

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION RESEARCH AND PRACTICE



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in honour of

PROFESSOR
**DAVID FOLORUNSO
ELATUROTI**

CLN, FNLA, MNAE

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Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of and Attitudes Towards Plagiarism in Universities in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Plagiarism is one of the most significant challenges bedevilling academia. The act manifests as self, accidental, and mosaic plagiarism; unreferenced use of published and unpublished ideas of others; requests for research grants; and publication of a full paper under new authorship, sometimes in a different language, amongst others. This study investigated undergraduate students' perceptions of and attitudes towards plagiarism in Kwara State, Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting two universities for the study. Multi-stage sampling was utilised in selecting the faculties, departments, and all the undergraduates for the study. A sampling fraction of 20% was used to select the respondents from each department, giving a total sample size of three hundred and fifty (350) undergraduates. The results indicated that the respondents had a positive perception of and attitude towards plagiarism. The study recommended regular awareness, sensitisation and training programmes, and solid institutional pressure to preserve academic integrity based on the findings. In the long run, these could help change the students' orientation and academic behaviour.

Keywords: Attitude, perception, plagiarism, undergraduates, Kwara - State

Introduction

The information age has brought about the proliferation of information resources that were very difficult to access in the past (Terlanga, Iorver, Ternenge, Akosu, & Terhemen, 2019). Also, the widespread use of the Internet and the popularity of wireless mobile and smart devices have made it easier for students to reach, access and transmit information without citing the source (Pandoi, 2020). Consequently, higher education throughout the globe is fraught with reported instances of plagiarism on a very high side as information and communication technologies (ICTs) are utilised in research (Rabahi, 2019). Also, there has been a copy-and-paste and general sharing culture since the development of the Internet. The kind of digital sharing that is accepted as permissible in social settings can be considered as plagiarism in educational and research settings (Eaton, 2021).

Plagiarism is a serious type of scholastic misconduct (Clarke, Chan, Bukuru, & Logan, 2022). Plagiarism can occur at any level of research preparation, and writing/publishing (print and digital versions) by students and faculty (Elshafei & Jahangir, 2020). It encompasses misappropriation/lack of acknowledgment of other people's ideas, words, and copying of phrases and sentences (Lindah & Grace, 2018). Plagiarism is a type of academic misconduct that spans a variety of objectionable behaviour, like dishonesty, cheating, fabrication or falsification of research data and unauthorised collaboration (Eaton, 2021). Although its scope is broad, the academic and scientific spheres have felt its impact the most (Ramos, Damián, Inga, Arias & Caurcel, 2019).

Plagiarism is made more accessible by technology as students can easily access a wealth of information on different topics online (Stren, 2022). The act varies from cyber plagiarism; to self, accidental or mosaic plagiarism; unreferenced use of published/unpublished ideas of others; request for research grants; and publication of a full paper under 'new' authorship, sometimes in a different language (Khiati, 2019; Elshafei &

Jahangir, 2020). To Helgesson and Eriksson (2015), the act of plagiarism is not unique to research activity and published works alone; it is equally relevant to music, literature, art, and design since it relates to using the product of someone's intellectual work while passing it off as one's own.

The discussion of plagiarism began to extend beyond the literacy circle to the learning context, as education became widespread during the industrial revolution (Eaton, 2021). The act is a crucial issue in the academic environment. It is alarming in higher institutions of learning where students generally are expected to demonstrate ability and understanding of course contents and communicating such core concepts is a vital skill expected of them (Howard, Ehrich, & Walton, 2014; Ramzan, Asif, & Adeeb, 2018). Linda and Grace (2018) argue that undergraduate students are expected to be skilful and innovative, besides exhibiting high ethical approaches in every facet of life. However, the contrary is the case, as they, in the comfort of their homes, can easily access the Internet, databases, textbooks, past student assignments and projects online with the click of a button. This increases plagiarism activities among university students (Elshafei & Jahangir, 2020).

Perception refers to immediate or intuitive recognition/appreciation of moral, psychological, or aesthetic qualities; insight; intuition and discernment (Dictionary.com, 2022). According to Ramzan, Asif, and Adeeb (2018), it is the ability to imbibe sensory information and make it into something meaningful; and having a capacity for comprehension (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Idiegbeyan-Ose, Nkiko and Osinulu (2016) opine that perception of plagiarism is the ability to make a favourable and moral judgment on the use of information not quoted/referred to in an academic report. Perception is the process or result of becoming aware of objects, relationships, and events by means of the senses, which includes such activities as recognising, observing, and discriminating (The American Psychological Association (APA), 2022). Undergraduate students can make meaning out of the set of unconscious processes available to them.

Attitudes are relatively enduring and general evaluation of an object, person, group, issue, or concept on a dimension ranging from negative to positive (APA, 2022). It is a central part of human identity and a psychological tendency expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour/disfavour (Orluweme & Magnus-Arewa, 2020). Thus, attitude is an individual's belief, thinking, and feeling about an object, group, event, or symbol (Rodhiya, Wijayati, & Bukhori, 2020). Also, Haq and Haque (2018) state that attitudes refer to the view undergraduates have about a phenomenon, things, people, groups, and problems, and the level to which an individual has a positive/negative evaluation of the behaviour in question. Here, attitude refers to the way undergraduates view the act of plagiarism. A positive attitude will translate into doing the right thing. Plagiarism is an iniquitous competition (Rodhiya, Wijayati, & Bukhori, 2020).

