Plagiarism Practice: Its Awareness & Dealing and Consequences among University Students in Punjab Province of Pakistan

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Abstract

Plagiarism is becoming more popular in academic and scientific research in higher education. Students are increasingly looking for quick solutions when writing research. This study examined plagiarism practices among university students in the province of Punjab (Pakistan). A total of 150 students were selected randomly from ten public sector universities. Data was collected through a questionnaire and analyzed via SPSS software. Results showed that 80% of the students agreed that they have awareness about plagiarism. They did their best on their own in their research work to handle plagiarism because teachers provided no training or skills to avoid or reduce plagiarism. Most of the students (46%) expressed that they handled plagiarism by ignoring similarities. They used online paraphrasing sources to minimize plagiarism. It was found that 56% of the students checked their plagiarism of research work from time to time. It is also found that the majority of the students (76%) believed that universities were implementing anti-plagiarism policies in the research work of students. It is recommended that awareness about plagiarism be promoted, and comprehensive training about the skills to avoid plagiarism and reduce plagiarism should be arranged at the university level.

Disciplinary: Higher Education, Practices & Ethics.

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1 Introduction

Plagiarism is defined as the steal and passes off (the others' ideas) as one's own or using another's production) without crediting the source (Liddell, 2003). It is considered a great offense

in every field of education, especially at the higher education level. As the foundation of the academic world at the higher education level is rooted in moral principles and creativity where novel ideas, concepts, and theories are developed, experiments and related research works are conducted and published with genuine desire and aspiration of recognition in the interest of humanity (Adebayo, 2011; Onuoha & Ikonne, 2013; Palmer et al., 2017). Therefore universities have been formed that produce novel ideas and theories not only through experiments, fieldwork, and other research methods, but also exceptionally skilled and competent graduates with high standards of truthful, professional, and ethical standards to serve the countries (Foltýnek & Glendinning, 2015; Pradhan & Pradhan, 2017; Thomas, 2017).

Many institutions highlight this unethical aspect and are trying to reduce the practice of plagiarism (Greenberger et al., 2016). Until the mid-nineties, the primary sources of plagiarism were journals, printed books, and newspapers. Nevertheless, with the application of the internet after 2000, extensive cases of plagiarism have become prominent. There is a considerable amount of information on the internet (Engkizar et al., 2018; Hu & Sun, 2017). Due to this, most students use copy-paste method. In the past, college and university libraries were centers of learning (Mohamed et al., 2018). The world has become a global village due to developed technology. There is much impact on students' use of libraries (Rodafinos, 2018; Sivell, 2013). As a result, students use net sources to work on their assignments, research, thesis, etc. Now trend to visit libraries and habit of book reading among students have been abolished. Here is a noticeable break between the culture of library institutions and the culture of students of the net generation (Byungura et al., 2019; Heather, 2010; Starovoytova & Namango, 2016).

Students realize that plagiarism is unfair, but they do not know what plagiarism is and avoid it (Mahmud et al., 2019). Students require the rules to avoid plagiarism, and it must always be remembered that the university is monitoring this academic crime. Students are also eager for sound knowledge and practical references, especially Internet resources, to avoid being marked as cheating (Alghamdi et al., 2018; Haitch, 2016; Khathayut & Walker-Gleaves, 2020).

In recent years, Pakistan has devoted increased attention to research and development by encouraging students to study in Pakistan and other countries for their higher studies. Students/researchers in the field of research are awarded several grants, bourses, financial aid, and awards to conduct and publish research. However, the emphasis on research and academics has been changed according to the government's priorities. The temptation to publish promotional articles and money advantages raises ethical difficulties for research in Pakistan. In the news, newsletters, and warnings from the Higher Education Commission, there are accusations of plagiarism in Pakistani universities. Sheikh (2008) and Shirazi et al. (2010) said that plagiarism is a frequent problem at academic institutions worldwide and is growing in many Pakistani universities. Plagiarism is usually mentioned and is minimized by individuals. The Pakistani authority has published guidelines on the management of plagiarism and mandates academic institutions to apply their particular institution's plagiarism policies. However, the intended effect of plagiarism

minimization by Pakistani academic institutions has not yet been accomplished because of the absence of empirical data on the form and quantity of plagiarism among Pakistani Students. This study focused on examining the plagiarism practice, its awareness, consequences, dealing, and knowledge and training among university students of the Punjab province (Pakistan) based on the following objectives.

