Sports Management Students' Perceptions of FYPXpress Version 1 Template's Effectiveness in Research Writing

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Abstract
Research writing in the academic context functions as a vital component within higher education especially when final-year students complete their research projects. Interdisciplinary students such as those in sports management face particular difficulties when writing their research papers. The FYPXpress Version 1 Template emerged as a structured writing tool to help students manage these difficulties. This study investigated the perceptions of sports management students regarding the template's effectiveness in enhancing their research writing performance. The study involved 71 final-year sports management students from UiTM Shah Alam through a quantitative research design. A structured questionnaire evaluated five essential aspects of the template regarding its clarity and simplicity, comprehensive coverage usability, visual appeal, and guidance with examples. Strong positive significant correlations emerged between the template effectiveness and research writing performance according to Pearson correlation ($r = 0.916$, $p < 0.05$) and multiple regression results. The template effectiveness resulted in 86.8% of students' writing performance variance. The results reveal the FYPXpress Template provides significant support to students both for keeping their work organized and finding effective ways to present their research outcomes. The template provides better research writing capabilities but students need independent academic writing experience instead of relying solely on the template. The study suggests future investigations to determine how long-term use of structured writing tools influences students' capacity for independent writing. These findings advance current discussions on academic writing strategies that benefit sports management students along with other academic disciplines.
Keywords: Academic Writing, Research Template, Sports Management, Fypxpress, Student Perceptions

Introduction

The significance of academic writing has garnered considerable attention from scholars, emphasizing its critical role in higher education (Alostath, 2021). Academic research writing, particularly for final-year projects (FYPs), serves as a cornerstone of student achievement, requiring not only a strong grasp of subject knowledge but also the ability to communicate findings in adherence to academic conventions effectively (Itua et al., 2012; Alostath, 2021). To enhance the quality of research writing, students often perceive writing tool templates as valuable aids. These templates are recognized for improving writing skills and confidence by providing structure and clarity. Many students find such tools practical and time-efficient, with notable improvements in essay quality attributed to their use (Syazali et al., 2023; Adeoye, 2024). However, some express apprehension about their ability to write effectively without these tools, suggesting a dependence that could hinder the development of independent writing skills (Setyowati et al., 2022). Templates and example papers are particularly effective in developing students' writing proficiency, especially in science disciplines, where many achieve high competency levels in specific writing indicators (Syazali et al., 2023). Moreover, the use of assessment rubrics has proven beneficial by offering clear guidelines and expectations and helping refine critical elements of research writing such as problem statements and literature reviews (Bukhari et al., 2021). Despite these advancements, research writing remains a daunting and complex task for students in applied fields like sports management. The interdisciplinary nature of sports management presents unique challenges for students, who must synthesize concepts from business, physical education, and sociology. These challenges are further compounded by limited prior exposure to formal academic writing practices, making the structuring of research, adherence to academic standards, and effective synthesis of information particularly challenging (Al-Qaderi, 2016). Tools like templates have been introduced to address these difficulties, but their efficacy in meeting the specific needs of sports management students is not well-established (Balduck et al., 2004; Skinner et al., 2014; Hoeber & Shaw, 2017).

This gap raises critical questions about whether tools such as the FYPXpress Version 1 Template effectively support students in overcoming these challenges and achieving academic success. The development of structured tools and resources has been a key response to the complexities of research writing. Among these resources, the FYPXpress Version 1 Template offers a systematic framework to guide students through essential components of research writing, including problem statements, research objectives, and data organization. Designed to simplify the research writing process, the template provides a predefined structure intended to streamline the development of academic papers. While this tool shows promise as a potential enabler for academic success, its actual effectiveness, especially among sports management students, has yet to be thoroughly examined. The purpose of this study is to investigate sports management students' perceptions of the FYPXpress Version 1 Template's effectiveness on their research writing process. Given the critical role of high-quality academic writing in sports management, where theoretical knowledge must be integrated with practical applications, understanding the template's effectiveness is essential. Specifically, this research seeks to assess whether the template addresses the unique challenges faced by sports management students and supports them in achieving writing proficiency. The findings will identify the strengths and limitations of the template, offering actionable recommendations for its refinement. These insights are expected to form the development of more targeted academic support mechanisms tailored

to the distinct needs of sports management students, thereby enhancing their ability to succeed in research writing. The increasing emphasis on research writing in higher education underscores the importance of effective tools and resources that cater to the diverse needs of students. The FYPXpress Version 1 Template represents a promising innovation, yet its efficacy within the context of sports management education remains insufficiently examined.