Attitudes towards plagiarism reflect students' perceptions (Orluweme & Magnus-Arewa, 2020). The behaviours and attitudes gained by undergraduates would help lay a significant foundation. Studies abound on why university undergraduates engage in different forms of plagiarism, such as misappropriating ideas and words without proper acknowledgment of the source(s), cheating in examinations, and cutting and pasting (Howard, Ehrich, & Walton, 2014; Helgesson & Eriksson, 2015; Idiegbeyan-Ose, Nkiko, & Osinulu, 2016; Permana & Santosa, 2018).

Kokkinaki, Demoliou and Iakovidou (2015) assert that plagiarism happens for various reasons, such as the free and easy access to download Internet resources. Similarly, Paulo and Ana (2014) aver that students tend to attribute the cause to voluminous information on the Internet. Some teachers attribute plagiarism among undergraduates to lack of skill, pressure to get good grades, laziness, and poor time management. The high

emphasis placed on paper qualifications and the realities of the digital environment created a serious problem relating to cheating and promotion of plagiarism in higher institutions of learning. Thus, the solid institutional pressure to preserve academic integrity is germane to students' decision not to plagiarise (McInnis & Devlin, 2002). Therefore, it is of great importance that the perceptions of and attitudes towards the act are duly examined (Soyemi & Ojo, 2015).

Preliminary investigations revealed that the majority of undergraduates are not aware of their university's plagiarism policy, and among those that are aware, most of them do not know what the policy entails. Thus, some students engage in the act of plagiarism in almost every assignment given to them by their lecturers; while they do not know they are plagiarising, others do not know the gravity of the act. Identifying and understanding undergraduate students' perceptions of and attitudes towards the act of plagiarism would serve as an essential basis for educating and deterring students from plagiarising other people's works and ideas. Therefore, this study investigated undergraduate students' perceptions of and attitudes towards plagiarism in two selected universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The specific objectives were to:

1. identify the type(s) of plagiarism common among undergraduate students in universities in Kwara State, Nigeria;
2. ascertain undergraduate students' perceptions of plagiarism in universities in Kwara State, Nigeria;
3. ascertain the attitudes of undergraduate students towards plagiarism in
4. universities in Kwara State, Nigeria;
5. identify factors promoting plagiarism among undergraduate students in
6. universities in Kwara State, Nigeria; and
7. suggest ways of curbing the act of plagiarism among undergraduate students in universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Plagiarism originally came from the Latin word *plagiarius*, that is kidnapper (Permana & Santosa, 2018). Plagiarism is a serious type of scholastics misconduct; a multi-layer phenomenon of dishonesty that occurs in higher institutions of learning (Clarke, Chan, Bukuru, Wong & Logan, 2022; Jereb, Perc, La'mmlein, Jerebic, Urh, Podbregar, & Sprajc, 2018). It is the cautious effort to mislead the reader(s) over the fraud and demonstration of someone's ideas, words, and work (Magubane, 2018). Plagiarism involves misappropriating another person's ideas/entire works, paraphrasing without acknowledging, and cutting-and-paste (Permana & Santosa, 2018). To Helgesson and Eriksson (2015), plagiarism encompasses stealing the manuscript from the author(s), using passages from an unpublished manuscript circulated at a seminar, or using ideas communicated at a lecture without proper acknowledgement. Undoubtedly, plagiarism is an unlawful activity synonymous with cheating (Gow, 2013; Elshafei & Jahangir, 2020).

Plagiarism is multi-faceted, contextually specific, and highly complex owing to divergent and emotive views surrounding the understanding of what it is, why it occurs, and how to prevent it (Powell, 2014). According to Phyo, Lwin, Tun, Oo, Mya and Sillverman (2022), plagiarism is a significant ethical issue. It is presenting someone's work or ideas as one's, with /without their consent, by incorporating it into one's work without full acknowledgement (The University of Oxford, 2022). Similarly, Helgesson and Eriksson (2015) define plagiarism as an instance of using someone's intellectual product (texts, ideas, and results) and implying that it is one's. Permana and Santosa (2018) aver that plagiarism involves using exact wordings of other author(s)

without appropriate attribution. Similarly, Rosseau, Egghe and Guns (2018) observe that plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, results, and processes without giving credit to the source.

Unarguably, plagiarism comes in different forms, such as self-plagiarism - the reuse of previous work and submitting it in a new assignment (George & Caulfield, 2022); accidental plagiarism, which refers to quoting random terms, words, sentences, ideas, data, and information from a source(s) without proper acknowledgment (Sulaiman, 2018). Other types of plagiarism include salami slicing, which refers to small chunks in different papers to increase the number of publications (Helgesson & Eriksson, 2015); submitting a paper written by another person and copy/paste information from the Internet without proper citations (Schrimsher, Northrup, & Alverson, 2011); receiving unpermitted help from someone on an assignment (Doro, 2014); cypypaste (Permana & Santosa, 2018); buying an essay from a 'paper mill', an Internet site which sells papers such as assignments and completed projects (Razera, 2011).

