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# WRITTEN EXPRESSION SKILLS AND DIFFICULTIES AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS AT IMAM MUHAMMAD IBN SAUD ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY: A DESCRIPTIVE FIELD STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*Written expression holds special educational value, as it allows students to develop their vision, choose words, select structures, organize their style, and refine their speech, it also enables teachers to identify weaknesses in students' expression and address them. Furthermore, a learner's competence reflects the strength of their thinking, and expression is an inseparable process. Writing is considered one of the highest forms of human achievement, Numerous studies have pointed to weaknesses in students' written expression skills and have called for the adoption of modern learning strategies, such as active learning, in teaching written expression, Therefore, this study aims to identify the written expression skills and difficulties of female students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, and to what extent these skills contribute to improving their academic performance, This descriptive study employs a media survey methodology , The study population consists of female students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, King Abdullah City for Female Students, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, A random sample of 400 students was selected, ensuring diversity in terms of academic level and field of study For both the humanities and applied sciences tracks, the study results revealed the degree of difficulty female students face in expressing themselves and mastering its skills Several problems contributed to this weakness, including inadequate classroom environments conducive to expression and the prevailing teaching methods. Regarding the most popular writing genres among female students, stories emerged as the most frequent choice at 12.7%, highlighting the importance of stories for the humanities track, Students in the applied sciences track demonstrated strong oral writing skills, which align with their specializations. Overall, the study results indicate that female students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University possess moderate levels of written expression skills.*

**KEYWORDS:** Written Expression skills, Difficulties among female students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the foundation, vessel, and tool of human thought. Language is a human characteristic that distinguishes humans from other living beings. It is the system that consists of a set of phonetic symbols issued by the human speech apparatus. The Arabic language is an integrated system in which there is interdependence and integration among its arts. Developing any linguistic skill affects other skills, and linguistic growth affects intellectual growth, To the extent that an individual has a wealth of language, he is able to express himself and communicate. To the extent that language grows in an individual, his thinking process grows, which includes expression in terms of word choice, selection of structures, arrangement of ideas, good formulation, coordination of style, and selection of evidence and proofs (1)

Written expression is of great importance in human life, manifested in developing the ability to interact with members of one's community in various fields of life. It is a necessity, as every person spends a large part of their time either conveying their thoughts in writing or reading what is written. Through written expression, a person is able to adapt to the society in which they live, thus achieving security and harmony between them and all other members of their species. Written expression has its own educational value, as it allows students to exercise vision, choose words, select structures, coordinate style, and refine speech. It also allows the teacher the opportunity to identify weaknesses in students' expression in order to address them. Furthermore, the learner's competence determines the strength of his thinking, and expression are two processes that cannot be separated (2), It is also considered one of the highest levels of human achievement (3), as writing is a basic skill among the four language skills, and its importance lies in recording knowledge and transmitting sciences and ideas in different stages of life from ancient times to the present (4)

## 2. THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The relationship between language and thought is characterized as a strong, reciprocal relationship, such that one influences and is influenced by the other. Language is a fundamental means of building knowledge, concepts, and ideas. That is, eloquent language requires clear and understandable thought. Therefore, attention to thinking is one of the primary goals of language teaching and teaching various academic subjects (5)

Given this close relationship between written language and thinking, we find that many learners exhibit weaknesses in written expression and the ability to convey meaning clearly and engagingly. Among the most prominent signs of students' weakness in written expression are weak ideas, disorganized thought processes, an inability to connect ideas logically, and a lack of focus on the main idea (6) Several studies have pointed to the weakness of learners' written expression skills and have called for the importance of adopting modern learning strategies such as active learning in teaching written expression (7), Undoubtedly, societies today face many challenges in various aspects of life economic, cultural, and social that affect the 21st-century learner. Today's learners have a greater inclination towards technology and a learning environment that relies on rapid interaction with devices and tools suitable for active learning. This requires mental effort and provides them with means, capabilities, and tools that help in the practical application of useful and effective learning, changing their attitudes in light of the enormous knowledge revolution (8)

Despite the technological advancements in electronic writing and artificial intelligence, the need to learn written expression skills remains crucial at all educational levels, as it is a vital channel for communication. Therefore, the study's problem is defined as identifying the written expression skills and difficulties of female students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, and the extent to which these writing skills contribute to improving the students' academic and scientific performance

