

## **Academic Dishonesty among Youth: Faculty and Students' Perceptions about Plagiarism in Research Work**

\* Dr Riffat-un-Nisa Awan, Associate Professor (Corresponding Author)

\*\* Dr. Ghazala Noureen, Associate Professor

\*\*\* Ghazanfar Ali, Lecturer

### **Abstract**

*Plagiarism is responsible for decline in academic integrity among scholars at higher education level that also hinders their genuine learning and development. This study intended to explore university students' perceptions about prevalence and causes of plagiarism practices in academic work. It also attempted to explore measures for reducing the academic dishonesty as suggested by university faculty. A sample of 200 post graduate students and 40 teachers from the social sciences departments of two universities was selected conveniently. A Likert-type scale was adopted for data collection. The findings indicated that students were involved in stealing the ideas of others and using unpublished material from the internet without acknowledgment. The main causes as indicated by students included; lack of interest, poor academic skills, no obvious penalties, the fear of failure, busy schedules, easy access to internet sources, and the stress of meeting deadlines. The faculty emphasized to foster academic integrity among scholars and improve their academic skills along with strict implementation of rules and regulations regarding plagiarism. They also suggested that supervisors should develop awareness among scholars about plagiarism and its consequences along with training them in proper referencing and use of Turnitin to promote originality in research work.*

**Keywords:** Plagiarism, Academic Dishonesty, Use of Turnitin Software

### **Introduction**

In recent years, academic misconduct has been a crucial issue in academic practices. Plagiarism is one of the most contentious academic misdoings in higher education that is generally practiced in academic writing (Bahadori, Izadi, & Hoseinpoufard, 2012; Wasay & Siddiqui, 2015). The word plagiarism originally comes from a Latin "plagiarius" that means robbers (Cook, 2012). According to Gasparyan et al. (2017), the term "plagiarism," also refers to the freebooting of literature.

Academically questionable practices such as stealing intellectual property have a long history that went on long before the invention of worldwide web. However, in the age of digital technology academically dishonest practices such as plagiarism has become easier than ever before. Plagiarism is an unethical practice of using ideas or academic work of other people and claiming it as one's own. In literature six different forms of plagiarism has been identified namely; copy and paste, word switch, style, metaphor, ideas and plagiarism of authorship (Anney & Mosha, 2015). Pincus and Schmelkin (2003) stated that academicians include ethical and moral mistakes, complicated conduct, and student's dishonesty.

Grossberg (2008) summarized following central themes of plagiarism as defined by American Historical Association. These themes include; First, plagiarism includes using the exact wording of another author without suitable attribution. Second, using another person's ideas, theories, rhetorical strategies, and interpretations without genuine attribution. Third, plagiarism happens when the writer fails to accept and acknowledge the work of others. Therefore, plagiarism is an act of academic dishonesty and deception at conscious level. It involves manipulation and misuse of someone else's intellectual work for taking illegitimate credit of that work. So, plagiarism is considered as an intellectual theft and fraud that cannot be tolerated among academicians on moral and ethical grounds (Bennett, 2017; Brennan, 2015; Cook, 2012; Latourette, 2010).

\* Department of Education, University of Sargodha Email: [riffat.nisa@uos.edu.pk](mailto:riffat.nisa@uos.edu.pk)

\*\* Department of Secondary Education, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore  
Email: [g\\_noureen@yahoo.com](mailto:g_noureen@yahoo.com)

\*\*\*Department of Education, University of Sargodha Email: [ghazanfar.ali@uos.edu.pk](mailto:ghazanfar.ali@uos.edu.pk)

Plagiarism is a clear violation of copyrights and it is a serious offense. It is an academic deceit that is often experienced by academic community. Due to easy access to internet, there is remarkable increase in reported plagiarism cases and sources of plagiarism have been multiplied over the years (Onuoha, Unegbu, Ikonne, & Madukoma, 2013) It ranges from copying few sentences from internet without providing source of information, fabricating bibliography and stealing work done by other people to purchasing of academic assignments and papers that are available at various websites. It includes replicating phrases, sentences, and paragraph by changing the expressions of the text without acknowledging the source and submitting them as one's own (Spiller & Crown, 1995).