Other types include cyber plagiarism - taking information from the Internet without citation (Khiati, 2019); major plagiarism - unacknowledged inclusion/summarising of a large amount of published work (Pears & Shields, 2019); buying an essay from a ghost writing service and passing it off as one's own; copying a large amount of another student's work and submitting a piece written by a person known to the student; minor plagiarism - citation of a few sentence, using one's name on someone's phrases, collusion, inaccurate citation, failure to put quotation marks (The University of Nairobi, 2021); and taking more significant sections of text from another author without attribution (Rosseau, Egghe, & Guns, 2018). Undoubtedly, plagiarism has become a more common cause of the retraction of publications (Lindah & Grace, 2018).

Theories in human psychology indicate that a deeper understanding of an individual's or groups' perception of an issue is critical for changing their attitudes and behaviours towards that particular issue (Ramzan, Asif & Adeeb, 2018). Perception refers to the organisation, identification, and interpretation of sensory information (Lumenlearning, 2021). There is much controversy about individual's perceptions of academic dishonesty among learners (Magubane, 2018). For instance, Arias-Chávez, PostigoZumarán, Villalba-Condori and Ramos-Quispe (2020) studied the behaviours and perceptions about academic plagiarism in students of four universities in the city of Arequipa, Peru. They discovered that the students recognised certain acts as plagiarism and admitted to having sometimes carried out actions related to plagiarism behaviours. Anaman and Agyei's (2021) study on perceptions of and attitudes towards plagiarism among graduate students in Ghana revealed that the students generally had a basic understanding of the concept of plagiarism but had widened the concept to include other forms of academic dishonesty. Yet, they still plagiarised even though they believed they had control over plagiarism.

There are university policies about plagiarism, but undergraduate students' understanding of plagiarism differ. Ramzan, Asif and Adeeb's (2018) study on insights into university students' perceptions of plagiarism in Pakistan found that the students perceived plagiarism as wrong but might not find it appropriate to complain about their fellow students, keeping in mind that this might harm their relationship with peers. McCulloch and Indrarathne's (2022) study on plagiarism in EMI higher education: conceptual understanding of staff and students in four south Asian countries revealed that students had limited understand of plagiarism and held the belief that it could lead to inadvertent malpractice in an international context. Permana and Santosa (2018) investigated the EFL students in Singaraja, Indonesia. They reported that most of the respondents understood the notion of plagiarism but still committed the act owing to lack of understanding of how to avoid it. Doro (2014) discovered that Hungarian students were more permissive to cheating as they did not consider certain acts as cheating/plagiarising and were often unaware of the implications; thus, they might accidentally plagiarise.

Furthermore, Anjum and Ali (2011) surveyed researchers' perceptions of and practices about plagiarism at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan. They reported that most of the researchers copied ideas without acknowledgments and references to secure good grades. Razera's (2011) study in Sweden discovered that the problem of plagiarism was known to the students, and there was no clear division between what was permitted/not permitted. Clarke, Chan, Bukuru, Wong and Logan's study (2022) on assessing knowledge of and attitudes towards plagiarism and ability to recognise plagiaristic writing among university students in Rwanda discovered that their respondents disapprove of plagiarism, but the act is unavoidable. Moreover, Bodary's (2014) research on plagiarism among faculty in America discovered that the majority of the respondents were unaware of the college's plagiarism guideline, while students did not see plagiarism as an offensive act worthy of a penalty.

Attitude is the way a person views something or tends to behave towards it, often in an evaluative way; it is a distinctive and indispensable factor that defines an individual (Orluweme & MagnusArewa, 2020; Collins Dictionary, 2021). Attitude encompasses an affective dimension (feeling/emotions), behavioural (overt) and cognitive dimension (beliefs). Diverse studies on students' attitudes towards plagiarism abound (Heuckmann, 2015). For instance, Rodhiya, Wijayati, and Bukhori (2020) surveyed the attitude of graduate students towards plagiarism in academic writing in Malang, Indonesia. They discovered that the majority of the respondents had a neutral attitude towards plagiarism (knew that plagiarism was an improper action) but tolerated the act. Orluweme and Magnus-Arewa (2020) investigated the attitude of postgraduate students towards plagiarism at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. They found that the students had a positive attitude towards plagiarism. Hosny and Shameem (2014) surveyed students' attitudes towards cheating and plagiarism in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They discovered that cheating and plagiarism were common among the respondents, though most of them believed that such behaviour was unethical and against religious values. Memon, Ali, Zafar, and Shaikh (2019) carried out a comparative study of students' knowledge of and attitude towards plagiarism from medical and non-medical fields in Pakistan. They found that the majority of the students were aware of research ethics and plagiarism, and almost half of them plagiarised unintentionally owing to lack of knowledge and learned about it later. The medical students were more aware of ethics of research than the non-medical students, as they considered it stealing.

