

A Comprehensive Program Evaluation of the Thesis Boot Camp Implementation: Impact on Thesis Writing Ability and Pedagogical Challenges in English Education at IAIN Palopo

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Abstract

Thesis writing is a major challenge for undergraduate students, often leading to delays in graduation. This study examines the impact of a Thesis Writing Boot Camp on students' abilities and identifies the challenges faced by 33 students from the English Language Education Study Program at IAIN Palopo. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, data were collected via questionnaires from 23 respondents. Findings revealed that strongly positive outcomes: a high majority of participants reported satisfaction (73.9% satisfied/very satisfied), found materials relevant (82.6% relevant/highly relevant), and rated facilitators highly (91.3% good/excellent). The program also led to significant self-reported improvements in understanding thesis structure (73.9% improved/significantly improved) and increased writing confidence (65.2% confident/very confident). Mentoring sessions were deemed highly beneficial (82.6% beneficial/highly beneficial), and the program received a strong endorsement (60.9% highly likely to recommend). However, challenges persisted, including insufficient time allocation for some sessions (as noted by 8.7% of respondents), only moderate gains in confidence and understanding among a substantial subgroup (34.8%), and an uncomfortable learning environment for a minority (8.7%). The study concludes that structured, intensive Boot Camp is highly effective, and recommendations are provided for program enhancement, including extending session duration and improving the learning environment to optimize outcomes.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Boot Camp, Higher Education, Student Challenges, Thesis Writing.

1. Introduction

Writing a thesis is often perceived as a daunting task by final-year students, serving as one of the significant barriers to completing their studies. This challenge is well-documented across various academic contexts. For instance, Tokarz et al. and (2022) specifically highlight the role of self-efficacy in thesis-writing experiences of undergraduate students, while Flowerdew & Petrić (2024) examine the need for corpus-based pedagogical support in thesis writing, pointing to a gap in specific writing guidelines. The absence of detailed descriptions and guidelines for English Education students contributes to the difficulties they face in finishing their theses. This leads to variations in thesis quality across higher education institutions and a lack of faculty initiatives in producing dedicated thesis writing guidelines. Additionally, supervisors and examiners may exhibit biases in their assessments due to their research paradigms, further complicating the thesis completion process (Hariyadi et al., 2017; Ren & Zhu, 2023).

Students frequently encounter challenges in thesis writing due to limited resources, lack of research experience, and anxiety related to the writing process (Ariyanti, 2016;

Budjalemba & Listyani, 2020). These difficulties align with findings from Merga et al., (2020), Puspita (2019), Tokarz et al.(2022), which indicate that students often struggle to start and sustain their thesis writing due to inadequate supervision and support. Also, students face obstacles such as writing blocks, procrastination and language-related anxiety that can negatively impact both the writing process and students' confidence (Karlsholm et al., 2024; Lestari, 2020; Mendoza et al., 2023; Ren & Zhu, 2023; Wahyu et al., 2025). In alignment with that, limiting productivity in writing can come with emotional barriers, such as lack of confidence, perfectionism and fear of rejection (Stritch, 2025; Taye & Mengesha, 2024). These psychological and academic barriers suggest that writing support must go beyond the traditional classroom. Academic writing, particularly thesis writing, requires not only technical knowledge of research design and formatting but also sustained motivation, feedback, and emotional resilience. Students need structured opportunities to engage in writing, receive formative feedback and reflect on their progress in a supportive environment (Furwana & Syam, 2019). Without such support, students are at greater risk of disengagement and writing block (Habibie, 2022; Pintz & Posey, 2013; Stritch, 2025).

Therefore, to address these multifaceted challenges, the Thesis Boot Camp program has emerged as a potential solution and promising intervention, as it provides students with an intensive and focused writing experience within a short timeframe, complemented by structured mentoring from experienced academic advisors. Boot Camp is designed to accelerate writing progress by combining dedicated writing time with expert input and peer support, thereby reducing procrastination and increasing accountability (Cayley, 2020; Fladd et al., 2019; McCutcheon, 2024; Rowtho et al., 2020). The aims to promote writing fluency, enhance the academic self-efficacy of students, and build sustainable writing habits are often overlooked in conventional thesis courses.

