Uncovering Psychological Determinants and Coping Strategies in English Language Anxiety Among High School Students

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Abstract

English language proficiency is increasingly vital in today's globalized world; however, many high school students experience English Learning Anxiety (ELA), which hinders their academic performance and language development. This study aims to explore the psychological determinants of English learning anxiety and to examine how students actively cope with anxiety in authentic classroom contexts. This research employed a qualitative descriptive design with thematic analysis, utilizing semi-structured interviews and classroom observations involving ten high school students from grades 10 and 11 at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno, Indonesia. The findings indicate that English learning anxiety is shaped by interrelated psychological determinants, including fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence (self-efficacy), test anxiety, and learning motivation, rather than by isolated factors. Fear of negative evaluation and evaluative pressure emerged as particularly influential in constraining students' classroom participation, while low self-confidence and test anxiety further intensified emotional distress. In response, students employed adaptive coping strategies, such as relaxation techniques, self-affirmation, peer support, and engagement in activity-based learning (e.g., storytelling, role-playing, and interactive tasks), to regulate anxiety during English learning. This study contributes novel, context-sensitive insights by foregrounding students' lived experiences and coping processes, thereby extending existing ELA research beyond variable-centered explanations toward a dynamic, process-oriented understanding of anxiety regulation in secondary education contexts. The findings suggest that supportive classroom environments and interactive instructional practices play a crucial role in reducing students' psychological burden. Accordingly, English language teachers are encouraged to integrate psychologically responsive and interactive teaching strategies to foster emotional safety and learner engagement, particularly within exam-oriented educational settings.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, English proficiency has emerged as a critical skill that provides access to academic achievement and broader career opportunities (Rao, 2019). As a result, students often experience substantial pressure to perform well in English, which can be motivating for some but, for others, becomes a major source of anxiety (Wang, 2023). This pressure frequently manifests as English Learning Anxiety (ELA), a situation-specific form of anxiety experienced by learners of English as a second or foreign language. ELA has been characterized by feelings of worry, nervousness, and fear, particularly during performance-based and oral communication tasks (Luo and Xiong, 2025). Previous research has predominantly focused on the prevalence and consequences of ELA, demonstrating that a large proportion of students experience high anxiety levels in English learning, often associated with low self-esteem and fear of making mistakes (Fitriani et al., 2022).

ELA not only interferes with language acquisition but also contributes to avoidance behaviors, reduced classroom participation, and poor academic performance (Luo, 2020). Its negative effects further extend to fundamental linguistic processes, including phonological accuracy, grammatical development, and semantic processing (Al Hakim & Syam, 2019). Moreover, factors such as limited vocabulary knowledge, fear of negative evaluation by teachers or peers, and low self-perceived English proficiency intensify students' apprehension and lead to the avoidance of speaking situations (Sabilla & Kaniadewi, 2025; Fahny et al., 2024).

Despite extensive documentation of factors associated with English Learning Anxiety (ELA), existing research has largely emphasized the identification of individual psychological determinants rather than examining how learners experience, interpret, and manage anxiety within authentic classroom contexts. Much of the literature relies on quantitative approaches that, while informative, tend to treat variables such as fear of negative evaluation, self-efficacy, test anxiety, and motivation as discrete constructs, offering limited insight into their dynamic interaction and the subjective emotional processes underlying anxiety. Moreover, qualitative evidence that captures learners' lived experiences—particularly in Indonesian high school settings characterized by exam-oriented practices and strong social evaluation pressures—remains comparatively scarce. Consequently, there is insufficient context-sensitive understanding of how psychological determinants of ELA interact in real instructional environments and how students actively develop coping strategies to regulate anxiety. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative thematic approach to explore the interplay between psychological determinants of English learning anxiety and students' coping strategies among Indonesian high school learners, thereby contributing experience-based and contextually grounded insights that complement existing variable-centered research.

A study conducted in Indonesia by Glory and Subekti (2021) sought to identify

psychological factors influencing English learning anxiety among high school students. Their findings revealed that fear of negative evaluation exerted a particularly strong influence on students' anxiety levels, with students who feared negative judgment displaying higher anxiety and lower motivation in English learning. This study underscores the pivotal role of evaluative fear in shaping learners' emotional experiences. Similarly, Zhang and Tsung (2024) argued that academic pressure, parental expectations, and grade-oriented assessment systems significantly contribute to English learning anxiety. By highlighting both psychological and sociocultural influences, their work is especially relevant to the Indonesian educational context, where exam-driven practices remain dominant.

