

Factors affecting the writing skills of students: A case of a higher secondary school

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ABSTRACT: *Writing is a vital skill in the formation of language. The present study explored the factors that affect students' writing skills by employing a convergent mixed-methods research design guided by a pragmatic paradigm. A survey and an interview were used to collect data. Simple descriptive and statistical analysis for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data analysis were employed. The finding showed that writing develops communication, critical thinking, creativity, and imagination in students. The finding also identified intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional factors as affecting students' writing skills. It is recommended that relevant stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, teachers, and parents work collaboratively to enhance the writing skills of the students.*

KEYWORDS: Writing, factors, creativity, intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional.

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1. Introduction

Bhutan borrowed its English education curricula from India, along with teachers to teach them, when the Western education system was introduced in the 1960s (Rinzin, 2018). Since then, it has been taught without much alteration. The Curriculum and Professional Support Division [CAPSD] (2006) implemented a new English curriculum in February 2006 to develop Bhutanese students' reading and writing skills. The purpose of the shift was to guide students in acquiring skills in reading and writing, listening, and speaking, including grammar and language. The new curriculum defined the number of periods for each skill and specified that students must achieve the primary goals set out in the curriculum structure. The curriculum structure clarified how students could read and write and what kind of understanding they should demonstrate at the end of each level (Wangmo, 2006).

Writing is an event in which the writer and reader have a distinct public application. It becomes public property once the word is out. For both the content and the written essence, the writer is evaluated. Students' progress in writing depends on careful and mindful curriculum preparation, the availability of periodic writing tools, good models, teachers, arrangements, and the evaluation of various styles of writing skills (Drukpa, 2016).

1.1. Problem statement

Writing skills are crucial for successful learning in higher education work (Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007; Prior, 2012), and society (Prior, 2012). In this era of globalization, the ability to write in English is essential for students. Accordingly, equipping students with English writing skills is necessary in this competitive era.

The Bhutanese English Curriculum Framework requires secondary school students to use correct spelling, write logical paragraphs, employ apt terminology, and display differences between grammar and phraseology (CAPSD, 2005). Similarly, the writing standards of the "Silken Knot" spell out how students should be able to use a wide range of punctuation appropriately at levels five to eight, write simple and complex phrases, and use advanced vocabulary in their writing (CERD, 2002).

Despite the significance of writing in secondary education for skilful communication, academic performance, and student achievement, including success, students in one of the schools in Thimphu Thromde (the city) have problems writing effectively in English. Dorji (2000) stated that students in the towns speak fluently, but they face difficulties in writing. In a study that was carried out to explore students' quality of writing in English, it was found that the standards of students' writing fell far below the

standards (CAPSD, 2006). Similarly, Choeda et al. (2020) found in their study that students have poor writing skill. They make numerous grammatical errors and are unable to express and convey their messages. As a whole, the students' writing standards are poor, and they do not align with the standard required. Therefore, there is a need to nurture students' writing skills to meet the standard by exploring the benchmarking factors for English writing skills.

Many studies have been conducted worldwide on a similar topic (Al-Hammadi & Sidek, 2014; Ceylan, 2018; Sugumlu, 2020). However, there is not a single study conducted on this topic in the Bhutanese context, which reveals a gap. This study, therefore, explored the importance of factors affecting students' writing skills. Writing is an important skill for our students, so it is critical to understand the factors that influence it so that we can help them improve.

1.2. Research questions

This study was guided by the following main research question and sub-questions.

Primary question

What factors influence students' writing skills at a higher secondary school in Thimphu Thromde?

Sub-questions

What factors promote students' writing skills?

What barriers impede students' writing skills?

What are the strategies to overcome the barriers to students' writing skills?

2. Literature review

Writing is a vital skill, and all language learners need to learn how to write to improve grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary and also allow communication through a different medium that requires the proper use of language skills (Al-Hammadi & Sidek, 2015). Writing is a technique and is idiosyncratic, as no two authors approach their craft in the same way (CAPSD, 2005).

Writing is creating graphic symbols or using images by arranging terms and words to form phrases according to certain conventions or to

communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form (Benwell, 2012). Furthermore, writing skills are the way to convey what we understand and are also a primary requirement for better academic performance (Geiser & Studley, 2002).

