STUDY ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOWARDS PLAGIARISM IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study is designed to find the knowledge level of students towards plagiarism. Survey methodology is used for this research study. The population for the study includes all the university students of both public and private universities. Six universities were selected from which a sample of 180 was drawn (30 respondents from each). Data was collected using a drafted tool. Many students knew about plagiarism and admitted that it was an unethical practice. Students also agreed that plagiarism was a very common practice among university students even though university provided information regarding plagiarism. Many also showed agreement to the fact that copying from books, journals, websites etc. was plagiarism but many also justified that it was right if teacher assigned too much work. Students remained neutral regarding the plagiarism percentage allowed and about the policies of the university for it. Surprisingly, a great number of students did not know proper referencing of websites. Furthermore, the study found out that students agreed that plagiarism affected the society greatly.

Keywords*: Plagiarism, Knowledge, University Students*

Introduction

Plagiarism is a way of adapting the concepts, techniques, or any literary material of some other writer without taking consent of the original writer and with the willingness to use that material as their own credible work (American Association of University Professors, 1989). Numbers of methods of plagiarism are functional and it is not just isolated to the copying material from other sources, copying the formatted styles, taking other ideas without recognizing the original author of the content, when the ideas or words are expressed in a different way and express idea or problem in their own words (Barnbaum, 2006). A significant amount of research has been undertaken in recent years covering different aspects of student plagiarism in response to the high volume of plagiarism now being detected.

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So far most of the research has been initiated by academics in English speaking countries, particularly the UK, North America, and Australia, for example a Benchmark Plagiarism Tariff was developed by the AMBER project (Tennant, Rowell 2010; Tennant, Duggan, 2009); East (2009) and more recently Bretag et al. (2011) led projects to investigate the effectiveness of policies for dealing with academic integrity issues in Australian universities. Some researchers, notably MacCabe, have particularly focused on the attitudes to plagiarism in North America (2005) and Canada (Abasi and Akbari 2008). More recently a group of researchers compared experience of how universities are dealing with plagiarism to the situation at selected institutions (McCabe, Fenghali and Abdallah, 2008). A few researchers have investigated plagiarism relating to non-English speaking countries particularly Sweden (Carroll and Zetterling, 2009), (Razera et al., 2010).   Hayes and Introna explored cultural influences to plagiarism in international students studying in an English university, drawing comparisons between students from UK, Asia, Greece and China (Hayes and Introna, 2005). Although much research has focused on text-based plagiarism, a team from one of the Western investigated students' understanding of plagiarized computer programming code (Joy et al, 2011), drawing on earlier work by the team (Cosma and Joy, 2008) and work done by a number of other researchers on aspects of code-based plagiarism. The evidence from these wide ranges of researches has increased understanding of why plagiarism occurs, different methods in place for dealing with the problem and what can be done to encourage good scholarship. The research findings have prompted redesign of procedures and policies in several UK institutions (Macdonald and Carroll, 2006), (Park 2004), (Neville, 2010) which in turn led to further evaluation and refinement of ideas. (Irene Glendinning, nd.)

In Pakistan, the culture of plagiarism begins from the secondary level, when students fulfill the requirement of subject assignment by copying it from different sources. This culture becomes more common when students reach at University Level Under graduates and Post Graduates. Cheema, Mahmood, Mahmood, and Shah (2011) probed the amount of copy pasting at University level research work, which was deliberate as well as not deliberate due to the poor knowledge or lack of awareness towards plagiarism. The writers discovered that meanwhile most researchers may have a common knowledge of what may be counted as plagiarism, but a great number were not aware of the various ways in which plagiarism could be categorized. In the result, the writer recommended that the researchers have to be knowledgeable in the authentic referencing and the laws of academic ownership of content.

Additional research studies (Overbey & Guiling, 1999) indicated that the learner's immaturity in research work has added to the plagiarism amount. Prof. Dant of Brimingham Young University carried out a research in 1986 on 20% of the new inducted students that were present in the classes. She proposed that university level linguistics classes

were unsuccessful in facilitating the learners with the knowledge that was essential to produce the work that would rather depend on copy pasting trend. Dant's research stressed on the concept that learners are facing problems in producing content that is free from plagiarism. Another research (Roig, 1997) pointed out to the result that learner needed an enormous amount of help in the mastery of paraphrasing without errors. The outcome illustrated that half of the learners that were part of the survey failed to notice the differences between the two paragraphs. (Overbey and Guiling, 1999). Although many educational universities have a criterion to check plagiarism but still all educational institutions have yet to follow a certain strategy to discourage students to solely rely on plagiarized work. There is a need to change the direction of student's mindset regarding plagiarism as this practice is now becoming more and more common among the students of higher educational level such as universities.

The general trend of teaching in universities located in Karachi is that teachers provide notes to the students that the students use as a reference material but sadly there is no system of providing the reference to that resource material to the students so that students can also prove that the resource material is not plagiarized. Although some teachers follow strict rules of not plagiarizing the content and they provide proper references but still the issue of plagiarism is not yet solved on a macro level. Teaching is not yet how the students need it to be and how the educational policies had planned it to be furthermore teaching is not producing creative and intellectual skills of that caliber that they were intended to create. Most of the students still solely depend on their memorizing skills from the teaching material they are provided. This research will investigate knowledge level of students to identify challenges and opportunities for academic grooming of students.

Research Question

- What is the knowledge level of students towards plagiarism?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology

In the light of the research objectives, quantitative research methodology is used for this study. In this study, survey method is used to gain data from the respondents.

Population

The population for the study includes all the universities from Karachi recognized by Higher Education Commission (HEC).

