An Empirical Study on College Students' Academic Writing Motivation in Sabah, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the academic writing motivation among 160 randomly chosen college students in Sabah, Malaysia using the 37-item Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire. Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed no significant differences in college students' academic writing motivation by way of ethnicity and age, while Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant differences in terms of gender. Wilcoxon signed rank test based on a hypothesized value of 3.5 revealed that 26 of the items were significant at $p < .001$. Moreover, a total of 11 items showed that their medians significantly differed from the test value and were likely to indicate strong agreement, while the other 15 items showed that their medians significantly differed from the test value and were likely to indicate strong disagreement. The overall mean score was 126, indicating that college students tended to have a low level of academic writing motivation. In light of the findings, some recommendations were made on ways to enhance their academic writing motivation.

Contribution/Originality: This research offers a valuable contribution by examining college students' academic writing motivation in Sabah, Malaysia. Findings can lead to deeper insight into the factors influencing the academic writing motivation among tertiary students, which encourages educators to implement effective measures to promote academic writing as a critical skill for not only academic achievement, but also as a generic attribute for better employability and career success.

1. Introduction

As a principal component of coursework and examinations, academic writing is an essential skill for tertiary success and professional development. Nevertheless, it poses a

seemingly unsurmountable challenge to many Malaysian tertiary students, particularly for second language (L2) learners whose mother tongue is not English. Their writing motivation is often affected by academic difficulties in relation to vocabulary, coherence, and paraphrasing, which arise mainly due to a lack of English proficiency, first language (L1) interference, lack of writing exposure, inappropriate teaching techniques, and medium of instruction (Lin & Pua, 2024). Moreover, Ravana, Palpanadan, and Vivian (2023) posited that Malaysian university students are often unfamiliar with the conventions of academic writing, especially in terms of structuring an essay and expressing complex ideas and arguments.

According to Baharuddin, Mohd Nasir, and Stark (2023), many Malaysian students fail to meet the rigorous standards of academic writing, thus producing essays that are frequently devoid of coherence, organization, and adherence to academic standards. Their poor academic writing performance not only hinders their ability to effectively convey ideas and arguments, but also inevitably impacts on their overall academic performance. On the other hand, Azmar and Razali (2024a) reiterated that academic writing in Malaysia tends to be instructor-centric with high reliance on traditional drills and writing practices rather than the more effective process-based approach. Additionally, many academic writing instructors at higher education institutions are adversely affected by time constraints and grading issues, besides the lack of interest, pedagogical content knowledge, and institutional support. Other recurrent problems include large class sizes, heavy teaching load, as well as students' lack of English proficiency, interest, and motivation (Azmar & Razali, 2024b).

Beh and Ganapathy (2021) reiterated that the Malaysian Ministry of Education has made several attempts to transform the education system by focusing on students' English Language mastery and critical thinking skills to increase productivity and efficiency, which is often regarded as the primary panacea for increasing graduate employability. Moreover, the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) has highlighted that employability skills include, but are not limited to, English proficiency in spoken and written production, besides the application of higher-order thinking skills. Under its Shift Two, tertiary students are expected to acquire effective academic writing skills for research and future employability. On the other hand, the Roadmap 2015-2025 educational policy, which aims to reduce the mismatch of graduates in the job market, has underscored the need for different pedagogies in propagating English Language skills to help students become self-assertive and productive global citizens.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Since academic writing poses a profound challenge to many Malaysian tertiary students, it is of paramount importance to ensure that they are motivated to improve their written expression on campus and beyond to successfully attain their professional and personal goals. Motivation, a fundamental issue in the area of second language learning, may influence students' ability and willingness to overcome problems associated with academic writing. Therefore, writing motivation often drives students to exert greater effort into learning a second language out of need and a real desire to master it. Motivated students tend to display eagerness to acquire the English Language, show willingness to expend effort on the learning, and demonstrate capacity to sustain it. Some researchers found that writing motivation, writing self-efficacy, and writing outcomes are interrelated, whereby the more confident students tend to be more motivated to engage in academic writing. Academic writing, one of the most crucial productive skills, is often

regarded as a challenging endeavor for non-native users of English, while also acting as a motivational factor that affects students' academic attainment (Aygün & Aydin, 2016; Kulusakli, 2021; Surastina & Dedi, 2018).

