Students' Awareness of Plagiarism in Some Selected Universities in South-western Nigeria

La Conscience Des Étudiants Au Plagiat Dans Des Universités Choisies De La Région Sud-Ouest Du Nigeria

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Abstract

This article examined students' awareness of plagiarism. A survey method was used for this study and the instrument used for collecting data was questionnaire. This study is to ascertain awareness, types, reason for plagiarism in students and existence of plagiarism software/policy in selected universities in Nigeria. Stratified random sampling method was adopted and respondents was selected from faculties of science and social science. Three universities were selected (A, B & C) in south-western, Nigeria. Data was analyzed using frequency counts and simple percent. It was discovered that students from all three universities were aware of plagiarism but still indulge in it by cutting and pasting from the internet. Findings show that plagiarism in university (A) is moderate, but the highest type is the use of articles without proper referencing the author, due to lack of research skills. Data from university B indicates that plagiarism is moderate, but the highest form of plagiarism is the use of a colleague's work without permission. Data from university C illustrates that plagiarism awareness is high, but the highest form of plagiarism is citing an article in text, without proper referencing of the author. Institutions must ensure that plagiarism is included in their induction programme for students, awareness created on plagiarism, types,

policy available in school, and the penalty defined in their hand book on code of ethics. Students must be encouraged to submit their project/thesis electronically in Microsoft word and Turn-it-in" software is recommended for checking articles/research publications.

Résumé

Cette recherche examine la conscience des élèves au plagiat. Méthode de recherche par sondage a été utilisée pour cette étude et le questionnaire a été utilisé pour la collecte des données. Cette étude vise à déterminer la sensibilisation, les types, la raison du plagiat chez les étudiants et l'existence d'un logiciel/politique de plagiat dans des universités sélectionnées au Nigeria. Une méthode d'échantillonnage aléatoire stratifié a été adoptée et les répondants ont été choisis dans les facultés des sciences et des sciences sociales. Trois universités ont été sélectionnées (A, B et C) dans le sud-ouest du Nigeria. Les données ont été analysées à l'aide de comptages de fréquence et de pourcentages simples. On a découvert que les étudiants des trois universités étaient conscients du plagiat, mais qu'ils s'y adonnaient encore en coupant et collant de l'Internet. Les résultats montrent que le plagiat à l'université (A) est modéré, mais le type le plus élevé est l'utilisation d'articles sans référence appropriée à l'auteur, en raison du manque de compétences en recherche. Les données de l'université B indiquent que le plagiat est modéré, mais la forme la plus élevée de plagiat est l'utilisation du travail d'un collègue sans permission. Les données de l'université C montrent que la conscience au plagiat est élevée, mais la forme la plus élevée de plagiat est de citer un article dans le texte, sans référence appropriée de l'auteur. Les établissements doivent veiller à ce que le plagiat soit inclus dans leur programme d'initiation des étudiants, à ce qu'une sensibilisation au plagiat, aux types de plagiat, aux politiques disponibles à l'école et aux sanctions définies dans leur manuel d'éthique soit mise en place. Les étudiants doivent être encouragés à soumettre leur projet/thèse par voie électronique en Mot de Microsoft et le logiciel "Turn-it-in" est recommandé pour vérifier les articles/publications de recherche.

Introduction

The rise in plagiarism amongst students in today's educational system is really alarming, students assume that once they have a topic for their project or any assignment, they can simply go online and search for similar topics, alter few lines and words, and they are done. Plagiarism simply means substituting somebody's writing as yours, including the language or ideas, it is a collection of words and bibliographical reference without providing recognition to the creator of the work as noted by Mc Kenzie, (2013) Wiki (2014). The subject 'plagiarism' is a universal occurrence in academia yet it has not received the necessary attention, but it is a great concern amongst public, state and private universities in Nigeria and the world generally. It cuts across all higher institutions of learning in Nigeria like universities, polytechnics, and college of education. According to Wrigley, (2016) plagiarism is a very important subject to be written about because even with the introduction of plagiarism software like Turnitin, Grammarly, Plagiarism Direct, Plagiarism Checker, EVE and Viper, the threat still increases, hence for quality and uniformity to be maintained in higher institutions of learning especially in developing countries in Africa like Nigeria, we all must rise against this menace in our educational system by introducing quality/standards such that articles of students are randomly scrutinized though this may be a huge task for lecturers but it's worth the effort. Salleh, (2012) suggests that lecturers must endeavor to discourage students of this menace and same time aid students to imbibe good writing ethics and moral values in life, as well as in their academics.

In time past, there was no internet and nothing like information explosion, hence researchers obtained most of their resources from the library which made students develop valuable reading and writing skills, unlike what we have today, where from the comfort of their homes and schools they can access as much information as they need. Plagiarism stretches over all levels in education, from primary to tertiary as a result of over dependence on the internet by researchers in

this digital era, this action have made students who input information with the aid of the keyboard master the act, instead of writing.

