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# A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON STUDENTS' ESSAY WRITING SKILLS

By

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the essay-writing skills of students in Indonesian education institutions. A descriptive study approach was used to collect data from a group of students. Students were given three topics to choose from and were instructed to write academic essays within a certain time range. The student writings were gathered and scored using a scoring rubric that assessed several components of the essays. The data obtained were statistically analysed using descriptive analysis to describe the students' essay writing skills. According to the findings of this study, the majority of students performed modestly on the writing test, with some performing better than others. The research found that the students struggled with organization and consistency, while their grammar and word usage still required to be improved. The study highlights the importance of enhancing students' writing skills to a higher level.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a productive language activity. As a language skill, writing is a complex activity because a person must organize and organize the contents of the writing. Writing activities need someone to express ideas, ideas, experiences, and opinions in written form. Writing does not develop independently of individuals but as part of the process of production and expression. As a production process, writing relates to biological aspects that make it meta-performant. Writing conveys messages through graphic symbols, which are arranged logically and systematically in words, sentences, paragraphs, and discourses so that the readers understand their meaning (Mantra et al., 2021).

Writing is a construction process and is one of the most learning skills for students. It is a process of creative thinking power of an individual to express ideas, ideas they have and can express them in an unspoken way directly (Cahyani et al., 2018). It is well known that not everyone can express opinions and ideas directly. Therefore, writing skills are needed. Writing skills are an aspect of language that humans need. Writing expressed by a writer, of course, has a particular purpose. The result of creative thought sourced from individuals poured through written language that what then called essay writing (Kadek & Lastari, 2018).

Writing skills are one part of units of expression conveyed through linguistic aspects. Furthermore, writing is also one of the forms of artistic activity. In writing activities, someone redescribes symbols, shapes, or graphics whose function can clearly describe a language (Widiastuti et al., 2020). Originally the symbol was challenging to be interpreted, but in the end, the meaning of the complicated writing can be understood and understood by the community. This is why writing activity is one of the crucial aspects that need to be mastered by someone in the process of communicating messages in life socializes (Exposition et al., 2015).

Writing activity is a part that usually becomes one unity obtained through the learning process experienced by students, primarily when they pursue formal education (Widiastuti, 2018). With good writing skills, it is hoped that in the future, students will quickly develop their linguistic creativity and distribute it for use in life in society as well as the work environment they want. Writing activity is something that the students can easily do. Writing activities have been taught at each level of the educational unit from Kindergarten to College. However, that ability is acquired that person is not the same. This happens because various things influence it (Widiastuti et al., 2020).

Based on the explanation above, it can be said that a writing activity is an activity that cannot be separated from the teaching and learning process. This is because the process of writing is not easy for students to do. Activity writing takes a long time if someone wants to produce good writing. In the process of writing, it is necessary not only to write neatly and beautifully, but it also requires precision and creativity. All of this, of course, comes from within the student self (Mantra & Widiastuti, 2019). Thus, to produce writings that contain meaning and can be understood by other people or readers, students must meet a set of writing requirements.

There are various writing skills, one of which is writing essays. In the process of learning to write essays, students are expected to have the ability to develop the ideas they have (Vijayavalsalan, 2016). In the process, writing essays requires carefulness to read situations and environmental conditions around them. Thus, their essays will look good and become more attractive to readers. An essay is a piece of writing made to affect emotional and psychological readers. In writing an essay, the writer needs complete data and concrete examples or relevant. It is helpful to influence the reader convincingly with the arguments given. The writing of Essays can influence or invite readers to join in the same argument as the author. Essays also provide a uniform point of view, such as what the author wants, and indirectly force the reader to fulfil the author's will. In writing an essay, students must be able to process the information they have (Zarei & Feizollahi, 2018).

Essay writing is one of the writing skills topics in the Teaching Curriculum for creative writing courses. As part of language skills, writing skills have a crucial and strategic position because students can express ideas and problems with others through writing essays (Sun & Feng, 2009). In addition, through essay writing, students can express problems using sound and coherent language as a basis for writing scientific papers (Mantra et al., 2021). Writing essays can be helpful for students to practice patience, be thorough, and focus on the topic. Essay writing is also used to measure the author's knowledge of the topic of discussion. An essay is one type of writing that can be used to communicate with the public. Aside from emphasizing elements of thought, reasoning, and factual data, essay writing activities also pay attention to aspects of using language to produce good writing (Tyas, 2020).