Many factors promote the act of plagiarism among students. Ramos, Damián, Inga, Arias and Caurcel (2019) reported that ignorance, fear of failing a course, and finding an easy way to do something were some of the factors identified in Peru as promoting the act of plagiarism. McCulloch and Indrarathne's (2022) study discovered that students had limited understanding of plagiarism and held believe that it could lead to inadvertent malpractise in an international context while teachers were hampered by lack of detection tools, lack of clarity of policy and inadequate understanding of plagiarism. To Kayaoglu, Erbay, Flitner & Saltas (2015), busy schedule, easiness of locating Internet sources, lack of severe consequences, and not knowing how to cite the source(s) correctly, amongst others, were factors causing plagiarism among students.

Orluweme and Magnus-Arewa's (2020) study discovered that ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism was the main factor promoting plagiarism among their respondents. Razera (2011) points out that lack of time, skills and interest, achievement of higher grades, poor assignment design, less contact with the teacher owing to large class size and lack of knowledge about what is acceptable owing to cultural differences are some of the factors promoting plagiarism among undergraduate students. Similarly, Kokkinaki, Demoliou and Iakovidou (2015) aver that free and easy access to downloading information from the Internet is the factor promoting plagiarism. In the view of Elshafei and Jahangir (2020), new technology and the accessibility of the Internet and the web, time management issues, social pressure, lack of clarity and incomplete policies have strong

influence on plagiarism. Jereb, Perc, La'mmlein, Jerebic, et al. (2018) assert that easy access to information communication technologies and the web are the main reasons driving plagiarism. Lack of proper and clear understanding of the institutional definition of plagiarism/academic integrity and inability to apply the rule of the college correctly are also factors promoting plagiarism (Marcus & Beck, 2011).

Many studies have recommended ways of curbing plagiarism in the academic world. Sawahel (2022) states that the integration of educational training into the curriculum of students and researchers coupled with the establishment of research integrity offices would curb the act among Moroccan university students. Phyo, Lwin, Tun, Oo, Mya and Silverman (2022) aver that exposing researchers and students to more in-depth course and training sessions about research methods at an early stage would be more beneficial and discouraging the act among their respondents in Myanmar. Elshafei and Jahangir (2020) recommend proper education and technology involvement as a wakeup call. According to Ramos, Damián, Inga, Arias & Caurcel (2019), academic integrity policies/manuals, ethics regulations, and codes of conduct, among others, were mechanisms identified to curb plagiarism in Peru.

Clarke, Debbie, Bukuru Wong and Logan (2022) suggest intercollegial collaboration on effective plagiarism policy implementation and regular training programmes among students in Rwanda. Stren (2022) avers that students should be educated about intellectual honesty, instruct on how to avoid plagiarising other people's work and equally understand the importance of developing informational skills. Hosny and Shameem (2014) discuss the need for detailed attention to the moral characteristics of students. Schrimsher, Northrup and Alverson (2011) recommend that faculty expectations concerning academic integrity should be clarified. Academic administrators should offer appropriate training, monitor conformity with the plagiarism policy with appropriate and justifiable deviation where necessary to meet the various disciplinary needs and advocate transformative teaching strategies (Mammen & Meyiwa, 2013). To Bodary (2014), institutions/universities should have a clear rule on plagiarism.

In addition, Phyo, Lwin, Tun, Oo, Mya and Silverman (2022) recommend that training in responsible conduct of research should be provided to students in Myanmar. Chao, Wilhelm, and Neureuther (2009) and Eaton and Hughes (2022) note that training and exercise in documenting and paraphrasing are essential to reducing plagiarism in an academic institution. Punishing deliberate and unintended plagiarism could lead to concrete alternatives while reporting to administration could be formal (Singh & Bennington, 2012). Ramzan, Asif, and Adeeb (2018) argue that the need for universities to develop a culture of morality, develop students' writing and referencing skills, and strictly implement a zero-tolerance policy towards plagiarism would be a step in the right direction towards curbing the act of plagiarism to the barest minimum. Therefore, there is the need for academic institutions to create awareness of institutional plagiarism policy regularly to prevent students from committing the act (Eaton, 2021).