2.1. The importance of writing

Writing is one of the four essential skills in language learning and is a potent tool. The writing process involves skills that are difficult to implement, such as reading, thinking, and expressing thoughts (Ungan, 2007). Further, CERD (2002), and Rao (2007), Walsh (2010) opined that writing strengthens students' exposure and competency in learning, thinking, and reflecting, and that it is also used extensively in higher education and the workplace. Writing skills influence the quality of work and how people interpret professionalism. For school children, writing is indispensable because they express everything in their writing. Besides speaking, writing seems to be the world's only means of communicating one's feelings. It was noted that teachers respect writing for academic excellence through the written exam, and the skill will help the student throughout their adult life (Dukpa, 2000). Consequently, they ought to be concise, legible, and well-set out so that the writing skills can help achieve accuracy.

2.2. Factors affecting students' writing skills

Students need a positive attitude to motivate their writing. According to Lipstein and Renninger (2007), students interested in writing are more likely to create practical goals, apply valuable techniques, and seek feedback as they work on writing tasks. Motivation has a significant influence on the growth of students' writing skills (Akyol & Aktaş, 2018). Furthermore, Ackerman (2006) emphasized the importance of motivation in writing, indicating that if teachers exhibit their writing skills, it will boost students' motivation in writing. The amount of time devoted to writing tasks often affects the writing skills of students. A student who devotes a good deal of time to writing can gain writing skills faster than someone who puts less time into it. Thus, familiarity with a

specific type of content lays the groundwork for writing abilities and influences students' writing abilities.

2.3. Strategies to improve writing skills

Literature highlights strategies that can help improve students' writing skills. Fareed et al. (2016) reported that students need to learn grammar, spelling, punctuation, and rhetorical skills. In addition, it is important to inculcate the culture of writing in the early classes by stressing the deliberate teaching of vocabulary and reading to learn better writing (Kalikokha, 2008; Quintero, 2008). Correspondingly, teachers need training in effective writing methods. Institutes should offer skilled teachers to teach and inspire writing.

Additionally, conventional approaches are inaccurate and incompatible with current practices. So, teachers must modify their pedagogical approaches and collaborate to create tasks that can motivate and encourage students to be successful writers (Dorji, 2000; Pineteh, 2013). It is also important that teachers provide immediate and constructive feedback on students' writing to enhance their interest (Haider, 2012).

Therefore, effective teachers, educational tools, and aids are required to make writing more efficient and meaningful. Teachers can use these tools to assist students in writing accurately and effectively.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research paradigm

A pragmatics paradigm guided this research study. The pragmatic approach encourages qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to investigate complex social and natural-context phenomena (Morgan, 2007). Given the intent of the research, which is to find out the factors affecting writing skills, the most appropriate means to get insight within a pragmatic context is using a mixed method of convergent parallel design.

3.2. Mixed methods design

The study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to thoroughly understand the

subject. The researcher conducted the quantitative and qualitative elements of the research process simultaneously, weighed the methods equally, analyzed the two separately, and interpreted the results together (Creswell & Pablo-Clark, 2011). A more comprehensive understanding of the research issue was yielded by combining both approaches.

3.3. Data collection tools

This research used quantitative and qualitative tools to collect data. In the quantitative phase, data was collected using a six-point Likert scale. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured and focused group interviews were used to collect detailed data from teachers and students on the factors affecting writing skills. The interview allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions, probe for additional information, and revisit key questions later in the interview to generate a rich understanding of the factors affecting the students' writing skills.

3.4. Data analysis method

Quantitative data was coded and entered for statistical analysis in the Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) Version 22.0 and interpreted using descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation.

Raw data collected from the semi-structured interview was transcribed, coded, and categorized into diverse themes judging by participants' responses, which were grouped into common themes. A thematic analysis by Braun and Clark (2018), which involved six steps, was used.

- i) Familiarizing, knowing, and transcribing data.
- ii) Generating codes.
- iii) Categorising codes.
- iv) Generating themes.
- v) Reviewing themes.
- vi) Naming themes.

3.5. Sampling strategies

In mixed methods analysis, sampling plays a critical role, and the quantitative sample size is typically more significant than the qualitative

sample size (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In the present analysis, the researcher used data from both samples.

Clustered sampling was used for the survey. Researchers split the sample into smaller groups called “clusters” and randomly chose a sample from among these clusters. For the qualitative data, purposive sampling was used for selecting interview participants.

4. Results

The discussion is centered around four themes: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional factors. The quantitative data was gathered from 171 grade X students, and the qualitative data was gathered from two focus group interviews with students and five one-on-one interviews with teachers. Participants’ quotes from the interview data (using pseudonyms) were used to support the discussion.

