

# Writing Strategies Used by High-Achieving Students in Academic Writing

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## Abstract

Academic writing is a fundamental competency in higher education, requiring students to develop structured arguments, integrate credible sources, and maintain coherence throughout their writing. This study investigates the academic writing strategies employed by high-achieving students, focusing on five key themes: pre-writing strategies, effective use of academic sources, drafting and structuring arguments, revision and self-editing techniques, and time management. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research was conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang, involving 15 fifth-semester students from the English Education Department who had successfully completed the Academic Writing course with outstanding academic performance. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in students' writing strategies. The findings reveal that high-achieving students systematically engage in pre-writing planning, utilize effective citation and paraphrasing techniques, structure their arguments logically and coherently, revise their work through multiple drafts and peer feedback, and employ disciplined time management strategies to optimize their writing process. These results suggest that explicit instruction in academic writing strategies, integrated peer-review practices, and the use of digital writing tools can significantly enhance students' academic writing proficiency. The study provides pedagogical implications for improving academic writing instruction, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

**Keywords:** *Academic writing, Writing strategies, High-achieving students, Thematic analysis*

## Introduction

Academic writing is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in higher education and professional success. As Hyland (2018) emphasizes, academic writing is not merely about linguistic proficiency but also about engaging in disciplinary discourse, demonstrating critical thinking, and constructing well-founded arguments. In an academic setting, students are expected to articulate their ideas clearly, support their claims with credible evidence, and adhere to formal conventions of writing. According to Swales and Feak (2012), academic writing serves as a tool for knowledge dissemination and intellectual engagement, allowing students to communicate their thoughts effectively within a scholarly community. Moreover, proficiency in academic writing is essential for students to succeed in various forms of assessments, including essays,

research papers, and theses, which are pivotal in determining their academic achievements. Beyond university walls, strong writing skills continue to be valuable in professional fields where clear, structured, and persuasive communication is required. Studies have shown that employers highly value graduates with well-developed writing abilities, as these skills contribute to effective problem-solving, decision-making, and professional correspondence (Andrews, 2019). Given its significance in both academic and professional domains, mastering academic writing is not just a requirement but a necessity for students aiming for long-term success. However, despite its importance, many students struggle with the complexities of academic writing, highlighting the need for effective strategies to enhance their writing proficiency.

Despite the undeniable importance of academic writing, many students encounter significant challenges in mastering this skill, particularly in areas such as structure, cohesion, and argumentation. Research by Hyland (2019) indicates that a major obstacle for students is the ability to organize their ideas logically and present them in a coherent manner, which is essential for producing well-structured academic texts. Similarly, Halliday and Hasan (1976) highlight that cohesion—achieved through the effective use of linking words, reference mechanisms, and logical progression—is often a weakness in student writing, leading to fragmented and unclear compositions. Additionally, the development of strong arguments supported by critical analysis and credible evidence remains a persistent struggle among learners (Wingate, 2012). While numerous instructional strategies, such as writing workshops, peer feedback, and structured writing exercises, have been introduced to enhance students' academic writing abilities (Graham & Perin, 2007), not all students benefit equally from these approaches. Many still experience difficulties in integrating these techniques effectively into their writing process. However, within this broader student population, a specific group—high-achieving students—demonstrates a remarkable ability to overcome these writing challenges and produce high-quality academic texts. Their success suggests that they employ distinct writing strategies that enable them to navigate the complexities of academic writing more effectively than their peers. Understanding these strategies is essential, as it may offer valuable insights into best practices that can be adapted to support students who continue to struggle with academic writing.

key academic skills, represent a unique group that excels in academic writing. These students consistently produce well-structured, coherent, and critically engaging texts that meet the rigorous standards of academic discourse. Research suggests that their success is not solely attributed to innate talent but rather to the deliberate and strategic approaches they adopt in their writing processes (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Unlike their peers who struggle with organization, argument development, and linguistic accuracy, high-achieving students are more likely to employ metacognitive strategies such as pre-writing planning, iterative revisions, and self-assessment to refine their work (Oxford, 2017). Additionally, they tend to engage more actively in academic reading, which enhances their ability to synthesize ideas, use disciplinary language effectively, and integrate sources seamlessly into their writing (Graham & Harris, 2018). Identifying and analyzing the specific strategies used by these high-performing students is crucial, as their methods can serve as a model for other students seeking to improve their writing proficiency. By understanding how these students navigate the challenges of academic writing, educators and learners alike can gain valuable insights into effective writing practices that can be adapted and taught in academic settings. This study, therefore, aims to bridge the gap between high-achieving students and those who struggle by uncovering the key strategies that contribute to their writing success.

