



Exploring Gender Influence on Argumentative Essay Structure: A Case Study of IELTS Test Takers in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study investigated how gender influenced the alignment of thesis statements with the structure of argumentative essays among IELTS test takers in Pakistan and evaluated gender's impact on organizational structures to identify writing strategy challenges. Additionally, it offered perspectives on the linguistic and cultural context influenced by gender among Pakistani test takers. The study carries significant consequences for the field of education., informing teaching methodologies, enhancing test preparation, and promoting gender-inclusive assessments. Using a mixed-methods approach and textual analysis based on Ken Hyland's Genre-Based Structure model, the findings revealed that 86 out of 100 candidates effectively incorporated hooks into their essays, capturing the reader's attention. Gender-based comparisons indicated that 44 females and 42 males engaged readers effectively, unveiled nuanced differences in their writing strategies. Variations in integrating background information, adhering to the essay structure, and crafting introductory and body paragraphs among male and female candidates are highlighted. Overall, females adhered more closely to the content structure of the essay, comprising 54%, while males constituted 46%. The study emphasizes the need for tailored support mechanisms to address specific challenges faced by both genders in essay writing. This research offers valuable insights into gender-specific writing patterns, forming a basis for refining educational practices and improving IELTS test preparation strategies. Future research could explore underlying factors influencing these patterns, including cultural and educational influences, focusing on developing interventions to enhance writing skills for both genders and fostering more equitable and inclusive educational environments.

Introduction

This research delves into the intricate dynamics of essay writing, specifically within the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) context in Pakistan. Focusing on the interplay between gender and argumentative essay structure, the study conducts a retrospective analysis of writing strategies employed by IELTS candidates. Recognizing the broader implications for educational practices and policies (Akram & Yang, 2021; Akram 2020) and assessment frameworks, the exploration of gender influence in this context extends beyond an academic exercise.

The domain of language assessment, exemplified by IELTS, offers a rich terrain for understanding how individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds express their thoughts in writing. The study places particular emphasis on the historical framework, meticulously examining the connection between thesis statements and structural elements in argumentative essays. It acknowledges that essay composition is not a standardized task but is influenced by various factors, with gender emerging as a significant aspect.

The research objectives are clearly defined: to investigate how gender influences the alignment of thesis statements with the structure of argumentative essays among IELTS test takers in Pakistan. Through a retrospective lens, the study evaluates the impact of gender on the organizational structure of these essays, assessing the effectiveness of conveying ideas. Additionally, the research aims to identify challenges faced by male and female test takers, providing insights into the gender-based linguistic and cultural context of Pakistani IELTS candidates in the realm of essay writing.

The significance of the current study is multifaceted. Firstly, it contributes to refining teaching methodologies by offering insights into how gender influences thesis statement alignment in argumentative essays. This knowledge can inform educators in tailoring instructional approaches to consider gender-specific writing patterns. Furthermore, the findings have practical applications for enhancing test preparation strategies, potentially improving overall performance in the IELTS exam.

Identifying challenges faced by male and female test takers in Pakistan, the research supports the development of targeted support mechanisms. This is particularly beneficial for individuals retaking the exam, providing a nuanced understanding of their writing strategies and areas for improvement. Beyond immediate contexts, the study contributes to the discourse on gender-inclusive assessment practices, offering retrospective insights into how linguistic and cultural factors intersect in the specific context of the IELTS exam in Pakistan.

The findings of the present study indicate that, overall, 86% of candidates successfully integrated hooks into their essays, capturing the reader's attention effectively. However, in a gender-based comparison, 54% of females demonstrated effective engagement compared to 46% of males, revealing nuanced variations. In conclusion, this retrospective investigation into gender influence on argumentative essay structure among IELTS test takers in Pakistan provides a foundational understanding of historical writing patterns. It not only offers valuable insights but also lays the groundwork for future studies in language testing and related domains. The exploration contributes to a nuanced and inclusive understanding of the complexities of academic writing influenced by gender, with females exhibiting a more meticulous adherence to the essay structure, representing 54% compared to males at 46%.

Statement of the Problem

Many IELTS test takers in Pakistan exhibit unique approaches to essay writing, and this study aimed to explore how gender influences the writing strategies of these individuals. The present research focused on understanding if and how gender impacts the alignment of thesis statements with the overall structure of argumentative essays. This investigation is vital for revealing insights into gender-specific writing strategies and addressing potential challenges faced by male and female test-takers in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

The study holds significant implications for education and assessment practices. Firstly, it contributes to the processing of teaching methodologies by revealing insights into how gender influences the alignment of thesis statements in argumentative essays. This knowledge can inform educators and institutions on tailoring instructional approaches to consider gender-specific writing patterns. Secondly, the study's findings have practical applications in enhancing test preparation strategies, potentially improving overall performance in the IELTS exam. Additionally, by identifying challenges faced by male and female test takers, the research supports the development of targeted support mechanisms, particularly beneficial for individuals retaking the exam. Moreover, the study advances the discourse on gender-inclusive assessment practices, providing a nuanced understanding of how linguistic and cultural factors intersect within the specific context of the IELTS exam in Pakistan. Lastly, it contributes to the broader academic research landscape by offering new insights into the alignment of thesis statements in argumentative essays, laying a foundation for future studies in language testing and related fields.

