



# Examining Students' Reading Habit and Gender Differences behind Students' Academic Writing Achievement

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## Abstract

Students' reading habit and gender differences are believed as two influential factors on students' academic writing achievement. The purposes of this study were to find out the effect of the two factors on students' academic writing achievement and to find out the relationship among them. 43 English students of UIN Imam Bonjol Padang in the fourth semester registered in academic year 2020/2021 were involved. Reading habit questionnaire and essay writing test were administered. To analyze the data, simple regression test, multiple regression test, and Pearson's correlation test were applied. It was revealed that reading habit had no effect on students' academic writing achievement; they had very weak correlation, whereas gender affected students' academic writing achievement; they had weak relationship. Moreover, students' reading habit and gender affected students' academic writing achievement as many as 10.4 %.

**Keywords:** reading habit; gender differences; academic writing achievement

## Introduction

As a productive language skill, writing is considered as the most difficult skill among other skills. It is caused by the complexity of writing itself that involves transferring idea and knowledge by concerning vocabulary, grammar, critical thinking skills, background knowledge, and so forth (Ferisia, Miftakhuddin, Hidayah, & Huda, 2019). Another thing that makes writing such a laborious activity is the process of writing which consists of some stages; it is started from pre-writing activity like designing an outline, writing, and editing. Those stages should be done carefully in order to produce good writing.

At college level, academic writing in English is regarded as a stressful task especially for students who have lack of literacy skill (Ángel & García, 2017). In relation to this fact, Merjen, Kassymova, Setyo, and Kosbay (2019) state that most of college students in Indonesia have some issues in academic writing, such as poor grammar skill, lack of vocabularies, and less writing practice. In addition, Puspita (2019) in her study reported three main factors influence students' obstacle in writing, namely 82 % students have problem in writing due to personality factors; 83 % students have difficulty in socio-cultural factors; and the last, the highest

number (86 % students) deals with linguistic factors. Similarly, Raimes as cited in Alfaki (2015, p. 41) believes that:

“When students complain about how difficult it is to write in a second language, they are talking not only about the difficulty of finding the right words and using the correct grammar but also about the difficulty of finding and expressing ideas in a new language.”

Alfaki (2015) adds that several general causes that triggered students' problems in writing are having less motivation; getting insufficient time to do writing task –notably in writing under pressure where the students need more time to narrow the topic down, write the draft, doing proof-reading, re-writing; having lack of practice, and getting minimum response and or feedback from the teacher. Different from Alfaki, Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017) found out that there are two types of students' difficulties in writing. The first category regarded as the serious problems are grammatical, cohesion, and coherence, whereas the minor problems are in organization, words choice, and words misspelling.

Moreover, the quality of academic writing depends on critical thinking. Tapper in Vyncke (2012) defines critical thinking as a bunch of skill in selecting, evaluating, analyzing, reflecting, questioning, inferring, and judging. All those aspects are applied to write essay and thesis –argumentative writing that should be written in structured formal language. The set of those critical thinking components are not attained instantly. It needs effort by keep practicing reading a lot of literatures habitually (Changwong, Sukkamart, & Sisan, 2018).

Florence, Adesola, Alaba, and Adewumi (2017) point out that reading support students' academic achievement. It is the artery off all courses offered by an institution. Unless having good reading, students will not be able to gain information and have abundant knowledge and experience that are useful to their study (Ferisia et al., 2019). It is claimed that reading and writing are closely related each other in terms of knowledge representations, cognitive processes, contexts and contextual constrains, both of them have linearity (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). The development of writing is in line with the development of reading. It means that one who is good at reading; she or he is good at writing too. Having a lot of knowledge resulted from habitual reading makes someone easier to expand his or her idea into writing like flowing water. This notion has been proved by a handful of studies that discovered there is a positive correlation between reading and writing in English (Budi, 2020; Choi, Moon, Paek, & Kang, 2018; Prianggita & Habibi, 2018).

Good reading skill is formed by reading habit. In academic activity, it is important to grow reading habit up considering its positive contribution to success of academic writing. Ferisia et al. (2017) define reading habit as one's actions in performing reading style, reading preference, amount of reading materials, and reading frequency in various topics and types of texts. It shapes readers' knowledge and helps them to develop their critical thinking.

Khairunnisa and Safitri (2018) argue that reading habit helps the students in their academic writing. The benefits from reading habit are: it helping ideas

development, improving critical analysis, enhancing knowledge, enriching vocabulary, adding supporting details easily, strengthening theory, and producing better quality of writing. This idea was proven by Linuwih and Winardi as well (2020). In their study, they reported that reading habit gave the greatest contribution on content of writing among other writing components –organization, language use, mechanic, and vocabulary. The students who have good reading habit can produce great content in their writing. Therefore, reading habit and academic writing are closely related each other.

