

The Correlation Between College Students' Flash Fiction Engagement and Perception of Their Creative Writing Skills

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DOI: 10.63941/OCCKatatau.2026.1.1.01



Article Information

Received: September 21, 2025

Accepted: November 23, 2025

Published: January 28, 2026

Keywords

Flash Fiction; Flash Fiction Engagement; Perception; Creative Writing Skills; Flexibility

ABSTRACT

This study explores the correlation between college students' engagement with flash fiction and their perceived creative writing skills, focusing on flexibility and originality. Conducted among second-year Bachelor of Secondary Education students majoring in English at a local community college in Mindanao, Philippines, the research utilized a descriptive-correlational design with total population sampling. Data were collected through a structured survey and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's correlation. Findings indicated a significant positive relationship between flash fiction engagement and flexibility, while originality showed a modest but significant correlation. In turn, flash fiction engagement was moderately linked to perceived improvements in both dimensions of creative writing. These findings suggest the potential of concise literary forms like flash fiction to foster adaptability and innovative thinking in creative writing education.

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, creativity has become an increasingly valuable skill. The digital revolution, characterized by constant access to information, social media, and multimedia content, requires individuals to think beyond conventional approaches, pushing the boundaries of innovation and self-expression (Özcağlayan & Çelik, 2015). With technology shaping nearly every facet of life, being creative is not only a desired skill but a necessity, enabling people to navigate and contribute to an ever-changing world (Bruno & Canina, 2019). Yet, while the demand for creativity grows, its cultivation is often influenced by both traditional and digital methods, necessitating a deeper understanding of how these mediums can foster creative potential, particularly in younger generations.

Creative writing, a unique form of self-expression through words, plays a significant role in the development of creativity. Defined as the act of using words to convey emotions, ideas, and narratives in a manner that captivates and resonates with readers, creative writing is a foundational skill in many educational systems (Kroll, 2013). For college students, creative writing is not only a mode of artistic expression but also an essential academic skill that enhances cognitive abilities, critical thinking, and communication (Peary, 2012). Cultivating strong creative writing skills at the college level can help students excel academically and professionally, offering them tools for problem-solving and innovation in a world that values original thought (Achilov, 2017).

Flash fiction has been explored in previous studies for its potential to enhance creative writing. For instance, Sinha et al. (2017) stated that micro fiction or flash fiction has been incorporated into a

Creative Writing Workshop at the University of Essex to help budding writers develop imaginative and precise writing skills. This approach provides an accessible entry point for students to explore this emerging genre. Adaptable across universities and disciplines, it can serve as an effective tool for enhancing writing skills and grammatical knowledge in students of all fields. Additionally, an action research study by Flórez (2020) investigates the use of flash fiction to promote literary writing among eleventh-grade students. The findings suggest that engaging with this genre can stimulate creativity and improve writing skills.

While existing research acknowledges the benefits of writing flash fiction, few studies explore the influence of simply engaging with flash fiction as readers or viewers, leaving a gap in understanding how passive engagement with this narrative form might influence creative writing skills. Furthermore, the connection between digital media-driven flash fiction consumption and creative development among college students has not been extensively examined, especially within the Philippine context.

Overall, this study aims to address this gap by examining whether engagement with flash fiction through reading and viewing can enhance college students' creative writing skills. Specifically, the research will explore whether the concise, narrative-driven nature of flash fiction promotes flexibility and originality in students' creative writing skills. By focusing on the potential of passive engagement with flash fiction as a tool for creative skill development, this research seeks to provide insights into innovative educational methods for fostering creativity in the digital age.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to observe existing conditions and examine the relationship between flash fiction engagement and creative writing skills without manipulating variables. It was conducted at Opol Community College during the 2024–2025 academic year and focused on second-year Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) students. A total population sampling method was used to include the entire target group for more reliable and unbiased representation. Although there were 62 students enrolled, only 55 voluntarily participated. Data were collected using a researcher-made survey questionnaire developed through the adviser's guidance. The instrument consisted of three sections measured using a 4-point Likert scale, focusing on students' engagement with flash fiction and their levels of flexibility and originality in writing.

