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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Unraveling the impact of metacognitive planning on writing performance through willingness to write in Pakistani ESL learners: a mixed-methods study

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Abstract: Despite the extensive focus by the Pakistani government on improving English language skills among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, their writing performance in English remains unsatisfactory. To address this issue, this study aimed to examine the role of planning as a metacognitive strategy in writing performance, along with the indirect effect of willingness to write. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, collecting quantitative data through a survey questionnaire and a writing performance test administered to 145 students pursuing a Bachelor of Science (BS) in English at Pakistani universities, and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with selected participants. The Partial Least Square (PLS) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and thematic analyses were employed for quantitative and qualitative data analysis, respectively. The findings revealed that planning as a metacognitive strategy can enhance the writing performance of Pakistani ESL learners. Planning was found to promote willingness to write, subsequently contributing to increased writing performance. Willingness to write emerged as a mediating variable between planning and writing performance. The findings of the study carry practical implications for universities to enhance students' writing performance by implementing planning strategies and improving their willingness to write.

Keywords: Metacognitive strategy, planning, willingness to write, writing performance, ESL learners, public universities.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the increasing global influence of the English language, the Pakistani government has re-emphasised the importance of the English language in universities. At all levels of education, the English language is already a core subject. However, the writing performance of students is below the satisfactory level (Abbas *et al.*, 2018; Sabir *et al*., 2023; Samiullah & Haidar, 2022), which requires significant attention. The main dilemmas include; vocabulary, punctuation, grammar, and spelling, voluble syllabus, and restricted time (Shafique *et al*., 2022). Pakistani students were found to have low writing self-efficacy (Fareed *et al*., 2021) leading to low writing performance. The low writing performance of Pakistani ESL learners harms their academic careers.

The most significant dilemma in the Pakistani university educational system is rooted in the continued practice of outdated teaching methodologies (Noor *et al*., 2020). This situation poses a great challenge in producing dynamic and progressive results, particularly for ESL pedagogy. Due to this old-fashioned methodology, i.e., the grammar-translation method (GTM), the failure ratio of the students in Pakistan, especially from the province of Punjab, is enormous in the subject of English in comparison with the rest of the subjects at every level of education (Brubacher, 2011). This problem can be resolved by focusing on the metacognitive strategies among universities. The metacognitive strategies significantly contribute to the writing performance of students (Robillos & Thongpai, 2022; Teng *et al*., 2022; Vocal & Borong, 2022). The knowledge of metacognitive strategies (Karlen, 2017) and implementation has a

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vital role in writing performance. However, Pakistani students cannot follow metacognitive strategies. This study focused on planning as a metacognitive strategy suitable to improve writing performance. Suitable writing planning supports good writing performance, while inadequate writing planning may lead to poor performance in writing (Bourdin & Fayol, 2000).

Furthermore, this study considered the willingness to write among university students, an influential variable that has not been addressed in previous studies on planning and writing performance. Without the willingness of ESL learners, planning cannot be beneficial to improve writing performance. Several previous studies considered planning (Channa *et al*., 2015; Ellis *et al*., 2012; Takallou, 2011), however, these studies have not addressed the influential role of willingness to write. None of the previous studies have examined the impact of planning on the willingness to write and writing performance among Pakistani ESL learners. Hence, in addition to addressing the direct impact of planning, this study focused on the indirect effect of willingness to write between planning and writing performance. Consequentially, the objective of this study is to examine the role of planning as a metacognitive strategy on writing performance along with the indirect effect of willingness to write among Pakistani university ESL learners.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study considered one metacognitive writing strategy namely, planning to promote the writing performance of ESL students in Pakistan. Metacognitive strategy can be defined as the mental executive skills that "control cognitive activities and ensure a cognitive goal is achieved" (Xing *et al*., 2008). The metacognitive strategy of planning refers to the assignment of tasks to accomplish goals (Zhang & Seepho, 2013)**.** The effect of planning on writing performance is developed based on two theories. These two theories include the theory of metacognition and the cognitive process theory of writing. This theory of metacognition is presented by Flavell (1979). The theory of metacognition suggests that metacognitive strategies including planning can help a writer to promote writing quality. Consistent with this theory, the current study considered the effect of planning as a metacognitive strategy on the writing performance of ESL learners. Similar to this study, the theory of metacognition claims that planning the paragraph before writing can improve performance in writing. According to Flavell (1979), theory of metacognition, humans have an understanding of their cognitive processes and are capable of actively overseeing, managing, and governing their thoughts. The favorable impact of planning as a metacognitive writing approach in the context of writing can be attributed to the heightened self-awareness and control it offers (Mazancieux *et al*., 2019). By engaging in planning, students can employ higher-order cognitive skills, such as goal setting, concept organisation, and strategic thinking, to effectively approach the writing assignment. Engaging in metacognition enables students to proactively anticipate obstacles, efficiently manage resources, and adapt their writing process accordingly. Hence, the deliberate utilisation of planning aligns with Flavell's metacognitive framework, enabling students to effectively negotiate the intricacies of writing assignments and ultimately enhance their writing proficiency (Wilson, 1985).

