READING Interests and Academic Writing Motivation as Correlate to the News Writing Skills of Special Program in Journalism STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between reading interests, academic writing motivation, and news writing skills of Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) students in selected public secondary schools in Davao City during the school year 2024–2025. The respondents are composed of 209 SPJ students in the school year 2024 – 2025 who were purposively chosen through cluster sampling. Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, Mean, standard deviation, Pearson r moment correlation, and multiple linear regression analysis were the statistical tools used to analyze the data. Results showed that there was a moderate level of reading interests among students enrolled in SPJ. The level of academic writing motivation was high, which is often manifested. Results also showed that the level of news writing skills of SPJ students was found to be high. Findings revealed that both reading interest and academic writing motivation had a significant positive correlation with the students' news writing skills. Furthermore, regression analysis indicated that these independent variables significantly influenced overall news writing performance. The results underscore the importance of fostering students' engagement with reading materials and strengthening their motivation to write in order to enhance their journalistic competencies. The study provides vital insights that can guide SPJ teachers in crafting targeted interventions and pedagogical strategies to support the development of students' writing skills, ultimately contributing to improved journalistic outputs in campus publications.

KEYWORDS: *Education, Special Program in Journalism, academic writing motivation, news writing skills, Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

As Arafat and Porlezza (2023) emphasized, news writing epitomizes a genre complete with information dissemination, assumes the role of an articulate conveyor of societal occurrences where it embodies a mode of factual reporting, grounded in data and verifiable facts where 'immediacy' is its hallmark, demanding swift transcription and dissemination via mass media platforms. However, Barbarona (2020) expressed that many students still lack these skills completely, and some of whom may have only partially mastered journalism, where writing emerges as a potent vehicle for reporting, conveying information, and exerting influence upon its readership.

In the United States, Yomiyama (2014) and Paglinawan (2018), explained that the improper use of linking words in writing would result in global errors which may lead to misunderstanding and even communication breakdown. Al Karazoun (2016) expressed that university L2 learners of English lacked knowledge in terms of the rules in news writing that readers will find engaging and understandable. In China, Shaw et al. (2022) also found that journalism students often struggle with confidence, especially in high-pressure situations requiring accuracy and quick decision-making.

Furthermore, Novelti et. al (2022) elaborated that students' news text writing skills remain low, and are still below the school's standard minimum. Thus, respondents found news writing challenging. This is also in consonance with the study of Jayati (2024) showing that respondents had not completed the elements of news writing structure and students need to improve their competence in the field of news writing.

In the Philippines, studies were also conducted and presented within the country that focused on the news writing of campus journalists. Hunahunan (2018) explained that there is a struggle among the second language learners of English which is believed to be inevitable even to campus journalists. Furthermore, Morales (2023) identified similar news writing problems on which common errors were identifying facts and details, writing the lead of a news story, and connecting the paragraphs as part of a news story.

This problem in news writing is happening in Davao. As proven by Aratan (2020) study in his analysis among his students revealed that these news writings scored below, as such Novelti et al. (2022) and Garg (2023) emphasized

that students must develop strong news writing abilities, because these abilities are fundamental to credible and successful reporting, where they require accuracy, brevity, and clarity to communicate ideas.

Furthermore, Alfatihah and Tyas (2022) explained that one major external factor is a lack of interest in reading among students, which can hinder their writing development. Also, cited in the studies of Payne (2012) and Hayikaleng et al., (2016), motivation to write is an important factor, emphasizing that students who lack motivation to write will not readily engage in academic writing activities thus motivation is considered an important element in students writing skills.

Taking into consideration all the valuable points raised on the issues, Saavedra and Barredo (2020) mentioned that writing in news has long been deteriorating, and the researchers who explored the factors that cause the poor writing performance of learners. While there exists a considerable amount of research on the different factors that affect the writing of the students, there remains little to no study available that would explain the current condition SPJ students are facing in terms of their journalistic writings.

The data gathered in this study are primarily used to acquire knowledge on the needs and proficiency of SPJ learners and would serve as the basis and guide for SPJ teachers to craft interventions or develop learning resources that would cater to the needs and background of the learners. School administrators and SPJ teachers might benefit from the results of this study to make an informed decision in implementing school policies and classroom instructions that would ensure students' satisfaction with their journalism experiences. The analyzed and interpreted data would be beneficial to students and schools who took part in the survey, which would be published in an online journal that is accessible to all.