Furthermore, studies by Arslantaş and Tokel (2018) and Kurnia (2021) examined the relationship between self-efficacy and language learning anxiety among English learners. Their findings consistently showed that higher levels of self-efficacy were associated with lower anxiety and stronger learning motivation. These results emphasize the critical role of self-efficacy in mitigating anxiety during language learning. Supporting this conclusion, Wei et al. (2020) found that students with stronger self-efficacy beliefs exhibited significantly lower anxiety levels. Collectively, these studies validate Bandura's theoretical framework, highlighting the importance of belief systems in shaping learners' emotional responses to academic challenges.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) What psychological determinants contribute to anxiety in English learning among high school students? and (2) What coping strategies do students employ to manage this anxiety? Accordingly, the study aims to identify key psychological determinants underlying English learning anxiety and to explore effective strategies for reducing such anxiety. By clarifying these determinants, this research contributes knowledge that may inform the design of targeted pedagogical interventions addressing students' psychological and emotional needs. Teachers, in turn, may implement instructional practices that foster supportive learning environments grounded in the underlying causes of ELA, which is particularly critical in the Indonesian context, where English proficiency is increasingly essential for academic advancement and career development.

The present study introduces methodological novelty by employing a qualitative thematic analysis approach to examine the interaction among psychological determinants of English learning anxiety. Through this approach, the study aims to generate operational insights that may inform psycho-pedagogical training and classroom-based interventions. The study offers two primary contributions. Theoretically, it integrates Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997) and Horwitz et al.'s Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (1986) to provide a comprehensive framework explaining how fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, test anxiety, and motivation interact to shape learners' emotional experiences. Practically, it offers

psycho-pedagogical insights by identifying adaptive coping strategies, including relaxation techniques, self-affirmation, peer support, and activity-based learning, which may serve as practical references for classroom implementation.

Bandura's theory (1997) posits that self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve specific goals. This belief, rather than actual competence alone, determines how effectively individuals translate ability into performance. Bandura identified four primary sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological or emotional states. In the context of second-language acquisition, these sources play a crucial role in shaping learners' motivation, persistence, and self-regulatory behaviors. Students with high self-efficacy tend to demonstrate optimism, resilience, and willingness to engage in linguistic risk-taking, thereby reducing anxiety in language use.

In contrast, Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualized foreign language anxiety (FLA) as a form of situational anxiety experienced during the learning or use of a foreign language. FLA is manifested through tension, fear, and apprehension, which disrupt the learning process. Horwitz et al. identified three core dimensions of FLA: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These affective dimensions influence students' academic performance by promoting avoidance behaviors and limiting language use, ultimately hindering language development.

Finally, the findings of this study point to the importance of teacher training programs that emphasize emotional intelligence and anxiety management. Teachers who are equipped to recognize and respond to students' anxiety are better positioned to cultivate inclusive and effective learning environments. The study further highlights the need to integrate coping and resilience-building strategies into instructional practices, enabling students to develop sustainable mechanisms for managing anxiety. These implications are particularly relevant for educational policymakers, who play a critical role in shaping systems that support students' emotional, psychological, and spiritual development, thereby promoting more effective outcomes in language education.

METHOD
Research Design and Participant

This study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the psychological determinants contributing to students' English learning anxiety at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno, as this design enables an in-depth understanding of learners' experiences within authentic instructional contexts. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for exploring the complexity of participants' perceptions, emotions, and coping behaviors in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Accordingly, the data were derived from students' subjective experiences, reflections, and observable behaviors during the learning process. This study was conducted to explore both the psychological

determinants underlying English learning anxiety and the strategies students use to cope with such anxiety.

The participants consisted of ten high school students from grades ten and eleven at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which allowed the researcher to identify participants who met predefined criteria relevant to the research focus. These criteria included observable signs of English learning anxiety, low confidence in speaking English, and limited classroom participation. The identification of participants was informed by preliminary classroom observations and informal interviews conducted prior to formal data collection. Rather than aiming for statistical representativeness, participant selection was grounded in the presence of consistent behavioral indicators suggesting psychological factors influencing English learning, which aligns with the exploratory nature of qualitative inquiry.

Data Collection and Instruments

This study utilized two primary data collection instruments to obtain rich and detailed information regarding psychological determinants contributing to English learning anxiety and students' coping strategies. The first instrument was semi-structured interviews, which enabled participants to articulate their personal experiences, emotions, and perceptions related to anxiety in English learning. All participants took part in individual semi-structured interviews, allowing flexibility for follow-up questions while maintaining consistency across core themes.