Similarly, a cognitive process theory of writing mentioned that a writer's thought procedures which is a part of planning can help to write better. A cognitive process theory of writing was presented by Flower & Hayes in 1981 (Flower & Hayes, 1981) grounded in gaining insight into the writing process through the writer's thought procedures (Alfaki, 2015). The cognitive process theory of writing posits that writing involves a series of interconnected cognitive processes, such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Within this framework, planning serves as a critical phase where students engage in thoughtful organisation of their ideas before actual writing. The positive impact of planning on student writing performance can be attributed to its role in facilitating a systematic and well-structured approach to composition (Flower & Hayes, 2004). By outlining thoughts and considering the overall structure in advance, students enhance the coherence and clarity of their writing. In essence, planning as a metacognitive strategy aligns with the cognitive process theory by optimizing the initial stages of the writing process, leading to improved overall writing quality.

Thus, the relationship between planning and writing performance is well justified with the help of the theory of metacognition and a cognitive process theory of writing. However, only planning cannot promote writing performance, willingness of the writer is more important to get maximum benefit from planning. Writing performance cannot be improved by just planning because the ESL learners' willingness to write is crucial. Hence, willingness to write plays an important role in planning and writing performance. Therefore, this study addressed the mediating role of willingness to write between planning and writing performance as shown in Figure 1.

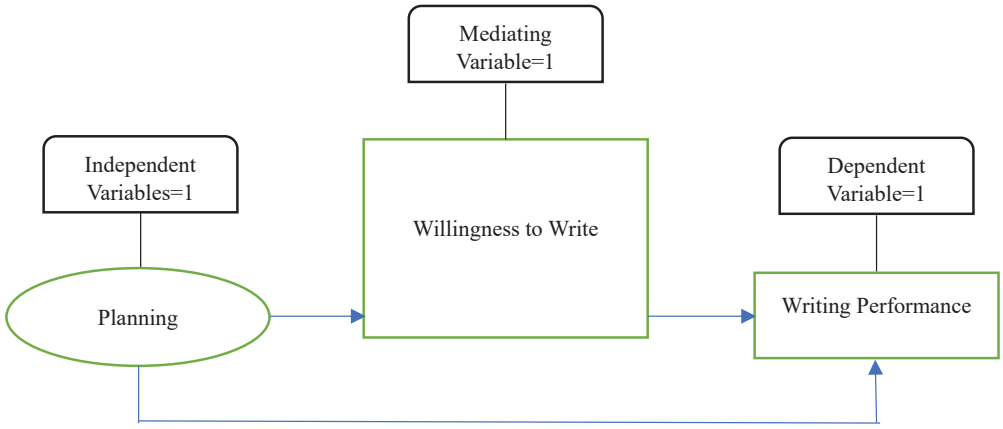


Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the study describing the relationship between planning, Willingness To Write (WTW) and writing performance

Relationship between planning and writing performance

The metacognitive strategy of planning refers to the assignment of tasks to accomplish goals (L. Zhang & Seepho, 2013). In this study, planning refers to the writing task setting by considering paragraph structure, making an outline, language features, setting up writing goals, time allocation, writing preparation, and efficient use of online resources. Nejad *et al*. (2022) concluded that critical thinking abilities, including planning, are useful for English as foreign language learners, improving their writing performance. Qin & Zhang (2019) reported that non-native English learners could use metacognitive strategies effectively for better learning and writing performance. Chuo (2007) pointed out that writing instructions, including planning and self-evaluating, are important for writing performance and apprehension of non-native English language learners. According to Limpo & Alves (2017), transcription planning has an important influence on the writing performance of students. Furthermore, Graham *et al*. and Fishman (2017) added that writing behaviour, planning, and performance are significantly interrelated and facilitate improving students' learning. Additionally, Abdolrezapour (2013) demonstrated that the connection between emotional intelligence and writing performance is significant and facilitates the students to plan and evaluate their writing for strong skills development. Similarly, Esmaeili (2002) reported that the planning of task writing is necessary for writing performance in writing tests. A study carried out by Rochmah (2020) identified that different modes of planning while writing help to promote writing accuracy. Additionally, Aripin & Rahmat (2021) confirmed that the metacognition model which also includes planning helps to promote ESL learners' writing process. Olinghouse *et al*. (2015) concluded that the knowledge of the topic and planning of writing significantly influence writing performance. Therefore, the literature shows the relationship between planning and writing performance which is highlighted in following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between planning and writing performance.

Relationship between planning and willingness to write

Willingness can be defined as the quality or state of being prepared to do something (Alakrash & Razak, 2020). Writing is considered a complex process to discover ideas, and thoughts or generate meaning. To convey fundamental and essential meaning in persuasive, effective, and successful writing, writers must be knowledgeable of various facets. According to most language students, writing is the most challenging and problematic skill to master. However, this problem can be resolved through a better willingness to write with the help of planning strategies. According to Esfandiari Dehmajnoni & Amjadiparvar (2022), students can improve their willingness to write and communicate when they have online planning for learning a language. In the study carried out by Rafiee & Abbasian-Naghneh (2020), it is reported that students' willingness to write can be improved with motivation and self-confidence that arbased on their planning. Basöz & Erten (2018)

reported that Turkish students of an English language course could improve their writing and communication through proper writing planning. Additionally, Mirsane & Khabiri (2016) concluded that students' willingness to write could be increased if their teachers motivated them to perform well and assisted them with writing planning and evaluation. Widiastuti (2018) revealed that the students' willingness to write and their confidence in writing is directly influenced by their self-assessment factors (i.e., planning). Meanwhile, Liao & Roy (2017) addressed that the willingness to write poetry in English by students of another language is influenced by the planning and rationality that is critical for a learner. Thus, literature highlighted the connection between planning and willingness to write which is proposed through the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between planning and willingness to write.