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty that is being practiced at graduate and post graduate level and is a growing threat to academic integrity in higher education. Due to its long term consequences and widespread practice plagiarism has become a serious concern. It is quite evident from the findings of many empirical studies that plagiarism has serious implications for quality of higher education and is one of the major causes of decay of academic integrity. It is a rapidly growing problem especially among students from developing countries. As a result of increase in plagiarism practices among students around the globe, higher education institutions in developed countries have already started to take advantage of technology to overcome this serious issue (Thompsett & Ahluwalia, 2010). However, in developing countries use of plagiarism detection technologies is a relatively recent development. Due to very high enrolment of students at universities and lack of facilities it remained a challenge for teachers from developing countries to detect plagiarism and identify the sources and causes of this unethical behavior.

In this era of information technology where the access to intellectual and academic work is much easier than before, the trend of plagiarism is also growing among students and researchers at higher education level (Wasay & Siddiqui, 2015). Most frequently used practices of plagiarism among higher education students and researchers includes paraphrasing by remixing and recycling ideas, metaphors and data into a new reasoning pattern. Besides paraphrasing, stealing ideas and work of colleagues, copying unpublished work, self-plagiarism, using illegal material from internet paper mills and fake references are also very common in post graduate students written assignments and research work (Meo & Talha, 2019).

Poor communication skills and language barriers (i.e. poor academic reading and writing skills ) along with lack of aptitude, confidence and moral responsibility are the major underlying factors of growing trend of plagiarism among higher education students (Wasay & Siddiqui, 2015). However there is a need to investigate this growing tendency of plagiarism among under graduate and graduate students that reflects the deterioration of academic integrity that is a core ethical and moral value of academic community (Díaz, Montoliu, & Becerra, 2018).

Plagiarism occurs due to some breaches in the academic settings and there are multiple reasons of plagiarism such as academic pressure, ambition of good grades, lack of skills, fear of failure, careless attitude, ambiguity in university policies, and procrastination. According to Onuoha et al. (2013) plagiarism practices are greater than ever before as information is more easily accessible through electronic resources and students when cutting corners misuse the sources and materials. The researcher has identified numerous causes of plagiarism in academia; nevertheless more work is desired in this area. It is very important to explore context specific factors that are pushing students to opt for this academic dishonesty. This will help to reduce the prevalence of dishonest practices and in turn increase the quality of education and research in higher education.

Keeping in view the nature and practices of plagiarism, several studies have given different recommendations to decrease these malpractices from academic work. Shakeel, Iffat, Quds, Tanveer, and Hassan (2013) recommended higher educational institutions to develop administrative structures and pedagogical approaches that foster academic skills and ethical responsibility among students that will consequently minimize the tendency among students to present plagiarized content in their academic writing. They further recommended higher education institutions to implement transparent monitoring policy and procedures for identification of malpractices in intellectual work. Many recent studies have acknowledged the effectiveness of *Turnitin* software in electronic detection of plagiarism in academic research at higher education level that have been developed as a result of collaborative efforts of academic and technical experts (Kayaoğlu, Erbay, Flitner, & Saltaş, 2016; Levine & Pazdernik, 2018).

Therefore, educational institutions should develop academic honesty and integrity as a core ethical values that would lead an avoidance behavior towards plagiarism while increasing genuine learning, development and competitiveness (Ahmad & Ullah, 2014; Bennett, 2017; Coughlin, 2015) This study is an attempt to explore the level of awareness of university students about the prevalence and causes of plagiarism practices in research work. It also explored the views of HE faculty members regarding measures for preventing the academic dishonesty especially the role of Turnitin software for detecting plagiarism. This study also intends to sensitize policy makers, administrators and faculty of higher education institutions to develop workable solutions to avoid this serious violation of academic integrity.

**Objectives**

This study intends to:

1. Explore the perception of university students about plagiarism in research work.
2. Discover the cause of plagiarism in research work as perceived by university students.
3. Find out the measures for reducing the academic dishonesty especially the role of Turnitin software for removing plagiarism as suggested by university faculty.

**Methods**

This research intends to explore the views and perception of university students about plagiarism in their academic work. All university post-graduate students and teachers were considered as the population of this study. A sample of 200 post-graduate students from social sciences departments was selected from two universities (1. University of Sargodha, 2. Lahore College for Women University). Moreover for getting teachers suggestions to reduce academic dishonesty among students, a sample of 40 teachers was selected from social sciences departments of the same universities.

