



The Correlation Between EFL Students' Big Five Personality Traits and Their Writing Skills at Al-Fatah Islamic Boarding School

Asri Oktavia Ningrum¹, Meisuri¹, Zakiyah¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Lampung, Indonesia
*desiririanti@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and students' writing skills, as well as to identify which personality dimension has the strongest correlation with writing skill. The research was conducted with 59 tenth-grade students of Al-Fatah Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia. A quantitative approach with a correlational research design was employed. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) was used to measure students' personality traits, while the writing skill was assessed through a personal recount writing test. The results indicated that there was a low to moderate positive and statistically significant correlation between the Big Five personality traits and students' writing skills ($r = 0.336$, $p = 0.009$). Among the five dimensions, Openness showed a moderate positive and significant correlation ($r = 0.470$, $p = 0.000$), followed by a weaker but significant correlation with Conscientiousness ($r = 0.338$, $p = 0.009$). Meanwhile, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism demonstrated weak or nonsignificant correlations. These findings suggest that the Big Five personality traits show a positive relationship with writing skill, and Openness displaying the strongest correlation.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important productive skills in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is writing. It enables students to express ideas and communicate in a structured and meaningful way. However, writing is considered one of the most difficult skills to master because it requires not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking, creativity, and organization (Toba et al., 2019). Writing is a complex, creative

process that involves generating ideas, organizing them, and expressing them clearly in written form. It requires not only mastery of grammar and rhetorical skills but also strong conceptual understanding and critical thinking (Nunan, 1999). According to Brown (2007) writing is essentially a process of thinking that moves through several stages to produce a coherent and well-structured text. Writing is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to express their thoughts, emotions, and knowledge. It is not merely about transferring ideas into written form but involves a complex process that requires critical thinking, creativity, and continuous practice.

Despite its significance, many EFL students still struggle to develop excellent writing skills, especially in Indonesia (Lestari, 2020). Linguistic competency, teaching strategies, exposure to the target language, and individual learner characteristics are some of the elements that affect writing skill (Brown, H. D., 2007). Among these, psychological elements including personality, learning preferences, and motivation are important in determining how well students write. According to the previous research Zaswita & Ihsan, (2020), personality traits have a role in the variances in students' learning outcomes, including their ability to write.

A preliminary observation at Al-Fatah Islamic Boarding School Lampung showed that students within the same class displayed varied levels of writing proficiency. This implies that internal elements such as personality could affect the way they write. Further emphasizing the significance of comprehending the interplay between contextual and psychological factors in students' learning processes is the school's distinctive setting, which combines academic and religious instruction (Mansyur, M., & Hidayatullah, 2021).

The Big Five Personality Traits framework, created by McCrae, R. R., & Costa Jr (2003), is used in this study to investigate these individual variances. Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are the five fundamental factors identified by the model as having an impact on human behavior and learning preferences. escribed each of the factors in the Big Five personality model. The Big Five personality traits consist of Neuroticism, the tendency to experience negative emotions, notably anxiety, depression, and anger; Extraversion, characterized by high activity, sociability, and positive emotions; Openness to Experience, reflecting creativity, curiosity, and openness to new ideas; Agreeableness, which involves being friendly, cooperative, and caring; and Conscientiousness, associated with responsibility, self-discipline, and goal-directed behavior. These five dimensions describe broad and stable patterns of human personality. (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2011)

Many people consider this framework to be among the most reliable models for analyzing students' personalities in educational settings (Kumaran & Kadiravan, 2015). Every component represents distinct behavioral patterns that could influence how students approach writing assignments (Feist & Feist, 2009).

A study by Rahardi et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between university students' personality traits and their writing mastery using the IPIP questionnaire, focusing only on the extroversion trait. The findings revealed a weak negative correlation

between extroversion and writing performance. However, the study was limited in scope as it did not consider all five personality dimensions and used mid-semester test scores as the writing measure. Therefore, a more comprehensive investigation is needed to examine the broader relationship between the Big Five Personality traits and writing skills using a more detailed assessment approach. This research aims to fill that gap by analyzing the correlation between all dimensions of Big Five Personality and students' writing skills in the context of Islamic boarding schools. From a psycholinguistic perspective, personality is part of the affective and cognitive factors influencing language production. Thus, exploring how personality traits relate to writing skills contributes to understanding how internal psychological characteristics affect students' language performance.

The objectives of this study are to determine the correlation between students' Big Five Personality traits and their writing skills and to identify which dimension has the strongest relationship. By uncovering these patterns, the research provides insights that can help teachers design writing instruction aligned with students' personalities. This study also offers valuable implications for educators, policymakers, and practitioners in Islamic boarding schools to improve writing pedagogy based on learners' individual differences.

