Report-writing Disposition and Achievement Orientation:
An exploratory research on MUET students

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Abstract
This paper aimed to gauge the MUET students' report-writing dispositions and achievement orientation as well as examine the influence of selected demographic variables on these two variables. The research was conducted on two groups of MUET students (79 students) in a government secondary school in Kuching. The findings indicated that the multi-item writing disposition and achievement orientation were reliable. These two variables were having a weak association. The report-writing dispositions of the surveyed MUET students were generally low, but their achievement orientations were satisfactory. The demographic variables had significant influences on their report-writing disposition, but not their achievement orientations.

Keywords: Report-writing disposition; Achievement orientation; MUET English

1.0 Introduction
The Malaysian Education Department is always keen and active in improving the standard of English among secondary school students. There is a continuous and consistent process of training the teachers (e.g. Benson and Enström, 2017) as well as the administrators. The Malaysian government has been emphasizing the importance of English and the competence of English teachers. Nevertheless, there are still rooms for improvement in terms of students' command of English. One of the challenges faced by the MUET students is on writing, typically the report-writing. Their scores on Paper 4 (Report) were found to be relatively lower. They should be able to write a good report that can meet the expectations. The findings (Teo, 2010) suggested that the Expectation-based Teaching (EBT) approach of teaching had significantly improved the writing performance of the MUET students.

Though the teaching approach can be practical, the attitude of the students will also play an essential role in learning. The attitude towards English report-writing will most probably facilitate the teaching and learning processes. The results in the previous study also hinted that those who liked English reports tend to have relatively higher scores in their Report-writing tests. Besides, their achievement orientation may exert some influence too. Besides, the possible demographic influences on these two antecedents to learning performance should be investigated to achieve more holistic, effective management of the English-report writing teaching process. The main objective of this survey research is to explore the report-writing dispositions and achievement orientation of the MUET students, as well as investigate the demographic influences on these variables. The specific objectives are: i) To explore the report-writing disposition of the MUET students, ii) To explore the achievement orientation of the MUET students, iii) To examine the associations of report-writing disposition and achievement orientation of students on their report-writing performance, and iv) To examine the influences of demographic variables on the report-writing disposition and achievement orientation of the sampled MUET students.

2.0 Related Literature and Research Model

The management scholars and practitioners suggest that the high performing organizations and individuals are very competent in terms of serving their target customers. They are very customer-oriented. It is also observed that more and more researchers have illuminated marketing mechanisms in the education sector (e.g. Edwards and Kuhlman, 2007; Green, 2006; Mehra and Rhee, 2009; Voon, 2006). Besides, market orientated attitudes and behaviours in teaching are recommendable for better customer benefits. Customer satisfaction (or student satisfaction) also need to be taken into consideration (e.g. Ihtiyar, 2018; Jaggar, Folk & Mullins, 2018; Latino, Latino & Latino, 2019). Kohli and Jaworski (1990) emphasized the generation, dissemination and responsiveness to the relevant information. This market-oriented culture can help to create superior customer value (Narver and Slater, 1990). The teachers need to be student-oriented and adopt interactive approach in teaching (e.g. Suarmi & Fatimah, 2019). In fact, a lot of empirical research suggested that understanding the students' needs and then teachers will be more effective (e.g. Edwards and Kuhlman, 2007). Figure 1 shows the research model for this exploratory research. The independent variables are report-writing dispositions (RWD) and achievement orientation (AO) of the MUET students, whereas the dependent variable is the report-writing performance (RWP). The influences of demographic variables were analyzed accordingly.
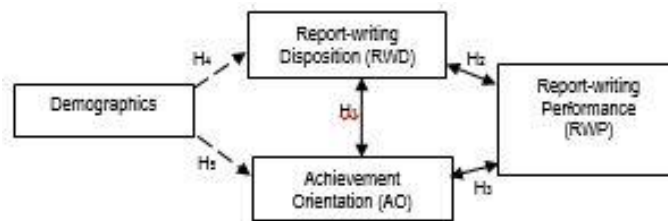

Figure 1: The Research Model

Specifically, the five significant hypotheses which were tested in this exploratory research were:

H_1:   Report-writing Dispositions and Achievement Orientation are associated.
H_2:   Report-writing Dispositions is positively associated with Report-writing Performance
        H_3:   Achievement Orientation is positively associated with Report-writing Performance
H_4:   Demographic variables have significant influences on Report-writing Dispositions
H_5:   Demographic variables have significant influences on Achievement Orientation

3.0 Methodology

This exploratory research aimed to gauge the report-writing dispositions and achievement orientation of the participating MUET students. The data were collected at a government secondary school in Kuching. Structured questionnaires were used to collect the self-reported data, and the sample size was seventy-nine (n=79).