Writing an essay aims to convince readers to believe our opinion about an incident. With this aim, the essay should be accompanied by supporting data and facts so that the reader is sure of our opinion. Besides that, the essay also aims to show how a cause will have a particular impact, describing a problem and offering a solution. Writing effectively and efficiently is challenging because it requires a series of processes (Toba et al., 2019). This is because writing is an activity to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings in written form so that other people or readers can understand them (Widiastuti et al., 2020).

Writing is an inevitable human need for students, educators, and employees. However, in reality, in the educational environment, many students still complain about how difficult it is to write or compose, even though learning to write has been given since elementary school. Several previous studies found problems in writing essays (Widiastuti, 2018; Toba et al., 2019; Bukhari, 2016). These problems can be seen in that students need a complete writing structure to write essays. Studies also revealed that students needed help to write essays coherently. The essay's title could be more precise, engaging, and relevant to the content. Students writing essays do not show the elements of the essay in the form of unclear content, so students' essay writing skills still need to improve.

Furthermore, it was found that Some of the results of previous research indicated that students' writing skills still need to improve, and there still needs to be an enhancement in linguistic, and logical aspects. The inability to write essays is related to students' weaknesses in expressing their ideas in written forms. Therefore, this study analysed students' essay writing skills is considered to be essential.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive research design to reveal the real existing ability of the students in writing academic essays. Thirty-five students participated in this study. They were randomly selected to represent the total population. The selected students were given three topics to be chosen and then they were assigned to write an academic essay based on the topic chosen. The collected essays were then analysed by employing a scoring rubric to obtain an accurate score of the student's abilities. The scores of the students were then analysed based on a norm-reference measure of five standard values. This is done to find out the students' levels ranging from poor to excellent. After all the data were carefully analyzed, the findings were discussed descriptively to provide a clearer



understanding of the student's skills in writing academic essays. Data analysis of the student's skills in writing essays was essentially conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses that could be used to design a better teaching strategy to improve students' writing skills.

The Scoring Rubric	
Criteria	Maximum Score
<b>Format – 5 points</b>	
- There is a title.	1
- The title is centered.	1
- The first line is indented.	1
- There are margins on both sides.	1
- The work is tidy.	1
Total	5
<b>Punctuation and Mechanics – 5 points</b>	
- There is a period after every sentence.	1
- Capital letters are used correctly.	1
- Commas and other punctuation are used correctly.	1
- Spellings are correct.	2
Total	5
<b>Content – 25 points</b>	
- The paragraph fits the assignment.	5
- The paragraph is unified.	10
- The paragraph is coherent.	10
Total	25
<b>Organization – 40 points</b>	
- The paragraph is begun with clear identification about the object being described.	10
- The paragraph uses detail descriptions about the object so that the readers can easily visualize it.	25
- The paragraph is ended with a suitable concluding sentence.	5
Total	40
<b>Grammar and Sentence Structure – 25 points</b>	
- Estimate a grammar and sentence structure score.	25
Total	25
Grand Total	100

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the essay-writing ability of the students. The data were obtained by administering a writing test. The student's essays were first scored using the scoring rubric and analyzed based on a norm-reference measure of five standard values.

## Results

After scoring the students' essays using the scoring rubric and the results were analyzed by converting into a norm-reference measure of five standard values. The summary of data analysis can be presented in the following.

Table 2. The Summary of Data Analysis of Students' Essay Writing Competence

No	Converted Scores	Total	Percentage
1	$\geq 84.64$ (A/Excellent)	3	8%
2	$\geq 62.91 < 84.64$ (B/Good)	9	26%
3	$\geq 19.42 < 41.15$ (C/Sufficient)	23	66%
4	$\geq 19.42 < 41.1$ (D/Insufficient)	0	0%
5	$< 19.42$ (E/Poor)	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results of the data analysis showed that 8% of samples under study were categorized as excellent essay writing achievement, 26% of samples under study were categorized as good essay writing achievement, 66% of samples under study were categorized as sufficient essay writing achievement, 0% samples under study were categorized as insufficient essay writing achievement 0% samples under study were classified as poor essay writing achievement. In this research, 23 samples obtained sufficient essay writing achievement because they only had few vocabulary and low grammar, so they could not write well.