Many studies have explored the challenges students face in academic writing, such as difficulties in structuring ideas, maintaining coherence, and developing strong arguments (Hyland, 2019; Wingate, 2012). However, there has been less focus on the specific strategies used by high-achieving students who excel in academic writing. While some research has examined general writing strategies, little is known about how top-performing students approach writing differently and what makes their methods more effective. This gap in understanding suggests a need for further investigation into the strategies these students use to succeed. By identifying and analyzing their approaches, this study aims to provide insights that can help other students improve their academic writing. The findings may also offer valuable guidance for educators in designing more effective writing instruction that incorporates proven strategies from high-achieving students.

This study aims to identify and explore the specific academic writing strategies employed by high-achieving students. By understanding the techniques that contribute to their success, this research seeks to uncover practical methods that can be adopted by other students to improve their writing skills. Additionally, the findings will provide valuable insights for educators, enabling them to develop more effective instructional approaches that incorporate proven writing strategies. Through this investigation, the study hopes to bridge the gap between struggling writers and high-performing students by offering concrete, evidence-based recommendations. Ultimately, the research will contribute to enhancing academic writing pedagogy, ensuring that students receive better guidance and support in developing strong, coherent, and well-structured academic texts.

This study holds significant value for students, educators, and researchers in the field of academic writing. By identifying the strategies employed by high-achieving students, the findings can serve as a practical guide for other learners struggling with academic writing, helping them develop more effective approaches to structuring their ideas, enhancing coherence, and strengthening their arguments. For educators, this research provides valuable insights into the writing habits of successful students, allowing them to refine instructional methods and incorporate proven strategies into writing curricula. Additionally, researchers in the field of second-language academic writing can benefit from this study by gaining a deeper understanding of the successful writing strategies used by EFL students, contributing to the growing body of literature on best practices for academic writing instruction. Ultimately, this study aims to bridge the gap between struggling and high-achieving students, offering practical and theoretical contributions that enhance the teaching and learning of academic writing in EFL contexts.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate the academic writing strategies used by high-achieving students. Given the complexity of writing processes and the need to explore students' individual experiences, a thematic analysis was chosen to analyze the data, allowing for an in-depth understanding of recurring patterns and strategies in their writing practices (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This section outlines the research design, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods used in this study.

## **Research Design**

This research follows a qualitative case study design, which is well-suited for exploring complex phenomena within their real-life contexts (Yin, 2018). Since the study aims to identify and examine the academic writing strategies of high-achieving students, a qualitative approach allows for a rich, detailed exploration of students' experiences, perceptions, and practices. Using semi-structured interviews, this study seeks to understand how successful students navigate the challenges of academic writing, focusing on the strategies they employ to achieve excellence.

## **Research Site and Participants**

The study was conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang, specifically within the English Education Department. The participants were 15 fifth-semester students who had successfully completed the Academic Writing course with high academic performance. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants, ensuring that only students with demonstrated proficiency in academic writing were included (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These students were expected to provide insightful reflections on their writing processes and strategies, contributing to the study's objective of identifying effective writing practices.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, which provided flexibility while maintaining a focus on key research themes. Interviews were conducted individually, allowing participants to elaborate on their writing strategies, challenges, and problem-solving techniques. The interviews covered topics such as pre-writing strategies, organization of ideas, use of sources, revision techniques, and time management in academic writing. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent for accurate transcription and analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used method in qualitative research that allows for the identification of patterns and themes within textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis followed a systematic process:

1. Familiarization with Data – Transcribing the interviews and thoroughly reviewing the data.
2. Generating Initial Codes – Identifying key phrases and concepts that reflect participants' writing strategies.
3. Searching for Themes – Grouping related codes into broader themes, such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing strategies.
4. Reviewing Themes – Refining themes to ensure clarity and relevance to the research objectives.
5. Defining and Naming Themes – Providing clear descriptions of each identified theme.

This thematic approach was chosen because it allows for both flexibility and depth, ensuring that the nuances of students' writing strategies are captured while maintaining a structured analytical framework (Nowell et al., 2017).

