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Level Of Awareness On The Legal Implications Of Plagiarism Among Adult Learners: A Case Study Of Public And Private Universities In Johor And Melaka

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Abstract

Academic dishonesty has been proven to be found at all levels of schooling from grade school to graduate school due to the convenient accessibility of electronic resources on the Internet. It is a growing problem at postsecondary institutions. Academic dishonesty can be defined as dishonest behavior related to academic achievement including cheating, plagiarism, lying, deception and any other form of advantage unfairly obtained by one student over the others. Academic dishonesty may be more prevalent in the near future as universities offer more courses through online distance education. In this research we gathered data concerning the level of awareness on plagiarism and level of awareness on the legal implication of plagiarism among 100 respondents who are adult learners at universities which offer distance education in Malaysia. We conclude that raising awareness about plagiarism might be worthwhile it is no substitute for systematic detection and vigilant enforcement among adult learners.

Keywords: *Level of awareness, plagiarism, long distance students, legal implication.*

1. Introduction

For the past fifteen years, many universities have been implementing more and more of continuous assessment coursework rather than examination-based assessment (Overfield & Dawson, 2006). Students face a variety of assessment such as assignments, case reviews, reports, quizzes, projects, problem base learning, dissertation and followed by formal examinations. All these coursework raise the opportunity to plagiaries from books and journals in written coursework. Unfortunately, students do know that they are committing plagiarism but they do not consider this act as a problem thus addressing the problem as a preventative measure in higher

education makes it more important. Plagiarism in its many methods and categories has always existed but the extensive development and use of the Internet as a source of learning materials has enabled students to download and plagiarise information much more easily (Dawson & Overfield, 2006; Wideman, 2008; Granitz & Loewy, 2006; Madray, 2007). Eventually, the need to increase the awareness should be enforced to ensure the learners do not easily use Internet as their option to finish up their tasks even though the temptation to plagiarize is high. This is due to the fact that we are living in a world of technological access to almost unlimited informational resources.

Usually students experience difficulty in integrating new information into their own work or writing and this easily lead to plagiarism (Madray, 2007; Granitz & Loewy, 2006). On the other hand, this research prove that, even though there is a rise of plagiarism by using the Internet, somehow learners are still incapable of learning the right method of turning in a completely original paper.

Plagiarism can be defined as using someone else's ideas, language, words or other original materials without clearly acknowledging the source of information (Jocoy & DiBiase, 2006). It may be intentional (for example copying or purchasing papers from an online source) or unintentional (example failing to give credit for an author's ideas that you have paraphrased or summarized in your own words).

In this research, awareness means knowledge or understanding of a subject, issue or situation. An adult learner is referred to any student regardless of age who has adult responsibilities beyond college classes and for those adult responsibilities take priority in time of crisis. Distance learner can be defined as individuals who are having education or training geographically separated by physical distance from the instructor using computer and telecommunication facilities. However, we stress on academic integrity that includes honesty and responsibility in scholarship, students and faculties must obey rules of honest scholarship which means that all academic work should result from an individual own effort. Therefore, the intellectual contribution from others must be consistently and responsively acknowledged. Academic work completed in any other way is fraudulent.

2. Literature Review

In researches conducted by Smith et al (2007), Liu et al. (2007) and Madray (2007), they found that factors that contribute to plagiarism are both internal and external. For external factors, it might be pressure such as grade, time or task. For internal factors it includes lack of awareness of what plagiarism is all about, lack of understanding of what is plagiarism, lack of competence in referencing skills, inexperience in research writing and negative personal attitudes. No evidence was found to support either pressure or availability of internet facilities as the contributing factor in the rise of plagiarism. On the other hand, Kennedy (2002) found that experience with using of internet or teaching online is a major contributor to academic dishonesty. Distance learners communicate with their supervisors via the internet and have good knowledge of using the internet. This give opportunities for them to commit plagiarism. Most adult learners who are furthering their studies do so on a part time basis while having family

commitment. Their salary is channeled to the consumption of their family rather than to buy several books for only one assignment. Hence, copying from the internet is the only solution. Moreover, teachers and universities usually neglect to take any action if they found students committing plagiarism. This idea is supported by Sterngold (2004) who admits that the advent of the internet has vastly increased the number of sources available to student and open the opportunity to copy and paste the information.

