

Knowledge and Strategies of Controlling Plagiarism at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Debora Mbilinyi

Information Studies Programme, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
deborambilinyi100@gmail.com

Jangawe Msuya

Information Studies Programme, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
jangawem@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

This paper presents findings of a study conducted at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) Tanzania concerning academic staff and students' knowledge of plagiarism. The study investigated forms of plagiarism practiced and prevention strategies used. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students and academic staff. In contrast to academic staff, students were found to have insufficient knowledge on plagiarism despite the existence of various strategies for awareness creation on the problem. The results study has revealed various plagiarism forms practiced at the University, as well as prevention measures used. The study ends with a set of strategies to control plagiarism, in addition to e existing initiatives.

1. Introduction

In recent years, literature has revealed a worrying increase in plagiarism in higher learning institutions. The increase is attributed to 21st century technological advancements that render plagiarism effortless. It is an undeniable fact that plagiarism degrades education integrity and lowers standards culminating in having graduates who are incompetent, unconfident, and incapable of observing integrity at work (Maxel, 2013; Qorro, 2015; Ryan et al, 2009). The recognition of the magnitude of this problem is observable in the innumerable institutional policies and penalties to curb the practice. Efforts to discourage this behavior have led to academic institutions adopting and applying detection software to curb such incidences and measure their extents in students' assignments.

Although the introduction of these software packages may appear to be a major breakthrough in deterring plagiarism, some studies (Olutola, 2016; Batane, 2010; Stappenbelt & Rowles, 2009) have highlighted their marginal impact in curbing the problem. In that light, a holistic approach to this problem, in which a range of interrelated strategies including awareness creation, curriculum designs, mode of assessments, detection, and regulations has been recommended (Boden & Stubbings, 2006; Olutola, 2016; Ryan et al., 2009).

A study conducted at University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) by Anney & Mosha (2015) on plagiarism revealed its prevalence among students. This is against the University's core values of academic integrity, professionalism standards and ethical behavior, therefore it

is intolerable. Like any other problem, the elimination of plagiarism requires understanding factors that contribute to its occurrence. Personal knowledge of what plagiarism encompasses is considered a major determinant of one's involvement in (Madray, 2007). This is why it is argued that plagiarism in higher learning institutions cannot end if knowledge about it is incorrect and inconsistent among students and academic staff (Adiningrum & Kutieleh, 2011).

It is therefore imperative to ensure that actions to eliminate this problem are informed by findings of studies on the knowledge possessed by academic staff and students. Unfortunately, little has been done on this issue, despite the documented prevalence of the problem by Anney & Mosha (2015) who explored its extent among students. This study therefore was set to address this insufficiency by finding out students and academic staff's knowledge on plagiarism so as to pave way for more effective measures to eliminate plagiarism.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. Assess students and academic staff's knowledge on various forms of plagiarism;
- ii. Identify forms of plagiarism most encountered in students' assignments at the University of Dar es Salaam; and
- iii. Identify strategies for raising awareness on plagiarism at the University.

2. Related Literature

There are various plagiarism behaviors common among higher education students which Walker (1998) categorized into six major forms namely;

- i. Sham paraphrasing
- ii. Illicit plagiarism
- iii. Verbatim copying
- iv. Ghost writing
- v. Purloining plagiarism
- vi. Student plagiarism.

As described by the author, sham paraphrasing is when one copies another person's work, word by word, without using quotation marks to show that they are another person's words but includes the copied work's reference information. The inclusion of references is usually interpreted as an indication that the author had no intention to deceive but did so out of ignorance on how to correctly use the information. The presence of this form is confirmed by Sarlauskiene & Stabingis (2014) who state that sometimes students plagiarize unintentionally due to lack of referencing knowledge and appropriate academic writing skills.