The results of this study showed that students' essay-writing skills need to be improved. Their essay writing skills were rated average by 66% of the sample studied, but only 8% were rated excellent. This showed that there is a huge gap between what is expected of students and what they can achieve. One way to address this problem is by giving the students more opportunities to practice their essay-writing skills. This can be achieved by regularly assigning students essay writing tasks and providing feedback on their work. Additionally, teachers can guide on structuring essays, using proper grammar and punctuation, and effectively incorporating evidence to support arguments.

Additionally, students are required to improve their vocabulary to write a better essay. This study showed that 23 samples obtained only sufficient essay writing achievement due to limited vocabulary. Students can be encouraged to read extensively to expand their vocabulary and learn how to use words in the correct context. Moreover, the students needed more vocabulary and more substantial grammar. While they could produce coherent essays, they needed more variety in their language and grammar to achieve higher scores. The findings suggest that the majority of the students in this study possessed adequate essay-writing skills. However, a significant proportion of the students could benefit from improving their vocabulary and grammar to enhance the quality of their writing.

Moreover, teachers can offer assistance to students to develop fundamental skills for successful essay writing. It can be accomplished by empowering students to inquire questions, analyze data basically, and create their points of view on issues. Students can moreover take part in talks about and dialogues, which can offer assistance to them create their contentious improvement. The findings of this study emphasized the requirement for students to progress their paper writing competence. Whereas there is no one-size-fits-all solution, giving normal practice openings, direction on structure, language structure, and lexicon, and creating basic skills can go a long way in progressing the academic essay writing skills of the students. By taking these learning stages, students can be better prepared to construct their ideas and opinions clearly, coherently, and viably, which can offer assistance to them to succeed academically.

The findings highlighted the significance of developing and refining writing skills, particularly in educational institutions, to empower students to communicate their thoughts and opinions through writing successfully. Writing essays is a fundamental ability for students in education. In writing essays, students are required to be able to organize thoughts and information logically and coherently. Students must be able to communicate thoughts and arguments clearly and viably.

In addition, the ability to write essays can also help students improve their academic writing skills. Students are always expected to have the expertise to write essays as part of their academic assignments (Ayu et al., 2020). By having good essay writing skills, students can efficiently complete their academic assignments and obtain higher achievement in writing exams and other academic assessments. In addition, the ability to write essays is also essential for the students to prepare themselves for the world of employment and businesses as well as a better standard of living (Syahrin et al., 2019). Students may be faced with situations where they have to write reports, proposals, or even presentations while they are at work. Therefore, having good essay writing skills definitely help

students to be efficient at their study and also at their work in the future. Therefore, students' writing skills should be improved continually (Uysal & Sidekli, 2020).

In addition, having good writing skills as a part of linguistic competence may improve students' ability to communicate socially (Mantra & Kumara, 2018). Developing writing skills, means students have to develop various linguistic competence, moreover, students have to develop their critical and creative thinking skills to develop their opinions, thoughts, ideas and argument and then integrate them into a good piece of writing. Moreover, in writing essays, students can reflect on their views on a topic, analyze arguments from different points of view, and conclude with clear and precise reasons. Consequently, critical and reflective thinking is useful in developing writing skills. Understanding various skills need to be addressed in enhancing writing skills, it is important for students to seriously study writing skills and practice them regularly (Styers et al., 2018).

The ability to write essays is a basic skill that students must master in language learning because it can help them develop critical thinking and creative skills, improve communication skills, create inventiveness and public speaking skills, progress academic achievement and prepare them for the world of work. Therefore, educational institutions, schools and universities ought to pay more consideration to create students' essay-writing abilities and give them meaningful opportunities to improve their essay-writing skills.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings found in this study are based on the data taken from writing tests given shrewd data concerning their essay writing competence. The results showed a variety within the level of accomplishment among the students, with a few scorings higher than others. The findings showed the need for teachers to pay consideration to their students' writing skills and give suitable opportunities to enhance their writing performance. Moreover, the investigation of the scoring rubric uncovered that the utilization of evidence and coherence were the foremost considerable ranges of the student's essay writing skills. At the same time, linguistic use and lexicon were recognized as their weakest areas which need to be carefully addressed by the teachers. In this manner, it is fundamental to provide instruction to progress students' linguistic use and lexicon skills and improve their essay writing competence. The findings also showed that most of the students fell into the adequate essay writing accomplishment category, demonstrating areas for improvement in the student's writing skills. These findings highlighted the requirement for teachers to distinguish and address the particular areas in which their students require improvement and to provide ongoing support and input to help them develop their writing skills.

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