## 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Writing is a vital means of communication and a fundamental human skill. It is essential in every field of life, particularly education, as it is a key skill in the Arabic language and the second facet of expression. It is also a complex mental skill that involves generating and creatively presenting ideas. Through writing, the writer's thoughts and meanings are transformed into written symbols, indicating that impactful writing is creative in nature, requiring intellectual engagement, in-depth analysis, and skillful handling of the subject matter (9), The importance of written expression increases for students at various educational levels, especially at the university level, as it reflects a degree of intellectual, emotional, and physical maturity that enables students to interact effectively with their society and achieve their desired goals (10),

Furthermore, writing serves as a source for identifying students' writing abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, thus contributing to the development of learners' skills

#### 4. STUDY OBJECTIVES

**The study aimed to:**

1. Recognize the importance of writing at the university level as a vital communication tool
2. Survey students' opinions on their most important writing topics
3. Evaluate the importance of communication skills in university life
4. Highlight the importance of writing skills among female university students
5. Emphasis on the importance of female university students possessing strong written expression skills
6. Lamine the most significant difficulties students face that hinder their written expression
7. Propose solutions to overcome the difficulties and problems related to written expression among female students

##### 4.1 The Study's Procedural Concepts

###### 4.1.1. Writing

The ability to express ideas by drawing symbols that conform to established spelling and grammatical rules, resulting in clear, readable words (11)

###### 4.1.2. Written Expression

The ability of students to write and translate their ideas into correct, error-free language, commensurate with their linguistic abilities. This involves training them to write with appropriate artistic flair, and familiarizing them with choosing suitable words, organizing, classifying, sequencing, and connecting ideas (12)

###### 4.1.3. Skill

Performing a task or activity convincingly, using appropriate methods and procedures, correctly, with meticulous accuracy, and with speed (13)

###### 4.1.4. Written Expression Skills

The ability to use written symbols in a subject that conveys thoughts, feelings, and sensations in an organized and engaging manner, free from errors, and using an interesting style that benefits the reader and helps in understanding and comprehending what is written (14)

#### 5. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Previous studies did not all share a single perspective on the subject matter. Some linked written expression skills to the three creative thinking skills: fluency, flexibility, and originality, such as the studies by Osama Kamal El-Din (2020) (15), Islam Gamal (2021), (16) and David, F., and Kristin, C. (2011) (17). Some scholars have divided written expression skills into two categories: formal skills and content skills, and their relationship to the arrangement of ideas and coordination and organization skills, as in the study by Muhammad Al-Fawzan (2026) (18), Naif Al-Otaibi's study (2020) (19) classified the skills into four basic skills: fluency, flexibility, originality, and linguistic correctness. Ali Madkour's study (2016) (20) emphasized that written expression skills at the intermediate level begin with linguistic correctness, then clarity, and finally reach beauty. Salman (2020) (21) confirmed that linguistic correctness is represented by mastering the rules of Arabic sentence structure and avoiding linguistic errors. Many studies have also focused on enrichment programs to develop students' written expression, such as Muhammad Al-Manasir's study (2022) (22), which aimed to find out the effectiveness of using the brainstorming strategy in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers and showed the trend towards employing the brainstorming strategy in teaching Arabic, as did the study of Abdul Rahman Al-Habishi (2018) (23) To determine the effectiveness of an enrichment program based on active learning in developing students' creative writing skills, and it concluded that active learning strategies play an effective role in developing writing skills. As for the study of Iman Ibrahim (2021) (24), It aimed to reveal the effectiveness of using active learning strategies in developing writing skills, and concluded that active learning is effective. Ahmed Al-Haidari's study (2014) (25) identified the effect of teaching using multiple intelligences strategies in developing writing skills and concluded that the effect is effective. Radwan Ali's study (2023) (26) also came to demonstrate the effectiveness of the simulation strategy in developing writing skills, there is also the study by Adnan Al-Jufi (2024) (27), which aimed to determine the effectiveness of a program based on language activities in developing students' creative writing skills. This study concluded that language activities have an impact on developing creative thinking skills. Similarly, there is the study by Saeed Al-Zahrani (2024) (28), which concluded that a training program is effective in developing research and essay writing skills, thereby enhancing expression and self-learning skills Many studies have confirmed the prevalence of weakness in students'

writing skills at various educational levels, such as Hassan Al-Khaj's study (2021) (29), which aimed to identify students' creative writing skills and concluded that writing skills were available to a weak degree, and the studies of Ali Abdel-Azim (2020) (30), Naif Al-Otaibi (2020) (31), and Abdul Rahman Al-Juhani (2021) (32), which proved the general weakness in writing skills, form and organization skills, content skills, fluency skills, and linguistic accuracy skills .

