

LIBRARIANS' PERCEPTION OF PLAGIARISM IN SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS
IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study's goal was to determine how university libraries' librarians perceived plagiarism in scholarly publication. In line with the study's goals, two research questions and one hypothesis were posed. The study is restricted to academic librarians working in federal, state, and private university libraries in Nigeria's South-South area. The study employed a descriptive survey design of the co-relational kind. The total enumeration sample technique was chosen because it enables the study of the full population, which in this case consists of 229 librarians working in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The researcher's structured questionnaire served as the instrument for gathering data. Both face and content validity tests were performed on the instrument. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The study found that South-South Nigerian university libraries have a high level of librarians' perception of plagiarism, and that among the reasons librarians plagiarize are laziness, a lack of ability to express someone else's ideas in their own words, the desire to publish a lot of work quickly, and a lack of understanding of what plagiarism is. It was recommended that university administration create regulations against plagiarism to deter individuals from engaging in it.

Keywords: Librarian, Perception, Plagiarism, University Libraries.

Introduction

Universities in the twenty-first century encourage teaching, learning, mentoring, and character development among young scholars, as well as high-quality research and innovation that have a significant impact on knowledge and society at large. Scholarly publication is an essential step in the information life of scholars (North Central University Library, 2019). Scholarly publishing is usually understood as the publication of research results. In other words, it is the published results of researchers who have gained new

knowledge in their discipline by means of scientific theories and methods (Jonkoping University, 2019). Through scholarly publication, scholars allow readers to view, comment on, and build upon their work, all of which are necessary steps to further knowledge (North Central University Library, 2019).

According to Jonkoping University (2019), scholarly publications primarily consist of journal articles, research reports, conference papers, and books in which previous research is used as a starting point but is critically investigated and developed further. Cornell University Library (2019) affirmed that scholarly or peer-reviewed journal articles are written by scholars or professionals who are experts in their fields. In the sciences and social sciences, they often publish research results. It is worthy of notice that not all scholarly publications are considered to have equal worth; some have high outputs while others have low outputs. The research community uses multiple metrics to estimate the overall "output" of a research article by assessing its likely "impact" on the scientific community. One commonly used metric is the "impact factor" (IF) (Garfield, 2006). The impact factor is defined per journal, and each new publication in a journal has the value of the journal associated with it. This number is correlated with the number of times articles published in the given journal are cited by other articles. Other measures exist, such as the journal "half-life," which estimates the decrease in the number of citations an article gets over the years that follow its publication. The different outreach values that the publications of a given researcher can have can be combined in order to assess the overall work of the researcher. This is generally done using the h-index (Hirsch, 2005; Garfield, 2006; Enago Academy, 2018).

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, or by incorporating them into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished materials, whether in manuscript, printed, or electronic format, are covered under this definition (University of Oxford, 2019). Also, Valdes (2018) affirmed that plagiarism is the act of taking credit for someone else's words or ideas. It's an act of intellectual dishonesty, and it comes with serious consequences. According to the University of Michigan Library (2019), plagiarism involves presenting others' work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one's own.

Some notable examples of plagiarism, as listed by the University of Michigan Library are: a sequence of words incorporated without quotation marks; an unacknowledged passage paraphrased from another's work; and the use of ideas, sound recordings, computer data, or images created by others as though they were one's own. It violates university honor codes and can cause irreparable damage to a person's reputation. According to Valdes (2018), the types of plagiarism include: Direct plagiarism is the act of copying another person's work word for word; Paraphrase plagiarism: it involves making a few changes (often cosmetic) to someone else's work and then passing it off as your own; Mosaic plagiarism is a mix of direct and indirect plagiarism. Accidental plagiarism occurs when citations are missing or sources are cited incorrectly.

Perception is the result of the processing of information received by individuals regarding various events around them (Your Article Library, 2019). It involves the organization of inputs through a dynamic inner process that shapes all that comes in from the outside environment (Your Article Library, 2019). Perception can also be regarded as the process of recognizing, organizing, and interpreting sensory information; it deals with

the human senses and generates signals from the environment through the five sense organs: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste (Cherry, 2019). According to Lumen Boundless Psychology (2019), "perception" refers to the set of processes we use to make sense of the different stimuli we are presented with. Our perceptions are based on how we interpret different sensations. This begins with receiving stimuli from the environment and ends with our interpretation of those stimuli. This process is typically unconscious and happens hundreds of thousands of times a day (Lumen Boundless Psychology, 2019). According to Rummel (2019), perception is the first aspect of behavior because it influences individuals' behavioral intentions to engage in certain behaviors. If academics perceived engaging in plagiarism to be bad behavior with a lot of consequences, they would not be engaging in it as much as we see today.

Universities in Nigeria, especially in this 21st century are experiencing heightened reported cases of plagiarism by academics. The prevalence is traceable to the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education as well as the plethora of online resources (Gow, 2013). 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 (Idiegbeyan-ose, Nkiko, &Osinulu, 2016). Today, a lot of 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 (Idiegbeyan-ose, Nkiko, &Osinulu, 2016). In spite of the measures put in place to curb the menace of plagiarism; a lot of cases are still been reported and investigated.