Additionally, writing motivation consists of several components, including self-efficacy, beliefs, attitudes, and goal orientation; therefore, students need to augment their motivation and inner beliefs to become effective writers. Those who perceive themselves as competent writers often demonstrate more effort in writing and are more likely to engage in academic writing activities, besides exhibiting greater determination to improve their written expression. Lastly, attempts to improve students' academic writing will not have a significant impact unless their motivation is taken into account (Kulusakli, 2021). Consequently, it is necessary to conduct more empirical research that focuses not only on academic writing, but also on motivation to undertake it.

1.2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the academic writing motivation among college students in Sabah, Malaysia, where research in this area is still scarce. This study was significant for two reasons. First, research on academic writing motivation would provide a pragmatic framework for educators and policymakers to increase the employability rates among Malaysian fresh graduates by enhancing their spoken and written expression in English, which is often required by international entities. Second, findings would provide greater insight into the pedagogy of academic writing, thus encouraging instructors to develop more innovative means to increase students' motivation to do academic writing for various purposes, including knowledge acquisition, life satisfaction and enjoyment, and lifelong learning. Since academic writing is a multifaceted and complex process that predominantly challenges Malaysian tertiary students, findings of this study would contribute to extent knowledge and highlight the importance of implementing appropriate strategies that could increase students' motivation to engage in academic writing in a purposeful manner.

1.3. Research Questions

To guide the study, three research questions were formulated:
   i.   Were there any significant differences in college students' academic writing motivation in relation to gender, age, and ethnicity?
  ii.   Were there any significant differences (agreement/disagreement) on the academic writing motivation items based on a hypothesized value of 3.5?
 iii.   What were the percentages of agreement on the academic writing motivation items and implications?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Networking, Demographics, Self-regulation, and Motivational Strategies

Research shows that students' academic writing motivation is influenced by several factors. First, earlier studies indicated that it is associated with social networking, demographic background, self-regulatory control, and instructors' motivational strategies. For example, Yunus, Salehi, and Chenzi (2012) found that integrating social networking services in the ESL writing classroom can increase student motivation and build confidence in ESL writing, while Vikneswaran and Krish (2015) revealed that peer influence and school surroundings can motivate students to write better on social

networking sites via feedback exchange and idea sharing. On the other hand, in their study on self-regulatory control and academic writing, Csizér and Tankó (2017) discovered that, while students are motivated to enhance their professional writing, only a minority tend to control their writing processes via self-regulatory strategy use. Lastly, Cheung (2018) indicated that the more the instructors use motivational strategies, the more students tend to demonstrate positive attitudes toward writing, with improved self-efficacy and feelings of success.

2.2. Instrumental Motivation, Intrinsic Motives, and Self-efficacy

There is ample research evidence indicating that academic writing motivation is associated with instrumental motivation, intrinsic motives, self-efficacy, and other psychosocial factors. For example, Hong and Ganapathy (2017) found that students tend to be more instrumentally motivated in ESL learning, since their academic writing motivation tends to be associated with their perceived utility of written expression; they believe that effective academic writing can augment their social status or self-image and lead to more prestigious careers and business opportunities, besides helping them meet challenging academic requirements and mastering technical materials. Additionally, they also perform primarily for the sake of extrinsic rewards, such as positive appraisal, personal fulfilment, prestige, or power. van Blankenstein et al. (2018) found that students' writing self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation tend to increase halfway through the academic year, when students have acquired the necessary writing skills. Moreover, Surastina and Dedi (2018) discovered that enjoyment has the highest contribution to writing motivation, followed by instrumentality, and self-efficacy.

