

**Factors Contributing to Plagiarism of Intellectual Property Among Undergraduate Students of a Tertiary Institution in Delta State Nigeria**

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Plagiarism is the act of using another person's words, concepts, reflections, or ideas without giving due credit to the original author.

**Aim/purpose of the study:** This study assessed the factors contributing to plagiarism of intellectual property among Basic Medical Science Students in Delta State University.

**Methodology:** The descriptive cross-sectional study design and the simple random sampling technique was used. The target population for this study included all the final year students in the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences in Delta State University, Abraka. This was estimated to be 506. The questionnaire was used to collect the required data. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25).

**Results:** This study revealed that there was a high awareness of academic plagiarism of intellectual property as almost two-third (65.9%) of the subjects agreed to have heard of it. The factors influencing plagiarism was similarity in the topics of research and excessive information available on them thus making the research work easier, time and effort getting saved in copying the information from Internet, and lack of requisite knowledge in the way of quoting the original author. The awareness on the consequences of plagiarism of intellectual property was low as the majority strongly agreed that there are no penalties for plagiarizing others' work, one will not get caught if they copy others' work.

**Conclusion:** The result suggests that although there was a high awareness on plagiarism of intellectual property. The awareness on the consequences of plagiarism of intellectual property was low. Hence, understanding the reasons behind plagiarism and promoting understanding among students of the problem may help prevent future academic misconduct through improved support and guidance during the time students study at the university.

**Keywords:** Plagiarism, Factors, Awareness, Intellectual property, undergraduate students

### Introduction

Plagiarism and intellectual theft are terms used to describe the act of using or altering another person's idea or work without giving credit to the original creator (Curtis *et al.*, 2018) Not citing the source of information in any written work is a serious academic malpractice. But according to the standards of academic writing, the student writer must properly credit the original author of any borrowed ideas through in-text citation and then build a list of all the credited sources in the references

Plagiarism is described as "the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own" in the Oxford English Dictionary online 2020. Plagiarism, according to Larkham, it is the act of using another person's words, concepts, reflections, or ideas without giving due credit to the original author (Muluk *et al.*, 2021). As plagiarism involves giving credit for someone else's creative work, Koul *et al.* characterized it as a type of cheating and stealing (Koul *et al.*, 2019). As per Fishman, "Plagiarism occurs whenever somebody uses words, ideas, or work products that are 1) likely to have contributed to another identifiable person or source, 2) without attributing the work to the origin from which it was acquired, 3) in a situation where there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship, 4) or in order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain that need not be monetary,

and 5) in order to obtain some benefit, gain, or benefit that is not necessarily monetary" (Fishman, 2019).

Universities are very concerned about plagiarism. Although administrators and faculties take some safeguards, the problem is still widespread, leading experts and researchers to search for novel solutions to stop this undesirable conduct (Cronan, 2018). As a way to prevent plagiarism, certain cutting-edge technical solutions (such as Turnitin and iThenticate) evaluate the content of papers for originality and compare how closely the text matches that of papers that are hosted on other websites and databases (Muluk *et al.*, 2021). Current trends indicate a decline in plagiarism rates, in part due to the effectiveness of algorithms for detecting it (Elshafei and Jahangir, 2020). Essentially, preventing and eliminating plagiarism calls for a comprehensive institutional strategy that involves all parties involved (students, instructors, institutions, academic management, and other organizations) and emphasizes shared responsibility over detection and punishment (Uzun and Kilis, 2020). For stakeholders to more effectively address issues brought on by this sort of academic misconduct, it may be helpful to clarify aspects that contribute to the removal of plagiarism (Balbay and Kilis, 2019).

In the academic world, plagiarism is a serious offense. Plagiarism is on the rise among students in tertiary institutions, although many students do not view it as unethical or wrong (Bikowski and Gui, 2018). Many students make the mistake of omitting to credit the original authors of their copied ideas while writing term papers, assignments, and projects. Many students copy and paste, which is when they lawfully take a passage from a text and add it to their own work as if it were their own. A direct quotation with an in-text citation is frequently written as though it were paraphrased, making it difficult for readers to tell what is cited verbatim and what has been reworded (Sprajc *et al.*, 2017). Software to identify plagiarism is readily available, but global reports of fresh instances of plagiarism have been rising. With the huge student enrolment in universities in developing nations and the lack of equipment to identify plagiarism, university instructors found it challenging to actually find the source from which students had plagiarized their work (Muluk *et al.*, 2021). This study therefore addressed factors contributing to plagiarism of intellectual property among Basic Medical Science Students.