On the other hand, as further described by Walker (1998), illicit plagiarism occurs when a student writes another person's ideas in his/her own words without acknowledging the person. In contrast, verbatim copying is when a student copies another person's work word by word without acknowledging the author. Both these forms of plagiarism may be



intentional, aimed at deceiving instructors, or unintentional due to ignorance. On the same note, literature shows that ghost writing is when a student asks another person to write an assignment on his/her behalf and submits it for marking as his/her own work. In contrast, purloining plagiarism occurs when a student copies another student's work and submits it without the knowledge of the owner while student plagiarism occurs when one student permits another to copy his or her work and submit it as an original one. Neville (2012) classified these three last forms of plagiarism as deliberate cheating because they are all knowingly carried out for reasons that include the need to get better academic grades.

Despite their intentional involvement in plagiarism, studies show that majority of students are not fully aware of the different forms of plagiarism (Adiningrum & Kutieleh, 2011; Mahmood, 2009; Park, 2003). As a result, such practices continue to be prevalent in higher learning institutions (Macatangay, 2015).

Plagiarism knowledge among students and academic staff influences knowledge sharing, information usage, students' assessment and how academic values are ensured. Paull & Teh (2013) note that majority of students are uninformed about plagiarism when they first join higher education, hence their high likeliness to get involved in such acts. The authors further state that the responsibility of stopping plagiarism in higher education falls on both students and academic staff hence the need to ensure their level of awareness on the matter is sufficient for the purpose. Determining if a person is knowledgeable about plagiarism is tricky considering that, as put by Mahmood (2009), some students may claim to be fully knowledgeable about it but when required to explain what it encompasses they fail. This was confirmed in a study conducted by Ramzan, Munir, Siddique, & Asif (2011) involving 320 students at selected universities in Pakistan. In this study, a total of 229 (71.6%) students claimed to have a clear understanding of plagiarism, but when they were asked if copying phrases from a book without acknowledging the author is plagiarism, only 79 (24.7%) strongly agreed, while 111 (34.6%) merely agreed, 63 (19.7%) chose to be neutral, and the rest did not consider it to be plagiarism. In other words, 41.7% of students did not know that this behavior is plagiarism.

Evidently, the perception and understanding of plagiarism varies between countries, cultures, and individuals (Sarlauskiene & Stabingis, 2014). For instance, in a survey involving 181 students at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, it was found that students with non-English speaking backgrounds were less aware of plagiarism forms and more likely to be involved in plagiarism practices than those with English speaking backgrounds (Marshall & Garry, 2005). Similarly, at the University of Derby in the United Kingdom, most international students were found to lack a clear understanding of plagiarism and did not consider it a serious academic offense compared to local students whose first language is English. In contrast, in a study conducted at two Australian universities, it was found that misconceptions regarding what constitutes plagiarism were generally common among students regardless of their backgrounds (Maxwell, Curtis, & Vardanega, 2008). These studies are clear evidence that knowledge on plagiarism depends on more than personal cultural background.

In an evaluation of academic integrity at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, Theart & Smit (2012) found that most students were knowledgeable of plagiarism. However, despite their awareness, 88% of the students admitted to engaging in such practices, a reality attributed to laziness, taking plagiarism for granted, and lack of strict measures imposed by departments to counter the practice. In contrast, a study conducted by Sentleng & King (2012) at an undisclosed higher learning institution in South Africa, found that most students had insufficient knowledge on plagiarism. These findings, as incongruous as they appear, are a reminder that a lot needs to be done in addition to imparting students with knowledge about plagiarism.

The positive impact of exposing a student to ethical usage of information was revealed in a pre-test and post-test study by Madray (2007) in which 326 new students at Long Island University were tested on their plagiarism knowledge before a plagiarism awareness session was carried out followed by a post-test on the same. The tests results showed that providing plagiarism education to students greatly helped influencing their behaviors towards the appropriate use of information.