The objective of this study is to identify student awareness of plagiarism, the types of plagiarism in universities of students that they are involved in, the reason for plagiarism in students, the level of plagiarism in selected university of study, the presence of plagiarism software and policy in the selected universities.

Statement of the Problem

Do students plagiarize? Are they aware that plagiarism is a serious academic offense? What can universities do in terms of policy to stern the cankerworm of plagiarism? The problem of the present study is to establish if students in Western States of Nigeria are constantly being reminded of the dangers of plagiarism, and to help find solution for this evil.

Significance of the Study

Student's awareness of plagiarism in federal, state or private universities in Nigeria will enhance student's passion for thorough research in future articles for publication. Awareness of plagiarism will assist students in translating their ideas and effort in writing by developing writing skills as a result increase their confidence in producing quality research papers.

Literature Review

Plagiarism in students is a common challenge in universities globally and drastic measures must be put in place to effectively curtail it, as noted by Gullifer, (2010) The evolution of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has enhanced plagiarism by the ease to copy and paste information obtained directly from the internet in any part of the world by just a click of the digital mouse. This information is so enormous that users are confused and several people are not interested in writing in their own words anymore (Eret & Ok, 2014). Bailey, (2016) observed that certain universities play down on plagiarism because it is a delicate subject and lecturers do not like speaking about it. However, when plagiarism software (Turn it-in) is run through a plagiarized paper, the outcome is reduction of the grade

in student assignments, increases the possibility of students being penalized, and most importantly reduces the rate of graduation from school. Plagiarism may not be much of a concern, if few sentences are used in an assignment and the writer properly acknowledged, but it becomes a huge concern when full article or a student's project is copied, this is regarded as a serious academic offence as noted by Capsuan, (2013).

Recently in Nigeria, the Committee of Vice Chancellors met and deliberated on the introduction of a software called Turnitin. This software works by high-lightening few sentences from an article by showing the percent of plagiarized work as opined by Gillam, (2011). An IT scholar Dr. Heather at the University of Surrey disclosed that students still have ways of scaling through detection by the software by extracting characters from articles without altering the outlook of the article, thus the software will not detect any form of plagiarism in the work, making it appear original. Students are now aware of this shortfall, hence they convert the copied article into a PDF format and arrange the character such that it aligns with the initial script so that similarities will not be detected by the software as opined by Times Higher Education, (2011).

Another instance of plagiarism in students of other higher institutions in the world is in the process of translating from one language to another. This translation mostly affects international students during the course of the software converting from one language to another; some words may be altered in sequence by the software which was not originally paraphrased by the student, without the student's intention to cheat as pointed out by Carroll, (2008). A university lecturer in United Kingdom illustrated with her Malaysian students that whenever deadline is fixed for submission of an assignment, fraud in students writing is normally high because they hurry to keep up with the deadline thereby making them prone to copying as posit by Higher Education Academy, (2014).

Plagiarism also affects both local and international student whose total average grade point is quite low and because of the pressure to graduate from school with a higher grade, they indulge in plagiarism acts unlike

students who already possess high grade point and are already in their comfort zone as suggested by (Rettinger 2005). According to Gullifer (2010) and Walker (2009) students plagiarize due to numerous academic task given by their lecturers with little or no time to properly organize themselves to accomplish the task, laziness by students to write and inadequate writing skills yet, student's maneuver their way by altering letters and assume they can never get caught by their lecturers. According to Ramasesha, (2014) plagiarism awareness should be taught by students in all institutions of learning as well as giving creative thinkers and writer's recognition for their effort which will further encourage young writers to develop writing skills. Many institutions of higher learning internationally have begun to take positive steps to curb plagiarism by verifying that all submitted electronic copies of PhD thesis are subjected to Turnitin as a means of maintaining standards Pavan, (2015). Universities like Harvard, Stanford and Wharton have initiated method for checking written essays of student in quest of admission in their school by using plagiarism software called "Turnitin" and if discovered that the work has been plagiarized, students wouldn't be given admission. This new development is being used over hundred institutions of learning in the US as noted by Osborne, (2012).

Another giant step for our universities locally in Nigeria, is the controlling body of the Association of Vice Chancellor of Nigerian University (AVCNU) who authorized Professor Abdul Ganiyu Ambali, Vice Chancellor of University of Ilorin to meet with all ICT staff of Federal, State and Private Nigerian universities to develop an indigenous software and repository to check plagiarism in our educational system, as a result of this meeting, a team of ICT staff went into action and develop a software, this invention has showcased the skills of Nigerians in Information Technology. The truth is that students possess same quality traits irrespective of their institution, age, gender and class in the society as posit by Scanlon, (2002).