English Education Program at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, IAIN Palopo, requires students to complete a thesis as part of their graduation requirements. However, due to the complexity of academic research and the challenges of writing in English for scholarly purposes, many students face significant obstacles in completing their theses. According to administrative records, 53 students from the 2018 cohort had not yet completed their theses. Additionally, 40 students from the 2019 cohort, who should have already graduated, were still struggling to finish their theses. Meanwhile, 84 students from the 2020 cohort were in the process of taking the thesis course.

Efforts must be made to assist students in overcoming these difficulties. One possible approach is to enhance their research skills through relevant coursework (Habibie, 2022; Husnaini & Yahya, 2023; Lee & Bonk, 2019; Navas, 2013; Stritch, 2025). The Thesis Writing Boot Camp, a three-week program organized by the English Education Program at IAIN Palopo, was designed for this purpose by providing the writing thesis courses, including Statistics, Measurement, Qualitative and Quantitative Research, CAR and R&D Methodology, and Proposal Seminars. The program consisted of core sessions, led by instructors, and followed-up mentoring sessions with supervisors. The initiative was based on prior research studies, demonstrating the effectiveness of thesis-writing Boot Camps, such as Hariyadi et al., (2017), McCutcheon (2024), and West et al. (2012). Although such integration has already been implemented at IAIN Palopo, persistent delays in thesis completion are identified that coursework integration and thesis writing guides alone are insufficient to meet students' needs. Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of thesis writing Boot Camps in various contexts, but most of them focus on graduate students or general academic writing interventions, with little attention given to undergraduate English Education students writing in English as a foreign language.

Moreover, there are no data related to systematic evaluation of how the Boot Camp at IAIN Palopo specifically impacted students' thesis writing ability and what challenges emerged during its implementation. This research gap highlights the importance of conducting a follow-up study to assess positive outcomes and constraints of the program in order to inform more effective and sustainable academic writing support in the future.

In response to this gap, the present study aims to examine the impact of the Thesis Boot Camp program in students' writing of more effective learning methods for improving students' thesis writing abilities. By implementing the Thesis Boot Camp program, students at IAIN Palopo are expected to experience direct benefits in their thesis writing process. Furthermore, this research seeks to provide insights for academics and policymakers at IAIN Palopo regarding the need for structured mentoring programs that enhance the quality of education and research at higher education institutions. This study focuses on the Implementation of the Thesis Boot Camp Program on Thesis Writing Ability: Impact and Challenges Faced by English Education Students at IAIN Palopo.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to analyze the impact and challenges of the Thesis Writing Boot Camp at IAIN Palopo, and it will be elaborated below.

2.1. Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive quantitative approach, which is appropriate for systematically describing the characteristics of a specific population or phenomenon. The design focused on quantifying data obtained through a structured instrument and presenting it using statistical tools such as percentages and averages (Creswell, 2009; Kaufman & Kaufman, 1964). This approach was chosen because the primary purpose of the research was not to test hypotheses or establish causal relationships, but rather to provide a clear and objective picture of how students perceived the bootcamp and what challenges they experienced. Descriptive quantitative design is particularly suitable for educational program evaluations, as it allows researchers to summarize participants' responses in measurable terms and highlight general trends across the group. The aim was to objectively assess how the Boot Camp influenced students' thesis writing skills and to identify any challenges they encountered during the process.

2.2. Participants and Sampling

The participants (sample) of the study were students from the English Education program at IAIN Palopo who had taken part in the Thesis Writing Boot Camp. A purposive sampling method was applied as the study specifically targeted students with direct experience of the program. A total of 33 were involved in the research: 9 were male and 24 were female of the eighth semester. These students were selected based on their participation in the program, ensuring that they represented individuals with direct experience of the Boot Camp activities. In terms of thesis progress, 16 students were still in the draft proposal writing stage, 4 students had already completed the proposal seminar, 11 students were in the data collection and research stage, and 1 student had completed the thesis result seminar. None of the participants had reached the final stage defense stage at the time of the study. Of these participants, 23 students (69.7%) completed the post-Boot Camp questionnaire, and their responses formed the sample for the descriptive quantitative analysis. This response rate reflects voluntary participation in the survey, but the demographic composition of the respondents was similar to the total group, ensuring that the data remained representative. Regarding English proficiency, all participants had completed core English

skills courses (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as part of their program, providing them with the minimum academic English competence required for thesis writing.

