The academic misconduct as a sinful Islamic behaviour in an academia

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Abstract. Academic misconduct is not a new issue of integrity in academia. There were claims and proofs that plagiarism as the main type of academic misconduct that are committed by university students is rampant and pervasive at most of the higher institutional learning and education. Plagiarism is a sinful behavior in an academia. Alas, to prove that it is in existence is not difficult. One can look at the many student projects and by checking the literature review, any research course lecturer can pinpoint the places or areas that seem not to be done by the students themselves. Indirectly, they copy from someone else. Plagiarism as for an issue is the lack of integrity inside the student's moral obligation. In embracing the ethics of writing, one should not take from someone without giving or citing the original writer as the owner of the ideas or writings. Any student should know that the sentences that they are writing whether it is coming from them or they took from others. If it is not from them, in many instances they need to cite it. If not, by using it, they are having mala fide intention and this thing should be avoided at all. For Muslim persons, they are accountable of their works to the Al-Mighty Allah in the Hereafter. The purpose of this paper is to study the attitudinal and behavior of university students towards plagiarism activity. An empirical study of consisting 150 bachelor degree students was conducted at a branch of an established public university. The research methods used were quantitative, survey using self-administered questionnaires and deductive approach. The findings of the research show that the factors that make the students plagiarised are the accessibility of the internet, lack of awareness and the pressure of completing the assignment and not the personal values and attitude of the students. Several items concerning the attitudes and behavior of the students using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis that were analysed have confirmed that the students did commit the plagiarism activity. The strategies and the activities that should be taken by lecturers and the university respectively are further recommended for managing the plagiarism.

Introduction

The critical discussion on academic misconduct is not uncommon in today's academia. Academic misconduct is a persistent and pervasive problem in most of the universities of the world. A university is established for its noble purpose, that is, to provide the quality education according to its purpose of establishment. It is a place of where the people in its community share and explore their knowledge for seeking their own different purposes. *Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia* (USIM) for example has stated its vision is to integrate the *Naqli* (revealed) and *Aqli* (human) knowledge for the benefits of country, ummah and humanity. Thus, they must behave accordingly to the academia ethics. In other words, For the lecturers, they must show that they possess the academic integrity. Thus, they must condemn or alienate any academic misconduct. An academic misconduct is an act of distrust behaviour that should not be exhibited or done by any person in the academia circle (Azman, 2014). An academic misconduct shows the lack of academic integrity at the university. What exactly is the difference between academic integrity versus misconduct? Academic integrity is the belief of oneself that he is able and capable of doing himself the paperwork that is given to him or entrusted on him by the authority. In other word for a student at the university, the assignment that is given to him by his lecturer is done by himself (Azman, 2015). He may select the information and data from various sources, such as from internet, text books and journals, but he cannot copy directly without acknowledging the works of others. The student needs to use his own word and own style or format and if he borrows someone's idea, then those ideas should be clearly shown the sources from and not to treat the ideas as his own. In a simple work, the student is not allowed to cheat in doing his assignment. Thus, misconduct is the act that goes against the academic integrity. An academic misconduct, such as cheating is the unwanted and negative behaviour that is taking someone else's work and claiming it as owned by the student. A university as an intellectual community must be based on the trust as an important integrity ethics as spelt out clearly by the many top universities of the world. *Princeton University* for example is putting trust as "the central ethic of such an intellectual community, in several respects. You should be able to trust that your ideas, no matter how new or unusual, will be respected and not ridiculed; to trust that your ideas will be seriously considered and evaluated; and to trust that you can express your own ideas without fear that someone else will take credit for them. Moreover, others need to be able to trust that your words, data, and ideas are your own. The right to intellectual ownership of original academic work is as important to the life of the university as the right to own personal possessions".