## **5.1. Methodological Procedures of The Study**

### **5.1.1. Type of Study and Methodology**

This study is a descriptive study that aims to describe the phenomenon using a media survey methodology. This methodology aims to identify the phenomenon and clarify its various dimensions and implications

### **5.1.2. Study Population**

The study population consists of female students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, King Abdullah University City for Female Students, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

### **5.1.3. Study Sample**

A random sample of 400 female students was drawn from Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University. The sample was selected to ensure diversity in terms of academic level and field of study, with the sample drawn from both the humanities and applied sciences tracks

### **5.1.4. Data Collection Tool**

A questionnaire was designed to identify the students' opinions regarding their difficulties and writing skills. This was achieved through a set of questions that measured their cognitive, writing, and expressive levels. The goal was to determine the extent of the students' writing skills and to formulate suggestions and recommendations in this regard

### **5.1.5. Theoretical Framework of The Study**

Writing addresses, a significant aspect of our lives; indeed, it encompasses human life in all its material and spiritual dimensions. It connects individuals to their past, shapes their present, and plans for their future. Through writing, we can present and express our ideas in a way that endures through the ages. Writing is also the foundation of media work, permeating all its elements, tools, and methods, such as the newspaper article, the journalistic interview, the news report, the

investigative report, and the feature report. Similarly, it is essential for radio writing in all its forms and formats, television writing in all its forms and formats, and dramatic art in all its forms and manifestations written expression involves skills related to generating ideas before writing, formulating ideas into a written form during the writing process in a way that attracts the reader with the logical sequence of ideas, and then evaluating and revising the written text after its completion. This highlights the importance of the originality of the idea and the originality of its formulation style (33)

The importance of expression is highlighted as one of the most important means of communication, through which a person can express their opinions and ideas using all linguistic skills, including listening, speaking, and reading. Its importance increases for the learner at different educational stages, enabling them to interact with the society in which we live in an interaction that achieves the desired goals (34), Many studies have emphasized the importance of employing active learning strategies in the educational process and have called for the necessity of using the technologies and media produced by the stage of technological development to address learning difficulties, especially learning written expression skills, and the importance of relying on modern strategies and modern technologies in written expression(35), Language comprises four arts: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Linguistic expression is linked to both speech and writing. If expression is related to an event, it is conversation or oral expression; if it is related to writing, it is written expression. Thus, expression is either verbal or written. Verbal expression is the natural way for a speaker to translate their feelings and emotions, indicating what the human soul holds of pain, joy, or admiration. Written expression, however, has a special educational value, as it allows students to practice narration, choose words, select structures, organize ideas, formulate well, coordinate style, and refine speech. Among the skills of written expression are formal skills, which include paragraph structure, punctuation, spelling and grammar accuracy, formatting, and handwriting quality. Content skills include effective summarization, conclusion, the quality of ideas, their adequacy, coherence, originality, and relevance to the topic (36), Studies have confirmed that developing writing skills involves three elements: first, reading, which increases vocabulary; second, cultivating and developing comprehension skills And comprehension and appreciation, and the third is the

continuation of writing practice, and finally the practice of constructive criticism to improve style and address flaws (37)

## 5.2. Discussion of the Study Results

**The field study yielded a number of important findings, which the researcher addressed in the following sections:**

1- It became clear that verbal and written expression methods together ranked first among all expression methods, representing 41.7% of the total study sample. This was followed by written expression, which accounted for 33.3% of the total expression methods in the study sample. Applied science colleges accounted for 44% of all colleges in this category, indicating the importance of written language in such colleges, whose content may conflict with written expression. These colleges are based on equations, numbers, and scientific theories. This highlights the importance of written expression skills and the availability of its requirements, regardless of the nature of the content presented. Focusing on the main idea, organization and arrangement, using aesthetic imagery, and supporting the content with evidence and examples are skills that are not dependent on the nature of the content. This result indicates the importance of identifying types of written expression. Functional written expression, which is used for specific purposes in practical life (38), is what students in the applied track possess, as it aligns with the nature of their studies. Verbal expression ranked last, representing 25% of the total expression methods in the study sample

