming or when they perceive the demands of a learning situation as exceeding their available resources. In particular, anxiety and fear of failure can contribute to a cycle of avoidance and disengagement, especially among students who experience persistent learning difficulties (Eriksen Bergstrand & Xenofontos, 2026). These tendencies may become more pronounced in performance-evaluative situations when students interpret academic demands as threatening rather than manageable. Threat appraisals are associated with unpleasant achievement emotions and poorer academic performance, whereas stronger academic self-efficacy is associated with lower performance-avoidance goal orientation (Malkoc et al., 2023; Tuncel & Ayvaz-Tuncel, 2024).

In addition to task characteristics, students' avoidance tendencies are strongly shaped by the classroom climate and the extent to which they perceive instructional support from the teacher. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory [SDT], a growing body of research indicates that teacher behaviors promoting autonomy support—such as acknowledging students' perspectives, providing meaningful rationales, and encouraging choice—enhance students' motivational quality and engagement by satisfying their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Yang et al., 2022). When these basic psychological needs are satisfied, students are more likely to display higher-quality motivation, sustained engagement, and persistence in learning activities. Conversely, need frustration and autonomy-thwarting environments have been associated with reduced intrinsic motivation, diminished well-being, and increased disengagement behaviors, including withdrawal and avoidance (Earl et al., 2017; Johansen et al., 2025). In this regard, avoidance can be understood as a coping response that emerges when students perceive classroom demands as threatening and feel insufficiently supported to manage academic risks.

Although academic avoidance has been examined within broader research on motivation and self-regulation, empirical work tracing avoidance processes across diverse classroom contexts remains an active but still developing area of inquiry. One prominent form of avoidance is academic self-handicapping, through which students may procrastinate, strategically withdraw effort, or reduce their engagement to protect their self-image in anticipation of possible failure; fear of failure and low self-esteem are among the factors most strongly associated with such behavior (Schwinger et al., 2022). From an instructional perspective, school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports provide a systems-level framework for organizing proactive and preventive behavioral support rather than relying primarily on reactive responses (Simonsen & Sugai, 2019). Complementary evidence indicates that emotionally safe classrooms in which mistakes and help-seeking are normalized can support students' participation, while fair, respectful, and supportive teacher behavior is associated with stronger motivation, confidence, and interest in learning (Eriksen Bergstrand & Xenofontos, 2026; Kahveci, 2023). Within second/foreign language learning, help-seeking avoidance also appears to be context-sensitive. However, evidence from university EFL classrooms did not identify a direct relationship between help-seeking avoidance and the overall classroom social climate; instead, avoidance was negatively related to task orientation, while teacher support and student involvement contributed to language proficiency (Waluyo & Tuan, 2021). Overall, these findings suggest that academic avoidance may be addressed through a combination of supportive and predictable learning environments and targeted efforts to strengthen students' motivation, self-beliefs, and adaptive help-seeking. Nevertheless, claims that such approaches directly improve academic achievement or satisfaction require evidence from interventions explicitly designed to assess these outcomes.

Although previous research has examined academic avoidance in broader motivation and self-regulation contexts, studies focusing specifically on students' avoidance behaviors in EFL writing classes remain limited. Nurmi et al. (2003) examined the relationship between students' individual achievement expectations, task avoidance situations, academic achievements, and satisfaction levels. The research concluded that students with high levels of task avoidance tended to have lower levels of academic achievement and satisfaction. Zuna and McDougall (2004) have highlighted how important it is for educators and administrators to handle behavioral issues in the classroom. They have emphasized once more how crucial it is to manage students' academic avoidance tendencies in the classroom by offering positive behavioral support. Betoret and Artiga (2011) have investigated the relationship between students' psychological needs, learning approaches, avoidance strategies, and academic achievement levels. Turner et al. (2002) have examined the relationship between the learning environment, the avoidance strategies students employ, and their preferences for avoiding innovative approaches in mathematics classes. Almeda et al. (2017) have explored whether students' avoidance of seeking help is associated with their prior knowledge of learning situations. Kösterioğlu et al. (2019) have examined students' achievement goal orientations in terms of the variable of high school type. In the study, they

compared students' achievement goals with their avoidance behaviors. Waluyo and Tuan (2021) explored the patterns of help-seeking avoidance among EFL students and the social climate of EFL classrooms. Considering these findings, it becomes evident that effectively addressing and managing behavioral issues, particularly academic avoidance, is essential for creating a positive and conducive learning environment in classrooms. This involves implementing strategies that provide positive behavioral support and understanding the interconnectedness of individual achievement expectations, task avoidance, and overall academic success and satisfaction.

1.2. The Present Study

This study contributes to second language acquisition research by examining how students navigate writing challenges. Within this context, the problem statement of the study was defined as "What are the avoidance strategies among the EFL students in writing classes?" Accordingly, the following research questions were addressed:

RQ 1) What is the level of avoidance strategies among EFL students in writing classes?

RQ 2) What is the English writing motivation level among EFL students?

RQ 3) Do avoidance strategies of EFL students differ in terms of gender and class level variables?

RQ 4) Is there a significant relationship between the English writing motivation and avoidance strategies levels of EFL students?

RQ 5) What are the EFL students' opinions on their academic avoidance behaviors in writing classes?

1.3 Theoretical Framework (Self-Determination Theory)

To address the research questions above, we adopted Self-Determination Theory [SDT], a prominent framework for understanding motivation and its influence on human behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). SDT proposes that motivation and behavior are shaped by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—which influence both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Students with more autonomous forms of motivation generally demonstrate greater engagement, persistence, and adaptive learning strategies, whereas controlled motivation and amotivation are associated with less optimal educational outcomes (Vansteenkiste et al., 2009). More recent research has consistently demonstrated that supporting these basic psychological needs promotes students' engagement, well-being, academic achievement, and persistence across diverse educational contexts (Howard et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In second and foreign language learning, autonomous motivation has also been associated with greater willingness to communicate, higher engagement, and improved language achievement (Al-Hoorie & Szabó, 2022; Okumura, 2026). The expectation that self-determined behavior contributes to learners' well-being and supports the sustainability of learning outcomes highlights the importance of autonomy in educational settings (Köksoy & Kutluer, 2023). Consistent with this perspective, autonomy-supportive teaching may strengthen students' self-efficacy and deep learning, particularly when meaningful choice and learner agency are accompanied by appropriate structure and instructional support (Lobo, 2025).

In the context of this study, SDT provides a theoretical foundation for examining how different motivational orientations influence students' tendencies to avoid challenges, seek help, and invest effort in English writing classes. By examining avoidance behaviors through the lens of SDT, this study offers insights into the motivational mechanisms underlying EFL students' writing experiences and provides implications for curriculum design and instructional practices.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design to examine EFL students' avoidance behaviors in writing classes. Quantitative data were first collected via the Academic Avoidance Scale and the English Paragraph Writing Motivation Scale, followed by qualitative data

obtained through student interviews (Creswell, 2022; Fraenkel et al., 2012).