In line with the purpose of this study and to provide a clear research direction, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Is there a significant correlation between students' Big Five personality traits and their writing skills?
2. Which dimension of the Big Five personality traits demonstrates the strongest correlation with students' writing skills?

METHOD

This study utilized a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between EFL learners' Big Five personality traits and their writing skills. According to Creswell (2012), correlation is a statistical test used to determine the tendency or pattern for two or more variables, or two sets of data, to vary consistently. The two variables examined in this study were students' Big Five personality traits and their writing proficiency. Writing proficiency was the dependent variable (Y), while students' personality traits were the independent variable (X).

The population of this research consisted of 96 tenth-grade students at Al-Fatah Islamic Boarding School in Natar, South Lampung, in the 2024–2025 academic year. They were divided into two study programs: Tahfidz (37 students) and Regular (59 students). The sample comprised 59 students from the Regular program, selected through purposive sampling because these students had been taught writing as part of their curriculum, making them suitable for investigating the correlation between Big Five personality traits and writing skills. Purposive sampling was applied because the researcher selected participants who aligned with the study's purpose, particularly students who had been taught writing and had been exposed to English learning

(Creswell, 2012). The demographic profile of the sample included both male and female students aged approximately 15–16 years.

Since only the Regular program was included, the findings are generalized only to this program. The sample size of 59 was considered adequate for correlational analysis because it meets the commonly recommended minimum number of participants for Pearson correlation research.

The instruments of this study included a writing test and a questionnaire. The first instrument was the Big Five Personality Questionnaire, adapted from the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by John et al. (1991). The BFI measures five major dimensions of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience. Understanding these dimensions is important for identifying the personality traits of EFL students. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with 41 closed-ended statements on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Before being used in the main study, the questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability. It was first administered to 30 students as a try-out.

The writing test was used to measure students' writing skills in English. The test required students to compose a recount text. In this test, students were asked to write about their Eid al-Fitr holiday experience by describing events in chronological order. The writing was required to consist of at least three paragraphs and contain a minimum of 200 words. The allocated time to complete the task was 60 minutes (1 hour). The validity of the writing test was determined through expert judgment. The writing was scored by two independent raters to ensure scoring consistency. A writing scoring rubric was used to assess students' writing objectively by evaluating five key components: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Data were collected in one meeting for each class to ensure time efficiency and to maintain students' focus throughout the process. The research was conducted in three different classes. Each meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes and was carried out on separate days under the same conditions.

This study analyzed the data in two stages: first, by examining the correlation between the overall Big Five personality score and writing skills; and second, by exploring the relationship between each Big Five dimension and writing skills. To examine the relationship between students' personality traits and their writing skills, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used. This technique was appropriate for measuring the strength and direction of the relationship between two continuous variables. The same analysis was also applied to each of the five dimensions—Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism—to identify which dimensions had a significant relationship with students' writing skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the relationship between students' overall Big Five personality scores and their writing skills, as well as the relationships between each Big Five personality dimensions and writing skills. Pearson correlation analysis was used to measure the strength and direction of these relationships.

Results

Before conducting the correlation analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the distribution of students' scores on each dimension of the Big Five Personality and their writing performance. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Personality Dimensions and Writing Skill

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Openness	59	23	40	31.29	3.996
Conscientiousness	59	21	37	29.24	3.496
Extraversion	59	12	34	24.03	4.077
Agreeableness	59	21	41	33.03	3.970
Neuroticism	59	13	38	27.31	5.042
Writing	59	40.00	86.50	74.28	11.78

The descriptive statistics of students' personality traits and writing ability show that among the Big Five dimensions, Agreeableness had the highest mean score ($M = 33.03$, $SD = 3.970$), followed by Openness ($M = 31.29$, $SD = 3.996$) and Conscientiousness ($M = 29.24$, $SD = 3.496$). Extraversion scored the lowest ($M = 24.03$, $SD = 4.077$), while Neuroticism had a moderate mean ($M = 27.31$, $SD = 5.042$), indicating some variability in emotional stability. The students' writing scores ranged from 40.00 to 86.50, with a mean score of 74.28 and a standard deviation of 11.78.

To further investigate whether these personality traits were associated with writing performance, the assumptions of normality and linearity were first examined and found to be satisfactory. Therefore, Pearson Product-Moment correlation was employed to examine the relationship between students' Big Five personality traits and their writing skills. Table 2 presents the results of the correlation analysis, which aims to determine whether students' personality traits collectively have a significant relationship with their writing performance.