This research makes a meaningful impact by improving the way students and institutions approach research writing. For students, it provides a clear and structured framework that makes their work easier to read, reduces the need for repeated corrections and saves both time and effort. Educational institutions benefit by establishing a consistent research format, which helps attract more students to postgraduate programs, nurtures a stronger talent pool and increases the chances of students graduating on time. Meanwhile, the industry gains from closer collaborations in research and development, while also being able to recruit well-prepared graduates more efficiently, bridging the gap between education and the workforce.

Literature Review

Criteria of good Research Writing

In an academic setting graduate school and an academic career depend on the skill of writing. The ability to construct an academic thesis for the master's degree, research proposals, conference articles, essays, abstracts, literature reviews, and journal articles are all required to meet graduate school writing demands and expectations. However, reading is not a craft as simple as being taught in a course or explicitly taught (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008). In an ideal world, a graduate student would be equipped and given the tools to have a solid grasp of the required academic writing skills.

Students' Difficulties When Doing Research Writing

Graduate students have difficulties understanding the nature of scholarly writing at the graduate level (Cadman, 1997; Hardwell, 2016; Holmes, 2022). Scholarly writing at the graduate level is different than writing at the undergraduate level or general writing aspects. Graduate students' academic writing should express the writers' perspective, add information and knowledge to the research problem, synthesize related theories and previous studies to the research study, and present all this information in a well-written academic manner (Mallett et al., 2015; Lee & Murray, 2015).

The literature on international graduate students postulates the diverse difficulties they face in their academic writing (e.g., Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Paltridge, 2002; Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; Shaw, 1991; Singh, 2015; Huerta et al., 2017; Holmes et al., 2018). Researchers investigated the various challenges graduate students are struggling with and then sought to put them into categories. Researchers identified two main themes/groups: discourse-level problems (e.g., content quality, ideas development, paragraph organization, overall writing ability) and sentence-level problems (e.g., using accurate grammar rules, academic vocabulary usage, spelling, punctuation).

Many graduate students use the APA writing style to write their academic papers. Nevertheless, many of them face challenges and commit multiple errors (Weerakoon, 2012; Mandernach et al., 2016). Some students' writing lacks agreement between in-text citations

and references (Lambie et al., 2008), whereas other students fail to present the sources in their writing (Howard et al., 2010). However, few studies addressed citation and empirical studies among graduate students considering the gap of their knowledge in this aspect (Petrić, 2007; Lambie et al., 2008; Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011). Lambie et al. (2008) reported four main mistakes in students writing practices. They include lack of continuity, lack of organization, inadequate empirical studies citation to build an argument, and synthesis of information, particularly in the literature review. Lambie et al. (2008) findings are similar to Lunsford and Lunsford (2008), wherein both studies concluded that students' writing included inadequate empirical citations.

The Emergence of FYPXpress Version 1 Template
Research writing is a new skill for undergraduate students. As a result, they struggle to produce high-quality paragraphs, and some resort to plagiarism by copying sentences from other researchers. A survey-based study by Na (2023) reported that 35% of undergraduate students admitted to plagiarizing because they struggled with research writing. The majority believed that plagiarism could be reduced through better academic writing education. Consequently, the FYPXpress Version 1 Template was created to facilitate students' writing performance effectively. There are several considerations for building the template, in terms of clarity and simplicity, comprehensive coverage, usability, visual appeal; and guidance and example. Research indicates that effective document design enhances readability and usability, facilitating clearer communication of ideas (Smith, 2016; Mahlow & Piotrowski, 2022). Other than that, aesthetics and visual appeal significantly impact user satisfaction and perceived usability, suggesting that well-designed templates can improve student engagement (Lindgaard., 2007; Ramírez-Correa et al., 2018). As a result, the presence of the template might help students to not just only understand how research writing works, but it can also save time and energy.

Methodology
This study employed quantitative research to measure the effectiveness of using the FYPXpress Version 1 Template on student writing performance among sports management students from the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, UiTM Shah Alam. The survey method was used to collect data, as it was a primary source of data collection in social sciences (Domede et al, 2022). In this study, 71 final-year students from Bachelor of Sports Management (Honours) took the Research Methodology subject. All of them utilized the product as part of the tools to facilitate their understanding of writing a proper and acceptable final-year project according to the standard set by the faculty.

