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Academic Research Writing through Preservice Teachers' Eyes: Navigating Challenges and Benefits

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the perceptions, challenges, and benefits of academic research writing among preservice teachers in the Bachelor of Elementary Education program. Using a qualitative phenomenographic approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with nine female third-year student leaders. The results indicate two perspectives from the participants: a curricular requirement and means of knowledge construction. Time constraints, resource limitations, and professional development are some of the challenges that preservice teachers encountered. On the other hand, their perceived benefits include enhanced information literacy, self-confidence, improved academic writing, and professional development. These findings suggest that teacher education programs should strategically reframe research writing as both academic and professional development opportunity, implement holistic support systems addressing technical and collaborative skills, and emphasize the broader personal and professional benefits of extending preparation for evidence-informed classroom practice.

Keywords: *Academic Research Writing, Preservice Teachers, Teacher Education, Writing Challenges*

Introduction

Instead of being considered a fundamental element of the production of academic knowledge, academic writing is frequently perceived as solely "writing up" (badly, 2009). According to Kiriakos and Tienari (2028), academic writing is portrayed in dominant discourse as a straightforward, rational process aimed at publishing in prestigious journals. While writing academic journals plays an important role in shaping the field and enhancing teaching practices, many academic experts experience significant difficulty in writing. It also one of the challenges faced by students is academic writing (Cumming et al., 2016). Educators globally recognize that learning to write effectively is a fundamental academic literacy skill developed at the tertiary level or higher education (Beach et al., 2016). However, many students struggle to maintain acceptable academic writing standards, particularly in state universities.

To complete a research-based subject, preservice teachers must finish a research proposal to deepen their understanding of educational theories, gain practical experience, and contribute knowledge, with academic research writing serving as a crucial component that extends beyond the classroom to impact broader fields of education. They are expected to develop academic research writing skills to enhance their future teaching practices and contribute to the profession's knowledge base (Kennedy-Clark et al., 2018). However, most struggle to write, leading to increased demand for educational development as a strategic intervention to improve academic writing and other soft skills (Hyland, 2016).

Comprehending university preservice teachers' perspectives on academic research writing is crucial for recognizing their experiences, obstacles, and opportunities. This study examines their viewpoints to provide insights into the experiences that preservice teachers face when engaging in research writing.

This study provides significant insights for designing focused strategies and resources to enhance research writing skills among preservice teachers. Teacher preparation programs can adopt, propose, and improve more effective curriculum design and support mechanisms by analyzing their benefits and challenges. This comprehensive approach contributes to developing preservice teachers who excel as

effective and efficient future classroom teachers and potential educational researchers.

Understanding how preservice teachers perceive the significance of academic research fulfills several essential objectives: it fosters analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities, links theoretical knowledge to practical classroom applications, enhances teaching efficacy, promotes evidence-based practices, and instills a dedication to ongoing professional development.

The methodology section will likely elucidate the study's approach to data collection, analytical techniques, and efforts to ensure quality. Results may be structured around principal topics of preservice teachers' research experiences, including participant testimonies and graphic data displays. The discussion will contextualize findings within existing scholarships, explore implications for teacher education curricula and policies, and address any surprising or conflicting outcomes. The concluding recommendations may suggest specific curriculum enhancement, specialized support frameworks, approaches to nurture a research-positive environment, methods to connect research assignments with authentic educational challenges, and proposals for extended studies on how research engagement influences teaching practices over time. This article endeavors to provide practical recommendations to improve preparation programs and to gain a comprehensive understanding of preservice teachers' engagement with academic research writing through this comprehensive examination.

Literature Review

Student Writing in the Tertiary Level

Academic writing is higher education falls short of expected standards. According to Nugraha (2015), writing proper grammar, appropriate conventions, and suitable lexical choices are frequently unmet. Most academic writing of tertiary students is generally weak when measured against academic standards. This expectation and actual performance gap represent a significant challenge in higher education and assessment. Despite the critical importance of academic writing, many students acknowledge that they experience challenges in expressing themselves through

academic writing, which results in substantial barriers to academic issues and knowledge demonstration (Bram & Angelina, 2022).

In their book, Bean and Melzer (2021) asset that critical thinking is intrinsically linked to academic writing. It also entails considerations of power dynamics and the cultivation of intellectual identity within academic settings. This multifaceted perspective offers significant insight into the reasons students encounter difficulties with academic writing research, uncovering intricacies that simplistic skills-based methods may neglect. Comprehending academic writing through this expansive perspective clarifies how students maneuver the complex requirements of engaging in scholarly discourse and cultivating their voices within recognized academic groups.