- To find out the level of awareness about plagiarism among researchers at universities of the Punjab province.
- To examine the perceptions of researchers about plagiarism handling practices.
- To highlight the ways through which university students practice.

2 Methodology

2.1 Population

This research consisted of all the research students dealing with plagiarism software for their research work at the university level in Punjab (Pakistan). In contrast, the target population consisted of M.Phil and Ph.D. researchers of the Universities of the Punjab Lahore, Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, University of Sargodha, University of Gujarat, Islamia University Bahawalpur, Education University Lahore, Government College University Faisalabad, Government College University Lahore, Baha-ud- Din Zakirya University Multan, and Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi served as the target population for the study.

2.2 Sampling

At first, ten public sector universities were selected randomly. Further research students were selected purposively from universities where plagiarism software is being utilized for the research work of M.Phil and Ph.D. Researchers were identified who have dealt with plagiarism software. Among these, a suitable percentage of samples were targeted from each university. Using the purposive sampling technique, 15 researchers, including ten M.Phil and five Ph.D. researchers utilizing plagiarism software for their research work, were selected. In this way, a sample of 150 researchers was available for research in which 50 were Ph.D. students and 100 were M.Phil. Students. The data collection was done during January 2021.

2.3 Instrument

A self-developed questionnaire was prepared after reviewing of literature, previous research, and with expert opinion. Items of the questionnaire covered the awareness about plagiarism, Conduct / Dealing by University, Self-plagiarism, Reasons of plagiarism, Perceptions about plagiarism, Consequence of Plagiarism, Knowledge Training about plagiarism, various software of plagiarism, Uses about plagiarism software and Handling Plagiarism practices. As the items were constructed on a five-point Likert scale and scoring was done by giving the weightage of each scale as SA = Strongly Agree=5, A=Agree=4, UC = Uncertain=3, DA=Disagree=2, SDA=Strongly Disagree=1

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) by applying descriptive statistics. Based on the analysis, findings and recommendations were generated.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Awareness about Plagiarism among Students

This study deals with plagiarism practices among university students in Punjab (Pakistan). Table 1 (a) shows that 27 % of researchers came to know about the concept of plagiarism at the undergraduate level, and 53% got this concept at their master's level, whereas 20% came to know such concepts at a higher level of M.Phil /Ph.D.

Table 1(a): Distribution of respondents regarding when they came to know about plagiarism.

Item	Undergraduate	Masters Level	Postgraduate
When did the researcher come to know about plagiarism?	27	53	20

Table 1(b) shows that 99% of the respondents understood the meaning of plagiarism. Only one percent of the respondents did not know the exact meaning of this term. Considering plagiarism as bad as stealing in the exam was reported by 91% of the respondents. 75% of the researchers use the information without acknowledgment, 12% of the researchers do not like it, and 13 % were found uncertain. 21% of the student still considered paraphrasing the ideas in addition to that documentation is plagiarism. In comparison, 16% of the students were found uncertain in their response 64% of the students consider paraphrasing the ideas there with documentation is not plagiarism.64% of the researchers prefer the written material from books for less chance of plagiarism while 17% of the researchers do not prefer the written material and 19% were uncertain in their response regarding the statement. 81% of the respondents agreed that submitting a paper written by others is academic, whereas 6 % consider it misconduct.

Table 1(b): Awareness about plagiarism among students.

Items	Responses (%)				
	SA	A	UC	DA	SDA
The researcher understands the meaning of plagiarism.	58	41	0	1	0
The act of plagiarizing is as terrible as stealing an exam.	41	50	5	4	0
Researchers copy a sentence or two just to get inspiration for further writing.	19	57	19	4	1
Using the information on the internet without citing is plagiarism	22	53	13	9	3
Paraphrasing of ideas used by others with citations is not plagiarism.	13	51	16	14	6
Researchers prefer written material from books for less chance of plagiarism	20	44	19	16	1
If the researcher submits a paper written by someone else, either in a division or as a whole, would the researcher think of this as academic misbehavior?	39	42	13	4	2

3.2 Self-plagiarism Practices

Table 2 indicates the response related to Self-Plagiarism; it is evident that 74% of the respondents considered that self-plagiarism should not be dealt same as plagiarism in its punishment, while 16% of the respondents were uncertain in their response only 10 % thinks that plagiarism and self-plagiarism may be punishable with the same intensity. Three-fourths of the respondents (75%) supported the phenomenon of no punishment for self-plagiarism. While 16% of the researcher were uncertain in their response, only 9 % did not support self-plagiarism. The mean value of 3.8 also falls in agreed responses. In times of moral and ethical decline, 84% of respondents considered discussing plagiarism and self-plagiarism, whereas 6% of respondents did not support such discussions, and 10% remained uncertain. Researchers have some concerns while attempting their research papers and using their published work without citation. 53% of respondents favored justifying this concern, whereas 20 % of the respondents did not show their favor about the need for citation for such activity, and 27 % remained uncertain.