Prior to data collection, participants were oriented and informed consent was secured to ensure voluntary participation and ethical compliance. The instrument underwent face and content validation by three experts to confirm clarity and relevance, and pilot testing with 30 non-participant students established reliability using Cronbach's alpha. Data gathering involved distributing the validated questionnaires and checking responses for completeness and consistency. The scoring procedure aligned with the Likert scale to interpret levels of engagement, flexibility, and originality. For data analysis, descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage, and standard deviation) were used to assess engagement and creative writing skills. To determine the relationship between flash fiction engagement and writing abilities, Spearman's correlation was applied due to the non-normal distribution of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. What is the degree of students' engagement with flash fiction?

Table 1 presents the range, description, frequency, and percentage of the degree of students' engagement with flash fiction. The highest frequency recorded in the table is for the "Strongly Agree" category, with 29 respondents representing 52.73% of the total. This indicates that a significant portion of students found flash fiction to be highly engaging, suggesting that the format might align well with

their preferences for brevity, creativity, and the opportunity for critical or imaginative thinking. The high level of strong agreement may also point to the effectiveness of flash fiction in stimulating interest and fostering positive emotional or intellectual responses. On the other hand, the lowest frequency observed is for the "Strongly Disagree" category, which has no respondents (0%). This absence of strong disagreement signifies that none of the students found flash fiction to be disengaging to an extreme extent. This result could be attributed to the versatility and accessibility of flash fiction as a medium, making it appealing to a broad range of learners. The lack of negative sentiment suggests that flash fiction was generally well-received, with minimal resistance or dissatisfaction among the participants. According to Batchelor and King (2014), flash fiction effectively engages high school students by fostering creativity and improving writing skills through concise and imaginative mentor texts. Similarly, Dipannita (2019) highlights the strong appeal of short, ephemeral stories on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, noting their spontaneous, visually captivating nature aligns with the fleeting attention spans of digital users.

Table 1. The Degree of Students' Engagement with Flash Fiction

Range	Description	Frequency	Percentage
3.26 - 4.00	Strongly Agree	29	52.73
2.51 - 3.25	Agree	23	41.82
1.76 - 2.50	Disagree	3	5.45
1.00 - 1.75	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00
TOTAL		55	100.00

Table 1.1 presents the mean, standard deviation, and interpretation of participants' degree of flash fiction engagement. The data show that item 5, "I appreciate how flash fiction can deliver a complete story quickly, whether I read it or watch it," has the highest mean score of 3.44. The brevity and completeness of flash fiction make it a preferred form of storytelling, aligning with students' need for efficient yet meaningful content consumption. Item 8, "I enjoy engaging with flash fiction because it's available both online and offline, in various formats," ranks as the second highest with a mean score of 3.42. The ability to access flash fiction through various platforms, such as social media, websites, and printed collections, makes it convenient for students to explore and enjoy stories in formats that suit their preferences.

Table 1.1. Mean Scores of Students' Engagement with Flash Fiction

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I read flash fiction stories, either online or in print, as a quick way to enjoy storytelling.	3.40	0.56	Highly Engaged
I enjoy coming across flash fiction stories on social media platforms, websites, or in printed collections.	3.36	0.62	Highly Engaged
I follow creators or accounts that post flash fiction stories or videos on social media or streaming sites.	3.07	0.77	Moderately Engaged
I share interesting flash fiction stories I find online or offline with friends and family.	3.00	0.77	Moderately Engaged
I appreciate how flash fiction can deliver a complete story quickly, whether I read it or watch it.	3.44	0.63	Highly Engaged
Flash fiction allows me to enjoy stories without the need to commit to lengthy reads or viewings.	3.38	0.62	Highly Engaged
I look forward to discovering new flash fiction stories that are brief yet impactful, regardless of format.	3.35	0.67	Highly Engaged
I enjoy engaging with flash fiction because it's available both online and offline, in various formats.	3.42	0.60	Highly Engaged
I have joined online groups or forums focused on flash fiction to engage with other enthusiasts.	2.62	0.65	Moderately Engaged
I save or bookmark flash fiction stories that resonate with me for future reading.	3.00	0.72	Moderately Engaged
Overall Mean	3.20	0.46	Moderately Engaged