Relationship between willingness to write and writing performance

In linguistics, performance is referred to as an individual's linguistic behaviour, which involves his/her capability to write in a specific language. Writing performance is grounded on five components; content, organisation, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992). Willingness to write is the most imperative element discussed in various studies (Chung & Leung, 2016; Le *et al*., 2019; Liang *et al*., 2019; Madeng & Palanukulwong, 2019; Sharrad & Faravani, 2021b), However, these studies have not addressed writing performance. To fill this gap, the effect of willingness to write on writing performance is addressed. Writing is complex as it is a multidimensional and complicated process influencing different cognitive and affective factors (Alnufaie & Grenfell, 2013). Several researchers attempted to explore this phenomenon to address these complicated writing dimensions. In these directions, several previous studies attempted to identify the factors affecting writing performance (Graham *et al*., 2019; Kojima, 2020; Nik *et al*., 2010; Teng, 2020), however, the effect of willingness to write in relation to writing performance was ignored.

There is a crucial positive relationship between willingness to write and writing performance. An essential factor favorable to becoming a decent writer is the willingness to write (Lefever & Carati, 1995). Willingness to write is considered a sub-element of willingness to communicate (Khajavy *et al*., 2016) which is essential for writing performance. De Bernardi & Antolini (2006) proved a positive relationship between willingness and interest in argumentative writing. The student's failure, along with the trouble in writing in English, could be addressed with the help of applying a writing method, which can inspire individuals to discover topics, gather various ideas from good pieces of knowledge, and use the draft as well as review in their writing (Reid, 1993). However, it requires a level of students' willingness. Numerous studies have also demonstrated that writing helps to develop a better level of positive features toward writing learners and their willingness to take risks to write (Liao & Wong, 2010; Puengpipattrakul, 2014; Rattanaintanin, 2017). Generally, students' willingness to find their thinking and manifest their ideas is important (Liao & Wong, 2010; Puengpipattrakul, 2014). Therefore, willingness to write influences the writing performance of students which is proposed through the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive relationship between willingness to write and writing performance.

The mediation hypothesis suggests that the relationship between planning and writing performance is contingent upon an individual's inclination to engage in writing. Essentially, the level of inclination or motivation to participate in writing serves (Hasanah & Ali, 2020) as a mediator in this relationship. Individuals who possess a greater inclination toward writing (Camacho *et al.*, 2021) may demonstrate a more pronounced association between their preparatory endeavours and the tangible results of their writing. This implies that a person's proactive attitude towards writing, fueled by passion or enthusiasm, is essential in turning planning into successful writing. The mediation concept suggests that the influence of planning on writing performance may rely on the individual's willingness, highlighting the complex interaction between cognitive processes and motivational elements in the domain of writing accomplishment.

Furthermore, the mediating role of willingness to write between planning and writing performance is considered by following the instructions of Baron & Kenny (1986). According to the approach of Baron & Kenny (1986), planning must have a relationship with willingness to write, and willingness to write must have a relationship with writing performance. Furthermore, there should be a direct relationship between planning and writing performance. The aforementioned discussion proved all these relationships allow this study to use willingness to write as a mediating variable between planning and writing performance. Therefore, this study proposed that willingness to write is a central factor in producing better writing performance as outlined in the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis 4: Willingness to write mediates the relationship between planning and writing performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The research design is the most significant part of any study which should be consistent with the objective. This study employed a mixed-methods research design. A mixed-methods research design includes the collection, analysis, and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data at a definite stage of the research process within the same study. For the quantitative part, this study used a questionnaire and for the qualitative part, this study used semi-structured interviews. While using mixed-methods research, this study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach as illustrated in Figure 2.

Operational definition of the variables

In this study, writing performance refers to an individual's linguistic ability to generate high-quality writing, taking into account writing content, text organisation, grammar, vocabulary, and writing mechanics. It is assessed through a writing test, which is evaluated based on content, organisation, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics, following the guidelines outlined by Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1992). Before undertaking main data collection, a pilot study was carried out. A panel of three reviewers was selected from the English Departments of three universities. Therefore, three professors of applied linguistics were selected from three universities to confirm the validity of the instrument. After the confirmation of validity, a descriptive writing test was employed to measure the students' writing performance. The test topic was selected from the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) writing topics. The essays written by the students were evaluated using the writing composition scale provided by Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1992). The writing composition scale was based on five categories: content, organisation, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. English writing performance of students was based on the total score attained on the writing task. Students' essay writing skills were evaluated by the relevant examiners from universities. The examiners rated each category out of 10 points. Finally, based on the marks obtained, it was converted into the 5-point Likert scale.

Furthermore, willingness denotes the quality or state of being prepared to do English writing by considering willingness to develop notes in English, willingness to respond to mistakes, willingness to write journals in English, willingness to write daily routine activities, willingness to write dialogue, and willingness to improve English. The scale items are adapted from Madeng & Palanukulwong (2019). Finally, planning refers to the writing task setting by considering paragraph structure, making an outline, language features, setting up writing goals, time allocation, writing preparation, and efficient use of online resources. The scale items are adapted from Zhang & Qin (2018). All the scale items are reported in the appendix along with the complete questionnaire. Furthermore, for the qualitative part of the study, two interview protocols were developed for planning and three interview protocols to examine the effect of willingness to write. All the interview protocols are presented in the appendix.

