

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Inoculating against Students Plagiarism: The Role of Turnitin

Michael Karikari Appiah

Scholar, Brain-Trust Research PVT Limited, Adum-Kumasi, Ghana

Abstract:

This paper was conducted to examine the awareness, thoughts and practices of plagiarism among both undergraduates and graduate students in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. Moreover, students' knowledge on Turnitin also formed an integral part of this study. The study adopted mixed method descriptive research design. Overall, 200 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Convenience sampling technique was employed to select all the respondents. Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. The survey questionnaires were adopted from Batane (2010) who had conducted similar study in Botswana. The field data were analyzed using statistical package for social scientist (SPSS) and Microsoft excel. The survey discovered that majority (82.7%) of the respondents' belief in the efficacy of turn-it-in. They asserted that turn-it-in can be used as a tool to check plagiarism among students with the least (17.3%) said otherwise. Following turn-it-in adoption 86.5% of the student are most likely to put a stop to plagiarism knowing that their papers would be checked for plagiarism through turn-it-in. Respondents indicated reasons towards plagiarism as follows: Majority (30.3%) are most likely to plagiarize due to laziness, 23.2% will plagiarize due to procrastination and poor time management, 16.7% will again plagiarize due to lacking of the requisite skills to cite and reference, whereas 10.3% of the respondents are likely to plagiarize owing to lack of materials on plagiarism. Regarding the available policy on plagiarism, majority (33.5%) argued that policy on plagiarism only affects students when some lecturers are victims.

Keywords: Plagiarism, awareness, Turnitin, thought, practices, Kumasi, Ghana

1. Introduction

Students' academic plagiarism has been variously studied (see Batane, 2012; Stappenbelt & Rowles, 2009; Stenleng & King, 2012). Bahadori, Izadi & Hoseinpoufard (2012) summarized the various causes of plagiarism into political, technological, cultural, social, institutional as well as personal attributes. The authors asserted specifically that, the fast multiplication of journal, the increasing growth and adoption of technologies, fierce competition between and among countries, weak institutional capacity, low culture, lack of explication of plagiarism and different understanding of the concept, rapid growth of knowledge lack of awareness, poor time management and procrastination have all contributed to the up surging of plagiarism.

Many authors have proved that Turnitin plagiarism detective software is very active and effective. Batane, (2010) postulated in relation to the above that when Turnitin was deployed in the university of Botswana the impact was great. He maintains that there was a clear difference between student's attitude before and aftermath of the Turnitin. He had indicated that Turnitin is very efficacious in handling any form of academic misconducts such as cheating and stealing. Appiah (2016) studied the incidence of plagiarism among under graduate students in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana and reported that plagiarism practices among undergraduate students were high. Moreover, students' knowledge on forms of plagiarism was low.

Appiah, (2016) had suggested that there is the need for national policy on plagiarism just as is been done on copy right. This implies that macro-policy is considered more feasible than the individual institutional by-laws. As cited Moore (2013) who conducted a study on sloppy referencing and plagiarism in students theses and reported that going by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research plagiarism *Ethics* (2002, 21) when "someone else's text, or parts thereof" were "presented as one's own". The author further reported that there are copious sloppy works and plagiarized theses which have been accepted by some higher institutions mostly involving masters and undergraduate studies.

Roig (2010) had reported that the incidences of plagiarism are still high in North American Countries. The author asserted that when 10,000 out of total pollution of 70,000 were surveyed from 83 colleges in the United States and Canada the results indicated that the plagiarism prevalence was higher among both undergraduates (62%) and graduate students (59%). In both cases students admitted for taking internet sources for their assignments without acknowledgement. Stappenbelt & Rowles (2009) asserted that most plagiarism detection softwares are generally good but recommended that the Turnitin is very effective. Moreover, the authors posited that when this is implemented the students will focus on learning the appropriate ways in handling plagiarism such as phrasing, rephrasing, paraphrasing, quotations and references. These authors believed would yield much better results.