Statement of the Problem

1. What is the level of reading interests of SPJ students in terms of individual interest; situational interest and topic interest?
2. What is the level of academic writing motivation of SPJ students in terms of intrinsic motivation; self-efficacy; extrinsic motivation and effort?
3. What is the level of news writing skills of SPJ students in terms of organization; lead and writing; objectivity and accuracy; Associated

Press (AP) style (convention) and headline writing?

4. Is there a significant relationship between reading interests and news writing skills on SPJ students? academic writing motivation and news writing skills on SPJ students?
5. Do reading interest and academic writing motivation significantly influence the news writing skills of SPJ students?

Theoretical Lens

This study is primarily grounded from the self-determination theory (STD) of Deci and Ryan (2000) which emphasizes about understanding human motivation, personality, and well-being. They also elaborated that SDT is a broad framework for understanding factors that facilitate or undermine intrinsic motivation, autonomous extrinsic motivation, and psychological wellness, all issues of direct relevance to educational settings.

Howard, et.al (2021) explained that in line with theoretical expectations, adaptive outcomes were generally associated with more self-determined forms of motivation, and less self-determined motives were generally associated with more maladaptive indicators. Self-determination theory is also presented in the study of Urhahne and Wijnia (2023) where the external incentives such as expected or real rewards to motivate behavior are still visible. Thus, the theory gives light on the understanding on the reading interests, academic writing motivation to the skills in the news writing of students enrolled in Special Program in Journalism.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This quantitative study employed a descriptive-correlational research design in determining the level of reading interest, academic writing motivations, and news writing skills of students enrolled in SPJ and the relationship of these variables. Creswell and Cresswell (2023) described quantitative research as a systematic investigation that involves collecting and analyzing numerical data to address specific research questions objectively. On the other hand, Kosie and Lew‑Williams (2024) emphasized that descriptive research often involves observing events and annotating different aspects of situations as they naturally unfold, which are then organized, including data visualization or summary statistics across individuals or groups. Further, Downie and Heath (2022) explained that a descriptive-correlational design measures the association between variables, providing insights into their interrelations.

The descriptive-correlational design was appropriate for this study as it aligns with the research objectives. The descriptive aspect allowed for assessing the levels of reading interests, academic writing motivation, and news writing skills. The correlational aspect is suited to identify potential relationships between these variables, such as whether higher reading interests and academic writing motivation are associated with improved news writing skills. By employing this design, the study effectively addressed its aim of exploring both the individual and interconnected dynamics of the variables, ensuring an objective and data-driven inquiry.

Place of the Study. The study was conducted in four public secondary schools that are implementing a Special Program in Journalism in the Division of Davao City from grade 7 to grade 10 in the school year 2024-2025. These schools were classified as "very large" institutions. Schools that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the study, specifically, schools that did not offer the SPJ program, were located outside Davao City, or lacked an active grade seven SPJ section for the specified school year were not included. This approach ensured that the selected schools aligned with the study's objectives while accounting for possible limitations or barriers to participation.

*Respondents of the Study***.** The respondents of this study were enrolled in the SPJ from the four identified public secondary schools in the Division of Davao City. A cluster sampling technique was employed, wherein each school offering the SPJ program served as a cluster. All SPJ students from the selected schools were included, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the population while simplifying the sampling process. Nanjundeswaraswamy and Divakar (2021) also elaborated that cluster sampling is a method where the entire population to be analyzed is divided into smaller groups called clusters. This method was typically used when the population is large, widely dispersed, and inaccessible. The clusters should ideally mirror the characteristics of the population as a whole. A total of 209 respondents from the population were considered in the study. Seventy-six students were from School A, 27 students were from School B, 37 students were from School C, and 69 students were from School D. In this study, the respondents' vulnerability was considered carefully who were identified as minors, ages 13 – 16, and their potential vulnerabilities were acknowledged, and appropriate ethical measures were implemented ensured their voluntary participation and that they were free from coercion. They were reminded that they can withdraw from participating in the study, which yielded no negative effects on their academic performance.

Statistical tools. For the interpretation and analysis of data, the following statistical tools were used in this study. Mean, this was employed to identify the extent of SPJ students' reading interests, academic writing motivation, and news writing skills. Standard Deviation, this was used to determine how spread out, how far, or how close the students' reading interests, academic writing motivation, and news writing skills are. Pearson-Product Moment Correlation (Pearson r), This was used to determine the correlation between reading interests and academic news writing skills, and the writing motivation and news writing skills of SPJ students. Multiple linear regression, this was used to know the relationship between the reading interests and writing motivation to the news writing skills of SPJ students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Reading Interests of SPJ Students

Table 1 shows the level of reading interests among SPJ students. Three indicators of reading interests are presented on the table with corresponding mean and standard deviation; these indicators include individual interest, situational interest, and topic interest. Results show that the overall mean is 3.39, which is described as moderate, with a standard deviation of .726, which is lower than one, considering that the consistency of the responses of respondents has minimal variations and is considered homogenous. The moderate level of reading interests implies that the SPJ students showed positive interest towards reading, and while reading is present in their journalistic and personal lives, it is not a consistent habit for them. The result confirms with the study of Latifah (2021) that interest in reading is a natural liking or mental tendency to find the meaning of writing and find information to develop intellectuality, which is done with full awareness and feelings of pleasure that arise from within.