Research Questions

The present research answers the following questions:

1. How does gender influence the rhetorical moves and strategies employed in argumentative essays following Ken Hyland's Genre-Based Structure?
2. How does gender influence the formulation and presentation of thesis statements in argumentative essays adhering to Ken Hyland's Genre-Based Structure, and what role do these thesis statements play in shaping the overall persuasive intent of the essays?

3. In what ways does gender impact the organization and development of the introduction, body, and conclusion sections in argumentative essays following Ken Hyland's Genre-Based Structure?
4. How do these structural variations influence the overall coherence and persuasiveness of the essays?

Literature Review

The act of writing involves the organization and expression of thoughts. Given its nature as a process, there isn't a singular, fixed approach to writing. Nevertheless, as asserted by (Fowler et al., 2007), proficient writers navigate through various stages that often interconnect and loop back. These stages encompass (1) initial development or planning through techniques like brainstorming, clustering, free writing, etc., (2) the drafting phase, and (3) the revision stage.

Within the realm of essay writing, the evolution of ideas is intricately tied to the formulation of a thesis statement. This statement serves as a guide for the reader, clarifying the essay's focus and the author's intended argument, echoing Sullivan's (1984) assertion that a thesis statement, or thesis sentence, articulates the composition's purpose. It encapsulates the central idea and frequently hints at how this idea will be substantiated. Ideally, it serves as a concise one-sentence summary of the entire composition (Sullivan, 1984, p. 125). Ramzan et al. (2023) have claimed that in written communication, grammar plays a vital role in ensuring that messages are conveyed clearly and effectively. Further, Ramzan et al. (2023) have suggested that motivation in English learning determines vigilant proficiency in ESL learning. Furthermore, Ramzan et al. (2023) have confirmed that social media helps facilitate the exchange of ideas, insights, and knowledge, fostering a dynamic and stimulating academic environment. By adding more, Ramzan et al. (2023) Abdelrady and Akram (2022) have elucidated that the English language holds significant importance in today's global society, serving as a vital tool for communication (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023; Al-Adwan et al., 2022), business, academia (Akram et al., 2020), and more.

Beyond proficiency in organizing and developing ideas, a writer must also possess adeptness in grammar rules. Drawing on the writer's experience in instructing writing, it becomes evident that students often encounter challenges, with grammar rules being a recurrent stumbling block in the writing process Hadiani (2013).

Teaching writing to non-native students entails a focus on key elements like vocabulary, grammar, and text organization. Emphasizing the development and expression of core ideas is crucial for effective writing. In essay writing, students need to construct logically ordered ideas that directly address the given topic, supporting arguments with evidence. Providing authoritative evidence, including specific examples, facts, expert opinions, and quotations, strengthens arguments. However, ensuring the relevance of ideas and support to the topic question is paramount. Understanding and addressing the topic question is crucial for constructing a meaningful and pertinent response. For instance, when addressing the legalization of euthanasia in Indonesia, considerations should encompass social, ethical, religious, and constitutional aspects. In summary, effective writing for non-native students involves mastering language skills, organizing ideas logically, and ensuring content relevance to the given topic (Wijaya, 2017).

According to Schaum (1999), a thesis statement is essentially the response to the topic question. A lack of comprehension regarding the topic question can significantly impact the formulation of an appropriate thesis statement. For example, if the topic question is "Should euthanasia be legal in Indonesia?" a misguided thesis statement such as "Euthanasia may be legal if it is the right decision to do" may seem responsive, but it lacks relevance to the actual topic question. The ideal thesis statement should assert a clear stance on the topic question and offer supporting reasons for that stance.

Hyland's genre-based structure for argumentative essays emphasizes a systematic approach to constructing persuasive compositions. Following a conventional format, the introduction begins with an engaging hook, provides background details, and concludes with a precise thesis statement. The subsequent section contextualizes the issue, offering relevant background information and defining key terms. The core of the essay involves presenting a well-supported argument based on logical reasoning, concrete evidence, examples, and quotations. Acknowledging potential counterarguments and skillfully refuting opposing perspectives adds depth to the argument. Each main point is supported by comprehensive evidence, accompanied by meticulous analysis. Seamless transitions ensure a coherent flow of ideas, guiding the reader through the essay. The conclusion succinctly recaps main points, restates the thesis, explores broader implications, and may end with a thought-provoking statement or a call to action. Adhering to

prescribed citation styles is essential for proper referencing if required. For a deeper understanding of Hyland's genre-based structure, consulting his specific works is recommended (Hyland, 1990).

The 'argumentative essay' emerges as a predominant genre for undergraduate students, particularly within the arts, humanities, and social sciences (Wu, 2006, p. 330; Hewings, 2010). Despite variations in its nature across disciplines, the ability to construct a persuasive argument is universally recognized as a crucial aspect of effective academic writing (Lea & Street, 1998). (Nesi & Gardner, 2006) survey spanning 20 disciplines emphasizes the essay's value in exhibiting critical thinking and argument development within the curriculum. However, many students encounter challenges in mastering argumentation, often due to a lack of awareness or difficulties stemming from disparate secondary school teachings (Bacha, 2010; Davies, 2008; Andrews, 1995).