4.1. Importance of writing

The analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that participants identified the importance of writing, which is elucidated in the following section. The mean and standard deviation of items for the importance of writing are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation on importance of writing

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level of opinion |
|--|------|--------------------|------------------|
| I write to provide evidence of my understanding. | 4.79 | 1.058 | Agree |
| I write to channelize my knowledge. | 4.74 | 0.89 | Agree |
| I write to channelize my creativity and imagination. | 4.84 | 0.879 | Agree |
| Overall Mean | 4.79 | 0.94 | Agree |

As evident in Table 1, the average mean of 4.79 and standard deviation of 0.94 fall into the “agree” category. This reveals that participants agree that writing is an important skill. The

average standard deviation indicates that the responses are almost similar and close to the mean. At the same time, participants revealed that writing helps them channel their creativity and imagination, with nearly all of them *agreeing* (M = 4.84, SD = 0.879), indicating that they write to harness their imagination and creativity.

Writing was identified as important by all the respondents in the interview. For example, T1 said, “*It [writing] is very important for students to have writing skills.*” Similarly, FG1S5 stated, “*I think that writing is really important.*” Teachers highlighted that writing is important since it helps students improve their language, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and handwriting. Further, they pointed out that writing improves students’ speaking and reading skills, builds confidence, and allows them to score well in examinations, as reported by T1, “*Writing is important for the students because it is going to improve their language, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and even their handwriting.*” This point was echoed by students who believed that writing enables them to communicate effectively, express themselves, fosters their critical thinking, creativity, and imagination, and enhances their language skills. This view is represented by FG2S1, “*Writing equips us with communication and thinking skills, fosters our ability to explain and define our ideas to others and ourselves.*”

4.2. Intrapersonal factors

In the context of this study, intrapersonal factors are conceptualized as individual traits such as knowledge, attitudes, behavior, self-concept, and abilities that affect writing. This theme is discussed under two categories: positive and negative dispositions. Each category is elucidated in the following sections.

4.2.1. Positive disposition

Positive disposition refers to knowledge as a source of boosting participants’ confidence and enthusiasm. The mean and standard deviation for the items on positive disposition are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation for positive disposition

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level of opinion |
|---------------------------------|------|--------------------|------------------|
| I write because of my interest. | 4.70 | 1.152 | Agree |
| I write to achieve my goals. | 5.15 | 0.982 | Agree |
| I write to learn. | 5.44 | 0.775 | Agree |
| I enjoy writing. | 4.96 | .903 | Agree |
| Overall Mean | 5.06 | 0.95 | Agree |

As depicted in Table 2, the mean for the item “*I write because of my interest and I enjoy writing*” is 4.70 and 4.96, respectively. This shows that most students *agree* that they write out of their interests because they enjoy it. Further, the items “*I write to achieve my goals*” (M = 5.15, SD = 0.982) and “*I write to learn*” (M = 5.44, SD = 0.775) are in the *agree* category but lean more towards strongly agree as the mean is above five. This shows that students write to achieve their goal and to learn or enhance their knowledge. The overall mean (5.06) is also in the *agree* category, indicating that students enjoy writing to understand new concepts, express themselves, and communicate.

In the interview, the majority of the students pointed out that they like writing and schedule time to write personal diaries, journals, non-fiction stories, and articles on social media blogs.

For example, FG1S1 stated:

“I also own a blog and also write on Facebook. So, I get really enthusiastic when I write on that, because I’m conveying a message to everybody through my blog and other social media.”

Participants pointed out that writing is goal-oriented, it stimulates interest. Furthermore, FG2S5 contended that “*good writers are good readers,*” because a good writer will have read many books. According to the teacher participants, students who read books can express themselves more effectively and write better than non-readers.

4.2.2. Negative disposition

In this context, negative disposition refers to negative attitudes toward writing. The mean

and standard deviation for the items on negative disposition are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation for negative disposition

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level of opinion |
|--|------|--------------------|------------------|
| I need guidance from the teacher while writing. | 3.53 | 1.411 | Somewhat agree |
| I lack competency in writing. | 3.64 | 1.641 | Somewhat agree |
| Lack of my reading skills hamper writing skills. | 3.37 | 1.560 | Somewhat agree |
| Lack of motivation forbids me to write. | 3.73 | 1.530 | Somewhat agree |
| Overall Mean | 3.57 | 1.54 | Somewhat Agree |

The average mean (M = 3.57), which falls under the “*somewhat agree*” category for the sub-theme negative disposition, reveals that student participants somewhat acknowledged that their negative disposition influences their writing. The rating for the item, “*I need guidance from the teacher while writing,*” with a mean of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 1.411, comes in the somewhat agree category. This indicates that students lack confidence in writing. Therefore, they need guidance from the teachers. This item is supported by the following item, “*I lack competency in writing,*” with a mean score of 3.64. The participants also need motivation from the teachers and parents to write, as the item “*Lack of motivation forbids me to write*” comes in somewhat agree category.