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 (Strongly Disagree), 1.76 – 2.50 (Disagree), 2.51 – 3.25 (Agree), 3.26 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree)

Nonetheless, Item 1, "I read flash fiction stories, either online or in print, as a quick way to enjoy storytelling," follows closely with a mean score of 3.40. The concise nature of flash fiction provides students with a quick and enjoyable way to experience storytelling, making it an ideal choice for those seeking brief yet satisfying literary content. On the other hand, the lowest mean is item 9, "I have joined online groups or forums focused on flash fiction to engage with other enthusiasts," with a score of 2.62 and a standard deviation of 0.65. This indicates that participation in online communities or forums dedicated to flash fiction appears to be limited. While students may occasionally take part in such activities, some students prefer engaging with flash fiction individually.

The overall mean of 3.20 with a standard deviation of 0.66 indicates that students demonstrate a moderate level of engagement with flash fiction. This engagement may be due to the format's brevity and accessibility, which make it an appealing and convenient option for quick storytelling experiences. Thomas (2017) explores how the condensed nature of flash fiction allows readers to quickly engage with narratives, offering an intense and immersive experience that is often absent in longer forms of storytelling. Similarly, Allan & Jacobs (2019) highlight the growing popularity of flash fiction in the digital age, attributing its appeal to its brief format, which fits well with modern readers' busy lifestyles and decreasing attention spans.

2. What is the level of students’ creative writing skills in terms of flexibility and originality?

Table 2.1. The Level of Students’ Creative Writing Skills in terms of Flexibility

Range	Description	Frequency	Percentage
3.26 - 4.00	Strongly Agree	16	29.09
2.51 -3.25	Agree	33	60.00
1.76 -2.50	Disagree	6	10.91
1.00 -1.75	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00
TOTAL		55	100.00

Table 2.1. presents the range, description, frequency, and percentage of the level of students’ creative writing skills in terms of flexibility. The highest frequency recorded is in the "Agree" category, with 33 respondents, representing 60% of the total. This indicates that a majority of students feel that flash fiction positively influences their flexibility in creative writing, allowing them to adapt and explore various writing styles or approaches effectively. The high percentage suggests that students recognize flash fiction as a valuable tool for enhancing their adaptability and creativity. In contrast, the lowest frequency is in the "Strongly Disagree" category, with no respondents (0%). This absence highlights a universal acknowledgment of flash fiction’s positive influence, suggesting that it effectively fosters adaptability and versatility in students’ creative writing skills without eliciting any negative perceptions. According to Asrofi (2023), the integration of flash fiction techniques significantly enhances students' writing abilities, demonstrating the genre's adaptability and versatility in fostering creative expression. Similarly, Batchelor and King (2014) emphasize that engaging with flash fiction not only cultivates writing skills but also encourages students to explore various narrative forms, underscoring its capacity to adapt to diverse educational contexts.

Table 2.1.1. presents the mean, standard deviation, and interpretation of the students’ level of creative writing in terms of flexibility. The data indicates that item 2, "Reading and watching flash fiction has improved my ability to adjust my writing style based on the story I want to tell," has the highest mean score of 3.16 with a standard deviation of 0.60. This shows that flash fiction's concise and varied storytelling provides students with practical examples and techniques, helping them develop skills to modify their writing to align with different story requirements. Item 8, "I find myself able to adjust my writing to meet the needs of different audiences, inspired by flash fiction's adaptability," has a mean score of 3.09 with a standard deviation of 0.62. This demonstrates that flash fiction’s versatility in tone, style, and themes exposes students to adaptable writing approaches, encouraging them to

consider audience needs and tailor their work accordingly. audience responses. Item 9, "Flash fiction has helped me become more versatile, adjusting my narrative style quickly when needed," has a mean score of 3.07 with a standard deviation of 0.60. This shows that the fast-paced and dynamic nature of flash fiction fosters in students the ability to make swift adjustments, building flexibility and adaptability in creative writing.