2.3. Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire employing a Likert-scale format. This questionnaire allowed students to indicate their level of agreement or satisfaction with various statements, providing quantifiable data. The questionnaire focused on some key aspects. They are students' satisfaction with the overall Boot Camp experience, relevance of materials to students' thesis writing needs, facilitator effectiveness in delivering content and providing guidance, time allocation adequacy for different sessions, comprehension improvement in relation to thesis structure, and challenges faced by students during the Boot Camp. Each of these aspects was assessed using a five-point scale ranging from very negative to very positive responses.

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To ensure the quality of the instrument, both validity and reliability were established qualitatively. Content validity was examined through expert judgment by two senior lecturers in English Education, who confirmed that the questionnaire items were clear, relevant, and aligned with the research objectives. Face validity was further ensured by piloting the instrument with ten students outside the research sample, who indicated that the questions were understandable and contextually appropriate. For reliability, consistency was checked qualitatively by comparing students' responses across related items to ensure coherence. In addition, a member check was conducted with a subset of respondents, who verified that their answers accurately reflected their experiences during the bootcamp. These procedures confirmed that the instrument was valid and reliable for collecting the required data.

2.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using both online and offline (in-person) methods. Students completed the the questionnaire after the Boot Camp program ended, ensuring the responses reflected their full experience of the program.

2.5. Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which included percentages to indicate how many students responded in each category and averages/means to understand general trends. This analysis provided a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the program, as perceived by the participants. This choice was made because the study aimed to evaluate and describe the effectiveness and challenges experienced by the participants rather than to test hypotheses or establish causal relationships. Descriptive statistics were considered sufficient for this purpose, as they allowed the researchers to highlight general trends, summarize participants' experiences in measurable terms, and identify areas that need improvement, such as time management and source adequacy. The findings were used to evaluate the implementation of the program to see how well it met its goal in improving students' writing skills and provide recommendations for future improvements based on real student feedback and statistically

grounded insights. Given the evaluative and exploratory nature of the study, descriptive analysis was appropriate and adequate to capture the impact of the Boot Camp on students' writing ability.

3. Results

3.1. Findings

The program's management actively involved both faculty members and students to ensure oversight and support. Scheduled and consistent mentoring sessions, a core component of the Boot Camp, helped students stay focused on their objectives. Data collected from 23 participants revealed overwhelmingly positive feedback across all measured aspects of the Boot Camp, though several key challenges were also identified. The general findings are summarized comprehensively in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of participant responses on Boot Camp aspects (N=23)

No.	Aspect/ Objective	Very High/ Highly Positi- ve (%)	Positive/ Good/ Sufficient (%)	Moderate/ Fair (%)	Low/ Poor/ Insufficien- t (%)	Very Low/ Very Poor	Key Inter- pretation/ Trend
1.	Overall Satisfaction	43.5	30.4	26.1	0	0	Highly positive
2.	Relevance of Materials	47.8	34.8	17.4	0	0	Highly relevant
3.	Quality of Facilitators	52.2	39.1	8.7	0	0	Excellent
4.	Understanding of Thesis Structure	34.8	39.1	26.1	0	0	Significant improvement
5.	Confidence in Thesis Writing	13.0	52.2	34.8	0	0	Area for improvement
6.	Usefulness of Mentoring Sessions	52.2	30.4	17.4	0	0	Highly beneficial
7.	Adequacy of Resources	30.4	39.1	30.4	0	0	Adequate
8.	Recommendation to Peers	60.9	34.8	4.3	0	0	Strong endorsement
9.	Sufficiency of Session Time	34.8	30.4	26.1	8.7	0	Area for improvement
10.	Comfort of Learning Environment	43.5	34.8	13.0	8.7	0	Minor concern

3.1.1. Overall Positive Trends

As illustrated in Table 1, the participants exceptionally well received the Boot Camp program. A strong majority reported high levels of satisfaction (73.9% combined 'Very Satisfied' and 'Satisfied'), found the materials highly relevant (82.6% combined 'Highly Relevant' and 'Relevant'), and rated the quality of facilitators as excellent or good (91.3%). This positive reception is further underscored by the fact that most students would highly

recommend the program to their peers (60.9% 'Highly Likely').

