

Problems College Students Encounter When Writing Term Papers

How Do Ibri College Students View it?

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Abstract: Writing term papers is a demanding task. It is not a simple mission to accomplish in a short time; on the contrary, it may take most of the academic semester. Distinguished term papers represent students' efficiency and capability in researching. Seldom do academic institutions conduct workshops, deliver lectures, or seminars on the problems students face when writing research papers. In order to tackle this problem, the researchers distributed a comprehensive questionnaire among twenty male and female students at Ibri College in the Sultanate of Oman. The results were encouraging and expressed students' level of writing high-quality research papers. Recommendations, discussions, and explanations will be highlighted throughout this paper.

Keywords: challenge, graduate, paper, problems, questionnaire, research, workshops

Introduction

Writing term papers is essential in almost all courses that university students take. Students have to have sufficient knowledge and skill to create great content. Therefore, students first have to read books and articles on how term papers should be written to have the concepts, proper terms, way, skill, and elements of this mission- writing a term paper. Choosing a researchable topic is the ultimate priority to think of, in addition to a good plan that serves as a road map for the whole work, not to mention referring to the proper references that deal with the topic.

The great challenge in writing term papers is possessing the writing skill with its crucial elements: grammar, spelling, vocabulary, coherence, cohesion, etc. Moreover, the teacher plays an important role in guiding and assisting students if they get stuck. This paper highlights the challenges that students may encounter when writing term papers, especially at academic institutions—colleges and universities.

Literature Review

In general, writing is both, an art and craft. No matter what purpose the writer seeks, he/she should have the skill how to put words and phrases, linking words and ideas together. Organizing the whole work matters on top of which is coherence. It governs the piece of writing and makes it always under control. No loose work is accepted in writing academic papers.

The problem with words is among the biggest ones a first-year student may encounter. Proper linking words and phrases is actually not that simple for many people, to say nothing of inexperienced people who have to write essays, reports, labs, etc. Each of these papers requires linking one idea argument to another and developing coherence within a paragraph. Therefore, even if people write academic papers themselves, they still may need professional proofreading and editing services (Editor, (n.d), Para. 2).

Choosing a researchable topic with a strong thesis statement is of high priority. This makes the writer assume control over his/her production on the one hand, and gives the audience-readers the wish to continue reading with no boredom, on the other hand. The writer should be noticed and present in their writing and take a stand in the whole process.

Once you select a subject, creating a strong thesis statement is the next step. This is critical, foundational element for a successful paper. One hallmark is of a successful thesis statement is that you “take a stand,” or a definite point of view. The thesis statement should be clear and express one main idea. It should be about a topic that warrants further discussion. A good thesis statement is genuine, compelling, and makes the reader want to continue (Plaut, (n.d), Para. 3).

During their long experience in teaching, the researchers have witnessed some cases that get worried and nervous when asked to write a term paper. That is normal. A good number of students, even experienced ones- sometimes-have the same feeling, especially if, one day, they had a bad experience. “If you struggle with insecurities about your writing abilities, you’re not alone. It’s okay to be apprehensive about writing, especially if you had some negative experiences in the past. The first draft will never be perfect” (Morgan, 2018, Para. 5). Writing term papers needs preparation alongside planning.

Writing is a process, and cannot be accomplished in seconds; the writer should spend some time thinking and rethinking the topic to write, brainstorming, referring to the library to search for related references and sources, writing the first draft, editing, etc. It really is a process.

After all, writing a paper isn't like working math problems or reading a chapter of a book. As frustrating as those activities can be, they always seemed more finite than the monumental task of "writing a paper." "You can't just open the book and start working: you have to brainstorm, research, outline, draft, edit, and add those pesky citations" (Patterson, 2022, Para. 2).

It happens that some students delay writing their term papers, which is considered procrastination. Laziness can negatively affect students' academic performance and results, as well. Why not put a certain personal deadline for writing, finishing, and submitting the work? "To overcome the temptation to procrastinate on research, I employ my favourite approach for beating all forms of procrastination: setting a time limit" (Patterson, 2022, Para. 10). Students should seek their teachers' assistance if encounter difficulty when working on term papers.

Well, it is not clear why most students are often scared to seek help whenever they encountered any form of difficulty. Apparently, there is no shame in not knowing something, which is one of the reasons why students go to school. If you are scared to seek assistance, there is a high probability that you will have difficulty achieving your academic objectives. It is essential to note that lecturers are always happy when they see students seeking clarification on the topics they have difficulty understanding (Beach Essay, 2021, Para. 3).

Writing cannot be performed at random; everything should follow certain procedures and specific criteria. One of the most challenging elements in writing a term paper is choosing the right methodology which reflects the way one analyzes the content offered.