Academic misconduct is not a just a problem, but a menace or social ill that must be managed and tackled by any university authority. Its problem is so serious to the extent that the top universities of the world, such as *Harvard university* has

developed their own policies of combating the plagiarism and taken actions against the students of plagiarising other people works. *The New York Times* has reported on 2 February 2013 that *Harvard university* has forced dozens of students to leave its largest cheating scandal of the academic integrity. The students were disciplined for cheating on a take-home exam final exam given May 2012 in a government class. The academic scandal has given a black eye to one of the world's great educational institutions, where in an average year, 17 students were kicked out for academic misconduct. Academic cheating when or if it is done with the mala fide intention is a sinful behaviour for any Muslim person. In Islam, there are certain behaviour according to the *shariah*, which become the forbidden behaviour and should not be performed by any Muslim. The Muslim persons that got the knowledge from the wrong way could not get the *barakah* or the blessings from the Al-Mighty Allah. Therefore, a practising Muslim is a person that is fully committed to the academic integrity. He, thus never cheat in the process of getting or giving knowledge for the sake of *al-falah*. The purpose of the paper is to examine the attitudinal behaviour of the Muslim university students towards plagiarism as the main type of academic misconduct. The characteristics of the Muslim students needs for further review as to the reasons of them for doing the plagiarism.

The review of the literature on academic misconduct

Academic integrity is the foundation for the academic excellence of the university. The academic excellent, thus will increase the academic reputation of the university. The top universities are becoming the leader for innovation and research for their own respective fields and disciplines. They are making it clear of their own commitment towards academic integrity. Some examples of the policies on the academic integrity are from *University of Illinois*, *Michigan State University* and *University Malaya* of Malaysia. For *University of Illinois*, it states that "academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Students and faculty alike must obey rules of honest scholarship, which means that all academic work should result from an individual's own efforts. Intellectual contributions from others must be consistently and responsibly acknowledged. Academic work completed in any other way is fraudulent". *The Michigan State University* has stressed the academic integrity as "an honest and responsible scholarship. As a student, you are expected to submit original work and give credit to other peoples' ideas. Academic misconduct not only cheats the student of valuable learning experiences, but can result in a failing grade on assignments, a failing grade in a course, or even expulsion from the university for the student". In Malaysia, *University Malaya* being the number one university has stated explicitly in its own specific handbook of how to avoid plagiarism. Academic integrity for University Malaya means that "the students are expected to produce original academic work. This work must be the result of their own thought, research or self-expression at all time. However, the students are also expected to base their work on the text, information and ideas of experts and authorities. Therefore, it is necessary that the students know how to read, research and refer to the work of other people. The students are expected to know how to select, organize, summarize, and interpret the body of information obtained, and more importantly, how to acknowledge them as the sources of information. If the students do not acknowledge the work of others in their own work such as assignments, reports, thesis, or dissertations, the students are guilty of plagiarism – which is a serious form of misconduct in the academic world. *Universiti Malaya* views plagiarism seriously".

The consensus of the agreement of the decisions on the academic integrity can be viewed as, first; academic integrity is concerned with the honesty of the members of the university in producing their works. For the students, the students must be honest in doing their works. In a simple word, no cheating is allowed in performing their work. The students must obey the rules and regulations of the academic work. As for the lecturers, their responsibilities go beyond the academic papers, that is, they must be honest in their work and performance. For example, they must attend and deliver the lecture as agreed in their schedule. For the university as the shared culture of the intellectual community, the relationship is based on the trust, that is own-trust, self-trust and trust of other's idea and works. Second; the academic works done by the lecturers, such as the papers for publication and the students, such as the assignments and the project papers they are doing must be from their own works. if they take other people' works, they must acknowledge them in their own works. and third; the lecturers and the students, especially must be knowledgeable in doing their works. They should know on how to select and cite the works of other people. The students should be trained on how to do the assignment through the proper and right way. The lecturers on the other hand, should inform the students of the peril of the plagiarism and are expected to use the anti-plagiarism software to check the similarity index of their students' assignments and their works with the other people. Thus, by following the good work ethics, the outcomes of the academic integrity will benefit the university and thus enhancing its academic credibility in the eyes of the academic world (Azman, 2015)