The interview protocol was developed based on established psychological theories to ensure conceptual rigor. Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (Horwitz et al., 1986) guided the exploration of anxiety-related dimensions, including fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997) provided the theoretical foundation for questions addressing students' self-confidence, perceived competence, and beliefs about their ability to perform English learning tasks. In addition, principles drawn from Self-Determination Theory (Bureau et al., 2022) and Lintunen et al. (2025) were employed to examine the roles of intrinsic motivation and environmental support in shaping students' emotional experiences. The integration of these theoretical frameworks enhanced the conceptual validity of the interview instrument and supported a comprehensive examination of psychological determinants of English learning anxiety.

The second instrument involved classroom observations, conducted to gain a contextual understanding of teacher–student interactions and classroom dynamics related to anxiety and participation during English lessons. These observations provided complementary, real-world evidence of how psychological determinants manifested during instructional activities and how students enacted coping strategies in situ.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, this study employed data triangulation, whereby interview data were compared with classroom observation results. This triangulation strengthened the trustworthiness of the analysis by allowing convergence

across multiple data sources and reducing reliance on a single form of evidence.

Data Analysis Technique

Data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis, following a systematic and iterative process. This analysis involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, identification of recurring patterns, and the development of overarching themes related to psychological determinants of English learning anxiety and coping strategies. Themes were refined through continuous comparison between interview transcripts and observation notes, allowing for deeper interpretation and contextual validation.

The validity of the analytical findings was further strengthened through methodological triangulation, achieved by comparing themes emerging from interviews with patterns observed during classroom activities. This analytic approach aligns with the study's qualitative design and supports the generation of context-sensitive, experience-based insights rather than generalized causal claims.

RESULTS

Psychological Determinants Contributing to English Learning Anxiety

The results of this study were derived from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations involving students at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno, Bojonegoro. Through thematic analysis, four major psychological determinants contributing to English learning anxiety were identified. These determinants did not emerge as isolated factors but were experienced as interrelated psychological conditions that shaped students' emotional responses and classroom behaviors. The identified categories are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Psychological Determinants Contributing to English Learning Anxiety

		Categories
	1)	Fear of Negative Evaluation
Psychological Determinants	2)	Low Self-Confidence
	3)	Test Anxiety and Fear of Failure
	4)	Motivation and Environmental Support

1) Fear of Negative Evaluation

Many students reported intense anxiety when required to speak English in front of the class, primarily due to fear of being evaluated by peers or teachers. This fear of negative evaluation emerged as a central psychological barrier that constrained students' willingness to participate actively in English learning activities. Students frequently associated classroom participation with the risk of embarrassment, ridicule, or negative judgment, which in turn discouraged oral engagement and increased emotional distress. As a result, students tended to withdraw from learning activities, thereby limiting opportunities to develop their English proficiency. Fear of negative judgment thus functioned not only as an emotional response but also as a behavioral inhibitor in the learning process.

For example, Participant 1 stated:

P: *"Do you often feel anxious or nervous during English lessons? Can you describe when and why this happened?"*

N: *"When asked to speak English in front of the class, I am terrified of making mistakes. I am afraid of being laughed at or thought of as incapable."*

Participants 2 expressed a similar concern:

P: *"Do you feel afraid of making mistakes when speaking or writing in English? Why?"*

N: *"I often hesitate to answer questions because I am afraid of making grammar or pronunciation mistakes."*

Classroom observations further supported these accounts, as students who expressed fear of negative evaluation were often reluctant to volunteer answers or initiate interaction. This convergence between interview and observational data indicates that fear of negative evaluation consistently shaped both emotional experience and observable classroom behavior.

2) Low Self-Confidence

Low self-confidence emerged as a salient determinant that interacted closely with fear of negative evaluation and further intensified English learning anxiety. Several students perceived their English abilities as inferior to those of their peers, despite expressing interest in learning the language. This diminished sense of self-confidence reduced students' readiness to engage in communicative tasks and heightened feelings of helplessness. As students avoided practicing English, their anxiety increased, creating a self-reinforcing cycle between low confidence and avoidance behavior.

Participant 3 described this experience as follows:

P: *"How do you feel about your ability to learn English?"*

N: *"I like English lessons, but I am not confident when I have to speak. I am afraid of making mistakes and feeling embarrassed."*

These findings suggest that low self-confidence functioned not merely as a background trait but as an active psychological condition influencing students' emotional regulation and participation decisions during English lessons.