Understanding what is academic dishonesty and stopping the factors that lead to plagiarism maybe the key to reduce the frequency of cheating. Klein (2011) found that morality and ethic, cultural relativism, and social desirability are the major factors that contributed to the plagiarism activity. In addition, other factors may include lack of awareness, personal attitude, internet facilities, lack of self-confidence, laziness, family commitment, time and financial constrain, pressure and the neglects of the institutions. Students that fail to know the rules and regulations in their academic organization could make them commit plagiarism (Kelley, 2005).

McCabe et al (2003) conducted a research on the issue of whether an institution with honor codes in their faculty/institution would be more likely to report incidents of cheating. As a result, they found that;

- 1) institution with an honor code is more likely to believe students should be held responsible for peer monitoring
- 2) non-code faculty were more likely to take actions designed to catch cheaters
- 3) non-code faculty were more likely to deal with cheaters one on one
- 4) code faculty were more likely to perceive their institution's academic integrity policies to be fair and effective.

Gerhardt (2006) stated that students who commit academic dishonesty may be charged with plagiarism and even if no penalty is implemented, the charge itself may amount to unjustly harsh punishment. The accusation will inspire feeling of deep shame and may put a student's career in jeopardy. The accusation may be noted on the student's transcript and will be seen by graduate school admission committees and prospective employers.

Other than that, the typical honor code will provide a range of penalties including a failing grade in the course, academic probation or expulsion. The penalty will be assessed depending on the severity of the conduct. Besides that, in the survey conducted by Kimberly (2005), the majority of the students indicated that institution either lowered the grade on assignment or gave the student a failing grade in the class. The second most frequent response was to report the problem to their department chair. Another finding is that academic dishonesty rarely result in formal action against the student. Instead, plagiarism cases are more often handled by the faculty member approaching the student involved on one on one basis.

The consequences of plagiarism vary among different academic institutions. In Malaysia, there are several provisions either from public or private institutions of higher learning (IPTA or IPTS) which prohibit this academic dishonesty. For example, Paragraph 26 of the Educational Institutions (Discipline of Students) Rules 1976. laid down the punishment for those who commit plagiarism. The section provides that:

Paragraph 26(1): The Disciplinary Authority may at its discretion in lieu of taking disciplinary proceedings under Part V, impose a summary disciplinary punishment of a reprimand or a fine not exceeding fifty ringgit upon any student who commits a disciplinary offence under paragraph 3(7), Rules 6, 21, 22, 23 and 25 in the presence of or within the sight of such disciplinary authority.

2.1 Legal Provisions in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the statute governing student in university is Educational Institutions (Discipline) Act 1976 or known as Act 174. In exercising powers conferred by Subsection 22(2) of the Act, Minister of Higher Education of Malaysia had legislated several Orders inter alia is Educational Institutions (Discipline of Students) Rules 1976. The prohibition of plagiarism is clearly stated under Paragraph 8A (1) which stated that; A student shall not plagiarize any idea, writing, data or invention belonging to another person. Paragraph 8A(2) clarifies the act which amount to plagiarism namely the act of taking an idea, data or invention of another person and claiming that the idea, writing, data or invention is the result of one's own findings or creation or an attempt to make out or the act of making out in such a way that one is the original source or the creator of an idea, writing, data or invention which has actually been taken from some other source.

Paragraph 8(3) says that a student plagiarizes when he;

- (a) Publishes, with himself as the author, an abstract article, scientific or academic paper, or book which wholly or partly written by some other person;
- (b) Incorporates himself or allows himself to be incorporated as a co-author of an abstract, article, scientific or academic paper or book when he has not at all made any written contribution to the abstract, article, scientific or academic paper or book when he has not at all made any written contribution to the abstract, article, scientific or academic paper or book;
- (c) Forces another person to include his name in the list of co-researches for a particular research project or in the list of co-authors for a publication when he has not made any contribution which may qualify him as a co-researchers or co-author;
- (d) Extracts academic data which are the result or research undertaken by some other person, such as laboratory findings or filed work finding or data obtained through library research, whether published or unpublished and incorporate those data as part of his academic research without giving due acknowledgement to the actual source;

