# Role of creative writing on creative personality, quality of life, meaning in life and affect balance of male and female creative writers.

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Creative writers have an indirect role in the society to teach a lesson for moral, intellectual, idealistic reasons. It is thought important to investigate the effects of types of creative writing on the creative writers as they act to keep their era alive for the future generations. The present study is aimed to assess the impact of different types of creative writing and gender on the Creative Personality, Quality of Life, Meaning in Life, and Affect Balance of the Creative writers. The sample consisted of 120 creative writers ( 60 males and 60 females ). The sample is further subdivided into 3 groups on the basis of types of writing (20 poets, 20 writers, and 20 both poem and prose writers). A detailed Information Schedule, Gough Creative Personality Scale for adjective check list ( Gough, 1979 ), WHO quality of life scale BREF (WHO, 1991), The Meaning in Life questionnaire ( MLQ) (Steger, 2006) and Bradburn scale of Affect Balance (Bradburn, 1969) were administered to the subjects individually. The results revealed that types of writing as well as gender of the writers influenced their Creative Personality, Quality of Life, Meaning in life and Affect Balance.

Keywords: Creative Personality, Creative writing, Quality of Life

# **INTRODUCTION**

Creative writing can technically be considered any writing of original composition. In this sense, creative writing is a more contemporary name what has been traditionally called literature, including the variety of genres. The practice of creative writing has historically been conceived of as cathartic or curative. In recent decades a new paradigm of writing that is 'Expressive Writing' has been developed. This is psychological in nature demonstrating emotional and physical health benefits of writing about traumatic events. Because in expressive writing it acts as elimination of previously unaddressed, unfulfilled feelings and desires and instead offers a sense of self affirmation that is necessary to any form of individual flourishing Creswell (2007). The reason behind the creative writer's continuous and compulsive writing lies in the fact that they experience 'Dissolution of self as personal enhancement' Stevens (2006). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) argues for "eight major components" to the enjoyment of an activity, including clear goals, \*Former Student, \*\*Associate Professor, Department of Applied Psychology University of Calcutta 92, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Road, Kolkata-700009, India

immediate feedback, altered sense of time and, of course, the disappearance of "concern for the self". He concluded that the combinations of all these elements are likely to produce a sense of deep enjoyment which is very rewarding. So people feel that their exerted energy is worthwhile. Indeed, creative writing has been demonstrated to improve mood Kohanyi (2009).

Another recent quantitative study posits that expressive writing might facilitate 'resource activation'- which has been identified as a primary 'mechanism of change' in psychotherapy Grawe( 1997). However, poets and eminent creators face pressures in attempting to push the limits of their art form, which tends to lead them towards regression and primordial cognition. When the art form becomes more abstract or disconnected from daily living, creators are at high risk of intra-psychic disconnection Martindale(1975,1990). Creative writers write because they have a lot of things to say to the society. They have an ability to recreate the time, place and characters of the era they live in and to give a better world to live in. The different genres of writing give birth to different types of creative writers. Here in this study, three types of creative writers are taken into consideration- poet, writer and both poem and prose writer. The very nature of the different streams of creative writing somehow influences their ideology, personality and their physical and psychological wellbeing. Hossain (2014) in his comparative study defined prose, as follows: "Prose is the ordinary form of written language. Most writing that is not poetry, drama, or song is considered prose. Prose is one of the major genres of literature and occurs in two forms: fiction and non-fiction". Hossain (2014) also defined poetry as, "Poetry is one of the three major types of literature the others being prose and drama. Most poems make use of highly concise, musical and emotionally charged language. Poems are often divided into lines and stanzas and often employ regular rhythmical patterns, or meters". The present study intended to investigate the effects of the different streams of writing on the psychological correlates of the creative writers mentioned below. 'Gender' refers to a set of characteristics that are associated with a certain biological sex (male or female). Gender appears to be another important factor in influencing the creative writing as it has its own features which pertain to different intellectual abilities, thinking, feeling, personality pattern. So it is thought justified to understand the effect of gender on the Creative Personality, quality of life, meaning in life and affect balance of the creative writers. Creative personality is the characteristic pattern of thoughts, feeling and behavior that distinguishes one person from another and that persists over time and situations Phrase (1986). Thus to identify creativity it can be