**Research Instruments**

A Likert-type scale developed by (Sarwar & Shah, 2020) measuring students' awareness and their views about plagiarism practices, causes of plagiarism, measures to reduce plagiarism, and role of *Turnitin* software in reducing the plagiarism in universities was adapted for data collection. A pilot testing was carried out for ensuring the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire was revised in accordance with the results of pilot study. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was used to calculate the internal consistency of instrument which were as follows: Plagiarism Practices .810, Causes of Plagiarism .712, Measure to reduce Plagiarism .697 and Role of Turnitin in reducing the Plagiarism .755. Data was collected by administering the questionnaire in person and analysis of data was done through percentage, descriptive analysis and graphical portrayal.

**Results**

The following Figure shows that 59% students agreed that scholars re-submit their previous work of another purpose. The majority of the students (56%) agreed that scholars steal the work of their fellows and submit it with their work. A big majority (88%) was of the view that scholars use unpublished material without acknowledgment or rephrasing. A large majority agreed that scholars copy material from the internet and other published sources without acknowledging the authors. Majority of the students (86%) agreed that scholars steal the ideas of someone else and mention as their own.

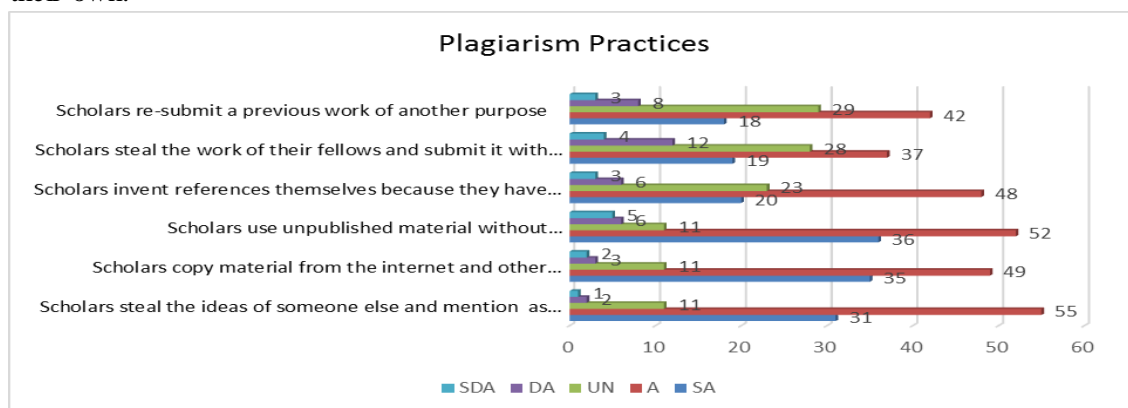


Figure 1: Students' views about plagiarism practices

Table 1  
Causes of plagiarism

SR	Statement	SA	A	UN	DA	SDA	Mean	S.D
1.	Scholars involve in plagiarism for their unimportant assignments	10	58	17	9	6	3.66	.987
2.	Students' lack interest in research cause them indulge in plagiarism	21	56	13	8	2	3.87	.828
3.	Scholars' lack of moral responsibility results in plagiarism	31	46	10	10	3	4.12	.737
4.	Supervisors ignoring plagiarism cases is a cause of plagiarism	30	57	9	3	1	4.07	.689
5.	Scholars feeling that they would not get caught, drives them to do plagiarism	23	61	10	5	1	4.08	.757
6.	Lack of awareness about consequences of plagiarism may be cause of plagiarism.	20	59	8	8	5	3.90	.810
7.	Scholars lack of confidence in their abilities may drive them involve in to do plagiarism.	50	38	5	7	1	4.28	.904
8.	Scholars feel convinced to plagiarize because so many other scholars are doing it.	47	29	14	6	4	3.88	.850
9.	The fear of failure may persuade them to do plagiarism.	26	52	12	10	0	3.96	.827
10.	Competition and pressure to achieve higher grades and higher degree is a cause of plagiarism	19	51	18	9	3	3.76	.806
11.	Busy schedule (of scholars or supervisor) lead to plagiarism.	32	46	15	4	3	4.01	.683
12.	Easy access to internet sources is cause of plagiarism.	33	54	2	6	5	4.11	.852
13.	Scholars unfamiliarity with plagiarism policy is cause of plagiarism	18	63	7	5	7	3.84	.967
14.	Week academic writing skills may be a cause of plagiarism.	12	77	8	3	0	3.92	.692
15.	Stress of meeting deadlines lead to plagiarism	48	42	7	2	1	4.32	.755