Focusing on academic staff, Eret & Gokmenoglu (2010) conducted a study to explore their knowledge of plagiarism at Middle East Technical University in Turkey. Staff members were not only conscious about plagiarism, but also against it although their knowledge of what plagiarism encompasses was found to be inadequate to effectively fight it. Similarly, a study by Olutola (2016) conducted at various Nigerian universities on plagiarism, attributed the high extent of plagiarism practices among students to failure of academics to teach good academic writing practices. The study further established that the academics' failure to educate students on proper usage of information was a result of carelessness and insufficiency of knowledge on the matter.

In line with that, a study by Wilkinson (2009) at Charles Sturt University in Australia found that the notion of plagiarism was a confusion to both academic staff and students even though the situation seemed more acute among the later. In a study by Ercegovac & Richardson (2004), 742 academic staff at the University of Minnesota completed a survey in which they stated that they aware of plagiarism and the University's policy to deal with it. However, majority also indicated that they do not take the problem seriously when they notice it among students.

In striving to control the upsurge of plagiarism acts in higher education, institutions have developed innumerable strategies including the formulation of programs for creating knowledge about plagiarism. Over the years, the California State University (CSU) library and journalism faculties have been working collaboratively to offer courses on ethical usage of information (Lampert, 2004). Similarly, University of Maryland University College (UMUC) has a range of programs aimed at creating knowledge about plagiarism. The university has established a compulsory course for undergraduate students named Information Literacy and Research Methods (LIBS 150) (Stover & Kelly, 2005). This course is similar to the one at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Health Sciences (MUHAS) in Tanzania, named Information and Learning Technology (IT 100) which covers plagiarism issues in its information literacy module. This course



was found useful in a survey carried out by Lwoga (2014) in which 65.8% of students admitted to greatly apply skills earned from the course in other courses.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted at the University of Dar es Salaam, Mwalimu J.K. Nyerere campus in Tanzania which was considered ideal due to the documented prevalence of the problem. The study employed a quantitative, descriptive survey design with few qualitative inputs from the respondents.

The study population encompassed students as this is the group identified as major culprits of plagiarism. Academic staff were also included based on the fact that they teach students, prepare academic tasks and assess students, hence, well positioned to answer the research questions of this study. A stratified sampling technique was used to pick the sample size of 210, comprised of 110 undergraduate, 50 postgraduate students and 50 academic staff.

Two sets of self-administered questionnaires comprised of both closed and open-ended questions were used to obtain information from staff and students. Closed-ended questions were designed to collect respondents' demographic characteristics, measuring their knowledge of plagiarism, forms and frequency of plagiarism. The open-ended questions required respondents to share their understandings of plagiarism and state the strategies for developing plagiarism awareness among the students.

Among the 210 respondents to whom the questionnaire were distributed, 182 (92 undergraduate students, 47 postgraduate students and 43 academic staff) responded, making the response rate of 86.7%. SPSS software Version 19 was used to analyze the data from which descriptive and inferential statistics were obtained.

4. Findings

4.1 Students' Study Level and Academic Staff Teaching Experience

This part presents the number of students involved in the study per their academic study level and members of academic staff involved with their teaching experience details.

Table 1: Students' Study Level and Academic Staff Teaching Experience

Category	Variables	Freq.	%
Students Level of Study (N=139)	Undergraduate	92	66
	Postgraduate	47	34
	Total students	139	100
Academic Staff's Teaching Experience (N=43)	0-5 years	5	11.6
	6-10 years	9	20.9
	11-15 years	12	27.9
	16-20 years	13	30.2
	21+ years	4	9.3
	Total Academic Staff	43	100

Table 1 shows that, out of 139 students, 92 (66%) and 47 (34%) are undergraduate and postgraduate students respectively. On the other hand, 5 (11.6%) academic staff had 5 years or less of teaching experience, while 9 (20.9%) had 6 to 10 years of experience. 12 (27.9%), 13 (30.2%) and 4 (9.3%) academic staff had teaching experience of 11 to 15 years, 16 to 20 years and 21 years and above respectively.