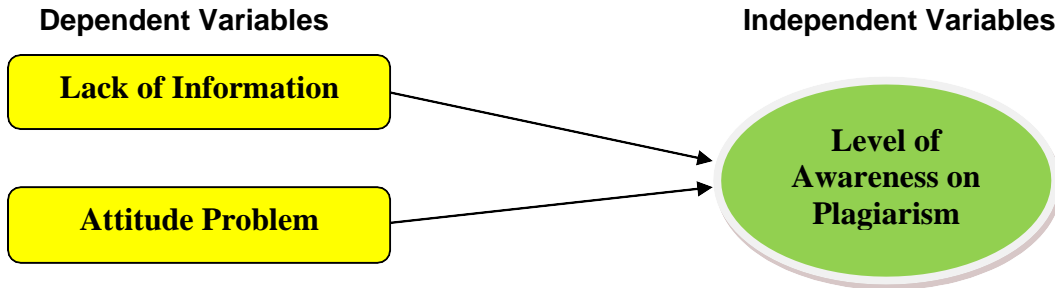
- (e) Uses research data obtained through collaborative work with some other person, whether or not that other person is a staff member or a student of the University, as part of another distinct personal academic research of his, or for a publication in his own name as sole author without obtaining the consent of his co-researchers prior to embarking on his personal research or prior to publishing the data;
- (f) Transcribes the ideas or creation of others kept in whatever form, whether written, printed, or available in electric form or in slide form or in whatever form of teaching or research apparatus or in any other form and claims whether directly or indirectly that he is the creator of that idea or creation; or
- (f) Translate the writing or creation of another person from one language to another whether or not wholly or partly and subsequently presents the translation in whatever form or manner as his own writing or creation; or
- (g) Extracts ideas from another person's writing or creation and makes certain modifications without due reference to the original source and rearranges them in such a way that it appears as if he is the creator of those ideas.

Majority of public universities in Malaysia applies the same provision and embark them in their own authority. For example, Section 6 of University of Malaya (Discipline of Students) Rules 1999, Section 6 of University Tun Hussien Onn Malaysia (Discipline of Students) Rules 2009 and so forth.

Paragraph 26 of the said Rules laid down the punishment for those who commit plagiarism. The section provides that :

Paragraph 26(1): The Disciplinary Authority may at its discretion in lieu of taking disciplinary proceedings under Part V, impose a summary disciplinary punishment of a reprimand or a fine not exceeding fifty ringgit upon any student who commits a disciplinary offence under paragraph 3(7), Rules 6, 21, 22, 23 and 25 in the presence of or within the sight of such disciplinary authority. Plagiarizer cannot participate from graduating programs and usually obtains a failing grade. Most universities also banned them from enrolling in another course for a period of five years. Junior faculty members could lose their jobs.

3. Theoretical Framework



Hypothesis

H1: The level of awareness of plagiarism is high among adult learners

H2: The level of awareness on the legal implication of plagiarism is high among adult learners.

4. Methodology

This research paper uses primary data collected from 100 adult learners studying at public and private universities in Johor and Melaka. The questionnaires are distributed during the students' final meeting with their supervisor. The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what students understand about plagiarism and its legal implications. The questionnaire consists of 3 sections;

Section A contain 5 basic questions of plagiarism
Section B contain 36 multiple choices questions on plagiarism and Section C contain 3 demographic questions.

Students are given half an hour to complete the questionnaire. After receiving the data, we analyzed it using SPSS software. This section will explain the results from the SPSS analysis. Three tests have been applied namely, Croanbach Alpha, Multicollinearity Test, and autocorrelation followed by Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.863	3

Table 1 : Cronbach Alpha /

Reliability Test Item-Total Statistics	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Level Of Awareness (LOA)	5.0568	.732	.670	.916
Lack of Information (IVE)	5.1490	.795	.824	.729
Attitude Problem (IVA)	5.0392	.993	.807	.792

The results show that the reliability test consist of 86.3% of the data are reliable.

Coefficients

Model	Significant	Collinearity Statistic VIF
CONSTANT	0.550	
IVE	0.069	4.125
IVA	0.475	4.125

Table 2 : Muticollinearity Test / VI
Dependent Variable: Level Of Awareness

This table shows that there is no multicollinearity problem because the value for the independent variable is 4.125 which is more than 2 and less than 10.

Durbin Watson Table

SIGNIFICANT f CHANGE	DURBIN WATSON
0.000	1.643

Table 3 : Autocorrelation Test / Durbin Watson

No serious serial correlation problem that exists in the model. The Durbin Watson value must between 0 to 4. The result for this model is 1.643. It means that there is a positive autocorrelation between the variables.

Pearson's Correlation.

From the table, we can conclude that all the variables have positive relationship between the dependent and independent variables. By referring to the table, we can see that when there is a 1% increase in LOA(Level of awareness) there is 66.6%

increase lack of information (IVE). Following an increase of 1% in LOA, there is an increase of 62.6% in attitude problem (IVA).