There are many types of the academic misconduct such as plagiarism, cheating and misrepresentation. Academic misconduct for this paper is defined as the sinful behaviour that is intentionally committed by any university academician or student which gives advantage or contributes positively to the academic performance or achievement of a student or a lecturer in a university. Misconduct occurs when the student or the lecturer either knows or reasonably should know that the act that he is doing is against the rules and regulation of the academia. The *North Western University* has defined the academic misconduct as "any form of unethical behaviour that violates the integrity of the academic process such as cheating, plagiarism, bestowing or seeking academic favours or advancement on the basis of friendship or gifts, concealing conflicts of interest, or deliberate failure to meet professional obligations". Some examples of academic misconducts are (1) copying with or without the other person's knowledge during an examination, (2) paying someone else to write a coursework paper and submitting it as one's own work, (3) using unauthorized notes during an exam for the purpose of cheating, (4) plagiarizing published material or past students project papers or assignments, and (5) falsifying an attendance record of which the person is absent. Many top universities of the developed countries had classified the specific types of the academic misconducts. These types of the academic misconduct are clearly spelt out in the policy for academia at their own respective universities and are critically evaluated in the paper.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the most common form of academic misconduct at most of the universities of the world. It is a *numero uno* malaise in an academic world. There have been so much research done on the plagiarism (Mohd. Haris, 2011). Plagiarism is simply defined as the intentional copy of someone's work with no proper citation and it is within the knowledge that it is not the person own work and then submit the work as belonging to that person (Zimerman, 2012). Most of the universities have defined clearly what the plagiarism is and have their own policies, rules and regulation on the avoidance of plagiarism.

Cheating

Cheating is the negative behaviour done by the person with the intention to obtain the academic advantage. This kind of misconduct is not welcome in the academia world. Some examples of cheating are turning in a paper that has been purchased from an outside firm or obtained from the internet, giving or receiving answers by use of pagers, cell phones or any other electronic devices during an examination and stealing the class assignments from other students from other lecturers and submitting them as one's own.

Fabrication

Fabrication is the falsifying or misusing data or making up of, information, or citation in any evaluated academic work. Some examples of fabrication as outlined in University of Northern Iowa are:

a. Falsifying data collected during a research activity.
b. Presenting falsified data in a paper, manuscript, or presentation.
c. Making up a source for a citation.
d. Citing a source the person did not use.
e. Altering and resubmitting assignments, tests, quizzes or exams to gain additional credit.

Misrepresentation

Misrepresentation is an act of misconduct of the individual towards himself in performing or conduct as a member of the university. There are many examples of misrepresentation, such as given by Oxford Brookes University to include:

a. Misrepresentation of data, for example suppression of relevant findings and/or data, or knowingly, recklessly or by gross negligence, presenting flawed interpretation of data.
b. Undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publications.
c. Misrepresentation of qualifications and/or experience, including claiming or implying qualifications or experience which are not held.
d. Misrepresentation of involvement, such as inappropriate claims to authorship and/or attribution to work where there has been no significant contribution, or the denial of authorship where an author has made a significant contribution.

Other academic misconduct activities

There are many others of academic misconduct, that is, the unacceptable behaviour and conduct of the members of the university that give the academic advantage to them but to imply them of having low self-esteem and poor self-identity for themselves. Some examples are given below and from the website of DePauw University.

a. Facilitating academic misconduct. Helping someone else to commit an act of academic misconduct. This includes giving someone a paper or homework to copy from or allowing someone to cheat from the person test paper.
b. Multiple submission. Submitting work of the person that had been done in previous classes as if it were new and original work.

c. Abuse of academic materials. Harming, appropriating or disabling academic resources so that others cannot use them. This includes cutting tables and illustrations out of books to use in a paper, stealing books or articles and deleting or damaging computer files intended for others' use.

d. Electronic misconduct. Using network access inappropriately, in a way that affects a class or other students' academic work. Examples of electronic misconduct include using someone else's authorized computer account to send and receive messages, breaking into someone else's files, gaining access to restricted files, disabling others' access to network systems or files, knowingly spreading a computer virus or obtaining a computer account under false pretences