Data collection

In the case of quantitative data, a structured questionnaire was used for data collection from the respondents. 300 questionnaires were used for data collection from the public universities of South Punjab, Pakistan. First-semester students of BS English from public universities were considered. The rationale for selecting Punjab instead of other provinces in Pakistan is that it is the most populous province with a higher literacy rate. This study targeted bachelor-level students from public universities, it is more suitable for the current study to examine the phenomenon under discussion due to the greater number of universities in this region. Only the first semester students are considered because these students have the same level of education. Stratified random sampling was



Figure 2: Explanatory sequential design.
Source: Creswell (2002)

Table 1: Basic statistics

	No.	Missing	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
PLAN1	1	0	3.681	4	1	5	1.191	-0.606	-0.541
PLAN2	2	0	3.775	4	1	5	1.157	-0.51	-0.632
PLAN3	3	0	3.611	4	1	5	1.148	-0.597	-0.469
PLAN4	4	0	3.667	4	1	5	1.145	-0.589	-0.464
PLAN5	5	0	3.719	4	1	5	1.133	-0.245	-0.67
PLAN6	6	0	3.846	4	1	5	1.11	-0.016	-0.79
PLAN7	7	0	3.67	4	1	5	1.183	-0.626	-0.539
WTW1	8	0	3.677	4	1	5	1.09	-0.582	-0.411
WTW2	9	0	3.705	4	1	5	1.065	-0.179	-0.598
WTW3	10	0	3.67	4	1	5	1.074	-0.377	-0.524
WTW4	11	0	3.442	4	1	5	1.194	-0.806	-0.347
WTW5	12	0	3.449	4	1	5	1.149	-0.674	-0.37
WTW6	13	0	3.432	4	1	5	1.167	-0.733	-0.334
WTW7	14	0	3.54	4	1	5	1.109	-0.611	-0.397
WP	15	0	3.428	4	1	5	1.202	-0.856	-0.311

Note: PLAN = Planning; WTW = Willingness to Write; WP = Writing Performance

used to distribute the questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed physically by visiting the English Departments of various universities. Similarly, after the questionnaire distribution, the same students were requested to participate in a writing test to evaluate writing performance. A total of 145 valid responses were received; therefore, the response rate was 48.3% which is suitable for the next step of data analysis. Furthermore, qualitative data were collected by using semi-structured interviews. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with the first-semester students of BS English.

This study carried out data screening before data analysis which is important to remove errors in the data (Won *et al*., 2017). In this section of the study, quantitative data were used for data screening in which various errors related to the missing value and outlier were examined. Data was found free from these errors and data normality was fine. Finally, data statistics after data screening are reported in Table 1.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Quantitative findings

The quantitative findings of the study are grounded on Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) which was carried out through Partial Least Square (PLS) which is a popular data analysis technique (Hair *et al*., 2016; Shehzad *et al*., 2019). First, convergent validity, essential to achieve, was considered. For convergent validity, the PLS measurement model was employed, as illustrated in Figure 3. The results of the PLS measurement model for convergent validity are presented in Table 2.

Convergent validity was achieved by examining factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) (Khurram, 2023), and average variance extracted (AVE). Table 2 presents all the factor loadings which are higher than 0.5. Furthermore, CR and AVE are above 0.7 and 0.5, respectively. The achievement of the minimum threshold level for factor loading, CR, and AVE confirmed the convergent validity. Second, discriminant validity was confirmed by using the AVE square root as given in Table 3 (Henseler *et al*., 2015).

The relationship between planning, willingness to write, and writing performance was examined through the PLS structural model as indicated in Figure 4. PLS structural model is the most significant way to examine the relationship (Aziz *et al*., 2023; Cheah *et al*., 2018; Matthews, 2017). The direct effect results in Table 4 highlight that all the relationships are significant. The relationship between planning and writing performance