The research instrument was made up of two main sections, namely Section A: Demographic Variables and Section B: Report-writing dispositions and achievement orientation. The demographic information included: gender, race, English speaking norms, parents' income, father's occupation, and SPM grade. Report-writing disposition was measured by adapting the multi-item scale of Piazza and Siebert (2008), whereas the achievement orientation measure has adapted the scale which was developed by Cumming *et al.* (2008). The duly pre-tested questionnaires were distributed to the sampled classes of MUET students in the school. Each respondent used about 10 minutes to answer the questionnaire carefully. The duly answered and returned questionnaires were checked and coded accordingly before the data entry process.

The quantitative data analysis phase involved reliability checks (internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and item-to-total correlations), Pearson correlations, Mean differences analyses using t-test and ANOVA (F-test). The demographic influences were investigated using the comparisons of means between or among the independent sample groups. For instance, the means between male and female groups, the means among the different racial groups, and so forth.

4.0 Results

The results in Table 1 show the reliability and descriptive statistics of the variables. The statistical results of the reliability analysis indicated that the two multi-item measures (i.e., report-writing dispositions and achievement orientation) possessed a satisfactory level of reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the former stood at 0.88, whereas the latter was 0.87, both were higher than the mandatory level of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Churchill, 1979). Besides, the item-to-total correlations of all the items of the respective measures had also surpassed the required level of 0.40 (e.g. Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Voon, Douglas and Baljinder, 2012; Voon, Firdaus, Lee and Kueh, 2014; Voon, Jamil, Patricia, Teo and Agnes, 2017). As such, these constructs most probably were able to measure the intended information reliably. The Report-writing Dispositions (RWD) consisted of ten items, whereas Achievement Orientation (AO) also contained 10 items.

Measuring the scale continuum of 1 to 7, the average score for RWD of the sampled 79 students was only 3.21, which was below mid-point of 4 (7-point scale). This indicated that the students were rather incompetent and uninterested in English report-writing. The items with relatively low score were:

- I enjoy writing reports in English (2.95)
- I always look forward to report-writing (2.72)
- I can write good reports in English (2.57)
- Writing report in English is easy for me (2.37)
- My report-writing skill is among the best in class (2.11)

Nevertheless, they did admit that Report-writing was important (mean score of 4.91). Besides, they were willing to try and learn to improve their report-writing skills and performance. These could be seen from the mean scores of 3.92 for 'I take time to solve problems in report-writing' and 3.87 for 'I will not mind writing more reports to learn'.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis with the Relevant Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Alpha Value	Item-total-correlations	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report-writing Disposition Scale (1-7)	0.88			
1. Report-writing skill is among the best in class.			2.11	1.121 1.070
2. I can write good reports in English.		0.485 0.620	2.57	1.123 1.186
3. Writing report in English is easy for me.		0.621 0.542	2.37	1.061 1.383
4. I enjoy writing reports in English.		0.611 0.653	2.95	1.416 1.583
5. I always look forward to report-writing.		0.770 0.536	2.72	1.620 1.478
6. I will try different ways/methods in the writing.		0.681 0.591	3.42	
7. I am willing to spend time on writing reports.			3.29	
8. I take time to solve problems in report-writing.			3.92	
9. I do not mind writing more reports to learn.			3.87	
10. Report-writing is an important skill.			4.91	
Achievement Orientation (Scale 1-5)	0.87			
1. My goal is to learn and be very good in English.		0.487	3.96	0.980
2. The important thing is to be the best MUET student		0.576	3.44	1.010
3. The important thing is to improve my reporting skills.		0.618	3.73	0.943
4. My goal is to improve and be better than other		0.699 0.589	3.30	1.054
5. I work hard to become the best in report-writing.		0.639 0.640	3.57	0.929
6. I want to be better than others in report-writing.		0.480 0.529	3.35	0.920 0.996
7. I feel successful when I learn a new skill.		0.676	3.78	1.149 1.137
8. Success means being better than others.			3.04	1.063
9. I feel successful when I do my best.			3.96	
10. My goal is to be better than others in report-writing.			3.15	

The level of achievement orientation for the MUET students was recommendable (i.e., 3.53, on the 5-point scale).

- My goal is to learn new skills and get as good as possible (3.96)
- I feel successful when I do my best (3.96)
- I feel successful when I learn a new skill (3.78)
- The most important thing is to improve my reporting skills (3.73)

The results from Pearson correlation analysis show that there is a significant association between Report-writing Dispositions and Achievement Orientation. These could be viewed at the level of significance of 1% ($\alpha = 0.01$), the correlation coefficient (r) which stood at 0.389 and the strength of correlation that is considered rather weak (Burns and Bush, 2000). Hence, hypothesis H_1 was supported.