3) Test Anxiety and Fear of Failure

Test anxiety was identified as another significant determinant contributing to students' English learning anxiety. Many students reported experiencing heightened emotional tension prior to examinations, quizzes, or oral presentations, which interfered with their concentration and recall. The pressure associated with evaluation contexts often led to cognitive blockage, such as forgetting previously learned material, thereby negatively affecting performance and reinforcing fear of failure.

Participant 5 stated:

P: *"What are the factors that make you feel depressed when you have English lessons?"*

N: *"During exams, I often forget all the material because I am too tense. I am afraid of getting a bad grade."*

Similarly, Participant 6 explained:

P: "Did you have anxiety during the test?"

N: "When there is a quiz or English exam, I get stressed. Sometimes I cannot even sleep the night before."

These narratives indicate that test anxiety operated as both an emotional and cognitive burden, amplifying students' fear of failure and undermining their confidence in academic evaluation contexts.

4) Motivation and Environmental Support

Students' learning motivation was strongly influenced by instructional practices and the social climate of the classroom. Several participants emphasized that teacher encouragement, peer support, and positive feedback significantly reduced their anxiety and increased their willingness to participate. Motivation thus emerged as a contextual determinant that moderated the impact of anxiety rather than functioning as a fixed internal trait.

Participant 7 reported:

P: "How do you feel about your friends and the environment? For example, your performance in English class."

N: "If the teacher is enthusiastic and motivating, I feel motivated too and not afraid."

Participant 8 added:

P: "How do your friends or the classroom environment affect your confidence and motivation in your English learning?"

N: "When I received praise for speaking up, I wanted to try more often."

These findings highlight the interactive relationship between psychological determinants and environmental support, indicating that anxiety levels fluctuated in response to classroom dynamics and pedagogical approaches.

Strategies to Overcome English Learning Anxiety

In addition to identifying psychological determinants of anxiety, this study also examined the coping strategies students employed to manage emotional stress during English learning. Students were not passive recipients of anxiety but actively engaged in regulating their emotional responses, using both individual and socially mediated strategies. The identified strategies are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Strategies Implemented to Overcome the Anxiety

Category	Strategies	
Internal emotion management strategies (self-regulation)	1)	Taking deep breaths
	2)	Calming themselves before presentations
	3)	Self-affirmation
	4)	Seeking help from friends
Activity-based learning strategies	1)	Language Games
	2)	Online Quiz
	3)	Watching videos
	4)	Storytelling

Students reported employing internal emotion-regulation strategies, such as deep breathing, calming themselves before presentations, positive self-talk, and seeking reassurance from peers. These strategies helped reduce immediate emotional tension and enabled students to regain a sense of control during anxiety-provoking situations. Peer support, in particular, fostered feelings of safety and encouragement, which facilitated greater participation.

Participant 9 stated:

P: "What do you usually do to overcome anxiety when learning English?"
N: "Usually, I take a deep breath before being asked to go up. To calm down first."

Participants 3 and 5 similarly reported:
P: "What do you usually do to overcome anxiety when learning English?"
N: "When I start to panic, I try to reassure myself that I can do it."

P: "What are the strategies that you use when you are depressed?"
N: "Stay calm and concentrate."

In addition, activity-based learning strategies were perceived as highly effective in reducing anxiety. Students reported feeling more relaxed and confident when teachers incorporated interactive and enjoyable learning activities, such as storytelling, role-playing, language games, quizzes, and watching videos. These activities shifted students' focus from fear of evaluation to engagement in the learning process, thereby reducing psychological pressure.

Participant 10 explained:

P: "After experiencing anxiety, do you reflect on or evaluate that experience? Moreover, what do you think would make learning English safer and more enjoyable?"
N: "If I study using games or watch videos, I become more enthusiastic and relaxed."

Participant 8 added:

P: "After experiencing anxiety, do you reflect on or evaluate that experience? Moreover, what do you think would make learning English safer and more enjoyable?"
N: "I prefer creative tasks like storytelling. It feels freer, and I am not too afraid of making mistakes."

Overall, the findings demonstrate that English learning anxiety is shaped by interconnected psychological and contextual factors, while students actively employ adaptive coping strategies to manage emotional challenges. These results provide process-oriented insights into how anxiety is experienced and regulated in real classroom settings, directly addressing the research gap identified in the Introduction.