Some of the findings reviewed above may not apply to the Nigerian context in examining students' real perceptions and attitudes. However, the justifications and reasons for cheating and plagiarising may be similar among students across countries. The peculiar pervasive, contextual, and societal distinctions of undergraduate students in Nigeria differ significantly in individual, institutional and situational factors such as education quality, level of exposure, skills and abilities, value system, technology use, ethical beliefs, and perceptions of plagiarism. Therefore, this study investigated undergraduate students' perception of and attitude towards plagiarism in two selected universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. This design was considered appropriate, as it allows for the use of a questionnaire as a data collection instrument (Tella & Ibinaiye, 2020). The study population consisted of nineteen thousand, five hundred and eighty-eight (19,588) undergraduate students in two universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting the two (2) universities (state-owned and a private-owned university) used for the study and the multi-stage sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of three hundred and fifty (350) from the population size of nineteen thousand, five hundred and eighty-eight (19,588) undergraduate students using probability proportionate to size of 20% in line with Smart Methodology (2012), as cited in Ogunwuyi (2017). The questionnaire titled undergraduate students' perception of and attitude towards plagiarism (USPAATP) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into six sections A-F. Section A contained the demographic information of the respondents such as age, gender, faculty, department, course of study, and name of university (six items). Section B contained items on types of plagiarism. It had seven item-statements measured on a 4-point Likert Scale. The response format ranged from strongly agree (SA = 4) to strongly disagree (SD = 1). Section C dealt with perceptions of plagiarism among undergraduates. It contained eleven item-statements measured on a 4-point Likert Scale. The response format ranged from strongly agree (SA = 4) to strongly disagree (SD = 1). Section D dealt with attitudes towards plagiarism among undergraduates. It had ten item-statements measured on a 4-point Likert Scale. The response format ranged from strongly agree (SA = 4) to strongly disagree (SD = 1). Section E dealt with factors promoting plagiarism among undergraduates. It had thirteen item-statements measured on a 4-point Likert Scale. The response format ranged from strongly agree (SA = 4) to strongly disagree (SD = 1). Section F dealt with ways of curbing the act of plagiarism among undergraduates. It contained fourteen item-statements measured on a 4-point Likert Scale. The response format ranged from strongly agree (SA = 4) to strongly disagree (SD = 1). The whole questionnaire contained sixty (61) items in all. It has a reliability coefficient $r = 0.75$ Cronbach's α .

The copies of the USPAATPQ were administered to three hundred and fifty (350) undergraduate students sampled from two (2) universities randomly through the help of three trained research assistants. Out of the total number administered, three hundred and thirty-four (334) were duly filled and returned, giving a response rate of 95%. All the three hundred and thirty-four were found usable for analysis. The questionnaire distribution and response rate across the sampled universities in Kwara State, Nigeria is presented in Table 1. The Statistical Product for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 was used for data analysis.

Table 1: Questionnaire administration and retrieval of undergraduates in selected universities in Kwara State, Nigeria

S/N	Name of universities	Sample Size	Questionnaire administered	Number responded	Response rate (%)
1.	Al-Hikmah University.	145	145	141	97
2.	Kwara State University.	205	205	193	94
	Total	350	350	334	95

Results

The demographic profile of the respondents showed that, out of the 334 undergraduate students surveyed, 124 (37%) were from Al-Hikmah University, Adewole, Ilorin, Kwara State and 210 (63%) were from Kwara State University, Malele, Kwara State. The distribution of the respondents by university are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Pie chart showing the distribution of the respondents by university

Figure 2 presents the distribution of the respondents by gender.

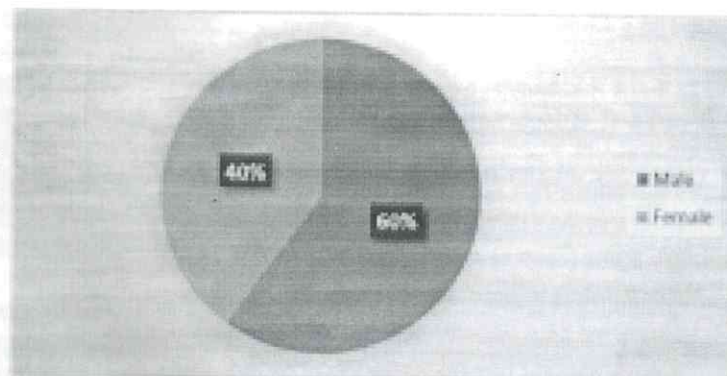


Figure 2: Pie chart showing the distribution of the respondents by gender

The gender distribution of the respondents shows that 200 (60%) were males and 134(40%) were females.

Figure 3 presents the distribution of the respondents by age.

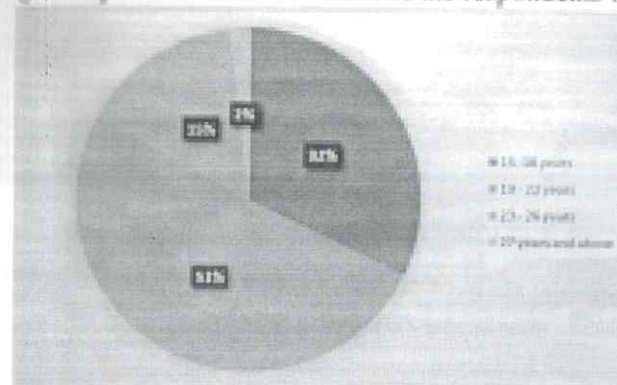


Figure 3: Pie chart showing the distribution of the respondents by age

The age distribution of the respondents ranged from 15-27 years. Most of them, 172 (51%), were within the 19-22 years age bracket. A total of 107 (32%) fell within the 15-18 years age bracket. 49 (15%) were within the 23-26 years age bracket. Only 6(2%) were within the age of 27 years and above.

Figure 4 presents the distribution of the respondents by college.