Table 1 shows that the majority of the students (68%) with mean score 3.66 and SD = .987, agreed that scholars get involved in plagiarism when they don't consider their assignment important. The majority of the students (77%) with mean score 3.87 and SD = .828, agreed that lack of interest cause them indulge in plagiarism and their lack of moral responsibility results in plagiarism (M= 4.12, SD= .737). Eighty four percent students viewed that scholars feeling that they would not get caught, and their lack of awareness about the consequences of plagiarism drives them to do plagiarism. Scholar's lack of confidence in their abilities (M=4.28 and SD = .904) and their desensitization about the issue because so many other scholars are doing it (M=3.88, SD = .850), may drive them to get involved in plagiarism. Majority of the students (M=3.96 and SD = .827), agreed that the fear of failure and competition and pressure to achieve higher grades and higher degree (M=3.76 and SD = .806), may persuade them to do plagiarism

Majority of the students (78%) with mean score 4.01 and SD = .683, agreed that busy schedule of scholars and supervisors lead to plagiarism. Majority of the students (87%) with mean score 4.11 and SD = .852, agreed that easy access to internet sources is a cause of plagiarism. Scholars unfamiliarity with plagiarism policy (M= 3.84 and SD = .976), and their poor academic writing skills (M= 3.52 and SD = .792) may be causes of plagiarism. Majority of the students (90%) with mean score 4.32 and SD = .755, agreed that the stress of meeting deadlines lead to plagiarism.

**Measure to Reduce Plagiarism**

The figure 2 reflects that majority of the teachers (73%) agreed that scholars need to enhance their moral principles to reduce plagiarism. Majority of the teachers (83%) agreed that plagiarism can be reduced by improving writing skills of the students. A big majority (82%) agreed with the idea that scholars should be informed that their work will be checked for plagiarism and Quality Enhancement

Cell (QEC) should play its due role to control plagiarism. Majority (69%) agreed that university authorities need to implement rules and regulations regarding plagiarism. Many teachers (65%) were in agreement that plagiarism can be reduced if supervisors train their scholars about the citation and referencing, and clears the concept of students about plagiarism.