This paper was conducted to examine the awareness, thoughts and practices of plagiarism among both undergraduate and graduate students. In particular the study would address how factors such as the increasing growth and adoption of technologies, fierce competition between and among countries, weak institutional capacity, low culture, lack of explication of plagiarism and different understanding of the concept, rapid growth of knowledge lack of awareness, poor time management, complacency and procrastination can influence Turnitin as a means to prevent cheating and promote academic integrity

2. Literature Review

Plagiarism had been studied widely and comprehensively. These include; awareness, thoughts practices, incidence, mitigating strategies among others. Theories and models have so far been deployed. The most common being social learning theory, social cognitive theory, self-efficacy theory, theory of reasoned behaviour and theory of planned behaviour. The section of the study present literature review on how uniquely individual author addressed plagiarism in the past.

To start with, Sentleng & King (2012) posited that internet source continue to dominant undergraduate students forms of plagiarism. Other academic misconducts revealed include; copy without references, poor quotation, poor referencing, summarized without referencing, invented data and bibliographies. All these come about due to the following; poor academic writing, lack of referencing skills, laziness, poor time management, inadequate teaching, learning materials, desire to score higher marks have all contributed to the upsurge of plagiarism prevalence. Many authors have proved that Turnitin plagiarism detective software is very active and effective.

Moreover, Batane, (2010) postulated in relation to the above that when Turnitin was deployed in the university of Botswana the impact was great. He maintains that there was a clear difference between student's attitude before and aftermath of the Turnitin. He had indicated that Turnitin is very efficacious in handling any form of academic misconducts such as cheating and stealing.

Again, Appiah (2016) studied the incidence of plagiarism among under graduate students in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana and reported that plagiarism practices among undergraduate students were high. Moreover, students' knowledge on forms of plagiarism was low. Appiah, (2016) had suggested that there is the need for national policy on plagiarism just as is been done on copy right. This implies that macro-policy is considered more feasible than the individual institutional by-laws.

Sequel to the above, Stappenbelt & Rowles (2009) asserted that most plagiarism detection softwares are generally good but recommended that the Turnitin is very effective. Moreover, the authors posited that when this is implemented the students will focus on learning the appropriate ways in handling plagiarism such as phrasing, rephrasing, paraphrasing, quotations and references. These authors believed would yield much better results.

Similarly, Park, (2003) reported three major areas that require institutional involvement in order to handle students' academic plagiarism in the United Kingdom. The need for cohesive frame work in handling students plagiarism, the need for education and training to build students capacity on plagiarism. And finally the need for transparent and consistent penalty system to deal with those who continue to plagiarize

More so, Roig (2010) had reported that the incidences of plagiarism are still high in North American countries. The author asserted that when 10,000 out of total population of 70,000 were surveyed from 83 colleges in the United States and Canada the results indicated that the plagiarism prevalence was higher among both undergraduates (62%) and graduate students (59%). In both cases students admitted for taking internet sources for their assignments without acknowledgement.

In addition, Bahadori, et al, (2012) summarized the various causes of plagiarism into political, technological, cultural, social, institutional as well as personal attributes. The authors asserted specifically that, the fast multiplication of journal, the increasing growth and adoption of technologies, fierce competition between and among countries, weak institutional capacity, low culture, lack of explication of plagiarism and different understanding of the concept, rapid growth of knowledge lack of awareness, poor time management and procrastination have all contributed to the up surging of plagiarism.

Moving on from the above, Chang, (2003) studied the problem of plagiarism among educators of theology and reported that there is the need to have adequate measures in place to handle plagiarism among students of all professional background. Since plagiarism incidence has no geographical limit.

Meanwhile, Gow (2013) reported that there are no major variations in the plagiarism practice in the United Kingdom and that of china. The only thing that differs has to do with strictness on policy. This implies that students irrespective of socio-cultural background has the propensity to cheat depending on how such behaviours are regulated in one own culture.

Finally, Moore (2013) studied sloppy referencing and plagiarism in students theses and reported that going by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research plagiarism Ethics (2002, 21) when "someone else's text, or parts thereof" were "presented as one's own". The author further reported that there are copious sloppy works and plagiarized theses which have been accepted by some higher institutions mostly involving masters and undergraduate studies. Clearly, it can be learnt from the review that different authors employed different approach to study plagiarism. Hence, this study followed similar precedent in tackling student's plagiarism.

