Investigating Teachers and Students' Perceptions of Academic Plagiarism at the University Level

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Abstract

Plagiarism is a prevalent issue in academic settings that demoralises the integrity of learning and assessment processes. This study aimed to explore students' perceptions towards plagiarism, their level of plagiarism awareness, the causes of plagiarism, and potential strategies to tackle this issue. Data was collected through surveys and interviews with both students (N = 267) and teachers (N = 4) at a university. The findings indicated that while students acknowledged plagiarism as unethical and detrimental to their learning progress, many lacked a clear understanding of what plagiarism involves. Students' level of plagiarism awareness did not necessarily develop as they progressed in their academic studies. The causes of plagiarism identified in the study included easy accessibility to online resources, a lack of research writing skills, cultural influences, and perceived time constraints. Teachers emphasized the importance of technical writing training, providing constructive feedback, and intensifying penalties as strategies to combat plagiarism. The study underscores the critical need for comprehensive educational interventions that enhance academic writing skills, promote time management and stress management, provide constructive feedback, and enforce clear plagiarism policies. Therefore, educational institutions should consider implementing a multifaceted approach, encompassing academic writing skill development to efficiently address plagiarism and promote academic integrity among students. Further research should involve policymakers and explore the effectiveness of interventions in reducing plagiarism rates.

Keywords: plagiarism, academic integrity, perceptions, plagiarism awareness

1. Introduction

The technological revolution has enabled students, researchers and all knowledge seekers to find information easily. However, this easy access to knowledge comes at a price, as it has enabled many people to be academic thieves. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) work hard to fight plagiarism. Both manual and automated detection methods are used, and regulations are in place to punish students who plagiarise. In an era of increasing digital resources and easy access to information, it is crucial for students to understand the severity of plagiarism and actively engage in tackling this issue (Clarke et al., 2023). Higher education institutions often provide guidelines and policies regarding plagiarism, but assessing students' level of awareness and understanding is essential.

Furthermore, identifying the causes of plagiarism among students in higher education is vital for developing effective prevention strategies (Romanowski, 2022). On the other hand, teachers in higher education play a crucial role in addressing plagiarism. Their insights and experiences are invaluable in understanding the challenges associated with combating this issue.

This study aims to offer valuable insights into students' perceptions of plagiarism, their level of awareness, the underlying causes, and potential strategies to address this issue in higher education. By comprehensively addressing plagiarism, educational institutions can ensure the integrity of their academic programs and empower students to contribute to knowledge ethically and responsibly. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1) What is the students' perception towards plagiarism?

2) What is the students' level of plagiarism awareness?

3) What are the main reasons for plagiarism?

4)   What can be done to prevent plagiarism?

2. Literature Review

Plagiarism is defined by Ellis et al. (2018) as "presenting someone else's words and/or ideas as your own without appropriate attribution." Plagiarism refers to taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own, which is a form of academic stealing and an act of fraud. According to Hosseinpur et al. (2023), there is a growing international concern regarding plagiarism. Some students attempt to make use of others' work and efforts in order to gain fake academic success unethically and illegally. Plagiarism takes different forms, including turning in work done by another person, copying parts from other sources either with or without proper citation, or paraphrasing parts taken from other sources without proper citation (Park, 2003).

Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) are a vital stakeholder in the plagiarism circle. Different HEIs have been working on many ideas to raise awareness about this kind of academic crime. On the other hand, researchers continuously propose various solutions to the growing concern of such academic misconduct, following an internal, national or even internationally recognised policy. Lee and Partridge (2011) discussed tackling the roots of the issue by spreading awareness using printed stationery, posters or brochures that carry slogans encouraging academic honesty. They also mentioned that some universities declared certain days as "Academic Integrity Day" which highlights the sensitivity of the issue at this level. On the other side of the coin, other scholars advised that there must be clear consequential penalties for such malpractices. Mammen and Meyiwa (2013) suggested that plagiarism should be faced by well-stated disciplinary actions proposed by the institution. Where this suggestion focuses on an institutional level, other researchers like Starovoytova (2017) advised that such issues must be dealt with not only on a national scale but internationally. She also recommended that researchers, their publishers as well as their institutions should be penalised and blacklisted internationally in order to highlight the severity of this academic crime. Such precautions and serious actions will definitely influence the future of the fairness of academic research.