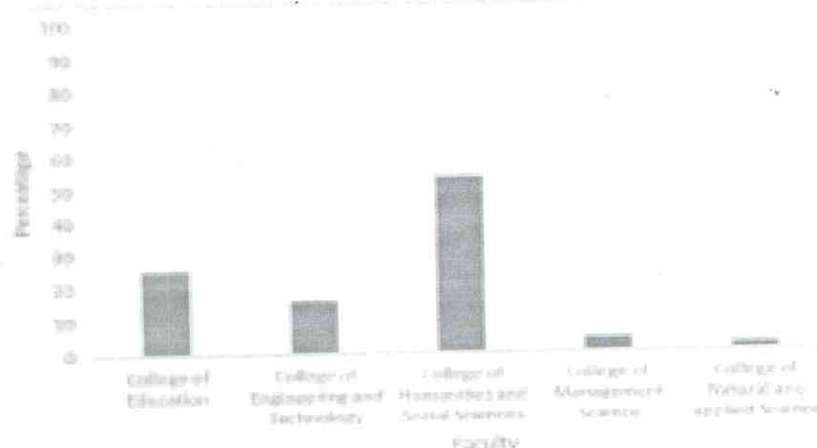


Figure 4: Bar chart showing the distribution of the respondents by College

Out of the three Hundred and thirty-four (334) respondents, 176 (53%) were from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences; 86 (25%) were from the College of Education; 52 (16%) were from the College of Engineering and Technology; 12 (4%) were from the College of Management Sciences; and 8 (2%) were from the College of Natural and Applied Sciences.

Table 1: Mean score of types of plagiarism exhibited by the respondents

S/N	Types of plagiarism	($\bar{x}$)	Rank
B1	Direct plagiarism.	1.57	7
B2	Self-plagiarism.	1.77	6
B3	Paraphrasing.	1.81	5
B4	Mosaic plagiarism.	1.86	4
B5	Accidental plagiarism (failure to cite or misquote sources, unintentional paraphrasing).	1.90	3
B6	Patching work (cutting and pasting materials without adding anything of value to the content).	2.12	2
B7	Buying assignment.	2.36	1
Weighted mean ($\bar{x}$) = 1.91			

Table 2 presents the mean scores of the types of plagiarism commonly exhibited by undergraduate students in surveyed universities in Kwara State.

The results in Table 2 showed that the types of plagiarism commonly exhibited by the undergraduate students in the selected universities was buying assignment ($\bar{x}$ = 2.36), which was ranked 1st; patching work ($\bar{x}$ = 2.12) ranked 2nd; accidental plagiarism ($\bar{x}$ = 1.90) ranked 3rd. Other identified types were mosaic plagiarism ($\bar{x}$ = 1.86); paraphrasing ($\bar{x}$ = 1.81); self-plagiarism ($\bar{x}$ = 1.77), and direct plagiarism ($\bar{x}$ = 1.57) respectively. These

results showed that buying assignment, patching work, and accidental plagiarism were the common types of plagiarism exhibited by the undergraduate students surveyed, and the least common type of plagiarism was direct plagiarism.

Table 3 presents the mean score of the respondents' perception of plagiarism in universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Mean score of the respondents' perception of plagiarism			n=334	
S/N	Perception statements	Mean	Rank	
C1	Copying small amount of information from the Internet/books without proper reference.	1.75	11	
C2	Copying a large amount of information from the Internet/books without proper reference.	1.87	10	
C3	Submitting already assessed work.	1.95	9	
C4	Combination of information from books/Internet without reference.	2.01	8	
C5	The use of work/research of others without citation, thus making it appear as the person's work.	2.04	7	
C6	Plagiarism is a close imitation or form of cheating.	2.05	6	
C7	Use the author's idea without reference.	2.12	4	
C8	Copying from classmates with/without their knowledge.	2.12	4	
C9	Working with others on an assignment when asked for individual work.	2.20	3	
C10	Plagiarising Internet sources is less dishonest than a similar act of plagiarism using a printed source.	2.24	2	
C11	Not participating in group assignment.	2.31	1	
Weighted mean ($\bar{x}$) = 2.06				

The results presented in Table 3 showed some of the statements that best described the respondents' perceptions of plagiarism. Most of the respondents perceived plagiarism as follows: not participating in group assignment ($\bar{x}$ = 2.31); plagiarising Internet sources is less dishonest than a similar act of plagiarism using a printed source ($\bar{x}$ = 2.24); working with others on an assignment when asked for individual work ($\bar{x}$ = 2.20); copying from classmates with/without their knowledge ($\bar{x}$ = 2.12); and using authors' idea without reference ($\bar{x}$ = 2.12) amongst others.

