

# Research And Academic Writing Needs: The Case Of Msu-Sulu Graduate School Students

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## ABSTRACT

Like other students of any discipline, graduate school students are taught to develop and enhance their higher cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. They are being trained for their future responsibilities in the different public institutions or community-based facilities and are empowered to create positive changes in their respective institutions through the conduct and publication of quality research. However, conducting and publishing quality research could be challenging for many graduate school students as these entail a myriad of skills, including research and academic writing in the discipline. This study investigated graduate school students' needs in research and academic writing needs in graduate school research programs using descriptive-survey methods design. Quantitative data were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire from a group of 100 graduate school students. Descriptive statistics such as Frequency counts, Percentage and Mean were employed as data analyses for the survey. The following are the findings of the study: on the the process of conducting research, the graudate school students need “high support” in generating an idea for research, identifying a research problem, developing a research question, doing a literature review, selecting an appropriate research design, choosing an appropriate sampling technique, selecting an appropriate instrument, developing an instrument, collecting survey data, collecting interview data, analyzing quantitative data using appropriate statistical tools, analyzing qualitative data using thematic analysis, interpreting the result of a research study, drawing conclusion based on the result of a research study and drawing recommendation based on the conclusion of a research study; c) on the process of writing research, the graudate school students also need “high support” preparing an outline before starting writing, organizing paragraphs, organizing the whole text, choosing correct words (field-related terminology), using proper grammar, using proper connections, using proper transitions, using correct punctuation and spelling, citing sources within the body of a paper properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style), listing references properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style), presenting ideas clearly, presenting ideas objectively and avoiding plagiarism (how to quote, paraphrase or cite); d) on preparing the publishable research output, the graduate school students need high support in the process of writing research in writing the introduction, methods, results and discussion, conclusion and recommendation and writing abstract. The study draws pedagogical implications for graduate school programs, suggesting that the instructors and professors employ explicit teaching of writing strategies that facilitate research skills of the students and teach academic writing both at the micro and macro levels.

**Keywords:** Education, research, academic writing, graduate school, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Research is one of the fundamental course requirement taken by the graduate school students. It is an integral part of the graduate course program. All graduate students are assumed to demonstrate a desire to continuously pursue personal and professional development through accomplishment of their thesis and dissertation. Besides, in the Philippines, research and development is an integral component of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Agri-Fisheries, and Mathematics (STEAM) program in higher education (Anito & Morales, 2019). Universities should establish a research organization that supports the development of research competence among their research stakeholders (Anito, Limjap & Padagas, 2020). However, doing research is challenging on the part of the students not just in the undergraduate but even in the graduate studies. Data from previous academic literature reveals that Saudi postgraduate students face a great deal of challenges in academic writing. Some of these challenges are related to the choice of terminology, planning skills, outlining and some other ones (Otilia, 2015). So, the ability to comprehend academic writings is vital, which the university students are required to perform (Levine, Ferenz & Reves, 2000). As with academic writing, students' needs revolve around correct grammar, paraphrasing, adherence to a publication format, and confidence in academic writing. Students' needs on grammar were specifically indicated in the lowest mean scores of items in the quantitative survey relating to grammar rules. This particular result was also confirmed in the qualitative interview, where majority of the students reported challenges in terms of grammar rules. This finding corroborates Alfaki's (2015) study, which revealed the university students indicated several writing needs, mostly language-related at the levels of usage errors, mechanical mistakes, among others.

Building on this contention, this study is an attempt made to provide insights into the needs of graduate school students concerning academic reading and writing in research. The researchers believe that skills in research and academic writing applied in academic settings are extremely pivotal in graduate school research course as these serve as pathways for graduate students to engage in research and demonstrate scholarship essential for evidence-based practice in professional environment. The findings of the present study have useful applications to teaching research in graduate school studies, particularly in the context of research and academic writing.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study used Descriptive-survey method to investigate the Research and Academic Writing Needs of Graduate School Students. The researcher devised questionnaire as a tool to obtain the profile of the graduate school students and their respective response and provide evaluation type questionnaire for students to assess their research and academic writing needs.

### Research Locale

The setting of the study was at Mindanao State University- Sulu, Graduate School Department. It is the only university in Jolo, Sulu located at the Capitol Site near the Provincial Capitol.

