

Plagiarism and Academic Performance of Students in Federal Tertiary Institutions of Adamawa State.

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Abstract

This study investigated the Plagiarism and its Effect on Academic Performance of Students in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State. To achieve this, two objectives and two research questions were formulated. Survey research method was adopted for the study. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were administered on the Students of Federal Tertiary Institution in Adamawa State that is, forty each in Modibbo Adamawa University of Technology Yola, Federal College of Education Yola and Federal Polytechnic Mubi Yola Campus. Descriptive statistic was used to answer the research questions while inferential statistic of chi square was used to test the null hypotheses. The findings revealed that: The bulk of the Students of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State are completely ignorant of the concept “plagiarism “as a crime and its consequences; lack of orientation and the desire to earn more grades constitute the major reason why students in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State spend their time plagiarizing. The study recommends that: the managements of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State should find a way of organizing programs such as library instruction/skills to their students on how to use other people’s work without plagiarizing to avoid its consequences.

Keywords: Plagiarism, Academic Performance, Students, Effects

Introduction

The concept of plagiarism is a product of advancement in technology in that, people are now being careful that lifting someone’s work without acknowledging the original owner is unacceptable. Students of higher schools or colleges may plagiarize another’s work unintentionally or intentionally more especially during assignments in order to get more grade. As teachers according to Schools Catalogue and Information Science (2007), we cannot assume that students know what we mean when we tell them not to plagiarize. At what stage in our students’ schooling and in what curriculum areas do we take the time to build an understanding of what plagiarism is, how it relates to cheating and how it will be dealt with if discovered? Sutherland-Smith (2005) equally added that, the increased demand for the supply of literature by many more literate people created the desire for individuals to claim rights to their works. Plagiarism as defined by Stanford University (2012) is the use of someone’s work without giving reasonable or appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of other people’s original work, whether such work is made up of codes, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s).

Student cheating (plagiarism) has gained much public attention recently. 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. Shekoofeh, Rezazadeh, and Sarani, (2015) pointed out that, there is not any strict and obvious rule on plagiarism in the educational and academic environments in Iran. This is why many researchers and students have many plagiarism motivations in their academic texts. They equally argued that, the placement of emphasis and attention on the quantity of papers rather than its quality in their country leads that many students and researchers have motivation to duplicate others academic texts.

It is believed that when students lack awareness of the concept and the existence of plagiarism as a crime and its consequences affect their academic performance. In a study carried out by Ramzan et al (2012) on the awareness about plagiarism amongst university students in Pakistan revealed that, majority of the students had poor understanding of both plagiarism and the university plagiarism policies although, significant number of the students admitted that they are aware of plagiarism and its consequences but intentionally plagiarize written materials. According to Hirby and Fact (2014) in their publication titled “What are some consequences of plagiarism” reveals that, when the plagiarism appears to be intentional, there may be a number of consequences which may include failing the assignment or having to redo that assignment again. In some cases, some students may not be able to recover their grades and they will automatically fail the course.

It is assumed that poor or lack of training on proper citation and referencing affects students’ plagiarism. According to Idiegbeyan-ose, Nkiko, and Osinulu (2016), exposure of students to training on proper citation and referencing revealed that 15% reported high exposure, 26% average and 59% low level of exposure. The respondents suggested ways of reducing or curbing act of plagiarism among postgraduate students, by increased awareness among students will curb the act of plagiarism and adequate training and education on proper citation and referencing.

It is assumed that the reasons for which undergraduate students plagiarize has effect on their academic performance. Sa’eed, Aamir and Ranzanl. (2011), shifted the blame to the nature of Nigerian philosophy of education as the reason why Nigerian university students plagiarize. According to him, “Nigerian philosophy of education was vague because it failed to express succinctly the competencies and skill expected of a graduate rather, it emphasized the degree and the certificates to be awarded to students”. Adeniyi and Taiwo (2011) indicated that the reason why students plagiarize is attributed to the lecturers as according them, majority of their respondents seemed to blame the lecturers for playing a little or no role in guiding students. The causes of plagiarism can be summarized as: ignorance, lack of skills, and academic pressure of publish or perish (Idiegbeyan-ose, Nkiko, and Osinulu, 2016)).

It is believed that there is significant effect of plagiarism on students’ academic performance as it could be quite diver stating because it is a serious crime if caught in the act. Gullifer and Tyson (2010) revealed that when students plagiarize,

they by-pass learning thereby produce inadequately trained graduates who are potential threat to the society through lack of competences and skills at various levels. The occurrences of students' plagiarism could tarnish the image of the higher education institution and increase media scrutiny, which could lead to negative publicity and reputational damage. This study is therefore an attempt to look at the concept of plagiarism and how its effects affect academic performance of Students' in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State.