The Importance of Academic research

Research engagement acts as a conduit for knowledge dissemination and improves the academic performance of educators in higher education. Cordingley (2015) emphasizes that teacher participation in different research forums and academic festivals provides exposure and improvements in their methodical approaches to addressing educational challenges. Moreover, involvement in research activities enables teachers to conduct meaningful self-assessments of their teaching methods (Winch et al., 2015). This research-informed approach allows teachers to critically examine their classroom practices through an evidence-based lens, leading to more intentional and effective instructional decisions.

Teachers who actively participate in research forums cultivate essential problem-solving abilities, build confidence in pedagogical experimentation, enhance self-evaluation of teaching practices, and develop a deeper understanding of theoretical underpinnings (Bell et al., 2010). In addition, these teacher-level reflections directly affect students' performance (Cordingley, 2015). This is essential for perspective teachers, as it facilitates the connection between educational theory and classroom practice.

Challenges in Academic Writing for Preservice Teachers

Many preservice teachers encounter difficulties in composing academic research. Van Katwijk et al., (2023) mentioned the following reasons: (1) preservice teachers prioritized hands-on classroom practice over research activities; (2) stress of the cognitive demands on research methodology; and (3) the requisite nature of research that must be presented to complete the course program. These are the primary reasons why composing academic research challenges most college students.

Benefits of Academic Writing for Preservice Teachers

Community engagement necessitates acquiring communication skills that conform to the norms and standards of a specific society (Hyland & Rodrigo 2017). Universities operate as communities with defined criteria for academic writing. Students trained properly in these conventions gain advantage over those who are not and can apply these valuable skills in their future endeavors (Van de Poel & Gasiorek, 2012).

The process of academic writing mirrors teaching itself in its developmental nature. Preservice teachers represent a transformative journey of becoming (Britzman, 1992). As Lamote and Engels (2010) explain, this period involves formation and transformation, requiring examination of one's current practices and future potential. According to Botha et al. (2023), if we recognize identity as crucial to teacher development, teacher education programs must carefully consider the various identity stages preservice teachers experience during professional evolution, especially in academic writing.

Research Questions/Objectives

Primary Focus of the Study

To examine the perceptions of university preservice teachers regarding academic research writing, focusing on their mindset, methodologies, lived experiences, and acknowledge benefits.

Research Questions

1. In what manner do preservice teachers perceive the objectives and reasons underlying academic research writing?
2. What challenges do preservice teachers encounter in the academic research writing process, and what techniques do they utilize to surmount these difficulties?
3. What beneficial results do preservice teachers recognize from participating in academic writing?

Objective of the Research

1. To investigate preservice teachers' motivating elements and perspectives about academic research writing.
2. To uncover and evaluate the primary obstacles preservice teachers encounter when writing academic research.
3. To explore the approaches and methods preservice teachers implement to address difficulties in academic research.
4. To ascertain the advantages and developmental outcomes that preservice teachers recognize from their participation in academic research writing.
5. This study aims to gather insightful perspectives that inform the development of enhanced support frameworks and methodologies for bolstering preservice teachers' competencies in research writing.

Participants

The research participants were female third-year preservice teachers in the Bachelor of Elementary Education Program. Each participant served as the leader of their respective research group projects. The age distribution included seven participants who were 21 years old and two who were 20 years old. Nine students were chosen from a more significant cohort of 53 students.

Table 1 provides a detailed profile of the research participants, outlining their key qualities and leadership roles within their academic institutions.

Table 1 Participants Demographics

Participant Code	Age	Sex	Year Level	Program	Designation
1	21	Female	Third Year	BEEd	Leader
2	21	Female	Third Year	BEEd	Leader
3	21	Female	Third Year	BEEd	Leader
4	20	Female	Third Year	BEEd	Leader
5	21	Female	Third Year	BEEd	Leader
6	21	Female	Third Year	BEEd	Leader
7	21	Female	Third Year	BEEd	Leader
8	20	Female	Third Year	BEEd	Leader
9	21	Female	Third Year	BEEd	Leader

Sampling Process

The research utilized purposive sampling to identify suitable participants. This methodological approach was selected to ensure participants have the necessary experience to provide substantive information relevant to the research objectives.

Participant selection was based on two primary criteria: (a) current enrollment in the third year of the Bachelor of Elementary Education program, and (b) active leadership position within their research project group.

This intentional sampling approach enabled the researcher to concentrate on students with firsthand experience in academic research writing who also shouldered leadership responsibilities. The strategic selection enabled the gathering od extensive insights concerning the obstacles, advantages, and experiences related to academic research writing among preservice teachers.