2.2. Participants

The quantitative study sample consisted of 358 EFL students enrolled in the International Trade and Finance Department of a state university in Türkiye during the 2024–2025 academic year. A convenience sampling strategy was adopted because the participants were readily accessible and satisfied the inclusion criteria established for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Demographic details are presented in Table 1.

For qualitative data, 32 students were selected using criterion sampling, a purposive sampling method that ensures the inclusion of individuals meeting specific criteria (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The Academic Avoidance Scale categorized students into low, moderate, and high avoidance groups. Based on the predefined score intervals, 122 students (34.08%) demonstrated low levels of avoidance behavior, 216 students (60.34%) demonstrated moderate levels, and 20 students (5.59%) demonstrated high levels. Students volunteering for interviews were chosen from each group to ensure diverse representation, enabling a detailed exploration of their experiences and perspectives.

Table 1

Descriptive data on the students in quantitative part

<i>Variable and Categories</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Male	162	45.3
Female	196	54.7
Class Level		
RA1	162	45.3
A1	196	54.7
A2	162	45.3
B1	196	54.7
B1	162	45.3

Note. Class-level labels are based on CEFR-aligned course placement: RA1: Repeat A1 (beginner); A1: Beginner; A2: Elementary; B1: Pre-intermediate; B2: Intermediate.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

2.3.1. Avoidance Strategies Scale

The “Avoidance Strategies Scale” developed by Betoret and Artiga (2011) was used to measure EFL students’ avoidance behaviors in writing classes. The scale comprises three factors – *Avoiding Novelty*, *Avoiding Help-Seeking*, and *Avoiding Effort and Challenges* – with 15 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all true; 5 = very true) (Betoret & Artiga, 2011). The “Avoiding Novelty” dimension assesses students’ tendency to avoid unfamiliar or cognitively demanding learning situations and to prefer tasks or concepts with which they are already familiar. Representative items include “I prefer to do tasks that are familiar to me before attempting new ones” and “I would not like to have to learn many new concepts in this subject.” The “Avoiding Help-Seeking” dimension measures students’ reluctance to seek assistance when they encounter difficulties during learning. Sample items include “If there is something I do not understand in this subject, I tend to solve it myself instead of seeking help” and “I do not ask questions in class even though I do not understand what is being taught.” Finally, the “Avoiding Effort and Challenges” dimension reflects students’ tendency to minimize effort and avoid demanding learning tasks. Representative items include “I have opted to do those tasks that were easier for me and avoided difficult challenges” and “I have not wanted to take on difficult challenges and tasks in this subject.” In their study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the three subscales were reported as .76, .73, and .84, respectively (Betoret & Artiga, 2011). In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were .76 for Avoiding Novelty, .83 for Avoiding Help-Seeking, and .78 for Avoiding Effort and Challenges. The overall reliability coefficient for the scale was .86. Given that the scale demonstrated satisfactory construct validity and internal consistency during its development (Betoret & Artiga, 2011), it was considered an appropriate instrument for measuring students’ avoidance behaviors in the present study.

2.3.2. English Writing Motivation Scale

The “English Writing Motivation Scale” developed by Karafil (2022) was used to assess the students’ English writing motivation levels. The scale consists of 31 items and three factors as Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation and Amotivation. In the original study, Cronbach’s Alpha for the first factor was found as .95, as .94 for the second factor, and as .79 for the third factor. In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were .92 for the first factor, .91 for the second factor, and .76 for the third factor, indicating satisfactory internal consistency for the present sample.

2.3.3. Semi-structured interview form

Qualitative data were acquired via a semi-structured interview form comprising five open-ended questions. These questions were devised by the researchers in alignment with the study’s objectives. During the formulation of the interview questions, considerations such as clarity, focusing on a single dimension per question, avoiding leading prompts, and facilitating participants to articulate their perspectives were taken into account (Patton, 2002).

The initial draft of the form was created and then forwarded to two field experts, both university academics with expertise in qualitative research and English language education. Following their feedback on content and structure, certain questions were omitted, while others were refined and reworded. Subsequently, the final version of the interview form, comprising a total of five questions, was finalized.

2.4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including arithmetic means and standard deviations, to assess academic avoidance and motivation levels. Independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were conducted to explore differences based on gender and class level. Levene’s test confirmed variance homogeneity ($p > .05$), and Tukey’s HSD test was used for post hoc comparisons. Correlation analysis was conducted to determine whether students’ levels of academic avoidance differed according to their motivation levels.

For qualitative data analysis, the content analysis technique was employed. This systematic approach involves categorizing, theme development, and coding of textual content, using words or phrases that encapsulate the essence of the data. The main objective of content analysis is to unveil meaningful concepts and their interrelationships to illuminate the interview findings. In this study, interview data underwent coding and content analysis. The researchers initially examined students’ views, identifying recurring themes and categories. Responses to each question were then classified under these themes, and their frequencies were tallied, with subsequent interpretation and definition of the findings. An expert in curriculum and instruction reviewed the identified themes and categories to ensure their relevance, leading to consensus.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles for research involving human participants. Ethical approval was granted by the İstanbul Aydın University Educational Sciences Ethics Committee on 29 November 2024 (Decision No. 2024/09) prior to the commencement of data collection. All participants were informed about the aims, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study before participation. They were advised that they could decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, participants’ identities were protected by replacing their names with anonymous identifiers (e.g., S1, S2) in the reporting of the qualitative findings. No personally identifiable information was collected or disclosed.

3. Results

In this section, the findings of the study are presented in accordance with the research questions of the study.

3.1. Avoidance Strategy Levels of EFL Students

The first research question sought to find out the avoidance levels of EFL students in their writing classes. The obtained findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Avoidance Levels of EFL Students

Variable	Mean	SD
Avoid Novelty	2.95	.87
Avoid Help-seeking	2.34	.93
Avoid Effort-Challenges	2.66	.86
Overall Level	2.65	.70

Table 2 presents the findings on EFL students' avoidance levels in their writing classes, showing moderate tendencies across various categories. The mean scores indicate that students moderately avoid novelty ($M = 2.95$), help-seeking ($M = 2.34$), and effort-challenges ($M = 2.66$). The overall avoidance level is $M = 2.65$.

3.2. Writing Motivation Levels of EFL Students

The findings on the English writing motivation level of the EFL students are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
English Writing Motivation Levels of EFL Students

Variable	Mean	SD
Intrinsic Motivation	2.55	.78
Extrinsic Motivation	3.12	.85
Amotivation	1.50	.51

As shown in Table 3, extrinsic motivation had the highest mean score ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .85$), followed by intrinsic motivation ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .78$). Amotivation had the lowest mean score ($M = 1.50$, $SD = .51$). These findings indicate that, among the three motivation dimensions, students reported the highest scores for extrinsic motivation and the lowest scores for amotivation.