A few researchers have investigated the problem of plagiarism and concluded that teachers, in some cases, take part in this phenomenon. Hyland (2001), for instance, believes that teachers play a significant role in the spread of plagiarism due to the lack of constructive feedback; she insists that written feedback is not enough and recommends that teachers must give oral feedback and communicate the seriousness of plagiarism as an academic dishonesty issue to students appropriately. Furthermore, working on students' perceptions of plagiarism can play a positive role in the reduction of plagiarism. Raising awareness about plagiarism, as well as teaching students to avoid plagiarism techniques, can help students to avoid plagiarism (Harris, 2004; Schwabl et al., 2013).

Previous studies have reported that students perceive plagiarism premised on two factors; technical and cultural (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010). The technical factor is mainly initiated due to the misconceptions that students perceive towards plagiarism. A considerable amount of literature has revealed that students unintentionally commit plagiarism because they lack an understanding of plagiarism forms and penalties (Ibegbulam & Eze, 2015; Muluk et al., 2021; Rodhiya et al., 2020). This indicates that students are not aware that copying someone's work is wrong, and in many cases, they think their act does not affect their honesty in the academic field. In some research, students were exposed to some forms of plagiarism, yet they failed to identify where plagiarism occurs (Ahmad et al., 2012).

The technical aspect also refers to some cases where students intentionally commit plagiarism. Literature shows that students sometimes are aware of plagiarism, but they do not know how to avoid it (Ibegbulam & Eze, 2015). Many students rely on plagiarism due to a lack of the academic writing skills that are essential to avoid it (Holt, 2012; LoCastro & Masuko, 2002; Rodhiya et al., 2020). They, for example, do not know how to cite a source of information (Jackson, 2006). Further, recent evidence has revealed that students tend to plagiarise due to poor time management (Muluk et al., 2021; Selemani et al., 2018). Time limitation on an assignment forces some students to submit plagiarised work, wishing that the teacher would not check for plagiarism.

The internet is another growing apprehension that teachers perceive when checking plagiarism (Heckler & Forde, 2015). As the internet continues to expand, offering a massive range of knowledge and information, students find it easy to grab and use materials to complete their assignments. The internet, however, provides teachers with authorship-checking systems to help them verify the originality of assignments. Still, there is research evidence carried out to investigate students' perspectives on plagiarism that reveals that some students admit they plagiarise despite their knowledge that the internet has the potential to detect plagiarised works (Peytcheva-Forsyth et al., 2018). What is worse is that students now can even get full research papers that are written by professional writers, which is referred to as 'paper mills' or 'third-party' plagiarism (Newton & Lang,

2016).

Several studies have explored students' perceptions of plagiarism and concluded that students are sometimes driven by their cultures to resort to plagiarism (Hosny & Fatima, 2014; Jereb et al., 2018; Pennycook, 1996). In one learning setting, there can be multiple cultural backgrounds with diverse learning approaches and text understandings. For example, Szabo and Underwood (2004) emphasise that in some cultures, students do not consider "copying and pasting" as malpractice. According to Biggs and Tang (2011), some cultures do not consider plagiarism to be a problem at all. It is interesting to know that collective cultures, very common in Asia, believe that success belongs to the whole group and not to individuals; thus, it is not very important to give credit to individuals, including what they say or write (Chien, 2014). This creates confusion for students in an academic environment in which it is a crime to steal others' ideas and publish them as our own. Although such students may have no intention to deceive their teachers or institutions (Howard, 2002), it still creates a problem for them to pass university courses this way. Memorisation is also seen as an effective learning technique for some Asian cultures (Pennycook, 1996). In some cultures, demands on high grades from either family or society oblige students to plagiarise (Lahur, 2004).