### Research Respondents

Graduate School students served as the respondents of this study which aimed to investigate the research and academic writing needs of graduate school students. The researcher chose conveniently one hundred students to evaluate and to assess their research and academic writing needs.

### Research Sampling

In this study, the researcher will use purposive sampling to select the participant of the study. This means the researcher will purposefully select one hundred sample from the graduate school students. Also, their profile was gathered through survey-questionnaire and students evaluated and assessed their research and academic writing needs.

### Research Instrument

The questionnaire was used to obtain the needed information for this study. The researcher chose the questionnaire as the research instrument of the study for it help him answer the objectives of the study is to assess the research and academic writing needs of graduate school students. Specifically, the questionnaire was divided into four-parts. The first part will contain the profile of the graduate school students which was composed their gender and graduate course taken. On the other hand, the second part included the process of conducting research. Third, it contained the process of writing research and last contained the preparing publishable research output.

### Statistical Treatment of Data

For the analysis of data, the researcher used Statistical Packages for Social Science which utilized frequency count and percentage and weighted average mean to analyze the research questions. Frequency count and percentage used to analyze the research question number one, weighted average mean used to measure the number two, three and four.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percent
a) Gender		
• Male	23	46%
• Female	27	54%
<i>Total</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>100%</i>
b) Graduate Course Taken		
• MAED		
• MPA	27	54%
• MAN		
• PhD	5	10%
• Others	2	4%
	12	24%
	4	8%
<i>Total</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 1 provides the results of the respondents’ profile. The following distribution was found: Gender - the majority were (27%) female; and Graduate Course Taken – the majority of the respondents (54%) were Master of Arts in Education students.

**Table 2. Process of Conducting Research**

Process of Conducting Research	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1) Generating an idea for research	3.8	.69985	High
2) Identifying a research problem	4.1	.78895	High
3) Developing a research question	4.06	.86685	High
4) Doing a literature review	4.06	.73983	High
5) Selecting an appropriate research design	4.26	.63278	High
6) Choosing an appropriate sampling technique	3.9	.81441	High
7) Selecting an appropriate instrument	4.14	.70015	High
8) Developing an instrument	4.0	.63888	High
9) Collecting survey data	4.14	.72871	High
10) Collecting interview data	4.24	.87037	High
11) Analyzing quantitative data using appropriate statistical tools	4.3	.73540	High
12) Analyzing qualitative data using thematic analysis	4.24	.82214	High
13) Interpreting the result of a research study	4.16	.73845	High
14) Drawing conclusion based on the result of a research study	4.28	.90441	High
15) Drawing recommendation based on the conclusion of a research study	4.14	.85738	High
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.55</b>		<b>High</b>

*Mean: 1.00-1.49 = No Need; 1.50-2.49 = Low; 2.50-3.49 = Moderate; 3.50-4.49 = High; 4.50-5.00 = Very High*

Revealed in Table 2 are the results of process of conducting research as rated by the graduate school students. The overall mean for the process of conducting research was 3.55. This means that the graduate school students need high support as demonstrated the process of conducting research described in the study. The graduate school students need high support in the process of conducting research such as generating an idea for research, identifying a research problem, developing a research question, doing a literature review, selecting an appropriate research design, choosing an appropriate sampling technique, selecting an appropriate instrument, developing an instrument, collecting survey data, collecting interview data, analyzing quantitative data using appropriate statistical tools, analyzing qualitative data using thematic analysis, interpreting the result of a research study, drawing conclusion based on the result of a research study and drawing recommendation based on the conclusion of a research study.

**Table 3. Process of Writing Research**

Process of Writing Research	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1) Preparing an outline before starting writing	3.92	.92229	High
2) Organizing paragraphs	4.0	1.03016	High
3) Organizing the whole text	4.34	.82338	High
4) Choosing correct words (field-related terminology)	4.28	.72955	High
5) Using proper grammar	4.34	.82338	High
6) Using proper connections	4.46	.83812	High
7) Using proper transitions	4.2	.92582	High
8) Using correct punctuation and spelling	4.32	.95704	High
9) Citing sources within the body of a paper properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style)	4.12	.93982	High
10) Listing references properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style)	4.12	.98229	High
11) Presenting ideas clearly	4.36	.74942	High
12) Presenting ideas objectively	4.28	.80913	High
13) Avoiding plagiarism (how to quote, paraphrase or cite)	4.28	1.06981	High
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.93</b>		<b>High</b>

