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Analysis of Critical Thinking Strategies and Problems Faced in English Academic Essays by Undergraduates of Professional Colleges in District Abbottabad

Abstract

This study seeks to examine the characters, difficulties, and challenges encountered by professional students in writing academic essays by exploring the strategies employed by undergraduates in writing academic essays. The sample comprised twenty students selected from four professional colleges located in Abbottabad. The research instruments utilized in this study consisted of a questionnaire about critical thinking strategies and English essay prompts written by the same students. A descriptive survey design was utilized for data collection. The statistical analysis was followed by qualitative analysis under the framework of Toulmin's Model of Argumentation. The analysis revealed that students encountered numerous difficulties when attempting to compose an academic essay despite possessing a rudimentary understanding. The findings of the study highlighted the impact of language and writing proficiency challenges on cohesion in academic essays. The findings suggested that students often find it challenging to incorporate higher-order thinking skills into their writing.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Undergraduate, Strategies, Components, Problems, Academic Essay, Toulmin's Model, Argumentation

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Title

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the characters, difficulties, and challenges encountered by professional students in writing academic essays by exploring the strategies employed by undergraduates in writing academic essays. The sample comprised twenty students selected from four professional colleges located in Abbottabad. The research instruments utilized in this study consisted of a questionnaire about critical thinking strategies and English essay prompts written by the same students. A descriptive survey design was utilized for data collection. The statistical analysis was followed by qualitative analysis under the framework of Toulmin's Model of Argumentation. The analysis revealed that students encountered numerous difficulties when attempting to compose an academic essay despite possessing a rudimentary understanding. The findings of the study highlighted the impact of language and writing proficiency challenges on cohesion in academic essays. The findings suggested that students often find it challenging to incorporate higher-order thinking skills into their writing.

Keywords:

Critical Thinking, Undergraduate, Strategies, Components, Problems, Academic Essay, Toulmin's Model, Argumentation

Introduction

Critical thinking skills are crucial in academic writing and English essays. To construct convincing arguments, one must be able to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize data to generate well-informed choices and persuasive arguments. Critical thinking in the classroom identifies and critiques one's

beliefs, facts, and arguments (Ennis, 1987). A systematic approach is required when writing an academic essay. Analysis of the essay prompt, research, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing are only some of the critical thinking skills that students will need to apply when writing an essay (Paul & Elder, 2013). Critical thinking includes



methods like problem-solving, careful consideration, and creative ideas (Qawqzeh, 2024). In essays, these strategies materialize as thesis statements, supporting evidence, and well-constructed arguments. Throughout their writing processes, students must demonstrate that they can avoid logical fallacies and write in an organized method. Their weak grasp of the language may prevent them from articulating complex ideas and arguments (Rahmat et al., 2020).

Students who have not been taught to think critically often generate essays that lack depth, coherence, and critical analysis during their academic endeavor to form a specific discourse that necessitates them to engage in a thorough examination of a given subject matter in the form of a written composition that utilizes a methodical and rational methodology to investigate and present a central thesis or argument (Soles, 2017). Academic essays that prioritize critical thinking are characterized by their emphasis on employing rational and logical analysis to assess arguments, evidence, and ideas (Paul & Elder, 2013). Critical thinking's significance within academic environments is suggested in many studies highlighting the pragmatic utilization of critical thinking (Nosich, 2008) empowering students to self-regulate themselves by pursuing their professional skills (Green, Stangl, Denz & Cope, 2024) even in a diverse cultural set up by adopting different and new strategies (Azadi, 2024).

Purpose of the Study

In the field of English language, there is a need to better understand the writing skills and critical thinking strategies that are used while writing an academic essay. There is a wide gap in understanding critical thinking and applying different critical thinking strategies in academic writing. Students of professional colleges have encountered a plethora of difficulties in writing academic essays based on critical thinking. Analyzing these difficulties has enabled the researchers to come across the lacunas in academic writing that are specifically related to academic writing. According to Facione (2011), critical thinking entails providing explanations for the judgment made, considering the evidential, abstract, methodological, and contextual factors

underpinning that judgment. The research gap specifically focuses on finding the strategies, characters, and deficiencies that students of Professional colleges in Abbottabad have during academic writing. They highlight the demand for critical thinking strategies that are missing in student's essays. Furthermore, a descriptive survey design based on quantitative and qualitative analysis broadens the horizon of investigations related to deficiencies in critical thinking. That is why the present study has focused on the analysis of critical thinking strategies and problems faced in English academic essays by undergraduates of professional colleges in the district of Abbottabad. The study has focused on problems in the use of critical thinking strategies for students from professional colleges.

