Pagpadayon: Milestones of a Student-Writer's Journey

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Research Article

ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive study examines the main steps and forces that shape a student writer's writing process. The study used in-depth interviews and descriptive case analysis to find three main milestones: joining the Special Program in the Arts, making a zine as a creative outlet, and becoming a part of a writers' group. Writing in a daily diary, building a relationship, using writing as a form of advocacy, the support that writing communities offer, getting helpful feedback, and writing for professional, cultural, and societal change were some of the things that drove the participant. The study shows that personal experience, social involvement, and group membership can all affect how well you write. The WWC model provides a solid framework for thinking about this process, and the participants' stories prompt us to look more closely at the emotional and temporal aspects of writing in groups. This study supports the model's focus on how the relationship between a person's drive and the social surroundings that shape their writing identity changes over time, especially in marginalized and regional settings. *Keywords: education, milestones, motivations, writing journey, Special Program*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is more than just an assignment; it is a profoundly human activity that helps us make sense of the world. Writing helps people turn their vague ideas into understandable concepts, their feelings into stories, and their creative ideas into real, talkable forms. In addition to its educational uses, writing is a space where identity, speech, and self-perception are constantly changed by doing, learning, and reflecting on it (White, 2021; Martin, 2025). This means that writing is not just a skill that can be learned; it is also a personal practice that helps people better understand themselves and their surroundings.

The Visayan word pagpadayon, which means "to continue," is at the heart of this artistic process. In writing, pagpadayon means a writer's careful, long-term dedication to growth, even when there are breaks, doubts, or problems from external sources. These days, we know that creativity does not grow in a straight line. Instead, it has periods of intensity, interruptions, and rediscovery over time (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2022). So, writing becomes both a personal and a developmental journey, one that can only be kept going by being strong, thinking, and wanting to keep making things.

Writing well is still important for doing well in school, working as a professional, and being involved in politics. This is especially true in 21st-century classrooms that stress critical thought, creativity, communication, and teamwork (Cariaga, 2024a; 2024b). Despite this importance, ongoing national and global discussions continue to highlight concerns about students' writing performance and engagement, often grounded in broader systemic and curricular challenges (Cariaga, 2023). More than just basic skills, motivation is essential for continuing to improve your writing. A lot of research has been done on what motivates people to learn a language, but not as much on what motivates people to write, especially when writing is a personal and changing experience.

Feedback, independence, emotional connection, and important social settings are thought to have a significant impact on how engaged people are in writing (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Alt et al., 2022). However, we still do not have a complete picture of what each writer has been through.

This gap is easy to see when you look at a past student. Of the 46 students who graduated from the Special Program in the Arts–Creative Writing, this is the only one who went on to get a writing degree at college and is still participating in writing groups like the Sarangani Writers League. The Special Program in the Arts was started in 2013 at Malapatan National High School in the Sarangani Division. Its goal is to help students who are very good at art grow. However, the fact that its graduates are writing less than they used to raises important questions about what keeps people writing. Understanding these factors is important for creating writing lessons that are relevant to the students' lives and adapt to their needs. This is especially true in creative programs and higher education institutions that seek to improve students' outcomes, career prospects, and societal impact through culturally informed, hands-on learning (Cariaga & El Halaissi, 2024; Herrera, 2021). The goal of this study was to examine the significant turning points and underlying drives in a student writer's career path. This would help show how writing identities are formed, kept, and changed.

Statement of the Problem
An important part of teaching writing is helping students do well in school by showing what they can do and how well they do overall. However, this view does not really show what it is like for student writers—their doubts, breaks, inspiration, and support—that affect whether they keep writing after school. Moreover, even though there are structured creative schools like the Special Program in the Arts—Creative Writing, not many students keep writing after they graduate. At Malapatan National High School, where many students received formal training in creative writing, only one took a writing-related class and remained involved in literary communities. This situation shows that we do not fully understand what keeps a writer committed over time. Not much research has really listened to the personal journeys of student writers, especially in local and cultural settings. To rethink writing education as a human, social, and long-lasting practice rather than a temporary academic requirement, it is important to understand these experiences.

Research Questions
The point of this study was to learn more about the writing path of a student who kept writing even after school hours ended. The study was built around the following questions:
1. What steps did the individual take to improve as a writer over time?
2. What experiences and important events helped her grow as a writer and change how she saw herself?
3. What kept her going with her writing even when she ran into problems or was not writing for a while?
4. How did her personal experiences, relationships with other people, and ties to the community affect her choice to keep writing?
5. What does the person think writing means to her right now and in terms of her plans for the future?

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Research Design
In-depth interviews with participants were used to examine their real-life experiences as student writers as part of a qualitative descriptive study design. Qualitative description would work best because it allows for a thorough, story-based account of how things work and how meaning is made, rather than focusing on measurement or prediction. The study used a single-case study method, which helped the researchers obtain a comprehensive and detailed picture of a real-life event.
Research Locale
Mindanao State University–General Santos City, where the participant is currently registered, served as the study site. This place was chosen because it was appropriate for the situation, as the university had a significant impact on the participants' academic writing and interactions in literary groups.
Sampling Procedures
Purposive sampling was used to select a subject whose experiences aligned with the study's goals. The chosen person consistently engaged with, improved, and achieved in writing. She was a student in the Special Program in the Arts–Creative Writing, and the only member of the program to take a writing-focused college course at the time. Her self-published works and her active participation in literary groups made her a compelling case study with ample data.
Research Participants

The participant is now getting a Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies at Mindanao State University–General Santos City. They graduated from Malapatan National High School's Special Program in the Arts–Creative Writing. Some of her writing credits are self-publishing "Have Mercy on Us" and co-authoring "Malafatan" and "At Iba Pa." Additionally, her active involvement in area literary groups shows a strong dedication to her writing projects.