The university setting offers limited explicit guidance on argumentative little incorporation into undergraduate programs in the UK (Mitchell & Riddle, 2000). While general advice on academic writing is dispensed through course handbooks and tutors' feedback, its application proves challenging for students within their specific writing contexts (Lea & Street, 1998). Tutors' feedback, often communicated through categorical comments like 'Argument!' tends to be vague, reflecting uncertainties among tutors regarding the concept of argument and, more broadly, the essay's requirements (Lea & Street, 1998; Mitchell & Riddle, 2000; Jacobs, 2005).

The essay provided comprehensive guidance on structuring and writing history papers, covering key elements such as titles, introductions, body paragraphs, conclusions, and the overall writing process. It emphasized crafting effective titles after drafting the essay and starting the introduction with a captivating hook, avoiding general statements. The importance of concise thesis statements and clear topic sentences in body paragraphs was highlighted, with a focus on clarity and logical order. The conclusion went beyond summarization, exploring broader ideas from the argument. The writing process involved careful reading, note-taking, outlining, drafting, creating a title, taking breaks, and revising. Stylistic pitfalls to avoid included unattributed quotations, passive voice, improper tense use, casual language, excessive thesaurus use, and improper parallel structure. The document also offered advice on evidence gathering, creating outlines, and handling the revision process, concluding with a reminder of the challenges and rewards of writing and the continuous improvement achievable through practice (Endy, 2011).

The existing literature highlights four types of topical progression in essays: parallel, sequential, extended parallel, and extended sequential. This study focuses on Turkish learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and aims to evaluate their proficiency in constructing topical links, identify preferred progression types, and discern the linguistic structures employed for progression. Using Topical Structure Analysis (TSA), the research examined essays from 81 English Language Teaching students in three Turkish universities. The findings indicate that Turkish EFL learners demonstrate less-than-optimal proficiency in topical structuring, with a preference for parallel and sequential progressions. Extended progression is less frequently employed. Pronouns are predominantly used for parallel progression, transitioning to new noun phrases for sequential progression. This investigation provides valuable insights into the topical structuring abilities of Turkish EFL learners in argumentative essays, revealing their preferences and proficiency in utilizing different progression types and linguistic structures (Kılıç, Genç, & Bada, 2016)

Research Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was employed to conduct a textual analysis, with the presentation of findings facilitated through the use of pie charts. The primary data collection method involved administering essay tests to 100 IELTS test takers in Pakistan, comprising 50 males and 50 female students. Simple random sampling was utilized to ensure a representative sample. Subsequently, the collected data underwent textual analysis using Ken Hyland's Genre-Based Structure for Argumentative Essays model (1990). This model served as a framework for comprehensively examining the content and structure of the essays. The outcomes of this analysis were then visually represented through tables and charts, providing a clear and accessible means of presenting the distribution of data. This research design ensures a holistic exploration of gender-specific writing patterns in argumentative essays within the context of IELTS testing in Pakistan.

Analysis of the Selected Discourse

1. Theoretical Analysis and Discussion

The theoretical framework for this study integrates a mixed-methods approach and textual analysis within the context of argumentative essay writing, employing Ken Hyland's (1990) Genre-Based Structure as the guiding model.

1.1 Mixed-Methods Approach

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This allows for a comprehensive exploration of the alignment of thesis statements with the structure of argumentative essays among IELTS test takers in Pakistan.

1.2 Textual Analysis

Textual analysis serves as a central component of the theoretical framework. By scrutinizing the content of essays through systematic examination, the study aims to uncover nuanced patterns in how theses align with the overall structure. This approach provides depth to the understanding of gender-specific writing strategies.

1.3 Simple Random Sampling

The study employs a simple random sampling technique to ensure a representative sample of 100 IELTS test takers, consisting of 50 males and 50 female students. This method enhances the generalizability of findings to the broader population of IELTS test takers in Pakistan.

1.4 Data Collection Tool

The primary data collection tool is an essay test, administered to the selected participants. This tool allows for the elicitation of authentic responses, providing rich data on participants' writing styles within the argumentative genre.

1.5 Theoretical Model: Ken Hyland's Genre-Based Structure

Ken Hyland's (1990) Genre-Based Structure for Argumentative Essays serves as the theoretical model guiding the analysis. This model provides a systematic framework for examining the rhetorical moves and organizational patterns within argumentative essays. Applying this model enhances the study's ability to categorize and interpret the data systematically.

This structure typically includes the following components:

1.5.1 Introduction: Hook or Attention-grabber

The introductory paragraph in an argumentative essay plays a vital role by starting with a compelling hook, offering a brief background on the issue's relevance, and introducing a clear and debatable thesis statement. Its purpose is to establish context, engage the reader, and outline the author's stance for the upcoming argument.

