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**Awareness and Perception of Plagiarism among Postgraduate LIS Students in South –
East University Libraries, Nigeria.**

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Abstract

This study examined awareness and perception of plagiarism among the postgraduate students of Library and Information Science in South-East University Libraries, Nigerian. In carrying out this study five research questions were formulated. The study sample population comprised 246 postgraduate registered students of the libraries. (2018/2019) academic session. The instrument used for data collection in this study was questionnaire. Research questions were answered using frequency and percentages. The findings show average level of awareness of plagiarism among postgraduate students, lack of understanding of the concept, uses of the materials without referencing the materials, lack of seriousness on plagiarism, improper citation among other. The study recommends that management should approval and adoption of plagiarism detective software such as Turn tin, Copycat, Eve2,

Plagium, See sources, Plagiarism Detect and Plagiarism Checker etc. in Nigerian Universities for effective and efficiency protection of intellectual property among others.

Keywords: Plagiarism, Postgraduate students, Plagiarism awareness, Perception, Nigerian Universities South-East

Introduction

Plagiarism is rampant in the academia, among both students and lecturers/researchers (Shahabuddin, 2009), and it occurs either knowingly or unknowingly. Whatever or however the case may be, plagiarism is considered as information theft (Ahmad, 2011), a severe offense (Stephen, 2005), as such, there are currently many measures designed towards combating it, such as the implementation of plagiarism detecting systems, as well as establishing penalties for the act (Lukashenko et al., 2007). Furthermore, Onuoha and Ikonne (2013) stressed that the incidents of plagiarism nowadays seem to be on the increase especially with the advent of Internet, which made information more easily available and accessible without any geographical barriers; therefore, researchers can have access to any document in any part of the world as easily as possible. Though the ease of access to these millions of resources via the Internet has also resulted to an increase in the rate of plagiarism (Tarantino et al., 2013; Shephard, 2007; Simon et al., 2001); a term called cyber-plagiarism (Simon et al., 2001). Indeed, a recent worldwide survey by Turnitin,(2012) identified 10 different types of cyber-plagiarism, the three topmost being; (1) Clone - “an act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own”; (2) CTRL-C - “a written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations” and (3) Find-Replace - “the act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper”p.15. Hence, plagiarism is considered as a breach of professional conduct (Simon et al, 2001; Campbell, 2006), whether it is intentional, unintentional, much, or little. It is categorized into many types; direct text copying, “patch work”, paraphrased, truncation, excision etc. Consequence, there is the need to investigate LIS postgraduate students awareness and perception of plagiarism in South-East University libraries, Nigerian.

Statement of the Problems

Student’s plagiarism is serious offences that needs serious attention. It is a very critical form of ethical misconduct especially in higher institutions of learning. For this reason, various official steps have been taken in recent times to address it in all scholarly disciplines. A sufficient case is that of Committee of Vice Chancellors (CVC) of Nigerian universities that recently partnered with a UK Information Technology firm, for the deployment of plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) in all federal Universities to counter act plagiarism among students (Enekano, 2013). Some institutions had even subscribed to plagiarism detection software such as turnitin. This crime is so common among the postgraduate students, some go

to the Internet or textbook to copy and paste without acknowledging the source. Could it be the postgraduate students are not aware or the awareness is not adequate that they are committing an academic misconduct, which could possibly make them to have a negative perception towards plagiarism. Though, interactions with some postgraduate students revealed that some of them did not consider some acts that constitute plagiarism as such because of their general ignorance about plagiarism. Apart from awareness issues, observations revealed that some faculty members seem to expect postgraduate students to have the perquisite skill in appropriate referencing, paraphrasing and summarising ideals taken from others. As a result. They seem to disregard this aspect during research methods class and focus more on other aspect of research methods. It is against this background that this study is driven to fill a gap in examining the awareness and perception of plagiarism among LIS postgraduate students in the South- East University, Libraries in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the awareness and perception of plagiarism among LIS students in Nigerian Universities.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- To establish level of Postgraduate awareness among LIS student.
- To identify students perception on plagiarism
- To examine the reason why LIS postgraduate students plagiarize
- To suggest solutions that would prevent plagiarisms in Nigerian University.