*Mean: 1.00-1.49 = No Need; 1.50-2.49 = Low; 2.50-3.49 = Moderate; 3.50-4.49 = High; 4.50-5.00 = Very High*

Revealed in Table 3 are the results of process of writing research as rated by the graduate school students. The overall mean for the process of writing research was 3.93. This means that the graduate school students need high support as demonstrated on the process of conducting research described in the study. The graduate school students need high support in the process of writing research such as preparing an outline before starting writing, organizing paragraphs, organizing the whole text, choosing correct words (field-related terminology), using proper grammar, using proper connections, using proper transitions, using correct punctuation and spelling, citing sources within the body of a paper properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style), listing references properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style), presenting ideas clearly, presenting ideas objectively and avoiding plagiarism (how to quote, paraphrase or cite).

**Table 4. Preparing the Publishable Research Output**

<b>Preparing the Publishable Research Output</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Verbal Description</b>
1. Writing the Introduction	4.22	.93219	High
2. Writing the Methods	4.24	.93808	High
3. Writing the Results and Discussion	4.3	.88641	High
4. Writing the Conclusion and Recommendation	4.42	.90554	High
5. Writing the Abstract	4.28	.94847	High
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>4.29</b>		<b>High</b>

*Mean: 1.00-1.49 = No Need; 1.50-2.49 = Low; 2.50-3.49 = Moderate; 3.50-4.49 = High; 4.50-5.00 = Very High*

Revealed in Table 4 are the results of preparing the publishable research output as rated by the graduate school students. The overall mean for the process of writing research was 4.29. This means that the graduate school students need high support as demonstrated on preparing the publishable research output described in the study. The graduate school students need high support in the process of writing research such as writing the introduction, writing the methods, writing the results and discussion, writing the conclusion and recommendation and writing the abstract.

## **DISCUSSION OF THE RESULT**

### **Process Of Conducting Research**

Revealed in Table 2 are the results of process of conducting research as rated by the graduate school students. As described in the study, the graduate school students need high support as demonstrated the process of conducting research. Specifically, they need high support in the process of conducting research such as generating an idea for research, identifying a research problem, developing a research question, doing a literature review, selecting an appropriate research design, choosing an appropriate sampling technique, selecting an appropriate instrument, developing an instrument, collecting survey data, collecting interview data, analyzing quantitative data using appropriate statistical tools, analyzing qualitative data using thematic analysis, interpreting the result of a research study, drawing conclusion based on the result of a research study and drawing recommendation based on the conclusion of a research study.

The findings revealed that challenges in citation included addressing the credibility of information in published sources, adopting a stance toward the citations, insufficient knowledge about using citations, and second language difficulties (Jomaa & Bidin, 2017). It was found out that students required support in three main areas: writing, supervision and ICT. Students sought English language support and more workshops and programmes which specifically dealt with thesis writing. They also believed that peer support groups would be beneficial. Secondly, more guidance was needed from supervisors to enable greater clarity on writing and institutional processes and procedures. Finally, students wanted greater access to ICT writing tools to facilitate writing and language learning (Jeyaraj,2020).

## Process Of Writing Research

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The findings of the study revealed that the participants were in need of improving their academic speaking and writing skills within the context of Nursing in order to perform better in writing research articles and giving presentations in international conferences (Uzun, 2018). In a study by Milad (2017) statistical analysis indicated that there was a significant improvement in the students' academic writing skills due to integrating the stages of the reading and writing process which helped the students to approach academic writing systematically. Consequently, the proposed blended course proved to be effective in developing the AOU students' identified skills and it was recommended to adopt the blended course to improve their academic writing skills.

As with academic writing, students' needs revolve around correct grammar, paraphrasing, adherence to a publication format, and confidence in academic writing. This means that nursing students may have little knowledge of the English language's grammatical structure, which consequently results in their difficulty in paraphrasing and, in general, in low confidence in academic writing. Students' needs on grammar were specifically indicated in the lowest mean scores of items in the quantitative survey relating to grammar rules. This particular result was also confirmed in the qualitative interview, where majority of the students reported challenges in terms of grammar rules. This finding corroborates Alfaki's (2015) study, which revealed the university students indicated several writing needs, mostly language-related at the levels of usage errors, mechanical mistakes, among others (Alfaki, 2015).