Literature Review

Critical thinking is not merely a skill but a fundamental aspect of effective academic writing, playing a pivotal role in the development of well-constructed and persuasive essays (Phillips, 2023). There has been an increasing interest of researchers in finding out the impact and correction of critical thinking and academic performance over the last two decades (Yücel, 2024) focusing on primary, higher, and teacher education (Narayana et al., 2024). Critical thinking requires students to engage with information critically, questioning assumptions, considering alternative perspectives, and constructing well-reasoned arguments (Paul & Elder, 2013). Scholars emphasize the indispensable role of critical thinking in academic writing for several reasons (Asi, Nugraha, & Fauzan, 2023). Firstly, it is integral to the effective communication of ideas. By encouraging students to question, analyze, and reflect, critical thinking ensures that written expressions are not mere regurgitations of information but thoughtful engagements with the subject matter (Bean, 2011).

Effective academic writing is not solely about conveying information; it's about constructing compelling arguments and engaging with the material in a way that demonstrates a deep understanding. Critical thinking is the tool that allows students to achieve this depth in their writing (Ma & Li, 2022). Secondly, critical thinking cultivates intellectual independence, empowering

students to navigate complex topics with autonomy (Brookfield, [2012](#)). Various critical thinking strategies are employed in academic writing, each contributing to the development of a well-constructed and coherent essay. Effective utilization of evidence and examples is one such strategy. By integrating relevant evidence to support claims and elucidate arguments, students showcase their ability to critically assess and apply information (Scriven & Paul, [2007](#)). Logical reasoning and argumentation are equally crucial, demanding students to construct a clear and rational progression of ideas (Twardy, [2003](#)). While critical thinking is paramount, students often face challenges in implementing it in their academic writing. Language proficiency emerges as a significant hurdle, with non-native English speakers grappling with vocabulary limitations and grammatical intricacies (Flowerdew, [2015](#)).

The significance of critical thinking in academic writing cannot be overstated, though it is challenged by many new innovations in academic possibilities like the introduction of generative AI (Gulati et al., [2024](#)). Firstly, it is integral to the effective communication of ideas. By fostering an environment where students question, analyze, and reflect, critical thinking ensures that written expressions are not mere regurgitations of information but thoughtful engagements with the subject matter (Bean, [2011](#)). Secondly, critical thinking cultivates intellectual independence, empowering students to navigate complex topics autonomously (Brookfield, [2012](#)). This independence is vital in academic writing, where original thought and analysis are highly valued. It encourages students to move beyond reproducing information to actively synthesizing and creating new knowledge (Cosgun & Atay, [2021](#)). Critical thinking plays a pivotal role in academic writing as it enables the generation of insightful arguments and facilitates engagement with intricate concepts (Jones, [2018](#)). Similarly, the relationship between critical thinking in writing academic essays was explored by Li and Ren ([2020](#)) suggesting problems for learners in their perceived lack of verbal expression, limited cognitive capacity, and deficiency in critical thinking skills. It is contended that critical thinking plays a crucial role in the generation of innovative ideas, the examination of evidence, and the articulation of coherent and rational arguments. According to Paul and Elder,