Varvel, (2005) states that due to student's inability to obtain admission into some universities, there have been an increase for distance education in Nigeria, especially for young school leavers, workers, nursing mothers and the elderly due to the flexibility in the mode of

learning. However, research have shown that plagiarism in students from distance learning institutions is reduced compared to their counterpart from other universities, because of the use course materials and other technological aids in studying but students in distant learning insttutions are examined via (TMA) Total Marked Assessment and examinations as noted by Stuber-McEwen et al., (2009); Walker, (2010) & Kier, (2014).

Student in universities should be encouraged to constantly translate their thoughts into writing and avoid copying. As soon as the habit of writing is inculcated early in a student's life, they express themselves with little or no effort because they have mastered the skill. Frequent writing help students develop constructive ideas, creativity and originality in their work.

Best Practice in Plagiarism
Lectures in universities must encourage students to develop writing skills by using their own words, thus students should not be afraid of making mistakes thinking they do not have the appropriate words to suit any sentence they intend to construct. Students must practice writing, editing, and re-arranging the structure of the sentence until they are comfortable with the work. According to WPA, (2015) the following policies may be of great assistance to students in writing articles:

1.   **Define plagiarism and write down separate policy**.
     Students should be informed that, in writing scholarly articles they must be focused and express themselves on general issues of life. There should be laid down policy in students curriculum for using sources from publications and students must pledge to the honor code of their institution.

2.   **Develop and strategize order of tasks.**
     Students must be encouraged to engage in explorative research and given adequate time for better understanding of the topic of research and supervised by an experienced lecturer.

3. **Citation of references and instruments for gathering information.**

   Students must be able to discuss in writing the methodology / design of their work with proper citation of references in their text.

4. **Display of maturity in plagiarism issues.**

   Students should be asked to provide evidence of work in progress or draft of papers where doubt is observed, lecturers must know that the use of detection software is not 100% reliable. Hence caution must be applied before penalizing students by ensuring that students understand proper use of referencing and citation.

5. **Apply corrective plagiarism steps.**

   Steps on plagiarism must be in line with the institutions guideline and procedures regarding academic dishonesty and appropriate penalty meted on defaulting students.

Methodology

This study used questionnaire as the instruments for collecting data and the sample comprised one hundred (100) students from selected academic institutions (A, B& C) in South West Nigeria. Stratified random sampling method was used to select respondents within each of the institutions to represent the sample of the study due to the large population of students from various faculties. The population has be divided into smaller units called strata and from this stratum, respondents from faculty of Science and Social Science were randomly selected for this research for efficiency CULT, (2014).

Table 1: Gender, Age and Academic Qualification of Participants

Variation	Frequency	Percent %
Gender		
Male	32	45.1
Female	39	54.9
Total	**71**	**100**
Age		
15-29	31	43.7
30-49	26	36.6
50-59	13	18.3
60 and above	01	1.40
Total	**71**	**100**
Qualifications		
PhD	06	8.4
Master	13	18.3
Post Graduate Diploma	19	26.8
Bachelor	33	46.5
Total	**71**	**100**

TABLE 2: Analysis on Plagiarism.

Variation	**Universities**					
Students' analysis on Plagiarism	**A**		**B**		**C**	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	23	65.7	15	71.4	13	86.7
No	12	34.3	06	28.6	02	13.3
Total	**35**	**100**	**21**	**100**	**15**	**100**

Table 2 shows that students of the three universities (A, B & C) are aware of plagiarism representing (65.7%, 71.4 and 86.7%) respectively.

TABLE 3: Types of Plagiarism involved in Students

Variation	Universities					
Types of plagiarism	A		B		C	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Articles used without citing the author	10	28.6	04	19.0	02	13.3
Cited article in text, without reference	08	22.9	03	14.3	06	40.0
Using a colleagues article without permission	06	17.1	07	33.3	02	13.3
Buying an article from a paper site	03	8.6	02	9.5	01	6.7
Cutting and Pasting from the internet	08	22.9	05	23.8	04	26.7
Total	**35**	**100**	**21**	**100**	**15**	**100**

Table 3 depicts the types of plagiarism in various universities. Analysis from institution (A) show that students use articles without citing the author of the work with a high percent of 28.6%. There was increase of citing an article in text without proper referencing and cutting & pasting of articles from the internet with 22.9% with these data lecturers in institution (A) are advised to run softcopies of their student's projects/thesis through Turn-it-in. The least type of plagiarism is buying an article from a paper site which has 8.6%.

Data analysis from institution (B) show that, the highest type of plagiarism by students is using a colleague's article without permission, this constitute an increase of 33.3% which is followed by cutting and pasting information directly from the internet with 23.8% while the least type of plagiarism in university (B), is buying an article from a paper site with 9.5%.