According to Yulianawati (2019), students' writing motivation tends to be influenced by self-efficacy derived from four sources, including (a) direct, authentic, and personal mastery experiences attributed to their own efforts and skills, (b) vicarious experiences or modeling whereby students believe that they, too, possess the capabilities to master comparable activities after observing peers succeed through persistence and perseverance, (c) social persuasion whereby they self-affirm their own beliefs that they have the potential to succeed, and (d) physiological states that enable them to appropriately interpret their physical and affective responses, while reducing stress and other destructive emotional tendencies. Similarly, a study by Graham et al. (2021) indicated that a majority of students' writing behavior tends to be driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives. In their study, Lesiuk and Lynch (2022) revealed a significant relationship between English writing motivation and writing achievement, and between writing motivation and self-efficacy. Moreover, Eryilmaz and Yesilyurt (2022) found that a positive attitude, intrinsic motivation, and needs satisfaction tend to increase students' propensity to compose in English. Lastly, Gloria and Mbato (2023) revealed that students tend to be extrinsically motivated to write academic papers, while Andheska et al. (2020) found that writing ability of both field independent and field dependent students tends to significantly influence that writing motivation.

2.3. Feedback, Digital Technology, and Writing Mode

Some researchers found that feedback, digital technology, and writing mode tend to have an impact on academic writing. For example, Nor Mahadzir and Phung (2013) found that augmented reality (AR) pop-up books tend to increase students' motivation to learn English; besides being relevant, AR increases students' attention, confidence, and feelings of satisfaction through such factors as perceptual and inquiry arousal, success

opportunities, personal control, equity, intrinsic reinforcement, and extrinsic rewards. Additionally, a study by Ahmed et al. (2021) evidenced that synchronized/unsynchronized e-feedback and face-to-face feedback tend to augment students' academic writing, achievement motivation, and critical thinking, while Saputri, Qurrotul, and Fauzan (2023) revealed that feedback during the initial writing attempts tends to increase writing motivation. While multiple revisions may temporarily decrease writing motivation, it often reverts to its former state when students have successfully met the expectations on proper academic writing. Similarly, Song and Song (2023) found significant gains in both academic writing skills and motivation among students who have received AI-assisted instruction. Lastly, Zewde, Yesgat, and Dememe (2024) discovered that competitive team-based learning tends to increase students' academic writing motivation, while Alzubi and Nazim (2024) asserted that self-assigning topics and advanced writing skills tend to have similar impact.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Approach

The study employed a quantitative approach because it used a survey to obtain numerical data and SPSS 26.0 was conducted to analyze data to understand the concept of academic writing motivation. This approach was appropriate for the study since it attempted to find patterns and averages in data, draw conclusions based on the empirical findings, and suggest recommendations to improve academic writing motivation among college students.

3.2. Research Location

The study was conducted in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, where empirical research on college students' academic writing motivation is lacking. Students from a private local university college were recruited as subjects because the study aimed to examine students' academic writing motivation only in the Kota Kinabalu area, which was deemed sufficiently representative of the college population in Sabah. Moreover, there are only three private university colleges in Kota Kinabalu, and the other two had declined to cooperate in data collection, justifying that their lecturers and students were already overloaded with paperwork. Besides, data collection was more feasible at the chosen location because the first author is the head of its Master of Education program. The study also received little funding; therefore, it was feasible to collect data in only one small area in Sabah. Overall, data collection was limited to only one private university college due to constraints in terms of time, accessibility, and funding.

3.3. Sample

The sample (n = 160) was recruited through systematic random sampling at a private university college in Sabah, Malaysia, which has an undergraduate population of 480. First, a list of undergraduates (N = 480) was obtained from the registrar. Subsequently, every second student on the list was contacted and asked to respond to the online questionnaire that was uploaded onto the group WhatsApp.

According to Roscoe (1975), a sample size greater than 30 and less than 500 is suitable for most survey studies; the argument behind this rule of thumb is derived from the Central Limit Theorem, which states that the distribution of means will reach a normal

distribution as the sample size increases. Overall, a sample that is equal to or greater than 30 is deemed sufficient to yield meaningful data for analysis (Memon, *et al.,* 2020). By obtaining 160 random data points, the authors could gain meaningful insight into college students' academic writing motivation with reasonably high confidence in the findings.