One more interesting thing that related to academic writing is gender issue. Gender is strongly believed as the prediction in students’ success in academic and career selection (He & Freeman, 2010). There have been many studies regarding gender and academic writing. Waskita (2008) asserts that there were differences between male and female students in academic writing. Female students were more organized in writing thesis statement and providing supporting details in arguing. The similar result found by Al-Saadi (2020); she discovered that Omani female students had better writing quality than male students. Moreover, female students more concerned than male students on writing strategy to get the best writing achievement (Mutar & Nimehchisalem, 2017).

A number of studies about reading habit and academic writing have been conducted, so have been studies about gender and academic writing. However, the study involved reading habit, gender, and academic writing simultaneously is rarely found. Regarding this fact, it is necessary to discover the relationship of reading habit, gender, and students’ academic writing achievement at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang. Specifically, three research questions were addressed to be answered in this study: (1) Is there any effect of students’ reading habit on students’ academic writing achievement?; (2) Is there any effect of gender on academic students’ academic writing achievement?; (3) Is there any co-relationship between students’ reading habit, gender, and students’ academic writing achievement?

**Method**

This research was a correlational research. It is a study aimed to investigate the relationship among involved variables (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). In relation to this research, the investigated variables were students’ reading habit, gender, and students’ academic writing.

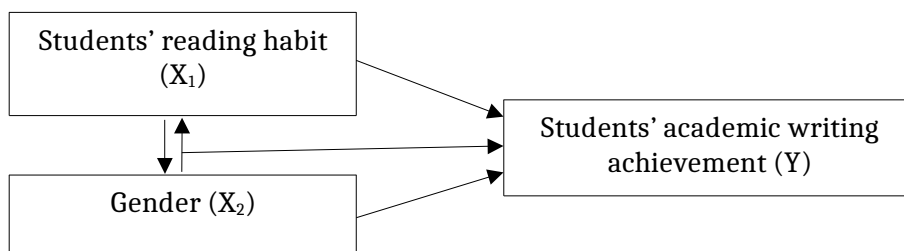


Figure 1. Research Variables

Moreover, this study comprised the fourth semester of English students in 2020/2021 academic year at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang. The total numbers of all students were 43 and they were taking academic writing course at that time; they consisted of 13 male students and 30 female students. Therefore, all students were as samples of this research.

There were two instruments applied, namely reading habit questionnaire to investigate students' reading habit and writing persuasive essay was assigned to the students to get the data about their academic writing achievement. To analyze the data, SPSS 16.0 was used, specifically the test constituted three types, i.e. simple regression test (t-test), multiple regression test, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation test.

Simple regression test was used to examine the effect of students' reading habit and gender on students' academic writing achievement. Moreover, multiple regression tests were administered to analyze whether students' reading interest and gender influenced students' academic writing or not. The last, Pearson's correlation test was used to test the relationship between the three variables. To interpret the strength of coefficient among variables, Sugiyono (2017) proposes 5 categories of coefficient correlation as below:

*Table 1. Coefficient Correlation Category*

Coefficient Interval	Coefficient Level
0.80 - 1.000	Very strong
0.60 - 0.799	Strong
0.40 - 0.599	Strong enough
0.20 - 0.399	Weak
0.00 - 0.199	Very weak

## Results →

### ***The Effect of Reading Habit and Gender on Students' Academic Writing Achievement***

The summary of the effect of each independent variable (reading habit and gender) on students' academic writing achievement is comprised in table 2.

*Table 2.  
The Effect of Reading Habit and Gender  
on Students' Academic Writing Achievement*

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	45.657	26.494		1.723	0.093
Reading Habit	-0.033	0.271	0.019	0.123	0.903
Gender	14.019	6.69	0.328	2.096	0.043

From the table above, significant value of reading habit variable was 0.903; it was higher than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . It indicated that there was no effect of students' reading habit on students' academic writing achievement. On the other hand, significant

value of gender variable was  $0.043 < \alpha = 0.05$ . It meant that there was a significant effect of gender on students' academic writing.

Furthermore, the result of multiple regression tests to discover whether or not writing habit and gender influence academic writing achievement simultaneously is presented in table 3.

Table 3.  
*Multiple Regression Test Result of Students' Writing Habit, Gender, and Students' Academic Writing Achievement*

Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1727.734	2	863.867	2.325	0.111 <sup>a</sup>
14865.051	40	371.626		
16592.786	42			

It turned out that significant value was 0.111. It was bigger than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Thus, it can be concluded that writing habit and gender did not influence students' academic writing achievement simultaneously.