A set of adapted questionnaires was prepared to collect the students' opinions of experience when using the FYPXpress Version 1 Template and the effectiveness of this template on their writing performance. The questionnaire was written in English to facilitate understanding among students and to ratify each item listed in the questionnaire. This questionnaire consists of two sections: Section A is the constructs of Effectiveness of FYPXpress Version 1 Template (independent variable): which is (1) the clarity and simplicity, (2) comprehensive coverage, (3) usability, (4) visual appeal; and (5) guidance and example. while section B indicates the Student's Research Writing Performance for the Final Year Project (dependent variable). For the item structure, each of the items was written very well, and concisely; and there was no technical jargon and no double-barrelled items to minimize

the errors during the data collection process. According to De Vellis et al (2021), the shorter and more concise item scales are preferable since they lay less of a load on respondents. In this questionnaire set, there are 29 items in total. There are 10-point Likert scales used as they can capture more data than a scale with fewer points (Coelho & Esteves, 2007). The questionnaire was set up according to the guidelines before being distributed to targeted respondents.

After the questionnaire had been developed, a pilot study was conducted to ensure reliability before the actual data collection was carried out. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability and consistency of the questionnaire set (Ahmad Hashim, 2024). An alpha index value of .60 or higher is acceptable for the instrumentation with 10 Likert scales (Pallant, 2011). Below is the reliability scale, valued at 0.979, which surpassed 0.6. Therefore, this questionnaire is reliable enough for further data collection.

Table 3.1. Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.979	29

The questionnaire was distributed to 71 final-year students from Bachelor of Sports Management (Honours) who took the Research Methodology subject. This self-administered questionnaire was conducted after the class session ended. Students were given 10 minutes to complete all the responses. They are also being reminded to answer sincerely and not take a long time to give the responses. Proper administration entails designing, implementing, and monitoring the data-gathering process to reduce errors and biases while increasing data quality. Valid data collection strategies measure what they are designed to measure, which is critical for producing trustworthy study results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After all the data had been collected, the data was extracted to be analysed in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Software Version 29.

Result
This section presents the statistical findings on the effectiveness of the FYPXpress Version 1 Template in enhancing students' research writing performance. The analysis includes descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression results to examine the impact of the template's key components.

Descriptive Statistics of Writing Performance
Table 4.1
Descriptive Statistics of Writing Performance and the Effectiveness Domain of FYPXpress Version 1 Template.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Student's writing performance	42.70	6.49	71
Clarity and simplicity	43.69	6.26	71
Comprehensive coverage	43.17	6.29	71
Usability	44.18	6.26	71
Visual appeal	33.96	5.64	71
Guidance and example	43.73	5.90	71

The highest mean score was recorded for usability (M = 44.18, SD = 6.26), while visual appeal had the lowest score (M = 33.96, SD = 5.64). This suggests that while students found the template useful and structured, its aesthetic design could be improved.

Correlation between Template Effectiveness and Writing Performance
Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the FYPXpress Template effectiveness and students' writing performance.

Table 4.2.1
Pearson Correlation between the Effectiveness of FYPXpress Version 1 Template on Student Writing Performance

		Student's Writing Performance
Effectiveness of FYPXpress Version 1 Template	Pearson Correlation	.916[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

The correlation analysis indicates a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship (r = 0.916, p < 0.001), suggesting that the use of the FYPXpress Template significantly enhances student's writing performance. Further correlation analysis of individual components of the template is presented in Table 4.2.2

Table 4.2.2

Pearson Correlation Between the Effectiveness of FYPXpress Version 1 Template Dimensions on Students' Writing Performance

		Student's Writing Performance
Clarity and simplicity	Pearson Correlation	.797**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
Comprehensive coverage	Pearson Correlation	.896**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
Usability	Pearson Correlation	.886**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
Visual appeal	Pearson Correlation	.833**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
Guidance and example	Pearson Correlation	.894**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

These results indicate that all five template dimensions have strong positive correlations with writing performance, with comprehensive coverage (r = 0.896, p < 0.001) and guidance & example (r = 0.894, p < 0.001) being the most influential.

Regression Analysis of Writing Performance
To further investigate the impact of template effectiveness on writing performance, a multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Table 4.3.1
Model Summary[a]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.932[a]	.868	.858	2.44717

a. Predictors: (Constant), Guidance and example, Clarity and simplicity, Usability, Visual appeal, Comprehensive coverage.