Table 2.1.1. Mean Scores of Students' Creative Writing Skills in Terms of Flexibility

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I can easily adapt my writing style to different genres and audiences thanks to my exposure to flash fiction.	3.05	0.62	Moderately Flexible
Reading and watching flash fiction has improved my ability to adjust my writing style based on the story I want to tell.	3.16	0.60	Moderately Flexible
I feel confident in changing my writing tone and approach depending on the subject, due to my experience with flash fiction.	3.04	0.61	Moderately Flexible
I find it easy to shift between formal and informal writing styles, inspired by the variety I see in flash fiction.	3.02	0.71	Moderately Flexible
Exposure to diverse flash fiction has made me comfortable adapting my voice and style to fit different story types.	3.04	0.64	Moderately Flexible
I am more open to experimenting with different perspectives or styles in my writing thanks to flash fiction.	3.05	0.62	Moderately Flexible
I am prepared to respond to different writing challenges because flash fiction has taught me flexibility in storytelling.	2.89	0.66	Moderately Flexible
I find myself able to adjust my writing to meet the needs of different audiences, inspired by flash fiction's adaptability.	3.09	0.62	Moderately Flexible
Flash fiction has helped me become more versatile, adjusting my narrative style quickly when needed.	3.07	0.60	Moderately Flexible
I am able to switch between multiple perspectives in my writing, influenced by flash fiction's varied narratives.	2.91	0.62	Moderately Flexible
Overall Mean	3.03	0.49	Moderately Flexible

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 (Strongly Disagree), 1.76 – 2.50 (Disagree), 2.51 – 3.25 (Agree), 3.26 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree)

Conversely, item 7, "I am prepared to respond to different writing challenges because flash fiction has taught me flexibility in storytelling," has the lowest mean score of 2.89 with a standard deviation of 0.66. This indicates that students feel less confident in their ability to apply the flexibility learned from flash fiction to a wide range of writing challenges. While flash fiction fosters adaptability in storytelling, students do not view it as directly preparing them for more complex or varied writing demands. The overall mean of 3.03 with a standard deviation of 0.49 indicates that students demonstrate moderate flexibility in their creative writing, influenced by their engagement with flash fiction. This flexibility may stem from the concise and adaptable structure of flash fiction, which challenges students to experiment with diverse styles and ideas within a limited space. According to Munir and Hendaryan (2023), incorporating flash fiction into creative writing programs allows students to engage creatively within concise structures, promoting diverse expression. Similarly, Lemerond and Saul (2019) observed that integrating flash fiction in multimodal courses helps students navigate various narrative styles and adapt to different creative demands.

Table 2.2. The Level of Students' Creative Writing Skills in Terms of Originality

Range	Description	Frequency	Percentage
3.26 - 4.00	Strongly Agree	18	32.73
2.51 -3.25	Agree	34	61.82
1.76 -2.50	Disagree	3	5.45
1.00 -1.75	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00
TOTAL		55	100.00

Table 2.2. presents the range, description, frequency, and percentage of the level of students' creative writing skills in terms of originality. The highest frequency is in the "Agree" category, with 34 respondents, representing 61.82% of the total. This majority indicates that most students view flash fiction as a significant tool in enhancing their originality. Its concise and imaginative nature likely provides students with opportunities to think creatively and explore unique ideas. The lowest frequency is in the "Strongly Disagree" category, with no respondents recorded, accounting for 0%. This complete absence of strong disagreement indicates that students universally reject the notion that flash fiction negatively impacts their originality. Such unanimity highlights the perception of flash fiction as a supportive and constructive tool for fostering creativity, further affirming its value in enhancing students' originality in writing. Ciolfi and Lockley (2017) highlight how flash fiction encourages creative thinking by allowing participants to explore unique scenarios and generate new ideas. Similarly, Rodríguez and Salvador (2021) emphasize flash fiction's effectiveness in fostering imaginative writing skills through engaging and concise literary formats.