In the interview, students agreed that a lack of motivation hampers their writing skills. A few students said that they disliked the writing activities given by the teachers. In addition, students expressed that teachers’ priorities for the end product rather than the process had compromised their quality of writing, as indicated by FG1S3:

“I don’t enjoy writing activities given by teachers, because they usually give topics and they also set a due date.” “So, we struggle to

complete that on time. And normally we copy and paste from the internet, and we learn nothing.”

Consequently, student participants agreed that their positive and negative dispositions influenced their writing skills.

4.3. Interpersonal factors

In the context of this study, interpersonal factors include how teachers, friends, and family members impact students’ writing. This theme is reported under five sub-themes: motivation, role model, writing environment, strategies used by teachers, and challenges.

4.3.1. Motivation

In this context, motivation refers to the strength and desire of participants to be consistently interested in and devoted to writing. Motivation is essential for inspiring as well as sustaining students’ interest in writing. Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation for the items on motivation.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation for motivation

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level of Opinion |
|--|------|--------------------|------------------|
| My teacher gives proper instruction for the writing tasks. | 5.18 | .890 | Agree |
| My teacher motivates me to write. | 4.95 | .963 | Agree |
| My teacher helps me overcome my difficulties in writing. | 4.90 | .956 | Agree |
| My teacher’s grading in writing is fair. | 4.80 | 1.109 | Agree |
| My teacher’s guidance improves my writing. | 4.91 | 1.019 | Agree |
| My teacher’s feedback improves my writing. | 5.01 | 1.003 | Agree |
| Overall Mean | 4.96 | 1.01 | Agree |

The finding in Table 4 indicates that motivation plays a significant role in enhancing students’ writing skills. Students rated all the items as agreeable (M = 4.96, SD = 1.01). This shows that they are motivated to write, and they overcome

their difficulties with the encouragement and guidance from teachers in the form of proper instructions to carry out their writing activities. Students also gave high ratings (M = 5.18, SD = .890) to the items “My teacher gives proper instruction for writing tasks and My teacher’s feedback improves my writing” (M = 5.01, SD = 1.003). This indicates that teachers not only provide proper instruction but also, constructive feedback on their writing tasks, which helps them improve their writing.

Similar to the survey data, the interview data also revealed a range of factors that motivate students to write. In addition, students also expressed that they need guidance from teachers since it motivates them and helps improve their writing. For instance, FG2S1 said, “I do need guidance from my teacher to improve my writing and structure.”

Moreover, the majority of students expressed that they enjoy writing and are able to express themselves better when they have the option to choose their own topics. For example, FG2S4 said, “When we have the freedom to choose what we like, we really enjoy writing.” The views of the students are echoed by the teachers, who pointed out that when students choose their own topics to write about, they produce different kinds of writing. For example, T5 shared, “When we give them [students] the freedom to choose the topic, they come up with varieties of writing.”

Conversely, a few students stated that they liked to write on topics provided by the teachers. This opinion is represented in the following quote by FG2S6: “Yes, I do enjoy the writing activities given by our teachers.” In summary, the teacher’s instruction, feedback, and motivation in the form of allowing students to write on the topics of their choice helps improve their writing.

4.3.2. Role model

A role model in this context is someone students look up to as an inspirational ideal for writing. The item analysis for role model is shown in Table 5.