In writing introductions, a "hook" and an "attention-grabber" share the goal of capturing the reader's interest. Females in this study exhibited a higher frequency of using these techniques compared to males, as demonstrated by specific examples from study:

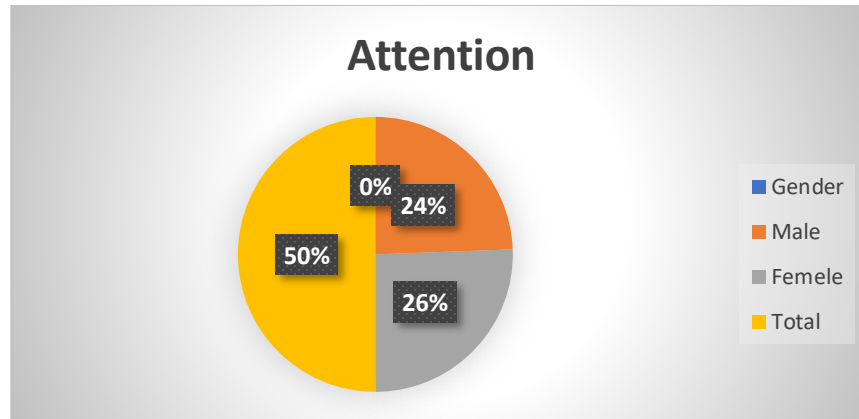
“A perspective to consider is that the public's interest in celebrities often drives media coverage.”

“A dimension to explore is the symbiotic relationship between celebrities and media, celebrities often benefit from media.”

In the first sentence “public interest in celebrities often drives media coverage” made a hook with the essay topic and got the readers' attention about the main topic of essay that media's involvement in the personal lives of celebrities is good or bad. Same in the second example the candidate talked about the “symbiotic relationship between celebrities and media” here, the hook attached with the topic of paper. In a research of newspapers' argumentative essays (Rahman, 2020) 34 out of 40 papers had hooked with topic. But that research was not gender based.

Figure 1

Gender Differences in using Attention-Grabbers



Note. In the gender-based comparison, it was observed that 26% females managed to engage the readers compared to 24% males who achieved a similar outcome.

1.5.2 Background Information

Background information in writing provides essential historical context, key concepts, and definitions, aiding reader orientation. Its purpose is to establish a foundation for understanding, answering fundamental questions about the subject's "what," "why," and "how." In essays, this information ensures clarity and enhances comprehension of the main argument or thesis. Here are the two examples:

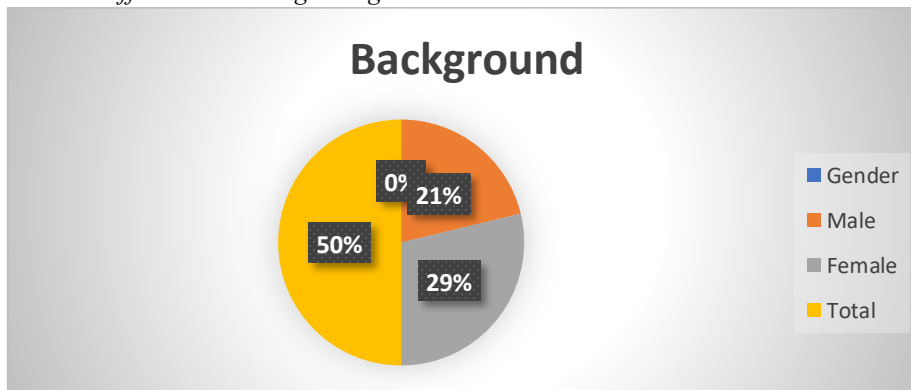
“It goes without saying that, in contemporary era mass media play a significant role in everyone lives, because it is a big source of entertainment”

“It goes without saying that media plays a significant role in the society.”

In both above examples, many books proved that media's role in society is so important such as in the Amedie, J. (2015) book he wrote the impact of media in society. So the candidates also used this information in their introductory paragraph by using the paraphrasing technique. In previous research on argumentative essays six sample size of university students was selected out of them 68% used background information in their paper but the study was not in gender-based. (Ouafi, 2017). However, this study provided a clear difference between gender-based that 42% of females and 31% of males provided background information in their essay and the overall result in Pakistan is 73%.

Figure 2

Gender Differences in using Background



Note. Among these, females were more likely to provide such information, with 29% females compared to 21% males.

1.5.3 Thesis Statement

The thesis statement in an argumentative essay is a concise and specific declaration that outlines the main point and purpose. Positioned in the introduction, it serves as a roadmap for the essay, guiding both the writer and

reader. In addition to stating the writer's position, it crucially presents reasons and evidence, forming the foundation for the entire argument. The examples of thesis statements are as under:

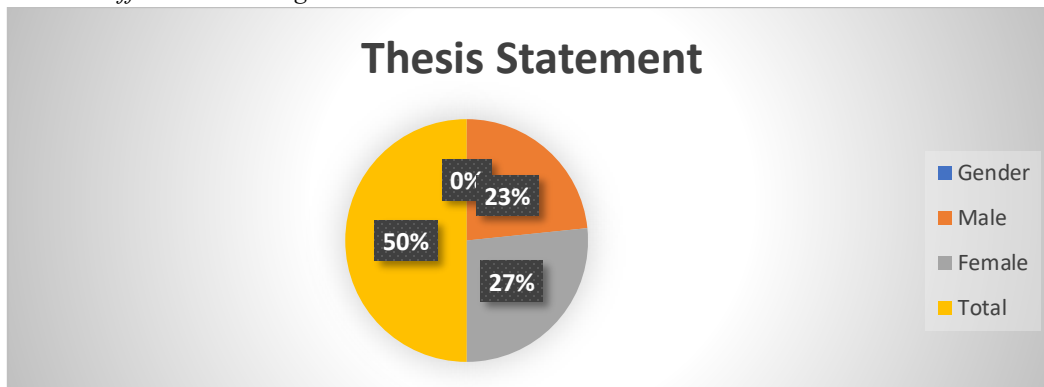
“Sometimes media cross its limits and interfere the personal lives of well-known persons, which reasoned many difficulties in their lives.”