Research Questions

The following are the questions to which the study will provide answers:

- What is the level of Postgraduate awareness among LIS student.
- What is the perceptions of the students on plagiarism
- Why do postgraduate students plagiarize
- Suggest possible solutions that can prevent plagiarisms in Nigerian University.

Review of Related Literature

The review of literature will be discussed in five subheadings: the concept of plagiarism, awareness of plagiarism by postgraduate students, perception of postgraduate students towards plagiarism, reasons postgraduate student's plagiarism and the preventive measure.

Concepts of Plagiarism

In general plagiarism can be classified into two broad categories; plagiarism due to refusal to cite sources and plagiarism due to an improper citation (Ma *et al.*, 2008), the former is usually intentional, while the latter is mostly unintentional. Plagiarism if left unchecked could yield graduates and scholars of low standard who could impact on societal development by promoting corruption in public service and tarnishing University's reputation (Gullifer and Tyson, 2010; Marsden *et al.*, 2005). Academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism is a global concern in the academia. Derived from the Latin word *plagiare*; a verb meaning abduct or kidnap (Mangalore, 2006), plagiarism has been defined as an act of reproducing another individual's ideas, document, or any other form of information without acknowledging the source of that information (Hashimet al., no date). According to Douglas Harper, the word originates from *plagiarius* meaning seducer, plunder, or kidnapper (Online Etymology Dictionary 2010).

Level of Awareness of Plagiarism among Postgraduate LIS Students

Awareness according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary is having or showing realization, perception or knowledge of a situation, condition or problem exists. It also refers to the knowledge about an object or event, the competences or skills as well as the methods of operation; it has to do with background knowledge about the object, event or any other phenomenon. (Reinhart, Mletzko, Sloep and Drachsler, 2015). Oyewole, Rasheed and Ogunsina (2018) in their work titled awareness, perception and attitude towards plagiarism by distance learners in University of Ibadan, Nigeria state that it will be difficult for University students to avoid plagiarism if they are not aware of what constitutes plagiarism. The work further revealed that the level of awareness on plagiarism of the distance learner was high. Some studies have also reported an average and low level of plagiarism awareness by university students. One of such is the one conducted by Idiegbeyan-Ose, Nkiko and Osinulu, (2016) that focused on the awareness and perception of plagiarism by postgraduate students in federal, state and private universities in Ogun State Nigeria. Findings of the study showed that the postgraduate students had an average level of plagiarism awareness.

Similary, Babalola (2012) while studying the awareness and incidence of plagiarism affirmed negative attitude towards plagiarism as the majority of the respondents were found to have been involved in different forms of plagiarism. Among the respondents for the study, 69.2% admitted to copying and pasting portions of text from the internet; 65.7% often copied

verbatim from a textbook or journal without using quotation marks; 58.5% often included references they did not use in their work and 46.7% submitted assignments without references. Adeniyi and Taiwo (2006) in a similar study involving students in Colleges of Education found out that 476 (34.3%) have copied materials word for word from written source at least once while 407 (29.3%) have fabricated/falsified. According to Jerome, Christopher and Ifeakachuku (2016) in their findings from the study conducted in selected universities in Ogun state shown average level of awareness of plagiarism among postgraduate students, level of training influenced their level of awareness; pressure to meet deadlines, inadequate writing skills and lack of knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism were found to be responsible for the malaise. Oyewole, O and Abioye, A (2018) in their study awareness of plagiarism acts and policy postgraduate students in university of Ibadan, Nigeria revealed that most of the respondents 17 (86.4%) were aware of what plagiarism is and majority were highly aware of the different acts that constitutes plagiarism. Results also revealed that a significant proportion of the postgraduate students 110(55.6%) had low level of awareness of existence of a plagiarism policy in their university.

Perception of Postgraduate LIS Students towards Plagiarism

Perception is the way one think or the ability to understand something using sense organs. It is the process of recognizing, organizing and interpreting sensory information. It deals with the human senses and generate signals from environment through the five sense organs: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. (Human Perception and Information Processing, 2015 in Idiegbeyan-Ose, Nikko and Osinulu, 2016). A study carried out by Oyewole, Rasheed and Ogunsina (2018) revealed in their study on the awareness, perception and attitude towards plagiarism by distance learning in university of Ibadan, Nigeria that the respondents have a positive perception of the need to be conscious of plagiarism as an academic crime. The favourable perception could be as a result of their understanding of what plagiarism is. Since they had the knowledge that failure to abide by the ethical principles guiding scholarly writing comes with sanctions, they had to develop a positive perception towards its avoidance.