Table 2.2.1. below presents the mean, standard deviation, and interpretation of the students' level of creative writing skills in terms of originality. The data indicates that item 2, "Reading and watching flash fiction encourages me to think outside the box and create original storylines," has the highest mean score of 3.24 with a standard deviation of 0.61. This shows that flash fiction's unconventional style allows students to explore innovative ideas and create storylines that stand out for their originality. Item 1, "I find that exposure to flash fiction has helped me develop unique writing styles that resonate with different genres and audiences," has the second highest mean score of 3.20 with a standard deviation of 0.56. This indicates that by engaging with the diverse nature of flash fiction, students develop the capacity to tailor their creative expression to different audiences and genres, showing adaptability and originality in their work.

Table 2.2.1. Mean Scores of Students' Creative Writing Skills in Terms of Originality

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I find that exposure to flash fiction has helped me develop unique writing styles that resonate with different genres and audiences.	3.20	0.56	Moderately Original
Reading and watching flash fiction encourages me to think outside the box and create original storylines.	3.24	0.61	Moderately Original
Flash fiction nurtures my creativity and helps me break away from traditional writing norms.	3.11	0.57	Moderately Original
I am more open to experimenting with different perspectives or styles in my writing thanks to flash fiction.	3.18	0.51	Moderately Original
I find it easier to come up with fresh, imaginative ideas after reading unique flash fiction pieces.	3.13	0.64	Moderately Original
I attribute my ability to craft unique twists and surprises in stories to my experience with flash fiction.	3.16	0.57	Moderately Original
Reading flash fiction has inspired me to take risks and innovate in my storytelling style.	3.09	0.62	Moderately Original
Flash fiction has given me the confidence to create unique and original storytelling formats.	3.07	0.57	Moderately Original
Flash fiction encourages me to invent characters that are unique in personality and backstory despite limited space.	3.04	0.64	Moderately Original
Flash fiction inspires me to explore genres or styles I would not have considered otherwise, sparking originality.	3.16	0.57	Moderately Original
Overall Mean	3.14	0.46	Moderately Original

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 (Strongly Disagree), 1.76 – 2.50 (Disagree), 2.51 – 3.25 (Agree), 3.26 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree)

Conversely, the lowest mean score is from item 9, "Flash fiction encourages me to invent characters that are unique in personality and backstory despite limited space," with a mean score of 3.04 with a standard deviation of 0.64. This shows that students may find it somewhat challenging to fully develop

characters' personalities and backstories within the constraints of flash fiction's limited word counts. The overall mean of 3.14 with a standard deviation of 0.46 indicates that students demonstrate moderate originality in their creative writing skills through engagement with flash fiction. This level of originality may be influenced by the concise and focused nature of flash fiction, which encourages students to develop unique and creative expressions within a limited framework. Wulandari (2017) highlighted the effectiveness of flash fiction in enhancing ESL students' reading and writing skills, using its brevity and authentic content to foster critical thinking and creativity. Similarly, Rodríguez and Salvador (2021) found that flash fiction workshops align with students' digital-age preferences, boosting creativity and engagement through concise literary forms.

3. Is there a significant relationship between the degree of flash fiction engagement and the students' creative writing skills?

Table 3. Test of Statistical Relationship Between the Degree of Flash Fiction Engagement and the Students' Creative Writing Skills

	df	Spearman rho	p-value
Constant			
FLEXIBILITY	53	0.478***	<0.001
ORIGINALITY	53	0.299*	<0.027
OVERALL CREATIVE WRITING	53	0.403**	<0.002

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4 provides results from a Spearman rank correlation analysis, which measures the strength and direction of monotonic relationships between a constant variable and three predictors: flexibility, originality, and overall creative writing. The use of Spearman's rho suggests that at least one of the variables violated the assumption of normality, making this non-parametric approach appropriate. Each variable's correlation coefficient (rho), degrees of freedom (df), and p-value are reported, providing a comprehensive understanding of the relationships.