Table 2. Correlation between Big Five Personality Traits and Writing Skills

Variables	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Writing Skill & Big Five Personality	.336**	.009	59

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

The Pearson correlation analysis indicated a positive and statistically significant relationship between students' writing skill and their overall Big Five personality score, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.336$ and $p = 0.009$. This suggested that higher scores on the Big Five personality traits were associated with better writing skills among the students. The sample size for this analysis was 59 students. The strength of the correlation was considered weak to moderate, and the result was significant at the 0.01 level, indicating a reliable linear relationship between the two variables.

To learn more about the specific relationship between writing ability and personality traits, the correlation between each dimension of the Big Five Personality namely Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism was also examined.

Table 3. Correlation between Each Big Five Personality Dimension and Writing Skill

Personality Dimension	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Interpretation
Openness	.470**	.000	59	Moderate positive, significant
Conscientiousness	.338**	.009	59	Weak to moderate positive, significant
Extraversion	-.039	.768	59	Very weak, not significant
Agreeableness	.151	.254	59	Weak positive, not significant
Neuroticism	.242	.065	59	Weak positive, not significant

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

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed that the Openness dimension has a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship with students' writing skills ($r = 0.470$, $p = 0.000$). Conscientiousness also showed a weak positive but significant correlation with writing skill ($r = 0.338$, $p = 0.009$). In contrast, Extraversion ($r = -0.039$, $p = 0.768$), Agreeableness ($r = 0.151$, $p = 0.254$), and Neuroticism ($r = 0.242$, $p = 0.065$) displayed weak or very weak correlations that were not statistically significant, implying no meaningful relationship with writing skill. Overall, only Openness and Conscientiousness among the Big Five personality dimensions were significantly associated with writing skill in this study.

Discussion

This section provides a detailed interpretation of the findings regarding the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and students' writing skills. The

discussion connects the statistical results with relevant theories and previous research to give deeper insights into how personality contributes to writing performance.

In terms of writing skill, students' scores ranged from 40.00 to 86.50, with a mean score of 74.28 and a standard deviation of 11.78. This indicates that the students' overall writing proficiency was at a moderate level. While many students demonstrated strong writing ability, others still needed improvement in areas such as grammar and organization. This variation reflects natural individual differences in writing performance.

Based on the descriptive statistics presented in Table 1, the students also showed diverse levels across the Big Five personality dimensions, along with a wide distribution of writing skill levels. These descriptive findings provide an initial picture of the students' characteristics and serve as the foundation for further interpretation.

The following section discusses the correlation between the Big Five personality traits and writing skill in more detail.

The Correlation between Big Five Personality Traits and Writing Skill

The correlation analysis yielded a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.336$ with a significance level of $p = 0.009$ among 59 students, indicating a low to moderate positive relationship between Big Five personality traits and writing skills. This suggests that students who exhibit more positive personality traits tend to perform better in writing tasks, although personality is not the sole determinant of writing skill.

This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the influence of personality on academic and linguistic performance. A previous study found that personality significantly affects students' writing skills. Their quasi-experimental research showed that different personality types have a significant impact on writing performance (Zaswita & Ihsan, 2020). It is also supported by Sucianik & Natasha (2018) found that all Big Five dimensions had a positive relationship with students' writing skill. The study by Rahardi et al., (2024) found a weak but positive correlation between students' personality and their writing mastery. They explained that while personality does play a role, it interacts with other factors such as linguistic competence and learning environment. This aligns with the current study's result ($r = .336$), indicating that personality contributes to writing performance but is not the only determinant factor.

The low correlation in this study might be explained by several factors. First, not all dimensions of the Big Five contribute equally to writing skills; for example, Neuroticism often correlates negatively with academic performance due to anxiety or emotional instability. Second, the writing tasks used in this study, recount texts may rely more on students' language mastery than personality-driven creativity.

Third, other mediating factors such as writing motivation, prior experience, or teacher feedback could have influenced students' performance.

Overall, this study confirms that Big Five Personality has a significant and positive relationship with writing skill, consistent with both theoretical expectations and previous empirical findings. However, since the strength of the correlation is moderate, personality should be viewed as one of several factors influencing writing skill, alongside linguistic proficiency, motivation, and learning strategies.

The Strongest Personality Dimension Related to Writing Skill

To identify which dimension of the Big Five personality traits exhibits the strongest association with students' writing skills, a correlation analysis was conducted for each trait. The results demonstrated that Openness yielded the highest correlation coefficient ($r = 0.470$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Conscientiousness ($r = 0.338$, $p = 0.009$), whereas Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism showed weak or non-significant correlations. This finding suggests that students with higher levels of Openness tend to perform better in writing tasks compared to their lower-scoring peers. The trait of Openness is characterized by creativity, imagination, intellectual curiosity, and a proclivity for cognitive exploration. Writing, a complex cognitive activity requiring idea generation, critical thinking, and organized expression, benefits substantially from these characteristics. Consequently, students high in Openness are more likely to produce rich, original, and coherent written texts as they engage in exploring novel perspectives and experimenting with language.