“Media should not intrusion in the personal lives of celebrities, because they also have the right to spend the normal lives as normal people.”

In the first statement, the topic was crystal clear, and the person agrees with the topic of the essay but also highlights the problems faced by celebrities due to the interruption of media. This small statement introduced the whole essay. In the second one, the person not only showed his agreement about the topic but also showed that he was going to support it with the rights of famous people. In a separate study on Arabic users conducted by Ozfidan and Mitchell in 2020, 55.08% of participants incorporated a thesis statement into their essays. However, our research, which focused on Pakistani users of English, revealed a higher percentage, with 92% of candidates including a thesis statement in their essays. This indicates a significant disparity between the two groups, with a greater proportion of Pakistani users incorporating thesis statements compared to their Arabic counterparts.

Figure 3

Gender Differences in using Thesis Statement



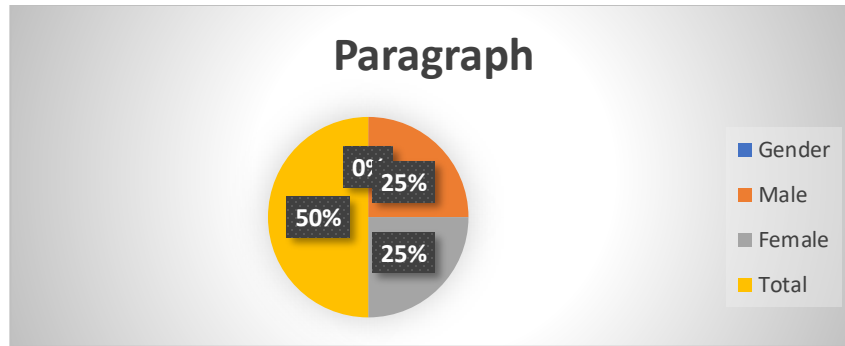
Note. The findings revealed that 27% of females included a thesis statement in their essays in 50% portion, whereas males comprised 23%.

1.5.4 Paragraphs

The division of paragraphs in an argumentative essay is crucial for effective communication and organization of ideas. Typically, an argumentative essay follows a standard structure, including: Introduction, Body and Conclusion. This structure helps readers follow the logical progression of their ideas and enhances the overall coherence of their essay. In this study, 76% of the candidates adhered to a well-defined essay structure, encompassing introduction, body, and concluding paragraphs. It is noteworthy that both male and female participants exhibited a similar compliance rate, with 38% from each gender following this structured approach. In comparison to a separate research endeavor, 45.46% of students, drawn from a pool of 187 individuals at a university in Saudi Arabia, demonstrated adherence to a proper argumentative essay structure (Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2020).

Figure 4

Gender Differences in using Paragraphs



Note. The data indicated that both males and females, at 25% each, applied paragraphs in their essays equally.

1.5.5 Introductory Paragraph

The argumentative essay's introduction must include a concise thesis, an attention-grabbing hook, and relevant background information for context. Clearly defining the essay's scope, engaging the reader, and previewing main points ensure a logical and reader-friendly flow. A brief conclusion reinforces the thesis, setting the stage for the subsequent discussion. In this investigation, it was noted that 35 participants adhered to the correct guidelines for composing introductory paragraphs. This comprised 13 males and 22 females. The instances are detailed below:

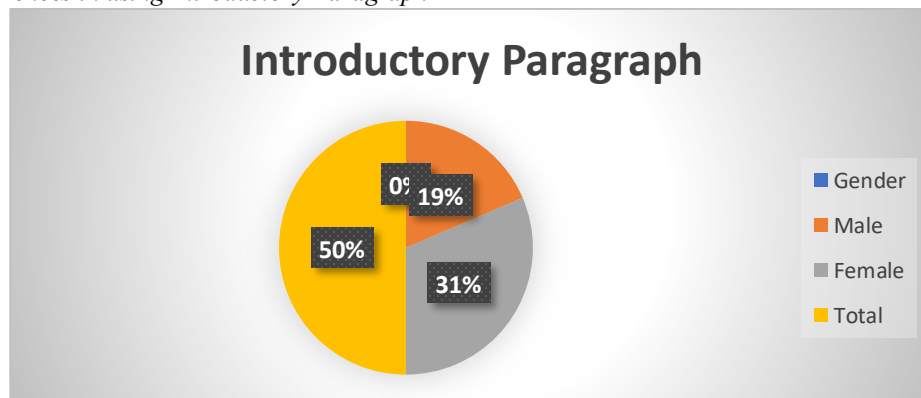
"I agree with this notion because its unethical and cause serious problems regarding health."

"However, I agree to this notion because of ethical boundaries or rights of their personal space and due to their security purposes."