Literature suggests that students should be introduced to a precise definition and forms of plagiarism in the early stages of their study (Muluk et al., 2021; Sarlauskiene & Stabingis, 2014; Selemani et al., 2018). Moreover, the existence of a penalty is indispensable to controlling plagiarism (Vuori et al., 2004). Establishing an appreciation of academic writing and research is undoubtedly another way to handle plagiarism practice (McGowan, 2005).

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The study involved two groups of participants: foundation students who joined the university recently and post-foundation students who have already received training on plagiarism. A total of 113 current foundation students and 154 post-foundation students were recruited for the study.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Survey

The survey was administered to both groups of participants to identify their perceptions of plagiarism. The survey included questions about understanding plagiarism, its consequences, and attitudes towards academic integrity. Participants completed the survey voluntarily, and their responses were anonymous.

3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interview

Four teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. The interview aimed to gather in-depth insights into the teachers' perspectives on plagiarism, strategies for addressing it, and their experiences with teaching and handling plagiarism cases. The interview was conducted virtually, and the teachers' identities were protected in the findings section through the use of anonymous identifiers (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.).

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Quantitative Data

The collected quantitative data from the survey responses were analysed using descriptive statistics on SPSS. Frequencies were calculated to determine the distribution of responses for each survey question. Mean scores were computed to understand the overall perception of plagiarism among the two groups. Additionally, inferential statistics, specifically an independent t-test, were employed to compare the mean scores between the current foundation and post-foundation students.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data

The collected qualitative data from the semi-structured interview were analysed using a 'general inductive approach' (Thomas, 2006). This approach involves a systematic data analysis procedure while guided by specific evaluation objectives. The interview was transcribed, and thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns in the teachers' responses regarding plagiarism.

4. Findings

4.1 Students' Perception Towards Plagiarism

The first part of the questionnaire was constructed to explore the students' background in plagiarism. The findings, as seen in Table 1, indicated that the students shaped a negative view of the awareness session that they were exposed to when they started studying at the university. About 70% of the respondents felt that the session

was not beneficial enough to form a basic understanding of plagiarism ($M = 0.30, SD = 0.461$). The data also revealed that about 60% of the participants were not well-informed about the plagiarism policy used at the university ($M = 0.40, SD = 0.492$). The participants were asked to tick the assessment activities where plagiarism is considered a violation. Surprisingly, the findings indicated that more than half of the participants believed that they would not be accused of plagiarism if they plagiarised in assignments, exams, homework and presentations. On the other hand, about 55% of the respondents confirmed that plagiarising in projects is seen as plagiarism ($M = 0.55, SD = 0.499$).

Table 1. Students' background in plagiarism

Question		Frequency		Per cent		Mean	Standard
		Yes	No	Yes	No	(From 0 to 1)	Deviation
Was the awareness session on plagiarism that you attended when you started studying at the university useful?		81	186	30.3%	69.7%	0.30	0.461
Are you aware of the plagiarism policy that is implemented at the university?		108	159	40.4%	59.6%	0.40	0.492
In which of the following can a student be accused of plagiarism?	Assignments	128	139	47.9%	52.1%	0.48	0.501
	Exams	60	207	22.5%	77.5%	0.22	0.418
	Projects	146	121	54.7%	45.3%	0.55	0.499
	Homework	105	162	39.3%	60.7%	0.39	0.489
	Presentations	114	153	42.7%	57.3%	0.43	0.496

The second part of the questionnaire was administered to investigate how the students perceive plagiarism in their studies. As shown in Table 2, the analyses revealed that 57.7% of the respondents believed that plagiarism is an unethical practice and it hinders their learning progress and affects their performance in assessments negatively. However, only 35% of the participants held that they understood what plagiarism is. The majority of the participants revealed that they had plagiarised neither internationally (66.6%) nor unknowingly (57.3%). The findings indicated that time is not always a key reason to plagiarise, as the participants (57.3%) stated that they plagiarise even when they have enough time to meet deadlines for submitting an assessment. Conversely, the participants asserted that their culture significantly contributes to the spread of plagiarism. The results also highlighted the importance of feedback that the students receive from their instructors when they plagiarise. The respondents revealed that they are not satisfied with the feedback on plagiarism they receive from their instructors (41.5%), and they reinforced that productive feedback will guide them to avoid plagiarism in the assessment activities (43%).