DISCUSSION

Psychological Determinants of English Learning Anxiety

Based on the findings, this discussion aims to systematically interpret the results in relation to relevant theoretical frameworks and existing empirical research. Drawing on qualitative data from ten students in grades ten and eleven at SMA Ahmad Yani 2 Baureno, the study offers a context-sensitive understanding of psychological determinants influencing English learning anxiety among secondary school students. The findings indicate that students' anxiety levels were shaped by interrelated psychological determinants, including fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, test anxiety, and motivation, rather than by isolated factors.

These findings are consistent with Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy theory, which posits that individuals' beliefs about their capabilities significantly influence their emotional responses and task engagement. Students who doubted their English abilities tended to experience heightened anxiety and reluctance to participate, particularly in communicative tasks. This pattern suggests that anxiety was not merely a reaction to linguistic difficulty but was closely linked to students' perceptions of competence, reinforcing avoidance behaviors during English lessons.

The findings also align with Foreign Language Anxiety Theory proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which conceptualizes anxiety as a situation-specific response influenced by communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Fear of being judged by teachers or peers emerged as a dominant theme, shaping both emotional distress and observable classroom behavior. Social classroom dynamics, including peer comparison and teacher expectations, appeared to intensify students' apprehension, thereby limiting active language use.

Previous studies have similarly reported that language learning anxiety results from a complex interaction of affective and evaluative pressures, such as fear of communication, fear of negative evaluation, and performance-related stress (Mulyani, 2018; Ran et al., 2022; Wang & Zhan, 2022). The present findings extend this body of research by demonstrating how these pressures are experienced simultaneously and interpreted by learners in real classroom contexts, rather than functioning as independent variables.

Fear of negative judgment was consistently identified as a salient determinant in students' narratives. Students frequently avoided speaking despite possessing relevant knowledge, due to concerns about making mistakes or being perceived as incompetent. This finding corroborates prior research indicating that social anxiety can inhibit classroom participation even when learners are cognitively prepared (M. Liu & Xu, 2021; Y. Liu & Wang, 2023; Putri, 2020).

Low self-confidence further compounded anxiety and reduced students' willingness to engage in English learning activities. Students' perceptions of inadequate competence discouraged participation and weakened intrinsic motivation, which is consistent with principles outlined in Self-Determination Theory. Bureau et al. (2022) emphasized that

perceived competence is a core psychological need that supports autonomous motivation. When this need was unmet, students in the present study reported heightened anxiety and disengagement, echoing findings by Lintunen et al. (2025), Salsabila et al. (2023), and Ulla (2019).

Test anxiety also emerged as a significant source of emotional strain. Students described experiencing intense stress before examinations and presentations, which disrupted concentration and memory recall. Such anxiety-related cognitive interference has been widely reported in prior research, with high anxiety levels negatively affecting academic performance (Dong et al., 2022; Han et al., 2022). The present findings suggest that test anxiety interacted with low self-efficacy and fear of failure, further intensifying emotional distress during evaluative situations.

Motivation played a dual role in students' experiences of anxiety. Students who reported supportive teacher behavior and positive peer interactions demonstrated greater confidence and reduced anxiety, whereas those who perceived limited encouragement expressed lower motivation. This finding aligns with studies highlighting the buffering role of intrinsic motivation and social support in mitigating foreign language anxiety (Aydin & Tekin, 2023; Nurasiah & Wahyudi, 2022; Oladrostam et al., 2024; Putri, 2020). Motivation, therefore, functioned as a contextual moderator rather than a stable internal trait, fluctuating in response to classroom dynamics.

Overall, the findings confirm that English learning anxiety is a multifaceted psychological phenomenon shaped by the interaction of emotional, cognitive, and social factors. Consistent with Subekti and Glory (2022) and Suryanto and Muthmainnah (2024), the results underscore the importance of addressing students' psychological well-being alongside linguistic instruction. By foregrounding learners' lived experiences, this study responds directly to prior calls for qualitative, context-sensitive research that moves beyond variable-centered explanations of ELA.

Strategies to Overcome English Learning Anxiety

In addition to identifying psychological determinants of anxiety, this study found that students actively developed adaptive coping strategies to manage emotional challenges associated with English learning. Students were not passive recipients of anxiety but engaged in deliberate efforts to regulate their emotional responses, employing both individual and socially mediated strategies.