Research Instruments

An in-depth, semi-structured interview was used to collect data. The interview was conducted in three parts: before, during, and after. A lot of thought went into the interview guide to cover writing goals, motivations, and challenges.

Data Gathering Procedures

The interview was recorded on audio and then typed up word-for-word after getting informed permission. This format was flexible enough to accommodate both deep questions and well-thought-out answers, resulting in greater depth and authenticity.

Data Analysis

Thematic and descriptive methods were used to look at the data. The researcher read the transcript several times to identify trends and main ideas. Coding methods were used to group ideas that came up more than once, and these groups were then combined into larger theme groups. To protect participants' viewpoints, direct quotes were used, following standard practices in qualitative research that emphasize honesty and authenticity (Eldh et al., 2020).

Ethical Consideration

The present investigation adhered to established ethical guidelines, prioritizing the dignity, rights, and welfare of the participant. Before data collection commenced, the participant received comprehensive information regarding the study's objectives, the specifics of her involvement, and the anticipated use of the collected data; her voluntary and informed consent was subsequently obtained. Furthermore, confidentiality was rigorously maintained through the use of pseudonyms and the elimination of any identifying information, thereby safeguarding the participant's anonymity. All interview recordings, transcripts, and associated documentation were meticulously safeguarded and utilized exclusively for scholarly investigation. The interview procedure was conducted with the utmost sensitivity and respect, thereby enabling the participant to articulate her experiences candidly and to abstain from or retract any response should any unease manifest. Throughout the study, the researcher maintained a reflexive stance and adhered to ethical principles in representing the participant's narrative, thereby ensuring that her perspective was presented with precision and respect, free of distortion or exploitation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined "Gy's" writing history, providing a picture of the important events and forces that shaped her growth as a student writer. The results showed two main themes: (1) important turning points in the growth of a student writer, and (2) the reasons she kept writing. These themes show how people's experiences, educational systems, and writing groups interact in complex ways. This shows how writing development is socially situated (Graham, 2018).

Important Steps in the Life of a Student Writer: Joining the Arts Special Program
When Gy started the Special Program in the Arts–Creative Writing, it was the legal start of her writing career. Her participation in events, performances, and portfolio presentations boosted her skills and confidence. Structured recognition and creative options strengthened her inner drive, in line with self-determination theory, which holds that long-term engagement stems from agency, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

As a creative comeback, making a zine
Gy's return to creativity after a long break was sparked by the publication of a self-published book. This zines really helped me think about myself, make stories, and figure out what they meant. This aligns with research indicating that zines are effective for artistic evaluation and self-reflection (Brown et al., 2021; Herrera, 2025). This achievement also shows how changed creative situations and opportunities can spark inspiration again (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2022).

Getting involved in a writers' group
Gy's participation in the Sarangani Writers League and SOX Writers was a big part of her growth. It was possible to get comments from others, get help, and feel like you belonged in collaborative writing settings. All of these things are known to increase engagement and persistence (Chen et al., 2023; Myhill et al., 2022). Her tendency to

see accomplishments as signs of progress rather than as finished results reflects a growth-oriented view aligned with long-term learning engagement (Zhao et al., 2021).

Writing in a daily diary
Writing in a book every day helped me become more disciplined and think more about myself.
Constructive comments, even when they came with significant changes, pushed people to do better. According to Alt et al. (2022) and Vula et al. (2024), writing in a reflective diary can help people develop skills for lifelong learning and self-regulation.

Parts that deal with emotions and relationships
A lot of expressive writing came from personal relationships. This shows how important emotional experiences are for both artistic expression and the development of identity (White, 2021; Martin, 2025).

Writing as a Way to Speak Out and Express Culture
Gy's later work showed that he was dedicated to writing for others and to giving voice to underrepresented views. This writing practice later became a way to promote culture, which aligns with community-based views that see writing as something everyone does (Randle et al., 2024; Cariaga & El Halaissi, 2024).

Feedback and Help from the Community
Honest feedback from peers and ongoing participation in writing groups helped Gy feel more confident in her abilities and keep going even when things got tough. Research shows that valuable feedback and a sense of community are important for improving writing skills in higher education (Nguyen, 2024; Reyes, 2023).

Conclusion and Recommendations
The results of this study showed that writing growth is not a straight-line process and has emotional and social aspects. Gy's personal story shows how organized teaching methods, creative distractions, and helpful writing networks can all work together to shape a writer's identity. The Writer(s)-within-Community approach, which says that writing is a socially situated and dynamic activity, fits well with what she has been through. So, her story reinterprets writing as an act of pagpadayon, which means a conscious commitment to ongoing creation, self-reflection, and self-expression, even when things are not clear.

Educational institutions should create writing programs that combine structured methods with real-life expression, including creative outlets like zines, writing communities, and reflection exercises on what you have written. Also, arts programs and college courses should emphasize culturally sensitive, student-centered methods that encourage long-term participation, creative output, and social impact.

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