Table 2. Students' perceptions of plagiarism

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand what plagiarism is.	15.4%	14.2%	35.2%	21.7%	13.5%
Plagiarism is unethical and immoral behaviour.	9.0%	7.5%	25.8%	21.0%	36.7%
Plagiarism enhances my learning progress and makes me better prepared for exams.	29.6%	26.2%	30.3%	9.7%	4.1%
I have intentionally plagiarised on some assessments [e.g. homework, assignments, exams, … etc].	41.9%	24.7%	22.5%	9.4%	1.5%
I may have unknowingly plagiarised on an assessment.	33%	24.3%	28.5%	10.9%	3.4%
I only plagiarise when the time to complete an assessment is not sufficient.	33.7%	23.6%	27.7%	10.1%	4.9%
I know that plagiarism is wrong, but I have no idea how to avoid it.	19.9%	25.8%	33.3%	12.7%	8.2%
Giving students lessons on how to avoid plagiarism at the beginning of every course would be useful.	8.2%	13.5%	27%	22.8%	28.5%
I usually get constructive feedback if my assessment includes plagiarism.	18.7%	22.8%	33%	18%	7.5%
Constructive feedback helps me to be aware of plagiarism and how to avoid it.	12.4%	14.6%	30%	24.3%	18.7%
Our culture plays a major role in the spread of plagiarism.	11.2%	14.2%	32.2%	22.8%	19.5%

4.2 Students' Level of Plagiarism Awareness

Besides exploring students' perceptions of plagiarism, the current study aimed at pinpointing the students' level of plagiarism awareness statistically. To achieve this, the respondents were asked to classify nine items in the questionnaire as plagiarism or not. The reliability of the nine-item scale was measured by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The analysis indicated that Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.734$) was good and statistically higher than Nunnally's (1994) recommendation ($\alpha = 0.70$). An independent t-test was also conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between foundation students (first-year students, *N = 113*) and post-foundation students (Diploma and bachelor's students, *N = 154*). As Table 3 demonstrates, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups, *t*(265) = 0.95, *p* = 0.35, even though foundation students achieved a slightly higher mean score (*M = 0.35, SD = 0.27*) than post-foundation students (*M = 0.35, SD = 0.27*).

Table 3. Independent samples test outputs

Level of plagiarism awareness	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	.076	.947	265	.345
Descriptive statistics	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Foundation	113	.3500	.27467
	Post-Foundation	154	.3203	.23628

The findings above allow us to proceed with the analyses, considering no statistically significant variation between the two groups. It is apparent from Table 4 that the majority of those surveyed (71.5%) agreed that copying something from another person's publication without a proper citation is a form of plagiarism, but they (70.4%) stated that citing the source without using quotation marks is enough to maintain originality. The findings also revealed that the participants viewed using someone's published idea(s) (58.1%) and paraphrasing or summarising another person's ideas (74.9%) without citing the source as ethical behaviour. The most striking result to emerge from the data is that there is a common perception among the respondents (80.5%) that hiring someone to complete an assessment activity or asking for unpaid help from someone are not forms of plagiarism. The data in Table 4 also shows that the participants believed that citation is not necessary for using translated ideas (70.4%), parts of or the entire work that has been submitted previously (67.8%), and image(s) published in a research paper or website (70%).