Table 1

Level of Reading Interests among Students in Special Program in Journalism

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Individual Interests	3.51	.760	High
Situational Interest	3.32	.740	Moderate
Topic Interest	3.35	.890	Moderate
Overall Mean	**3.39**	**.726**	**Moderate**

Meanwhile, individual interests got the highest mean among the

indicators of reading interests, with a mean of 3.51, which is described as high, with a standard deviation of 0.76. This means that the indicator is often manifested among the students in SPJ. It is implied that the SPJ students have strong internal interest in reading. It substantiates the findings of Rieger et.al (2022), which indicated that people are interested in and voluntarily spend additional time engaged in activities like reading. Also, this finding is in line with the idea of Kurnaz and Kurnaz (2021) stating that individual factors such as personal goals, beliefs, and values are significant contributors to fostering a deeper engagement with reading materials.

On the other hand, the situational interest garnered the lowest mean score of 3.32, with a description of moderate level and a standard deviation of 0.74. This means that the reading interests are sometimes manifested among the students enrolled in SPJ. This suggests that the reading interests of SPJ students are occasionally influenced by environmental factors, which is not consistently strong. The findings show differently in the study of Alexander (2019) and Sylvia (2017) that situational interest tends to be seen as a motivational force that drives learning, and their mobilization is considered an important instructional goal. Further, this finding is consistent with the study of Golke and Wittwer (2024), stating that situational interest enhanced students' reading comprehension level as measured by text comprehension with respect to explicit statements in the text and implicit information that had to be inferred during reading. This fosters personal relevance and intrinsic engagement may be more effective in cultivating consistent reading habits among journalism students than relying solely on external or contextual influences.

Level of Academic Writing Motivation among SPJ Students

Shown in table 2 is the level of academic writing motivation among students who are enrolled in SPJ, which has obtained an overall mean score of 3.49 and a standard deviation of 0.58, which is below one and shows that there are few significant differences in the respondents' consistency of answers. Moreover, the general mean of academic writing motivation has a description of high, which signifies that the academic writing motivation of the student is often manifested. This implies that the SPJ students are frequently driven by writing tasks and have a positive attitude towards academic writing activities engagement. This confirms the study of Philippakos et al. (2021) which identified that students exhibited greater motivation in academic writing tasks.

Table 2

Level of Academic Writing Motivation among Students in Special Program in Journalism

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Intrinsic Motivation	3.14	.740	Moderate
Self-Efficacy	3.38	.690	Moderate
Extrinsic Motivation	3.85	.710	High
Effort	3.58	.670	High
Overall Mean	**3.49**	**.580**	**High**

On the same table 2, the extrinsic motivation indicator got the highest mean of 3.85, which is described as high with a standard deviation of 0.71 and interpreted as often manifested. This means that students enrolled in SPJ are strongly driven to write due to external factors such as rewards or pressures. They are motivated to write because of external incentives rather than personal fulfillment or intellectual engagement. This conforms to the findings of Utami and Djamdjuri (2021), who posited that extrinsic motivation produces external goals in the form of short-term goals, including good grades, participation by students in competitions, awards received from teachers and parents, and so on.

Furthermore, the intrinsic motivation got the lowest mean score of 3.14 which is in moderate level with a standard deviation of 0.74. This means that the indicator is sometimes manifested among SPJ students. It implies that students sometimes write for personal satisfaction, enjoyment or interest in the writing task itself. This suggests that SPJ students only have slight personal connection to the writing process itself. This substantiates the contention of Payne (2012) and Ryan and Deci (2000) which emphasized that albeit intrinsic motivation important in writing, other students still may see writing more as a requirement than a personal or intellectual endeavor that may be shaped by factors such as writing anxiety, past experiences, confidence level or the nature of the writing task given.

Level of News Writing Skills among SPJ Students

As gleaned in Table 3, the level of news writing skills among SPJ students has a general mean score of 3.47, which is described as high, with a standard deviation of 0.58, which is below one and shows that there are few significant differences in the respondent's consistency of answers. This means that the news writing skills of the student are satisfactory. This suggests that the

students enrolled in SPJ demonstrate a strong foundation in journalistic writing. They exhibit solid competence in news writing implying that they are generally able to produce well-structured and coherent news articles.