traced through traits which appeared and settled on one's personality. Therefore it was thought important to select 'creative personality' as a variable to delve into the effect of different types of writing on it. Quality of life is "An individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value system in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment." (WHO,1991). So, this can be helpful to understand the difference in perceiving quality of life among creative writers who belong to different streams of writing. Meaning in life pertains to the significance of living or existence in general. Meaning in life can be conceptualized as meeting four basic needs: purpose, efficacy or control, value and justification, and self-worth (Baumeister, 1991). So it was thought useful selecting this variable to understand how creative writers value the meaning in life from their ideology and cultural viewpoint, Does creative writing help to attain meaning in life and how does it differ from various streams of writing. Affect balance is the ability of the mind to maintain equilibrium of positive and negative emotions in the face of challenge and change. Sine affect balance is a prerequisite for personal wellbeing and growth, it would be helpful to distinguish creative writers in respect of their affect balance style.

Hence the main aim of the study will be to investigate the role of the types of writing and gender on creative personality, quality of life, meaning in life and affect balance of the creative writers.

# **Objectives:**

- To determine the role of types of writing in Creative personality, quality of life, meaning in life and affect balance of creative writers.
- To determine the role of gender in creative personality, quality of life, meaning in life and affect balance of creative writers.

# **Hypotheses:**

**Ha1.** There is significant effect of types of writing on the creative personality of creative writers.

**Ha2.** There is significant effect of gender on the creative personality of creative writers.

**Ha3.** There is significant interaction effect of types of writing and gender on the creative personality of creative writers.

**Ha4.** There is significant effect of types of writing on the quality of life including its four domains- i) physical health ii)

psychological health iii) social relationship iv) environment of creative writers.

**Ha5.** There is significant effect of gender on the quality of life including its four domains- i) physical health ii) psychological health iii) social relationship iv) environment of creative writers.

**Ha6.** There is significant interaction effect of types of writing and gender on the quality of life including its four domains- i) physical health ii) psychological health iii) social relationship iv) environment of creative writers.

**Ha7.** There is significant effect of types of writing on the meaning in life including its two domains-i) presence ii) search of creative writers.

**Ha8.** There is significant effect of gender on the meaning in life including its two domains-i) presence ii) search of creative writers.

**Ha9.** There is significant interaction effect of types of writing and gender on the meaning in life including its two domains-i) presence ii) search of creative writers.

**Ha10.** There is significant effect of types of writing on the affect balance of creative writers.

**Ha11.** There is significant effect of gender on the affect balance of creative writers.

**Ha12.** There is significant interaction effect of types of writing and gender on the affect balance of creative writers.

#### **METHOD**

**Sample:** The sampling technique for the present study was multi stage stratified random sampling. Sample was drawn from male and female creative writers population between the age group of 30 to 60, residing in West Bengal, having passed graduation for the purpose of the present study. A total of 120 participants were selected for the study. These participants were categorized in three different groups according to their streams of writing that are poets, prose writers, and the combination of the two. These participants were also categorized according to their gender that is male and female.

People who have a permanent source of income (teachers, professors, service in private and public sectors) were selected. Duration of writing at least 5 years was selected. Mother tongue as 'Bengali' was selected.

People who do not have at least one published book were excluded. People who do not have published his/her writing in magazines/ little magazines and papers at least for once were excluded.

**Research Design:** This was a comparative study in which one of the independent variable was types of writing which was categorized into three subgroups- poets, prose writers, and both

poem and prose writers. Another independent variable was gender which was also categorized into two subgroups- male and female. The dependent variables were i) Creative personality ii) Quality of life (4 dimensions) iii) Meaning in life (2 dimensions) iv) Affect balance. The research design used for present study was ex-post facto design.

#### **Tools:**

An information schedule: The information schedule was included name, sex, marital status, family type, number of family members, income, socio-economic status, occupation, education, any physical illness( if present) and any mental illness( if present).

