

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WRITING SKILLS OF COLLEGE
CAMPUS PAPER WRITERS OF SELECTED SCHOOLS IN
ILOILO CITY AND BACOLOD

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ABSTRACT

by

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The study was conducted to determine the relationship between selected factors and the writing skills of college campus paper writers in Iloilo City and Bacolod City. This descriptive study used a one-shot survey. The study's sample population consisted of 102 college campus paper writers from 12 schools who were taken in complete enumeration. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection.

Major Findings of the Study

Most of the respondents were females who completed their secondary education from either a sectarian high school or a public high school, and whose parents were engaged in some professions or business as main sources of income. More than half of them were neither journalism nor mass communication students but they had basic journalism trainings, exposure to journalistic writing and had participated in several writing activities like seminars, press conferences and writing contests.

Majority of them had low exposure to print media within the period of four weeks prior to the survey. The Philippine Daily Inquirer was the most preferred newspaper by three-

fourths of the respondents while the Time magazine was preferred by about thirty percent of the respondents.

Most of the campus paper writers said that they liked to write mostly when they were inspired, as often as they could and when the deadline for some writing activity were catching up with them.

Half of them had “very good” writing practices as to the frequency of practice of desirable writing practices such as making an outline, reading about the chosen topic first, making a draft, not letting the deadline catch up with them and letting others read their manuscripts first.

The respondents’ levels of interest in writing and other related activities varied. More than half were “very interested” in reading while a little more than one fourth were “moderately interested.” More than a half also, but lower in percentage than those who were “very interested” in reading, were “very interested” in writing articles for publication, while more than one fourth were “very interested” and “moderately interested” in participating in writing competitions.

Only about ten percent of the respondents said that they were influenced by both their parents in joining the school paper, by telling them that writing was a noble task besides it being a status symbol. Further, their parents wanted them to be journalists someday and a few were told that they should join to get a scholarship. More than half of them said that they were influenced by their friends in joining the publication by openly convincing them, by telling them that they had the talent and also through the exposure they got from the writing experiences of their peers. About one third of the student writers said that nobody influenced their decision to join.

The college campus paper writers were “good” in writing skills as far as grammar was concerned, with more than half of them having only from one to three average number of errors in spelling, punctuation, tenses while less than half of them had from three to six errors in a writing test. As far as content was concerned, only one of the 102 respondents got an average rating of ninety percent and above as far as substance was concerned, less than half were in the 80-84 average rating bracket. A little more than three fourths were in the 70-74 and 75-79 brackets for contribution to development communication and for values promoted, one third were in the 70-74 and 75-79 brackets.

The respondents’ writing skills, far as grammar and content were concerned were not significantly influenced by age, sex, occupation of parents, household learning facilities, parents and peers and print media exposure. Both grammar and content, however, were significantly influenced by high school graduated from and journalism background.

There was a significant relationship between writing practices and writing skills as far as grammar was concerned. Respondents with “good” and “very good” writing practices tend to have lesser number of errors in grammar. Content and writing practices did not influence each other. Writing practices were not significantly influenced by age, sex, high school graduated from, occupation of parents, exposure to print media, parental and peer influence, journalism background, but there was a significant relationship between writing practices and household learning facilities.

Level of interest was not influenced by age, sex, high school graduated from, household learning facilities, occupation of parents, exposure to print media, parents and peers, and journalism background, but there was a significant relationship between

writing practices and level of interest. Most of the respondents were in the “moderately interested’ level and more than half of them had “very good” writing practices.

The multiple regression analysis showed that the more learning facilities the respondents have, the lesser were their number of errors in grammar. While the grammar errors of those who were aged 17-20 were lesser as shown by the regression results, they also had lower rating in content than those who were 21 years old and above.

Respondents whose fathers were into business as major economic activity and whose mothers were into agriculture and business had lower grammar errors as shown by the regression results, while those whose mothers were professionals had higher ratings as far as content was concerned.

Respondents who were either mass communication or journalism students and with journalism training had lower errors in grammar as well as higher ratings in content. Furthermore, graduates of public schools outside the city and from private sectarian schools had better writing skills in grammar as well as higher ratings in content.

Conclusions

1. Writing skills are associated with the high school from where the campus paper writers graduated. This supports Sarah Lightfoot’s statements that schools do make a difference in learning for all groups and that the kind of school influence a person’s ability and development of skills.
2. Writing skills are associated with the student writers’ background on journalism. This supports the necessity of journalism trainings, the rise of many journalism schools or institutions in the country and the existing provisions of the Journalism Act of 1991 which promotes the growth of Campus Journalism.

3. Parental and peer influence are not associated with the writers' skills in writing or their decision to join the publication. This strengthens the contentions of many authors that while parents and peers influence academic performance and learning abilities of students, this may not necessarily be true to writing skills.
4. Writing practices are associated with writing skills as far as grammar and content are concerned. This finding validates the need for developing desirable writing practices which are espoused by many grammar, English composition authors as well as by authorities on writing in general and journalistic writing in particular.
5. College campus paper writers who were from 17 to 20 years old, graduated from either public schools or private sectarian schools, whose fathers were into business and whose mothers were either into agricultural activities or business, who were either mass communication or journalism students with training, who have a number of household learning facilities and influenced by their peers tended to commit lesser number of errors in grammar in their writing.
6. College campus paper writers who were 21 years old and above, graduated from either public schools or private sectarian schools, whose fathers were into labor and business, whose mothers were into services, who were either mass communication or journalism students with training and neither mass communication nor journalism students with training, and those who had household learning facilities tended to have higher ratings in content in a writing test.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings and conclusions of the study the following recommendations are given:

1. Writing skills development should begin in high school and mentors should already be keen on this, by harnessing the skills of high school student writers or potential writers.
2. Student paper advisers should encourage exposure of student writers to journalistic writing, development communication to enhance their understanding of issues through community forums and assemblies. They should, likewise, help them form desirable writing habits, not only through imposition of deadlines, but regular meetings and sharing sessions.
3. School publication advisers should also encourage parental support and encouragement to their sons or daughters who are members of the school publications by taking interest in what they write.
4. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) should look closely into the implementation of the Journalism Act of 1991 (RA 7029) in various colleges and universities and survey the policies, programs and projects which the schools undertake, aimed at improving the journalistic skills of their students involved in the college papers. The CHED, should, likewise, determine how school publications are utilized to support national development and to collaborate with the Philippine Information Agency for resource sharing in basic journalism trainings.

5. The Philippine Information Agency, as a prime provider of basic journalism seminar workshops for college campus paper writers, should continuously enrich its modules to be more relevant and responsive to the need of college campus writers. The PIA should also hold regular consultations with the CHED on the policies which can best enhance the quality of college writers and college publications.
6. Further studies such as the following can be conducted: a) content analysis of the major publications of universities and colleges in Western Visayas; b) consideration of other variables which are not included in this study; c) comparative study of the writing skills of campus paper writers in all provinces of Western Visayas, or all departmental papers of different colleges and universities in Iloilo and Bacolod.