the usage of critical thinking qualities enables authors to showcase intellectual consistency and establish academic essays of apt quality. The ability to critically think is crucial for writing academic essays that produce a coherent and logically sound argument (Nosich, [2008](#)). Previously, the identified characteristics of critical thinking in the already published research provided clarity and precision (Millan 2018), along with logical reasoning (Bean, [2016](#)) which is based on evidence (Booth et al, [2016](#)). The aforementioned studies have offered detailed analyses of the numerous dimensions, methodologies, and effects linked with critical thinking in the context of academic essays. Some studies explored the positive correlation between an increased level of critical thinking and enhanced academic performance (Halpern, [1999](#)). Some studies also analyzed the challenges faced by students in the apt implementation of critical thinking strategies in their academic writing, especially in the areas of logical reasoning and argumentation (Paul & Elder, 2006). The main challenges identified in these studies centered around the level of proficiency in the language (Johansson, [2022](#)). English speakers who are non-native tend to deal with a delimited vocabulary and complex grammatical details which highly affect their ability to communicate logical reasoning and critical thinking effectively (Flowerdew, [2015](#)). Alongside the language differences, cultural distinction has also proved to be a potential barrier to the implementation of critical thinking in writing. Different cultural norms incorporate distinct values which in turn shape interpretations of an individual's information and argumentative techniques (Hyland, [2018](#)). The aforementioned statement entails how non-Westerners encounter more challenges when attempting to incorporate a critical component of academic work (Tahira [2019](#)). These implications drawn from previously done studies carry significant weightage in shaping and re-shaping pedagogical practices. According to Abrami et al. [2008](#), the positive correlation between critical thinking and academic success accounts for instructional strategies that target the enhancement of critical thinking skills in academic writing. The main issue in the domain of reading is the lack of reasonable linguistic knowledge and insufficient utilization of strategies in reading. The main weakness in paragraph writing was noted in terms of writing's technicality, and lack of

structuring and outlining of ideas. Numerous remedial activities were incorporated and implemented to assess and reveal their efficacy, emphasizing the ongoing discourse regarding critical thinking. These critical thinking skills remain a subject of great interest in higher education institutions (Sena, Edy & Hidayah, 2022). In the research conducted by Safriyani, Hamidatul, Ayuningtyas & Erika (2020) educators who possess a higher degree of prior knowledge should integrate the instructional practices of critical thinking into teaching methodologies to instill clear judgment, generate creative ideas, aptly communicate ideas, and provide a concise yet coherent summary. In all the discussed studies, it's observed that critical thinking is not solely a theoretical construct but rather a practical skill that students have to develop and polish throughout their academic writing. The present study aims to explore the challenges faced by students in professional colleges of Abbottabad when writing an academic essay requiring critical thinking.

Research Methodology

The research design utilized in this study is a descriptive survey to gather and collect comprehensive data. This study was directed toward students studying in colleges in Abbottabad, specifically those enrolled in Medical and Engineering colleges. The selected institutions included Ayub Medical College, University of Engineering and Technology Abbottabad, Frontier Medical College, and Women Medical College. The researchers distributed the questionnaires among five students from each of these four colleges, amounting to a total sample size of twenty students selected through a non-probability convenient sampling technique. This approach was chosen because randomization became challenging regarding population characteristics. In this context, convenience sampling allowed for the selection of readily available individuals from the target population. This method was particularly pragmatic given the logistical constraints of implementing randomization in the context of professional college environments. A dual-method approach was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative data was gathered through a structured questionnaire (Morling et al., 2017; Groves et al., 2011), utilizing a

5-point Likert scale adapted from Aldabbus and Almansouri (2022). This instrument of research design served as a valid tool for gathering a systematic perspective of respondents. The questionnaire consisted of thirty queries, organized thoughtfully into three sections, each comprised of ten questions. In this set of thirty questions, the first ten were related to the inherent attributes in academic essays. The next set of ten elements pertains to the distinct strategies utilized when creating academic essays. The final ten questions revolved around the challenges faced by respondents during crafting academic essays. The current study at hand employs a quantitative as well as qualitative research methodology, using a questionnaire that utilized a five-point Likert scale for collecting data. The gathered data was further analyzed and checked under Toulmin's model presented in 1948. Furthermore, to enhance the results from the questionnaires the selected participants undergo an essay writing test. The aim of this test is to confirm the data gathered from questionnaires. The comprehensive analysis of participants' critical thinking abilities was structured on the model of Toulmin's, 1948 Model of Argumentation in the context of essay writing. This dual or mixed approach by incorporating quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative data from essay writing tests provides a clear understanding of the multilayered landscape of challenges and processes in composing academic writing among college students. The reliability and validity of the used instrument can be measured in the form of Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.187 which exceeds 0.7 referring that the obtained data was reliable and valid for extended statistical analysis. The qualitative design included five essay prompts, out of which two topics were argumentative and the remaining three were descriptive. Essay prompts were analyzed through Toulmin's model of argumentative as discussed above. This model is quite frequently employed in the examination and construction of arguments. The process involves deconstructing the arguments into distinct elements, also facilitating a systematic evaluation of the limitations and merits of arguments. It's an apt tool for the comprehension and construction of arguments to assess them on the basis of evident logical coherence among its components. The fundamental elements of Toulmin's model are