These results indicate that 86.8% of the variance in students' writing performance can be attributed to the template's effectiveness, with only 13.2% being influenced by other factors not included in this study.

Table 4.3.2
ANOVA (Model Significance)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2563.526	5	512.705	85.613	<.001[b]
	Residual	389.263	65	5.989		
	Total	2952.789	70			

The regression model was highly significant (F (5,65) = 85.613, p < 0.001), explaining 86.8% (R^2 = 0.868) of the variance in students' writing performance. This suggests that the FYPXpress Template is a strong predictor of improved research writing skills.

Coefficients of Regression Model
Table 4.4
Multiple Regression Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-3.060	2.403		-1.273	.207
	Clarity and simplicity	.048	.102	.046	.470	.640
	Comprehensive coverage	.154	.152	.149	1.016	.313
	Usability	.423	.115	.408	3.670	<.001
	Visual appeal	-.046	.132	-.040	-.350	.727
	Guidance and example	.455	.127	.414	3.587	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Writing Performance.

Usability (β = 0.408, p < 0.001) and Guidance & Example (β = 0.414, p < 0.001) are significant predictors of writing performance. Other components, including Clarity and Simplicity (p = 0.640), Comprehensive Coverage (p = 0.313), and Visual Appeal (p = 0.727), were not statistically significant, suggesting they play a lesser role in influencing writing performance.

Discussion
The results of this study also continue to support the importance of using structured writing tools, more specifically the FYPXpress Version 1 Template to enhance the research writing competence of sports management students. A very high positive correlation was established between the use of the template and research writing skills (r = 0.916, p < 0.001) and the model had a high predictive power (R^2 = 0.868, p < 0.001) in explaining the variations in the performance of the students. These results align with previous research that has established that writing aids help improve students' academic writing achievement (Bitchener and Basturkmen, 2006; Holmes et al., 2018).

Although the outcomes indicate that structured templates are useful, they also reveal that some template components were more effective than others. In particular, usability and guidance/example were found to be the most important predictors, while clarity & simplicity, comprehensive coverage, and visual appeal were not found to be significant predictors of writing performance. The implications of these findings are further discussed in the following sections.

The Role of Usability and Guidance in Enhancing Writing Performance
The usability of the template was found to have a significant effect on the student's research writing performance (β = 0.408, p < 0.001). This means that when writing tools are friendly, easily accessible, and simple to use, then students are more likely to concentrate on the content as opposed to being hindered by issues to do with formatting and organization. Given the FYPXpress Template is designed to have a well-defined structure, this may have helped reduce students' confusion when drafting their research papers. Furthermore, it might have assisted in decreasing writing anxiety which is a well-known challenge for students working on final-year projects. Previous research has also established this, pointing out that structured and user-friendly writing frameworks enhance engagement and motivation in academic writing (Smith, 2016; Ramírez-Correa et al., 2018).

As it was with the usability of the template, guidance with examples was found to be the highest predictor of writing performance (β = 0.414, p < 0.001). This underlines the significance of model-based learning, which entails the improvement of writing skills through systematic examples. The availability of set sections and guided prompts may have assisted students in how to combine research findings, form conclusions, and ensure that their papers are coherent. The results of this study are consistent with the previous studies which show that structured writing guidance assists students to grasp the concepts of academic writing more effectively, especially in research-oriented disciplines (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Casanave & Hubbard, 1992). In other words, the template may have served as a link between the theoretical knowledge and the practical writing tasks by demonstrating how research should be communicated effectively.

Limited Influence of Clarity, Coverage, and Visual Appeal
Clarity and simplicity are often viewed as crucial properties of an effective tool for academic writing; however, they were not strong predictors of writing performance in this study (p = 0.640). Despite the notion that students tend to prefer a simple and organized template, clarity by itself does not necessarily result in better writing output. This implies that a good structure assists in the organization but it might not be enough to tackle more sophisticated writing tasks, for instance, developing a coherent argument or analysing and evaluating sources. One possible reason for this result is that although students may have clear and logical guidance, they may still lack the ability to write effectively, coherently, and at a higher order – skills that cannot be developed in practice, but only through actual writing and feedback (Paltridge 2002, Howard et al. 2010).