Table 4 shows the mean scores of the undergraduate students' attitude toward plagiarism in universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Mean score of the respondents' attitude towards plagiarism			N=334	
S/N	Attitudinal statements	Mean	Rank	
D1	Plagiarism is cheating.	1.90	10	
D2	Inability to consider the reuse of already assessed work as plagiarism.	1.88	9	
D3	It is right to give authors credit for their work.	1.91	8	
D4	There is nothing wrong with taking part of the assignment solution from a book/the Internet and submitting it.	2.22	4	
D5	Borrowing from a different source and connecting them to make a paragraph.	2.10	6	

D6	Getting good grades is more important than citing materials.	2.10	6
D7	Plagiarism is wrong, it undermines learning and creation of ideas.	2.12	5
D8	There is no harm in getting involved with plagiarising; winning is more important than honesty.	2.43	2
D9	Getting somebody to fix up assignments is acceptable.	2.38	3
D10	Copying other students' work with their knowledge is acceptable.	2.53	1
Weighted mean ($\bar{x}$) = 2.16			

Table 4 captures undergraduate students' attitudes toward plagiarism in universities in Kwara State, Nigeria to include the following: copying other students' work with their knowledge is acceptable ($\bar{x}$ = 2.53); there is no harm in getting involved with plagiarising; winning is more important than honesty ($\bar{x}$ = 2.43); getting somebody to fix up assignments is acceptable ($\bar{x}$ = 2.38); and there is nothing wrong with taking part of the assignment solution from a book/the Internet and submitting it ($\bar{x}$ = 2.22) amongst others.

Table 5 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of items that best describe factors promoting plagiarism among undergraduate students in universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation scores of factors promoting plagiarism among the respondents.

S/N	Factors promoting plagiarism statements	Mean	SD
E1	Lack of research skills	1.61	0.84
E2	Pressure to complete many assignments during a given period.	1.76	0.83
E3	High expectations of the family on getting better grades and peer pressure.	1.79	0.77
E4	Achievement of higher grades.	1.78	0.84
E5	Poor time management skills	1.87	0.90
E6	Self-deception.	1.87	0.91
E7	Everyone is doing it.	1.89	0.93
E8	The tendency to save time and effort.	1.89	0.88
E9	Less contact with lecturers due to class size.	1.90	0.91
E10	Do not know the legal implications of plagiarising.	1.91	0.90
E11	Lack of understanding of the basics of academic writing.	1.96	0.85
E12	Lack of knowledge about what is acceptable.	1.98	0.93
E13	Too much information is available in electronic format from websites.	2.17	0.99
Weighted mean ($\bar{x}$) = 1.87			

Table 5 reveals the mean and standard deviation scores of factors promoting the act of plagiarism among the respondents to include the following: too much information is available in electronic format from websites ($\bar{x}$ = 2.17, SD = 0.99); lack of knowledge about what is acceptable ($\bar{x}$ = 1.98, SD = 0.93); lack of understanding of the basics of academic writing ($\bar{x}$ = 1.96, SD = 0.85); do not know the legal implications of plagiarising ($\bar{x}$ = 1.91, SD = 0.90); less contact with lecturers due to large class size ($\bar{x}$ = 1.91, SD = 0.91); the tendency to save time and effort ($\bar{x}$ = 1.89, SD = 0.88); everyone is doing it ($\bar{x}$ = 1.89, SD = 0.93); poor time management skills ($\bar{x}$ = 1.87, SD = 0.90); and self-deception ($\bar{x}$ = 1.87, SD = 0.91) amongst others.

Table 6 presents mean and standard deviation scores of ways of curbing plagiarism among undergraduate students in surveyed universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 6: Mean and standard deviation scores of ways of curbing the act of plagiarism among undergraduate students in universities in Kwara State

S/N	Ways of curbing plagiarism statements	Mean	SD
F1	Adoption of plagiarism software.	1.69	0.87
F2	Libraries should incorporate sessions on plagiarism in the users' education class.	1.70	0.81
F3	Provision and implementation of guidelines/procedures on courses.	1.71	0.73
F4	Preventing others from copying one's work and submitting it as their own.	1.75	0.77
F5	Lecturers to change assessment style and task.	1.78	0.80
F6	Monitoring conformity with plagiarism policy.	1.78	0.78
F7	Special training session on plagiarism and academic honesty.	1.81	0.82
F8	Insist that a plagiarism declaration accompanies every assignment or research report.	1.82	0.85
F9	Lecturers should be giving citation style guides.	1.87	0.88
F10	Devoting a session to familiarise students with the contents of the institution's plagiarism policy.	1.87	0.87
F11	Students should get better training in the type of assignments where plagiarism usually occurs to give them better self-esteem.	1.90	1.03
F12	Need to sensitise students on subjecting their work for plagiarism checks.	1.93	0.92
F13	Being creative and proud to present one's original work for assessment.	2.16	1.06
F14	Acknowledging that plagiarising is wrong.	2.00	0.92
Weighted mean ($\bar{x}$) = 1.84			

The results in Table 6 showed the mean and standard deviation scores of ways of the ways of curbing the act of plagiarism among the respondents to include being creative and proud to present one's original work for assessment ($\bar{x}$ = 2.16, SD = 1.06); acknowledging that plagiarism is wrong ($\bar{x}$ = 2.00, SD = 0.92); need to sensitise students on subjecting their work for plagiarism checks ($\bar{x}$ = 1.93, SD = 0.92); and students should get better training in the type of assignments where plagiarism usually occurs to give them better self-esteem ($\bar{x}$ = 1.90, SD = 1.03) among others.