Emotion-focused strategies, such as deep breathing, calming techniques, positive self-affirmation, and concentration, were frequently reported. These strategies enabled students to reduce immediate emotional tension and regain a sense of control during anxiety-provoking situations, supporting prior findings on the role of emotional regulation in language learning contexts (Zhou et al., 2023). Such strategies were particularly effective during presentations and examinations, where anxiety levels tended to peak.

Social support also emerged as a critical coping mechanism. Encouragement from peers and teachers fostered a sense of psychological safety, enabling students to participate

more confidently in classroom activities. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of supportive learning environments in reducing foreign language anxiety (Dewaele et al., 2020; Putri, 2020; Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025; Tauchid, 2025). Social acknowledgment and reassurance appeared to enhance students' self-esteem and emotional resilience, thereby facilitating greater engagement.

Activity-based learning strategies further contributed to anxiety reduction. Students reported feeling more relaxed and motivated when instructional practices incorporated interactive and enjoyable activities, such as storytelling, language games, quizzes, and video-based learning. These approaches shifted students' attention away from fear of evaluation and toward meaningful engagement, creating a less threatening learning environment. This finding aligns with Dewaele et al.'s (2020) assertion that enjoyment in language learning can counterbalance anxiety and promote positive emotional involvement.

Environmental factors played a significant role in shaping students' coping strategies. Teacher sensitivity to students' emotional states, combined with peer support, contributed to a classroom climate that encouraged risk-taking and reduced fear of making mistakes. Such conditions resonate with humanistic and student-centered pedagogical models that emphasize emotional well-being as a foundation for effective learning (Amini et al., 2025; Fan et al., 2024).

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that coping with English learning anxiety involves a dynamic interplay between individual emotional regulation and social support mechanisms. By documenting how students actively manage anxiety within authentic classroom contexts, this study addresses a key gap in the literature by providing process-oriented insights into anxiety regulation, rather than merely identifying its determinants.

By integrating learners' lived experiences with theoretical perspectives on anxiety, self-efficacy, and motivation, this study extends existing ELA research beyond variable-based explanations toward a dynamic, process-oriented understanding of anxiety in English learning. Unlike prior studies that examined psychological determinants in isolation, the present findings illustrate how fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, test anxiety, and motivation interact within real instructional settings and are actively regulated through individual and social coping strategies. In doing so, the study provides qualitative, contextually grounded evidence from Indonesian high school classrooms, thereby addressing the previously underexplored interactional and experiential dimensions of English learning anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that psychological determinants play a central role in shaping English learning anxiety among high school students. The findings indicate that four key psychological determinants—fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, test anxiety, and learning motivation—contribute to students' anxiety in English learning contexts. These determinants do not operate independently but interact dynamically, influencing students' emotional responses, classroom participation, and engagement in

language learning activities. The results underscore the importance of psychological readiness and emotional regulation in supporting effective English learning.

Furthermore, this study reveals that students employ a range of adaptive coping strategies to manage English learning anxiety. These strategies include individual emotion-regulation techniques, such as deep breathing, self-affirmation, and calming strategies prior to presentations, as well as socially mediated strategies, including seeking support from peers and teachers. The availability of external support within the learning environment—particularly teacher encouragement and peer acceptance—contributes to the creation of a psychologically safe classroom climate, which enables students to participate more confidently and reduces anxiety.

In addition, engagement in enjoyable and activity-based learning practices, such as language games, online quizzes, video-based learning, and storytelling, emerged as an effective means of alleviating anxiety. These instructional approaches reduce evaluative pressure and promote positive emotional engagement, allowing students to focus on communication rather than fear of making mistakes. The findings suggest that anxiety reduction in English learning requires pedagogical practices that attend to both emotional and cognitive dimensions of learning, rather than focusing solely on linguistic competence.

By foregrounding students' lived experiences and coping processes, this study contributes context-sensitive qualitative insights into how psychological determinants of English learning anxiety interact within real classroom settings. In doing so, the study responds directly to the identified research gap by moving beyond variable-centered explanations and offering a process-oriented understanding of anxiety regulation among Indonesian high school learners. These insights highlight the value of integrating psychological awareness into English language pedagogy, particularly in exam-oriented educational contexts.

However, this study has several limitations. The focus on a single high school in a specific region of Indonesia limits the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. In addition, the qualitative design and small number of participants do not allow for generalization of results. Future research may extend this work by involving diverse educational settings, incorporating longitudinal or mixed-methods designs, and examining additional contextual variables, such as instructional strategies, parental involvement, and cultural influences, to further deepen understanding of English learning anxiety and its regulation.

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