Table 3: Perceptions about self-plagiarism practices.

Items	Responses (%)				
	SA	A	UC	DA	SDA
Self-plagiarism should not be liable to be punished as plagiarism.	25	49	16	9	1
Self-plagiarism is not liable to be punished because it is not harmful (one cannot steal it from oneself).	22	53	16	7	2
In times of moral and ethical turndown, it is important to talk about matters like plagiarism and self-plagiarism.	23	61	10	5	1
It is justifiable to use one's own published work without having to provide a citation to complete the paper one is at present working on.	12	41	27	17	3

3.3 Knowledge and Training about Plagiarism

Table 3 indicates the response related to knowledge and training about plagiarism. 18% of the respondents denied awareness lectures regarding plagiarism, while 65% of the respondents admitted that the university offers the lecture regarding plagiarism, and 17% were uncertain in their response. Information about plagiarism should be part of the curriculum 89% of the respondents admitted while 3% were uncertain in their response and only 8% denied it. The role of media regarding plagiarism 86% of researchers admitted that information about plagiarism should be spread through media for awareness 11% were uncertain in their response only 3% denied the media for this purpose. Avoid plagiarism in future, there should be training in university-level 91% of researcher concert about training 3% were reject it, and 6% were uncertain in their response. There should be training for the researcher to create awareness about plagiarism 90% of the respondents in favour of it, and 8% were uncertain in their response; only 2% of the respondents did not interested in this training.

Table 3: Knowledge and training about plagiarism

Items	Responses (%)				
	SA	A	UC	DA	SDA
Researcher's university offers awareness lectures regarding plagiarism.	23	42	17	11	7
The researcher thinks that information about plagiarism should be part of our curriculum.	32	57	3	5	3
Researchers think that information about plagiarism should be spread through media for awareness purpose	37	49	11	2	1
Researchers are in favor that students should be trained at the university level about how to avoid plagiarism in the future.	47	44	6	3	0
The researcher thinks there should be training for the researcher to create awareness about plagiarism.	37	53	8	1	1
If a colleague of the researcher allows him/her to copy from her/his paper, the researcher supposes that not doing anything bad, because the researcher is doing it with permission.	17	41	17	21	4

3.4 Plagiarism Considerations

The response to perceptions of plagiarism is provided in Table 4. Coping with a book without lending credit to the source is plagiarism. 75% of researchers supported it, while 15% were unsure about its answer, and 10% of scientists refused to copy a book without acknowledging it. Plagiarism is educational corruption, and 85% of respondents admitted and supported it, while 9 % were uncertain in their response, and 6% percent were not supporting it. Plagiarism is widespread in research. As a researcher, plagiarism should be allowed 57% of respondents denied or rejected, 25% favoring or supporting plagiarism in education, and 18% were uncertain in their response. Without citing the source, it is acceptable to copy/paste passages from the internet to assignments, papers, Etc. 48% of the respondents denied, while thirty eighty percent favored and supported the statement, whereas 13% were uncertain in their response. A student submitted an assignment with passages copied from a book or article with no attribution or citation. Would the researcher consider this plagiarism 71% of respondents admitted it, whereas 13% were uncertain in their response, while 16% were not considered plagiarism?

Table 4: Perceptions about plagiarism considerations.

Items	Responses (%)				
	SA	A	UC	DA	SDA
Copying from a book without recognition of the source is plagiarism.	18	57	15	8	2
The researcher thinks that plagiarism is education corruption.	44	41	9	5	1
Being a researcher think plagiarism should be allowed.	12	13	18	31	26
Plagiarized parts of a paper may be ignored if the paper is of great scientific value.	16	42	21	15	6
It is acceptable to copy/paste passages from the internet without citing the original source and putting it in assignments, papers, etc.,	9	30	13	37	11
A student, when submits an assignment with copied passages of a book or an article, having no attribution or citation, would students think that this is plagiarism.	19	52	13	12	4

3.5 Reasons of Plagiarism

Table 5 indicates the response related to reasons for plagiarism. It is evident that 69% of respondents admitted that short deadlines give the right to plagiarize a bit, fourteen percent were uncertain in their response, and 17% of the respondents reject this philosophy that short deadlines give the right to plagiarize. When the researcher does not know what to write, the researcher

translates a part of a paper from a foreign language 29% of respondents were not supported they know what to write while 15 % were uncertain in their response, and 56% percent do not know what to write.