Table 4. Students' understanding of plagiarism forms

Forms	Frequency		Per cent		Mean (From 0 to 1)	Standard Deviation
	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Copying something from another person's publication without citing the source.	191	76	71.5%	28.5%	0.72	0.452
Copying something from another person's publication by citing the source, but without using quotation marks.	79	188	29.6%	70.4%	0.30	0.457
Using another person's published idea(s) without citing the source.	112	155	41.9%	58.1%	0.42	0.494
Paraphrasing or summarising another person's ideas without citing the source.	67	200	25.1%	74.9%	0.25	0.434
Giving someone else money to write an assignment, homework, exams, etc.	54	213	19.5%	80.5%	0.20	0.402
Asking someone to write an assignment, homework, exams, etc. for free.	52	215	19.5%	80.5%	0.19	0.397
Using translated ideas that are published in another language (e.g. Arabic) without proper citation of the source.	79	188	29.6%	70.4%	0.30	0.457
Using parts of or the entire work that has been submitted previously by you in another assignment without proper citation.	86	181	32.2%	67.8%	0.32	0.468
Using image(s) published in a research paper or website without citing the source.	80	187	30%	70%	0.30	0.459

Based on the data in Table 4, students' level of plagiarism awareness was statistically classified into three levels: low, average and high. As seen in Table 5, the majority of respondents were ranked low (41.2%) or average (37.5%), whereas the minority showed a high level of plagiarism awareness.

Table 5. Students' level of plagiarism awareness

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent
Level	Low	110	41.2%	41.2%
	Average	100	37.5%	37.5%
	High	57	21.3%	21.3%
	Total	267	100.0%	100.0%

4.3 Causes of Plagiarism

4.3.1 Lack of Writing Skills

One of the challenges that the students face generally is that they are not taught some research writing skills such as paraphrasing, citation and referencing until they are in the last stage (level 4) of the foundation programme. Students do not spend enough time practising these skills, and as a result, they may unintentionally plagiarise due to a lack of research writing skills. Thus, a lack of writing skills is considered one of the main causes that lead to plagiarism, according to the interviewed teachers. Participant 1 stated that "students do not know how to cite; they do not know how to paraphrase; they do not know how to restructure sentences, and even if they want to use synonyms, they do not have enough vocabulary to rephrase these sentences."

4.3.2 Internet

Although it is a significant source of information nowadays, providing students with the knowledge needed to write their research papers, another cause that leads students to rely on plagiarism is the internet. The respondents agree that the ease of access and availability of resources have led to plagiarism. Thus, this is an issue that has to be addressed and resolved in order to make a positive use of the internet as a source of information.

4.3.3 Culture

Generally speaking, the Muslim and Arabic cultures prohibit plagiarism. When asked about the role of culture as a cause leading to plagiarism, the respondents had different points of view. Participant 3 thinks that students within an institution may develop a culture of plagiarism if they notice that they will not be detected and penalised. Participant 1 said, "In our Omani and Islamic culture, we are raised not to copy, and whenever we use something that does not belong to us, we need to acknowledge the use of that." Participant 4 does not see plagiarism as a cultural issue at all.

4.3.4 Feedback

The feedback given to students can be a major obstacle to solving the issue of plagiarism. The teachers interviewed explained that giving feedback to students might not be just enough. Following up with the feedback given to the students and how they react to it is just as crucial as the feedback itself because students may misinterpret the teacher's comments, leading to undesirable results. Participant 1 said, "*We need to pay attention to the feedback given to the students, whether they have received it or not.*" This goal can be met by including two different phases; giving feedback and evaluating students' responses.

4.3.5 Lack of Time

One of the biggest excuses that students make for plagiarising is 'I don't have enough time!' While this looks like a valid reason for them, the teachers interviewed believe that this is basically caused by the students' mismanagement of time. They believe that many students don't give their schoolwork enough time and attention because they are either careless or not motivated to complete the task.

4.4 How to Tackle Plagiarism

4.4.1 Technical Writing Training

The teachers interviewed believe that a major step towards solving the plagiarism crisis is training students explicitly on the technicality of academic writing. They should be well-trained in writing a research paper, citing, and referencing. Participant 3 stated, "*Students should be explicitly taught how to use the information they gather from different sources.*" The teachers suggested that educating students on this matter should start at the school level to have more solid results.

4.4.2 Constructive Feedback

Another solution suggested by the teachers to solve plagiarism is giving the students constructive feedback. They described the needed feedback as being detailed, direct and constant. This can help students stand on a firm point of reference that will encourage them to avoid any kind of copying.

