

Awareness of Plagiarism Among Diploma Students: A Study in UiTM Pahang Branch Jengka Campus

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ABSTRACT

Plagiarism awareness among students is essential for fostering academic integrity and maintaining educational standards. With the increasing availability of digital resources, students now have greater access to information, which has, in turn, made it easier to misuse or copy others' work without proper attribution. This study specifically investigates the level of plagiarism awareness among Diploma students and examines their understanding of academic integrity and ethical scholarship. Plagiarism has become a significant concern for educational institutions, as easy access to online information has heightened the risk of academic dishonesty. This research aims to assess students' knowledge of plagiarism, their attitudes, and the effectiveness of institutional policies and resources in promoting academic honesty. Using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) as a research methodology, the study collects data on students' awareness of plagiarism, understanding of citation practices, and perception of the consequences associated with academic misconduct. NGT allows for structured data collection through collaborative group discussions, which helps to capture diverse perspectives on plagiarism and academic ethics among students. Findings from this study reveal varied levels of awareness while some students exhibit a limited understanding of citation standards, others show an improvement in their comprehension of plagiarism's ethical implications. These results highlight the need for enhanced educational interventions, including more effective training and resources that emphasize the importance of originality and respect for intellectual property. Ultimately, the study suggests that fostering a culture of integrity within academic institutions can significantly reduce instances of plagiarism and better equip students to produce original work, upholding the values of ethical scholarship.

Keywords: plagiarism; Nominal Group Technique; university students; awareness; academic integrity

INTRODUCTION

In this era, the academic world is facing a serious challenge where the dissemination of knowledge is share without boundaries. This can be seen through the development of technology that keeps pace with the academic world, making information easily accessible and obtainable at one's fingertips [17]. Therefore, the need to maintain integrity in academia is an issue that must be given attention within an educational system in higher education institutions. Students are emphasized on integrity to develop a generation of scholars who possess high moral and ethical values.

Academic dishonesty is one of the issues frequently discussed in higher education institutions [13]. Academic dishonesty encompasses several aspects, including cheating in exams, plagiarism, falsification of references, and the misuse of academic writing ethics [14]. The issue of plagiarism is not a new problem among students. This act of plagiarism is the behavior of imitating or copying someone else's work. This is an act that contradicts academic values and ethics because plagiarism is the misconduct of copying or stealing someone else's work for personal gain [23]. This act of plagiarism not only violates religious values but also demeans a person's dignity.

Based on Hamzah's study [6], 100 student respondents at University Tun Hussein Onn (UTHM) Pagu indicated that fear of failure is the main factor driving students to commit plagiarism. In addition, the issue of plagiarism has also become an increasingly widespread trend. This can be seen through a study conducted by Mustapha et al. [13] carried out in 2014 on Muslim students at four universities, which showed that 55 percent were involved in academic dishonesty. Meanwhile, in 2015, as many as 63 percent were involved in the same issue. Through this phenomenon, this study aims to examine the level of awareness among Diploma students of university Technology MARA (UiTM) and assess their understanding of academic integrity and ethics in writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic integrity, especially plagiarism awareness is becoming a crucial concern in the higher education institutions of the world and will continue to be, hence demanding continuous scholarly attention and institutional intervention [8]. More recently, empirical investigations have exposed complex issues in maintaining academic honesty, including students' understanding of plagiarism concepts, ethical dimensions, and discipline-specific interpretations of academic misconduct [5]. Complexity in this phenomenon is further exemplified through research indicating that plagiarism behavior among students ensues from complex interactions among inadequate knowledge about citation practices, time pressure on the student, and varying levels of academic preparedness [8]. The collective results of these studies highlight how urgently institutions of higher learning must adopt comprehensive, research-based strategies that raise awareness of plagiarism and establish a strong culture of academic integrity in a variety of subject areas.