Gough Personality **Scale:** It is a creative personality scale for the adjective check list developed by Gough, (1979). The Gough is a self-assessment for creativity on personality characteristics in which the test taker is required to check off characteristic that apply to him/herself. Specific items reflect higher Quality of life Scale: The World Health Organizations Quality of life scale was developed by the WHOQOL group initiated in 1991. The WHOQOL-BREF is a shorter version of the original instrument that may be more convenient for use in large research studied or clinical trials. The WHOQOL-BREF instrument comprises 26 items, which measure the following broad domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships and environment. It produces a quality of life profile in each particular domain. For the manual calculation of individual scores, raw scores are obtained from four different domains. To get the raw scores, responses of the specified statements for specified domains are summed. In domain 1 (Q3,Q4) and domain 2 (Q26) has reverse scoring. Then the raw scores of four different domains are converted into transformed scores (4-20) and (0-100) in order to compare the WHOQOL-BREF scores with WHOQOL-100 (if required).

Meaning in life Questionnaire: The meaning in life questionnaire was developed by Steger, Frazier, Oishi & Kalker (2006). It assesses two dimensions of meaning in life using 10 items rated on a seven-point scale from "absolutely true" to "absolutely untrue". The presence of meaning subscale measures how full respondents feel their lives are of meaning. The search for meaning subscale measures how engaged and motivated respondents are in efforts to find meaning or deepen their understanding of meaning in their lives. To get the score of presence subscale, item no 1,4,5,6 and 9 (reverse coded) are totaled. To get the total score of search subscale, scores on item no 2,3,7,8 and 10 are totaled. Affect balance Scale: This scale was developed by Bradburn ,(1969). This scale is made up of two components having 5 items.

The scale asks participants, if, in the past few weeks, they have felt certain emotions. The participant answers "yes" or "no" to each question. The "no" score is subtracted from the "yes" score to create a positive/ negative affect difference score. For positive affect, participants receive 1 point for every "yes" they say. For negative affect, participant receive 1 point for every "yes" they say. The overall "balance" score is created by subtracting the negative affect score from the positive affect score.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Statistical analyses that were used in this study were mean, standard deviation, Analysis of variance. Table 1 represents mean and standard deviation of Creative personality, Quality of life, Meaning in life and Affect balance of male and female poets, writers and both poem and prose writers.

**Table 1:** *Mean and SD* 

Dependent variables	MALE(N=60)			FEMALE(N=60)								
	Poet(20) Writer(20) Both(20)		Poet(20) Writer(20)		Both(20)							
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Creative personality	12.45	1.93	7.3	2	6.6	2.38	5.75	1.8	6.4	1.66	9.55	2.13
Presence	17.5	4.23	27.5	2.8	27.2	2.6	9.75	2	9.95	2.13	25.9	2.46
Search	22.2	1.36	9.1	2.12	15.1	2.84	22	1.56	9.5	2.52	15.5	2.94
Physical	21	2.61	22	2.62	21	2.6	22	2.62	21	2.61	21	2.6
Psychological	18.6	2.41	25.4	2.7	18	1.91	12.1	2.64	19.9	2.15	15.9	2.8
Social	12.3	1.18	12.1	1	11.8	1.18	7	1.72	7.2	1.05	7.4	1.18
Environment	24.1	4.03	24.06	308	24.7	308	24.7	3.7	24.6	3.8	24.7	3.7
Affect balance	1.8	68°	3.2	69:	1.75	1	2	1	3.4	.59	1.8	.95

The mean of 6 different groups of gender and type of writing for the different dependent variables is compared through a graph which has been shown below:

**Table 2:** F values indicating the effect of Gender of the person(A) and type of writing (B) and their interaction (AB) on Creative Personality of the person

Source	df	F
Gender of the person (A)	1	52.617**
Type of writing (B)	2	22.842**
AB	2	30.913**

<sup>\*\*</sup>p< 0.01

To understand the significant effect of types of writing and gender two way ANOVA was calculated. Table 2 depicts the significant effect (if any) of gender and types of writing and their interaction on the dependent variable that is Creative personality of creative writer.

From table 2, the F value and significance level suggest that there are significant effects of gender, types of writing and also the interaction of these two variables on Creative personality of the person. From the mean table of gender, it may be said that males (M=9.88) scored higher on Creative personality than females (M=7.23). In case of types of writing, it can be said that both poem and prose writers (M=9.7) and poets (M=9.1) scored greater than writers (M=6.85) in Creative personality. The interaction effect revealed that male poets have significantly greater Creative personality (M=12.45) followed by male both poem and prose writers (M=9.9), female both poem and prose writers (M=9.95), male writer (M=7.3), female writer (M=6.4), female poet (M=5.75). Thus hypotheses no 1,2,3 are accepted.