Table 3

Level of News Writing Skills among Students in Special Program in Journalism

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Organization	3.90	.720	High
Lead and Writing (Focus and Support)	3.74	.850	High
Objectivity and Accuracy	3.58	.700	High
Conventions	2.92	.820	High
Headline Writing	3.22	.780	High
Overall Mean	**3.47**	**.580**	**High**

The result is in consonance with Morales' (2023) study, stating that students demonstrated news writing skills, specifically displaying higher scores in writing the lead and transition paragraphs of a news story. Also, Paglinawan's (2018) study revealed that the students have fair ability in both content writing and cohesion in all journalistic writing areas, especially in news writing. The result implies that there is a high need for training students in news writing, considering their competency in content writing and cohesion.

Further, the indicator which got the highest mean is organization with a mean score of 3.90, which is described as high, with a standard deviation of 0.72. This suggests that students enrolled in SPJ demonstrate a strong ability to structure and sequence their news articles effectively, which reflects how journalistic writing should flow logically, where they follow the structure of writing news from the most important to the least important. This confides with the study of Wismanto et al. (2021) which revealed that students displayed enhanced news writing skills, particularly in organizing news content in news content.

Moreover, the convention indicator of the news writing skills got the lowest mean score of 2.92, which is still described as high with a standard deviation of 0.82. This refers to the Associated Press (AP) style, which focuses on the grammar and mechanics in journalistic writing. This suggests that the students enrolled in SPJ have less background on the correct use of grammar and mechanics in writing news articles. This implies that there is a need to focus on

the mastery of language conventions that adhere to grammatical rules and correct mechanics, which can affect the credibility and readability of news articles.

While convention is at a high level, Hunahunan's (2018) findings revealed that grammatical errors are the most rampant linguistic problems among journalism students that could possibly prevent the message of the news from being comprehended by the readers, which is very essential in news writing. It also found that in Associated Press styles, grammatical errors tallied the most number of errors with 43%, while capitalization came in second as the most problematic category. Also, this is in consonance with Dabu and Dela Cruz's (2019) findings, which revealed that the articles written by the respondents had the highest number of errors made in dealing with subject-verb agreement, followed by sentence structure, and tenses.

Correlation of Variables

Table 4 presents the correlation between students' reading interests and academic writing motivation with their news writing skills in SPJ. The results show a moderate positive correlation between reading interests and news writing skills ($r = 0.364$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that students who exhibit greater interest in reading tend to demonstrate better writing skills in journalistic outputs. This aligns with the findings of the study of Prima and Abdurahman (2024) that interest in reading plays a critical role in students' writing success. Also, this proves the assertion of Nurzaiyanah et al. (2021) stating that there is only moderate positive relationship between reading interest and writing skills.

Moreover, there is a strong positive correlation between academic motivation and news writing skills ($r = 0.626$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that students who are highly motivated in academic writing are more likely to excel in news writing tasks. This aligns with the findings of the study of Süğümlü et al. (2019), stating that as the writing motivation of the students increases, writing evaluation scores also increase. The result also supports Graham et al. (2021), which revealed that while students take advantage of their writing motivation as it is inherently satisfying and enjoyable, it improves students' writing.

Table 4

Correlation of Variables

Variables paired with News Writing Skills among Students in Special Program in Journalism	r	p-value	Remarks
Reading Interests	0.364	0.000	Significant
Academic Writing Motivation	0.626	0.000	Significant

**Significant at 0.05*

Moreover, it conforms to Camacho et al., (2021) that writing motivation is a catalyst of writing performance in the set of dispositions, beliefs, and goals that students develop through the various tasks and situations in which they are asked to write and use their written productions. Further, this supports Espinosa and Baradillo's finding (2024) that intrinsic motivation has a significant influence on writing proficiency on students in terms of attitudes towards writing, generating, revising, feedback, and awareness and control of the writing process.

Influence of Reading Interests, Academic Writing Motivation on News Writing

Table 5 presents the regression analysis on the influence of reading interests and academic writing motivation on students' news writing skills in the Special Program in Journalism. The results indicate that academic writing motivation is a significant positive predictor of news writing skills ($\beta = 0.622$, $t = 9.365$, $p < 0.05$). Also, academic writing motivation is the strongest predictor of students' news writing performance, as evidenced by its higher beta coefficient and t-value. This means that a strong drive to excel in academic writing positively contributes to students' ability to write effective news articles. This supports the proposition of De Smedt et al. (2023) stating that writing motivation significantly contributes to writing performance, reinforcing the idea that motivation is a key determinant of writing success. Also, the findings also support the proposition of Wang and Troia (2023) stating that motivation had a positive predictive effect on writing ability at student levels, emphasizing the significant role of writing motivation in students' writing. Thus, the necessity of fostering writing motivation to enhance news writing skills across contexts and genres is emphasized.