3.3. Differences in Avoidance Strategies among EFL Students Based on Gender and Class Level

Another aim of the study was to determine whether EFL students' avoidance levels differed according to gender and class level variables. Independent sample t-test was utilized to see whether the students' avoidance levels differed in terms of gender variable, and the findings are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Independent Samples t-test Results for Gender Variable

Dimensions and gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Avoid Novelty					
Female	196	2.94	.87	-.226	.82
Male	162	2.96	.87		
Avoid Help-seeking					
Female	196	2.28	.95	-1.445	.14
Male	162	2.42	.90		
Avoid Effort-Challenges					
Female	196	2.60	.83	-1.459	.14
Male	162	2.73	.89		
Total Score					
Female	196	2.61	.69	-1.328	.18
Male	162	2.71	.71		

Note. $df = 356$

According to Table 4, no significant difference was found in all dimensions ($p > .05$). One-Way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether students' avoidance strategies differ in terms of class level variable. Descriptive analysis results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for Class Level Variable

Dimension	RA1 M(SD)	A1 M(SD)	A2 M(SD)	B1 M(SD)	B2 M(SD)
Avoiding Novelty	3.07 (.82)	2.58 (.86)	3.00 (.00)	2.97 (.82)	3.00 (.94)
Avoiding Help-Seeking	2.16 (.82)	2.17 (.88)	2.54 (1.00)	2.87 (.84)	2.02 (.83)
Avoiding Effort	2.56 (.88)	2.45 (.79)	2.86 (.87)	3.07 (.66)	2.49 (.95)
Total Avoidance	2.60 (.65)	2.49 (.65)	2.80 (.73)	2.97 (.64)	2.50 (.72)

Note. Values are presented as *M (SD)*. Sample sizes were RA1, *n* = 46; A1, *n* = 123; A2, *n* = 105; B1, *n* = 42; and B2, *n* = 42 (*N* = 358).

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for avoidance strategy dimensions across the five class levels. For Avoiding Novelty, the highest mean score was observed among RA1 students (*M* = 3.07), whereas the lowest mean score was found among A1 students (*M* = 2.58). For Avoiding Help-Seeking, B1 students had the highest mean score (*M* = 2.87), while B2 students had the lowest (*M* = 2.02). Regarding Avoiding Effort, B1 students reported the highest mean score (*M* = 3.07), whereas A1 students reported the lowest (*M* = 2.45). Overall avoidance scores ranged from *M* = 2.49 (A1) to *M* = 2.97 (B1). The results of the one-way ANOVA are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
One-Way ANOVA Results for Class Level Variable

Dimension	<i>F</i> (4, 353)	<i>p</i>	η^2	Significant Tukey HSD Comparisons
Avoiding Novelty	0.75	.561	.008	—
Avoiding Help-Seeking	7.72	< .001	.080	B1 > RA1, A1, B2; A2 > A1; A1 > B2
Avoiding Effort	6.66	< .001	.070	B1 > RA1, A1, B2; A2 > A1
Total Avoidance	5.75	< .001	.061	B1 > A1, B2; A2 > A1

Note. η^2 = eta squared. The greater-than sign indicates that the mean score of the group on the left was significantly higher than that of the group or groups on the right. Pairwise comparisons were conducted using Tukey's HSD test.

For Avoiding Novelty, no significant differences were found among the class levels, *F*(4, 353) = 0.746, *p* = .561. In contrast, significant differences were observed for Avoiding Help-Seeking, *F*(4, 353) = 7.720, *p* < .001, and Avoiding Effort and Challenges, *F*(4, 353) = 6.659, *p* < .001. Tukey's post hoc comparisons revealed that B1 students reported significantly higher levels of avoidance in help-seeking than RA1, A1, A2, and B2 students, whereas RA1 students exhibited the lowest levels of help-seeking avoidance. Similarly, for Avoiding Effort and Challenges, B1 students demonstrated significantly higher avoidance than the other class levels. Regarding the overall avoidance score, a significant difference was found across class levels, *F*(4, 353) = 5.745, *p* < .001. Tukey's post hoc analysis indicated that B1 students had significantly higher overall avoidance scores than students in the other class levels.

3.4. Relationship between English Writing Motivation and Avoidance Strategies among EFL Students

To examine the relationships between students' motivation levels and their academic avoidance behaviors, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted, and the findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Pearson Correlations between Writing Motivation and Academic Avoidance Dimensions

Writing motivation dimension	Avoiding Novelty	Avoiding Help-Seeking	Avoiding Effort	Overall Avoidance
Intrinsic Motivation	-.25**	-.30**	-.28**	-.35**
Extrinsic Motivation	.15**	.10	.18**	.12*
Amotivation	.40**	.45**	.42**	.52**

Note. *N* = 358. Values represent Pearson correlation coefficients. *p* < .05. *p* < .01.

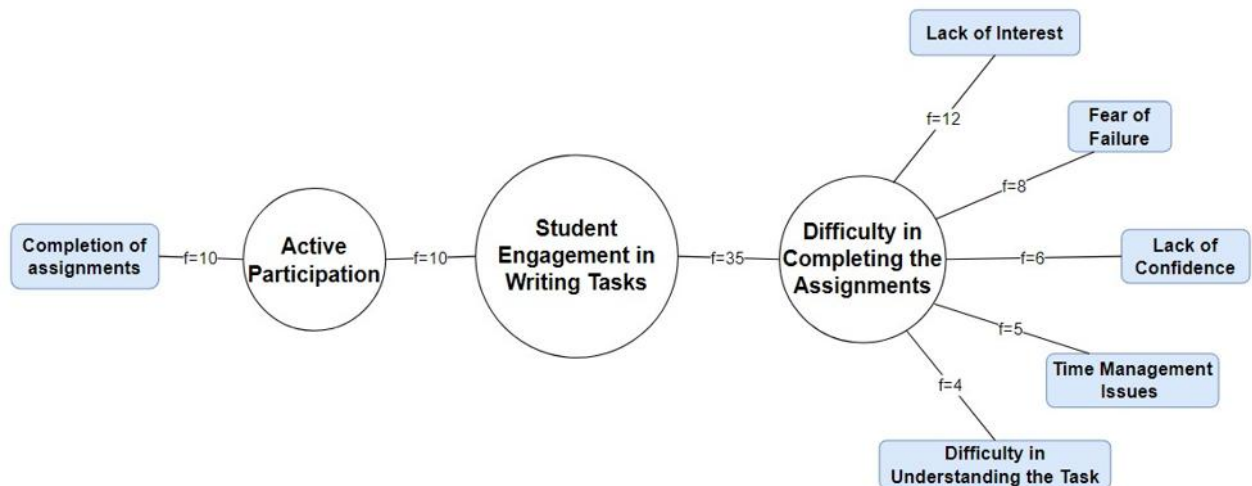
The correlation analysis reveals significant relationships between the dimensions of motivation and academic avoidance behaviors among EFL students in writing classes. There is a negative correlation between intrinsic motivation and all dimensions of academic avoidance. Specifically, intrinsic motivation has a moderate negative correlation with Avoid Novelty ($-.25$), Avoid Help-seeking ($-.30$), Avoid Effort-Challenges ($-.28$), and Overall Avoidance ($-.35$), all of which are significant at the .01 level. The relationships between extrinsic motivation and avoidance dimensions are weaker and positive. Extrinsic motivation shows low positive correlations with Avoid Novelty (.15), Avoid Help-seeking (.10), Avoid Effort-Challenges (.18), and Overall Avoidance (.12). The associations with Avoid Novelty, Avoid Effort-Challenges, and Overall Avoidance are statistically significant ($p < .05$), whereas the Avoid Help-seeking association is reported as $p = .05$ and is not marked as significant under the stated criterion. Amotivation has the strongest positive correlations with avoidance behaviors. Significant moderate to strong positive correlations are observed between amotivation and Avoid Novelty (.40), Avoid Help-seeking (.45), Avoid Effort-Challenges (.42), and Overall Avoidance (.52), all significant at the 0.01 level.