Table 3 depicts the significant effect (if any) of gender and types of writing and their interaction on the dependent variable that is Quality of life-physical health of the creative writer.

**Table 3:** F values indicating the effect of gender of the person (A) and type of writing (B) and their interaction (AB) on Quality of life Scale- Physical Health of the person

Source	df	F	Sig
Gender of the person (A)	1	.191	.663
Type of writing (B)	2	.049	.953
AB	2	.049	.953

From table 3, the F-value and significance level suggest that there is no effect of gender, type of writing and their interaction on the physical health domain of Quality of life variable. Thus hypotheses no 4(i), 5(i), 6(i) are rejected.

Table 4 depicts the significant effect (if any) of gender and types of writing and their interaction on the dependent variable that is Quality of life- psychological health of the creative writer.

**Table 4:** F values indicating the effect of gender of the person (A) and type of writing (B) and their interaction (AB) on Quality of life Scale-Psychological Heath of the person

Source	df	F
Gender of the person (A)	1	108.111**
Type of writing (B)	2	95.594**
AB	2	8.960**

<sup>\*\*</sup>p< 0.01

From the table 4, the F-value and significance level suggest that there is significant effect of gender, type of writing and their interaction on the psychological health domain of quality of life variable. From the mean table, it may be said that males (M=23.97) scored higher on psychological health than females (M=16.00). In case of types of writing, writers (M=22.68) scored greatest from both poem and prose writers (M=16.98) and poets (M=15.4) in psychological health. The interaction effect revealed that male writers have significantly greater psychological health (M=25.45) followed by female writers (M=19.9), male poets (M=18.65), male both poem and prose writers (M=18), female both poem and prose writers (M=15.95), female poets (M=12.15). Hence, hypotheses no 4(ii), 5(ii),6(ii) are accepted.

Table 5 depicts the significant effect (if any)of gender and types of writing and their interaction on the dependent variable that is Quality of life- Social relationship of the creative writer.

**Table 5:** F values indicating the effect of gender of the person (A) and type of writing (B) and their interaction (AB) on Quality of life Scale-Social relationship of the person

Source	df	F	Sig
Gender of the person (A)	1	531.140**	.000
Type of writing (B)	2	.043	.958
AB	2	1.346	.264

<sup>\*\*</sup>p< 0.01

From the table 5, the f value and significance level suggest that there is significant effect of gender on social relationship variable. From the mean table, it may be said that males (M=2.12) scored higher on social relationship than females (M=7.22). However, there is no effect of types of writing and the effect of the interaction of gender and type of writing on social relationship domain of quality of life variable. So, hypotheses no 4(iii) is accepted and hypotheses no 5(iii),6(iii) are rejected.

Table 6 depicts the significant effect (if any) of gender and types of writing and their interaction on the dependent variable that is Quality of life- Environment of the creative writer.

**Table 6:** F values indicating the effect of gender of the person (A) and type of writing (B) and their interaction (AB) on Quality of life Scale-Environment of the person

Source	df	F	Sig	
Gender of the person (A)	1	.082	.775	
Type of writing (B)	2	.036	.964	
AB	2	.082	.922	

From the table 6, the F-value and significance level suggest that there is no significant effect of gender, type of writing and their interaction on the environment domain of quality of life variable. So, hypotheses no 4(iv),5(iv) and 6(iv) are rejected.

Table 7 depicts the significant effect (if any) of gender and types of writing and their interaction on the dependent variable that is Meaning in life- presence subscale.

**Table 7:** F vales indicating the effect of gender of the person (A) and type of writing (B) and their interaction (AB) on Meaning in life-Presence of the person

Source	df	F
Gender of the person (A)	1	299.323**
Type of writing (B)	2	214.232**
AB	2	85.199**

<sup>\*\*</sup>p< 0.01

From table 7, the F-value and significance level suggest that there is a significant effect of gender, types of writing and also their interaction upon the presence subscale of meaning in life. From the mean table, it may be said that males (M=24) scored higher on presence than their females (M=15.2). In type of writing, both poem and prose writers (M=26.5) scored highest from writers (M=18.75) and poets (M=13.62) in presence subscale. The interaction table revealed that male writers (M=27.5) have significantly greater presence of meaning followed by male both poem and prose writers (M=27.2), female both poem and prose writers (M=25.9), male poets (M=17.5), female writers (M=9.95) and female poets (M=9.75). So, hypotheses no 7(i),8(i),9(i) are accepted.