In the same way, comprehensive coverage was not found to be a significant predictor of writing performance (p = 0.313). This result indicates that having a lot of details in a writing tool may not necessarily result in better writing productivity. Detailed descriptions and many examples and guidelines will indeed be useful but they can paralyze students and make the writing process more mechanical than creative. Some of the students may develop the perception that a very detailed template is restrictive and therefore tend to produce cerebral, replicative writing as opposed to analytical writing on the topic of research. Previous research has shown that students perform best when they have guidance that is detailed enough to be helpful, but not so detailed that it restricts their ability to use their judgement (Singh, 2015; Widodo et al., 2020). This means that in the development of future writing aids, comprehensive information should be provided but at the same time, the flexibility of the

template should be shown so that the student will be able to use it according to the particular research.

The least important factor in the writing performance was the visual appeal (β = −0.040, p = 0.727), which means that students pay more attention to the functionality than to the design of the academic writing tools. While it is always nice to work with visually appealing materials, they do not necessarily lead to better research writing. The results show that students prefer a simple and effective tool to one that has been designed to the utmost detail. This is in concurrence with previous research that has been conducted to show that although visual elements affect usability and engagement, they have a limited impact on cognitive learning and academic achievement (Lindgaard, 2007). This low sensitivity to visual appeal could be explained by the prioritization of students preparing their research papers, who are more likely to be concerned with the organization of content, coherence, and argument rather than the appearance of the document. Whereas in commercial applications or user-friendly websites, visual appeal is a key driver of engagement, academic writing is primarily a cognitive and structural activity. Therefore, students are more concerned with the understanding of the instructions, the accessibility of the resources, and the logic of applying the writing tools than with their appearance. Although aesthetics may not be the most important factor in writing performance, it is still important to consider how the user experience can be made as effective as possible to keep students engaged and motivated.

Implications for Academic Writing and Instructional Design
The findings of this study have significant implications for academic institutions, educators, and instructional designers who are interested in improving research writing instruction. The high effectiveness of usability and structured guidance suggests that universities should include exemplar writing templates in research-based courses to assist students in developing assurance and ability in academic writing. However, the results also indicate that structured tools should be combined with writing instructions that focuses on critical thinking and analytical skills. While templates can assist students with the organization of their papers, they do not substitute the need for one-on-one feedback, multiple revisions, and extensive engagement with the literature. Instructors should include some progressive learning strategies that would decrease the dependence on templates when teaching students how to transition from structured support to independent writing. Moreover, while comprehensive templates offer detailed directions, they should be created to allow for flexibility not strict adherence to the structure. Over-reliance on templates by students may lead to problems in the formulation of original research arguments in that students are more likely to concentrate on how content can be fitted into pre-defined sections than on how to best present their findings.

To this end, future versions of the writing tools could feature adaptive guidance features, including suggestions from an AI writing tool or interactive elements that change depending on a student's writing process. The findings on visual appeal also indicate that while visual appeal should not be the primary concern of writing tool development, designers should ensure that the products are easy to use. Although students may not need highly visual interfaces, the findings show that clear sectioning, font readability, and easy navigation are important in ensuring that templates are easy to use. Future writing aids should concentrate

on content optimization so that while usability is maintained, the visual structure of the product is simple and efficient.

Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the efficacy of using FYPXpress Version 1 Template in improving the research writing skills among sports management students. The results of the study show that the template is effective in helping students to organize their academic papers and therefore reduce complexity, confusion, and poor writing. Statistical analyses also show that there is a positive and significant correlation between the use of the template and students' research writing performance, thus supporting its usefulness as an academic writing tool. However, overreliance on the templates is a concern as it may hinder the development of students' independent writing skills. Although the use of structured frameworks makes research writing easier, it is important to incorporate critical thinking and analytical writing into the teaching. Therefore, educators must use writing aids in conjunction with other strategies that promote originality and more interaction with academic writing conventions. Further research should be done to investigate the long-term effect of writing templates on the student's ability to produce research work that is not guided by the templates. Also, extending the study to other academic areas can offer more general results on the use of structured writing tools across different subjects. Through the improvement of academic support, institutions can increase students' confidence in research writing and at the same time encourage self-reliance and academic integrity.

Authors' Contribution

Nurul Shahida Hamdan, Radin Rafeeuddin, and Cassendra Gilbert were responsible for data collection and writing the manuscript. Muhammad Faizal Kutip contributed to both writing and data analysis. Wan Ahmad Munsif Wan Pa and Hasnida Hanim Ahmad Kamil were involved in proofreading and writing. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research.

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