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.325	.538		.604	.550	-.771	1.421		
IVE	.599	.319	.499	1.879	.069	-.050	1.248	.242	4.125
IVA	.294	.407	.192	.723	.475	-.535	1.122	.242	4.125

Table 4 : Multiple Linear Regression
• Dependent Variable: LOA

The data shows the coefficient of IVE has a positive relationship with 0.599. it follow by the IVA which is 0.294. the significant level show that IVE is 0.069 and IVA 0.475. both variable are significant because the significant level is 0.05.

Hypothesis Testing

H₁: The level of awareness of plagiarism is high among adult learners

H₂: The level of awareness on the legal implication of plagiarism is high among adult learners

From the results, we accept the H₁ and H₂ and we conclude that the level of awareness of plagiarism and the level of awareness on legal implication of plagiarism is high among adult learners.

		Gender	Semester	CGPA
N	Valid	33	31	23
	Missing	0	2	10
Mean		1.58	2.35	2.74
Median		2.00	2.00	3.00
Mode		2	2 ^a	3
Std. Deviation		.502	.915	.689
Variance		.252	.837	.474
Skewness		-.321	.042	.392
Std. Error of Skewness		.409	.421	.481
Range		1	3	2
Percentiles	25	1.00	2.00	2.00
	50	2.00	2.00	3.00
	75	2.00	3.00	3.00

Table 5 : Frequency Distribution Statistics

- Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

		Level Of Awareness (LOA)	Lack of Information (IVE)	Attitude problem (IVA)
Pearson Correlation	LOA	1.000	.666	.626
	IVE	.666	1.000	.870
	IVA	.626	.870	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	LOA	.	.000	.000
	IVE	.000	.	.000
	IVA	.000	.000	.
N	LOA	35	35	35
	IVE	35	35	35
	IVA	35	35	35

5. Conclusions and Recommendation

As noted earlier, universities should consider plagiarism as a serious problem. In order to reduce this misconduct, it is recommended that the universities should promote activities through campaigns that ban the activities of plagiarism. This can be presented to students in a variety of ways such as in classrooms, during freshman orientation week and by incorporating with library introduction programs. Through this campaigns, university can explain to their students as what amount to plagiarism as well as their legal implication that will be enforced by the university. If students commit plagiarism, the university has to take action by enforcing the severe punishment so that become a lesson to others. The university also may find a software to detect the activity of plagiarism such as “Wcopyfind”, “Turnitin.com” and others. It will be easier for the university to trace the culprit of this academic dishonesty. Besides that, university administrators and lecturers should guide the students on how to cite properly, providing clear guidelines and policies according to each program and faculty and making sure that all students are responsible in their team projects.

In addition, lecturers should also be alert with this problem and they must take action if their student/s happen to commit plagiarism. Several punishment may be imposed by the lecturers as provided by the university rules and regulation such as downgrading the students’ marks, counseling the students, reject the assignments, enforce financial fines and finally, expelling the student.

The learners should also be ethically alert to the fact that committing plagiarism is something academically illegal. They must have self-motivation, be holistic, enthusiastically studying without copying the ideas of others. They must always be aware that there are legal implications that will be imposed for those copying the idea of someone else.

The impact of plagiarism is not only heated in the field of academia. In fact, it also has personal, social and economic consequences. Continual efforts to educate our students about the ills and the consequences of plagiarism are required. We hope that through these efforts, we could help students uphold academic honesty.

Gerhardt, (2006) in her research had proposed ten rules on how to avoid plagiarism.

1. Think about distinguishing your words and ideas from other voices.
2. If you cut content from a source and paste it somewhere else, put the content in quotation marks immediately, and note the source.
3. Put all borrowed content in quotation marks or an indented block, and cite your source.
4. Use quotation’s marks around any new or unusual term, and cite the source.

5. When you paraphrase, change the word, change the sentence structure, and cite your source after every sentence.
6. Provide the source for all ideas and definition that are not common knowledge.
7. Do not present fiction as fact.
8. If you are not sure whether a reference needs a citation, use one.
9. Keep a manual on proper citation form with you when you write.
10. Take your time.

To put in another way, we must learn to appreciate the work of others. We may benefit by exploring ideas from experts, thus giving us chance to develop our own taught and contribute our voice. The statutes and honor code has taught us to honor the hard work of others. If we respect other's idea, we can avoid plagiarism.

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