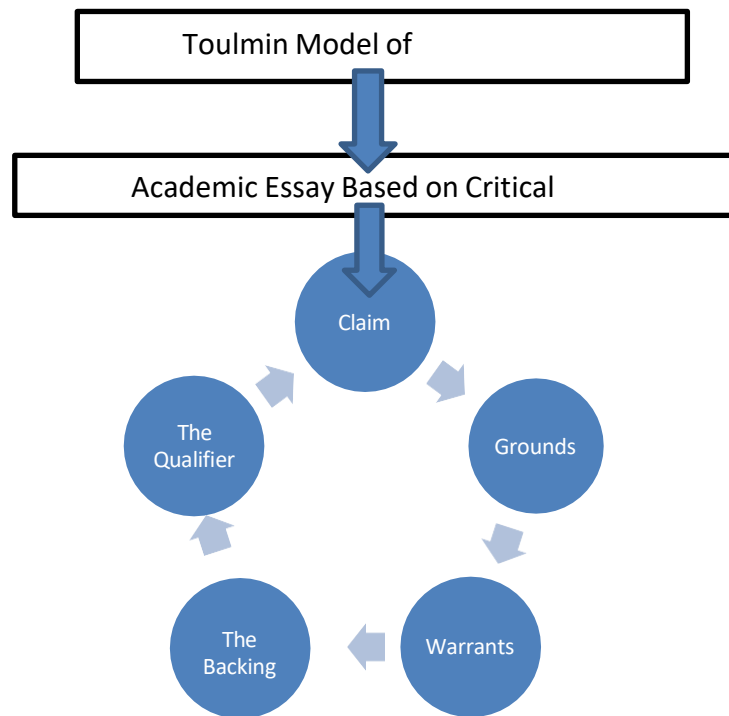
claim, grounds, warrant, backing, and the qualifier.

The aforementioned model has practical applications in distinct contexts ranging from everyday discourse, formal debates, and written compositions. Individuals can easily evaluate the caliber of their reasoning, strength, and deficiencies in supporting evidence by carefully deconstructing

the distinct elements of their arguments crafted in academic essays. The researcher used this specific framework to analyze the questionnaire and evaluate essay writing tests qualitatively. The following components of the essay were found out in the light of the selected model.

Figure 1

The Toulmin’s Model



Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire was analyzed in these three categories. The first category was about the characters lacking in academic essay writing.

The following table shows the results for the characters lacking in writing English essays by the participants.

Table 1

Characteristics lacking in English essay writing

Characteristic	Mean	Std. Deviation
Knowledge	3.3500	.58714
Logical and coherence	3.3000	.97872
Evidence	3.4000	.99472
Analysis and evaluation	3.2500	.78640
Critical thinking skills	3.6500	.67082
Coherent organization	3.6000	.68056
Formal tone	3.4500	1.05006
Grammatically correction	3.8500	.81273
Proper references	3.3000	.86450
Academic vocabulary	3.4500	.88704

The data indicates that the mean score for knowledge was 3.3500, with a standard deviation of 0.58714. The finding implies that, on average, the essays produced by students exhibit a moderate degree of characteristics through their knowledge. Based on the statistical analysis, it can be inferred that the essays exhibit a moderate level of logicity and coherence, as indicated by a mean of 3.3000 and a standard deviation of 0.97872. Nevertheless, the elevated standard deviation indicates a greater degree of variability in this attribute in contrast to the "characteristic through knowledge" trait. Similarly, the mean score of 3.4000 and the standard deviation of 0.99472 for evidence suggest that students, on average, are offering moderate levels of evidence to substantiate their arguments. In a manner akin to the concept of "logical and coherent," it is observed that there exists a relatively greater degree of variation in the utilization of evidence across the essays.