As shown in Table 5, the overall mean and standard deviation ((M = 4.74, SD = 1.06) for the items on the role model fall into the *agree*

category. This indicates that the students consider their teachers as role models for their writing. However, the participants *somewhat agreed* with the question “My teacher is a role model for my writing” (M = 4.47, SD = 1.199), which indicates that they slightly agree and consider the teachers as role models for their writing. Similarly, a few students in the interview identified their teachers as their role models for writing and were inspired by them. For instance, FG2S6 said, “*My role model is my teacher, my teacher, my hero, and my teacher inspire and encourages us to strive for greatness.*”

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation for role model

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level of opinion |
|--|------|--------------------|------------------|
| My teacher is a good teacher at writing. | 4.92 | .958 | Agree |
| My teacher is a good writer. | 4.89 | .836 | Agree |
| My teacher is a role model for my writing. | 4.47 | 1.199 | Agree |
| My teacher teaches me how to write. | 4.69 | 1.229 | Agree |
| Overall Mean | 4.74 | 1.06 | Agree |

Contrarily, the majority of the students shared that their teachers are not role models for writing. This view is evident in the following quote by FG1S3:

“I don’t look to teachers as writing role models.” I take blogger, Tshering Pelden, as a role model because she writes realistic fiction about Bhutanese women facing problems.”

In addition, teachers also agreed that they weren’t their students’ role models in writing since they don’t get time to write. Overall, the participants identified teachers, family members, bloggers, and authors as key sources of inspiration for their writing.

4.3.3. Environment for writing

In this context, “environment for writing” refers to both physical space and the psychological atmosphere that fosters writing. The mean and

standard deviation for the environment for writing are provided in Table 6.

Table 6. Mean and standard deviation for environment for writing

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level of Opinion |
|---|------|--------------------|------------------|
| I get to write on topics of my interest. | 4.63 | 1.143 | Agree |
| I have a conducive writing environment in the school. | 4.59 | .950 | Agree |
| My teacher engages me in a variety of writing activities. | 4.95 | .951 | Agree |
| I enjoy the writing activities provided by my teacher. | 4.60 | 1.003 | Agree |
| Overall Mean | 4.84 | 0.96 | Agree |

As shown in Table 6, the overall mean and standard deviation for the category “environment for writing” were 4.84 and 0.96, respectively, indicating that the school provides a conducive environment to promote students’ writing skills. Similarly, the item “I have a conducive writing environment at school” (M = 4.56, SD = .950) demonstrates the significance of writing environments. The participants also *agreed* that they got to write on topics of their interest, got engaged in the variety of activities by the teachers, and enjoyed the writing activities given by the teachers.

In the interview, all students shared that they need a conducive environment for writing. For example, FG1S4 articulated, “*I personally feel that if you are in a crowded place generally, we get distracted, and I forget what I was writing.*” However, a few students expressed that they prefer a community of writers where they can write with friends and other people in crowded places, and, when they have audiences, share their writing and get feedback and new ideas. For instance, FG1S6 said, “*I like writing when everyone is near me as I get motivation from them.*”

The item analysis revealed that participants liked the writing activities provided by the

teachers, with a mean of 4.95 and a standard deviation of .951. However, in the interviews, most students said that they did not enjoy the writing activities provided by the teachers. For example, FG1S6 said, “*I also don’t enjoy the writing exercises given by my teacher.*”. Overall, participants believed that a conducive writing environment, such as a community of writers, and writing to motivate others and for an audience are crucial to writing.

4.3.4. Strategies used by teachers

In this context, “*strategies used by teachers*” refers to a variety of approaches that teachers use to engage students in improving their writing skills. Table 7 shows the mean and standard deviation of items on the writing strategies employed by teachers.

Table 7. Mean and standard deviation form strategies used by teachers

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level of opinion |
|---|------|--------------------|------------------|
| I get opportunities to write every day. | 4.84 | .807 | Agree |
| My teacher sets criteria while evaluating my writing works. | 5.22 | .763 | Agree |
| My teacher provides me with enough writing activities. | 4.71 | 1.067 | Agree |
| My teacher provides opportunities for me to write beyond the classroom. | 4.14 | 1.484 | Some what Agree |
| My teacher’s feedback motivates me to write. | 4.95 | .960 | Agree |
| Overall Mean | 4.77 | 1.02 | Agree |

The item analysis on the strategies used by teachers with an overall mean and standard deviation (M = 4.77, SD = 1.02; graded in the *agree* category) indicates that students are getting opportunities to write as long as teachers provide enough activities. Moreover, teachers evaluate

these activities with set criteria and give feedback that encourages students to write. Additionally, the item, “*My teacher provides opportunities for me to write beyond the classroom*” (M = 4.11, SD = 1.484), which is in the somewhat agree category, indicates that students are provided with writing activities after classes.