The sinful behaviour of plagiarism

The perception of sinful behaviour in committing plagiarism is based mainly on the understanding of the Muslim on the plagiarism itself. What a plagiarism is simple and should be a straightforward, that is coping someone work without acknowledging the original writer or author. It is stealing someone's idea and making it yours without giving any credit for the writers. In Islam if it is intentionally done of committing plagiarism, then it should be *mala fide* intention. Abdul Rashid Moten (2014) has denounced the plagiarism as the theft or stealing of someone's ideas or language, and is a form of cheating which is morally and ethically unacceptable. Plagiarism is a wrongful and shameful academic activity committed by any member of the university. It can be done by the students when submitting the assignments by copying it from other writers without acknowledging those writers. It also can be done by the academician when writing the article for publication that is plagiarised from others without naming the sources (Azman, 2015). For many established universities of the world, such as MIT and Harvard University, it is considered plagiarism to draw any idea or any language from someone else without adequately crediting that source in the paper. It doesn't matter whether the source is a published author, another student, a web site without clear authorship, a web site that sells academic papers, or any other person. Thus, if someone is taking credit for anyone else's work, then it should be identified as stealing, and it is should be unacceptable in all academic situations, whether the students do it intentionally or by accident. While it may seem obvious that copying someone else's words verbatim and submitting them in a paper with the person name on it is plagiarism, as verbatim plagiarism, other types of plagiarism should be acknowledged (Harvard, n.d.). In one study by Hunter (2011), it was found that the types of plagiarism are sharing of the assignment with other students and copy a friend assignment.

The International Islamic College that is governed by the IIUM has stated clearly that its Muslim student shall not act contrary to the Islamic code of conduct as prescribed by the *Shariah* or neglect Islamic duties which are obligatory upon them in private or in public within or outside the College. For a policy on plagiarism, it is expected that a student shall not plagiarise any idea or intellectual property expressed in material form, writing or data, of another person and claimed that the work, writing, data or invention is the result of his/her owns findings or invention or any intellectual property right. It generally defines plagiarism to include (a) the act of taking any idea or intellectual property expressed in material form, writing, data or invention of another person and claiming that the idea, writing, data or invention is the result of one's own findings or invention; or (b) an attempt to make out or the act of making out, in such a way that one is the original source or the author of an idea expressed in material form, writing, data or invention which has actually been taken from some other source. (IIUM, n.d.).

There are many reasons attributed for the plagiarism. Many of the students committed plagiarism due to their ignorance of what is plagiarism and what is not. Carrol (2007) and Park (2003) had cited the most common reasons were poor time management, poor organizational skills and lack of understanding of the rules regarding research. Other explanations for student plagiarism, identified by Awdry and Sarre (2013) and Park (2003), include the desire to gain a higher grade, the belief that plagiarism is okay, temptations and opportunities offered to students, and a lack of any deterrent threat by the relevant universities. The UiTM Plagiarism survey in 2010 found various reasons given by the students such as too many assignments to complete during the semester, poor time management, common practice among the students, the need to get a good grade and the assumption that the supervisor does not know (InQKA, 2012). Maneesh Thakkar and Suri (2012) has divided the reasons into two approaches, that is from the traits approach and the context approach. The traits approach deals more with the individual characteristics and the context approach looks at the situational factors that are responsible for plagiarism.

The research methodology

The research type is a pure research since the findings are useful to improve the views on plagiarism done by university students. The design of the research is descriptive with using mainly the quantitative method. The study was conducted at one of the university branches with the sample of 150 bachelor degree students (N = 150). Hence, the sampling used is simple random probability sampling. The information and data gathered were done using the self-administered questionnaires and secondary data for the review of the literature. For the research framework, the variables or measurements identified are lack of awareness of the students of plagiarism, the lack of time management, the easy accessibility of the internet and the personal attitudes and values of the students. The data analysis was done for frequency and descriptive analysis and inferential statistical methods, such as the reliability analysis and strength of association using correlation.