Sampling

The sampling for the research study was scrutinized through several phases. Random sampling is used to select six

universities (three public and three private) from which the total sample of 180 students was randomly selected (30

students from each).

Research Instrument

The tool for the research that was implemented by the researcher for this study was an adapted scale. It was validated

through content validity while for reliability; the adapted scale was piloted on 25 students, taken from the population.

Ethical Considerations

To consider ethical domains, all the participant institutions as well as respondents were provided with consent letter

which was duly signed by them.

ANALYSIS

Tables:

S. No	Question: I understand the meaning of plagiarism	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	Agree	156	86.66		
2.	Neutral	16	8.88		
3.	Disagree	08	4.44	**60**	**83.23**
	Total	180	99.98		

S. No	Question: Plagiarism is a common practice in educational institutions	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	Agree	131	72.77		
2.	Neutral	34	18.88		
3.	Disagree	15	8.33		
	Total	180	99.98	60	62.21

S. No	Question: I was provided with information about plagiarism in university	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	Agree	97	53.88		
2.	Neutral	38	21.11		
3.	Disagree	45	25		
	Total	180	99.99	60	32.23

S. No	Question: Plagiarism is a serious crime or unethical issue. (justified if teacher assigns too much work in the course.)	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	Agree	103	57.22		
2.	Neutral	66	38.66		
3.	Disagree	36	20.55		
	Total	180	99.99	60	39.28

S. No	Question: Copying from a book/journal/research paper etc is plagiarism	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	Agree	135	75		
2.	Neutral	26	14.44		
3.	Disagree	19	10.55		
	Total	180	99.99	60	65.04

S. No	Question: Do you know how to give references of internet sources?	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	Agree	20	11.11		
2.	Neutral	46	25.55		
3.	Disagree	114	63.33		
	Total	180	99.99	60	48.53

S. No	Question: Do you think that the universities in our society are affected by plagiarism?	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	Agree	115	63.88		
2.	Neutral	46	25.55		
3.	Disagree	19	10.55		
	Total	180	99.98	60	49.50

S. No	Question: Do you have information about how much work is allowed to be copied?	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	Agree	55	30.55		
2.	Neutral	91	50.55		
3.	Disagree	34	18.88		
	Total	180	99.98	60	28.82

S. No	Question: Do you think educational institutions have defined rules against plagiarism?	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	Agree	57	31.66		
2.	Neutral	82	45.55		
3.	Disagree	41	22.77		
	Total	180	99.98	60	20.66

S. No	Question: In your opinion what percentage of plagiarism should be allowed in educational institutions?	Participants	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
1.	20 %	63	35		
2.	30 %	70	38.88		
3.	40 %	46	25.55		
4.	10% (1 Participant)	01	0.55		
	Total	180	99.98	60	31.01

Results

- 86.66% of the respondents selected Agree, while 8.88% of the respondents selected

   Neutral. The total mean calculated for question 1 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 83.23.

- 72.77% of the respondents selected Agree, while 18.88% of the respondents selected Neutral. The total mean

   calculated for question 2 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 62.21.

- 53.88% of the respondents selected Agree, while 21.11% of the respondents selected Neutral. The total mean

   calculated for question 3 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 32.23.

- 57.88% of the respondents selected Agree, while 28.33% of the respondents selected Neutral. The total mean

   calculated for question 4 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 39.28.

- 75% of the respondents selected Agree, while 14.44% of the respondents selected Neutral. The total mean

   calculated for question 6 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 65.04.

- 42.77% of the respondents selected Agree, while 36.66% of the respondents selected Neutral. The total mean

   calculated for question 8 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 21.63.

- 63.33% of the respondents selected Disagree, while 25.55% of the respondents selected Neutral. The total

   mean calculated for question 11 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 48.53.

- 63.88% of the respondents selected Agree, while 25.55% of the respondents selected Neutral. The total mean

   calculated for question 13 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 49.50.

- 50.55% of the respondents selected Neutral, while 30.55% of the respondents selected Agree. The total mean

   calculated for question 14 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 28.82.

- 45.55% of the respondents selected Neutral, while 31.66% of the respondents selected Agree. The total mean

   calculated for question 19 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 20.66.

- 38.88% of the respondents selected 30% as answer, while 35% respondents selected 20% as answer. The total mean calculated for question 20 was calculated as 60, whereas standard deviation as 31.01.

Conclusion

From the data gathered, analysis the researcher concludes that plagiarism is a common practice among youth in Pakistan. The knowledge level of most of the students towards plagiarism is satisfactory; however, they lack technical and professional skills to deal with plagiarism. The trend of plagiarism grows due to the leniency in the supervision of university teacher in the process of assessment. The researcher also found out that most students were unable to cite references in the official styles e.g. APA style or Chicago style. And this result showed that most students did not give credit to the author of the work they were adapting in their assignments or any other academic tasks. With reference to the results of the research, the researcher could know that plagiarism was a common practice among the learners in their routine academic life.

Recommendations

In the light of the results, following recommendations are provided:

- Seminars and workshops should be held for the students as well as teachers to create more and more awareness regarding the issues of plagiarism. As students will gain information regarding plagiarism and its negative effects on the cognitive abilities of the students, it will enhance the performance of the learner.

- A student should be well aware that taking someone else's words and not giving credibility to the original work's writer is not okay. Learners should be briefed that it may be fine to take content and providing references but it is not okay to take content and neglect the original writer's reference.

- Many teachers as well as students agree that the universities in the society are being affected by the common practice of plagiarism among students. Universities should establish strict policies regarding the assessment criteria of the student academic work.

- Universities do not usually use software that detects plagiarism. Therefore, there is a need to implement the use of that software in universities. Such software will help to reduce the level of plagiarism.

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