Reason for Plagiarism among the Postgraduate LIS Students

Khan (2016) viewed lack of competence on the part of the postgraduate students as academic factors that could account for the reasons why they plagiarise. Specifically, the factors include; lack of writing and research skills, problems evaluating Internet sources, confusion between plagiarism and paraphrasing and misconception of plagiarism. If postgraduate students do not possess these skills and cannot differentiate

between what plagiarism is and what it is not, they may even plagiarise without knowing that they have done so. In fact, a research conducted by Ma et al. (2008) observed that the Internet has increased the rate of plagiarism amongst students. Although, at the moment, several plagiarism detection tools have been developed which effectively detect plagiarism. He further suggested that counselling by the teachers, and embarking on serious punishments could help in reducing this misconduct. On the other hand, A study carried out in Egypt by Nejati, Ismail and Shafaei (2011) found out that the most common forms of plagiarism behaviours among Egyptian students are “giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation”, with 40% of male and 41% of female students sometimes doing it, and “changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit”, with 34% of male and 33% of female students doing it. On postgraduate student’s reason for plagiarism, the study by Orim *e t. al.* (2012) in their findings in UK University revealed that Nigerian postgraduate students abroad are not exempted from plagiarism. This study revealed that plagiarism among Nigerian postgraduates overseas is a serious problem. It further showed that most of the respondents in the study had little or no knowledge of plagiarism prior their trip to UK. Other reasons offered for participation of Nigerian students in this widely recognized unethical lapse are inadequate knowledge of students about appropriate citing and referencing of scholarly works.

Prevention of Plagiarism

As such, there is a serious need at all levels- the University Commission, Academic Staff Union, the University board and students to cooperatively work towards eradicating or minimizing this unethical and in moral intellectual thievery in order to save the integrity of the academia and enable it to nurture competent scholars that could shape the society positively. In fact, there is a growing concern over the credibility of some lecturers in the academia after the dismissal of many staff identified to have indulged in one or more academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and publishing in fake journals (Punch, 2013; Kayode-Adedeji, 2013). The review has well known that despite the fact the awareness of plagiarism by postgraduate students looks to have enhance, awareness could still be a concern. Plagiarism policies likewise need to be viewed as a requirement in universities, specifically in Nigeria and the skill level of some postgraduate students leaves little to be desired.

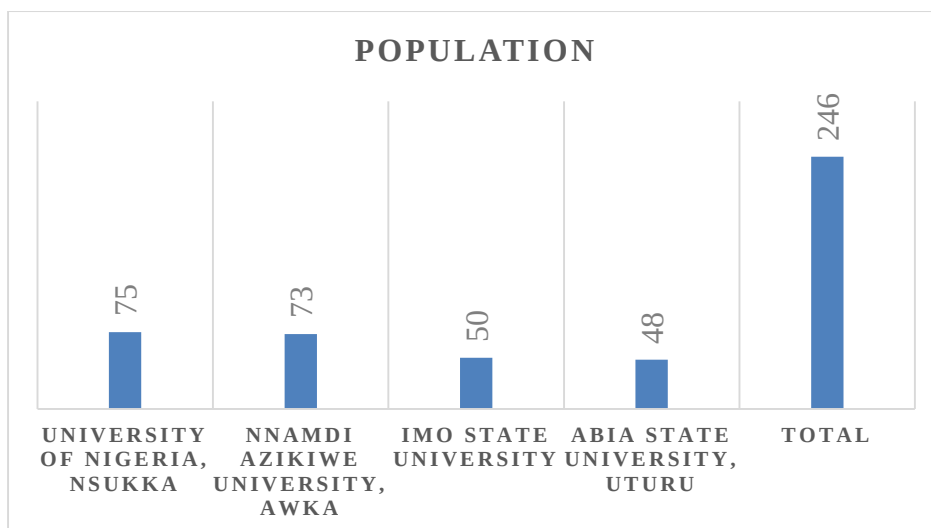
More so, The International School of Management (2015) pointed out that in Nigeria, the issue of academic integrity or dishonesty is so crucial in the heart of the higher institutions management. Therefore, the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian

Universities in 2012 contacted the United Kingdom (UK) based academic integrity software company called Turnitin for discussions and technical collaboration. Today virtually all universities in Nigeria have access to the Turnitin system and they can now conduct originality checks of diverse publications to ensure genuine intellectual contributions to scholarship.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey-using questionnaire to collect data. A total of two hundred and forty-six (246) postgraduate students from federal and state university in the South – East offering postgraduate programmes in library and information science) which met the criteria for the study. They include: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Imo State University and Abia State University. The total population for this study comprises of 246 of 2018/2019 registered users of the South-East University Libraries Nigeria as shown in table 1. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents and descriptive analysis of the respondents was made using the statistical package of social science (SPSS). Out of the 246 questionnaire that were distributed to the respondents, 205 was duly completed and found usable, which gives (83.3%) response rate. The data collected for this study was analysed using simple percentages and frequency counts and bar chart for easy interpretation.

Fig 1: Population and Sample of the Study



Source: 2018/2019 Academic Session retrieved from various Universities Libraries.

As shown in table 1 above, the populations of this study consist of 246 registered postgraduate students of library and information science (LIS) in the Federal and State University libraries in South- East, Nigeria is as follows: University of Nigeria Nsukka (75); Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka (73); Imo State University Owerri (50) and Abia State University Uturu (48) respectively.

Result

Fig 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

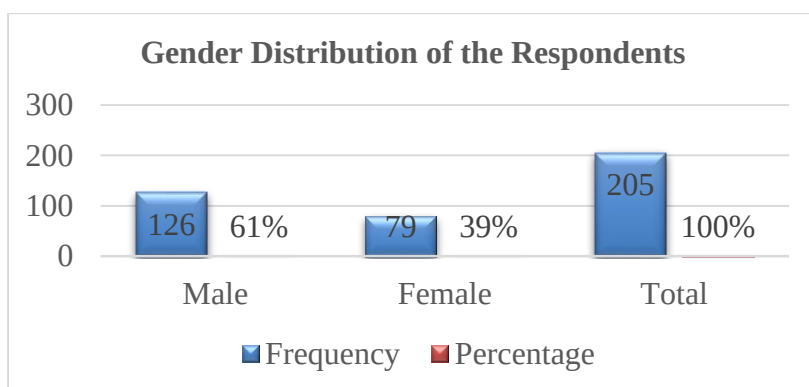


Fig 2 shows that 126(61%) of the participants are male while 79(39%) are female. This represents the gender distribution of the respondents in the survey.

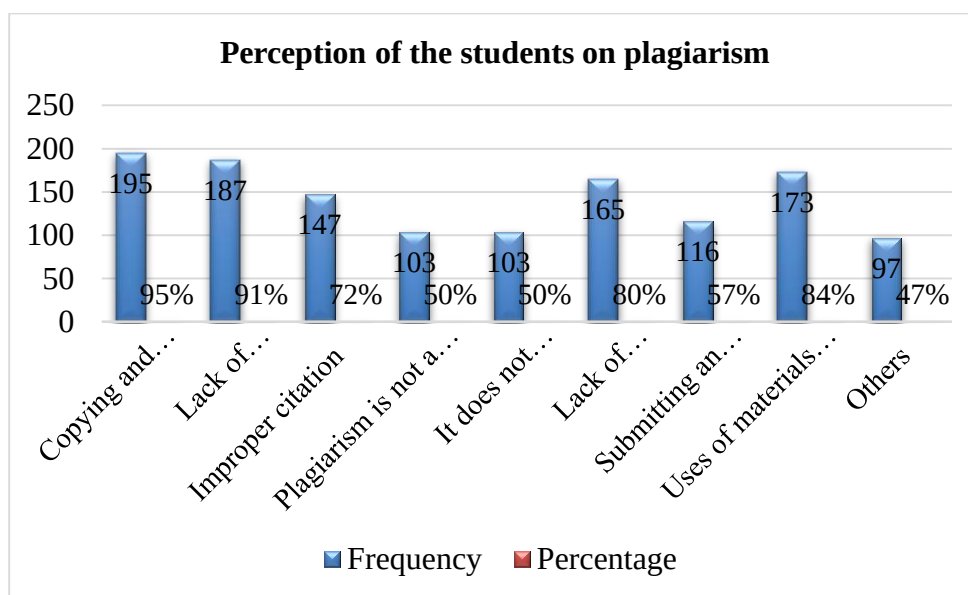
Table 1: Level of awareness of plagiarism?