The introductory paragraphs from two essays indicate that the candidates not only expressed agreement with the topics but also outlined the content they would discuss in their respective essays. In the first example, the candidate addressed unethical and health issues, subsequently elaborating on these topics in the essay. Similarly, in the second example, the candidate discussed personal space and security issues in the introductory paragraph and proceeded to explore these issues in her essay. In total, 35% of the candidates demonstrated proficiency in crafting effective introductions in this study. In contrast, another research study gathered data from 84 students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, Indonesia, revealing a mean score of 6.47 for writing introductory paragraphs (Prananda, 2016).

Figure 5

Gender Differences in using Introductory Paragraph



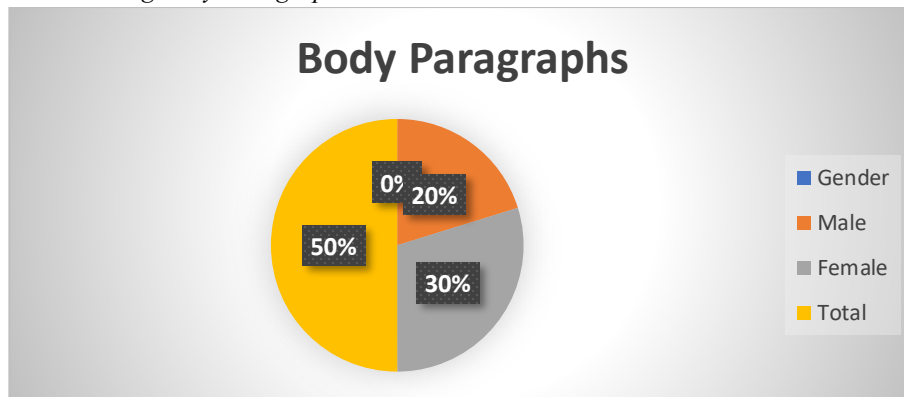
Note. The findings indicated that 31% of females effectively crafted introductory paragraphs, adhering to the necessary requirements, in contrast to only 19% of males who wrote proper introductory paragraph.

1.5.6 Body Paragraphs

Body paragraphs in an argumentative essay should start with a clear topic sentence, presenting a debatable claim aligned with the thesis. Supporting evidence, including facts and expert opinions, should be analyzed thoroughly, and addressing counterarguments adds depth. The research findings indicate that 47% of the participants effectively composed proper body paragraphs, comprising 19% males and 28% females. In contrast, a different study

revealed that Pakistani candidates exhibited a higher adherence, with 30.8% successfully crafting proper body paragraphs out of 26 essays evaluated at Universitas Bengkulu, Indonesia (Fitriani, Mulyadi, & Jayanti, 2019).

Figure 6
Gender Differences in using Body Paragraphs



Note. The findings revealed that 30% of females, in comparison to 20% of males, employed body paragraphs, each dedicated to discussing a single topic.

1.5.7 Topic Sentences

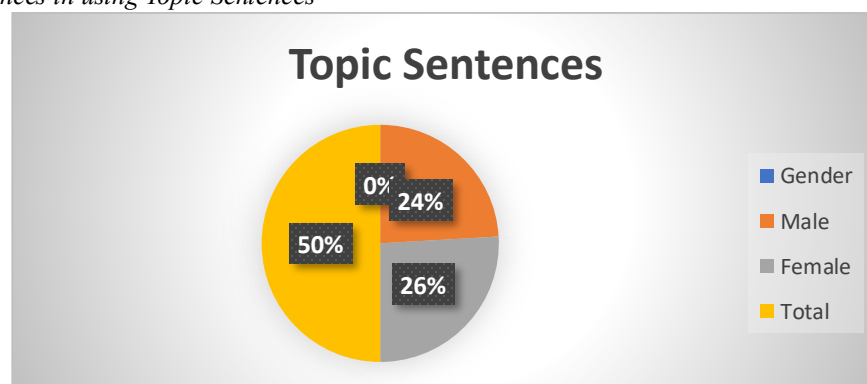
A topic sentence in an argumentative essay succinctly outlines the paragraph's main point, acting as a guideline for the reader and supporting the overall thesis statement. It serves as an introductory guide, ensuring coherence and logical progression of ideas. Examples of topic sentences extracted from this study are provided below:

“Firstly, everyone have a right to make some boundaries for their family.”

“First and Foremost, the factor that compelled me to agree with this notion is personal harassment.”

These represent two distinct instances of topic statements, wherein the authors expressed a clear intention to delve into specific topics throughout their respective paragraphs. The findings revealed that 54% of the participants successfully crafted appropriate topic statements to initiate their body paragraphs, seamlessly incorporating the outlined topics within the paragraphs. There was a slight disparity between male and female results, with 28% of females and 26% of males producing effective topic statements. In contrast, an alternative study involving Indonesian students reported a mean value of 8.71 out of 84 students for writing topic statements (Prananda, 2016).

Figure 7
Gender Differences in using Topic Sentences



Note. The results indicated that 26% of females and 24% of males incorporated topic statements in their body paragraphs, with females showing a slightly higher inclination in this aspect.