## Results

The analysis of interviews with 15 high-achieving students revealed several key strategies that contributed to their success in academic writing. Thematic analysis identified five major themes that characterize their writing approaches: pre-writing strategies, effective use of academic sources, drafting and structuring arguments, revision and self-editing techniques, and time management. These themes highlight the students' systematic and strategic methods in handling different stages of the writing process. The findings suggest that high-achieving students do not rely solely on their linguistic proficiency but also implement deliberate, structured techniques to enhance their writing quality. Each of these themes is presented in detail below

### Pre-Writing Strategies: Planning and Organization

The findings indicate that high-achieving students consistently engage in pre-writing activities to structure their ideas before drafting their academic papers. Most participants reported that planning strategies such as mind mapping, outlining, and brainstorming were essential in ensuring the clarity and coherence of their essays. These pre-writing techniques helped them organize their arguments logically, avoid redundancy, and maintain a smooth flow of ideas throughout their writing.

Several students emphasized the importance of structuring ideas before writing as a way to enhance their academic performance. One participant stated:

"Before I start writing, I always create an outline. It helps me see the logical flow of my arguments and prevents me from going off track. Without an outline, my ideas tend to be scattered and less cohesive." (Participant 4)

Another student highlighted the role of mind mapping in organizing complex ideas and establishing connections between different sections of their paper:

"When I have a complex topic, I use mind mapping to visualize my ideas. It helps me categorize key points and decide how to structure my paragraphs. This technique has really improved the clarity of my writing." (Participant 9)

Similarly, some students found brainstorming to be a useful strategy before writing, particularly when developing a thesis statement or main argument:

"I usually spend 10–15 minutes brainstorming before I start writing. It allows me to generate different perspectives on the topic and refine my thesis statement before I begin drafting." (Participant 12)

Moreover, participants noted that pre-writing strategies reduced the time needed for revisions, as their initial drafts were already well-structured. One student explained:

"When I plan my essay properly, I spend less time editing because my ideas are already well-organized. I focus more on improving my arguments rather than fixing structural issues." (Participant 7)

These findings suggest that effective pre-writing strategies contribute to better content organization and overall writing quality. The results indicate that high-achieving students not only recognize the value of pre-writing activities but also implement them consistently as part of their academic writing process.

### Effective Use of Academic Sources and Citation Practices

The results indicate that high-achieving students demonstrate strong skills in integrating academic sources into their writing while maintaining academic integrity. Most participants emphasized that paraphrasing, summarizing, and proper citation were crucial in avoiding plagiarism and ensuring their arguments were well-supported

by credible literature. These students exhibited a clear understanding of citation styles, including APA and MLA, and frequently used academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and JSTOR to find reliable sources. Additionally, citation management tools like Zotero and Mendeley were commonly utilized to organize references efficiently and prevent citation errors.

Many students stressed the importance of proper source integration as a fundamental aspect of academic writing. One participant explained:

"I always make sure to paraphrase information instead of copying directly. This not only helps me avoid plagiarism but also improves my understanding of the topic. Using proper citation tools like Zotero makes it easier to keep track of my references." (Participant 3)

Another student highlighted how summarizing and paraphrasing enhanced their writing:

"Instead of using long direct quotes, I try to summarize key ideas in my own words. This makes my writing more concise and original while still acknowledging the sources properly." (Participant 11)

Some students also mentioned the challenge of managing multiple sources but found that using citation management tools significantly streamlined the process:

"Before using Mendeley, I used to struggle with organizing my references and formatting them correctly. Now, I can easily generate citations and reference lists without worrying about mistakes." (Participant 6)

In addition, students acknowledged the value of cross-referencing multiple sources to build well-supported arguments:

"I try to compare different sources before including them in my paper. This helps me develop a balanced argument rather than relying on just one perspective." (Participant 14)

Overall, the findings suggest that effective use of academic sources, proper citation management, and strategic paraphrasing and summarizing are essential practices among high-achieving students. Their ability to systematically integrate scholarly materials into their writing allows them to produce well-researched and academically rigorous papers.

### **Drafting and Structuring Coherent Arguments**

The results indicate that high-achieving students place significant emphasis on drafting and structuring their arguments effectively to ensure clarity and coherence in their academic writing. Many participants reported using structured frameworks such as the IMRaD format (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) or the TEEL structure (Topic sentence, Explanation, Evidence, Link) to organize their ideas systematically. This approach allowed them to maintain logical progression, avoid redundancy, and enhance the persuasiveness of their arguments.