In terms of academic development, the program was particularly successful in improving students' understanding of thesis structure, with 73.9% reporting 'Significantly Improved' or 'Improved' understanding. Furthermore, the individual mentoring sessions were deemed highly valuable, with 82.6% of participants finding them 'Highly Beneficial' or 'Beneficial'.

3.1.2. Identified Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Despite the overall success, the data reveals three critical areas requiring attention for future iterations of the program. First, while a majority felt more confident (65.2% combined 'Very Confident' and 'Confident'), a substantial portion (34.8%) reported only a moderate increase in writing confidence. This indicates that the program's approach to building self-efficacy, though positive, was not fully optimized for all participants.

Second, the allocation of time for some sessions was a point of contention. Although 65.2% found the time 'Very Sufficient' or 'Sufficient', a notable 8.7% explicitly found it 'Insufficient', and another 26.1% felt it was only 'Moderately Sufficient'. This suggests that the pacing of certain complex topics may have been too rapid for some learners.

Finally, while most found the environment supportive (78.3% combined 'Very Comfortable' and 'Comfortable'), a minority (8.7%) expressed that the learning environment was less comfortable. This highlights a need to improve the physical or psychological learning space to ensure it is inclusive and engaging for all attendees.

3.2. Discussion

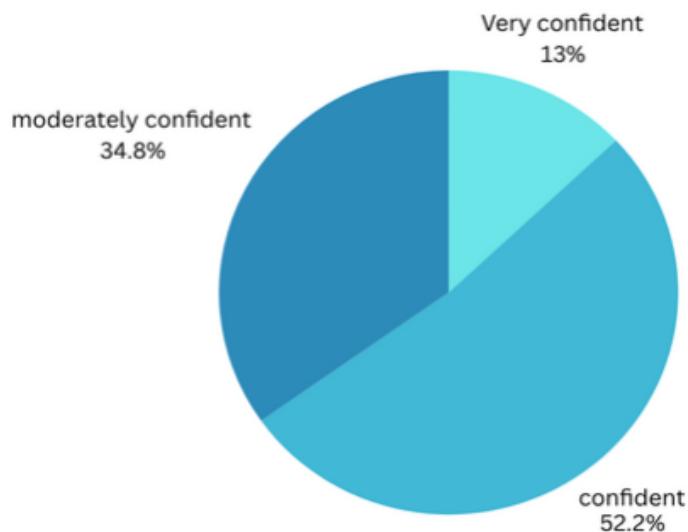
The results of this research show that the implementation of the thesis writing Boot Camp at IAIN Palopo contributes significantly to the improvement of students' writing skills, particularly in writing the thesis. This program created several notable improvements, such as enhancing students' satisfaction with their writing, providing materials relevant to thesis needs, ensuring excellent quality of facilitators, fostering better understanding of the thesis structure, developing confidence in academic writing, offering practical mentoring sessions, and improving access to learning facilities and resources.

The Boot Camp yielded specific benefits that reinforce its value as an intensive academic support model. A high level of student satisfaction (73.9% combined 'satisfied'/'very satisfied') and the resounding endorsement of the program—with over 60% of students being highly likely to recommend it to peers—indicate the effectiveness of its structure and delivery. Furthermore, the perceived relevance of the materials (82.6% combined 'Relevant'/'Highly Relevant') and the excellence of facilitators (91.3% combined 'Good'/'Excellent') suggest that the program offered both pedagogical and practical guidance (See table 2). The findings are consistent with and extend previous research in educational settings such as research by Badri, Susanti, Pranyoto, Gunawan and Rumangkit (2022), Cayley (2020), Fladd, Bermingham, and Stewart (2019), and McCutcheon (2024), which similarly reported improvements in students' self-efficacy and academic writing fluency. The linearity between the present findings and those studies underscores the reliability of bootcamps as an intervention model, while also showing that such benefits are not limited to graduate-level or Western contexts but are equally applicable to undergraduate EFL learners in Indonesia.