3.5. EFL Students' Perceptions of Their Academic Avoidance Behaviors in Writing Classes

Students were asked whether they fulfilled all the tasks given by the teacher, and the situations where they avoided doing some tasks/assignments in the writing classes. The obtained findings are given in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Student Engagement and Disengagement in Completing English Writing Course Assignments



The findings indicated that most participants reported actively completing the writing assignments assigned by their instructors. Students generally perceived these tasks as beneficial for improving their English writing skills and viewed regular participation as an important component of their language learning process. Several students also stated that they completed additional writing activities beyond the required coursework to further develop their writing abilities. For example, S14 explained, "With the aim of enhancing my skills, I completed all the assignments assigned by the teacher. In addition to this, I also took on extra assignments on my own." Similarly, S16 stated, "Yes, I completed all the essay assignments and submitted them to my teacher. In addition, I wrote extra essays and asked my teacher to check them." These responses suggest that many students demonstrated active engagement by consistently completing assigned tasks and, in some cases, voluntarily extending their writing practice.

Although most students reported completing the majority of their assignments, several factors were found to hinder full participation in writing tasks. Lack of interest emerged as the most frequently mentioned reason for avoidance. Some students explained that they were less willing to complete assignments when the topics were uninteresting or when they could not generate ideas. As S2 stated, "Some writing assignments are boring, and sometimes I cannot produce ideas or write about the topic." Another frequently reported barrier was fear of failure, with participants

expressing concerns about making mistakes or receiving low grades. In addition, lack of confidence reduced students' willingness to complete writing tasks, particularly when they doubted the quality of their work or felt academically inadequate. For example, S1 explained that "I didn't feel like doing it when I felt my knowledge was lacking. ", while S13 noted that uncertainty about the quality of the assignment sometimes led to delayed submission: "I generally completed my assignments. However, there were times when I submitted an assignment a few days late because I wanted to be sure about the work."

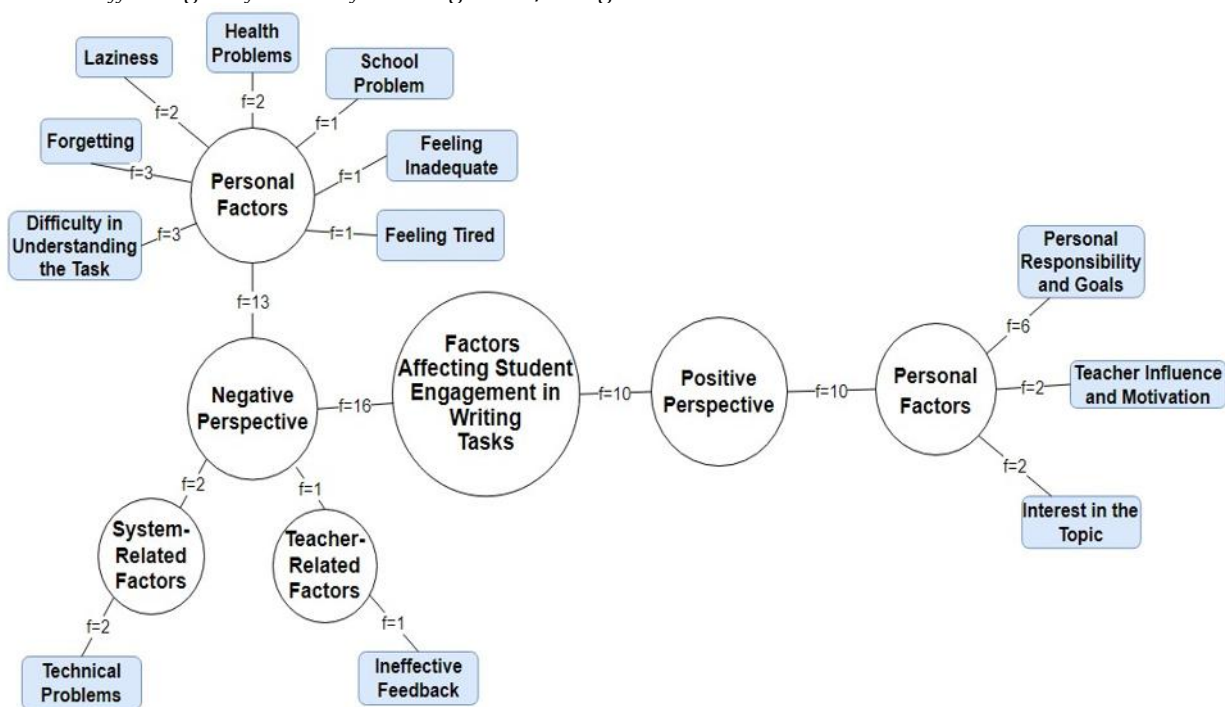
Fear of failure was identified in eight coded responses as a reason for avoiding writing assignments. S2 explained, "I avoid writing assignments because I'm afraid of making mistakes and getting low grades." Lack of confidence was also identified in six coded responses. S15 stated, "Whenever I have to write something, I doubt myself and end up avoiding it altogether."

Five students also mentioned time management was another factor leading to task avoidance. Some of the students' opinions on this issue are as follows: "I often avoid writing assignments because I struggle with managing my time effectively." (S12). "I procrastinate on writing tasks because I underestimate the time needed to complete them." (S18) Lastly, four students indicated that when they could not understand the task, they exhibited avoidance. For example, (S7) stated that "If I don't understand what is expected of me in a writing assignment, I usually avoid it."