Participants highlighted that clear thesis statements and topic sentences were essential components of their writing process. One student described their approach as follows:

"Before writing, I make sure my thesis statement clearly outlines the main argument. Then, I structure my paragraphs so that each topic sentence introduces a key point, followed by supporting evidence. This keeps my writing focused and coherent." (Participant 5)

Additionally, some students emphasized the importance of logical transitions and paragraph cohesion in maintaining a well-structured argument:

"I always check if my ideas flow smoothly from one paragraph to another. I use transition words and make sure each paragraph logically connects to the next one, so my arguments don't seem disconnected." (Participant 10)

Overall, the findings suggest that effective drafting and structured argumentation are key factors contributing to the writing success of high-achieving students. Their ability to plan, organize, and refine their arguments systematically enables them to produce well-developed and coherent academic texts.

### **Revision and Self-Editing Techniques**

The findings suggest that high-achieving students consider revision and self-editing to be crucial steps in their academic writing process. Most participants reported engaging in multiple rounds of revision to refine their arguments, improve clarity, and correct grammatical errors. Their revision strategies included self-evaluation, peer feedback, and the use of digital writing tools to enhance the quality of their final drafts. Several students emphasized that self-editing helped them identify weaknesses in their writing. One participant described their approach as follows:

"After finishing my first draft, I always take a break before reviewing it. This helps me look at my work with fresh eyes and notice any unclear ideas or weak arguments that I might have missed." (Participant 8)

In addition to self-editing, some students actively sought peer feedback to gain different perspectives on their writing:

"I often ask my classmates to read my work and give feedback before I submit it. They sometimes catch mistakes or suggest improvements that I wouldn't have noticed on my own." (Participant 13)

Moreover, many participants used grammar-checking tools and readability analyzers to enhance the linguistic quality of their writing:

"I use Grammarly and Hemingway Editor to check for grammatical errors and sentence clarity. These tools help me refine my writing and ensure that my arguments are clearly presented." (Participant 2)

Overall, the results indicate that multiple revision cycles, peer feedback, and digital editing tools are essential strategies that high-achieving students employ to produce polished and well-structured academic papers. Their commitment to refining their work ensures that their writing meets high academic standards.

### **Time Management and Writing Discipline**

A key factor distinguishing high-achieving students in academic writing is their effective time management and disciplined writing habits. Unlike students who often procrastinate, these individuals allocate specific time slots for different writing stages, ensuring a systematic and less stressful writing process. The findings reveal that these students follow structured time management techniques, such as setting personal deadlines, breaking tasks into smaller steps, and maintaining consistency in their writing routines.

Most participants emphasized the importance of establishing a writing schedule to manage their workload efficiently. By setting clear deadlines for brainstorming, drafting, revising, and finalizing, they were able to complete their assignments without last-minute pressure. One participant noted:

"I divide my writing tasks into small sections and set deadlines for each. For example, I finish the introduction first, then the body paragraphs, and so on. This keeps me on track and prevents me from rushing at the last minute." (Participant 1)

Many students reported that starting their writing early helped them avoid stress and gave them ample time to revise. Instead of writing under pressure, they preferred to work on their papers progressively. A student shared their experience:

"I always start working on my assignments as soon as I get them. Even if I don't write much at first, I at least brainstorm ideas and create an outline. This makes the actual writing process much easier." (Participant 15)

Another strategy employed by high-achieving students is consistent daily or weekly writing practice. Some participants developed habits such as writing a few paragraphs each day, which helped them maintain focus and improve their writing fluency over time.

Overall, the findings suggest that structured time management, proactive planning, and disciplined writing routines contribute significantly to students' academic writing success. By developing consistent and well-organized writing habits, high-achieving students can effectively manage their academic workload and maintain the quality of their written work.

Table 3.1 The Key findings of the Result in Thematci Analysis

Themes	Key Findings	Codes
Pre-Writing Strategies: Planning and Organization	High-achieving students consistently use mind mapping, outlining, and brainstorming to organize ideas before writing, ensuring logical coherence and clarity.	Pre-writing, Planning, Organization
Effective Use of Academic Sources and Citation Practices	Students demonstrate strong paraphrasing, summarizing, and citation skills, utilizing academic databases and citation management tools (Zotero, Mendeley) to enhance source integration.	Source Integration, Citation, Paraphrasing
Drafting and Structuring Coherent Arguments	Participants employ structured frameworks (IMRaD, TEEL) to maintain logical progression, ensuring clear thesis statements, topic sentences, and transitions for coherence.	Argument Structure, Coherence, Logical Flow
Revision and Self-Editing Techniques	Multiple revision cycles, peer feedback, and self-editing tools (Grammarly, Hemingway Editor) are used to refine arguments, improve clarity, and	Revision, Self-Editing, Feedback



correct errors before submission. Time Management and Writing Discipline Students effectively manage writing time by setting personal deadlines, breaking tasks into smaller steps, and maintaining consistency to avoid last-minute pressure and improve writing quality. Time Management, Writing Discipline, Scheduling