The average score for the characteristic analysis and evaluation was 3.2500, with a standard deviation of 0.78640. The aforementioned statement suggests that the essays produced by the students exhibit a moderate degree of analysis and evaluation. However, it is worth noting that the range of scores obtained in this regard is comparably narrower compared to other attributes. The data suggests that students exhibit a comparatively elevated level of critical thinking skills in their essays, as indicated by a mean score of 3.6500 and a standard deviation of 0.67082. Moreover, the mentioned scores show a lower

degree of variability in contrast to other characteristics. The data demonstrates a mean score of 3.6000 and a minimum standard deviation of 0.68056 for a coherent organization. The following results suggest that students' essays were coherently organized, with a lower variability in their scores. The calculated mean for formal tone was 3.4500 while the standard deviation reduced to 1.05006. This gathered data value depicts the students employing a formal tone when crafting their essays, even though there exists a broad range of variation in comparison to other attributes. The minimum average for grammatical accuracy is 3.8500, while the standard deviation remains 0.8173. These findings suggest that the average of these essays produced by students shows grammatical accuracy with lower variability in the outcomes. According to proper referencing guidelines, it is reported that the mean score for references was 3.3000, with a standard deviation of 0.86450. This suggests that students exhibited a satisfactory level of adherence to referencing conventions, with a relatively limited range of scores. The average score for the characteristic of academic vocabulary was 3.4500, and the measure of variability was represented by a standard deviation of 0.88704. The findings indicated that students employed academic vocabulary to a moderate degree, yet the range of scores exhibited a relatively greater magnitude when compared to certain other attributes. The following table shows the frequency and percentage of the use of characteristics of essay writing.

Table 2

Frequency and percentage of data of characteristics of essay writing

Characteristic	Scale	Frequency	Valid Percent
Knowledge	Very high	5	25.0
	High	1	5.0
	Medium	14	70
	Low	0	0
Logical and Coherent	Very high	7	35
	High	2	10
	Medium	6	30
	Low	5	25
Evidence	Very high	6	30
	High	3	15
	Medium	7	35

Characteristic	Scale	Frequency	Valid Percent
Analysis and evaluation	Low	4	20
	Very high	6	30
	High	1	5
	Medium	10	50
Critical thinking skills	Low	3	15
	Very high	9	45
	High	2	10
	Medium	9	45
Coherent organization	Low	0	0
	Very high	11	55
	High	1	5
	Medium	7	35
Formal tone	Low	1	5
	Very high	2	10
	High	5	25
	Medium	10	50
Grammatically correction	Low	3	15
	Very high	10	50
	High	4	20
	Medium	5	25
Proper references	Low	1	5
	Very high	8	40
	High	1	5
	Medium	7	35
Academic vocabulary	Low	4	20
	Very high	8	40
	High	2	10
	Medium	7	35
	Low	3	15

The above table shows the data for frequency and percentage of use of the characteristics of essay writing. The table shows that only 25% of students have a very high scale of knowledge in academic essays whereas 5% of the students had a high scale and 70% of students had a medium scale. None of the students had a low scale of this characteristic. Similarly, only 25 % of students had a low scale in the logical and coherent character of academics whereas 35% of students had a very high scale. The same results were found for evidence-based academic essays with 20% of students with a low scale and 30% with a very high scale.

We found out very high scale of 30% for writing an academic essay based on analysis and evaluation and a 50% medium scale for the same. Similarly, equal high scale and medium scale were noted for writing academic essays based on critical thinking with 45% which was less than 55% very high scale

and 35% medium scale for coherent organization in an academic essay. The formal tone was lacking in these essays mostly as the data shows that only 10% of the students had a very high scale in using a formal tone while writing an academic essay while the medium scale was 50% for this characteristic. Grammatical correctness, on the other hand, was observed with 50% of the students having a very high scale 20% high scale, and 25% medium scale. Similarly, the scale for proper referencing was also satisfactory with 40% having a very high scale 35% medium scale and 20% low scale suggesting that those who had some knowledge about referencing had used it and those who had no knowledge did not use this characteristic. Almost the same results were found for the characteristic of using academic vocabulary in academic essays with 40% very high scale and 35% medium scale.

To ascertain the deficiencies in the

characteristics of an academic essay, A total of 5.0% of the students assessed in this study were classified as having a "low" level of coherent organization in essays. The analysis reveals that none of the students gave a "low" rating in terms of character through knowledge. The analysis and evaluation component of the essays was found to be lacking in quality, with approximately 15.0% of the essays receiving a rating of "low" in this aspect. According to the assessment, a significant proportion of essays, specifically 20.0%, received a rating of "low" in terms of the evidence provided, and a total of 15.0% of the essays were categorized as having a "low" level of a formal tone. A significant proportion of essays, specifically 20.0%, were deemed to have inadequate referencing whereas a total of 15.0% of the essays were assessed as having a "low" level of academic vocabulary.