Level of Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
High level of awareness	75	36.5%
Average level of awareness	98	47.8%

Low level of awareness	32	15.6%
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As shown in table 1, majority of the respondents 98(47.8%) reported average level of awareness while 75(36.5%) reported high level of awareness and 32(15.6%) reported low level of awareness. This is in consonance with the finding of Idiegbeyan-Ose, Nkiko and Osinulu, (2016) that focused on the awareness and perception of plagiarism by postgraduate students in federal, state and private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Findings of the study showed that the postgraduate students had an average level of plagiarism awareness.

Figure 3: What are the perception of the students is on plagiarism?



As witnessed from figure 3, copying and pasting parts of electronic documents without acknowledgement 195(95%), lack of understanding of the concept 187(91%), uses of the materials without references the materials 84%, lack of seriousness on plagiarism 165(80%), improper citation 147(72%), submitting an article downloaded from the internet as assignment 116(57%), plagiarism is not a punishable offence/ it does not deprived the original author of his/ her work 103(50%) and others 97(47%). This is in consonance with the finding of (Gullifer and Tyson, 2010; Marsden *et al.*, 2005), attested that plagiarism if left unchecked could yield graduates and scholars of low standard who could impact on societal

development by promoting corruption in public service and tarnishing University's reputation.

Figure 4: Why do postgraduate students plagiarize?

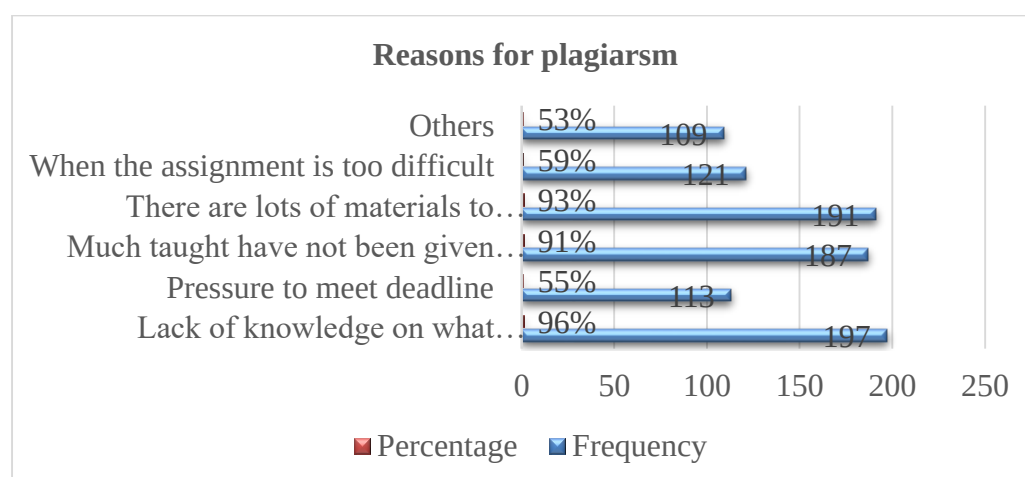
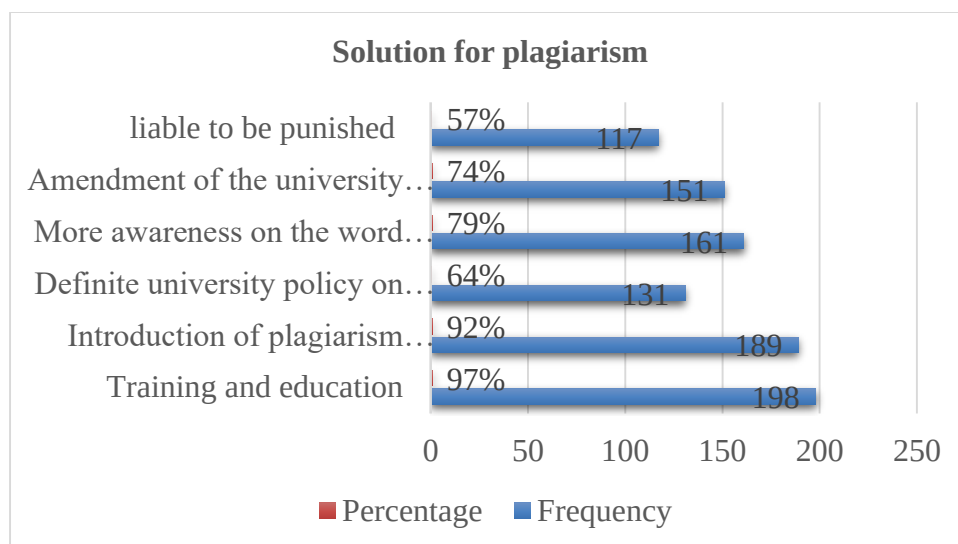