The measurements used were adopted from the various authors. For the internal consistency reliability, coefficient alpha is used as the indicator of a measurement quality. The coefficient alpha for plagiarism is 0.804, lack of awareness is 0.805, poor time management is 0.820, accessibility of internet is 0.764 and personal values and attitude is 0.913. The results of the coefficient alpha show that the measurements are having good reliability, especially for a very good reliability for personal values and attitude. Any scale with a coefficient alpha between 0.80 and 0.95 is considered to have very good reliability.

The evaluation of the findings

For the better understanding of the findings, two main outcomes of the data analysis are evaluated through Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. Pearson correlation is used for indicating the relationship of personal values and attitudes to the various factors identified respectively. By having its correlation coefficient, the strength of the association can be measured, that is *r* can be from -1.0 to + 1.0. the Pearson correlation coefficient is a standardized measure of covariance, namely the change in one variable correspond systematically to a change in another (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). The table 1 shows the Pearson coefficient of the factors studied influencing plagiarism.

Table 1: the Pearson coefficient, *r* of the study

Variable**s**	Plagiarism	Lack of Awareness	Poor Time Management	Accessibility of Internet	Personal Values and attitudes
Pearson Correlation. Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.328**	.373**	.357**	-.099
Personal values and attitude	-.099	.175*	.174*	.288**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result shows that the correlation between personal value and attitude with the plagiarism is -0.099, indicating an inverse relationship, but since *r* equal 0, then no relationship was indicated. For the relationship of lack of awareness, poor time management and accessibility of internet with the personal value and attitude, the relationship are weak, indicating not a strong relationship with those variables respectively.

Besides Pearson correlation, multiple regression analysis is used as dependence method for predicting the relationship with the numerous independent variables identified and studied. In this research, the plagiarism is the dependent variable and the others are independent variables. Table 2 shows the multiple regression analysis for the study.

Table 2: the multiple regression analysis of the study

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	2.310	.369		6.268	.000
Lack of awareness	.147	.071	.188	2.077	.040
Poor time management	.141	.117	.132	1.205	.230
Accessibility of Internet	.312	.116	.265	2.690	.008
Personal Values and attitudes	-.207	.069	.231	-3.021	.003

a. Dependent variable: Plagiarism

The multiple regression model is used to test the proposed theoretical model, that is the plagiarism behavior of the students. In table 2, for p < 0.05, three variables are significant, that is lack of awareness (B = .188), accessibility of internet (B = .265) and personal values and attitude (B = .231). Thus, it can be seen that the personal values and attitude is negatively significant with the plagiarism. In other word, when the personal values and attitude increase, the plagiarism decreases.

In examining the findings of the study, some results that can be explained, that is more than 80% of the students understand very good of the plagiarism. They know that plagiarism is an academic dishonesty and aware that copying without citation or acknowledgement is a plagiarism. For lack of awareness, even though is still one of main reasons on why the students still plagiarize their works, this study found that some students did not know on how to cite the sources the right way. The students also did not realize the university had already the rules and regulations about plagiarism. The students looked at the issue of managing their time with the conflicting opinions. They agreed that they were pressured with limited time that making them plagiarizing their works. They agreed that the accessibility of the internet had opened the opportunity for the students to plagiarize the works of others. They also believed that they did not need to cite from the internet because of public domain.

The limitation

The most important limitation is the number of samples. The sample respondents of 150 students are not the right size of population of around of a thousand students. More respondents should be added for reducing the sampling error. Thus, the sample cannot be used for representativeness of the population. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to other areas or branches of university.

The conclusion and future study

The evaluation of the various results can show that the personal values and attitude of the students are against the plagiarism. Even though the plagiarism is still being committed by the students, and yet they are aware that doing plagiarism is not a good behavior. For them, their personal values and attitude is much more important as a basic principle in their study. However, their acknowledgement that the institution is not doing something or many things to warn the students of the negative side of plagiarism need to be taken seriously by the management of the university. Thus, for future study, the variable for institutional factor should be considered. For the study on the Muslim behavior, it is advisable for the interested researcher to include the religiosity aspect of the Muslim.

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