2- The study results revealed the extent of difficulties female students face in expressing themselves in writing and mastering its skills. Several problems contributed to their weakness in expression, including inadequate classroom environments conducive to expression and the prevailing teaching methods, which were identified as major factors. The analysis of the verbal and written fluency of female students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University showed that 43.8% of the study sample reported no difficulties in expressing their thoughts and opinions. This was followed by 42.7% who reported experiencing some difficulties in expressing their desires and ideas. Finally, 13.5% of the study sample reported experiencing constant difficulties in expressing themselves

3- Anyone who investigates the problem of students' weakness in written expression will find that the reasons are numerous and varied. Some are

due to the teacher, some to the student, some to the curricula and teaching methods, and some to administrative, educational, and social problems. The results of the study reveal the most important reasons for students' reluctance to read, which is considered one of the most important problems and difficulties facing the enhancement of students' written expression skills. This came at a rate of 17% of the total difficulties in written expression. The student's reluctance to read is considered one of the important reasons for weakness in written expression. Free reading in newspapers, magazines, and books in all fields, and participation in the fields of language activity, are skills that would support the student's writing skill (39)

As an inevitable result of the reluctance to read, colloquial Arabic spread among the masses and became the mother tongue for expression. Colloquial Arabic is incompatible with written expression skills, and this came at a rate of 14.2% of the total difficulties and problems of written expression skills among female students. Applied track colleges came at a rate of 15.1% of the total colleges. Then the lack of cultural background and expressive repertoire among female students came in third place at a rate of 14% of the total reasons and problems of written expression among female students. The researcher emphasizes in this regard the importance of general culture among female students in all aspects of life. In confirmation of the circumstances of exposure to the recipient, the form of the message presented, its nature and content, and its vital role in shaping the expressive culture of the recipient, the percentage of the student's cognitive needs that are not satisfied by the study courses came at a rate of 9.2% of the total difficulties. In this, the current study agrees with the study of Badriya Al-Mutawa'a (1997), which concluded that the study and the teaching method are among the most important obstacles to written expression (40). The study's findings regarding a general weakness in students' writing skills align with those of studies by Abdel-Azim (2020), Al-Otaibi (2020), Qasim (2018), and Al-Juhani (2021) concerning the prevalence of weakness in creative writing skills. This weakness is further compounded by the professor's failure to adhere to standard Arabic during lectures and to encourage its use. Among the reasons for the weakness in students' writing skills, accounting for 8.5% of the total difficulties, was bilingualism, representing 8% of the total difficulties. Bilingualism, the combination of the national language and a foreign language, is considered one of the most significant factors affecting writing skills, as it creates confusion and

ambiguity in terminology and vocabulary. General linguistic weakness resulting from a lack of foundational skills in pre-university education accounted for 6.8% of the total difficulties. To master writing skills, individuals must be adequately exposed to the language in a manner appropriate to their level of maturity and readiness. The more a student interacts with these skills, and the more they learn and master them, the more their written thinking process is embodied. Writing facilitates interaction between the writer and the message they wish to convey. This highlights the importance of the mechanism through which the written message is delivered, whether through an article, poem, or play, and the supporting mechanisms of grammar, morphology, spelling rules, rhetoric, linguistic structures, imagination, perception, and planning. And the output (41), then came last in terms of the scarcity of linguistic and expressive skills at a rate of 6%, as a result of the student's weak culture and lack of information

4- Regarding the most popular writing genres among female students, stories topped the list at 12.7%, underscoring the importance of storytelling. The holy scriptures, from the Psalms of David to the Torah of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus, and finally the Holy Quran, all employ narrative language. Lessons and wisdom are embedded within these stories to amplify their impact on hearts and minds. This demonstrates the power of storytelling and its superiority over all other forms of expression (42), Reflections followed at 12.5% of the total writing genres, then personal memoirs at 10.7%, and finally, letters of various types and forms at 8.6%. Poetry came in fourth place at 6%, with humanities colleges ranking first at 9.2%. The College of Arabic Language, in particular, is renowned for its expertise in poetry and literature, and its students possess strong expressive writing skills in this area. This was followed by answering questions... Questions comprised 7.2% of all written forms, followed by detailed descriptions of events and scenes at 5.9%. The College of Media and Communication stands out among the humanities colleges that train their students in describing and analyzing events. Writing skills are a fundamental skill for media students, and they have several courses in which they receive comprehensive training in written expression skills. Articles also received 4.4% of all written forms, while news summaries and articles tied at 4.4%. As an important form of expressive writing, it received 4.7%. Research papers, analyses, speeches, and opening remarks came in a lower rank at 2.1% of all written forms. Telegrams and forms tied at 1.3% of