Besides, a major empirical study by Ebisemen [4] found clear statistical evidence of the relationship between the levels of plagiarism awareness and academic behavioural trends among students. This finding was further reaffirmed by the comprehensive study done by Hussein [7], which found a noticeable gap in the understanding of plagiarism by the students; while respondents showed a relatively high level of awareness of plagiarism causes, their level of understanding regarding its forms was moderate. Of most importance, Hussein's study revealed a considerable knowledge gap among students on plagiarism-related consequences and institutional disciplinary actions, strongly arguing for more supportive educational frameworks. The study has also shed light on the lack of academic support and increased scholastic stress as the major contributing factors to students' misperceptions of plagiarism principles. These multifaceted findings underline the critical need for institutions to engage in organized pedagogical interventions that deal with a conceptual understanding of plagiarism and its practical implications within the academic sphere.

In this case, modern scholars have suggested multidimensional intervention strategies. To be specific, the systematic review results by Miranda-Rodríguez et al. [11] conclusively demonstrated that those intervention programs specifically designed are likely to bring statistically significant plagiarism incident reductions among university students. So, this requires a holistic approach, says the integrated architecture proposed by Patil and Ganganahalli in 2024, which includes improved training programs, long-term research studies, and peer support networks. More recently, there have been calls for considering the role of technology and creating general awareness campaigns in the case of plagiarism in higher education. All this evidence points out that a holistic approach should be followed in any attempt to address plagiarism awareness among students, including educational interventions, technological solutions, and institutional policy reforms. Supplementing this, Patil and Ganganahalli [15] called for a holistic solution framework, including better training programs, longitudinal studies, and peer support systems. Further, recent research has underlined the integration of technological tools and developing overall awareness programs as important steps in plagiarism issues within a higher education institution. All these findings suggest that a holistic approach, combining educational interventions, technological solutions, and institutional policy reforms is necessary in an attempt to address plagiarism awareness among students.

Plagiarism awareness among students in higher education is a complex and multidimensional issue; hence, it demands attention from academic institutions right now. Synthesis of findings from a range of studies reveals three important dimensions: first, persistent problems of limited awareness and differential understanding of plagiarism concepts among students; second, a strong correlation between awareness and academic behavior

among students, complicated by other factors such as academic pressure and inadequate guidance; and third, the demonstrated efficacy of comprehensive intervention strategies that combine educational programs with technological solutions and institutional policy reforms. These related findings underscore the importance of developing and adopting holistic approaches toward raising plagiarism awareness and inculcating academic integrity within higher education institutions.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the methodology used is the Nominal Group Technique. (NGT). NGT is a technique used to generate ideas and make decisions in an orderly and systematic manner. It is designed to ensure that each group is equally involved and facilitates group members to resolve problems and issues promptly [12][16].

As a start, group members will individually jot down their ideas, and then select the one they feel is most suitable. Once all members are ready, each person will present their ideas. Then the ideas will be reviewed and evaluated by the entire group using a scoring system. The NGT technique also takes into account the importance of each group member by incorporating it into the group's weighted priorities. Additionally, NGT is also defined as a small, organized, and disciplined group discussion aimed at reaching a consensus [12][21]. According to MacPhail [10] and Mustapha and Darusalam [12], this method is also known as the interview technique because it involves face-to-face meetings. In this meeting, participants are free to express their opinions either verbally or in writing.

There are five steps in the implementation of NGT. First, identify the problems, questions, and issues to be discussed and ensure that all group members understand the matters being discussed. Second, each team member will think of solutions or ideas relevant to the problem and write down as many ideas and solutions as possible within the specified time frame. Third, each team member will present their ideas or solutions. Fourth, the ideas are discussed in turn. Fifth, the prioritization process is recorded about the original question using "multiboosting" or list reduction [12].

In determining the sample, there are various opinions regarding the appropriate sample size to be used in implementing the NGT technique. According to Lomax and McLean [9], Dobbie et al. [3], and Mustapha and Darussalam [12], several scholars state that NGT can be applied to a cohort or a large-sized group. However, it can be divided into smaller groups. This aims to ensure that more effective communication can be conducted depending on the research needs. Here are the details regarding the number of samples used in the implementation of the NGT technique.