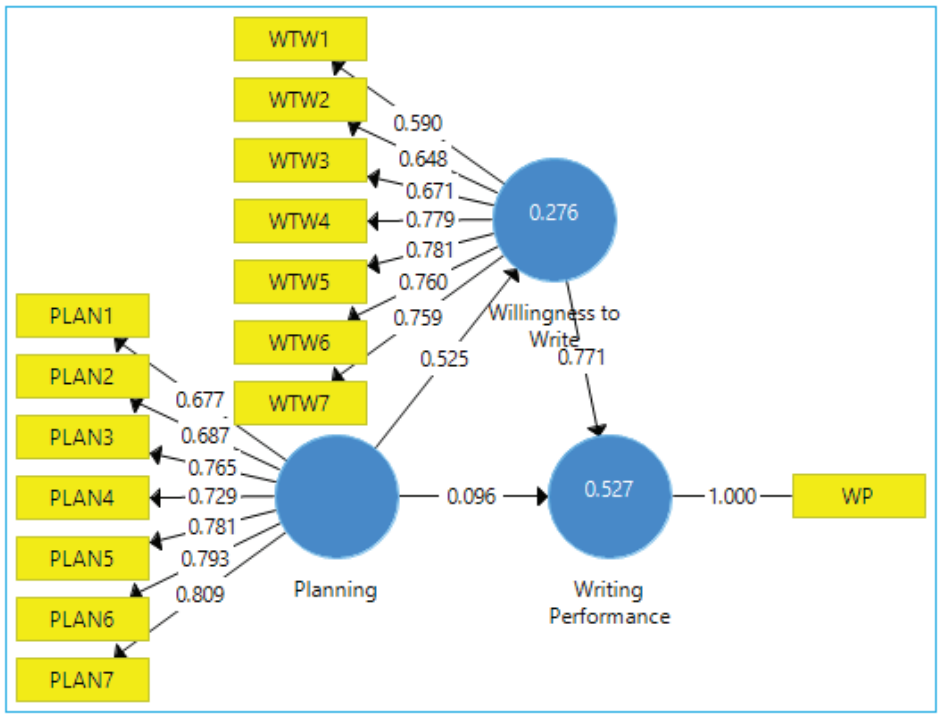


Figure 3: Measurement model assessment

Note: PLAN = Planning; WTW = Willingness to Write; WP = Writing Performance

Table 2: Convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Loading	Alpha	CR	AVE
Planning	PLAN1	0.677	0.87	0.9	0.563
	PLAN2	0.687			
	PLAN3	0.765			
	PLAN4	0.729			
	PLAN5	0.781			
	PLAN6	0.793			
	PLAN7	0.809			
Willingness to Write	WTW1	0.59	0.841	0.879	0.513
	WTW2	0.648			
	WTW3	0.671			
	WTW4	0.779			
	WTW5	0.781			
	WTW6	0.76			
	WTW7	0.759			
Writing Performance	WP	1	1	1	1

Note: PLAN = Planning; WTW = Willingness to Write; WP = Writing Performance

Table 3: Discriminant validity (AVE Square Root)

	Planning	Willingness to Write	Writing Performance
Planning	0.75		
Willingness to Write	0.525	0.716	
Writing Performance	0.309	0.621	1

Note: PLAN = Planning; WTW = Willingness to Write; WP = Writing Performance

Table 4: Results of Direct Effect

	B	M	STDEV	T Statistics	P Statistics
Planning -> Willingness to Write	0.525	0.524	0.06	8.743	0
Planning -> Writing Performance	0.096	0.094	0.046	2.073	0.039
Willingness to Write -> Writing Performance	0.771	0.769	0.038	20.128	0

Note: PLAN = Planning; WTW = Willingness to Write; WP = Writing Performance

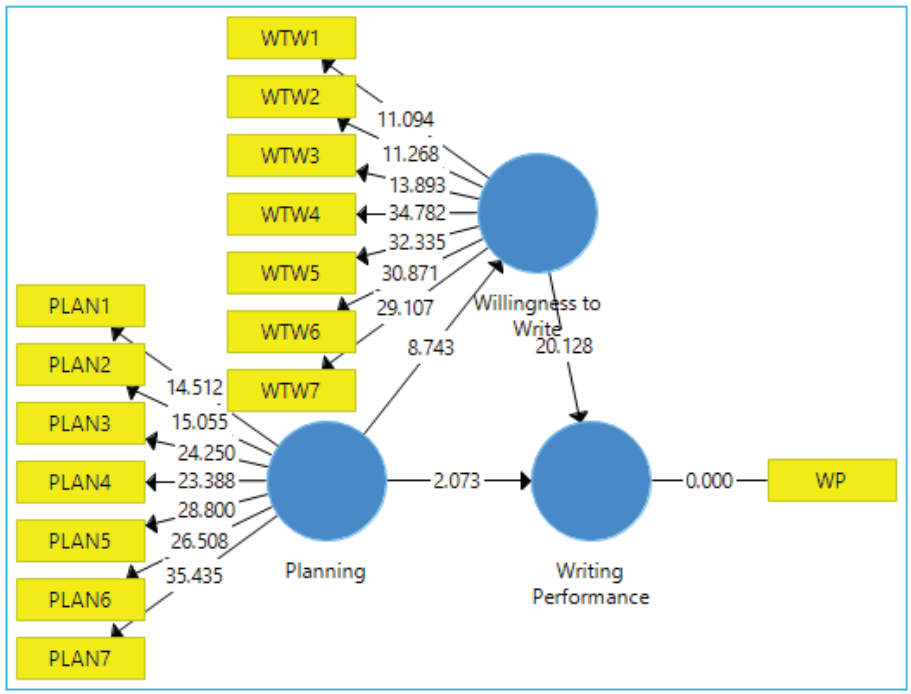


Figure 4: Structural model assessment

is significant as the t-value is higher than 1.96 (t-value=20.073; β-value=0.096) which accepted hypothesis 1. The relationship between planning and willingness to write is also significant which accepted hypothesis 2 (t-value=8.743; β-value=0.525). Finally, the relationship between willingness to write and writing performance is significant which accepted hypothesis 3 (t-value=20.128; β-value=0.771). These results are also given in Figure 5.

Moreover, the mediation effect of willingness to write was examined which is reported in Table 5. To assess the significance of the mediation effect, the t-value was considered similar to the direct effect. The mediation effect of willingness to write between planning and writing performance was proved significant (t-value=8.036; β-value=0.405). The mediation effect of willingness to write is visually apparent in the histogram which is indicated in Figure 6. Finally, this study assessed