In contrast, reading interests did not significantly influence news writing skills in the regression model ($\beta = 0.002$, $t = 0.039$, $p = 0.968$), even though it showed a moderate positive correlation in Table 4. This outcome underscores a key principle in research that correlation does not imply causation.

Table 5

Influencers of News Writing Skills among Students in Special Program in Journalism

Individual Predictors	**Standard Coefficient Beta**	**t**	**p-value**	**Remarks**
Reading Interests	0.002	0.039	0.968	Not Significant
Academic Writing Motivation	0.622	9.365	0.000	Significant
	Holistic Model			
Predictors Combined	**R^2** 0.392	**F** 66.30	**p-value** 0.000	**Remarks** Significant

**Significant at 0.05*

While interest in reading may build vocabulary and writing exposure, it does not necessarily improve news writing skills once motivation is considered. In short, reading interest may matter less when stronger factors like academic writing motivation are involved. This negates the assertion of Nurzaiyanah et al. (2021) stating that if students have a high interest in reading, their writing skills will be better.

When reading interests and academic writing motivation are considered together in a holistic regression model, they collectively account for 39.20% of the variance in news writing skills ($R^2 = 0.392$, $F = 66.30$, $p < 0.05$), which is statistically significant. This suggests that nearly four out of ten variations in students' news writing skills can be attributed to these two factors, especially academic writing motivation.

Overall, these findings reinforce the importance of nurturing students' academic writing motivation over mere reading interest to improve journalistic writing skills. While encouraging reading remains valuable, interventions aiming to enhance students' motivation to engage in writing tasks may yield more substantial improvements in actual writing skills. The study supports to Wang and Troia (2023) emphasizing that writing motivation significantly impacts writing quality, and effective instructional practices can further enhance this

relationship. This suggests that interventions aiming to boost writing motivation can lead to improved writing outcomes.

Academic writing motivation together with reading interest have been found to play a significant influence on the news writing performance which aligns to self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (2020) which emphasizes about understanding human motivation, personality, and well-being that facilitate or undermine intrinsic motivation, autonomous extrinsic motivation, and psychological wellness, which affect the performance of student in educational setting. Thus, to effectively support the writing performance of students in journalism-oriented programs, educational interventions and curriculum designs should prioritize the development of academic writing motivation and interests.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn. The level of reading interests among the students enrolled in SPJ was found to be moderate. With the three indicators, this suggests that while students are engaged in reading based on their personal enjoyment or habit, their reading interests are less influenced by situation or content factors. This implies that there is a need for educational interventions that would enhance their engagement in reading through social or content-based activities. The academic writing motivation among SPJ students was found to be high, particularly in their extrinsic motivation. This suggests that students are driven to write academic texts by the external outcomes such as academic achievements. Nonetheless, intrinsic motivation is on moderate level suggesting that not all students are motivated internally to write for personal satisfaction. The results also imply that although students exert effort and show confidence in their writing tasks, greater emphasis must be placed on fostering self-driven interest and enjoyment in academic writing to sustain long-term writing engagement and performance. The SPJ students also demonstrated high proficiency in news writing skills. The strongest performance is in the organization where students exhibit their ability in arranging the ideas and structure of the journalistic text efficiently. On the other hand, their lowest performance is on the conventions, revealing that grammar and mechanics come as a challenge for students during news writing activities. This suggests that while content development and logical arrangement is their strength, there is a need for support in improving the technical writing proficiency in news writing among the SPJ students. The correlation between reading interests and the news writing skills shows moderate positive correlation

while there is a strong positive correlation between academic writing motivation and writing performance. This implies that while reading interests can support writing development, academic writing motivation plays a more substantial role in predicting how well students perform in journalistic writing tasks. The regression analysis indicated that academic writing motivation is a substantial predictor of news writing skills, while reading interests did not have a significant impact when both variables were considered. The holistic model explained 39.2% of the variance in news writing performance, suggesting that students' success in journalism-related writing tasks is more influenced by writing motivation than by reading interests. This emphasizes the significance of motivational factors in the development of writing proficiency and suggests that programs designed to improve news writing performance should prioritize strategies that foster students' confidence and motivation in academic writing.

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