

THE SCHOOL PAPER WRITERS OF PHILIPPINE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA AND THEIR LEVEL OF WRITING COMPETENCE: A CORRELATION

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-correlational study examines the status and the level of writing competence of student-writers from the five Philippine International Schools in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Participants include the 100 student-writers and twelve school paper advisers. The research which used questionnaires and interviews had revealed the following: that female writers outnumbered the male counterparts; most of the writers had high performance in English; most respondents were able to attend seminars and conferences which helped improve their writing competence; highly qualified female teacher-advisers dominated the advising population and were more knowledgeable in scholastic journalism; student-respondents performed “good” in all writing category while the teacher-advisers of school publication had “very good” writing competency in writing. Drawn from the results, the profile of student-writers is certainly significant factors to make them competent in writing editorials, features, sports, copyreading and photojournalism. This is attributed to students’ elite performance in English and rich experiences in campus writing; a significant relationship was evident between the profile of teacher-advisers and their level of writing competence in photojournalism; and a very significant relationship between the profile of the advisers and the school writers’ writing competence was clearly manifested in this research.

Keywords: School publication, student-writers, writing competence

INTRODUCTION

The campus press plays a crucial role in the campaign to serve the masses and the program of the school and communities as part of continuing experiment. It is the main purveyor of information which is the basis of attitudes and opinions dictating individual actions. And the serious responsibility of the school press to society therefore cannot be overemphasized. Yet to a student journalist who is most responsible for the task and can assume the role in the development thrusts of the school government can be defined clear.

The campus journalist is more than a chronicler of human events. He is in a sense a catalytic being. He articulates issues, identifies problems and if he is knowledgeable or competent enough offers solution. He defines the diverse mood and thinking prevalent in his school milieu. As a keeper of journal he does not merely report or interpret, he, too, makes a stand or becomes an active participant in the national life. He breaks away from the confines of his socio-historic regimen but pursues vital issues and leads his thinking or areas of concern

In his blog site, Arao (2013) clearly defines the role of campus journalists. He said that “campus journalists are torch bearers in the sense that they try to shed light on issues.....what

makes campus journalists different from their so-called professional counterparts is their duty to relate all issues to their respective communities...their role is to keep become real torch bearers, they should help open the minds of students to the situation not only on campus but also in society as a whole.... Truth-telling is fulfilled when they are able to present both the data and the analysis of issues.”

Arao further exemplified this contention by citing the expectations from a campus journalist. He said that “a campus journalist should be able to write well and to write fast. In terms of disposition, he or she should develop the ‘nose for news’ or the ability to discern which is newsworthy in analyzing issues and events....Through a much deeper understanding of what is happening around him or her, a campus journalist is able to analyze the prevailing social contradictions, as well as realize the reasons for the age-old social conflicts.” (Arao, 2013)

Since the student journalist task is formidable, he is challenged to perform worthy mission-serving the readers with integrity and providing them information and inspirations necessary for the development of his community.

Pegged on this viewpoint, the responsibility of discovering prospective writers among the students and developing them into responsible chroniclers of truth and catalysts of change in the society lie in the hand of teachers and school administrators.

In the Philippines, the thrust of developing budding campus writers among students in both public and private schools is clearly stipulated in the Republic Act 7079, An Act Providing for the Development and Promotion of Campus Journalism and for other Purposes. This Campus Journalism Act of 1991 (CEAP Bulletin, 1991) was enacted into law on July 5, 1991. It aims “to uphold the freedom of the press even at the campus level, to promote the development and growth of campus journalism as a means of strengthening ethical values, encouraging critical and creative thinking, and developing moral character and personal discipline of the Filipino youth.” (RA 7079)

The legal basis in the promotion of the campus journalism and the implementation of this writing discipline inspire this research to be conducted in the foreign country. Equally significant motivation in conducting this study is to determine the level of writing competence of school paper writers who the researchers believe are the future chroniclers of truth and justice in the communities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study was School Paper Writers of Philippine International Schools in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and their Level of Writing Competence: A Correlation. Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1. What is the profile of school paper writers in terms of sex, year level, academic performance in English, and seminars/conferences attended in campus journalism?
2. What is the profile of the school paper teacher advisers in terms of sex, age, civil status, educational qualification and seminars/conferences attended?
3. What is the level of writing competence of the school paper writers in newswriting, editorial writing, feature writing, sports writing, copyreading and photojournalism?
4. What is the level of competence of the school paper advisers in news writing, editorial writing, feature writing, sports writing, copyreading and photojournalism?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of school paper writers and their level of competence?

6. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of school paper teacher-advisers and their level of competence?
7. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of school paper teacher-advisers and the students' level of competence?

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The study tested the following hypotheses:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of school paper writers and their level of competence?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of school paper teacher-advisers and their level of competence?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of school paper teacher-advisers and the students' level of competence?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following is an illustration of the conceptual paradigm of the study:

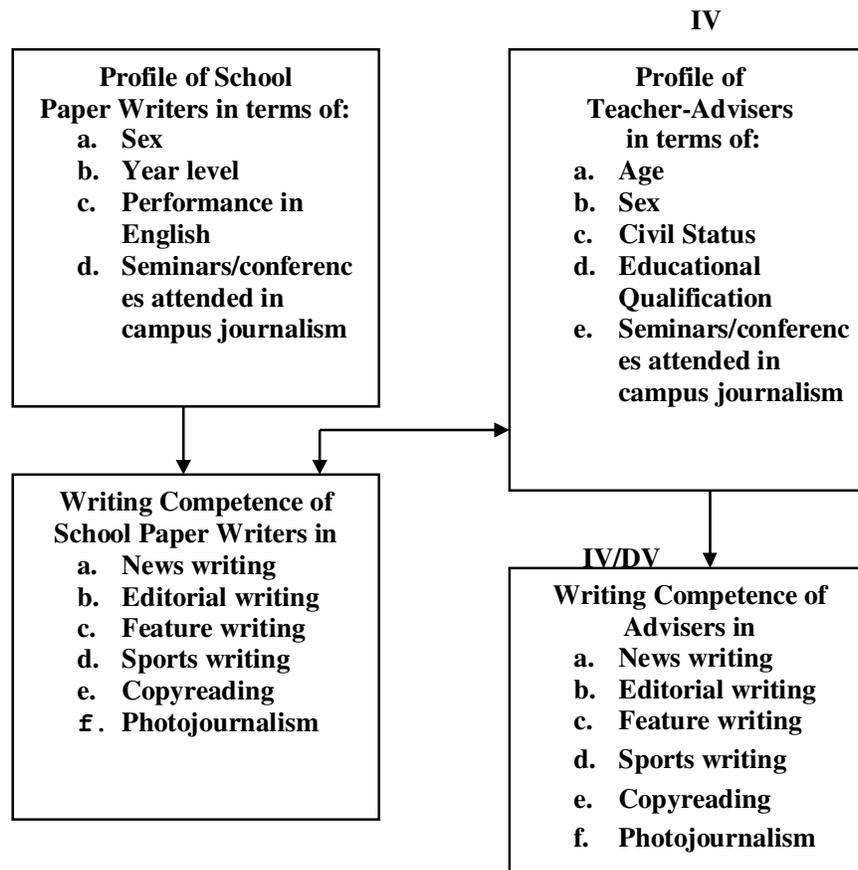


Figure 1. The Paradigm Showing the Relationship between the Independent and the Dependent Variables of the Study

METHODS

Research Design

This study used descriptive-correlational research on the School Paper Writers of Philippine International Schools and their Level of Competence. It described all dependent and independent variables of the study and measured the relationship among them.

The researchers used questionnaires as the chief data gathering instrument. They utilized the validated writing materials and rubrics. These criteria were designed to assess the respondents' writing competence. To substantiate the research data, interviews and focused group discussions among the respondents were also used in this study.

Respondents of the Study

The five Philippine International Schools in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were the focal point of this study. Respondents were carefully selected. The respondents of the study were one hundred high school campus writers and twelve advisers.

Data Gathering Procedure

The validated questionnaires were distributed in the schools through the help of the advisers. They were provided with guidelines in accomplishing the writing tasks. Hundred percent of the questionnaire distributed was retrieved.

Statistical Treatment of Data

In treating, interpreting and analyzing all gathered data, the researchers used the frequency, percentage, mean and all forms of descriptive statistics and were utilized in answering the questions number 1, 2, 3, and 4. To substantiate data results, the researcher himself conducted interviews and focused group discussions among the student-writers and teacher-advisers.