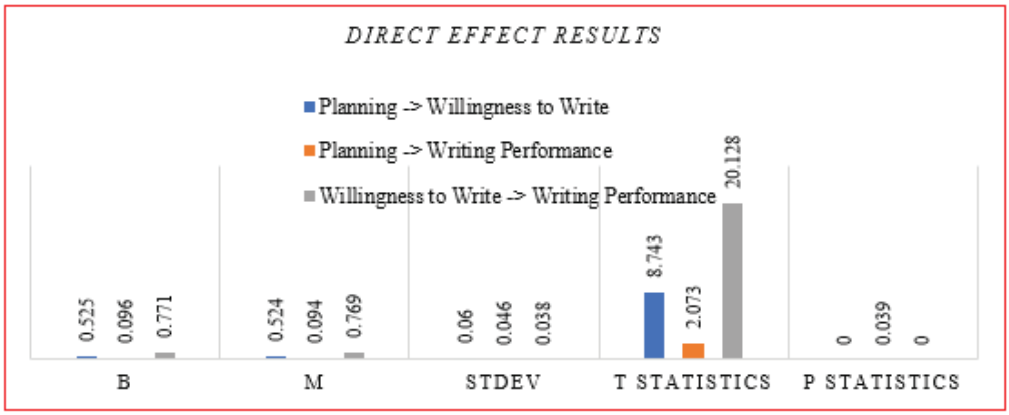


Figure 5: Results of Direct Effect

Table 5: Results of Mediation Effect

	β	M	STDEV	T Statistics	P Statistics
Planning -> Willingness to Write -> Writing Performance	0.405	0.403	0.05	8.036	0

Note: PLAN = Planning; WTW = Willingness to Write; WP = Writing Performance

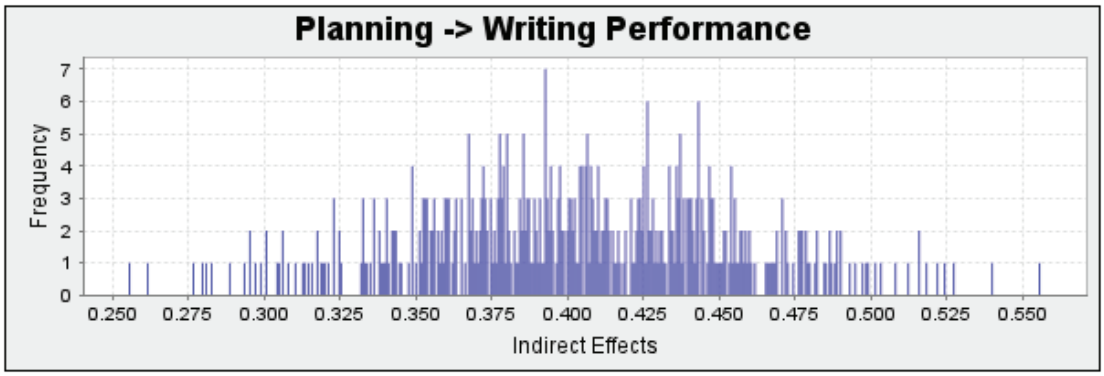


Figure 6: Results of Mediation Effect

the variance explained through r-square (R^2) which is 0.527. It identified that planning and willingness to write can bring a 52.7% change in writing performance.

Qualitative findings

Findings of the Pakistani ESL learners of English perspectives on the influence of planning on writing performance

This section of the study revealed the results of the influence of planning on writing performance among ESL learners of English. Planning is considered a metacognitive strategy. Therefore, this section provided the findings of planning on writing performance among university students. In interviews, participants emphasized crucial aspects related to planning for the improvement of writing performance. A concise overview of the findings is presented in Figure 7. In Figure 7, R1, R2, and R3 correspond to respondent/interviewee 1, respondent/interviewee 2, and respondent/interviewee 3, respectively. Respondents emphasized the significance of paragraph structure and the creation of an outline in enhancing the writing skills of ESL students.