Students come from ethnically diverse backgrounds and are fluent in both Malay and English. Male students comprised 86.9 percent, while female students comprised 13.1 percent of the sample. About 86.9 percent were 17 to 19 years old, 3.75 percent were 20 to 22 years old, and 9,38 percent were above 23 years old. Lastly, Kadazandusuns comprised 77.5 percent, Malays 11.3 percent, and Rungus/Muruts another 11.3 percent of the sample. Their demographic details are found in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Sample (*n* = 160)

Profile	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	139	86.9
	Female	21	13.1
Age	17-19	139	86.9
	20-22	6	3.75
	23 and above	15	9.38
Ethnicity	Kadazandusun	124	77.5
	Malay	18	11.3
	Rungus/Murut	18	11.3

3.4. Instrument

The Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire (AWMQ) developed by Payne (2012) was used to collect data. It consists of 37 Likert- type items ranging from Strongly disagree (1) to Strong agree (5). The developer has reported its means, standard deviations, and correlations as well as the results of independent samples t-tests, a reliability analysis, and an exploratory factor analysis based on a sample of 69 undergraduate students. Its Cronbach alpha was .95, which makes it an excellent instrument for this study. Further, Payne (2012) asserted that its content validity was ensured by consulting academic writing experts as well as by consulting literature and other existing academic writing instruments. Its reliability and utility were confirmed by Surastina and Dedi (2018) who examined the academic writing motivation of 120 prospective Indonesian language teachers. Their EFA analysis grouped the items into four factors (enjoyment, self-efficacy, instrumentality, and recognition), which revealed rotated factor loadings varying between 0.55 and 0.98. Moreover, it explained 75.6 percent of total variance with the greatest variance (almost triple that of other factors) found in the enjoyment factor. The overall value of Cronbach alpha was 0.93, again indicating its high reliability. Moreover, Kulusakli (2021) who used the same questionnaire to examine 65 EFL learners' academic writing motivation found that its Cronbach alpha was .89. Lastly, the AWMQ has a total score of 185 (high = 167-185; average = 130-166; low = less than 130).

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

A total of 160 randomly selected students from a university college were invited to complete the questionnaire online and were told that its completion was their indication of consent to voluntarily participate in the study. All respondents were assured of their anonymity, while their responses were kept strictly confidential. Data that were collected were automatically transferred onto a spreadsheet and subsequently analyzed using SPSS

26.0. First, Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in students' academic writing motivation in relation to ethnicity and age, while Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if there were any significant differences in terms of gender. Next, Wilcoxon signed rank was used to determine if significant differences (agreement/disagreement) existed in the items based on the hypothesized value of 3.5. Lastly, descriptive statistics were used to present the percentages of agreement on each item to gain an overview of college students' academic writing motivation.

4. Findings

4.1. Non-parametric Tests

Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed no significant differences in college students' academic writing motivation by way of ethnicity and age, while Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant differences in terms of gender (see Table 2).

Table 2: Results of Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney U Tests

Variable	Non-parametric test	*p*-value
Age	Kruskal-Wallis H test	0.910
Gender	Mann-Whitney U test	0.830
Ethnicity	Kruskal-Wallis H test	0.319

4.2. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Wilcoxon signed rank test based on a hypothesized value of 3.5 revealed that 26 of the items were significant at $p < .001$ (see Table 3). A total of 11 items showed that their medians significantly differed from the test value and were likely to indicate strong agreement. Lastly, the other 15 items showed that their medians significantly differed from the test value and were likely to indicate strong disagreement (see Table 3).

Table 3: Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test on Academic Writing Motivation
(Hypothesized Value = 3.5)

Item/Null Hypothesis	*p*-value	Conclusion
I enjoy writing	0.072	No significant difference from the test value
I like to write down my thoughts	0.723	No significant difference from the test value
I use correct grammar in my writing.	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I complete a writing assignment even when it is difficult	.006	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
Being a good writer will help me do well academically	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
I write as well as other students	0.005	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I write more than the minimum on writing assignments	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I put a lot of effort into my writing	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
I like to participate in written online discussions	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement

I like to get feedback from an instructor on my writing	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
I am able to clearly express my ideas in writing	0.540	No significant difference from the test value
I easily focus on what I am writing	0.435	No significant difference from the test value
I like my writing to be graded	0.002	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
I am more likely to succeed if I can write well	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
It is easy for me to write good essays	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I enjoy creative writing assignments	0.174	No significant difference from the test value
I like classes that require a lot of writing	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I plan how I am going to write something before I write it	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
Becoming a better writer is important to me	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
Being a better writer will help me in my career	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
It is important to me that I make an A on essay writing	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
I enjoy writing assignments that challenge me	0.220	No significant difference from the test value
I revise my writing before submitting an assignment	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
Punctuation is easy for me	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I enjoy writing literary analysis papers	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I like to write even if my writing will not be graded	0.151	No significant difference from the test value
I like others to read what I have written	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I enjoy writing research papers	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I would like to have more opportunities to write in classes	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Being a good writer is important in getting a good job	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
I practice writing in order to improve my skills	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
I want the highest grade in the class on a writing assignment	0.005	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong agreement
I prefer writing to answering multiple-choice questions	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I want others to recognize me as a good writer	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Spelling is easy for me	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
Choosing the right word is easy for me	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement
I am motivated to write in my classes	< 0.001	Median significantly differs from the test value indicating strong disagreement

*$p < .001$

4.3. Mean Score and Percentages of Agreement/Disagreement

Findings revealed that the overall mean score was 126, indicating that college students have a low level of academic writing motivation.

Percentages of significantly agree/strongly agree for each item were collapsed to gain an overall impression of the level of students' academic writing motivation. Only a low 21.3 to 28.8 percent of students significantly agreed/strongly agreed that they (a) used correct grammar in their writing, (b) found it easy for them to write good essays, (c) preferred writing to answering multiple-choice questions, (d) found that choosing the right word was easy, (e) wrote more than the minimum on writing assignments, (f) liked to participate in written online discussions, and (g) wanted others to recognize them as good writers. Another low 31.1 to 36.9 percent of students significantly agreed/strongly agreed that they (a) found punctuation easy for them, (b) enjoyed writing research papers, (c) liked others to read what they had written, (d) liked classes that required a lot of writing, (e) wrote as well as other students, (f) found spelling easy for them, and (g) were motivated to write in their classes (see Table 4).

Table 4: Percentages of Agreement on Academic Writing Motivation

Item	1	2	3	4	5	4 + 5
I enjoy writing	0	2.5	45.6	33.8	16.9	50.7
I like to write down my thoughts	1.3	9.4	41.3	31.3	16.9	48.2
I use correct grammar in my writing.	0	16.9	61.9	14.4	6.9	21.3
I complete a writing assignment even when it is difficult	0.6	4.4	38.1	38.8	18.1	56.9
Being a good writer will help me do well academically	0.6	1.9	27.5	40.6	28.1	68.7
I write as well as other students	0.6	12.5	50	27.5	9.4	36.9
I write more than the minimum on writing assignment	0.6	8.8	61.9	21.9	6.3	28.5
I put a lot of effort into my writing	0	3.1	30.6	43.8	22.5	66.3
I like to participate in written online discussions	3.8	16.3	51.2	21.9	6.9	28.8
I like to get feedback from an instructor on my writing	0	2.5	31.9	41.3	23.8	65.1
I am able to clearly express my ideas in writing	0	6.9	46.9	38.1	8.1	46.2
I easily focus on what I am writing	0	6.3	43.1	38.8	11.9	50.7
I like my writing to be graded	0	4.4	39.4	34.4	21.9	61.3
I am more likely to succeed if I can write well	1.3	3.8	26.9	40.6	27.5	68.1
It is easy for me to write good essays	1.9	23.1	51.9	19.4	3.1	22.5
I enjoy creative writing assignments	0.6	4.4	55	29.4	10.6	40
I like classes that require a lot of writing	1.3	9.4	55	25	8.1	33.1
I plan how I am going to write something before I write it	0	1.3	41.9	38.1	18.8	56.9
Becoming a better writer is important to me	0.6	5	33.1	35	25.6	60.6
Being a better writer will help me in my career	1.3	3.1	35.6	32.5	27.5	60
It is important to me that I make an A on essay writing	0	5.6	35.6	35.6	22.5	58.1
I enjoy writing assignments that challenge me	1.3	10	46.3	30	12.5	42.5
I revise my writing before submitting an assignment	0	2.5	30	39.4	26.3	65.7
Punctuation is easy for me	1.9	10.6	55	23.8	8.1	31.9
I enjoy writing literary analysis papers	0.6	14.4	58.8	19.4	6.3	25.7
I like to write even if my writing will not be graded	0.6	6.9	53.1	26.9	12.5	39.4
I like others to read what I have written	5	18.1	45	18.8	12.5	31.3