For the hypothesized relationship between paired variables of the study, Multiple Stepwise Regression was used. The range of correlation below was used in interpreting the statistical results of the study:

.00 to .19 =	very low correlation
.20 to .39 =	low correlation
.40. to .69 =	moderate/marked correlation
.70 to .89 =	high correlation
.90 to 1.00 =	very high correlation

The significance level for each statistics was set to 0.05 levels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After a thorough analysis of data obtained from the respondents, the researchers had arrived at the following results: Most of the school paper writers in selected high school were fourth year female students; they had high grades in English and other subjects that ranged from 90% to 95%; they had attended seminars/conferences two times during the school year. The results were supported by data obtained by the researchers through face-to-face interviews and focused group discussions conducted among the student-writers. The respondents revealed that only few male students were joining because boys were more indulged in sports than the academic activities like campus journalism.

Among the advisers, the data revealed that most respondents were single, female between 30-40; had obtained bachelor's degree in education, some had Master of Education units; had attended seminar and conferences once during the school year. In the meeting with the advisers, it was found out that the chance of obtaining post-graduate degrees was elusive as it was too difficult to leave their work and pursue higher academic endeavors. Some advisers are trying the opportunity of postgrad studies online. They also revealed that they seldom attend writing workshops and trainings on campus journalism due to some "culture bound" and stringent laws in the country where they work.

On the level of student's writing competence, the data revealed the students performed "good", as revealed by the mean result, described as "good." The over-all mean score of 3.88 reveals a generally good performance in the over-all writing as obtained by student respondents.

As to the advisers' writing competence, the over-all mean of 4.98 as the main result described as very good indicates that the advisers of the publication have an impressive competence in writing. This may have brought by their constant exposure on writing activity in and out of the campus. This finding may be explained by the exposure of the teachers in journalism. Attendance in seminars and press conferences help teachers become competent in writing. As to its implication, well-experienced and competent teacher-advisers would guarantee effective modelling and mentoring to the young writers.

Table 1. Regression Result of the Profile of School Paper Writers and their Level of Writing Competence

<i>Area</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>Description</i>
News Writing	0.2444	0.597	1.448	Not Significant
Editorial Writing	0.4434	0.1966	5.578	Significant
Feature Writing	0.4356	0.1898	5.341	Significant
Sports Writing	0.3024	0.0914	2.294	Significant
Copyreading	0.4550	0.2070	5.951	Significant
Photojournalism	0.3866	0.1495	4.003	Significant

As to relationship between the profile of the school writers and their level of writing competence, the data in Table 1 revealed that there is a significant relationship between the profile of school paper writers and their level of writing competence in terms of editorial, feature, sports copyreading and photojournalism, since the computed F values of 5.578, 5.341, 2.294, 4.006 exceed the critical F-value of 2.21 at 5% level of significance with 5 and 14 degrees of freedom. However, there is no significant relationship between the level of writing competence in news writing and the profile of school paper writers since the computed F-value of 1.448 failed to exceed the tabular F-value of 2.21. The results indicate that the student-writers can be taught with different principles of journalism. It is on news writing that their profiles don't affect writing competence for it needs one to be familiar with the structures of writing news. This had been supported by the respondents during the interviews and group discussion.

Table 2. Regression Result of the Profile of School Paper Advisers and Their Level of Writing Competence

<i>Area</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>Description</i>
News Writing	0.8140	0.6625	1.5710	Not Significant
Editorial Writing	0.4561	0.2081	0.2100	Not Significant
Feature Writing	0.7346	0.5396	0.9380	Not Significant
Sports Writing	0.7721	0.5961	1.81	Not Significant
Copyreading	0.6659	0.4435	0.637	Not Significant
Photojournalism	0.9536	0.9094	8.027	Significant

Analyzing the relationship between the profile of school paper advisers and their writing competence in campus journalism, the data in Table 2 showed that a significant relationship exists between the profile of the school paper teacher-advisers and their level of competence in photojournalism, since the computed F values of 8.027 exceeds the critical F value of 6.26 at 5% level of significance. The multiple r-value of 0.9536 reveals a very high correlation between the variables regressed. The coefficient of determination shows that 90.94% on the total variation of the dependent variable could be accounted for by the independent variables.