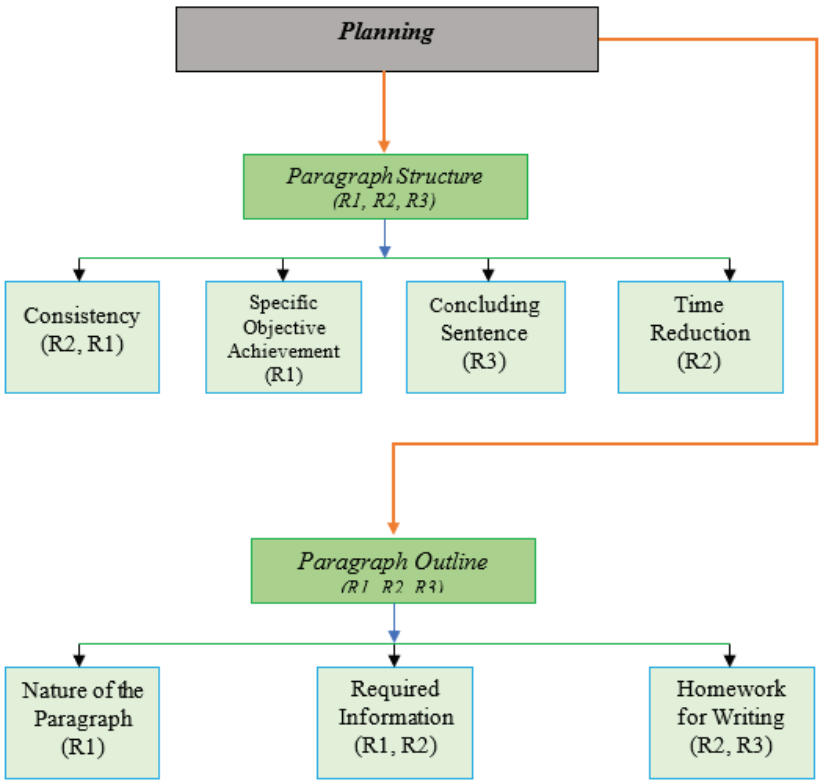


Figure 7: Summary of findings of Planning

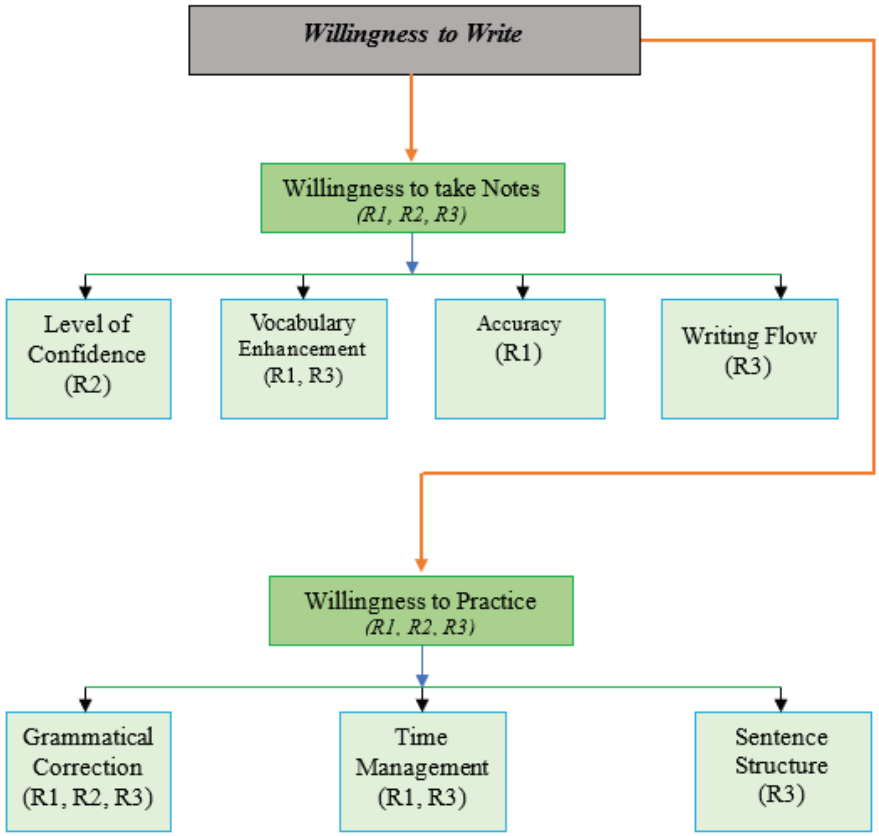


Figure 8: Summary of findings of Willingness To Write

> Well, [pause] the planning before writing is dependent on various elements and the structure of the paragraph is the crucial part of it. Paragraph structure is important in writing the text and planning paragraph structure can help me to compose better.
>
> In test composition, the role of the outline is critical. A better outline of the text can enhance the quality of my text. I think [long pause] planning the outline is most important in writing for me.

Findings of the Pakistani ESL learners of English perspectives on the influence of willingness to write on writing performance

This section addressed the influence of Willingness to Write (WTW) on the writing performance of Pakistani ESL learners of English. Interviewees revealed significant insights that contribute to improving writing through WTW. A summary of findings is reported in Figure 8. In Figure 8, R1, R2 and R3 denote the responded/interviewee 1, responded/interviewee 2 and responded/interviewee 3, respectively. Interviewees highlighted that, during the writing process, WTW has the potential to eliminate grammatical errors, enhance writing composition and that a willingness to practice can improve performance:

> Actually, [pause] the willingness to take notes helped me a lot to compose the text in a better way.
>
> A higher level of WTW increases the chances of fixing grammatical errors which ultimately increases the accuracy in writing compositing.
>
> It has a major effect on the writing composition. Generally, [pause], WTW is the imperative element in writing the text.
>
> Well, [pause] a better level of willingness to practice writing in English helps me to improve my writing performance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to test the role of planning on writing performance along with the indirect effect of willingness to write. Four hypotheses were proposed including three direct effect hypotheses and one mediation effect hypothesis. To test these hypotheses, two types of data were collected: (a) quantitative data through a questionnaire survey and, (b) qualitative data through semi-structured interviews.

Hypothesis 1 was proposed to investigate the impact of planning on writing performance. This hypothesis is accepted because the results highlighted the significant effect of planning on writing performance. Results identified the positive effect of planning on writing performance suggesting that an increase in the use of planning strategies can enhance overall writing performance. According to these results, planning the structure of the paragraph has a positive role in enhancing the writing of the ESL students. Similarly, the act of outlining before writing is identified as having a significant impact on promoting writing performance. Furthermore, language features, writing goals, time allocation, writing preparation, and efficient use of online resources have the potential to enhance writing skills among ESL learners. These results are similar to those of previous studies which highlighted that planning has an important contribution to writing performance (Huisman *et al*., 2019; Tarin & Yawiloeng, 2022; Teng *et al*., 2022).

Hypothesis 2 was proposed to examine the effect of planning on willingness to write. It is observed that planning holds crucial importance in increasing writing performance and serves as a most significant metacognitive strategy for enhancing willingness to write among students. Planning including considerations such as planning paragraph structure, the outline of the text, language features, writing goals, time allocation, writing preparation and efficient use of online resources has the potential to enhance willingness. While there are existing studies addressing willingness to write (Hashemian & Farhang-Ju, 2022; Sharrad & Faravani, 2021a; b), there is limited research specifically focused on the willingness of ESL students. Similar to this study, De Bernardi & Antolini (2006) proved a positive relationship between willingness and interest of students in argumentative writing.