Table 8 depicts the significant effect (if any) of gender and types of writing and their interaction on the dependent variable that is meaning in life- search of the creative writer.

**Table 8:** F values indicating the effect of gender of the person (A) and type of writing (B) and their interaction (AB) on Meaning in life- Search of the person

Source	df	F	Sig
Gender of the person (A)	1	.000	1.000
Type of writing (B)	2	356.796**	.000
AB	2	.000	1.000

<sup>\*\*</sup>p< 0.01

From table 8, the F-values and significance level suggest that there is a significant effect of types of writing on search subscale. Poets (M=22.2) and the both poem and prose writers (M=15.1) scored greater than writers (M=9.1) in search subscale. But no significant effect of gender and the interaction of gender and types of writing upon search were found. So, hypotheses no. 8(ii) is accepted and hypotheses no 7(ii) and 9(ii) are rejected.

Table 9 depicts the significant effect (if any) of gender and types of writing and their interaction on the dependent variable that is Affect balance of the creative writer.

**Table 9:** F values indicating the effect of gender of the person (A) and type of writing (B) and their interaction (AB) on Affect Balance of the person

Source	df	F	Sig
Gender of the person (A)	1	1.043	.309
Type of writing (B	2	35.362**	.000
AB	2	.136	.873

<sup>\*\*</sup>p< 0.01

From table 9, the F-values and significance level suggest that there is a significant effect of type of writing on affect balance. Writers (M=3.30) and poets (M=1.93) scored greater than both poem and prose writers (M=1.78) on it. But no significant effects of gender and the interaction of gender and types of writing on affect balance were found. Hence, hypotheses No 11 is accepted but hypotheses No 10 and 12 are rejected.

From the results it has been found that poets have greater creative personality than writers. It may be said that poets' nonconformist dimension of openness to experience differentiates poets from other streams of writers in Creative personality. Probably poets' natural flow of writing, intrinsic motivation, lack of inhibition and rigidity in thoughts among poets flourish their creative personality (Bulceva, 2016). But the psychological health and affect balance of poets were found to be poor. In poetry the poets are unable to integrate their emotions and experiences resulting in increased experience of flow but poorer psychological health. In support of this finding, it may be said that from the writing paradigm literature that poets are particularly susceptible to affective disorders (Kaufman & Baer, 2002). A study by Andreasen (1987) revealed that among 30 writers (mainly poets), 43% have suffered from bipolar disorders, 37% from major depressive disorders and 30% from alcoholism. In meaning in life, poets experience least presence of meaning but highest search of meaning from other types of writers. Poets used to pursue a vision of artistic beauty even when it leads them into intellectual confusion and uncertainty. This uncertainty may cause poets lacking in the presence of meaning in their lives and perhaps this idea is affecting the psychological health and affect balance of the poets causing anxiety, depression, distress among poets. for the lack of presence, poets are actively searching for the meaning or purpose which can be reflected by their poetry. Writers are found to be highest in psychological health and affect balance. In contrast to poetry, prose writing allows for the opportunity to observe one-self regulating one's own emotional processes, thus exerting some control and leading to improvement (King,2002). As prose writing propels one forward in understanding of integration of emotional and cognitive experience, it might help writers having good psychological health and emotional balance. In a study by Frattaroli et al. (2006); Pennebaker & Seagal (1999) found that prose writing has therapeutic effects across age, gender, culture, social class.