The thematic analysis revealed four key themes related to the impact of free writing on students' writing confidence. First, Improvement in Writing Confidence was observed, with 15 out of 20 students reporting increased confidence in their writing, as they felt freer to express their ideas without worrying about grammatical errors. Second, Comfort with Writing Tasks emerged, with 17 students feeling more comfortable engaging in writing tasks, particularly due to the reduction of pressure to write perfectly. Third, Perceptions of Writing Ability improved, with 15 students recognizing improvements in fluency and organization, though some still faced challenges with grammar. Lastly, Reduced Writing Anxiety was noted, as 12 students reported feeling more relaxed and less concerned about making mistakes, reflecting the positive impact of free writing on reducing writing anxiety. These findings underscore the effectiveness of free writing in fostering a positive and low-pressure writing environment.

## Discussion

### Pre-Writing Strategies in Academic Writing

The findings of this study indicate that pre-writing strategies play a crucial role in the writing success of high-achieving students, particularly in enhancing organization, coherence, and clarity. Participants in this study consistently reported using mind mapping, outlining, and brainstorming as essential techniques before drafting their academic papers. These results align with Flower and Hayes' (1981) cognitive process theory of writing, which emphasizes the importance of pre-writing as a stage where writers generate, organize, and structure their ideas before translating them into text. Effective pre-writing enables students to establish logical connections between ideas, which is critical for producing structured and well-developed academic arguments (Kellogg, 2008). Furthermore, previous research by Graham and Perin (2007) supports this claim, suggesting that students who engage in structured pre-writing activities demonstrate improved text quality and reduced revision time, as their ideas are already organized in a logical sequence.

The use of outlining as a pre-writing strategy among high-achieving students is particularly significant in shaping the cohesion and logical flow of their essays. Outlining allows writers to define their thesis statement, structure body paragraphs, and ensure a balanced distribution of arguments and supporting evidence. Hyland (2019) highlights that students who outline before writing tend to develop stronger argumentative structures, as they can anticipate counterarguments and refine their claims before drafting. Additionally, mind mapping as a visual pre-writing tool has been found to enhance critical thinking and conceptual understanding in writing (Al-Jarf, 2009). By visually representing relationships between concepts, students can identify key themes

and subtopics, which facilitates deeper engagement with their writing process. The integration of these techniques enables students to construct clear, focused, and well-supported academic texts, distinguishing them from their peers who write without structured planning.

Despite the evident advantages of pre-writing strategies, research suggests that many students underutilize these techniques due to a lack of formal training or time constraints (Ong, 2014). While high-achieving students in this study actively engaged in planning and organization before writing, other learners may struggle with these practices due to insufficient guidance on effective writing processes. Educators play a crucial role in promoting explicit instruction on pre-writing techniques and integrating these strategies into academic writing curricula. Providing students with structured models of outlining, brainstorming, and mind mapping could significantly improve their writing outcomes, particularly for those who face difficulties with coherence and logical progression. Therefore, incorporating pre-writing instruction into academic writing courses could serve as a pedagogical intervention to enhance students' ability to produce well-structured and critically engaged academic texts.

### **Effective Use of Academic Sources and Citation Practices**

The findings of this study reveal that high-achieving students exhibit a strong ability to integrate academic sources effectively while maintaining academic integrity. These students consistently employed paraphrasing, summarizing, and citation management tools to ensure proper source attribution and avoid plagiarism. Their approach aligns with academic writing conventions, which emphasize the ethical and responsible use of external sources to support arguments (Pecorari, 2013). According to Hyland (2018), academic literacy involves not only language proficiency but also the ability to engage with scholarly discourse, which includes proper citation and referencing. The students in this study demonstrated a clear understanding of citation styles such as APA and MLA, which allowed them to seamlessly incorporate evidence into their writing. This supports the argument that students who develop proficient citation and referencing skills tend to produce stronger and more credible academic texts (Harwood & Petrić, 2012).