The correlations between Report-writing Dispositions (RWD) and Report-writing Performance (RWP) were reported at 0.141, which was insignificant. The same went to Achievement Orientation (AO) and Report-writing Performance (RWP), where the correlation coefficient was only 0.043. Thus, Hypotheses H_2 and H_3 were not supported. The statistical results for the mean difference analyses are shown in Table 2. Generally, it was found that the demographic variables exerted significant influences on the report-writing dispositions, except for gender.

Table 2: Demographic Influences on Report-writing Disposition

Variables	Sample Sizes (n=79)	RWD Mean	t/F	Sig.	Remarks
Gender			1.152	0.253	Not significant
Male	27	3.38			
Female	52	3.13			
Race			5.127	0.008*	Significant
Malay	14	2.95			
Chinese	36	3.56			

Dayaks	29	2.92			
English Speaking 　Yes 　No	7 72	3.47 3.19	3.163	0.079**	Significant
Parent's Income 　2000 or less 　>2000	57 22	3.03 3.69	3.000	0.004*	Significant
Father's Occupation 　Public 　Private 　Self-employed 　Unemployed	22 20 27 10	3.35 3.65 2.97 2.70	3.706	0.015*	Significant
Like To Read English Report 　Yes 　No	27 52	3.64 2.99	3.131	0.002*	Significant
SPM Grade	79	Correlation coefficient (r=0.625)*			Significant

* 5% level of significance, ** 10% level of significance

There was no significant difference in RWD between the male and female students. However, there were significant differences in the means for the groups which were differentiated by race, English speaking norms, parents' income, father's occupation, and Like to read English report. RWDs of the following MUET students were relatively higher:

- Chinese students
- Those who normally speak in English
- Parents' income more than RM2000 per month
- Father working in the private sector
- Those who like to read English reports.

Besides, the SPM grade had a moderate correlation with their report-writing dispositions.

The results shown in Table 3 suggested that the demographic background of the MUET students generally had no significant influence on their achievement orientation, except for the Father's Occupation. The students whose fathers were working in the public sector and self-employed tend to have higher AOs.

Table 3: Demographic Influences on Achievement Orientation

Variables	Sample Sizes (n=79)	AO Mean	t/F	Sig.	Remarks
Gender 　Male 　Female	27 52	3.38 3.18	1.135	0.260	Not significant
Race 　Malay 　Chinese 　Dayaks	14 36 29	3.59 3.64 3.36	1.381	0.258	Not Significant
English Speaking 　Yes 　No	7 72	3.74 3.51	0.845	0.401	Not Significant
Parent's Income 　2000 or less 　>2000	57 22	3.49 3.62	0.731	0.467	Not Significant
Father's Occupation 　Public 　Private 　Self-employed 　Unemployed	22 20 27 10	3.69 3.48 3.64 3.00	2.760	0.048*	Significant
Like To Read English Report 　Yes 　No	27 52	3.57 3.51	0.366	0.751	Not Significant
SPM Grade	79	Correlation coefficient (r=0.147, sig.=0.195)			Not significant

* 5% Level of significance

6.0 Conclusion

This exploratory research on the MUET students aimed to gauge their report-writing dispositions and achievement orientation as well as examined the influences of selected demographic variables. The entire research and intervention were conducted within ten weeks duration, and four groups of MUET students in a government secondary school in Kuching were involved.

The findings indicated that the writing disposition scale of Piazza and Siebert (2008) and achievement orientation scale of Cumming *et al.* (2008) were reliable measures. They could be potentially adapted to measure the report-writing dispositions and achievement orientations of the MUET students. The correlation analysis indicated that the report-writing dispositions and achievement orientations were having a significant but rather weak association (r = 0.389).

Results from the descriptive statistical analyses suggested that report-writing dispositions of the surveyed MUET students were generally low (3.21 out of the 7-point scale), but their achievement orientations were recommendable (3.53 out of 5-point scale). In addition, demographic variables (race, English speaking norms, parents' income, father's occupation, and SPM grade) had significant influences on the report-writing dispositions, but not gender. As for achievement orientation, demographics generally had no significant influence, except for the Father's Occupation.

This questionnaire survey if can be replicated to cover more representative sample size, it will provide more useful insights for the MUET English teachers, advisors, the school management and educational policymakers. The conclusive information will help them to develop the relevant segmentation strategies to benefit the different student groups more effectively. For instance, planning more effective strategies to improve the report-writing dispositions of the MUET students, whose fathers' occupations were self-employed or unemployed as their report-writing dispositions were found to be comparatively lower.

Acknowledgments

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