These findings indicate that engagement in writing assignments is influenced by factors such as interest, fear of failure, confidence, time management, and task clarity. Students were asked about the factors that affect fulfilling the tasks/assignments, and the findings are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Factors Affecting Fulfilment of Writing Tasks/Assignments



Students' responses revealed two overarching themes regarding the factors affecting the fulfilment of writing tasks and assignments: positive perspectives and negative perspectives. The most frequently mentioned factor in terms of positive perspectives was personal responsibility and goal orientation. Many participants viewed writing assignments as an essential component of their academic and professional development and described completing them as a personal responsibility. Students emphasized that achieving future goals, improving their English proficiency, and succeeding academically motivated them to persist in completing writing tasks despite occasional difficulties. For example, one student stated, "I try to complete my assignments because I know they are essential for my academic success" (S8). Similarly, another student explained, "I complete my assignments to enhance my English skills and to gain insights from my

experienced teachers, aiming to have a better command of English in the future" (S14). In addition, several students indicated that their long-term educational and career goals encouraged them to fulfil writing assignments regularly.

Interest in the writing topic also emerged as an important motivational factor. Students reported that they were more willing to complete assignments when the topic attracted their attention or aligned with their interests. As one student explained, "The most important factor is my interest in the topic. The more interesting the topic is, the more I focus on it and produce more ideas" (S2). Teacher-related factors further strengthened students' engagement. Participants emphasized that approachable, supportive, and encouraging teachers increased their willingness to complete writing assignments. One student remarked, "When my teachers are good, I focus on my classes. Teachers who really listen and are open to questions encourage me to attend classes and take on responsibilities" (S1).

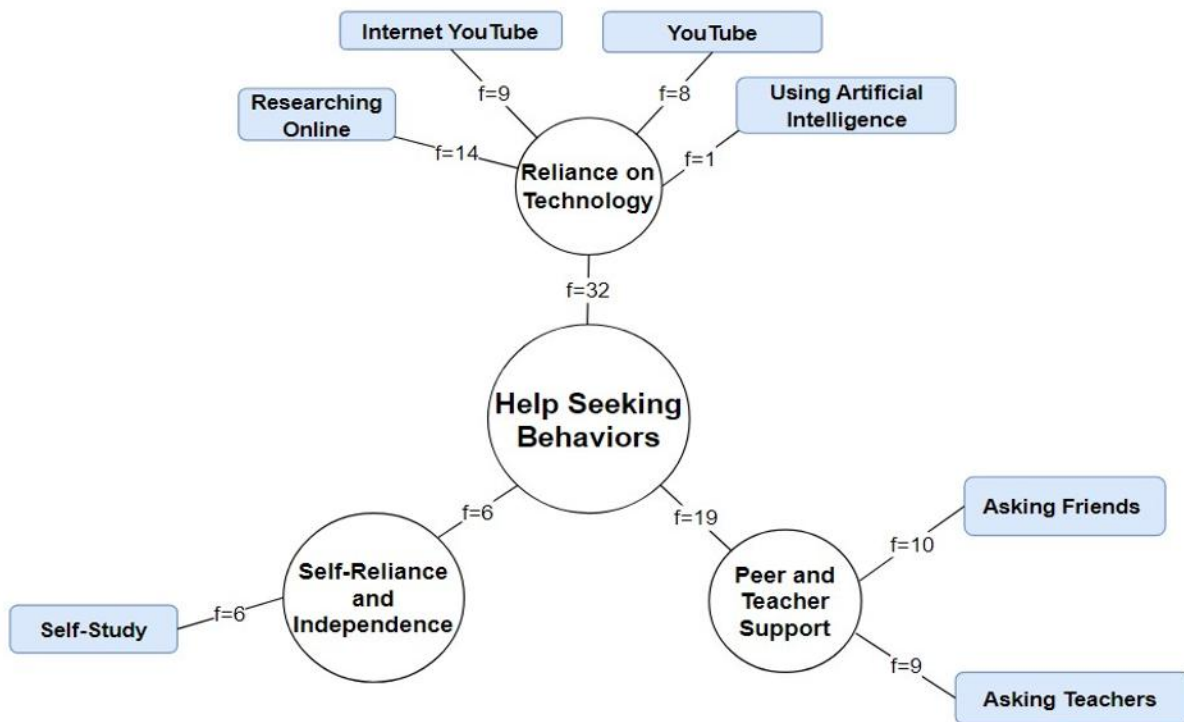
Students also identified numerous personal factors that negatively affected the completion of writing assignments. The most common barriers included difficulty understanding the task, feelings of inadequacy, tiredness, health problems, school-related problems, forgetfulness, and laziness. Several participants reported that they occasionally failed to complete assignments because they did not fully understand the lesson or the writing task. For example, one student stated, "Sometimes I have problems understanding the lesson" (S3), while another explained that the difficulty of the topic prevented assignment completion as follows: "The reason I fail to complete the tasks assigned to me is usually that the subject matter is difficult, or sometimes simply because I do not understand it." (S15). Emotional well-being also emerged as an important factor. Students described how anxiety, burnout, exhaustion, and low self-confidence reduced their motivation to complete writing tasks. One participant noted, "Whenever I do not feel psychologically well, I do not feel like doing anything. Nevertheless, I remind myself of my goals and try to submit my assignments" (S16). Health-related problems and forgetfulness were also mentioned as barriers to task completion. As S5 stated, "There have been times when I couldn't do it. For example, due to illness. Likewise, some students admitted forgetting assignments altogether" (S22).

Although mentioned less frequently than personal factors, teacher-related and system-related issues also influenced students' engagement in writing assignments. Some students indicated that ineffective feedback or insufficient instructional support reduced their willingness to complete subsequent assignments. Others referred to technical or system-related difficulties that occasionally interrupted the assignment completion process. However, several participants explicitly stated that they had not experienced any significant system-related barriers and considered personal factors to be much more influential. For instance, one student commented, "I don't think the problem is related to the system. It is completely due to personal burnout and tiredness" (S8), whereas another student stated, "I don't think there is a system-related reason; it is entirely personal" (S1). These findings suggest that while external conditions may occasionally influence students' writing engagement, personal motivational and emotional factors constitute the primary determinants of assignment completion.

The opinions of the students on whether they ask for help from their teacher/friends when they have difficulty or do not understand a task/homework are presented in Figure 3.

The content analysis revealed that peer and teacher support was the most frequently reported help-seeking strategy. Students commonly described a gradual help-seeking process in which they consulted their classmates and then sought assistance from their teachers if further clarification was needed. Some students also preferred approaching teachers directly, particularly when they required clear and trustworthy explanations. For example, S10 stated, "In difficult parts, I prefer to consult my teacher. I find my teachers' guidance more accurate, so I don't share with my friends, but I like to examine their papers." Similarly, S6 explained, "I prefer consulting my teachers because I find their guidance more accurate than my friends'."