The objectives of this study were to: Determine the awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property among students; Determine factors that influence plagiarism of intellectual property and Ascertain the consequences of plagiarism of intellectual property on academic performance of students.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was tested in this study:

H1: there is no significant relationship between department of study and awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property.

H2: there is no significant relationship between gender and awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property.

### **Scope of Study**

This study captured the data of both male and female students in the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka who are within their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) and fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) year of study.

## METHODOLOGY

The target population for this study included all the final year students in the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences in Delta State University, Abraka. This was estimated to be 506 comprising of males and females respectively.

### Sampling

#### Sample size determination

S/N	Departments	Population
1.	Pharmacology	106
2.	Anatomy	80
3.	Physiology	85
4.	Medical Biochemistry	78
5.	Nursing	157
	Total	506

The sample size for the study was calculated using Cochran method as described below:

For a known population, we use the formula below

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{(n_0 - 1)}{N}}$$

Here  $n_0$  is Cochran's sample size recommendation (384),  $N$  is the population size, and  $n$  is the new, adjusted sample size. In our study, there were 506 people in the target population, we would calculate

$$n = \frac{384}{1 + \frac{(384 - 1)}{506}}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{1 + \frac{383}{506}}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{1 + 0.76}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{1.76}$$

$$n = 218$$

Sample size = 218

In this study the following inclusion criteria was used:

- Students in in the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka.
- Individuals who volunteered to participate
- Students in their 400 and 500 level of study because they are exposed to academic writing at this stage.

#### Instruments for Data Collection

A well-structured questionnaire that had been adapted from various sources were used to collect the required data. The questionnaire was based on the following sections:

Section A: Socio-demographic variables of respondents (age, gender, marital status, religion, department, level of study), Section B: awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property, Section C: factors that influence plagiarism of intellectual property, Section D: awareness on consequences of plagiarism

Items of responses on the questionnaire was presented in a 5-point Likert scale which included the following options:

1 = Strongly Agree (SA)

2 = Agree (A)

3 = Neutral (N)

4 = Disagree (D)

5 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

### **Reliability of Instrument**

The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A pilot study was conducted among ten (10) respondents from the sample who would not form part of the study and the Cronbach reliability was computed. The Cronbach's reliability was used to endure the internal consistency of the research instrument. Hence, the result of 0.640 shows the reliability of this instrument.

**Table 3.2: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items (Questions)
0.640	22

### **Method of Data Collection**

The online Google questionnaire was sent to respondents and the researcher explained the purpose of the study, the importance of respondents' involvement in the study and their rights as respondents.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Questionnaires were extracted using the Microsoft excel format and the data was captured in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). Analysis of the calculation of the p value was achieved using the chi-square test for categorical variables. A p value less than 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, College of Health Sciences. Prior to data collection, the subjects were assured that their participation is voluntary. No names were mentioned, thus preserving privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. They were protected from exploitation and was not exposed to any harm.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	157	71.4
Male	63	28.6
Age (years)		
18-22	105	47.7
23-27	98	44.5
28-32	14	6.4
>32	3	1.4
Marital status		
Single	214	97.3
Married	6	2.7
Religion		
Christianity	220	100.0
Department of study		
Human Anatomy and cell biology	43	19.5
Medical biochemistry	36	30.0
Nursing sciences	66	14.5
Pharmacology and therapeutics	32	19.5
Human physiology	43	