While the study's emphasis on a specific demographic (female third-year students in leadership positions) may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader preservice teacher community, this targeted approach enabled a thorough exploration of their experiences. The insights obtained are significant for comprehending preservice teachers' academic research writing processes in similar educational contexts.

Methodology

The research employed a qualitative methodology grounded in phenomenography. This approach was selected to explore preservice teachers' experiences, perceptions, and understanding of academic research writing from their viewpoints (Ackoff, 2018). Data collection involved a researcher-developed two-part instrument. The initial component. robotfoto - a Dutch expression referring to a preliminary subject sketch (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) – established the participant's baseline characteristics. The second component comprised semi-structured in-depth interviews facilitated by an aide-memoir developed by the researcher and endorsed by university faculty experts.

Data Collection Analysis

The study began by obtaining informed consent from all participants. Interview schedules were organized based on participants' availability and preferences, specifically after school hours when all were available. Before the interview session, robotfoto was employed to collect demographic data. Interviews were audio-recorded using a smartphone with the informed consent of the participants, lasting between 30 to 60 minutes. Probing follow-up inquiries were utilized to augment data richness.

The investigation adhered to Harrington & Lea's (2020) seven stage phenomenographic analytical framework, encompassing data familiarization, response compilation, individual response condensation, preliminary categorization and comparison, category labeling, and contrastive comparison. Supplementary analytical procedures encompassed thematic analysis of textual data, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for data validation and enhancement, peer debriefing to establish credibility and validity, and member verification to ensure congruence between research interpreter interpretation and participants' intended meanings. This systematic technique enabled an extensive examination of preservice teachers' views on academic research writing while upholding stringent data collecting and analysis criteria.

Findings and Discussion

1. Preservice Teachers' Perspective on Academic Research Writing

Table 2 Summary of Student's Perception of Academic research Writing

Themes	**Codes**
Requirement	Academic requirement
	Prerequisite
	Research Subject
	University
	Academic Activity
Knowledge Development	Awareness
	Data Gathering
	Problem-Solving
	Solution for existing problems
	Society

Preservice teachers perceived academic research writing from two perspectives: (1) chiefly as a curricular obligation; and (2) as a means for knowledge creation and professional development. This multifaceted perception corresponds with Willison and O'Regan's (2007) claim that research involvement enhances critical analytical skills and problem-solving capacities in education students.

Analysis indicates that participants concurrently perceive research writing as requisite scholastic tasks and a chance for intellectual growth with the obligatory dimension frequently obtaining more prominence in their accounts.

Participants recognize the obligatory character of research writing in their curriculum yet expressed appreciation for its ability to broaden their conceptual understanding and improve their analytical skills. This dual acknowledgement offers an unexploited opportunity to enhance substantive involvement in academic pursuits.

Teacher education programs would benefit from prioritizing the practical professional uses of research writing worldwide rather than focusing on compliance elements. Reorienting research efforts to emphasize their significance for classroom

practice and professional identity development may significantly enhance motivation and genuine engagement among preservice teachers.

2. Challenges in the Research Writing Process

Table 3 Summary of Students' Challenges in Writing Academic Papers

Themes	**Codes**
Challenging	Unfamiliarity with the task and research paper
	Lacks gadget
	Tight budget
Time-Consuming	Data gathering
	Interpretation of Data
	Related literature
	Non-respondent partcipants
	Paper revision
Group Members	Non-compliance
	Passive members
	Nonpartcipant groupmates
	Negligence of duty as a member

The barriers preservice teachers encounter mirror findings from Cherry et al. (2012) research, particularly regarding conceptual expression complexities and discipline-specific writing convention adherence.

Analysis reveals that hurdles extend beyond individual domains, encompassing technological resource restrictions, logistical time constraints, and interpersonal collaboration challenges.

The complex structure of these obstacles suggests improving research writing competency requires comprehensive treatments rather than singular writing skill development methods.

Higher education institutions should provide comprehensive support systems that address material resource inadequacies, offer organized time management coaching, and incorporate collaborative competency development into research methods programs.

Table 3 Summary of Students' Benefits of Writing a Research Paper

Themes	**Codes**
Improvement	Writing skills and abilities
	Communication skills
	Information literacy
Knowledge expansion	Fulfilling
	Confidence
	Personal growth and development
Satisfaction	Celebration
	Happiness
	Achievement
	Rewarding

The identified advantages correspond to Tuck's (2012) research highlighting professional identity formation and enhanced self-efficacy among preservice teachers who engage in scholarly writing activities.