Table 3. Regression Result of the Profile of School Paper Advisers and the Level of Writing Competence of School Paper Writers

<i>Area</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> ²	<i>f</i>	<i>Description</i>
News Writing	0.7017	0.4923	0.7760	Not Significant
Editorial Writing	0.9237	0.8532	0.0808	Not Significant
Feature Writing	0.8946	0.8003	3.206	Not Significant
Sports Writing	0.9496	0.9017	7.338	Not Significant
Copyreading	0.8490	0.7208	2.065	Not Significant
Photojournalism	0.8820	0.7779	2.801	Not Significant

Finally, on the relationship between the profile of the school paper advisers and the competence of student writers, the research reveals that there is no significant relationship between teacher-advisers' profile and the school paper writers' writing competence in news writing, editorial writing, feature writing, copyreading and photojournalism since the r-value failed to exceed the computed F value. However, there exists a significant relationship between the advisers' profile and the student writers' competence in sports writing since the computed F-value of 7.338 exceeds the tabular F value of 6.26 at 5% level of significance with 5 and 4 degrees of freedom. The multiple r-value of 0.9496 shows a very high correlation between the variables regressed. It could also be noted that 90.17 of the variation in sport writing competence could be accounted for by the advisers' good profile. A further

analysis shows that civil status tends to have positive effects on the students' competence as evidenced by the regression coefficient of 0.1436. It further indicates that single female advisers influence the writers a lot. The significant relation could be deduced from the fact that competent advisers come more effective in mentoring and guiding writers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions have been deduced: Majority of the students was female; fourth year students dominated the number of organized staff; it was because most fourth year writers passed the qualifying exam given by the school paper board.

All writers have high performance in English and other academic subjects as evident of their academic performance. Most respondents were able to attend seminars and conferences which were significantly helpful in writing. Like students, paper advisers were majority female. They belonged to quite younger set of teachers. They were regarded by the administration as capable of the tasks in school paper adviser. Most advisers were found highly qualified because they held qualifications such that of Bachelor of Education and Master in Education, and their publication expertise. They were also able to attend seminars and conferences because schools had supported them in many ways. Students performed "good" in most of the writing because of their constant exposure on writing and attendance to conferences and seminars. The advisers of school publication have very good competency in writing; therefore, they are effective models of students.

Drawn from the result, the profile of students is certainly significant factor in writing good editorials, features, sports, copyreading and photojournalism. This is accounted for students' good performance in English and their wealthy experiences in journalism. A significant relationship was evident between the profile of teacher-advisers and their level of competence in photojournalism. Certainly, the teacher-advisers' attendance to seminars and press conferences are considered big factors. Since there is significant relationship between the profile of the teacher-advisers and the school writers' level of competence in sports writing, the researcher considered the teachers' experiences in reporting sports events very important factors.

From the conclusions drawn from the findings, the recommendations are as follows:

That the potential male writers be encouraged and motivated to join the staff giving advantage to the performance of school in competitions. Since there are more fourth year students in the staff, students in the lower year should also be encouraged. School writers should be encouraged to maintain their good performance in English.

Having a very good competency in writing, teacher-advisers of school publication should share their expertise to other faculty members. This assures school has alternative adviser. Advising is not always meant for female teachers. Male teachers should be encouraged to create balance in style and mood of the newspaper. Male teachers could help convince more male students to join the staff. Advisers' techniques should be shared to other teachers and students. Advisers should provide new opportunities to hone up writing skills.

Press conferences and seminars on campus journalism are very important for the advisers. Teachers should be encouraged to attend seminars and conferences to update themselves on new trends in writing.

Reading makes students good writers. Campus writers have to constantly read newspapers, books, journals, magazines, researches, documentaries and other genre of literature to become more competent in writing.

As we gear toward development journalism, it is prudent to suggest the inclusion of science and technology writing and development communication in seminars and contests so writers will have better knowledge in writing science reports and devcom writing.

The editorial board through the school administration should propose the inclusion of campus journalism in the school curricula.

Further research should be initiated using other variables to map out what must have influenced in the possible higher performance of the campus writers.

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