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	
I enjoy writing research papers	0.6	13.8	54.4	20	11.3	31.3
I would like to have more opportunities to write in classes	0.6	7.5	61.3	22.5	7.5	30
Being a good writer is important in getting a good job	0	2.5	35	38.1	23.8	61.9
I practice writing in order to improve my skills	0.6	3.8	36.3	37.5	21.9	59.4
I want the highest grade in the class on a writing assignment	0.6	6.3	38.8	26.9	26.9	53.8
I prefer writing an essay to answering multiple-choice questions	5	13.1	53.8	18.8	9.4	28.2
I want others to recognize me as a good writer	3.8	12.5	56.9	20	6.9	26.9
Spelling is easy for me	1.9	13.1	51.2	27.5	6.3	33.8
Choosing the right word is easy for me	1.3	15.6	56.3	21.3	5.6	26.9
I am motivated to write in my classes	0.6	12.5	60	20.6	6.3	26.9

Strongly disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly agree = 5

Additionally, barely 53.8 to 56.9 percent of students significantly agreed/strongly agreed that they (a) wanted the highest grade in the class on a writing assignment, (b) practiced writing in order to improve their skills, (c) wanted to get an A on essay writing, (d) planned how they were going to write something before they wrote, and (e) would complete a writing assignment even when it was difficult. Only 60.6 to 68.7 percent significantly agreed/strongly agreed that they (a) liked their writing to be graded, (b) believed that being a good writer was important to get a good job, (c) believed that being a good writer would help them in their career, (d) liked to get feedback from an instructor on their writing, (e) put a lot of effort into their writing, and (f) believed that being a good writer would help them do well academically. Like the overall mean, percentages of agreement on the items indicated that a significantly low percentage of college students are characterized by high academic writing motivation (see Table 4).

5. Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Findings imply that college students' academic writing motivation tends to be low, which is supported by previous research. For example, Pratiwi, Aridah, and Zamruddin (2022) found that students' level of writing motivation and writing achievement tend to be low, while Magogwe's (2024) findings supported the notion that students' motivation to write essays was not high. On the other hand, Rusli, Yunus, and Hashim (2018) found that low English proficiency is associated with poor academic writing among Malaysian undergraduate students, which is primarily due to the lack of effective instructional management and negative teacher and peer influence.

Findings of this study suggest that it is important for tertiary institutions to implement appropriate strategies to increase students' academic writing motivation to ensure that they will be able to effectively express themselves through writing in a purposeful and meaningful manner. Rafik-Galea, Arumugam, and de Mell (2012) found that group multi-drafting and feedback processes can reinforce students' perceptions of writing as a recursive process, which in turn enhance their academic writing literacy in such areas as referencing, planning, idea generation, editing, and revising, thus implying that multi-drafting is an effective pedagogical tool for improving the academic writing skills and confidence among tertiary students.

On the other hand, Muftah and Rafik-Galea (2013) reiterated that instructors should capitalize on students' instrumental agency to enhance their academic writing motivation.

Instrumentally oriented students are more motivated to write when instructors provide specific rather than general goals for language acquisition, as many of them often engage in academic writing for the sake of career development, advanced studies, communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, and utilizing the Internet properly. Language instructors should also ensure that students stay on track of their motivation toward English acquisition, while being inundated by the conventions of a writing class.