Figure 3
Help-Seeking Behaviours of Students



Another prominent theme was reliance on technology as a source of academic support. Many students reported using online resources, including websites, YouTube videos, and artificial intelligence tools, to solve problems independently before seeking assistance from others. Technology was perceived as providing immediate access to explanations and examples, enabling students to study at their own pace. For example, S14 stated, "Nowadays, we have the opportunity to identify our errors through technology, and when I cannot reach my teachers, I seek assistance from artificial intelligence." Likewise, S2 explained that he searched the internet extensively when he encountered difficulties:

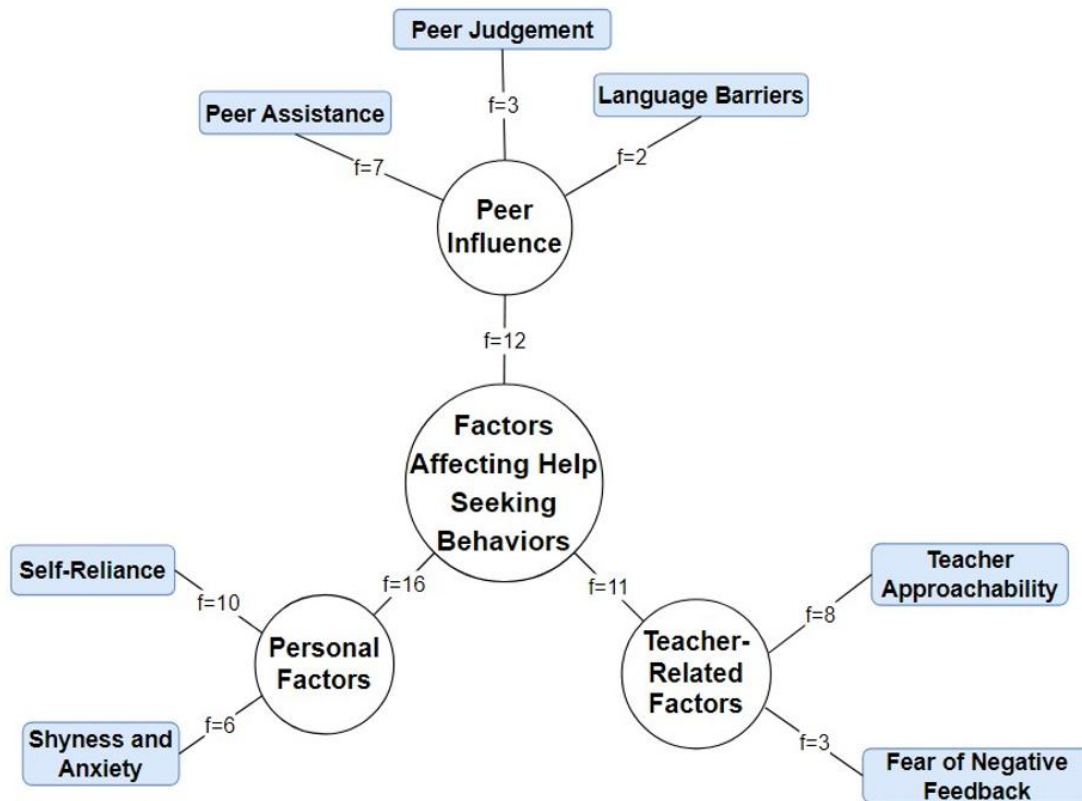
For this, I browse the web, even if it can be tedious. There are thousands of pieces of information across hundreds of sites—a whole world of things I don't know. I rarely ask my friends or teachers for help.

The third theme reflected students' preference for self-reliance and independent learning. Some participants indicated that they first attempted to solve problems on their own before requesting help from teachers or classmates. Independent research, self-study, and persistence were viewed as important strategies for developing writing skills and increasing confidence. For example, S15 stated, "When there is an assignment or topic I do not understand, I first try to learn by researching it myself. If I still cannot understand, I ask my friends, and finally my teacher." Similarly, S8 stated "When there is an assignment or topic I don't understand, I first try to learn by researching it myself."

Students' opinions on the factors affecting their Help-seeking behaviors are given in Figure 4.

The factors affecting help-seeking behaviors among students can be categorized into personal factors, teacher-related factors, peer influence, and language effect. Under personal factors, self-reliance is a significant theme, as well as shyness and anxiety. Many students explained that they preferred attempting to solve problems independently before asking for assistance and only sought help after exhausting their own efforts. For example, S19 stated, "I ask for help when I can't find the solution through my own research." Similarly, S20 explained, "I usually try to solve problems myself first. When I can't solve them, then I ask for help." In contrast, several students reported that feelings of shyness, embarrassment, or anxiety prevented them from asking

Figure 4

Factors Affecting Students' Help-Seeking Behaviors

questions, particularly in crowded classrooms. As S15 stated, "Because the classroom is crowded, I cannot always ask when I don't understand something. This is completely related to my being shy." These findings indicate that students' individual characteristics can both facilitate and inhibit help-seeking behaviors.

Teacher-related factors include teacher approachability and fear of negative feedback. Peer influence also emerged as a critical category. Finally, language barriers constitute a significant theme within the language-related factors, influencing students' help-seeking behaviors. Regarding personal factors, S19 stated that "I ask for help when I can't find the solution to the problem through my own research," while S13 stated that "I generally hesitate to ask for help from my classmates or other people, but teachers have always given me sincerity and confidence, so I mostly choose to go to them." S20 provided a more detailed explanation of their tendency to solve problems independently:

Although there isn't a specific reason, I usually try to solve problems myself first since I was young and generally keep trying until I solve them. I usually succeed except in rare cases. When I can't solve it, I do get help, but generally, there is no specific reason for not asking for help.

The third theme concerned the influence of classmates on students' help-seeking behaviors. Participants described peer influence as having both facilitating and inhibiting effects. Supportive classmates encouraged students to ask questions and collaborate in solving writing problems, whereas concerns about classmates' reactions sometimes discouraged public help-seeking. As S1 explained, "There is nothing that prevents me personally from asking questions. However, the attitudes of some classmates toward students who ask questions make many people hesitate." Several students also reported preferring to consult friends before approaching teachers, while others indicated that peer support depended on classmates' competence and willingness to help. For example, S21 stated, "I usually ask my friends first. If they know the answer, they help me; if not, we ask our teachers together." Similarly, S2 explained that he sought help only from classmates whom he considered competent, stating, "I ask for help only from friends whom I think are really successful." In addition, a small number of students mentioned language-related barriers

that influenced their help-seeking behaviors. One participant explained that teachers' explanations in English sometimes discouraged asking questions, stating, "The fact that teachers usually explain the parts I do not understand in English sometimes prevents me from asking questions" (S15).