In the interview, the majority of the teachers shared that they use different strategies to inspire the students to write. Further, they pointed out that they motivate the students to read books to improve their vocabulary, ideas, and sentence structure, as spelled out by T2. “*Reading and writing should go hand in hand. And if students need to improve their language and writing, they need to read books.*”

Ultimately, the participants agreed that the strategies used by the teachers had a considerable impact on the students’ writing.

4.3.5. Challenges

The obstacles that students face when carrying out writing activities are referred to as “challenges” in this context. Table 8 depicts the challenges that hinder students from writing.

Table 8. Mean and standard deviation on challenges

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level of opinion |
|--|------|--------------------|------------------|
| I don’t get time to write at home because of the household chores. | 3.55 | 1.569 | Somewhat Agree |

In the survey, students *somewhat agreed* (M = 3.55; SD = 1.569) in response to the question, “*I don’t get time to write at home because of household chores.*” This reveals that household chores hamper their writing. Similar views were expressed by the students in the interview. For instance, FG1S6 shared, “*As my mom is not here, I have to do house chores. So, I don’t get time to write.*” Furthermore, students stated that they were unable to write due to family issues. For example, FG1S4 asserted, “*Some students have problems at home, like divorced parents, so they can’t write and lose interest in writing.*” In summary, students

stated that household chores and family problems impeded their ability to write.

4.4. Institutional factors

The theme “institutional factors” in this context refers to organizational characteristics and formal rules and regulations that impact writing. Table 9 shows the mean and standard deviation for challenges.

Table 9. Mean and standard deviation on challenges

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level of Opinion |
|--|------|--------------------|------------------|
| I don't get time to write because of the academic and co-curricular pressure. | 4.45 | 1.406 | Somewhat Agree |
| My teacher cannot provide individual feedback on writing because of the large classroom. | 4.99 | .904 | Agree |
| Overall Mean | 4.72 | 1.15 | Agree |

It is apparent from Table 9 that the rating for the item “*I don't get time to write because of the academic and co-curricular pressure*” (M = 4.45, SD = 1.406) is in the “somewhat agree” category. This indicates that students are affected by academic and extracurricular activities. Similarly, the item, “*My teacher cannot provide individual feedback on writing because of the large classroom*” (M = 4.99, SD = 1.16), agrees that the large classroom affects their writing as teachers cannot provide individual feedback. On the contrary, in the interview, the teachers opined that they correct students’ write-ups and provide them feedback in addition to getting them to write several times.

Teachers are trying all possible ways to teach writing skills to students, as evident from the interview. However, a standard view amongst student participants was that writing has become very challenging owing to academic pressure, as indicated by FG1-S3, “*I don't get time to write, because of the academic pressures; teachers give lots of homework from 11 subjects.*”

Conversely, a few students asserted that, besides academic pressure, they find time to carry out pleasure writing, such as in diaries and on social media, depending on their interests, as articulated by FG1S3. “*I write on Instagram as well as Facebook, I get inspired by a blogger.*” Ultimately, participants talked about the challenges that affect their writing.

4.5. Discussion

Writing skills play a pivotal role in improving students’ exposure to and competency in communication and interaction (CERD, 2002). Writing is essential for students since they use it as a medium of expression. The findings are interpreted in relation to literature and prior studies, and a discussion is provided on how they support or contradict the findings.

4.5.1. The importance of writing

The findings of the study highlight the importance of writing. The quantitative and qualitative findings showed that all teachers and students indicated that writing is important since it improves students’ language skills, enhances their communication skills, and fosters critical thinking, creativity, and imagination.

This finding is consistent with literature that shows that writing is important (Adams & Keene, 2000; Mukulu et al., 2006; Walsh, 2010). Similarly, literature demonstrates that writing allows students to express their personalities, fosters communication, develops thinking skills, allows students to reflect and re-evaluate ideas, and builds competence in academic performance at all levels of the educational system (Ahmed, 2010; Dukpa, 2000; Ong’ondo, 2001). The finding implies that writing is important since it equips students with the knowledge and skills essential for their academic and personal survival.

4.5.2. Positive disposition

The findings of the study revealed that a positive disposition is essential for motivating students to write. The quantitative data shows that students write to achieve their goals and to learn or enhance their knowledge, indicating that students enjoy writing to understand new

concepts, express themselves, and communicate. The qualitative finding also pointed out that a positive disposition is essential in writing. Students have articulated that they schedule time to write personal diaries, journals, non-fiction stories, and articles on social media blogs.