**Table 2: Awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property among the studied population**

Variables	SA (n(%))	A (n(%))	D (n(%))	SD (n(%))
Have you heard of academic plagiarism of intellectual property	62 (28.2)	145 (65.9)	13 (5.9)	-
Any work submitted with passages copied directly from a book or article without citation is considered plagiarism?	81 (36.8)	103 (46.8)	20 (9.1)	16 (7.3)
Coping works without writing in ones own words is plagiarism	71 (32.3)	56 (25.5)	46 (20.9)	47 (21.4)
Plagiarism at the University is widespread	121 (55.0)	86 (39.1)	13 (5.9)	-
Acting with intellectual integrity is difficult	113 (51.4)	57 (25.9)	42 (19.1)	8 (3.6)
Plagiarism is an acceptable practice because of the competitive nature of academics	32 (14.5)	60 (27.3)	88 (40.0)	40 (18.2)
It is very easy to plagiarize without lecturer knowledge	62 (28.2)	45 (20.5)	61 (27.7)	52 (23.6)
Preventing plagiarism is time consuming	82 (37.3)	102 (46.4)	36 (16.4)	-

**Table 3: Factors that influence plagiarism among the studied population**

Variables	SA (n(%))	A (n(%))	D (n(%))	SD (n(%))
Similarity in the topics of research and excessive information available on them thus making the research work easier	99 (45.0)	72 (32.7)	49 (22.3)	-
Deliberate ignorance about the plagiarism	57 (25.9)	65 (29.5)	50 (22.7)	48 (21.8)
Lack of urge/desire to make efforts in undertaking research	75 (34.1)	86 (39.1)	47 (21.4)	12 (5.5)
Lack of interest in some topics of research	38 (17.3)	41 (18.6)	77 (35.0)	64 (29.1)
Academic/peer/family/social pressure to complete the research work	39 (17.7)	69 (31.4)	43 (19.5)	69 (31.4)
Limited time coupled with lack of time management skills on the part of researchers	47 (21.4)	102 (46.4)	45 (21.4)	26 (11.8)
Time and effort getting saved in copying the information from Internet	80 (36.4)	38 (17.3)	27 (12.3)	75 (34.1)
Lack of requisite knowledge in the way of quoting the original author	106 (48.2)	68 (30.9)	30 (13.6)	16 (7.3)

**Table 4: Awareness on consequences of plagiarism of intellectual property among the studied population**

Items	SA (n(%))	A (n(%))	D (n(%))	SD (n(%))
There are no penalties for plagiarizing others' work	37 (16.8)	62 (28.2)	65 (29.5)	56 (25.5)
One will not get caught if they copy others' work	51 (23.2)	43 (19.5)	72 (32.7)	54 (24.5)
The penalties for plagiarism are minor (start the work all over again)	21 (9.5)	84 (38.2)	77 (35.0)	38 (17.3)
The penalties for plagiarism is serious (expulsion)	40 (18.2)	50 (22.7)	65 (29.5)	65 (29.5)
There is no teacher control over plagiarism	97 (44.1)	70 (31.8)	46 (20.9)	7 (3.2)
Students are not aware of a university regulation against plagiarism	15 (6.8)	63 (28.6)	43 (19.5)	99 (45.0)
Plagiarism has no effect on academic performance	79 (35.9)	84 (38.2)	57 (25.9)	-
Plagiarism makes students do well academically	-	52 (23.6)	81 (36.8)	87 (39.5)

**TEST OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

H1: there is no significant relationship between department of study and awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property.

**Table 5: Association between department of study and awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property**

Department	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	P value
Human Anatomy and Cell Biology	27 (18.6%)	13 (100%)	3 (4.8%)	0.001
Medical Biochemistry	21 (14.5%)	0 (0%)	15 (24.2%)	
Nursing Sciences	53 (36.6%)	0 (0%)	13 (21%)	
Pharmacology and Therapeutics	23 (15.9%)	0 (0%)	9 (14.5%)	
Human Physiology	21 (14.5%)	0 (0%)	22 (35.5%)	

The table above shows that although there was a high awareness of academic plagiarism of intellectual property among students in all departments, the difference in their awareness was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between department and awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property is rejected.

H2: there is no significant relationship between gender and awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property

**Table 6: Association between gender and awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property**

Gender	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	P value
Male	37 (25.5%)	6 (46.2%)	20 (32.3%)	0.219
Female	108 (74.5%)	7 (53.8%)	42 (67.7%)	

The table above shows that more females than males were aware of academic plagiarism of intellectual property. However, there was no significant relationship between gender and awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between gender and awareness on academic plagiarism of intellectual property is accepted.