Discussion of the findings

The results revealed that buying assignments, patching work (cutting and pasting materials without adding anything of value to the content), and accidental plagiarism (failure to cite/ misquote source/s); unintentional paraphrasing) were the most common types of plagiarism exhibited by the respondents. These results agree with other studies that reported that buying an essay from a 'paper mill' (an Internet site which sells papers such

as assignments and completed projects (Razera, 2011); accidental plagiarism quoting random terms, words, sentences, ideas, data and information from a source(s) without proper acknowledgement (Sulaiman, 2018); salami slicing, which refers to small chunks in different papers to increase the number of publications (Helgesson & Eriksson, 2015).

This study found that not participating in group assignment; plagiarising from the Internet sources is less dishonest than a similar act of plagiarism using a printed source(s); working with others on an assignment when asked for individual work; copying from classmates with/ without their knowledge; and using authors' idea without reference were what the respondents perceived as plagiarism. These results correspond with the findings of Arias-Chávez, Postigo-Zumarán, VillalbaCondori, and Ramos-Quispe (2020), who discovered that students recognised specific acts of plagiarism and they admitted to having sometimes carried out actions related to plagiarism behaviours. Anaman and Agyei (2021) state that students generally had a basic understanding of the concept of plagiarism but had widened the concept to include other forms of academic dishonesty. Anjum and Ali (2011) note that researchers copy ideas without acknowledgments and references to secure good grades. Permana and Santosa (2018) observe that students understood plagiarism as copy-paste and never committed plagiarism.

The findings of this study also showed that the respondents' exhibited attitudinal behaviours included copying other student's work with their knowledge is acceptable; no harm involved with plagiarising I do not see what all the fuss is about and winning is more important than honesty; getting assignment(s) fixed is acceptable; and taking the solution to assignment from a book/the Internet and submitting it. These findings are a strong indication that the surveyed undergraduate students generally had a positive attitude towards plagiarism. The findings are in tandem with previous studies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Pakistan and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which reported that the sampled postgraduate students generally had a positive attitude towards plagiarism (Orluweme & Magnus-Arewa, 2020). Students were aware of research ethics and plagiarism (Memon, Ali, Zafar & Shaikh, 2019). Cheating and plagiarism were common among the respondents, even though most of them believed that such behaviour was unethical and against religious values (Hosny & Shameem, 2014).

Also, the results revealed that the factors promoting plagiarism were the following: too much information available in electronic format, mainly from websites; lack of knowledge about what is acceptable; lack of understanding of the basics of academic writing; do not know the legal implications of plagiarism; less contact with lecturers owing to class size; the tendency to save time and effort; everyone is doing it; poor time management skills; and self-deception. Ramos, Damián, Inga, Arias and Caurcel (2019) contend that ignorance, fear of failing a course, and finding the easy way to do something were some of the factors promoting the act of plagiarism. Kayaoglu, Erbay, Flitner and Saltas (2015) assert that busy schedule, laziness, ease of locating Internet sources, lack of information about instructions, lack of severe consequences, and not knowing how to cite the source(s) correctly were causes of plagiarism among students. Razera (2011) reveals that lack of time, skills and interest, achievement of higher grades, poor assignment design, less contact with the teacher owing to large class size and lack of knowledge owing to cultural differences were factors promoting plagiarism among undergraduates and teachers in Sweden.

The findings of this study equally showed that being creative and proud to present one's original work for assessment; acknowledging that plagiarism is wrong; checking students' work for plagiarism; exposure to tutorials on plagiarism and academic honesty; lecturers giving citation style guides; devoting a session to familiarise students with the contents of the institution's plagiarism policy; students should get better training in

the type of assignments where plagiarism usually occurs to give them better self-esteem; and insisting that a plagiarism declaration accompany every assignment/research report were ways suggested by the respondents to curb the act of plagiarism among undergraduate students. These findings correspond with Ramos, Damián, Inga, Arias and Caurcel (2019), who reported that academic integrity policies, ethics regulations, codes of conduct, and academic manuals were mechanisms recommended to curb plagiarism. Sawahel (2022) states that the integration of educational training into the curriculum of students and researchers with the establishment of research integrity offices would curb the act of plagiarism among students. Elshafei and Jahangir (2020) argue that proper education and technology involvement (software) would serve as a wake-up call). Eaton and Hughes (2022) aver that training and exercise in documenting and paraphrasing are essential to reducing plagiarism in academic institutions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated undergraduate students' perception of and attitude towards plagiarism in selected universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. In conclusion, based on the findings, undergraduate students in universities in Kwara State, Nigeria, have a positive attitude towards plagiarism and a clear understanding of what plagiarism is. Consequently, universities need to create an environment where ethics, morality and integrity are practised and upheld with zero tolerance for the act of plagiarism. Faculty members must work assiduously to ensure total compliance with the universities' position on plagiarism and the need for regular training, workshops and seminars in the academic environment to continually sensitise students. In addition, there is the need to deploy appropriate software to check assignments and research papers of students for originality.

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