3. Methodology

This paper was conducted to examine the awareness, thoughts and practices of plagiarism among both undergraduates and graduate students in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. Moreover, students' knowledge on Turnitin also formed an integral part of this study. The study adopted mixed method descriptive research design. Overall, 200 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Convenience sampling technique was employed to select all the respondents. Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. The questionnaires were adopted from Batane (2010) who had conducted similar study in Botswana. The questions were modified to address all the objectives outlined in this study. 15 out of the 200 questionnaires were rejected due to reasons such as

multiple responses, spelling mistakes and illegibility. Bringing the response rate to 92.5%. This according to copper (2007) as cited in Appiah-Karikari (2016) is ideal for statistical analysis. The field data were analyzed using statistical package for social scientist (SPSS) and Microsoft excel. The contents of the study were vividly explained to all respondents before giving out the questionnaires. Participation of this study was purely voluntarily.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Demographic

The survey result reveals that the average age group of the respondents was 32.5, this fall within the age bracket of 31-35. Males were identified as the most dominant sex group in the study with majority of them falling within the largest age group. Expectedly, Muslims were the least religious group. Christians as usual dominated the study. It was also discovered that undergraduates were more than the graduates in the study. However the margin is very small. Chi-square test shows that there is no association between respondents gender and their level of study negative (χ^2 -value = 0.137 $r = 0.027$ p-value > 0.05). The study revealed that a whopping majority (110) were without any form of scholarship albeit, 51 out of the total respondents were on scholarship schemes. The study Karl Pearson chi-square revealed that there is a significant association between respondent's age and their gender. However, correlation between them was negative (χ^2 -value = 58.602, $r = -0.318$, p-value < 0.05). The study also reveals a significant association between respondent's gender and their religion (χ^2 -value = 6.694 $r = -0.193$, p-value < 0.009). Finally, there is scholarship has significant association with gender at 90% significance level (p-value < 0.10)

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Laziness	56	30.3
Lack of skills in citing and referencing	31	16.7
Lack of moral responsibility	18	9.7
Lack of materials on plagiarism	19	10.3
I do not think i can be caught	18	9.7
Procrastination/time management	43	23.2
Total	185	100.0

Table 1: Student's reasons for plagiarism

Source: Field survey, 2016

The table 2 shows the classification of responses covering respondent's diverse reasons towards plagiarism. The survey results revealed that majority (30.3%) are most likely to plagiarize due to laziness, 23.2% will plagiarize due to procrastination and poor time management, 16.7% will again plagiarize due to lacking of the requisite skills to cite and reference, whereas 10.3% of the respondents are likely to plagiarize owing to lack of materials on plagiarism, on a moral basis, 9.7% will plagiarize because they lack the moral responsibility and seemingly 9.7% assume they cannot be caught when they plagiarize.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Yes	93	50.3
No	92	49.7
Total	185	100.0

Table 2: University providing skills to write properly

Source: Field survey, 2016

From Table 3 a greater portion (50.3%) commented that the university provides them with enough skills to write properly while 49.7% belief the university does not provide them with enough skills to write properly.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
I do not know much about referencing and citing	43	23.2
I have developed a habit for that	25	13.5
I have never been caught on assignment plagiarism	79	42.7
No training on avoiding plagiarism	38	20.5
Total	185	100.0

Table 3: Students suggested reasons for continue plagiarism

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 4 examined why respondents will continue to plagiarize even though they have been given the right skills to write proper. The outcome of the survey reveals that a whopping majority (42.7%) will continue to plagiarize because they have never been caught on assignment by plagiarism, more so 23.2% are susceptible to plagiarize due to the fact that they don't know much about referencing

and citing, whereas 20.5% will continuously plagiarize resulting from their lack of training on how to avoid plagiarism and finally 13.5% representing the minority will plagiarize because they have develop the habit of plagiarizing.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Plagiarism policy only covers these writing	37	20.0
Assignment are should be checked for plagiarism	6	3.2
The policy should covers both students and lecturers	38	20.5
The turning is a good start	43	23.2
Massive education is needed to support the policy on plagiarism	61	33.0
Total	185	100.0

Table 4: Students suggested measures to improve the situation
Source: Field survey, 2016

From Table 5 respondents' views on how to curb plagiarism and improve students' knowledge were collated. The result revealed that majority (33.0%) of the respondents postulated that massive education is needed to support the policy on plagiarism, followed by 23.2% who accepted that the turn-it-in is a good start to curb plagiarism, 20.5% again commented that the policy of plagiarism should cover both students and lecturers whereas 20.0% lamented that plagiarism policy only covers these writings with a minority (3.2%) agreeing to the fact that assignments should be checked for plagiarism.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Yes	153	82.7
No	32	17.3
Total	185	100.0