This finding corroborates literature that points out that students interested in writing are more likely to create effective goals, apply valuable techniques, and seek feedback as they work on writing tasks (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007). Further literature also shows that students' desire and excitement for completing a writing task and taking action are crucial components of the writing process (Ramirez, 2019). This finding indicates that a positive disposition is essential in propelling as well as sustaining students' interest in writing, which creates different writing pieces.

4.5.3. Negative disposition

Another finding of the study is that a negative disposition hinders students' writing. The average mean ($M = 3.57$) for negative disposition falls in the *somewhat agree* category, indicating that negative disposition affects writing. A few students expressed dissatisfaction over writing tasks assigned by the teachers. They stated that teachers are more concerned with the final product, and students plagiarized others' work to meet the entry number in the writing portfolio without learning anything. Literature highlights lack of motivation from the teacher as a potential challenge faced by students (Fareed et al., 2016).

The interview findings also revealed that, students lack competence and interest in writing. It was elaborated by one student that owing to distractions from gadgets, their interest in writing is hampered. This finding is consistent with literature, which shows that teaching writing in high school or college is difficult in the current period, where television, movies, videos, and games, among other things, have eroded the reading culture (Jurecic, 2006). However, Graham and Perin (2007) argue that technology encourages writing to increase students' curiosity, motivation, and appreciation of their writing skills. This has probably to do with how well and for what purposes students use gadgets.

Students' difficulties in writing are attributed to their lack of reading habits. Participants opined that reading and writing should go hand in hand since they complement each other. It was pointed out by Munro (2003) that reading and writing complement one another. The strong relationship between reading and writing is emphasized in the finding: students who are proficient readers are proficient writers, too. Hence, motivating students to read would improve their writing too.

4.5.4. Motivation

It was found that motivation is essential for inspiring as well as sustaining students' interest in writing. According to the findings of the survey, motivation plays a key role in improving students' writing abilities. On average, all items were reported as *agreed* upon by the students. This demonstrates that students are driven to write and overcome their challenges with the support and assistance of their teachers in the form of specific instructions on how to carry out their writing tasks.

Similarly, interview data also revealed that students' writing was aided by motivation. In line with this finding, motivation was a key factor and significantly influenced the growth of students' writing skills (Akyol & Aktaş, 2018; Bruning & Horn, 2000). Hence, teachers' enthusiasm played a part in motivating and encouraging students to write and enjoy it. This process might lead to students engaging in a variety of writing activities, which might ultimately hone their writing skills. Furthermore, the majority of students stated that they love writing and can express themselves better when they have the freedom to choose their topics. Teachers agreed with students, pointing out that when students pick their topics to write about, they generate a variety of writing styles. According to studies, when a writer is familiar with the material they write, they have ownership in their writing and a higher ability in their writing skills, because their willingness to write improves their competence to articulate their ideas (Dorji, 2000; Oldfather & Shanahan, 2007).

Another important finding is that providing adequate guidance and constructive feedback

improves students' writing. The findings agree with Haider (2012), which showed that the teacher has to give immediate and constructive feedback on their performance to enhance their interest in writing. Further, these findings support the ideas of Hidi and Boscolo (2006) and Kroll (2003), who stated that willingness, having enough information, a simple topic, obtaining immediate feedback, and exerting constant effort throughout the writing are among the factors that affect writing motivation. This finding is important since it designates teachers to provide guidance and suitable comments on students' written work.

4.5.5. Role model

Another finding of the study is that role models are important in inspiring and maintaining students' interest in writing. The overall mean and standard deviation for the role model items are in the *agreed* category. This implies that students regard their teachers as role models in terms of writing. Furthermore, participants agreed that the teacher was a good writer, demonstrating that only a competent writer can be a role model for writing. However, participants *somewhat agreed* about their teacher being a role model for writing indicating, uncertainty over whether their teacher was a role model for writing.

Similarly, a few students in the interview identified their teachers as role models for writing and a source of inspiration for them. The present finding is consistent with other research, which found that teachers directly impact the development of students' writing skills and should carry out model writing so that students are inspired (Dogan, 2020). Further, Gennrich and Janks (2013) found that teachers will be suitable role models if they engage spontaneously as writers and readers within and beyond the classroom.

Ten out of twelve students did not regard their teachers as role models. They identified bloggers, authors, and family members as role models. Teachers acknowledged this view and reasoned that they do not have time to write. A study conducted by Cremin (2021) revealed that teachers must write and be skilled role models. These findings point out that role models are

essential in motivating students to write. Teachers should start writing, as it motivates their students.