4. Discussion

The study revealed moderate levels of avoidance among EFL students, particularly in avoiding novelty, help-seeking, and effort-challenges. The moderate avoidance of novelty suggests that students may be resistant to engaging with new or unfamiliar tasks, which can hinder their learning progress. This finding is supported by Horwitz (2001), who noted that learners often experience anxiety when faced with novel language tasks, leading to avoidance as a coping mechanism. Such avoidance can limit exposure to new language forms and structures, ultimately affecting language acquisition. The avoidance of help-seeking is also consistent with previous research indicating that students may be reluctant to seek assistance due to fear of negative evaluation or a desire to appear competent (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991). This reluctance can be particularly pronounced in EFL contexts, where cultural factors and classroom dynamics may discourage help-seeking behaviors (Rao, 2002). Effort avoidance may be associated with lower levels of self-efficacy, consistent with evidence that students' confidence in their writing capabilities supports persistence and successful engagement with academic tasks (Pajares & Valiante, 2001). These findings suggest the need for interventions targeting anxiety reduction, fostering supportive environments, and improving self-efficacy to mitigate avoidance behaviors.

The overall avoidance level reflects a general tendency among students to engage in avoidance behaviors, which can negatively impact their language development. However, the moderate nature of these tendencies suggests that while avoidance is present, it is not pervasive, and there may be opportunities to intervene and reduce these behaviors. Contrasting these findings, Ryan and Pintrich (1997) observed that higher levels of help-seeking avoidance were more common among students with stronger relative ability (performance-oriented) goals, who prioritized demonstrating competence over learning (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). This contrasts with the current study's findings, where help-seeking avoidance was less pronounced, possibly indicating a classroom environment that places greater emphasis on learning than on demonstrating ability.

The findings also revealed that extrinsic motivation was the dominant motivational orientation, whereas amotivation was relatively low. This suggests that students primarily engaged in English writing because of external reasons such as grades, academic success, or future educational and career opportunities rather than purely for personal enjoyment. Similar patterns have frequently been observed in EFL contexts, where students often perceive English as an instrumental tool for academic and professional advancement (Shang & Ma, 2024; Sya et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the relatively low level of amotivation indicates that students generally retained a sense of purpose toward writing activities rather than feeling completely disengaged from them. According to SDT, even externally regulated motivation can support learning when students gradually internalize the value of learning activities and perceive them as personally meaningful (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Therefore, the relatively low level of amotivation observed in the present study suggests that most students perceive English writing as having at least some personal or instrumental value and retain a sense of purpose when engaging in writing activities.

Supporting this interpretation, a lower level of amotivation may also contribute positively to students' persistence and continued engagement with writing tasks. Supporting this interpretation, Yeşilyurt (2008) found a significant negative relationship between amotivation and writing achievement. These findings highlight the importance of fostering more autonomous forms of motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation, to enhance EFL students' engagement with English writing. According to Self-Determination Theory, classroom environments that support students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are more likely to promote high-quality motivation, sustained engagement, and effective learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

No significant gender differences were observed in avoidance behaviors in the present study, suggesting that male and female EFL students exhibited similar tendencies to avoid academic

engagement in writing classes. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that gender alone is not always a decisive factor in students' help-seeking or avoidance behaviors. For example, Ryan et al. (1998) highlighted the role of academic efficacy and classroom goal structure in students' help-seeking avoidance, suggesting that motivational and contextual factors may be more influential than demographic characteristics such as gender. Similarly, Karabenick and Newman (2006) argued that students' help-seeking behaviors are primarily shaped by achievement goals, classroom context, and perceptions of competence rather than demographic characteristics such as gender.

Nevertheless, previous studies have produced mixed findings regarding the role of gender. Pajares and Valiante (2001) found that female students reported higher levels of writing self-efficacy, stronger self-regulation, greater task orientation, and more positive attitudes toward writing than male students, all of which may facilitate greater willingness to seek academic support when needed. More recent evidence also indicates that gender differences may reflect underlying gender-role attitudes rather than biological sex. Brown et al. (2021) demonstrated that students who strongly endorsed traditional masculine attitudes, particularly those emphasizing mastery, emotional control, competitiveness, and self-reliance, were significantly more reluctant to seek academic help. Conversely, students endorsing more relationship-oriented attitudes tended to display more adaptive help-seeking behaviors.

Beyond gender, a substantial body of research suggests that psychological and motivational variables play a more important role in determining students' avoidance behaviors. Williams and Takaku (2011) found that adaptive help-seeking was one of the strongest predictors of writing performance among university students, even though students with higher self-efficacy were generally less likely to seek assistance. Likewise, Ryan et al. (2001) reported that students with lower academic achievement, lower perceived competence, and greater concerns about negative evaluation were more likely to avoid seeking help, despite having greater need for assistance. Goal orientations also appear to be influential. Students adopting mastery-oriented goals generally perceive help-seeking as a useful strategy for learning, whereas those pursuing performance goals are more likely to avoid help because they fear appearing incompetent (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997).

The significant differences found in avoiding help-seeking and effort suggest that students' avoidance behaviors may change as they progress to higher proficiency levels. In the present study, B1 students demonstrated the highest levels of avoidance in these dimensions, which may reflect increasing concerns about academic performance and greater expectations for independent learning. Similar patterns have been reported in the literature. Ryan and Pintrich (1997) found that students who perceived help-seeking as threatening to their competence were more likely to avoid seeking assistance, particularly when they were concerned about maintaining a positive academic image. Likewise, Karabenick and Knapp (1991) demonstrated that students with lower perceived competence and greater concerns about self-worth were more likely to avoid seeking academic help, despite having greater need for assistance (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991). This suggests that increasing academic demands may strengthen concerns about competence, thereby discouraging students from requesting support. From a self-regulated learning perspective, students are expected to become increasingly autonomous as they advance academically. However, greater autonomy does not necessarily translate into more adaptive help-seeking. Instead, students who perceive help-seeking as a threat to their competence may choose to persist independently or avoid seeking assistance altogether, even when doing so may hinder their learning (Ryan et al., 2001). These findings suggest that the higher avoidance observed among B1 students may reflect not only increasing academic demands but also stronger concerns about maintaining competence and independence.

The correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between motivation dimensions (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation) and academic avoidance behaviors (avoidance of novelty, help-seeking, and effort). Intrinsic motivation was moderately and negatively associated with avoidance behaviors, indicating that students who engaged in learning for inherent interest and personal satisfaction were less likely to avoid academic tasks. This finding

is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which proposes that intrinsically motivated learners demonstrate greater engagement, persistence, and psychological well-being because their behavior is supported by the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Extrinsic motivation demonstrated a weak positive association with avoidance behaviors. Within SDT, however, extrinsic motivation is not considered a unitary construct. Rather, it ranges from externally regulated behavior to more autonomous forms such as identified and integrated regulation. Consequently, externally regulated forms of motivation are generally associated with lower-quality engagement, whereas more autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation may support persistence and adaptive learning outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002).