4.2 Students' and Academic Staff Knowledge of Plagiarism

4.2.1 Academic Staff and Student's Ability to Define Plagiarism

To measure respondents' knowledge on plagiarism, the researcher asked the respondents to define the term *plagiarism* in their own words. The responses were then categorized as *correct* and *incorrect* definitions, after which a cross tabulation was carried out and chi-square tested as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Academic Staff and Students' Ability to Define Plagiarism

Category	Attribute		Definition of plagiarism				Chi-square value of Association (study level, teaching experience to plagiarism definition)
			Correct		Incorrect		
			Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Students (N=139)	Level	Undergraduate	57	41	35	25.2	0.965
		Postgraduate	20	14.4	27	19.4	
Total Students			77	55.4	62	44.6	
Academic staff (N=43)	Teaching experience	0-5 years	4	9.3	1	2.3	0.725
		6-10 years	7	16.2	2	4.7	
		11-15 years	11	25.6	1	2.3	
		16-20 years	10	23.3	3	7	
		21 years and above	3	7	1	2.3	
Total Academic Staff			35	81.4	8	18.6	

Overall, Table 2 shows that, 35 (81.4%) academic staff defined plagiarism correctly while 8 (18.6%) gave incorrect definitions. In contrast, only 77 (55.4%) students correctly defined the term plagiarism while 62 (44.6%) defined it wrongly. Regarding the impact of levels of study (for students) and teaching experience (for academic staff), the



Chi-square test values of association of 0.965 and 0.725 indicate insignificant relationships between these variables and the respondents' ability to define plagiarism.

4.2.2 Respondents Ability to Identify Different Forms of Plagiarism

To further assess their knowledge of plagiarism, the respondents were provided with a list of mixed scenarios that represented different forms of plagiarism and those that did not, from which they were asked to indicate which ones were plagiarism forms and which ones were not. The purpose of this was to find out if the respondents could recognize forms of plagiarism. Table 3 summarizes the results:

Table 3: Respondents Ability to Identify Plagiarism and Non- Plagiarism Forms

S/No	Scenario	Academic Staff (N=43)				Students (N=139)			
		Plagiarism		Not Plagiarism		Plagiarism		Not Plagiarism	
		Freq	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. *	When a student copies another person's work word by word without using quotation marks to show that they are another person's words but includes the copied work's reference information	43	100	0	0	115	82.7	24	17.3
2.	When a student expresses another person's ideas in his or her own words and credits the owner.	1	2.3	42	97.7	18	12.9	121	87.1
3.	When a student creates a new piece of work on the same theme as an existing one but in a new context without copying the existing one.	8	18.6	35	81.4	42	30.2	97	69.8
4. *	When a student copies a work of another student and submits it without the knowledge of the owner.	40	93.0	3	7	115	82.7	24	17.3
5. *	When a student permits another student to copy his or her work and submit it as an original work.	39	90.7	4	9.3	81	58.3	58	41.7
6. *	When a student asks another person to write an assignment for him or her and submits it as his or hers.	39	90.7	4	9.3	80	57.6	59	42.4
7.	When a student quotes words from an existing piece of work and includes the necessary references.	7	16.3	36	83.7	30	21.6	109	78.4
8. *	When a student reads another person's work and uses its ideas by putting them into his or her own words without crediting the owner.	38	88.4	5	11.6	79	56.8	60	43.2

* Scenarios representing different forms of plagiarism (The symbol was not indicated in the questionnaires)



Results in Table 3 show that majority (100%, 93%, 90.7%, 90.7% and 88.4%) of academic staff correctly identified different forms of plagiarism; compared to students (17.3%, 17.3%, 41.7%, 42.4% and 43.2%) who failed to identify different forms of plagiarism. It is therefore clear that students have insufficient knowledge on forms of plagiarism compared to academic staff.