1.5.8 Supporting Evidence

Supporting evidence is vital in an argumentative essay, enhancing the writer's position through facts, statistics, examples, and expert opinions. The argument's strength hinges on the relevance and credibility of this

evidence, establishing a persuasive link with the central claim. Careful selection and clear explanation of each piece of evidence contribute to overall coherence and effectiveness. The examples from this research are provided below:

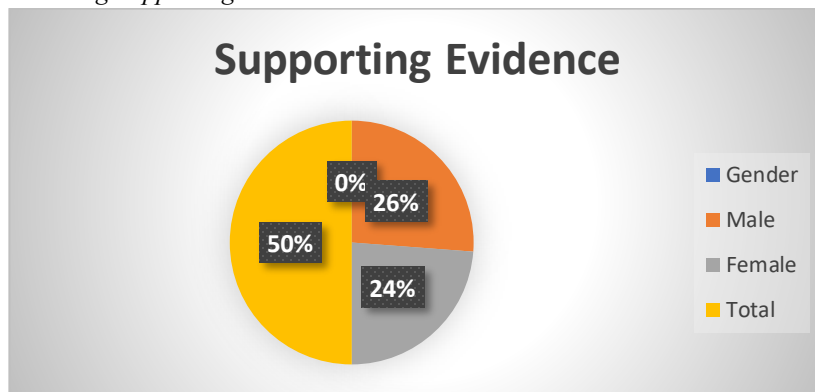
“It can be observed that if something is un-officially leaked without the consent of that celebrity it can be dangerous for the live of stars.”

“For instance, a local celebrity in India went to the verge of committing suicide because of depression caused when her personal photos and videos went viral on internet.”

In the aforementioned pair of examples, candidates presented details of specific incidents to bolster their arguments. The findings indicate that 63% of the candidates incorporated supporting evidence in their essays, with a slight distinction between male (33%) and female (30%) candidates. In contrast, another study involving 187 Saudi students revealed that 42.25% effectively included proper supporting evidence in their essays (Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2020). These results suggest that Pakistani candidates exhibit a higher proficiency in articulating supportive arguments within their essays.

Figure 8

Gender Differences in using Supporting Evidence



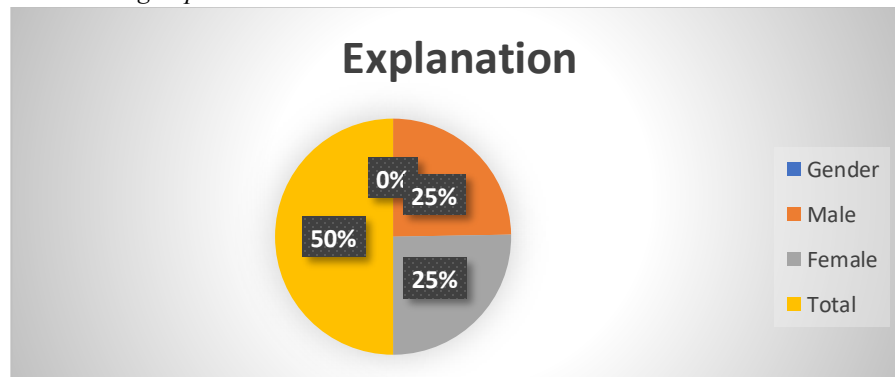
Note. The results demonstrated that 26% of males included supporting evidence in their paragraphs, whereas females exhibited a slightly lower ratio of 24%.

1.5.9 Explanation

Effective explanations in argumentative essays prioritize clarity, relevance, and precision, ensuring reader comprehension without unnecessary details. Precision is crucial, involving careful language selection, logical structure, and thorough yet concise detailing. Aligning with the thesis, addressing counterarguments, and balancing depth with brevity enhances credibility and strengthens the overall persuasive impact. The findings revealed that 89% of the candidates elucidated their points in their essays, with a marginal distinction between male (44%) and female (45%) candidates. In contrast, a study involving Saudi candidates indicated that only 29.95% of students met the expectation of effectively explaining their viewpoints (Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2020). In comparison, Pakistani candidates demonstrated a higher proficiency in explaining their perspectives compared to their Saudi counterparts.

Figure 9

Gender Differences in using Explanation



Note. The findings indicated that both males and females equally elaborated on topics in their essays, with 25% for males and 25% for females.

1.5.10 Counterarguments (Optional)

Counterarguments in an argumentative essay challenge the main thesis, representing alternative perspectives that readers may raise. Addressing these opposing views demonstrates the writer's awareness, enhancing the overall persuasiveness by acknowledging potential challenges. Effectively incorporating counterarguments showcases a thorough understanding, bolstering the essay's credibility and comprehensiveness. The examples from the research are as follows:

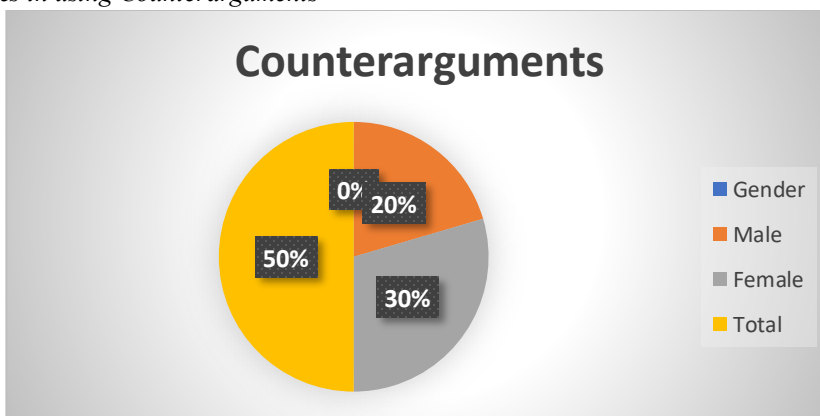
“While it is important for the media to report on matters of public concern, it should be done with sensitivity and a consideration for the boundaries of personal lives.”