Table 5: Using Turnitin to fight plagiarism among students
Source: Field survey, 2016

From Table 6 more than three quarters (82.7%) of the respondents' belief that turn-it-in can be used as a tool to check plagiarism among students with the least (17.3%) said otherwise.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Yes	25	13.5
No	160	86.5
Total	185	100.0

Table 6: Plagiarizing after knowing papers will be checked
Source: Field survey, 2016

Deducing from Table 7, 13.5% of the respondents who form the minority asserted that they will continue to plagiarize even after knowing that their paper will be checked through the turn-it-in while 86.5% think they will not continue to plagiarize when they know their paper will be checked through the turn-it-in.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Favoritism	19	10.3
Too lenient	44	23.8
I believe some lecturers lack knowledge as well	18	9.7
Lecturers do not expect anything a part from their note given in class	61	33.0
Research method syllabus do not Include plagiarism control	43	23.2
Total	185	100.0

Table 7: Lecturers role in encouraging plagiarism
Source: Field survey, 2016

On the grounds of the roles lecturers play to encourage plagiarism, it was quite a shocking when 33.0% of the respondents said lecturers do not expect anything apart from their note given in class while 23.8% belief lecturers are too lenient with students which result in plagiarism, also 23.2% belief research method syllabus does not include plagiarism control and adding to that 10.3% of the respondents belief favoritism is what encourages plagiarism among students with the least (9.7%) surprisingly think some lecturers lack the knowledge about plagiarism as well.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Authorities are during their best	25	13.5
Plagiarism policy only covers these writing	43	23.2
Assignment are not check for plagiarism	18	9.7
The policy covers only students but some lecturers are victims	62	33.5
The Turnitin is a good start	37	20.0
Total	185	100.0

Table 8: Views on university's response to plagiarism cases
Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 9 assessed the views of students on university's response to plagiarism cases and from the table majority (33.5%) belief that the policy of plagiarism only covers students when some lecturers are victims themselves, 23.2% of the respondents commented that plagiarism policy only covers these writing, 20.0% also belief the turn-it-in is a good start, more so, 13.5% of respondents belief authorities are doing their best to curb plagiarism while 9.7% of the respondents are with the conviction that checking assignments for plagiarism will help check plagiarism among students.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

The study had discovered respondent's diverse reasons towards plagiarism as follows: The survey results revealed that majority (30.3%) are most likely to plagiarize due to laziness, 23.2% will plagiarize due to procrastination and poor time management, 16.7% will again plagiarize due to lacking of the requisite skills to cite and reference, whereas 10.3% of the respondents are likely to plagiarize owing to lack of materials on plagiarism, on a moral basis, 9.7% will plagiarize because they lack the moral responsibility and seemingly 9.7% assume they cannot be caught when they plagiarize. Again, majority (50.3%) commented that the universities do not provides them with enough skills to write properly while 49.7% belief the universities do not provide them with enough skills to write properly.

Moreover, the outcome of the survey reveals that a whopping majority (42.7%) will continue to plagiarize because they have never been caught on assignment by plagiarism, beside, 23.2% are susceptible to plagiarize due to the fact that they don't know much about referencing and citing, whereas 20.5% will continuously plagiarize resulting from their lack of training on how to avoid plagiarism and finally 13.5% representing the minority will plagiarize because they have develop the habit of plagiarizing.

Sequel to the above on how to prevent plagiarism, majority (33.0%) of the respondents indicated that massive education is needed to support the policy on plagiarism, followed by 23.2% who accepted that the turn-it-in is a good start to curb plagiarism, 20.5% again commented that the policy of plagiarism should cover both students and lecturers whereas 20.0% lamented that plagiarism policy only covers these writings with a minority (3.2%) agreeing to the fact that assignments should be checked for plagiarism.