The reason behind higher presence of meaning in life among writers perhaps lies in the fact that writers do not have states of intellectual confusion and uncertainty which cause them having a sense of tranquility and the presence of meaning in life. Because of this higher presence, the search for meaning among them is much less. Probably because they might be satisfied with what they have grasped to make their lives meaningful. However, the writers have least creative personality. Prose writers give more importance on personal focus values than social values while poets give same importance on personal focus value as social focus values found by Bulceva (2016) in her recent study. This high emphasis on conservation, self-enhancement values of writers may cause them lacking in creative personality. The results also revealed that both poem and prose writers have highest creative personality from poets and writers group. They have variations in their writing including both poetry and prose which may act as a catalyst for the highest creative personality among them. Incorporating both of the traits of poets (openness to change, selftranscendence) as well as the writers (conservation, selfenhancement), the both writers group are likely to flourish in their creative personality. In a study by Stephenson & Rosen (2015) found that creativity was more likely to increase in haiku writing, the shortest forms of poetry, providing little opportunity for narrative elaboration central to Japanese culture. The both writers group have greater psychological health than poets but less than writers group. From the above discussion, it may be seen that writers group only writes prose that leads to highest psychological health for the very nature of the prose writing and the pregnant nature of poetry writing leads to poor psychological health among poets. As the both writers group also writes prose besides writing poetry, they are less than writers in psychological health but greater than poets for having the benefits of writing prose that the

poets do not have. Stephenson et al.(2015) in their study found that illness orientation decreased much in haiku nature group who writes about nature in haiku form ( shortest form of poetry allowing little narrative elaboration central to Japanese culture). The highest presence of meaning in their lives suggests that due to have good psychological health they have a clear sense of purpose for their lives. The lack of uncertainty and confusion about their existence and a preference for philosophical certainty over artistic beauty may enhance the presence of meaning in their lives. Their search for meaning is less than poets as the both writers group already have a valued meaning in life. However, their search for meaning is greater than writers indicating that both writers group are still openly exploring that meaning as it is an ever-unfolding process for them. However, the affect balance of this both writers group has been found to be much less than writers in spite of having a good psychological health. As this group of writers is used to write poetry also, they may have a possibility of emotional imbalance which was also supported by the previous research findings.

In case of gender, males possessed greater creative personality than females. Men have much freedom and exposures in public spheres than females because of the patriarchal structure of the society. But women have limited scope of exploring the world as they do not have that much liberty resulting inhibition in thoughts. The social boundaries of women may lower their autonomy of thought, openness to experience, aesthetic sensitivity resulting in less creative personality among them. A study by Costa, Terracciano & McCrae (2001) found men scored higher than women on openness to ideas but no difference on openness to fantasy or values. The difference in brain activity during creative thinking in males and females may be responsible for the difference in creative personality among males and females. In a study by Abraham, Thybusch, Piertiz (2013) regarding gender difference in creative thinking through FMRI findings suggest that the pattern of brain activity while engaged in the tasks in question was indicative of strategy differences between the genders. Brain areas related to semantic cognition, rule learning and decision making were preferentially engaged in men during conceptual expansion, whereas women displayed higher activity in regions related to speech processing and social perception.

In case of presence of meaning in life and psychological health, males tend to have higher presence and better psychological health than females. The pattern of socialization gives them a clear sense of purpose of life present within them as their gender roles. Likewise, females have predetermined gender roles emphasizing the

power equation of gender. Females who have literary creativity often find it difficult to choose between their zeal for writing, the desire to emerge as a creative writer and their predetermined gender roles. This state of confusion might give birth to lack presence of meaning in life leading to depression, anxiety affecting their overall psychological health. A study by Thege & Stauder (2008) found that leisure activities contributed to male's meaning in life more than females. Kaufman (2001) in his study found that females are more likely to suffer from mental illness. Results also indicate that males are advanced in social relationship than females. The advanced position of males in social relationship pertains to the fact that males have more freedom and exposure of exploring the world, expressing their thoughts, gaining social support that is deep rooted in their socialization. But for the same reason women have more boundaries only limited in private spheres. For the inequalities of power between males and females, females tend to be dominated by male in every aspect- in personal relationship, social support, even in sexual relationship.

## **Conclusion and Suggestion:**

In the present study the results revealed that types of writing as well as gender of the writers influenced their Creative Personality, Quality of life, Meaning in life and Affect balance. Further research may be conducted considering the impact of receiving any literary award and the impact of published and acclaimed books written by the creative writers on their personality, health and wellbeing. The occupational differences of the creative writers influencing their mind can also be studied further.

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