4.5.6. Environment for writing

The environment for writing is one of the vital enabling factors that affect writing. The overall mean and standard deviation for the sub-theme "environment for writing" were rated in the "agree" category, indicating that the school provides a suitable setting to enhance their writing talents. In the interview findings, both teachers and students agreed that creating a conducive environment for writing was crucial. Consistent with this finding, Fahreed and Ashraf (2016) found that an unconducive classroom environment, a crowded classroom, and a large class size hindered writing skill. The current finding highlights the necessity for a conducive writing environment to enable students to write. The absence of it hampered students' motivation and interest in writing.

4.5.7. Strategies used by teachers

One of the additional findings of the study is the importance of the strategies used by the teachers to teach writing. In the quantitative finding, the overall mean and standard deviation for the items on strategies showed that teachers provide enough activities for students to write, and they evaluate these activities using a set of criteria that motivate students to write. Furthermore, the item reveals that the teacher gives students chances to write outside of the classroom as a means of independent exploration and learning.

The qualitative findings revealed that teachers used a variety of strategies to assist and improve students' writing. Students are provided ample opportunities to write in various genres inside and outside the classroom. Corroborating this finding, Richard (2001) expressed that a teacher's technique may impact and improve students' writing abilities. In addition, Sengupta (2000) reinforced that the strategies used by teachers had a demonstrable impact on the results of students' written work.

The present finding implies that different strategies used by teachers help students write by providing additional experience.

4.5.8. Challenges

The findings of the study revealed various challenges that students face when writing. In response to the item “*I don't get time to write at home because of household chores,*” students were *somewhat in agreement*. This implies that students' writing is hindered by household work. Findings from the interview also indicate that family plays a crucial role in students' writing. Students stated that household chores and family problems prevent them from engaging in writing activities. The literature identified family background as an example of social factors, according to Ozturk (2007), who observed that, in addition to teachers, families should participate in the development of students' writing talents.

Other challenges identified by the participants relate to institutional factors that show that academic and co-curricular activities have an impact on pupils. The overall mean is in the *agreed* category. Teachers stated that they edit students' work, offer feedback, and make them write and rewrite it according to their interests. This present study concurs with the findings of other studies that showed that writing could also benefit from constructive feedback from peers and teachers (Fahreed & Ashraf, 2016). Al-Khairi's (2013) findings further highlight the importance of having competent, trained, and motivated teachers who should offer constructive comments to students to assist them.

According to the majority of student participants, writing has become extremely difficult due to academic pressure. They shared that they get homework on 11 subjects, which prevents them from engaging in writing activities. Nevertheless, a few students claimed that, amid academic pressure, they made time for leisure writing in diary entries, journals, and social media. Similarly, Ramirez (2019) argued that between a student who writes and another who does not, the former would become a better writer. The possible explanation could be that the more students are exposed to writing, the better writers they become.

Overall, the findings show that students encounter challenges in writing. These challenges

relate to both interpersonal and institutional factors. While students may be fluent in speaking, they require assistance in becoming proficient writers. They must learn to adapt their vocal knowledge of grammatical concepts to written language. Besides household chores, students are bogged down with both academic and co-curricular activities. If students can develop a flair for writing, it will benefit them both academically and personally.

5. Conclusions

Writing equips them with the required knowledge and skills for their academic and personal successes. This finding is significant because it sheds light on the significance and benefits of writing for students. The finding implies that teachers must play a key role in nurturing students' writing skills.

The following recommendations are made based on the findings and discussions presented in the preceding chapters. Writing has been revealed as an essential skill. The relevant stakeholders, such as teachers and parents, must work collaboratively to enhance the writing skills of the students. The Ministry of Education could provide teachers with frequent workshops and professional development opportunities to upscale their knowledge and boost their competence in writing. Heavy workloads and non-academic activities have been shown to hinder students' writing. It is recommended that schools and teachers provide students with enough writing time. If this factor is considered, it may help students develop a love for writing by investing their time and enthusiasm in it.

The finding shows a correlation between reading and writing. Teachers and parents must encourage students to read to improve their writing skills and expand their vocabulary. A further study that includes parents' views along with those of teachers and students would provide comprehensive data from all relevant stakeholders. Convergent mixed methods were used in this study. A sequential mixed method could be used in future research to investigate the topic. Adopting this method may allow qualitative data and their interpretation to strengthen and clarify the statistical findings.

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