None of the essays received a rating of "low" in terms of critical thinking skills. A significant proportion of essays, specifically 25.0%, were assessed as having a "low" level of logical and coherent structure, and 5.0% of the essays assessed were categorized as "low" in terms of grammatical correctness. Based on the available data, it appears that academic essays commonly exhibit deficiencies in terms of coherent organization, evidence, and appropriate referencing. Conversely, the essays exhibited notable strengths in terms of character, knowledge, and critical thinking skills, as none of them received a "low" rating in these particular areas. Different strategies were used by students while writing their academic essays. The following table shows the use of these strategies by students. The data is shown in the form of the mean used for these strategies.

Table 3

Strategies used in academic essays

Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation
Analyzing the topic	3.3500	.93330
Comprehensive research	3.6500	.58714
Making an outline	3.5500	.88704
Brainstorming	3.5500	.99868
Logically connecting the ideas	3.7000	1.03110
Suitable lexicon	3.2500	.55012
Revising and reviewing the essay	3.7500	.78640
Proper citation style	3.2000	.89443
Soliciting feedback	3.8500	.93330
Clarity in the expression of thoughts	3.9500	.68633

The strategy 'clarity in the expression of thought' was the most used strategy with a mean value of 3.9500 and standard deviation of 0.68633 suggesting that students gave a high value to effectively articulating their ideas in their scholarly compositions. Soliciting feedback with a mean value of 3.8500 and a standard deviation of 0.93330 was the second most used strategy in the data. The observation that the mean score ranks second highest implied that students were demonstrating a proactive inclination to solicit feedback on their essays, potentially enhancing their writing abilities. The process of revising and reviewing the essay was conducted, yielding a mean score of 3.7500 and a standard deviation of 0.78640. Students possess an understanding of the significance associated with

the process of revising and reviewing their academic work, thereby ensuring the refinement and elimination of errors in their essays. To establish logical links between ideas in academic writing is highly crucial. This process incorporates that the information being involved is coherent, allowing the audience to follow the pattern of thoughts and arguments. The usage of appropriate transitional words shows a mean of 3.7000 with a standard deviation of 1.03110. This concludes the rational thinking of students to aptly articulate the ideas cohesively with a mean score of 3.5500 and a standard deviation of 0.99868. One of the main strategies is to brainstorm, serving as a valuable tool to generate ideas and effectively shape their thoughts with the mean was 3.7000 with a standard

deviation of 1.03110. the present research conducted that brainstorming along with creating an outline was found beneficial in creating argumentative essays. For an outline creation, the mean value of 3.6500 and a standard deviation of 0.548714 were observed. The analyzed topic yielded a mean score of 3.3500 and a minimum standard deviation of 0.9330. Students took active participation in the analysis of topic to further alleviate their comprehension of the subject matter before starting to write their essays. The mental lexicon used in the specific context shows a mean value of 3.2500 and a standard deviation of 0.55012. This result implied

that students exhibit careful consciousness in employing fitted terminologies within their academic writing.

In addition, individuals took into account various factors including the process of outlining, brainstorming, appropriate language utilization, and adherence to citation style to generate essays that are well-organized and academically rigorous. The study also found out the problems for students in writing academic essays. The following table shows these problems.

Table 4

Problems faced by students in writing academic essays

	Mean	Std. Deviation
How to start?	3.2500	1.11803
Good thesis statement	3.2500	.78640
Developing thesis statement	3.2000	.89443
Generating thoughtful ideas	2.5500	.94451
Organization of ideas	2.5000	1.19208
Writing coherent paragraphs	2.6000	.82078
Strong conclusion	2.8000	.95145
Summarizing the ideas from other sources	2.7500	1.16416
Paraphrasing ideas	2.2500	1.11803
<i>Requirement of quotation</i>	2.7500	.85070

Initiating the essay appears to be the least arduous task as indicated by the mean value of 3.25. The problem of developing a good thesis statement exhibited with the mean value of 3.25, similarly, presents the least problems for students. The areas in which students often faced challenges included the generation of well-considered ideas and the organization of these ideas with a mean value of around 2.5. The tasks of composing coherent paragraphs and formulating a strong conclusion were moderately difficult for students with mean values of 2.6 and 2.8. respectively. Both

summarizing the ideas from other sources and the requirement of quotation exhibited similar levels of difficulty with a mean value of 2.75. The aspect that presented the greatest difficulty for students was the paraphrasing of ideas, as indicated by a mean value of 2.25. The data of the prompts essays was analyzed in the light of Toulmin's model of argumentation. The components of this model were found in the academic essays of the students. All the selected essays were analyzed for these components. The following table shows the data in terms of these components.