Choosing the right methodology for your research writing can be a tough challenge. The methodology is not just picked by preference but by analyzing the procedure you will be using in your research writing. You need to come up with research questions first. Furthermore, you need to proffer a suitable answer to the questions (Vrz, 2020, Para. 5).

Term papers should be specific and offer accurate information with clear evidence. If done arbitrarily, they lose legitimate credibility. So, whatever is offered should be supported with evidence that makes the audience trust the work.

If you are having a hard time writing an essay, then you should write enough examples to support your arguments. Another major mistake students make is that they do not provide enough proof or evidence to clarify their viewpoints. For instance, if your essay is about childhood obesity, you should provide evidence of where this problem is more

common. You should also know what types of measures should be taken in this regard (special to SouthFloridaReporter.com, 2019, Para. 3).

Referring to the *Literature Review* should be utilized in providing new outcomes, not just repeating what others did centuries ago. Even questions or enquiries should be specific and to the point, not loose that cannot be controlled and become redundant and misleading.

In any case, you should not repeat what other people have already said, ask a question that is way too big to be answered within your study, or be so vague that your reader is not quite sure what your motivation is (Kevin, 2022, Para. 5).

Any academic paper should follow certain procedures and criteria, especially citation of references. Credit should be given to the author or authority that the quoted material belongs to; otherwise, it is considered a crime. Plagiarism is dishonesty, whether done with good or bad intentions. Moreover, the author who refers to one of their writings without mentioning that as a reference is committing plagiarism.

Of all the mistakes that students make when writing a research paper, properly citing sources within the texts is a major one. When a paper is incorrectly cited or fails to give credit altogether to the person whose ideas they borrowed, the student has committed plagiarism. (Common obstacles in writing the research paper, (n.d), Para. 6).

Plagiarism can involve blatantly copying ideas and passing them off as your own or can be committed unintentionally by not providing parenthetical citations at the end of each statement that covers the material that you borrowed (Common obstacles in writing the research paper, (n.d), Para. 6).

Capturing the audience' attention is required when writing any piece of literature, especially term papers, where one should attract their teacher's attention. This is accomplished when the student has a specific tone of him/herself. Having no apparent tone in the content is no use.

Most students are not able to set a specific tone to their paper. In this case, they are not able to get the attention of the readers and hence their grades fall. You might end up spending a lot of time and energy in your essay but without the right tone, it will be useless (5 common problems faced by students when writing academic papers, 2017, Para. 4).

Moreover, having a personal style is required; it makes one's writing unique and distinguished. Referring to other writers' writings is helpful and shows different styles of writing. It is wise to see the possible styles of other writers and imitate them.

If you do not have a style of writing of your own, you can go ahead, understand the styles of other writers, and incorporate what you like best in theirs, to form your own set of

styles. This should help you to write some of the best academic papers (5 common problems faced by students when writing academic papers, 2017, Para. 6).

Questionnaire Analysis

In order to get more information about problems that students encounter when writing term papers, a survey was distributed among (20) male and female level 4 Foundation Program students at Ibri College of Applied Sciences-the Sultanate of Oman. The study is conducted through a questionnaire consisting of (10) questions. The first part contains (5 Yes/No), while the second consists of (5 Agree/ Disagree).

Yes/ No Questions

Table 1

When I write my term paper, I choose a researchable topic.	Yes	No
	16	1
	94.1%	5.9%

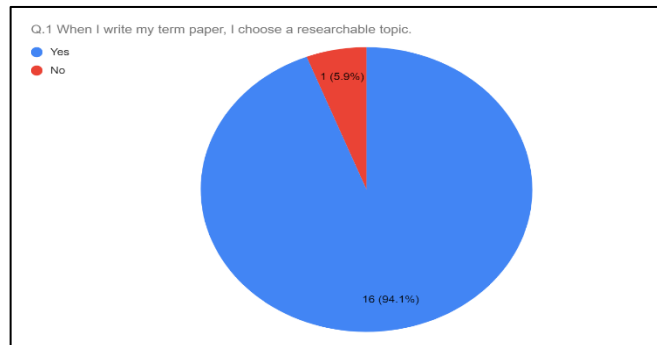


Table (1) shows that 94.1% of participants believe that for writing their term papers, they choose a researchable topic. On the other hand, 5.9% don't choose a researchable topic for doing so. This might be due to their shyness, lack of interest, or not having a serious attitude. It's obvious from the data collected that the students mostly like choosing a researchable topic for writing their term papers.