Problem Statement

It has been observed that Nigerian system of education is becoming weak and weaker owing to the fact that there is so much concern for paper qualification rather than academic performance of the graduates we have. Plagiarism is a contentious issue in Higher Education, it is perceived, by many to be widespread and increasing among university students. This has not only dented the image of our graduates but also has made our higher institutions of learning lose their reputations in the face of the world. Students are expected to be taught on how to use information resources effectively so as to be able to write assignments and researches perfectly without necessarily going against the law plagiarism. This study is an attempt to find out whether plagiarism is one of the factors responsible for the poor academic performance of Students in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are to:

1. Ascertain whether Students of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa state are aware of the existence of plagiarism as a crime
2. Ascertain the reasons why students in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State still engage themselves in plagiarism.

Literature Review

The long-term benefits of an academic environment where integrity and learning are cultivated cannot be overestimated as it exposes students to writing skills and research techniques. Ranzan et al (2010) in their study on "awareness about plagiarism amongst university students in Pakistan revealed that, there was poor understanding about both plagiarism and the university plagiarism policies processes among the students". Similarly, Abukhattala (2012) while carrying out a research on plagiarism and culture in Libya found that, many Libyan students were completely ignorant about plagiarism. He added that, the students could not distinguish the categories of plagiarism owing to their beliefs that plagiarizing information from the internet is less offensive than from textbooks. According to Shekoofeh, Rezazadeh, and Sarani, (2015) in their study on "Students' Awareness of Plagiarism Instances; Case Study-Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Iran", it should be remembered that the students' awareness of plagiarism is low. The results of this study was supported by findings of other authors such as Denis (2004) who pointed out that the students have not good and sufficient awareness of plagiarism phenomenon and its

instances. Shekoofeh, Rezazadeh, and Sarani (2015) equally revealed that, 200 (85%) of the students in Isfahan University of medical sciences indicated that their level of awareness of plagiarism consequences is low

The need to have proper citation and referencing skill goes a long way in controlling plagiarism, the findings of a study by Baruchson-Arbib and Yaari (2004) found that students' attitudes towards plagiarism from online resources was found significantly different for word by word copying than from print resources. This study suggested that students should be taught to observe ethics in use of Internet resources, proper citations of online resources and importance of copy right laws to reduce the plagiarism from academia. Idiegbeyan-ose, Nkiko, and Osinulu (2016) suggested a way of reducing or curbing the act of plagiarism among postgraduate students through adequate training and education on proper citation and referencing.

Despite the fact that plagiarism is a terrible crime punishable by law, students are still engaged in the act. In Nigerian Universities according to Babalola, (2012), some of the reasons why student still find themselves plagiarizing includes: the students' desire for good grade, poor knowledge of appropriate citation principle, lack of skills to adhere to academic conventions and to manage time and pressure to meet the assignment datelines. Ellery (2008) on the other hand in her study in South Africa pointed out that, most students plagiarize with deliberate intention to deceive, but rather, as a result of poor understanding of the technical matters such as correct referencing norms. According to Idiegbeyan-ose, Nkiko, and Osinulu (2016), the pressure in meeting deadlines in academic endeavors, inadequate writing skills of postgraduate students in Nigerian universities and poor knowledge on what constitute plagiarism are some of the reason why University Postgraduates plagiarize.

It is true that any bad practice has its effects on the society especially when it comes to issue that affects academics. According to Sa'eed, Aamir and Ranzanl (2011), where there is no appropriate understanding of ethical values or use of such, there will be breach of academic convention. These breaches result into consequences that affect not only the student but will affect the integrity of institution associated with the student and the society at large. The effects are not only on students as Adebayo (2013) affirms the outright dismissal of four university lecturers at the University of Calabar Nigeria for plagiarism. Similarly, Punch (2012) also reported the case of United State based university Nigerian lecturer (Chiedozie) who sued the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria Dr. SanusiLamido for allegedly plagiarizing his work. It is in view of the above assertion that prompted the need for this study to ascertain the effect of plagiarism on academic performance of Students of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State.

Methodology

For the purpose of this work, Survey research method was used as it studies both large and small population by selecting and studying sample chosen from the population (Osuala, 2005). A total of 120 Questionnaire was in-proportionately administered on the Students of Federal Tertiary Institution in Adamawa State that is,

40 each from Modibbo Adama University of Technology Yola, Federal College of Education Yola and Federal Polytechnic Mubi Yola Campus. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistic to answer the research questions and inferential statistic of Chi Square was used to test the null hypothesis.

Findings and Discussion

Out of the 120 questionnaire administered, 112 (93.3%) were adequately filled, returned and were found usable for the analysis, that is, 40 (35.7%) from Modibbo Adama University of Technology Yola 35(31.3%) from Federal College of Education Yola and, 37(33.0%) from Federal Polytechnic Mubi Yola Campus respectively. The finding equally revealed that the bulk of the students were males amounting to 80(71.4%) while 32(28.6%) were females.