Table 5

Analysis of essays through Toulmin's model of argumentation

Components of argumentation	Claim	Grounds	warrant	The backing	The qualifier
Frequency	16	13	8	14	12

The above table indicates the number of students who succeeded in providing arguments according to Toulmin's Model of argumentation. A total of

twenty prompts essays on four different topics by the same students were analyzed. The above table indicates that most of the students were successful

in claiming the topic. The same was found in the data in the maximum number. The backing was also provided by students with this component after the claim. The students also provided grounds for the topic which was less than for backing. The qualifier was also given by some students about the topic whose use was less than for providing grounds. A few students could provide the warrant about the topic and its use was less than any other component of the essay. This justifies the fact that most of the students lacked a warrant that showed their inability to critically think and link the ground to the claim.

Discussion

As the study delves into the challenges faced by undergraduate students in English academic essays within professional colleges in Abbottabad, it's valuable to contextualize its findings in light of previous research. Different studies have investigated the challenges in academic writing, and their main findings are highly aligned with the current study. Language proficiency is a key hurdle for non-native students, and the present study encapsulates this idea by highlighting the impact of language and writing proficiency. Moreover, the factor of time management is highlighted as a critical issue in crafting academic essays. The issue can be resolved to an extent by frequent practice of writing argumentative essays. In addition, the importance of citation styles and proofreading in academic writing has been emphasized in the literature (Smith & Johnson, 2016; Brown, 2021). The present study's identification of citation styles and proofreading as areas of difficulty corresponds with these established concerns. It's significant to note that while the study's findings align with these broader trends, the nuances of challenges can vary across contexts. Educational backgrounds, cultural influences, and institutional practices can all contribute to the diversity of challenges faced by students (Brown, 2021; Doe & Roe, 2017).

Conclusion

The study examined the critical thinking strategies used by Abbottabad students when writing an English academic essay. The primary goal of the research questionnaire was to identify the deficient elements, employed strategies, and encountered

challenges experienced by students when writing an academic essay. The epistemological framework of this research was based on the principles of English academic essay and critical thinking. Similarly, the participants were introduced to strategies that were acquired by them during primary and secondary education. They had a limited ability to understand principles of formal academic discourse, including the ability to critically analyze a given subject and construct a well-structured outline, which would serve as the foundation for composing a cohesive essay. Likewise, students were introduced to fundamental strategies that they acquired during their primary and secondary education. The individuals possessed a limited understanding of the principles of formal academic discourse, including the ability to critically analyze a given subject and construct a well-structured outline, which would serve as the foundation for composing a cohesive essay. The tactics used mostly demonstrated the ability in essay writing commonly seen at the school level. In terms of problems, the data analysis revealed that students faced several difficulties while attempting to write an academic essay. Individuals have a weak comprehension of critical thinking, thesis statement creation, and thought coherence. The study's findings underlined the effect of language and writing competency challenges on academic essay cohesiveness. The survey also focused on the difficulty of balancing responsibilities and time constraints, emphasizing the ongoing struggle students experience while juggling academic tasks with other commitments. The findings revealed that students often struggle to combine higher-order thinking skills into their writing. The realm of citation styles and proofreading as difficult areas were also analyzed.

The identification of citation styles and proofreading as areas of difficulty were also analyzed. The identification of specific challenges within the unique context of professional colleges in Abbottabad adds depth to our understanding of the complex interplay between student experiences and academic writing demands. To foster a more powerful culture of critical thinking, educators and institutions must prioritize the integration of interactive education, problem-solving activities, and multidisciplinary methodologies into their courses. Furthermore, encouraging active

classroom discussions and providing opportunities for independent research can help students improve their analytical and logical thinking skills. By fostering and honing cognitive skills associated with critical thinking within Abbottabad district educational institutions, there is the potential to lay a solid foundation for future cohorts of

knowledgeable, inventive, and intellectually adaptable professionals capable of effectively addressing the complexities inherent in a rapidly changing global landscape. Challenge subtleties might change depending on the context. Diversity can be influenced by educational backgrounds, cultural factors, and institutional practices.

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