Respondents from university (C) show that the highest type of plagiarism among students is the citation of an article in text without proper referencing with 40% followed by cutting and pasting from the internet with 26.7% while the least type of plagiarism is buying an article from a paper site.

Result from analysis show that the most common feature in the type of plagiarism in the three universities is the high rate of cutting and pasting from the internet, which points to the fact that most of our students are used to downloading most of their information needs instead of uploading information on the internet to add value to knowledge. The least type of plagiarism common to the three universities is buying of paper from a paper site.

TABLE 4: Level of Plagiarism Awareness

Variation	Universities					
Level of Plagiarism Awareness	A		B		C	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
High	03	8.6	04	19.0	08	53.3
Moderate	18	51.4	09	42.9	05	33.3
Low	14	40.0	08	38.1	02	13.3
Total	**35**	**100**	**21**	**100**	**15**	**100**

Analysis from Table 4 indicates that the level of plagiarism awareness in **university (A)** is moderate with 51.4%, also the level of plagiarism awareness in **university (B)** is also moderate with 42.9%, but the level of plagiarism awareness in **university (C)** is higher than the previous universities with 53.3%.

TABLE 5: Why do Students Plagiarize

Variation	Universities					
Reason for students plagiarism	**A**		**B**		**C**	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Lack of Research Skills	14	40.0	05	23.8	02	13.3
High Societal Expectations	08	22.9	09	42.9	06	40.0
Lack of Interest in Writing	08	22.9	02	9.5	02	13.3
Lack of Time	03	8.6	02	9.5	04	26.7
Outright Laziness	02	5.7	03	14.3	01	6.7
Total	**35**	**100**	**21**	**100**	**15**	**100**

Table 5 indicates the highest reason for student's plagiarism in (A) as 40%, this is due to lack of research skills, while the highest reason for plagiarism in (B) is 42.9% which is as a result of high societal expectations, same applies to university (C) with 40% due to high societal expectations.

Table 6: Presence of plagiarism software

Variation	universities					
Presence of Plagiarism Software	A		B		C	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	27	77.1	15	71.4	13	86.7
No	08	22.9	06	28.6	02	13.3
Total	**35**	**100**	**21**	**100**	**15**	**100**

Analysis from Table 6 indicates that students in university (A), (B) and (C) are aware of the presence of plagiarism software representing 77.1%, 71.4% and 86.7% respectively.

Table 7: Presence of Plagiarism Policy by Universities

Variation	universities					
Presence of Plagiarism Policy	A		B		C	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	12	34.3	06	28.6	12	80.0
No	08	22.9	11	52.4	01	6.7
No Idea	15	42.9	04	19.0	02	13.3
Total	**35**	**100**	**21**	**100**	**15**	**100**

Table 7 depicts that students of institution (A) have no idea of the presence of plagiarism policy in their school with 42.9%, while students of institution (B) are of the opinion that there is plagiarism policy indicating 52.4% but students of institution (C) are better informed of the presence of plagiarism policy with 80%.

Discussion of findings
Findings illustrate that students in university (A, B & C) are all informed on issues of plagiarism representing (65.7%, 71.4% & 86.4%) respectively and are all guilty of cutting and pasting from the internet, which points to the fact that most of our students today, are used to downloading most of their information needs, instead of uploading information on the web to add value to knowledge. Finding shows that plagiarism in university (A) is moderate, but the highest type of plagiarism is the use of articles without proper referencing of the author, and the reason for plagiarism in the institution is lack of research skills. Students are aware of the presence of plagiarism software, but have no idea of any policy on plagiarism.

Findings from university B indicate that plagiarism is moderate. Data illustrates that the highest form of plagiarism is the use of a colleague's work without permission, and the reason why students plagiarize is because of high societal expectations. Students are aware of plagiarism software but are not sure of its efficiency but are aware of plagiarism policy.

Data from university C illustrates that plagiarism awareness is high, but the highest form of plagiarism is citing an article in text, without proper referencing and the reason why students in university C plagiarize is because of high societal expectation, though students are conscious of the software and the presence of a policy, yet the plagiarize still.

Conclusion

Universities all over the world should constantly discourage students by enlightening them on the consequences of plagiarism, the knowledge obtained will enable students to re-focus their strength by developing creativity in their writings and research publications for a healthier workforce in various universities.

Recommendation

Institutions must ensure that plagiarism is included in their induction programme for students, and create awareness on plagiarism, types, policy available in school, and the penalty defined in their hand book on code of ethics. It should be mandatory for students to submit their articles electronically in Microsoft word, and also for plagiarism to be integrated in the university curriculum.

Turn-it-in" software is recommended for checking articles/research publications because it highlights the percent of similarities in publication, and directs the researcher to the exact location on the internet where the work was cited including the references, which acts as a guide especially for young writers.

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