Table 1

Num	Researcher	Number of Samples
1	Van De Ven & Delbecq (1971)	5-9
2	Steward (2001)	7-10
3	Dang (2015)	6
4	Harvey & Holmes (2012)	6-12
5	Horton (1980)	7-10

Sources: Mustapha & Darussalam (2022)

This study involves seven diploma students at UiTM Pahang, Jengka Branch. The seven students represent five faculties, namely the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, the Faculty of Plantation and Agrotechnology, the Faculty of Wood Industry, the Faculty of Management and Business, and the Faculty of Science Studies. Based on the answers provided by the students, the NGT technique was used to identify the level of

understanding of UiTM diploma students regarding plagiarism. After the session ended, the researcher used the NGT approach to perform calculations based on the responses obtained from representatives of each UiTM diploma student. This aims to gather information related to the study's objectives.

RESULT

The overall solution ratings of diploma students' awareness of plagiarism, as judged by experts, are shown in Table 2. Based on the findings of the study, it seems that all of the components that were examined are usable. According to the findings of these studies, a percentage above 70% is recommended [2][3][12]. All study participants agreed that the main components of the model were valid and helpful, the researchers concluded. Compared to the Delphi approach, which necessitates multiple rounds of expert judgment, researchers can gather data more rapidly with the modified NGT technique.

Sample: Table 2

NGT voting results

Items / Elements	Vo ter 1	Vo ter 2	Vo ter 3	Vo ter 4	Vo ter 5	Vo ter 6	Vo ter 7	Total item score	Perc enta ge	Rank Priori ty	Voter Consen sus
plagiarism workshop	5	3	4	4	5	4	5	30	85.7 1	5	Suitable
arranging references correctly	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	33	94.2 9	2	Suitable
Turnitin software	5	4	4	4	5	4	3	29	82.8 6	6	Suitable
guidelines on plagiarism	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	32	91.4 3	3	Suitable
conduct original research	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	27	77.1 4	7	Suitable
supervision of lecturers	4	5	5	5	5	3	4	31	88.5 7	4	Suitable
respect the work of others	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35	100	1	Suitable

DISCUSSION

A major academic offense at the university level is plagiarism. The majority of students engage in plagiarism when they replicate someone else's work without acknowledging the original author. Students may be penalized, dismissed from school, or even put in jail as a result. As a result, the results of this study (see Table 2) offer suggestions that students might utilize to become more conscious of plagiarism. All levels of students and all higher education institutions can employ the suggested method.

The first suggestion is the students may attend a plagiarism workshop. In a plagiarism workshop, the main goal is to educate participants about what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and why it is unethical. Participants often learn about the different forms of plagiarism, such as copying text directly, paraphrasing without proper

citation, and using someone else's ideas without giving credit. One of the key points is understanding the importance of originality and integrity in academic and professional work. By the end of the workshop, participants should have a clearer understanding of how to maintain ethical writing practices and the consequences of plagiarism, such as academic penalties or damage to one's reputation.

Besides that, students also suggested arranging their references correctly. Arranging references correctly is an essential skill in academic and professional writing. Properly citing sources not only gives credit to the original authors but also allows readers to find the sources they have used to support their ideas. By arranging references correctly, they ensure that their work is professional, clear, and respects intellectual property. Proper citations also help avoid plagiarism and demonstrate thorough research.

The next suggestion is the students may use Turnitin software to avoid plagiarism. Turnitin is not just a tool to catch plagiarism; it can also help users improve their writing by showing areas where they may have unintentionally copied or failed to properly cite. It's important to note that a high similarity score doesn't automatically mean the work is plagiarized—sometimes, it just means that common phrases, quotes, or properly cited sources are present. Overall, Turnitin is an effective tool for promoting academic integrity and encouraging proper citation practices.

Next, the students must know about guidelines on plagiarism. For example, they must cite their sources, paraphrase properly, use quotation marks, avoid self-plagiarism, and understand common knowledge. By following these guidelines, they can ensure that their work is original, ethical, and respectful of others' intellectual property. Plagiarism not only damages their credibility but can also result in serious academic or professional consequences.