Conscientiousness, while showing a more modest correlation than Openness, was nonetheless significantly associated with writing performance. This relationship can be attributed to the demands of writing not only for creativity but also for persistence, discipline, and systematic organization. Conscientious students tend to demonstrate diligence in planning, revising, and editing their work, behaviors that likely enhance the overall quality of their writing output. Their goal-oriented nature and sustained focus during writing tasks contribute positively to their writing achievements.

In contrast, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism did not exhibit significant correlations with writing skills. This outcome may be explained by the predominantly solitary and introspective nature of writing, which necessitates concentration and internal reflection rather than social interaction, thus diminishing the relevance of Extraversion. Similarly, although Agreeableness relates to cooperation and empathy, it does not directly affect the cognitive and technical facets of writing. Neuroticism, involving tendencies toward emotional instability and anxiety, may impede writing by undermining confidence and focus, leading to inconsistencies in performance.

Although extant literature directly linking Openness to writing skills is limited, related studies offer supporting evidence. For example, Muhid et al. (2021) found that

Openness significantly predicted academic achievement among students in Islamic senior high schools. This supports the notion that individuals high in Openness are adaptable to diverse learning tasks, eager to engage with new perspectives, and actively participate in learning activities, thereby enhancing both academic and writing performance. Writing benefits from Openness due to its requirement for idea generation and logical expression, which are facilitated by cognitive flexibility and creativity inherent in this trait.

Furthermore, this research converges indirectly with findings by Ramadhani et al. (2023), who documented a significant influence of Openness on self-directed learning. While their study did not specifically address writing, self-directed learning encompasses learner autonomy, curiosity, and a disposition toward exploring new ideas all integral to effective writing. Writing demands independence, reflection, and initiative, traits commonly observed in individuals with high Openness. Hence, the relationship between Openness and self-directed learning reinforces the present finding that students exhibiting high levels of Openness excel in writing by approaching it as a creative and exploratory endeavor.

The importance of conscientiousness in writing performance has also been highlighted in previous research. Syahreza (2025) reported that conscientiousness showed significant positive correlations with grammar accuracy and coherence and cohesion. These findings support the present study by indicating that students who are more organized, disciplined, and responsible tend to produce more accurate and well-structured writing. This suggests that conscientiousness plays a crucial role in shaping learners' writing quality.

In conclusion, among the Big Five personality traits, Openness has the strongest positive correlation with students' writing skills, highlighting its role in fostering creativity, intellectual curiosity, and cognitive flexibility essential for effective writing. Conscientiousness also shows a significant positive relationship, reflecting the importance of discipline, persistence, and organization in the writing process. In contrast, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism have little to no significant impact on writing performance, likely due to the introspective and cognitive nature of writing tasks. These findings are supported by related studies linking Openness to academic achievement and self-directed learning, reinforcing the view that open and self-motivated learners tend to excel in writing as a creative and exploratory endeavor. This understanding can inform educators in tailoring writing instruction to consider students' personality traits for improved learning outcome.

CONCLUSIONS

This study confirms a significant and positive relationship between the Big Five personality traits and students' writing skills. Among the five dimensions, Openness shows the strongest correlation, highlighting its important role in

supporting creativity, intellectual curiosity, and cognitive flexibility required in writing. Students with higher Openness tend to produce richer, more original, and more coherent texts because they enjoy exploring new perspectives and experimenting with language. Conscientiousness also contributes significantly to writing performance, although its correlation is weaker than Openness. The discipline, persistence, and organizational skills associated with Conscientiousness help students plan, revise, and edit more effectively, thereby improving writing quality. In contrast, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism do not show significant associations with writing skills, likely because writing is primarily a reflective and cognitive activity rather than a social or emotion-driven one.

These findings align with previous research indicating that personality can influence academic and language achievement, while also acknowledging that personality is not the only factor affecting writing outcomes. Other variables, such as language proficiency, motivation, experience, and the learning environment, may also play important roles. This study contributes to theory and practice in language education by emphasizing the value of integrating personality-related psychological aspects into writing instruction to support diverse learners and optimize learning outcomes. However, the study has limitations because the sample was taken only from the Regular program of a single Islamic boarding school and excluded students from the Tahfidz program, meaning the results can be generalized only to tenth-grade students in the Regular program at that school. Future research should include broader samples across grade levels, programs, and institutions, examine other language skills and writing genres, use more comprehensive assessments, and consider longitudinal or experimental designs to better understand how personality traits shape writing development over time.

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