A notable practice among the participants was their deliberate use of digital tools such as Zotero and Mendeley to manage citations efficiently. These tools enable students to organize references, generate automatic citations, and maintain consistency in their formatting. The reliance on such tools suggests a strategic approach to minimizing citation errors and streamlining the research-writing process. Research by McCulloch (2012) highlights that students who integrate technology into their writing workflow tend to demonstrate higher levels of accuracy in referencing, as they can efficiently track and retrieve sources when needed. Moreover, participants expressed a preference for Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and other academic databases over general web sources, ensuring that their writing was supported by peer-reviewed and credible references. The ability to critically evaluate and select high-quality sources is a skill that significantly enhances the depth and reliability of academic arguments (Bremner, 2018). Despite these positive findings, previous research suggests that many students struggle with source integration and citation due to inadequate formal instruction (Howard et al., 2010). While the high-achieving students in this study actively engaged with paraphrasing and source synthesis, less experienced writers often resort to direct quotations or improper citation practices, increasing the risk of plagiarism. This highlights the need for explicit academic writing instruction that focuses on source

evaluation, citation ethics, and paraphrasing techniques to ensure that all students develop these essential skills. Instructors can support students by incorporating hands-on training with citation management software, source analysis exercises, and structured writing assignments that encourage proper attribution practices. Strengthening students' ability to integrate academic sources effectively will not only enhance their writing quality but also reinforce their engagement with scholarly discourse and ethical research practices.

### **Drafting and Structuring Coherent Arguments**

The results of this study indicate that high-achieving students place significant emphasis on structuring their arguments to ensure clarity and logical flow in their academic writing. These students reported consistently using structured frameworks such as the IMRaD format (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) and the TEEL structure (Topic sentence, Explanation, Evidence, Link) to construct well-organized paragraphs. According to Wingate (2012), academic writing requires more than just content knowledge—it demands the ability to logically develop ideas and create a coherent structure that guides the reader through the argument. The participants in this study demonstrated an awareness of thesis-driven writing, ensuring that each paragraph contributed meaningfully to their overall argument. This strategic approach enabled them to maintain a strong central focus throughout their essays, which is a distinguishing characteristic of effective academic writing (Hyland, 2019).

An essential factor contributing to their success was their intentional use of transitions and paragraph cohesion. High-achieving students consistently reported reviewing their drafts to check the logical progression of ideas and the relationship between sentences. Studies have shown that cohesive writing enhances readability and strengthens the persuasiveness of arguments (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The findings suggest that students who consciously apply structural writing techniques—such as clear topic sentences, well-integrated supporting evidence, and logical linking devices—tend to produce more coherent and persuasive essays. However, previous research highlights that many students struggle with structuring their arguments due to a lack of explicit instruction on paragraph development and argumentation strategies (Nesi & Gardner, 2012). Therefore, academic writing instruction should emphasize structured drafting techniques, logical organization, and effective paragraph transitions to help students develop the skills necessary to construct clear and compelling arguments in their writing.

### **Revision and Self-Editing Techniques**

The findings reveal that high-achieving students engage in multiple revision cycles and self-editing practices to refine their academic writing. Unlike students who submit their first drafts without extensive review, these individuals dedicate time to evaluating their arguments, improving clarity, and correcting grammatical errors before finalizing their work. Research by Ferris (2003) highlights that revision is a crucial stage in the writing process, allowing students to critically assess and enhance the quality of their texts. The participants in this study reinforced this idea, emphasizing that self-editing helped them refine their ideas and improve their argumentation. Participants such as P8, P10, and P15 consistently described how they reread their drafts multiple times to check for coherence and logical flow before submitting their assignments.

A key strategy used by high-achieving students was seeking external feedback to gain fresh perspectives on their writing. Many participants actively shared their drafts with peers or instructors to receive constructive criticism, which helped them identify weaknesses in their arguments and areas for improvement. Participants P5, P9, and P13 stated that engaging in peer feedback allowed them to identify flaws in their reasoning and structure that they might have overlooked on their own. Similarly, P2 and P7 reported that working with instructors or more experienced writers helped them refine their academic arguments and strengthen their critical engagement with their topics.