4.4.3 Policies

As far as the policies are concerned, the teachers have two different suggestions to aid in resolving plagiarism. First, they suggested that the policies should be simplified in terms of language and presentation. Consequently, students will have a better understanding of the red lines that they should avoid when working on a specific project. The second recommendation is to intensify the penalties in cases of plagiarism. Following this path is expected to reduce academic fouls to a large extent as students will naturally pay more attention to avoid being caught copying others' work.

5. Discussion

5.1 Students' Perception Towards Plagiarism

The current study aimed to investigate how students perceive plagiarism in their academic studies. The findings indicated that a majority of the participants believe that plagiarism is an unethical practice that hinders their learning progress and negatively affects their performance in assessments. These findings align with previous studies that have emphasised the negative consequences of plagiarism on both academic integrity and learning outcomes (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010). Moreover, it is evident that many participants do not fully understand what plagiarism entails, as only 35% of the respondents claimed to have a clear understanding of plagiarism. This lack of awareness aligns with previous research that has identified misconceptions and a lack of knowledge about plagiarism among students (Ibegbulam & Eze, 2015; Muluk et al., 2021; Rodhiya et al., 2020).

Interestingly, the findings of this study indicate that despite having enough time to meet assignment deadlines, a significant portion of participants still engage in plagiarism. This challenges the assumption that time constraints are the primary driving factor behind plagiarism (Muluk et al., 2021; Selemani et al., 2018). Instead, it suggests that other factors, such as cultural influences, contribute to the prevalence of plagiarism among students in higher education. Participants acknowledged that their culture significantly contributes to the spread of plagiarism, highlighting the need for cultural sensitivity when addressing plagiarism issues. These findings resonate with previous studies that have highlighted the influence of cultural factors on students' attitudes and behaviours towards plagiarism (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010).

5.2 Students' Level of Plagiarism Awareness

The study aimed to assess students' ability to identify cases of plagiarism. The results indicated that the majority of students who completed the questionnaire were not aware of various forms of plagiarism. Surprisingly, no

differences in results were found in foundation and post-foundation students, as both groups seem to have a lack of awareness when asked about the different forms of plagiarism. This suggests that students' level of plagiarism awareness does not necessarily improve as they progress in their academic studies at the university. This finding is in agreement with Ahmad et al. (2012), whose findings revealed that students failed to identify where plagiarism occurs when exposed to some forms of plagiarism.

Based on the interview with teachers, students seem to be aware of the plagiarism policy; they know that plagiarism is wrong and is penalised as per the rules of the university. However, teachers agreed that students find it challenging to avoid plagiarism. This finding corroborates the ideas of Ibegbulam & Eze (2015), who stated that students sometimes are aware of plagiarism, but they do not know how to avoid it.

5.3 Causes of Plagiarism

The findings of this study showed that one of the main causes leading to plagiarism is the lack of research writing skills, such as paraphrasing, citation, and referencing. The interviewed teachers emphasised that students may unintentionally plagiarise due to insufficient practice and knowledge of these skills. This aligns with the previous research, where Hyland (2001) highlights the key role of teachers in providing constructive feedback and oral communication to address this issue. Another reason for plagiarism identified in this study is the ease of access and availability of resources on the internet. The findings revealed that students may depend on plagiarism due to the convenience of accessing information online. This finding corresponds to studies conducted previously, which highlight the internet as a growing concern for plagiarism. Heckler and Forde (2015) acknowledge the internet as a potential facilitator of plagiarism, while Peytcheva-Forsyth et al. (2018) concluded that some students admit to plagiarising despite being aware of the internet's detection capabilities.