all expressive written forms

5- The study results indicate that female students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University possess writing skills at a moderate level, representing 47.1% of their total writing skills. The most prominent writing skills demonstrated by the students were summarization and the use of punctuation. However, the ability to diversify between declarative and interrogative styles and to utilize facts to support the topic were skills they lacked. Students in humanities colleges, such as the College of Media and Communication, the College of Social Sciences, the College of Arabic Language, the College of Languages and Translation, and the College of Fundamentals of Religion, showed a greater commitment to developing all writing skills, as evidenced by their responses. This finding aligns with the study by Samahir Fathi (2003), which demonstrated a high level of proficiency in writing skills among Arabic language students (43), These students were more focused on correct spelling, grammatical and syntactical accuracy, organizing the topic, creating a logical flow between paragraphs, and ensuring coherent and well-structured sentences. Supporting the content with evidence and proofs is one of the creative writing skills that refers to an individual's personal expression of his thoughts, experiences, and expertise in his own unique style, such as writing personal memoirs, poetry, and various essay topics (44)

6- The skills of using aesthetic images and rhetorical devices, the skill of brevity without compromising meaning, and the skill of avoiding repetition were among the skills in which they most failed, and they showed a lack of responsiveness to them. These are considered among the difficulties of their written expression. The skills of creative written expression, such as how to write a suitable title for the topic, introduce the topic with an interesting and concise introduction, diversify the ideas presented on the topic, arrange the ideas in a logical order, support the topic with appropriate evidence and proofs, suggest appropriate solutions to problems related to the topic, conclude the topic with a summary conclusion, diversify the rhetorical methods, and select linguistic methods, were ranked low at a rate of 25.7 out of the total responses of the study sample. This is consistent with the study of (Muhammad Lotfi 2022) regarding the low level of creative written expression skills among the study sample (45)

7- Many functional writing skills emerged in applied science colleges, such as the College of Computer Science and the College of Economics and Administrative Sciences, despite the practical and

scientific nature of the studies. This was demonstrated by studies showing a correlation between students' proficiency in written expression skills and their overall academic achievement, with higher achievement levels being more favorable. In other words, a higher level of proficiency in written expression skills corresponds to a higher level of overall achievement (46). This is due to the special educational value of written expression, as it allows students to choose words, select structures, organize ideas, formulate effectively, coordinate style, and refine their speech, thus raising their academic achievement. Students in practical and applied science colleges demonstrated a wide range of written expression skills. They expressed ideas in complete and well-structured sentences, and they also possessed the ability to be concise without compromising meaning, avoid repetition, and express emotions and feelings. Furthermore, they demonstrated skills in diversifying between declarative and interrogative styles, effectively using punctuation marks, and supporting ideas with evidence. Evidence, proofs, and quotations are skills that have not been readily accepted by female students in applied sciences. In contrast, humanities colleges have emphasized the importance of written communication skills, such as expressing ideas in complete and well-structured sentences, maintaining a well-organized overall presentation, legible handwriting, and correct letter formation. They also stressed the importance of supporting ideas with evidence, proofs, and proofs, and distinguishing between facts and opinions in their writing. Salwa Azazi (2004) (47) discusses the importance of logical sequencing of ideas and supporting the text with evidence, while also highlighting the skill of

maintaining accurate horizontal and vertical margins during writing, the ability to convert spoken sounds into written symbols, and the skill of using rhetorical devices and aesthetic images, are skills that were not supported by the students' answers as important skills in written expression

## 7. STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

**The study recommends the following:**

1. Creating websites dedicated to written expression for university students, providing examples of expressive writing that students can read and use to enhance their writing skills
2. Conducting numerous courses and workshops to develop the written expression skills of university students Regularly developing the writing skills of faculty members
3. Adopting a course on creative thinking skills in all university colleges as a foundation for developing written expression skills, recognizing that writing is a science, an art, and a philosophical skill
4. Publishing a guide explaining written expression skills and making it accessible to students Enabling students to continuously express their thoughts and feelings within the classroom Training students to think logically, scientifically, and coherently
5. Training students to be meticulous in their observations and to remember events, situations, and people Cultivating students' literary taste, enabling them to appreciate and enjoy beauty
6. Developing students' sensitivity and ability to express themselves freely and naturally, avoiding affectation and linguistic pretension

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