Table 5: Responses about Reasons of plagiarism.

Items	Responses (%)				
	SA	A	UC	DA	SDA
The short time given by teachers results in practice plagiarism a little bit.	20	49	14	15	2
Sometimes researcher is tempted to plagiarize because everyone is doing it.	20	39	17	17	7
The researcher doesn't know what to write, the researcher translates a part of a paper from a foreign language.	11	45	15	25	4

3.6 Handling and Reducing Plagiaries' Work

Table 6 indicates the response related to discuss various software of plagiarism and their use, satisfaction with the service of plagiarism checking software 65% of the respondents were satisfied with service of Turnitin, 21% were uncertain in their response whereas 14% were not satisfied with the service of plagiarism checking software. Use of any plagiarism checking software in the academic year, researchers 74% use the plagiarism checking software, 11% were uncertain in their response, and 15% did not use any software during the study. When discussing the need to use turn-it-in software, 88% of respondents were researchers, and 12% were supervisors. Using the Turnitin software, researchers 73% used Turnitin for the thesis, 21% used it for assignments, and only 6% use it for articles. Using different anti-plagiarism software, students 79% preferred to use Turnitin while 11% Plagium, 8% used Dupli checker, and only 2% used other anti-plagiarism software. Turnitin plagiarism software cannot check the unpublished material 72% of the respondent admitted it, and 28% do not know about unpublished marital. Turnitin plagiarism software can not check any language material apart from English 52% admitted it while 48% do not know the checking martial other than English. Turnitin plagiarism software provides less chance of similarity from the material of written books 75% of researcher admitted while 25% did not know about it.

Table 6: Various software of plagiarism & it uses

Items	Responses (%)				
	SA	A	UC	DA	SDA
Researchers are satisfied with the services of plagiarism checking software Turnitin to check the plagiarism.	15	50	21	11	3
The researcher uses any plagiarism-checking software at any point in this academic year.	27	47	11	13	2

Table 7 indicated the response related to discussing handling and reducing plagiarized work student check their plagiarism of research work, 56% of respondents' time to time, while 44% of the respondents check after completion and before submitting the thesis. Reduce the plagiarism from research work 45% of the researcher reduce their plagiarism by ignoring similarities while 36% deleting the significant sentences and 13% using diff shortcuts only 6% do some others.

Table 7: Handling and reducing plagiaries' work

Items	Responses (%)				
	SA	**A**	**UC**	**DA**	**SDA**
Researchers are satisfied with the services of plagiarism checking software Turnitin to check the plagiarism.	15	50	21	11	3
The researcher uses any plagiarism-checking software at any point in this academic year.	27	47	11	13	2

3.7 Consequences of Plagiarism

Table 8(a) indicates the responses related to the consequences of plagiarism. Plagiarism is only a concern if the researcher gets caught; 33% of the respondents did not support the statement while 21% were uncertain in their response, whereas 46% of the respondents supported.69% of respondents understand the penalties of plagiarism if caught,15% were uncertain in their response, and 16% percent did not understand. 16% were uncertain in their response, and only 8% did not support the severe consequences. Researchers' personal belief about punishment compulsion against plagiarism conduct, 79% of students favored the punishment, 15% were uncertain in their response, and only 6% disliked such compulsion. Nineteen percent (19%) were uncertain in their response; only 11% denied such kind of act. 75% of the respondents supported that a milder punishment is given to those young researchers who are just at the initial level of their learning in the researcher process, 13% uncertain, and 12% went against the quiet intensity of punishment for beginners and so desired to treat them with equivalent levels of punishment because of plagiarism.