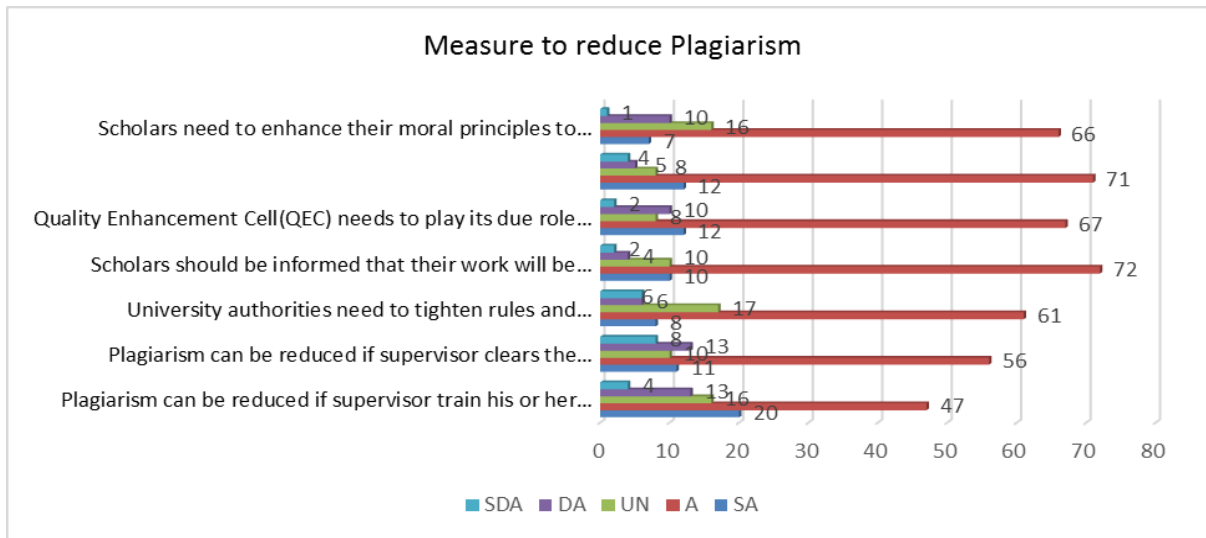


Figure 2: Teachers' suggested measures to reduce plagiarism practices

**Role of Turnitin in reducing the plagiarism**

The following figures make it clear that majority of the teachers (73%) agreed that the use of *Turnitin* has promoted originality in scholar's research work and it has raised awareness to avoid internet plagiarism and academic offenses (69%). The use of *Turnitin* software has helped improve scholar's citation and academic writing skills (64%). The majority of the teachers (52%) disagreed that *Turnitin* may not be helpful for the review of graphs, images, or tables because it focuses on text.

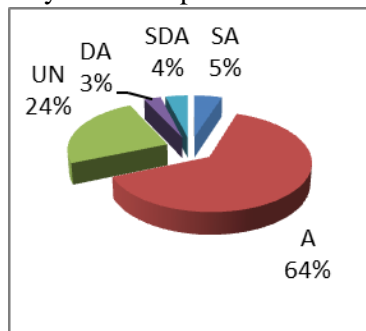


Figure 3: The use of Turnitin has promoted originality in scholar's research work.

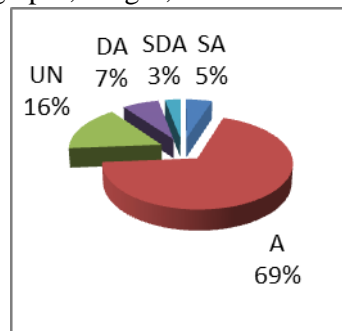


Figure 4: The use of Turnitin has raised awareness among scholars to avoid academic offences and internet plagiarism

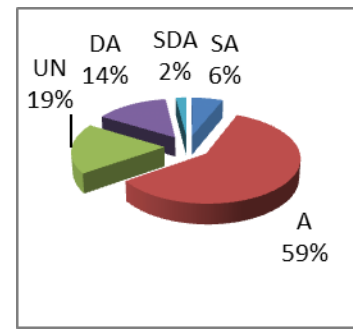


Figure 5: Using Turnitin has helped improve scholar's citation and academic writing skills

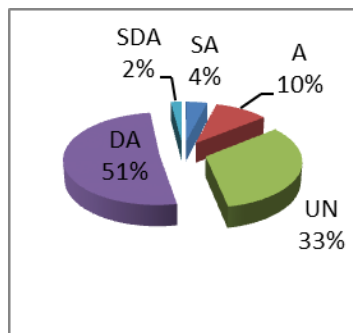


Figure 6: Getting familiar with the use of Turnitin takes a considerable time and effort

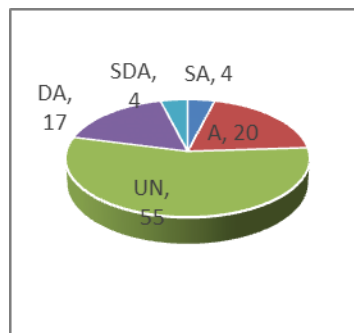


Figure 7: Turnitin does not detect the correctness of the used reference

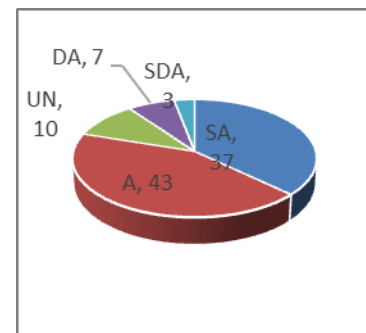


Figure 8: I use Turnitin quite often

### Findings and Discussion

Findings of the study reveals that most of the students were mindful of plagiarism, they had awareness about the concept and consequences of plagiarism in research work and university plagiarism policy because university plagiarism policy had been implemented in its essence. Klein (2011) asserts that weak institutional policy and its lack of awareness leads towards plagiarism. Findings of this study also revealed that students were aware of the plagiarism practices like re-submitting of the previous work for another purpose, stealing the work of their fellows and other researchers to submit and using unpublished material as well as published sources from the internet without acknowledgment or rephrasing. Bacha, Bahous, and Nabhani (2012) confirmed these findings and concluded that students were aware of the plagiarism practices and they were using strategies to avoid plagiarism by taking help from their peers and seniors.