## Preparing The Publishable Research Output

Revealed in Table 4 are the results of preparing the publishable research output as rated by the graduate school students. As described in the study, the graduate school students need high support as demonstrated the preparing the publishable research output. They need high support in the process of writing research such as writing the introduction, writing the methods, writing the results and discussion, writing the conclusion and recommendation and writing the abstract.

As a result of its greater tradition in qualitative research, Brazilian nursing faces some difficulty with this structure. In some qualitative studies, results and analyses can be distinguished. In others, however, this is not possible, given the researcher's inferential process in the results. In these cases, qualitative journals are the most indicated. Editors' experience recommends observing, in the selected journal, how paragraphs are structured and the size of

different sections, what types of subtitles can be included, how many pictures and charts can be presented, and which are the common types. The judicious use of tables and graphs supposes that results are organized, offering a clearer understanding than if the text format were adopted. Thus, it seems obvious that what is placed in the table/graph is not in the text and vice-versa. Elaborating tables and graphs can be harder than improving the written text but, if well done, can enhance the paper's quality. The opposite is also true. Therefore, drafting presentation modes to make the theme clearly communicated, concise and with coherence among the sections, is a good tip. A more structured or informal organization will depend on the theme, project and journal. Writing demands effort and one of them is to arrange and rearrange the sections, until the author is satisfied (Lacerda and Kirchof, n.d.).

## Findings

Based on the aforementioned results, it was found out that: a) Majority of the respondents were female and most of them were Master of Art in Education Students; b) on the the process of conducting research, the graudate school students need “high support” in generating an idea for research, identifying a research problem, developing a research question, doing a literature review, selecting an appropriate research design, choosing an appropriate sampling technique, selecting an appropriate instrument, developing an instrument, collecting survey data, collecting interview data, analyzing quantitative data using appropriate statistical tools, analyzing qualitative data using thematic analysis, interpreting the result of a research study, drawing conclusion based on the result of a research study and drawing recommendation based on the conclusion of a research study; c) on the process of writing research, the graudate school students also need “high support” preparing an outline before starting writing, organizing paragraphs, organizing the whole text, choosing correct words (field-related terminology), using proper grammar, using proper connections, using proper transitions, using correct punctuation and spelling, citing sources within the body of a paper properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style), listing references properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style), presenting ideas clearly, presenting ideas objectively and avoiding plagiarism (how to quote, paraphrase or cite); d) on preparing the publishable research output, the graduate school students need high support in the process of writing research in writing the introduction, methods, results and discussion, conclusion and recommendation and writing abstract.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study has attempted to graduate school students' needs in research and academic writing needs in graduate school students. It was concluded that b) on the the process of conducting research, the graudate school students need “high support” in generating an idea for research, identifying a research problem, developing a research question, doing a literature review, selecting an appropriate research design, choosing an appropriate sampling technique, selecting an appropriate instrument, developing an instrument, collecting survey data, collecting interview data, analyzing quantitative data using appropriate statistical tools, analyzing qualitative data using thematic analysis, interpreting the result of a research study, drawing conclusion based on the result of a research study and drawing recommendation based on the conclusion of a research study; c) on the process of writing research, the graudate school students also need “high support” preparing an outline before starting writing, organizing paragraphs,

organizing the whole text, choosing correct words (field-related terminology), using proper grammar, using proper connections, using proper transitions, using correct punctuation and spelling, citing sources within the body of a paper properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style), listing references properly following certain mechanical conventions (e.g. APA style), presenting ideas clearly, presenting ideas objectively and avoiding plagiarism (how to quote, paraphrase or cite); d) on preparing the publishable research output, the graduate school students need high support in the process of writing research in writing the introduction, methods, results and discussion, conclusion and recommendation and writing abstract. This illustrates that their complex academic writing needs range from foundational to more advanced skills in writing.

Building on the findings of this study, implications for research teaching were drawn suggesting that graduate school teachers handling research courses employ explicit teaching of research that facilitate research skills, and teach academic writing both at the micro and macro levels. Pedagogical implications further explicate that it is best if graduate school teachers of research are writers themselves through which they can serve as motivators in boosting students' confidence in research writing. It is recommended in this study that the graduate school department should conduct seminar and workshop every semester on process of conducting research, process of writing research and preparing publishable research.

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