Table 8a: Responses about consequences of plagiarism

Items	Responses (%)				
	SA	**A**	**UC**	**DA**	**SDA**
Plagiarism is only a concern if the researcher gets caught.	16	30	21	22	11
Researchers understand the penalties of plagiarism if caught.	24	45	15	13	3
If a researcher disobeys the plagiarism policy, he/she must be caught and result in serious consequences.	25	51	16	7	1
The researcher thinks that the researcher who did the plagiarism should be punished.	30	49	15	3	3
The name of the researchers who do plagiarism should be revealed to the scientific community.	30	40	19	10	1
New researchers who are not experts or skilled in writing should receive mild punishment for plagiarism.	18	57	13	11	1

Table 8b: Responses about the penalty of plagiarism

Items	Actions	%
Who should take action against the researcher if plagiarism found	HEC	29
	University	71
What is the highest penalty in case plagiarism found at any stage	Degree cancel	38
	Get fired from the job	5
	Strict warning	56
	Others	1
In the case of high similarity index, how did the researcher manage it	Consult the experts	36
	Rephrase	51
	Use software	13

According to Table 8(b), in response to taking action against the researcher if plagiarism found respondents 71% favored university while 29% favored Higher education commission. When talking about penalties, respondents 56% favored strict warning, while 38% favored degree cancellation and only 5% favored getting fired from the job, and 1% chose the others. In the case of

a high similarity index, how did the researcher manage it? Respondents 51% rephrase it; in comparison, respondents 36% consult the experts, and only 13% use the websites for managing the similarity index.

3.8 University Dealing with Plagiarism Practices

Table 9a is related to the literature review and similarity index; the university implemented the plagiarism policy concerning the section of the literature review. Moreover, 93% of researchers admit it, and while 7% do not admit it. University accepts the similarity index less than twenty percent, and 83% of respondents know about the rule, while 17% do not know the acceptability is less than 20%.

Table 9a: About Literature Review and Similarity index

Items	Responses (%)	
	Yes	No
Has the Researcher's university implemented the plagiarism policy concerning the section of literature review?	93	7
At the researcher's respective university, the similarity index acceptability is less than 20%.	83	17

Table 9b indicates the responses related to university's dealing with plagiarism; it is evident that 16% of the researchers did not support that faculty was effective at catching students who plagiarize and 15% of the researchers were uncertain in their response regarding the statement only 69 %of the researchers supported that faculty was effective at catching students who plagiarize. 89 % of the respondents admitted that their university was fully discouraging the researchers from producing plagiarized work. In comparison, 9% of the respondents were uncertain in their responses; only 2% negated that the university discouraged the researcher from plagiarising. 76% of the respondents admitted that the university has implemented an anti-plagiarism policy, 17%were uncertain in their response 7% of respondents did not admit to implementing an anti-plagiarism policy. Ninety-one percent (91%) of the respondents supported that the government should prepare laws to stop the plagiarism practices 6% were uncertain in their response, whereas 3% disagreed. Therefore, it can be depicted that at the university level, dealing with plagiarism was found positive, and universities were discouraging the conduct of plagiarism for the conduct of research.

Table 9b: Conduct/ dealing with plagiarism practices by university

Items	Responses (%)				
	SA	A	UC	DA	SDA
Researchers' teachers are efficient and effective at catching students who plagiarize.	19	50	15	13	3
The researcher's university discouraged the researchers to produce plagiarized work.	28	61	9	2	0
The researcher thinks that plagiarism practices should be discouraged by institutions.	43	45	7	4	1
The researcher's university has implemented an anti-plagiarism policy.	28	48	17	5	2
Researchers think there should be laws prepared by the government to stop plagiarism practices.	37	54	6	2	1

4 Conclusion

It was concluded that the majority of students agreed, they had awareness about plagiarism. They were aware of the meaning of plagiarism. Researchers prefer written material from books for less chance of plagiarism. They do their best on their own in their research work to handle

plagiarism because there was no training in universities to avoid plagiarism. Students were coping from a book without crediting the source constitutes plagiarism, and plagiarism is educational corruption. They denied that as a researcher, plagiarism should be allowed in research; however, they admitted that plagiarism is prevalent.

It is also concluded that universities were implementing anti-plagiarism policies, and used anti-plagiarism tactics for students' research work. They must understand the penalties of plagiarism if they catch it. They agreed that if students violate the plagiarism policy, they would be caught and face serious consequences.

5 Availability of Data And Material

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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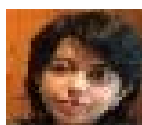
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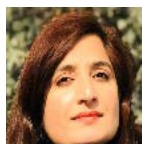
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