The results of the study had revealed that the lack of moral responsibility and awareness about the consequences of plagiarism drives to do plagiarism. Scholar's lack of confidence in their abilities and the fear of failure, competition, and pressure to achieve higher grades and higher degree may persuade them to do plagiarism. Majority of the students highlighted that busy schedule of scholars and supervisors lead to plagiarism. Other salient reasons include easy access to internet sources, poor academic writing skills and the stress of meeting deadlines led to plagiarism in most of the cases. (Onuoha et al., 2013) also proclaim that plagiarism practices are increasing with easily access of information on internet and students are misusing the sources and materials available. Evering and Moorman (2012) found the similar reasons like lack of interest in the subject matter and lack of experience in academic writing as the major reasons of plagiarism. Other studies had also revealed that if an institution effectively implements its institutional plagiarism policy, it would increase awareness among students and reduce plagiarism practices among students (Bacha et al., 2012; Klein, 2011).

The data collected from university teachers have shown that scholars need to enhance their moral principles to reduce plagiarism. Wasay and Siddiqui (2015) also found that plagiarism was an outcome of deficiency in moral training and deficiency in academic writing skills especially while working and writing in second language. These findings had been supported by other studies and these studies had recommended educational institutions to develop academic integrity as a core ethical values to reduce plagiarism (Ahmad & Ullah, 2014; Bennett, 2017; Coughlin, 2015)

Faculty members participating in this study agreed that plagiarism can be reduced by improving writing skills of the students and by informing scholars that their work would be checked for plagiarism. Higher education commission had initiated Quality Enhancement Cells (QEC) in almost all universities and degree awarding institutions for the purpose to improve quality in HE institutions. Teachers agreed that QEC and ORIC offices should play its due role to implement rules and regulations regarding plagiarism. They stated that plagiarism can be reduced if supervisors train their scholars about the citation and referencing and clear the concept of students about plagiarism. Motivating students for creative and genuine work is very important because plagiarism hinders learning and development (Coughlin, 2015) and leads towards inefficiency and incompetence. Other studies had also supported that to build strong foundations for best practices and high academic standards at graduate level, plagiarism policies and different aspects should be reviewed to develop effective management processes for curbing and reducing plagiarism (Kayaoğlu et al., 2016; Levine & Pazdernik, 2018; Shakeel et al., 2013).

University faculty agreed that the use of *Turnitin* had promoted originality in scholar's research work and was a big tool in reducing the plagiarism. Use of *Turnitin* had also raised awareness to avoid internet plagiarism and academic dishonesty. The use of *Turnitin* software had also helped scholars to improve citation and academic writing skills although it was not helpful for the review of graphs, images, or tables because it focuses on text. Brown, Robin, and Jordan (2008) had discussed that no software can detect plagiarized content 100 %. Many recent studies have acknowledged the effectiveness of *Turnitin* software in electronic detection of plagiarism in academic research at higher education level (Kayaoğlu et al., 2016; Levine & Pazdernik, 2018).

### Conclusion

It was concluded that despite the fact that students were well aware of plagiarism and that scholars were familiar with the plagiarism policy of the Higher Education Commission, they still indulged in coping ideas and stealing material without referring the original source. Mostly students understood

that plagiarism was being taken as a serious problem and was discouraged in the university. A range of factors were attached to this unlawful activity. A big majority agreed that plagiarism could be reduced if supervisor were vigilant and university authorities especially Quality Enhancement Cells (QEC) implemented rules and regulations regarding plagiarism very seriously. The use of Turnitin was considered an effective tool in promoting originality in research work. It was suggested that teachers and supervisors may guide the students individually and in groups about plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarism both formally and informally.

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