Table 2

I refer to all references cited in my research paper.	Yes	No
	11	6
	64.7%	35.3%

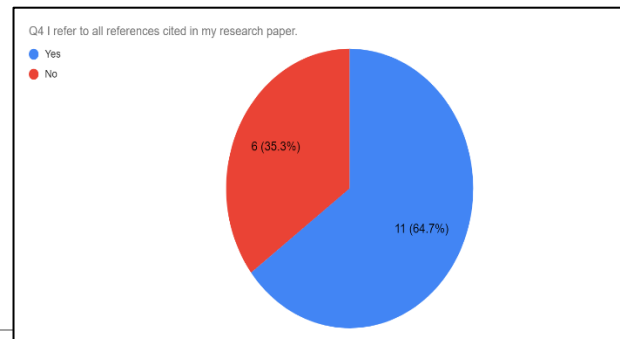


Table (2) shows that 64.7% of participants believe

they should refer to all references cited in their research paper, while 35.3% don't. This might be because of the lack of proper guidance or interest and proper facilities.

Agree/ Disagree Questions

Table 3

If you have a certain problem while writing your research paper, you ask your teacher for help.	Agree	Disagree
	15	2
	88.2%	11.8%

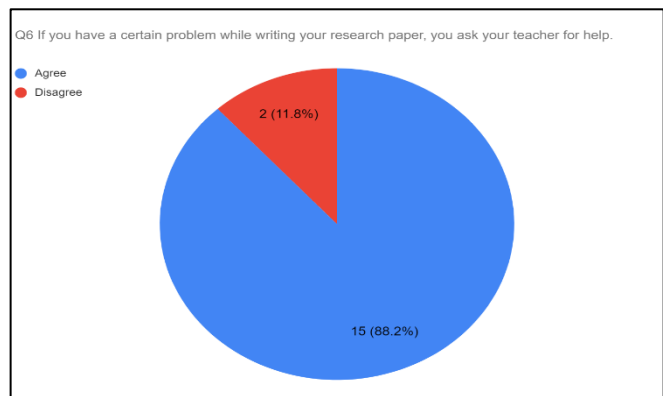


Table (3) shows that 88.2% of participants agree that they should ask if they are having a certain problem while writing research papers; however, 11.8% don't. It may be because of not having serious attitude or shyness. The data collected show that students mostly agree to ask for the help of their teacher, if they're having a certain problem.

Table 4

All ideas in my research paper are relevant and to the point.	Agree	Disagree
	13	4
	76.5%	23.5%

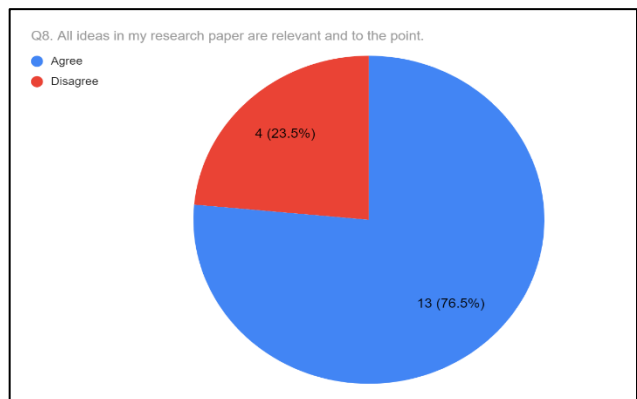


Table (4) shows that 76.5% of participants agree that all ideas in their research papers are relevant and to the point, on the other hand 23.5% don't. It may be because of not researching with proper materials or guidance; or not having a serious attitude. It is obvious from the data collected that the students mostly agree to refer to all ideas in their research papers that are relevant and to the point.

Recommendations

- in order to get an excellent term paper, students should pay close attention to some elements of writing— a topic sentence, coherence, cohesion, citation, plagiarism, etc.
- considering a researchable topic is essential in getting an excellent (publishable) paper.
- following the right methodology in writing term papers is very much required in data analysis and results.
- to get a strong term paper, there should be strong proof or evidence for clarifying all others' viewpoints mentioned in the review of the literature.
- for an excellent content, students should set a specific tone that attracts the reader's attention.
- beginning writers may mimic experienced ones and adopt a style they admire.
- the teachers' job is to help students clarify vague matters, so students should not hesitate to seek help from them.
- the thesis statement should be specific, clear, and express the main idea in the term paper.
- students should put a time limit for finishing term papers.

Conclusion

Although students may face some difficulties in writing term papers, they really excel in the end. Writing term papers is compulsory at all levels at Ibri College. Teachers guide students from the very beginning—choosing a researchable topic and finding references. According to a certain schedule, students start writing from the scratch under the supervision of their teachers. The writing component in the college is powerful—upon finishing the first draft, students have to upload it on the Blackboard system so as to check the plagiarism percentage, then it is reviewed and corrected by the teacher and the students. Once corrected, it should be uploaded on the Blackboard again. The result is that it is: perfect and accepted. Teachers, definitely, explain all writing elements to students: topic sentences, writing paragraphs, coherence, cohesion, plagiarism, and all items related to writing as a piece of art. To sum up, by the end of the semester, our students produce masterpieces.

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