The relationship between flash fiction and flexibility demonstrates a significant positive correlation (rho = 0.478, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that flash fiction engagement is strongly associated with increased flexibility in creative writing. Flash fiction requires writers to condense complex narratives into a very limited word count, compelling them to adapt and innovate within constraints. This likely cultivates flexibility, as writers must shift seamlessly between ideas, perspectives, and narrative elements to create a cohesive and engaging story in a short space. Roche-Jacques (2024) emphasizes flexibility in flash fiction, enabling creative manipulation of time, space, and narrative within constraints, fostering innovative storytelling. Ciolfi and Lockley (2019) similarly highlight its role in driving narrative innovation and interpretative creativity, empowering writers to craft impactful and original ideas.

Regarding originality, flash fiction shows a positive but more modest correlation (rho = 0.299, $p < 0.027$). While the constrained format may impose some limitations on the extent of originality, the findings highlight that engaging with flash fiction still promotes innovative thinking. The necessity to navigate creative storytelling within a concise framework encourages writers to find unique ways to present their ideas. This balance between format constraints and originality underscores flash fiction's effectiveness in fostering creative expression while maintaining clarity and impact. Hoggan and Cranton (2015) assert that reading fiction supports transformative learning by encouraging critical reflection and new perspectives, enhancing creativity. Wulandari (2017) adds that flash fiction's concise and authentic form promotes creativity and critical thinking, especially among ESL students.

Meanwhile, the correlation between flash fiction and overall creative writing skills, encompassing flexibility and originality, is positive and moderate (rho = 0.403, $p < 0.002$). This indicates that engaging in flash fiction helps develop these skills in a complementary manner. The demanding nature

of flash fiction requires concise storytelling, adaptability, and innovative thinking, which together enhance overall creative ability. The recognition of flash fiction's positive impact among respondents further highlights its effectiveness as a tool for cultivating adaptability, originality, and overall creative writing proficiency. A study by Al-Sharqi and Abbasi (2015) highlights how flash fiction fosters a unique writer-reader partnership by encouraging active interpretation and collaborative storytelling, enriching the creative writing process. Similarly, Tarrayo (2019) emphasizes its effectiveness as an educational tool, offering a non-intimidating yet challenging medium to enhance students' creative reading and writing skills,

In sum, engaging in flash fiction demonstrates a strong positive impact on flexibility and a modest yet significant effect on originality, enhancing overall creative writing skills. The concise and constrained format challenges writers to adapt and innovate, fostering flexibility as they navigate shifting ideas, perspectives, and structures. While the brevity of flash fiction may slightly limit originality, it still encourages unique approaches to storytelling within its framework. The moderate correlation between flash fiction and overall creative writing highlights its effectiveness in fostering adaptability and creativity, making it a valuable approach for developing these complementary skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Engagement with flash fiction significantly enhances students' creative writing skills, particularly in terms of flexibility and originality. The findings indicate that students who interact with this concise literary form develop the ability to adapt their writing styles and craft imaginative narratives within limited constraints. This supports Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which emphasizes observation and social influence in learning. Flash fiction offers clear and engaging models of creative expression that students can observe, interpret, and internalize. Through this process, learners acquire narrative techniques and expressive vocabulary that strengthen their storytelling. As they apply these strategies, they develop confidence and adaptability, illustrating how cognitive engagement and observation contribute to improvements in creative writing.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations are set forth. Students should regularly engage with flash fiction to further develop their creative writing skills, particularly in flexibility and originality. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate flash fiction into classroom instruction as a means of inspiring creativity and refining students' writing styles. Administrators can support these efforts by providing resources such as workshops, competitions, and access to flash fiction materials. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to investigate the long-term effects of flash fiction engagement on writing development to better understand how sustained exposure influences creativity and skill progression.

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