Other than that, they must conduct original research. Conducting original research involves gathering new data, insights, or knowledge on a specific topic that has not been explored in the same way before. This type of research is important because it contributes to the development of new ideas and expands understanding in a particular field. Original research requires critical thinking, careful planning, and a commitment to ethical practices. By conducting original research, they can contribute new knowledge to their field and potentially influence future studies or practices.

Supervision of lecturers can also help students avoid plagiarism. Supervising lecturers on plagiarism is an essential part of maintaining academic integrity in educational institutions. Lecturers are responsible not only for producing their original work but also for teaching students how to avoid plagiarism and follow ethical writing practices. By properly supervising lecturers on plagiarism, educational institutions ensure that both teachers and students understand the importance of academic integrity and contribute to a culture of honesty and respect for intellectual property.

The students also must be taught how to respect the work of others. Respecting the work of others is an important principle in both academic and professional settings. It involves recognizing the effort, time, and creativity that others put into their work and ensuring that their contributions are acknowledged and valued. Respecting the work of others promotes a culture of trust, fairness, and collaboration. By acknowledging others' efforts and contributing ethically, they help create an environment of mutual respect and integrity.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the results of the study show that the level of knowledge of Diploma students regarding plagiarism awareness is at a high level. This shows that the students have gained initial experience related to plagiarism in continuous assessment activities. However, the findings found that students need to be exposed to the importance of giving credit to the original author in taking information in the production of assignments. In terms of plagiarism awareness, it was found that students know the effects of plagiarism. Students are aware that plagiarism activities will harm academic achievement in terms of the level of student practice related to plagiarism, it was found to be at a moderate level and on the right track in producing students with a low level of plagiarism practice. Therefore, it is the lecturer's role to ensure that students are on the right track in ensuring that the level of plagiarism remains at a low level. One of the things that lecturers can do in terms of

evaluation is to encourage students to give credit to the original writer in producing any reference or assignment. This study, it is hoped to benefit academic research both knowledge and skills especially students and lecturers related to plagiarism in designing strategies, programs, workshops, teaching and learning techniques or training that is suitable for improving academic writing.

The results of this study are very beneficial to continue with more in-depth studies on better solutions to help students improve their critical thinking skills thus eradicating the symptoms of plagiarism among students in universities. Therefore, this study suggests that the construction of an academic writing module should be done by adapting the results of this study as an assessment guide that can be done formatively on students either to be used as teacher assessment or self-assessment. For tasks that have been allocated time such as changing words, or paraphrasing sentences is seen as not plagiarised and is said to be the student's property. In conclusion, awareness of plagiarism is essential in maintaining integrity, credibility, and originality in academic, professional, and creative fields. Understanding the ethical and legal implications of plagiarism encourages individuals to respect intellectual property, develop critical thinking skills, and produce authentic work. By fostering awareness, institutions can better equip students and professionals with tools for responsible information use, proper citation practices, and the importance of original thought. Ultimately, widespread awareness helps build a culture of honesty and respect for the intellectual contributions of others, which is foundational for innovation and knowledge advancement.

For further research, the researcher suggested some suggestions to add to the findings. Among the recommendations are that educational institutions can conduct an awareness campaign about the provision of information and the adverse effects of plagiarism as well as religious views on plagiarism through the mass media. This is because the researcher found that many of the respondents and those around them did not know what giving information was and took plagiarism behavior for granted. In this study, there are some weaknesses above certain listed reasons such as the limitations of the study. Therefore, some aspects that need to be considered to improve the study in the future are suggested. Future studies can be done by looking at the differences between public institutions and private institutions regarding plagiarism behavior and comparing the two. In addition, future studies will be added about other factors that are expected to reduce plagiarism behavior and can further help reduce that behavior. Reflecting on the study after producing effective academic writing is valuable for identifying areas for future research and seeking feedback from peers to improve subsequent studies. This continuous process of planning, conducting, analysing, and sharing helps researchers contribute effectively to their fields, advancing knowledge and encouraging further investigation.

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