Hypothesis 3 was proposed to investigate the effect of willingness to write on writing performance and the results indicate a significant relationship, thereby accepting the hypothesis. The findings reveal that an increase in willingness to write among students correlates with improved writing performance. It is observed that willingness to develop notes in English, willingness to respond to mistakes, willingness to write journals in English, willingness to write daily routine activities, willingness to write dialogue, and willingness to improve English can enhance writing performance. Similarly, it is mentioned by Lefever & Carati (1995), that an essential factor favorable to becoming a decent writer is the willingness of a writer. Finally, hypothesis 4 reveals that the willingness to write is crucial between planning and writing performance. It is identified that willingness

to write can transfer the positive effect of planning on writing performance.

The qualitative findings of the study highlight the importance of planning in fostering willingness to write. Furthermore, willingness to write was also found significant for writing performance. From interviews, it is identified that planning about the paragraph structure and outline of the text has a positive influence on enhancing willingness to write. Additionally, the willingness of ESL learners to engage in notes development, rectify mistakes, and actively participate in writing practices can increase writing performance. Consequently, it is identified that willingness to write is the mandatory factor in promoting writing performance through effective planning.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study makes a significant contribution to the field of applied linguistics, offering valuable theoretical implications. This study contributes significantly to the theory of metacognition and a cognitive process theory of writing by stressing willingness to write. Notably, it extends the theory of metacognition by advocating for the inclusion of willingness to write as a crucial component. While willingness to write plays a pivotal role in student writing performance, it has been overlooked in the existing metacognition theory. The study also explores novel relationships that were not previously examined by other researchers. Additionally, this study also addressed various new relationships that were not tested by other researchers. The addition of new relationships and the addition of willingness to write have several practical implications.

The findings of the study are helpful for universities to improve the writing performance of students by implementing planning strategies. Furthermore, this study added significant pedagogical contributions, which is quite rare in previous studies. For stakeholders such as syllabus designers and the education industry, the present study makes several recommendations to promote the learning of Pakistani ESL learners of English. This study suggested valuable insights for the syllabus designers while designing the syllabus of the bachelor's program among public universities. The identification of the important role of willingness to write suggested the policymakers focus on the willingness of the students towards writing. The promotion of willingness among students can increase the level of interest having a positive role in enhancing writing performance. Thus, policymakers should develop effective strategies to improve willingness levels. Additionally, the management of universities and the teachers should also focus on increasing the level of interest among students. Furthermore, this study suggested that Pakistani universities promote metacognitive strategies. Most importantly, the promotion of planning is key to promoting writing performance, however, along with the promotion of planning, the promotion of willingness cannot be neglected.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While the exploration of the relationship between planning, willingness to write, and writing performance among ESL students contributes significantly to applied linguistics, this study experienced certain limitations that can guide future research. One notable limitation is the focus on a single metacognitive strategy, namely planning, neglecting other important strategies such as monitoring and evaluating. Future studies should consider incorporating a broader range of metacognitive strategies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their impact on writing performance. Additionally, the geographical limitation of this study, confined to one province of Pakistan, is acknowledged. To enhance the generalizability of findings and to address regional variations, future research could extend its scope to encompass the entire nation or target specific areas, such as Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), which may present distinct challenges related to student writing performance. In summary, the identified limitations pave the way for future studies to explore a more diverse range of metacognitive strategies and broaden the geographical scope. Further, this study will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that affect writing performance among ESL students.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for Planning

The following section has been designed to obtain your opinion about planning. For each statement, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by **ticking or circling** an appropriate number on the five-point scale provided. Please read the following statement and mark accordingly: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

01	PLAN1	While English writing, I prefer planning the paragraph structure.	1	2	3	4	5
02	PLAN2	While English writing, I prefer planning to make an outline.	1	2	3	4	5
03	PLAN3	While English writing, I prefer planning about language features.	1	2	3	4	5
04	PLAN4	While English writing, I prefer setting up writing goals.	1	2	3	4	5
05	PLAN5	While English writing, I prefer planning time allocation.	1	2	3	4	5
06	PLAN6	While English writing, I prefer planning to do writing preparation.	1	2	3	4	5
07	PLAN7	While English writing, I prefer planning about efficient use of online resources.	1	2	3	4	5

Questionnaire for Willingness to Write

The following section has been designed to obtain your opinion about Willingness to Write. For each statement, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by **ticking or circling** an appropriate number on the five-point scale provided. Please read the following statement and mark accordingly: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

24	WTR1	I am willing to develop notes in English.	1	2	3	4	5
25	WTR2	I am willing to write in English whether there are grammatical errors.	1	2	3	4	5
26	WTR3	I am willing to read and respond to mistakes to my friend English writing.	1	2	3	4	5
27	WTR4	I am willing to write journals in English.	1	2	3	4	5
28	WTR5	I am willing to write down what happens in my daily life in English.	1	2	3	4	5
29	WTR6	I am willing to write dialogue journal outside classroom	1	2	3	4	5
30	WTR7	I am willing to improve my English writing skills through writing practice.	1	2	3	4	5

Interview Protocols

Planning

(a) How does planning the paragraph structure while writing help you compose the text better?

(b) How does planning to make an outline while writing help you compose the text better?

Willingness to Write

(a) How does willingness to take notes in English affect your English writing composition?

(b) How does WTW in English, irrespective of grammatical errors, affect your writing composition?

(c) How does WTW down what happens in your daily life in English affect your writing composition?

(d) How does willingness to practice writing in English affect your writing composition?