## Discussion

This of two hundred and twenty (220) respondents (71.4% females and 28.6% males). Almost half (47.7%) of the respondents were within the ages of 18-22 years, the majority were single, one hundred percent (100%) practiced Christianity. This difference could be due to differences in the study area. This finding was in contrast to that of Elshafei and Jahangir (2020) who reported that there were more males than females.

This study reported that there was a high awareness of academic plagiarism of intellectual property as almost two-third (65.9%) of the subjects agreed to have heard of it. It was agreed by most that any work submitted with passages copied directly from a book or article without citation is considered plagiarism, plagiarism is an acceptable practice because of the competitive nature of academics, and that preventing plagiarism is time consuming. Whereas, it was strongly agreed by most that coping works without writing in one's own words is plagiarism, plagiarism at the University is widespread, acting with intellectual integrity is difficult, and it is very easy to plagiarize without lecturer knowledge. This similarities could be due to similarities in the study population as the study made use of students in the universities. This study finding was similar to the finding of Muluk *et al.*, (2021) who reported that plagiarism at the University is widespread and



that acting with intellectual integrity is difficult; Hillermann (2023) who reported similar findings to this study. This similarities could be due to similarities in the aim of the studies.

This study found that it was strongly agreed by the respondents that the factors influencing plagiarism was similarity in the topics of research and excessive information available on them thus making the research work easier, time and effort getting saved in copying the information from Internet, and lack of requisite knowledge in the way of quoting the original author. On the other hand, it was agreed by most that deliberate ignorance about the plagiarism, lack of urge/desire to make efforts in undertaking research, academic/peer/family/social pressure to complete the research work, and limited time coupled with lack of time management skills on the part of researchers were factors influencing plagiarism. Similarly, Jereb *et al.* (2018) carried out a comparative study to find the difference, and factors influencing plagiarism among German and Slovene university students and found that easy access to the web was highlighted as the main factor; Selemani *et al.* (2018) uncovered reasons for plagiarism from the postgraduate students at Mzuzu University, Malawi and highlighted the ease of copying online content as one of the factors; Madaan and Chakravarty (2020) who revealed that lack of urge/desire to make efforts in undertaking research, lack of interest in some topics of research, and academic/peer/family/social pressure are factors that influences plagiarism. It can be deduced from this studies that there high rate of plagiarism among the students.

This current study found that it was disagreed by the majority that there are no penalties for plagiarizing others' work, one will not get caught if they copy others' work, the penalties for plagiarism is serious (expulsion). On the other hand, it was strongly disagreed that students are not aware of a university regulation against plagiarism and plagiarism makes students do well academically. Whereas more than one-third of the subjects agreed that the penalties for plagiarism are minor (start the work all over again) and that plagiarism has no effect on academic performance. However, 97 (44.1%) of the subjects strongly agreed that there is no teacher control over plagiarism. This finding was consistent with the finding of Elshafei and Jahangir (2020), Madaan and Chakravarty (2020). This consistency could be connected with a lack of regulations by the school authorities.

### **Implication to Nursing Practice**

The level of knowledge was quite high among the students. The nursing implication should be to give information about the implication of plagiarism of intellectual property on their academics.

### **Limitation of study**

1. The study has limitations, such as data being based on participant self-reporting and being unable to be checked.
2. Data collection was by means of a questionnaire and hence has an inherent risk of recalling bias.

**Summary**

This study examined the factors contributing to plagiarism of intellectual property among Basic Medical Science Students in Delta State University. It was revealed that there was a high awareness of academic plagiarism of intellectual property as almost two-third (65.9%) of the subjects agreed to have heard of it. The factors influencing plagiarism was similarity in the topics of research and excessive information available on them thus making the research work easier, time and effort getting saved in copying the information from Internet, and lack of requisite knowledge in the way of quoting the original author. The awareness on the consequences of plagiarism of intellectual property was low as the majority strongly agreed that there are no penalties for plagiarizing others' work, one will not get caught if they copy others' work.

**Conclusion**

The result suggests that although there was a high awareness on plagiarism of intellectual property. The awareness on the consequences of plagiarism of intellectual property was low. Hence, understanding the reasons behind plagiarism and promoting understanding among students of the problem may help prevent future academic misconduct through improved support and guidance during the time students study at the university.

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