The percentage of the influence of reading habit and gender on students' academic writing achievement can be seen as follows:

Table 4.  
*The Influence of Reading Habit and Gender on Students' Academic Writing Achievement*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
0.323 <sup>a</sup>	0.104	0.059

From the table above, the magnitude of the influence of reading habit and gender on students' academic writing is based on the value of R square i.e. 0.104. It meant that the influence of students' reading habit and gender on students' academic writing achievement was as many as 10.4 %, while 89.6 % was influenced by other factors that were not examined in this study.

***The Co-relationship among Students' Reading Habit, Gender, and Students' Academic Writing Achievement***

The following table shows the result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation test.

Table 5. Coefficient Correlation from Pearson Product Moment Test

Variable	Reading habit	Gender	Writing	N
Reading habit	Pearson Correlation	1	0.076	43
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.628	
Gender	Pearson Correlation	0.291	1	43
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.059	0.035	
Writing	Pearson Correlation	0.076	0.322	43

Sig. (2-tailed)	0.628	0.035
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Based on the table above, it was found that coefficient correlation ( $r$  obtained) of reading habit was 0.076 while the values of  $r$  table for 43 samples was 0.3008. Due to  $r$  obtained was smaller than  $r$  table ( $0.076 < 0.3008$ ), it can be concluded that there was no relationship between students' reading habit and students' academic writing achievement. Additionally, in line with the interpretation of coefficient correlation suggested by Sugiyono (2017), the value of  $r$  observed belongs to a 'very weak' relationship.

Furthermore,  $r$  obtained for gender was 0.322; it was bigger than  $r$  table (0.3008). It can be inferred that there was a relationship between gender and students' academic writing achievement. The interpretation result based on Sugiyono's coefficient correlation category is a 'weak' relationship.

## Discussion



### ***The Effect of Students' Reading Habit on Students' Academic Writing Achievement and the Relationship between Them***

After analyzing the data, it turned out that students' reading habit did not give any influence on students' academic achievement. It was proven by the result of simple regression analysis; the value of reading habit variable was 0.903; it was higher than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Moreover, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation test resulted the same finding; there was no significant correlation between the two variables and based on Sugiyono's interpretation of coefficient correlation category, the relationship between reading habit and academic writing achievement was very weak. The no significant correlation finding is the same with previous studies (Risman, Jufrizal, & Rozimela, 2019; Salsabila, 2018; Winiharti & Suprato, 2020).

Based on this fact, there are other crucial things to consider that affect students' academic writing achievement, they are student-teacher relationship, learner motivation, and positive feedback from teacher (Dhanya & Alamelu, 2019). Apart from them, material, media, classroom activities, classroom management, teachers' strategy, and teachers' approach are also some important factors behind success in academic writing (Herdi, 2015). Those affecting factors can possibly become factors that have greater significant correlation with students' academic writing achievement since the magnitude of the influence of reading habit is 10.4 % only.

### ***The Effect of Gender Differences on Students' Academic Writing Achievement and the Relationship between Them***

In contrast, another independent variable, i.e. gender, had a significant effect on students' academic writing achievement (Sig. value =  $0.043 < \alpha = 0.05$ ). It was also supported by the result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation test that argued there was a relationship between gender and students' academic writing achievement. In accordance with this finding, several further researches had been conducted and it was reported that gender differences caused different academic writing achievements in which female students were more outstanding than male

students (Al-Saadi, 2020; Bijami, Kashef, & Khaksari, 2013; Mutar, & Nimehchisalem, 2017; Reilly, Neumann, & Andrews, 2019; Waskita, 2008). They were better in writing strategies, writing fluency, producing high quality text, and providing facts in argumentative writing. Therefore, it is important to accommodate the students' needs in academic writing course, especially the male students to attain better academic writing achievement.

## Conclusion →

All in all, students' reading habit had no significant effect on students' academic writing achievement and they had very weak correlation. On the contrary, students' gender differences affected their academic writing achievement, but they had weak relationship. Since the size of simultaneous effect from students' reading habit and gender differences toward academic writing achievement was 10.4 %, it is crucial to conduct future further studies in order to discover other factors for the rest of 89.6 % that relate to and give contribution to students' academic writing achievement so that it can help the students to attain better academic writing achievement. Besides, due to this study is limited in sampling – involving 43 English students at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, the finding of the study can not be generalized. Hence, it is expected that further studies will comprise larger samples.

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