Table 2. Key success indicators of the Thesis Bootcamp Program

Success Indicator	Measurement	Result (%)	Interpretation
Student Satisfaction	Combined 'satisfied'/'very satisfied' rating	73.9%	Strong positive reception
Program Recommendation	'Highly likely' to recommend to peers	60.9%	Strong peer endorsement
Material Relevance	Combined 'relevant'/highly relevant' rating	82.6%	High practical applicability
Facilitator Excellence	Combined 'good'/excellent' ratings	91.3%	Outstanding quality of instruction

Moreover, the significant improvement in students' understanding of thesis structure (73.9% combined 'Improved'/'Significantly Improved') is a key outcome. The program also fostered a notable increase in writing confidence with 65.2% of participants reporting feeling 'Confident' or 'Very Confident'. However, the fact that a substantial portion (34.8%) reported only a moderate increase highlights an area for further development (See figure 1.). These aspects are critical in reducing writing-related anxiety and fostering long-term academic resilience. This echoes the argument by Mendoza, Sari, Lehtonen, and Hyttinen(2023) that confidence is crucial for sustaining writing efforts and managing challenges. The alignment between the current findings and prior studies suggests that intensive interventions not only enhance technical writing skills but also strengthen affective dimensions such as motivation, resilience, and self-efficacy. This is in line with theoretical perspectives in writing pedagogy which stress that effective academic writing instruction must simultaneously address both cognitive and affective factors, including scaffolding, confidence-building, and reducing anxiety (Karlholm et al., 2024; Stritch, 2025)

**Figure 1.** Writing Confidence Level after Bootcamp

One of the most outstanding successes of the Boot Camp is its structured approach, combining intensive mentoring sessions with guided writing practice. The mentoring component provided clear benefits in helping students understand both the structures and the contents of their theses. This finding supports Cayley's (2020) view that sustained and person-to-person guidance plays a vital role in improving academic writing performance of graduate-level academic writing. Furthermore, facilitators' attention to students' self-efficacy, attitudes toward writing, and knowledge of writing theories is crucial for developing

long-term competencies (Søndergaard Knudsen et al., 2025). Similarly, the participants' increased confidence and satisfaction align with West, Tateishi, Wright, and Fonoimoana (2012), who emphasize that Boot Camps are effective not only in strengthening writing skills but also in fostering supportive academic environments (See table 3).

Table 3. Mentoring impact on student thesis writing development

Mentoring Support Aspect	Specific Implementation in Bootcamp	Observed Outcome/Impact	Research Support
Structured Guidance	Combination of intensive mentoring sessions with guided writing practice	Improved understanding of thesis structure and content	Cayley (2020): Sustained person-to-person guidance vital for writing performance
Holistic Student Development	Facilitators' attention to self-efficacy, writing attitudes, and theoretical knowledge	Development of long-term writing competencies	Søndergaard Knudsen et al., (2025): Crucial for long-term competency development
Supportive Academic Environment	Interactive sessions and personalized feedback from facilitators	Increased student confidence and overall satisfaction	West et al.(2012): Bootcamp strengthen skills and foster supportive environments
Sustained Person-to-Person Interaction	Regular one-to-one or small group mentoring sessions	Enhanced academic writing performance and accountability	Cayley 2020): Emphasizes importance of sustained personal guidance

These compelling results carry significant implications for both academic practice and institutional policy. At the practice level, the success of the mentoring sessions and the value of structured feedback underscore the need to move beyond traditional, solely supervisory thesis guidance. Instead, a more holistic model that integrates intensive, boot camp-style support into the regular curriculum is recommended. This model should be characterized by collaborative learning, structured timelines, and formative feedback mechanisms. At the policy level, the high return on investment in student competence and confidence demonstrated here provides a strong rationale for higher education institutions, particularly those in EFL contexts, to formally adopt and fund such programs. University leadership and policymakers should consider institutionalizing thesis boot camps as a mandatory or highly encouraged component of the final year curriculum, allocating dedicated resources for facilitator training, material development, and the creation of a conducive learning environment to ensure sustainability and scalability. This shift from an ad-hoc intervention to a structured system is crucial for addressing chronic thesis completion delays and enhancing overall research output quality.