Omar et al. (2020) asserted that instructor motivational strategies play a crucial role in enhancing students' academic writing motivation, which include demonstrating appropriate instructor behavior, presenting relevant writing tasks, promoting students' self-confidence, and recognizing students' effort. First, instructors need to be always professional, caring, enthusiastic, and proficient so that students will respect them as the class authority and role model. Second, they should demonstrate what they expect students to do in class and explain the significance of each writing activity because instructional clarity tends to increase student motivation. Third, they should reinforce students' self-confidence by providing constructive feedback and offering activities that are age-appropriate. Lastly, they should recognize students' effort by sincerely complimenting them verbally rather than rewarding them with grades or other tangible items.

Moreover, Beh and Ganapathy (2021) confirmed that instructors can use the Frangenheim's thinking skills framework (TSF) to enhance students' academic writing proficiency. One of its most important features is the use of task verbs that enables students to articulate writing in specific, clear, and standardized terms, while reducing task ambiguity and allowing them to become independent writers. Requiring students to adopt a T-chart and concept maps to complete their writing tasks, the TSF can improve their academic writing and higher-order thinking skills. Lastly, it serves as an effective guidance tool, comprising several strategies and clues that activate students' fundamental thinking skills, idea generation, and decision-making.

To enhance students' academic writing, the collaborative approach (Azodi & Lotfi, 2020; Wonglakorn & Deerajviset, 2023; Zhang, 2021) should be adopted to motivate students to actively engage in a community that generates ideas together and respond to one another's feedback, while thriving in an authentic social context for interaction and learning. By encouraging two or more writers to collaborate within a single text, it allows students to work together to plan, draft, and revise their essays, besides allowing them to reflect on their language use and overcome language-related barriers. By providing opportunities for students to edit their peers' writing texts, collaborative writing can increase their insight into the grammatical constructs that yield better written products.

Udvardi-Lakos, Glogger-Frey, and Renkl (2023) asserted that self-regulated learning can be effective in enhancing students' academic writing motivation. It is based on computer-based learning that reinforces cognitive, metacognitive, and resource-based learning strategies that enable students to concentrate on conditional knowledge about various writing strategies, which in turn increases their cognizance of a broad array of application contexts for the writing strategies. Additionally, self-regulated learning also requires students to create learning journal entries after finishing their essays by practicing the writing strategies that they have mastered. For each entry, they need to apply at least one writing strategy effectively, for example, by mind-mapping new constructs or elaborating on novel concepts using vivid examples. Lastly, self-regulated learning encourages

students to evaluate their classmates' learning journal entries by using digital-generated rubrics.

To enhance students' academic writing motivation, Chien (2024) suggested the integration of mindset theories into the structures and research methods in relation to conducting literature reviews. Students with a growth mindset tend to challenge themselves, believe that they can achieve more, and become more resilient and innovative problem solvers. Standford University (n. d.) highlighted that instructors can cultivate a growth mindset by (a) being transparent about the importance of academic writing, (b) reminding students that academic writing skills are not innate, but can be refined, (c) modeling effort to show students that writing expertise is developed through constant practice, (d) asking authentic and open-ended questions that encourage critical thinking and independent learning, (e) praising and reinforcing students for their persistence and resilience, especially when they submit revisions on their assessments, (f) assigning work that promotes growth, reflection, and improvement, such as multiple drafts of papers and opportunities to respond to feedback, and (g) integrating learning strategies and approaches into the writing curriculum by emphasizing the best practices for skimming, speed reading, and test-taking.

To conclude, this study was the first to examine college students' academic writing motivation in Sabah, Malaysia. First, although the sample size was quite large, all the respondents in this study originated from only one small area. Therefore, limitations inherent in the sampling area might affect the generalizability of the findings to a certain extent. Future studies should consider the selection of more diversified regional and age-group samples for validation. Second, each motivational attribute was dependent upon college students' self-reporting; therefore, deviations or inaccuracies could occur due to social desirability. Lastly, future research should combine the questionnaire with behavioral observation, instructor reporting, and classroom evaluations that can help obtain more objective and accurate information on the topic.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study has strictly adhered to all ethical procedures involving the use of human subjects. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents who were ascertained of their anonymity, with their responses kept strictly private and confidential. They were also informed that the study was of low risk and that they could stop participating any time without any repercussions.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was found in this study in terms of authorship or publication of this article.

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