The study unearthed that majority (82.7%) of the respondents' belief in the efficacy of turn-it-in. they asserted that turn-it-in can be used as a tool to check plagiarism among students with the least (17.3%) said otherwise. Following turn-it-in adoption 86.5% of the student put a stop to plagiarism knowing that their paper will be checked through the turn-it-in. Meanwhile, least amount of the respondents asserted that they will continue to plagiarize even after knowing that their paper will be checked through the turn-it-in. They are of the view that not until adequate training and capacity building is provided.

While On the grounds of the roles lecturers play to encourage plagiarism, it was quite a shocking when 33.0% of the respondents said lecturers do not expect anything apart from their note given in class while 23.8% belief lecturers are too lenient with students which result in plagiarism, also 23.2% belief research method syllabus does not include plagiarism control and adding to that 10.3% of the respondents belief favoritism is what encourages plagiarism among students with the least (9.7%) surprisingly think some lecturers lack the knowledge about plagiarism as well.

Regarding the available policy on plagiarism, majority (33.5%) belief that the policy of plagiarism only covers students when some lecturers are victims themselves, 23.2% of the respondents commented that plagiarism policy only covers these writing, 20.0% also belief the turn-it-in is a good start, more so, 13.5% of respondents belief authorities are doing their best to curb plagiarism while 9.7% of the respondents are with the conviction that checking assignments for plagiarism will help check plagiarism among students.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study was conducted to ascertain how efficacious turn-it-in would be when deployed to check student's works against plagiarism in the Private Universities in Ghana. It had been discovered that majority (82.7%) of the respondents' belief in the efficacy of turn-it-in. They asserted that turn-it-in can be used as a tool to check plagiarism among students with the least (17.3%) said otherwise. Following turn-it-in adoption 86.5% of the student are most likely to put a stop to plagiarism knowing that their paper would be checked for plagiarism through turn-it-in. Respondents indicated reasons towards plagiarism as follows: Majority (30.3%) are most likely to plagiarize due to laziness, 23.2% will plagiarize due to procrastination and poor time management, 16.7% will again plagiarize due to lacking of the requisite skills to cite and reference, whereas 10.3% of the respondents are likely to plagiarize owing to lack of materials on plagiarism. Regarding the available policy on plagiarism, majority (33.5%) belief that the policy of plagiarism only covers students when some lecturers are victims themselves

7. References

- i. Allen et al., (2008). *The Virtual Jackpot! The socio-cultural and environmental context of youth gambling.* Queensland Treasury, July.
- ii. Appiah, K. M. (2016). Incidence of Plagiarism among Undergraduate Students in Higher Educational Institutions in Ghana. *International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Sciences (IMPACT FACTOR – 6.225)*, Volume 6, Issue 3, March
- iii. Bahadori, M. Izadi, M. Hoseinpourfard, M. (2012). Plagiarism: Concepts, Factors and Solutions. *Iranian Journal of Military Medicine*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Autumn 2012; 168-177
- iv. Batane, T. (2010), Turning to Turnitin to Fight Plagiarism among University Students. *Educational Technology & Society*, 13 (2), 1–12.
- v. Chang, S. H. S. (2003). *The Problem of Plagiarism: A Guide for Students and Educators of Theology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
- vi. Gow, S. (2013). A Cultural Bridge for the Academic Concept of Plagiarism: A Comparison of Chinese and British Cultural Concepts of Plagiarism by Chinese Master's Graduates of UK Institutions Employed by Sino-Foreign Joint Ventures in Shanghai, China. *Plagiarism across Europe and Beyond—Conference Proceedings*, pp. 27–41.
- vii. Moore, (2013). Sloppy Referencing and Plagiarism in Students' Theses. *Plagiarism across Europe and Beyond—Conference Proceedings*, pp. 27–41.
- viii. Park, C. (2003). In *Other (People's) Words: plagiarism by university students—literature and lessons.* *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol. 28, No. 5, October
- ix. Roig, M. (2010). Plagiarism: An Ounce of Prevention ... *ASQ Higher Education Brief June.(4APCEI) 28–30 September 2009.*
- x. Sentleng, P. M. & King, L. (2012). Plagiarism among undergraduate students in the Faculty of Applied Science at a South African Higher Education Institution. *SA Jnl Libs & Info Sci* 2012, 78(1)
- xi. Stappenbelt, B. & Rowles, C. (2009). The effectiveness of plagiarism detection software as a learning tool in academic writing education. *4th Asia Pacific Conference on Educational Integrity*