Analysis indicates that advantages extend beyond mere academic skill gain, incorporating substantial personal growth aspects and professional identity formation.

The significant sense of achievement and intellectuals linked to the completion of research projects suggests that these experiences may act as transformative educational milestone for preservice teachers.

Teacher preparation programs must expressly prioritize these comprehensive developmental outcomes to bolster students and assist preservice teachers in acknowledging the lasting significance of research writing beyond immediate academic obligation.

The findings reveal a complex link between preservice teachers' perception, challenges, and benefits derived from academic research writing. Although participants classified research writing mainly as a curricular obligation, they concurrently recognized its role in enhancing knowledge and developing analytical skills. This dichotomy embodies the theory proposed by Rai et al. (2019), which

stimulates academic writing as a sociocultural practice transcending mere technical proficiency.

Recognized limitations, especially those related to collaborative group dynamics and inadequate resources, highlight the need for enhanced support systems for preservice teachers involved in research endeavors. This supports Harrington and Lea's (2020) assertion regarding contextualizing academic writing within its broader educational and social milieu.

The acknowledged advantages, especially for personal development and establishing professional identity, highlight the transformative educational potential of academic research writing. This supports the findings of Zimbardi & Mayatt (2014), which indicate favorable developmental outcomes from undergraduate policies, proposing: (1) a strategic recontextualization of research writing as an academic obligation and a significant professional development opportunity; (2) the establishment of comprehensive support systems encompassing technical skills, resource availability, time management, and collaborative abilities; and (3), conscious focus on the extensive personal advantages that transcend attaining a degree. By focusing on these strategic areas, higher education institutions can improve preservice teachers' research experiences, enhance their readiness for classroom practice, and foster their potential as contributors to educational knowledge.

Implications

Several key implications for teacher education and teaching practices emerge from this research: (1) Research Skills Integration Throughout the Curriculum. The dual perception of research as both a requirement and knowledge-building tool suggest that teacher education programs should systematically embed research competencies across coursework. Introducing progressive research assignments within multiple courses rather than isolating research to a culminating project would facilitate incremental skill development and demonstrate research relevance across educational domains; (2) Application-Oriented Research Experiences. The recognized benefits regarding problem-solving capabilities indicate that programs should emphasize practical research applications. Facilitating action research opportunities during

practicum experiences and promoting the exploration of genuine educational difficulties would augment relevance and involvement; (3) Evidence-based Practice Preparation. Research engagement develops capabilities essential for evidence-informed teaching approaches. Programs should explicitly connect research experiences with future classroom applications, demonstrating how investigative skills enhance instructional effectiveness; (4) Research-Positive Environmental Cultivation. To leverage the documented achievement satisfaction and personal growth aspects, programs should deliberately foster a scholarly community through student research symposia, publication opportunities in academic journals, and structured mentorship with experience researchers; and (5), Professional Development Foundation. Research experiences contribute significantly to a lifelong learning orientation. Programs should frame research engagement as fundamental to ongoing professional growth, preparing preservice teachers for careers requiring continuous inquiry and knowledge advancement.

Conclusion

This study examined preservice teachers' experiences with academic research writing, focusing on their viewpoints, challenges, and perceived advantages. The study, utilizing a qualitative phenomenographic approach with nine third-year elementary students' leaders, demonstrated that preservice teachers perceive research writing as an academic obligation and a significant instrument for knowledge enhancement and problem resolution. Participants faced considerable challenges, such as time constraints, resource limitations, and group dynamic issues; however, they also reported significant benefits, including improved writing skills, enhanced information literacy, increased self-confidence, and professional development.

This research is significant as it elucidates how preservice teachers conceptualized academic research writing. These insights are essential for creating more effective teacher education programs that equip teachers to conduct research and implement research-informed methodologies in their teaching practice. The findings highlight the necessity for comprehensive support regarding contextual factors that influence academic writing experiences, such as availability, collaborative skills, and time management techniques.

Subsequent investigations ought to examine various auspicious avenues: Longitudinal studies examining the evolution of research perceptions from preservice education to early teaching career; comparative analyses across various teacher education programs and cultural contexts; interventions studies assessing targeted support for identifies challenges; large-scale quantitative investigations to evaluate the generalizability of findings; focused studies on specific demographic subgroup; exploration of the impact of research engagement on classroom practices; investigation of technology integration to facilitate research activities; analysis of faculty mentorship dynamics; incorporation of interdisciplinary perspectives; and examination of influence of institutional policies on research writing in teacher education. These guidelines would significantly improve our comprehension of optimizing academic research writing experiences for preservice teachers, thereby reinforcing evidence-informed practice.

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