“Although media has become the biggest entertainment for everyone, yet exposing anyone’s private life is not admirable.”

In the aforementioned instances, candidates initially elaborate on the significance of media before presenting opposing viewpoints. The study revealed that 66% of participants incorporated counterarguments in their essays. Among them, 39% were female candidates, while only 27% were male candidates. Another study focusing on Saudi candidates indicated that out of 187 students, 51.33% included counterarguments in their essays (Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2020), a proportion comparatively lower than that observed among Pakistani candidates.

Figure 10

Gender Differences in using Counterarguments



Note. The results revealed that, in comparison to males who incorporated counterarguments at a rate of 20%, females exhibited a higher percentage, with 30% including counterarguments in their essays.

1.5.11 Transitions.

Transitions in an argumentative essay are words or phrases that connect different parts of the text, facilitating a smooth flow of ideas. They guide readers through the logical progression of the argument, linking points and reinforcing the overall structure for clarity and persuasiveness. Examples include "however," "in addition," and "therefore." The examples from investigation as below:

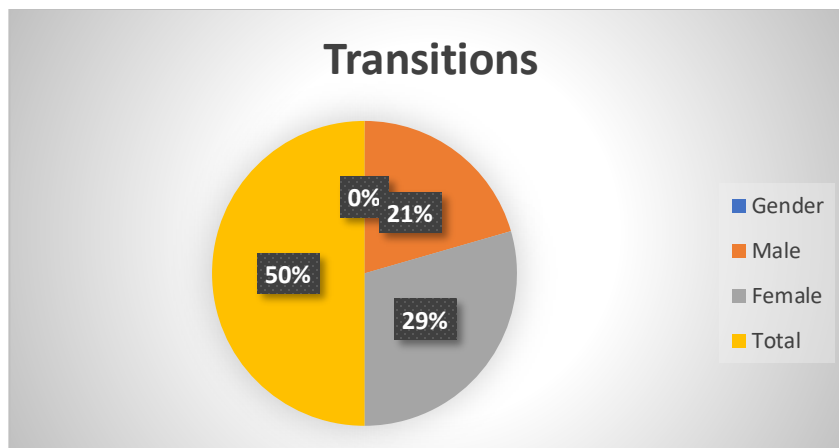
“Additionally, the impact of media intrusion on celebrities’ life can contribute to unrealistic expectations and standards.”

“However, celebrities also have great fame in youth.”

The findings indicated that 56% of the candidates incorporated transitions in their essays, with females employing them more frequently at 33%, while males used them less at 23%. In a separate study involving 35 students from FKIP Bung Hatta University Padang, only 40% of the students demonstrated proficient use of transitions in their argumentative essays (Yulansari, 2019). The results highlighted a higher usage of transitions among Pakistani students compared to their Indonesian counterparts.

Figure 11

Gender Differences in using Transitions



Note. The findings indicated that females utilized transitions more frequently in their essays compared to males, with 29% of females incorporating transitions as opposed to 21% of males.

1.5.12 Concluding Paragraph

A concluding paragraph in an essay serves to restate the thesis, recapitulate the main points, offer final thoughts, and optionally, suggest a call to action or propose areas for future research. It serves as the closing segment of the essay, summarizing the key arguments and leaving the reader with a lasting impression of the presented ideas. The findings revealed that 23% of the candidates effectively composed concluding paragraphs, with a marginal distinction between males at 10% and females at 13%. In contrast, a separate study on Indonesian students reported that 64% out of 13 students successfully crafted proper concluding paragraphs (Bina, 2020). This suggests that Indonesian students exhibited a higher proficiency in writing concluding paragraphs compared to their Pakistani counterparts.

Conclusion

This research provides a thorough investigation into the gendered dynamics of essay writing within the realm of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) among test takers in Pakistan. Through a retrospective analysis, the study explores the intricate interplay between gender and argumentative essay structure, shedding light on the nuanced writing strategies employed by IELTS candidates. The findings uncover variations in the integration of essential elements such as hooks, background information, thesis statements, and adherence to conventional essay structures. Notably, gender disparities emerge in the proficiency and preferences of male and female candidates in constructing different components of the essay. The significance of this study extends beyond academic exploration, offering practical implications for teaching methodologies, test preparation strategies, and the development of targeted support mechanisms. By contributing to the discourse on gender-inclusive assessment practices, this research provides valuable insights into the intricate intersections of linguistic, cultural, and gender factors within the specific context of the IELTS exam in Pakistan. Furthermore, the study lays the foundation for future research endeavors in language testing and related domains, fostering a nuanced understanding of historical writing patterns influenced by gender.

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