Figure 4, shown reasons while LIS postgraduate students in the south- east university, libraries plagiarism, (96%) lack of knowledge on what constitute plagiarism, (93%) there are lots of materials to download free of charge from the internet, 91% much taught have not been given on the concept, 5(9%) when the assignment is too difficult, (55%) pressure to meet deadline and (53%) others. This is supported by the finding of Onuoha and Ikonne (2013), suggested that people mainly plagiarize due to either ineffective ways of detection, poor writing skills and/or ignorance. Collaborate, Onuoha and Ikonne (2013) stressed that the incidents of plagiarism nowadays seem to be on the increase especially with the advent of Internet which made information more easily available and accessible without any

geographical barriers; therefore, researchers can have access to any document in any part of the world as easily as possible.

Figure 5: Solutions to prevent plagiarisms in Nigerian University?



A numbers of suggestions were identified, these includes training/education (97%), introduction of plagiarism detective software (92%), more awareness on the word plagiarism (79%), amendment of the university curriculum (74%), definite university policy on plagiarism (64%) and liable to be punished (57%). This is agreed with the finding of Stephen, (2005) and Lukashenko et al (2007) considered as a severe offense as such, there are currently many measures designed towards combating it, such as the implementation of plagiarism detecting systems, as well as establishing penalties for the act. Similarly, Udotong Obinna, (2012), confirmed that emphasis that there is need to put in place technologies that could help determine originality of plagiarised works”. Udotong (Obinna, 2012) further blamed the trend on the country’s poor teacher to student ratio, stressing that most universities in Nigeria have a ratio of one hundred students to one lecturer.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study have showed that an average level of plagiarism awareness existed among postgraduate students in Nigeria Universities. Even though there have been many efforts that have been initiated to curb plagiarism in Nigeria Universities such as Turnitin, copycatch, plagium, Eve2, see sources, plagiarism Detect, or plagiarism checker and Essay Rater etc these initiatives are commendable step to reducing plagiarism activities among students, researchers and scholars in the university. Students need to be sensitized on plagiarism since the awareness and perception of plagiarism is average level

among the postgraduate students in the South - East University, libraries, Nigerian. Irrespective of the awareness and perception of its consequences, students still indulged in plagiarism. Plagiarism like any other deviant behaviour in the society might be difficult to eradicate, but with increased awareness creation and favourable perception, it can be deduced to the barest minimum.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Awareness programme on plagiarism should be reinforced by all Nigeria Universities so also reduce the rate of involvement by students.
- Academic institutions should include plagiarism as a course of study or into their curriculum activities
- More awareness should be inculcated through introduction of the concept of plagiarism into curriculum order to avoid abuse of intellectual property.
- Embark on value re-orientation to encourage honesty, diligence, fairness and academic integrity among undergraduate students.
- Adopt well publicised institutional policies that clearly define plagiarism behaviours and their consequences.
- Lecturers should continue to educate students on issues pertaining to plagiarism to sustain positive attitudes towards plagiarism.

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