4.3 Plagiarism Forms Common in Students' Assignments

Academic staff members were asked if they had ever encountered plagiarism in students' academic work. The purpose of this question was to confirm the prevalence of the problem at the University. From their responses, the study established that all of them have encountered the problem. These acts are said to have been encountered in various types of students' assignments.

Staff members were then provided with the scenarios in Table 3 (although the analysis focused on only those that represented plagiarism forms) from which they were asked to indicate how often they encountered each in students' academic work. Apart from revealing the frequency of each plagiarism form, data from this exercise were expected to help in establishing if there is any association between students' familiarity with any form of plagiarism and the likeliness or unlikeliness of their involvement in the act. The results obtained on this are summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Plagiarism Forms Encountered in Students' Assignments (N=43)

S/No	Plagiarism Forms	Very often encountered		Often encountered		Seldom encountered		Never encountered	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1.	When a student copies another person's work word by word without using quotation marks to show that they are another person's words but includes the necessary references.	26	60.4	10	23.3	6	14	1	2.3
2.	When a student reads another person's work and uses its ideas by putting them into his or her own words without crediting the owner.	20	46.5	21	48.8	2	4.7	0	0
3.	When a student permits another student to copy his or her work and submit it as an original work.	20	46.5	15	34.9	5	11.6	3	7
4.	When a student asks another person to write an assignment for him or her and submits it as his or hers.	15	34.9	13	30.2	13	30.2	2	4.7
5.	When a student copies a work of another student and submits it without the knowledge of the owner.	14	32.6	14	32.6	12	27.8	3	7

Table 4 shows that all five forms of plagiarism were encountered in students' academic work at varying extents. The most frequently encountered form of plagiarism was "Copying another person's work word by word, with references but without quotation marks", followed by "Using another person's ideas by putting them into own words without crediting the owner", and then "Permitting another student to copy a work and then submitting it as an original work". The results also show that the fourth most prevalent form of plagiarism was "Students asking other people to write assignments for them and then submit them as theirs", followed by "Copying another student's work and submitting it without the owner's knowledge".

4.5 Awareness of Awareness Programs

Respondents were also asked to state if they were aware of programs for raising awareness about plagiarism at the University. Their responses are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Respondents' Awareness of Strategies for Raising Awareness about Plagiarism at UDSM

Strategies Awareness	Students (139)		Academic Staff (43)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Aware	101	72.7	29	67.4
Not Aware	38	27.3	14	32.6
Total	139	100.0	43	100.0

According to Table 5, majority (72.7%) of students said that they are aware of such strategies. In contrast, the figure shows that only 67.4% of academic staff members are aware of these strategies. The results hint that such strategies really exist at the university, a fact confirmed in the next subsection.

4.6 Strategies Used to Raise Awareness about Plagiarism at UDSM

Respondents who said they were aware of strategies used by UDSM to raise awareness about plagiarism were asked to mention them. The responses provided are as detailed in Table 6.

Table 6: Programs for Sensitizing People about Plagiarism at UDSM

Programs	Students (N=59)		Academic staff (N=29)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Information literacy	16	27.1	10	34.5
Orientation seminars	32	54.2	8	27.6
Academic writing training	13	22.0	4	13.8
Communication skills course	44	74.5	10	34.5
Classroom lectures	16	27.1	5	17.2
Research Methods course	11	18.6	7	24.1
Provision of information on announcement boards	10	16.9	1	3.5
Provision of necessary information through the University's prospectus	7	11.9	2	6.9

Table 6 shows that contrary to the majority of students and a fair percentage of academic staff who said they were aware of programs for raising awareness about plagiarism at the University as shown in Table 5, very few were actually aware of individual strategies the University has in place. For instance, out of 101 students who said they were aware of the strategies, only 59 mentioned them. Specifically, the results show that an undergraduate compulsory Communication Skills course is the most well known awareness strategy among the respondents, followed by orientation seminars. The rest, information literacy, classroom lectures, academic writing training, research course, information provision through notice boards, and university prospectus, were less known in significant percentages of respondents. In other words, the results reveal low level of awareness of these strategies.