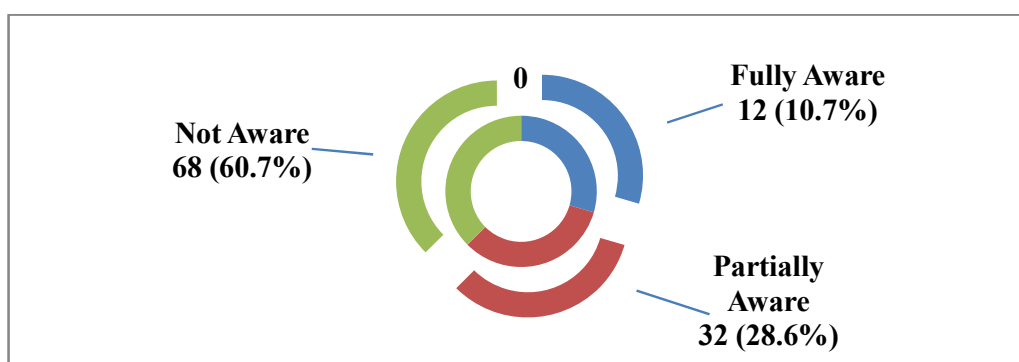


Figure 1: Students ‘Awareness on the Existence of Plagiarism as a Crime and its consequences in Federal Tertiary institutions in Adamawa State

Figure 1, shows that the bulk 68(60.7%) of the Students of Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State are completely ignorant of the concept “plagiarism” as a crime and its consequences. Where 32(28.6%) indicated that they were aware but not fully with only 12(10.7%) have adequate knowledge plagiarism as a crime and its consequences. This concludes that students were not aware of the implication of plagiarism as a crime and its consequences in academics and this indicates owing to proper orientation for the students in the institutions studied.

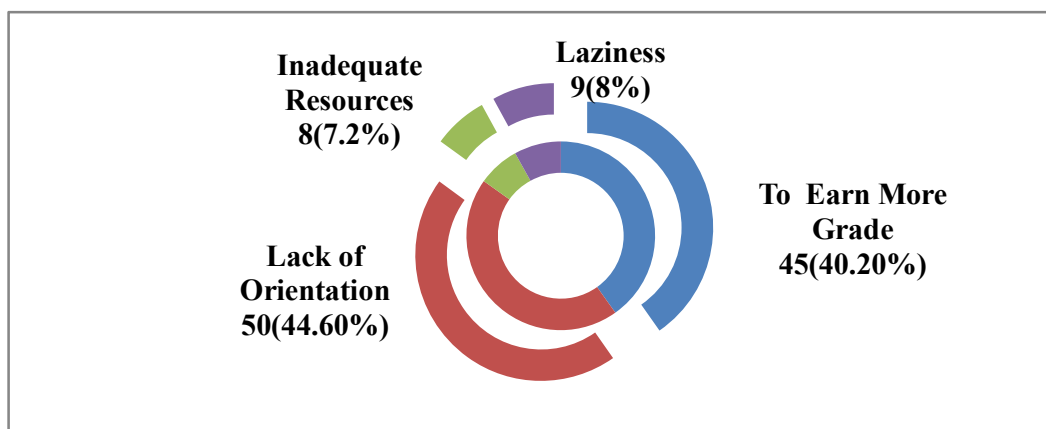


Figure 2: Reasons Students in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State Still Engage Themselves in Plagiarism

Figure 2, it can be seen that, “lack of orientation” 50(44.6%) constitutes the bulk of the reasons why Students in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State spends their time plagiarizing. This was followed by the “Desire to earn more grades” with 40(40.2%), “Laziness” constitutes 9(8%) and “Inadequate resources” covers 8(7%) respectively. Conclusively, it can be said that, students have not been give the orientations by their respective lecturers on how to use someone’s work and go free without being intimidated.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis made, the following are summary of the findings of the study:

1. The bulk of the Students of Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State are completely ignorant of the concept “plagiarism” as a crime and its consequences.
2. Lack of orientation and the desire to earn more grades constitutes the major reasons why students in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State spend their time plagiarizing.

Conclusion

Plagiarism is quite threatening and disappointing in academics in the sense that one could lose his integrity by being taken to court of law and even be dismissed from the school in advanced countries. And for one to say that he or she is aware and yet still indulges him/herself in the act is something worth investigating and Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State are not exception. It is therefore clear that the inability of our institutions to include library skill/instructions as a pre-requisite for everybody studying in any of the schools is one of the reasons why our students cannot cite properly. It is only library and information science that can effectively educate students on plagiarism and the dangers involved. This can be seen that the students are completely ignorant of the concept “plagiarism as crime and its consequences, they still continue doing it because of lack of training on how to cite and reference

work used. For the fact that they desire to earn more grades, they fall victims of plagiarism leading to public embracement and sometimes, withdrawal from school.

Recommendations

In line with the summary of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are worthy of consideration:

1. Managements of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State should find a way of organizing programs such as library instruction/skills to their students on how to use other people's work without plagiarizing and the consequences involved. This will indeed widen the horizons of the students such that they can effectively use the available information resources through appropriate code of conduct.
2. Managements of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State should find a way of giving orientation to their students on how to approach questions more especially during assignments to help them escape the wrath of plagiarism since they desire for more grades.

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