Amotivation showed the strongest positive correlations with all dimensions of academic avoidance. This result is highly consistent with SDT, which defines amotivation as a state in which individuals perceive little value in an activity, feel ineffective, or fail to see a connection between their actions and desired outcomes. Under such conditions, students are unlikely to invest effort, persist in challenging tasks, or seek academic support, resulting in increased disengagement and avoidance behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002). These findings highlight the importance of fostering more autonomous forms of motivation in EFL writing classrooms.

The findings highlight key factors influencing student engagement and disengagement in completing writing assignments. Students who regularly completed their assignments demonstrated positive engagement, driven by intrinsic motivation and a desire to improve their writing skills and achieve mastery (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This interpretation is also consistent with evidence that motivated participation in regular writing practice can support EFL learners' writing engagement and fluency (Farooqi, 2024). Conversely, many students avoided assignments because of boredom, lack of interest, or difficulty generating ideas, reflecting amotivation, in which learners perceive activities as having little value, feel ineffective, or fail to see a meaningful connection between their efforts and desired outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, difficulty generating ideas should not be interpreted as evidence of amotivation in itself, as it may also reflect a writing-specific cognitive or instructional challenge. Evidence from creative writing instruction indicates that appropriate visual and pedagogical support can facilitate idea generation, deepen engagement, and foster more positive dispositions toward writing (Kaşıkaya & Ateş, 2025).

Research has consistently shown that tasks perceived as boring, unpleasant, or aversive are more likely to be postponed, increasing disengagement and procrastination (Steel, 2007). Time management issues also contributed substantially to task avoidance. Students who struggled to balance multiple academic demands frequently delayed writing assignments, thereby increasing stress and avoidance behaviors. This finding is consistent with previous research demonstrating that poor time management, delayed action, and self-regulatory difficulties are closely associated with academic procrastination (Ferrari et al., 1995; Steel, 2007;). The students' willingness to complete assignments because of responsibility and goal orientation is consistent with social cognitive research emphasizing that goal setting, self-efficacy, and self-regulation are central motivational processes that sustain effort, persistence, and goal-directed learning (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). This suggests that students who are clear about their academic goals and perceive writing assignments as meaningful steps toward those goals are more likely to persist in completing them (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). The role of interest in the topic and teacher influence is also consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which proposes that students are more likely to engage in learning when instruction supports their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Likewise, teachers who create supportive learning environments, provide constructive feedback, and emphasize students' learning progress can strengthen motivation and self-efficacy, thereby promoting greater engagement (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Barriers to task completion include technical difficulties, unclear instructions, and personal issues such as anxiety and exhaustion. Studies by Daniels et al. (2021) also highlight how technical

difficulties, unclear instructions, and personal issues like anxiety and exhaustion can hinder students' ability to complete assignments. High cognitive load, particularly with poorly designed tasks, can also cause frustration and avoidance (Sweller et al., 2019). Additionally, forgetfulness and weak executive functioning, such as poor time management, hinder task completion (Diamond, 2013). Addressing these challenges through clear task design and supportive environments is essential to improve engagement and success.

Students employ diverse strategies when seeking help with tasks, reflecting personal preferences, perceived competence, and resource availability. Teacher support is the most preferred due to the clarity and trustworthiness of guidance (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Peer collaboration also plays a significant role, aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning as a socially mediated process. However, it is noteworthy that some students expressed a preference for teacher support over peer support, possibly due to concerns about the accuracy or clarity of the information provided by peers.

Technology, including platforms such as YouTube and AI tools, emerged as an important source of immediate and on-demand support among the participants. This finding suggests that students increasingly extend their help-seeking beyond traditional classroom resources. Finally, the preference for self-study and independent problem-solving among some students suggests a degree of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to navigate academic challenges on their own. This corresponds to research on self-regulated learning, which emphasizes the importance of students taking an active role in managing their learning process (Zimmerman, 2002). The findings underscore the importance of teacher and peer support, while highlighting the growing role of technology and self-regulation in help-seeking behaviors. A balanced approach that combines these strategies can foster student engagement and success in academic tasks.

Students' help-seeking behaviors are shaped by personal, social, and instructional factors. Personal characteristics such as self-reliance, shyness, and anxiety influence students' willingness to seek assistance. Students who prefer to solve problems independently may delay seeking help, whereas adaptive help-seeking is considered a self-regulated learning strategy that enables learners to maintain engagement and achieve long-term mastery (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Newman, 2002). Teacher approachability and perceived sincerity are also critical in encouraging help-seeking. Students are more likely to seek assistance when teachers are perceived as caring, supportive, and nonjudgmental, whereas concerns about negative evaluation may discourage students from asking for help (Newman, 2002; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Similarly, peer relationships play a dual role in students' help-seeking behaviors. Supportive friendships and collaborative classroom environments facilitate adaptive help-seeking, whereas concerns about peer approval, embarrassment, and negative social evaluation may inhibit students from requesting assistance (Newman, 2002; Ryan et al., 1998). Language barriers further complicate help-seeking in EFL and intercultural learning contexts. Limited language proficiency may reduce students' confidence in expressing their needs, participating in classroom discussions, and asking questions, thereby increasing feelings of isolation and limiting classroom engagement (Mori, 2000).

These findings suggest that reducing academic avoidance requires more than simply encouraging students to complete writing tasks. Classroom environments should promote students' sense of competence through constructive feedback, support autonomy by providing meaningful choices, and foster relatedness through supportive teacher-student relationships. Such conditions are likely to strengthen autonomous motivation while simultaneously reducing students' tendency to avoid challenging writing activities. Consequently, instructional practices grounded in Self-Determination Theory may contribute to greater engagement and more adaptive learning behaviors in EFL writing contexts.

5. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a specific context within Türkiye, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to EFL students in other cultural or linguistic contexts. The reliance on self-reported measures for quantitative data may also introduce response bias, as

students may underreport or overreport their avoidance behaviours. Additionally, the sample size for qualitative interviews was relatively small, which may not fully capture the diversity of experiences among EFL students. Future research could include larger, more diverse samples and explore longitudinal changes in avoidance behaviours to further understand how these strategies evolve across different educational settings.

6. Implications

The results of this study have significant implications for teaching practices and curriculum development in EFL settings. Educators can foster a supportive learning environment by promoting intrinsic motivation and reducing task-related anxiety, particularly in writing tasks that students perceive as novel or effortful. Addressing factors that lead to task avoidance, such as lack of interest, confidence, and time management, can improve students' engagement and task completion rates. Additionally, interventions that encourage help-seeking behaviors, provide clear instructions, and support time management skills may reduce avoidance behaviors and enhance learning outcomes. Curriculum developers may consider incorporating student-centered writing tasks and fostering supportive teacher-student dynamics to encourage positive academic behaviors.

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