In addition to peer feedback, students also relied on digital tools such as Grammarly and Hemingway Editor to check for grammatical accuracy and readability. Participants P3, P6, and P12 mentioned that these tools provided additional assistance in detecting errors that might have been overlooked during manual revision. However, while technology-assisted revision was beneficial, students acknowledged that human revision was irreplaceable, particularly for improving coherence and argumentation. Despite the clear advantages of revision, research suggests that many students, particularly novice writers, tend to underestimate its importance, leading to minimal editing before submission (MacArthur, 2007). The findings from this study suggest that academic writing instruction should emphasize a systematic approach to revision, incorporating self-assessment techniques, structured peer review, and multiple drafting. Encouraging students to adopt these revision habits can significantly improve the quality of their academic writing and foster a deeper engagement with the writing process.

### **Time Management and Writing Discipline**

The findings suggest that effective time management and disciplined writing habits play a crucial role in the academic writing success of high-achieving students. Unlike students who often struggle with last-minute writing, participants in this study reported adopting structured writing schedules, proactive planning, and consistent writing routines to manage their workload efficiently. Several participants, including P1, P4, and P10, described how they allocated specific time slots for different writing stages, such as brainstorming, drafting, revising, and finalizing their essays. This approach aligns with Zimmerman and Risemberg's (1997) self-regulated learning theory, which highlights the importance of students' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes to achieve academic success. Effective time management has been widely recognized as a key factor in academic performance, as it enables students to distribute cognitive effort efficiently and avoid the stress of last-minute work (Britton & Tesser, 1991).

A notable characteristic among these students was their ability to avoid procrastination by starting their assignments early. Participants P5, P9, and P14 stated that initiating their writing process as soon as they received a task helped them develop ideas gradually, allowing ample time for refinement. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that early engagement with writing tasks leads to deeper cognitive processing and better quality outputs (Steel, 2007). Additionally, P3, P7, and P12 mentioned that they broke their writing tasks into manageable sections, setting personal deadlines for each part to ensure steady progress. This reflects Parkinson and Musgrave's (2014) study, which found that students who divide their academic writing into smaller tasks are better able to maintain clarity and coherence throughout their work. By working in phases, students avoid cognitive overload and allow themselves time for reflection and revision, which contributes to higher-quality academic writing.

Furthermore, participants P2, P6, and P11 emphasized the importance of consistency in writing practice, stating that writing regularly—even in small portions—helped them improve their fluency and writing confidence. Research by Boice (1994) supports this approach, demonstrating that students who engage in frequent, low-pressure writing sessions tend to be more productive and experience less writing anxiety compared to those who engage in binge-writing before deadlines. Additionally, several participants highlighted that maintaining a fixed writing routine allowed them to gradually develop their ideas, reducing the cognitive overload associated with last-minute writing. This suggests that habitual engagement with academic writing not only enhances fluency but also fosters a sense of control and confidence in the writing process. While some students relied on digital tools and planners to track their progress, others preferred traditional methods such as keeping handwritten schedules or using sticky notes as reminders. The findings indicate that students who integrate structured time management strategies into their academic writing process tend to experience less writing anxiety and produce well-organized, high-quality texts. This reinforces the need for academic institutions to promote explicit instruction on time management strategies, helping students develop sustainable writing habits that can enhance both their academic and professional success.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored the academic writing strategies employed by high-achieving students, focusing on pre-writing techniques, effective use of academic sources, structured drafting, revision practices, and time management. The findings indicate that these students strategically plan their writing process, demonstrating strong organizational skills, a structured approach to argumentation, and a commitment to revision and self-editing. Their ability to integrate academic sources effectively while maintaining citation integrity highlights the importance of information literacy in academic writing. Moreover, their time management and writing discipline distinguish them from students who struggle with last-minute writing and disorganized argumentation. These results reinforce the notion that academic writing success is not solely dependent on linguistic proficiency but also on deliberate, structured writing practices and self-regulated learning strategies.

## **Suggestions**

Based on these findings, it is recommended that academic writing instruction incorporate explicit training in writing strategies, particularly pre-writing planning, structured drafting, and effective revision techniques. Universities should provide workshops and guided practice on citation management, source integration, and time management to help students develop sustainable writing habits. Additionally, educators should encourage peer review sessions and the use of digital writing tools to enhance students' engagement with their writing. Future research could further examine the long-term impact of these writing strategies on students' academic performance and explore how these techniques can be adapted for students with different proficiency levels. By fostering these strategies, academic institutions can better support students in developing strong, structured, and critical academic writing skills that will benefit them both academically and professionally.

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