Despite these positive impacts, several persistent challenges also emerged, similar to those identified in previous studies by Budjalemba and Listyani (2020) and Tokarz, Bucy,

Medaille, and Beisler (2022). First, time constraints during the Boot Camp limited some students' critical comprehension of the materials. Although most of the students (65.2%) found the time 'Sufficient' or 'Very Sufficient', a notable 8.7% explicitly found it 'Insufficient', suggesting that extended sessions may be needed to accommodate varied learning paces. This challenge can be explained by the inherently intensive nature of bootcamps, where condensed schedules may not provide sufficient space for all learners to internalize complex research and writing concepts. This supports writing pedagogy theories emphasizing the need for gradual scaffolding and distributed practice rather than overly compressed instruction (Pintz & Posey, 2013).

Second, the diverse levels of comprehension and confidence among students highlight the need for differentiated support mechanisms. While most students reported considerable improvement, some indicated only moderate progress. This may stem from individual differences in prior writing experience, linguistic proficiency, and levels of writing anxiety. Such findings resonate with pedagogical theories stressing that writing instruction in EFL contexts must be adaptive and responsive to learner heterogeneity, consistent with Merga, Mason, and Morris (2020).

Finally, the learning environment was another concern. Although a strong majority (78.3%) found it 'Comfortable' or 'Very Comfortable', a minority (8.7%) reported a 'Less Comfortable' environment. This could be linked to physical constraints, limited resources, or the affective climate of the classroom, highlighting the need for a more intentionally inclusive and engaging space. Theories of writing pedagogy highlight that a positive, inclusive, and resource-rich environment plays a central role in fostering writing engagement and reducing barriers such as perfectionism and fear of failure environmental factors that promote inclusivity, motivation, and resource accessibility (Cao et al., 2025; Dunmoye et al., 2025; Karlsholm et al., 2024). Addressing these factors is therefore crucial to ensure that all students benefit equally from intensive academic writing programs.

In sum, the results confirm that the Thesis Writing Boot Camp can be a transformative intervention in addressing academic writing difficulties among undergraduate students. The consistency of these findings with prior research reinforces bootcamps as a reliable instructional model, while the localized evidence from IAIN Palopo provides new insights into their applicability for EFL undergraduates in Indonesia. Beyond this context, the findings also offer broader pedagogical implications for ELT writing instruction. Integrating structured and intensive writing support into undergraduate curricula can help address common challenges such as writing anxiety, low confidence, and uneven research skills. Boot Camp-style interventions can complement regular thesis supervision by creating collaborative, time-bound, and feedback-rich environments that build both competence and autonomy in academic writing. Therefore, this study not only informs future Boot Camp design at IAIN Palopo but also offers practical guidance for higher education institutions seeking to enhance ELT writing instruction in similar EFL contexts.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the Thesis Writing Boot Camp at IAIN Palopo has had a significant positive impact on students' thesis writing abilities. Students demonstrated high levels of satisfaction, identified the relevance of materials to thesis needs, acknowledged the excellent quality of facilitators, improved theory understanding of thesis structure, increased confidence in academic writing, and experienced adequate access to learning resources. Furthermore, mentoring sessions were considered highly beneficial, and most students recommended the program to their peers. However, several challenges were

identified, including time limitations for certain sessions, moderate improvement in understanding among some students, unoptimized confidence level, and the need for a more conducive learning environment.

To enhance the effectiveness of the program, several recommendations are proposed and prioritized. In short term, organizers should adjust the time allocation for specific sessions and provide additional post-Boot Camp support for students who still lack confidence in their writing and allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the material. In the medium term, improvements should focus on enhancing the learning environment, including facilities and more interactive methods to ensure inclusivity and engagement. In the long term, institutions should consider institutionalizing thesis bootcamps as part of structured academic support systems, integrating them into the curriculum to strengthen students' research and writing competence. With these improvements, the Thesis Writing Boot Camp is expected to provide even greater benefits, helping students complete their theses more effectively and with greater confidence.

This study, however, has several limitations. The findings are based on a relatively small sample of 33 students from a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the study focused on immediate perceptions and self-reported outcomes rather than long-term tracking of thesis completion.

Looking forward, the findings carry important implications for policy, curriculum design, and future research. At the policy level, higher education institutions should adopt structured writing support programs to reduce thesis delays. From a curriculum perspective, integrating bootcamp-style interventions alongside regular supervision can enhance both competence and confidence in academic writing. For future research, longitudinal studies are needed to track thesis completion rates over time, while comparative studies across institutions and different bootcamp models in EFL contexts can provide insights into the sustainability and adaptability of this intervention.

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