5. Discussion

The results clearly show that there is insufficient knowledge about plagiarism among students and academic staff members at the University of Dar es Salaam. This is observable in the 44.6% and 18.6% students and academic staff, respectively, who failed to tell what plagiarism encompasses. In addition to that, the results show a disparity in the familiarity of plagiarism between students and academic staff as shown by their ability to identify its forms. As one would expect, academic staff have shown high ability in identifying plagiarism and non-plagiarism scenarios compared to students.

In general, academic staff are clearly more informed about this problem than their students. Such a variance suggests a deficiency in sharing knowledge about the problem between the two parties. This is made clearer by the low percentage of students who mentioned classrooms sessions as means used to raise awareness about plagiarism at the university. In other words, members of academic staff do not effectively play their role of informing students about plagiarism and teaching them appropriate ways of writing academic work. As a result, the problem is likely to continue considering that having insufficient knowledge among students and academic staff has been reported to be behind its prevalence (Eret & Gokmenoglu, 2010; Macatangay, 2015).

The effects of insufficiency of knowledge on plagiarism forms among students are evident in the forms of plagiarism encountered in students' academic work where, it can be seen that the three most prevalent forms are the least known while the least encountered is also the most known. The results therefore further confirm the negative impact of lack awareness about this problem. However, the results have not conclusively linked students' likeliness to plagiarize or the frequency of doing so to lack of knowledge considering that the form most encountered in students' academic work is also the most known among them. Effectively, this finding negates those by Macatangay (2015) which indicated that if knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism is high, its cases are lowered.

Regarding students and academic staff members' awareness of strategies for raising awareness about plagiarism at the University of Dar es Salaam, all the strategies but two (Orientation seminars and Communication skills course) are not well known to a majority of them. This is a clear indication that majority do not participate in the programs hence their insufficient knowledge. The high familiarity with Communication Skills course and orientation week as strategies for creating awareness about plagiarism can be attributed to the fact that all first year undergraduate students are subjected to them.

Despite being known to a considerable percentage of students and academic staff, orientation seminars were criticized by some respondents for its shallow coverage of matters relating to plagiarism. For instance, one respondent said, *"During orientation we are verbally told that we should not plagiarize otherwise we'll get discontinued, that is all"*. Such criticism of this method is in line with complaints registered in a study conducted by Badge et al. (2010) where students reported being warned not to plagiarize or otherwise risk being penalized. Such a warning was reported to be made without teaching students what plagiarism is and how proper referencing is supposed to be done. Clearly, this approach of warning students about plagiarizing without empowering them with knowledge about it is not effective, because it only terrifies instead of stopping them from doing so. Apart from that, information literacy sessions, identified by Lampert (2004) as the perfect method for teaching students about plagiarism and bibliographic citation methods, were not known to majority of students and academic staff members, an indication of their lack of involvement in them.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study reveals insufficiency of plagiarism knowledge among students compared to academic staff. Therefore, to eliminate the problem, students and academic staff should be imparted with detailed knowledge about plagiarism. Important university organs such as Quality Assurance Bureau, Communication Skills Unit, and the University Library should be involved and work collaboratively with teaching staff and students for effective results.

The IL program for example, should be advertised and promoted adequately so as to reach its targeted audience. On the other hand, the University's Communication Skills course should be reviewed to ensure that content on plagiarism is made intensive enough to meet the current need of eliminate the problem. Apart from knowledge creation, students' assessments should be structured in such a way that they should encourage students them to think critically and be creative rather than being merely dependents on secondary sources of information. In addition to

all these measures, detecting plagiarism using Information Technology should be intensified and go beyond theses and dissertations to include assignments.

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