The findings of this study offered diverse perspectives regarding the role of culture in plagiarism. One viewpoint suggested that institutional culture and perceived lack of detection and penalties may influence plagiarism rates. This finding is consistent with the cultural factor discussed in Gullifer and Tyson's (2010) study. On the other hand, the study also highlighted the influence of Islamic and Omani culture, which discourages plagiarism and emphasises acknowledgement of sources. This result resonates with studies such as Pennycook (1996), which highlight the influence of cultural values on perceptions of plagiarism. The findings of this study underscore the implication of feedback in addressing plagiarism. The teachers interviewed emphasised the importance of providing and evaluating feedback to students, as misinterpretation of feedback can lead to undesirable outcomes. This finding corroborates Hyland's (2001) recommendation for teachers to provide comprehensive feedback and communicate the seriousness of plagiarism. The findings of this study suggested that some students resort to plagiarism due to perceived time constraints resulting from poor time management. This supports previous research, which indicates that time limitation on assignments can lead to plagiarised work (Selemani et al., 2018; Muluk et al., 2021).

5.4 How to Tackle Plagiarism

The findings of this study are in line with previous research on how to tackle plagiarism. The teachers interviewed underlined the importance of technical writing training as a significant step towards addressing the plagiarism issue. This finding is reinforced by Lee and Partridge (2011), who suggested spreading awareness through printed materials like stationery, posters, and brochures to promote academic honesty. By explicitly teaching students the technicalities of academic writing, such as proper citation and referencing, students can better understand how to use information from different sources effectively. This aligns with the recommendations of Sarlauskiene and Stabingis (2014), Selemani et al. (2018), and Muluk et al. (2021), who stressed the significance of introducing students to the precise definition and forms of plagiarism in the early stages of their education.

Constructive feedback was also highlighted as a central tool for combating plagiarism. The teachers in this study spotlighted the need for detailed, direct, and constant feedback to provide students with a solid point of reference and encourage them to avoid copying. This finding subsidises the suggestion made by McGowan (2005) that establishing an appreciation of academic writing and research is crucial in addressing plagiarism. By providing constructive feedback, educators can direct students towards developing their own ideas and writing skills, reducing the likelihood of plagiarism.

Regarding policies, the teachers in this study presented two recommendations. First, they suggested simplifying the language and presentation of policies to confirm that students have a clear understanding of the boundaries they need to observe when working on projects. This suggestion resonates with the advice of Lee and Partridge (2011), who recommended using clear and concise penalties to discourage plagiarism. Furthermore, the teachers recommended intensifying penalties for cases of plagiarism, expecting that stricter consequences would prevent students from engaging in such practices. This is consistent with the findings of Vuori et al. (2004), who stressed

the importance of establishing penalties as strategies for controlling plagiarism.

6. Conclusion

This study shed light on students' perceptions towards plagiarism, their level of plagiarism awareness, the causes of plagiarism, and potential strategies to address this issue. The findings revealed that while students recognised plagiarism as unethical and detrimental to their learning, many did not clearly understand its various forms. Moreover, students' level of plagiarism awareness did not significantly improve as they advanced in their academic studies. The causes of plagiarism acknowledged in this study encompassed factors such as a lack of research writing skills, easy access to online resources, cultural influences, and perceived time constraints.

To tackle plagiarism efficiently, this study recommends several strategies. Firstly, there is a need for comprehensive technical writing training to equip students with the essential skills for academic writing, including paraphrasing, citation, and referencing. Also, providing constructive feedback is crucial in guiding students towards developing their own ideas and writing skills, reducing the inclination to plagiarise. Moreover, firming penalties for plagiarism cases can also serve as a deterrent for students, emphasising the seriousness of academic integrity.

The findings of this study suggest several implications. Firstly, educational institutions need to understand the importance of addressing plagiarism and take proactive measures to promote academic integrity. By providing technical writing training, offering consistent feedback, and enforcing clear plagiarism policies, institutions can build a culture of honesty and discourage plagiarism among students. This, in turn, will boost the quality of education and ensure fair assessment practices. Future studies could expand the sample size and include multiple institutions to promote the generalizability of the findings. This would provide a broader understanding of students' perception towards plagiarism across different educational contexts. Furthermore, future research could delve deeper into cultural influences on plagiarism, exploring how different cultural backgrounds shape students' understanding and engagement with academic integrity.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.