Plagiarism has been largely referred to as a scourge eating deep into the quality of research and scholarship of academics in this 21st century. Plagiarism has reduced the value/ quality of research emanating from most universities scholars in Nigeria and across the globe. For academics to be able to publish their works in high impact journals, such a scholarly work should be free from plagiarism to a large extent. Publication in high impact journal is a criterion for promotion for academics in universities, plagiarism has remain a major source for the rejection of most papers sent for publication by academics as most journal would out rightly reject papers without stating the major issues for the rejection. This study hereby examines librarians' perception of plagiarism in scholarly communication in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following research questions:

- i) What is the extent of librarians' perception of plagiarism in university libraries?
- ii) What are the reasons librarians' engage in plagiarism?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance:

- i) There is no significant relationship between librarians' perception of plagiarism and the publication outputs in university libraries.

Literature Review

Human perception is the process through which sensory stimulation is converted into a structured experience. This perception, or percept, is a joint creation of the process and the stimuli (Epstein et al., 2019). A growing proportion of librarians thought they were in charge of teaching students how to avoid plagiarism. Gibson and Chester-Fangman

(2010, quoted in Khan et al., 2021) discovered that 87% of librarians (n = 530) believed they had a responsibility to play in imparting the prevention of plagiarism. Opeyemi and Adebowale (2015) studied lecturers' perceptions; their study revealed that the majority of the lecturers perceive plagiarism mostly due to laziness or poor time management ($\bar{x}=3.733$). Likewise, lecturers check for well-written sections without references or quotations when detecting plagiarism. It was also revealed that 93% of the respondents give warnings to defaulters verbally or through a feedback sheet, while only 25% of the lecturers send a plagiarism case to an academic misconduct panel.

Staff and student attitudes of plagiarism and cheating were investigated by Wilkinson (2009). According to the study's findings, 49% of staff members and 39% of students said that cheating on assessment assignments was frequent, with "copying a few paragraphs without citing the source" being the most typical type. There are different opinions on why people cheat, with professionals supporting the idea that pupils don't comprehend the regulations. On the other hand, students believed that obtaining a higher score and having an excessive number of assessment items were good incentives for cheating.

As a result, Vincent-Robinson (2016) investigated how professors perceive university students' academic dishonesty, including self-plagiarism and other forms of academic fraud. The study's results showed that female faculty members were more likely than male faculty members to perceive high levels of exam cheating (p.01), inappropriate work sharing (p.05), plagiarism in written assignments (p.01), and institutional integrity policies violations (p.01).

However, Wei et al. (2019) conducted a survey on Chinese authors' and reviewers' perceptions of plagiarism. The study's findings showed that 60.8% (135) thought the threshold of 20% to 30% overall similarity was acceptable; 55.4% (123) thought it was plagiarism to continuously borrow up to 30 words from another paper without citing it; and 31.1% (69) thought it was plagiarism to continuously borrow up to 100 words from other papers, even if citations and references were used. Bennett et al. (2011) investigated how instructors perceived plagiarism, according to Curtis and Tremayne (2020). The majority of participants in the study believed, according to the study's findings, that acting in a way that claimed credit for someone else's work constituted plagiarism. Different instructors had different opinions on whether "recycling" one's work constituted plagiarism.

Research Methods

This study adopted the descriptive survey design of the correlational type. Therefore, frequencies, statistical mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistics were used to analyze the data. The population of this study is 205 librarians working in state, federal, and private university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The total enumeration sampling technique, also known as census sampling technique, was adopted for the study because it is usually associated with a small and manageable population. The instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire.

Results

Answering of the Research Questions and Testing of Hypothesis

Research Question 1: What is the extent of librarians' perception of plagiarism in university libraries?

Table 1: Librarians' Perception of Plagiarism

S/N	Librarians' Perception of Plagiarism Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean
a.	I feel engaging in Plagiarism is an unethical behavior	115	90	0	0	3.56
b.	I always keep my scholarly publication free from plagiarism	110	95	0	0	3.54
c.	I think indulging in plagiarism violates the laid down rules and policy of my institution	115	90	0	0	3.56
d.	I feel indulging in plagiarism reduces my academic profile as a researcher	115	90	0	0	3.56
e.	I know rightly that High Impact journals will not accept my work if I plagiarize	115	90	0	0	3.56
f.	I feel engaging in plagiarism reduces the ranking of my institution	110	95	0	0	3.54
g.	I will discourage any of my colleague who may want to indulge in plagiarism	115	90	0	0	3.56
h.	I feel the issue of plagiarism should be taken more seriously by management of institution	115	90	0	0	3.56
i.	I feel every academics should be careful in other not to indulge in plagiarism	105	100	0	0	3.51
Aggregate Mean						3.55
Criterion Mean						2.50

Key: VHE= Very High Extent; HE= High Extent; LE= Low extent; VLE= Very Low Extent

With an aggregate mean of 3.55, which is higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, the results showed that South-South Nigerian university libraries' librarians have a very high perception of plagiarism. This result is consistent with the research by Opeyemi and Adebowale (2015), which showed that lecturers had a high perception of plagiarism. The results are in line with a research by Wei et al. (2019), which found that Chinese authors had a high impression of plagiarism. Because of this, librarians believe that plagiarism is the same regardless of location.

Research Question 2: Research Question 2: What are the reasons librarians' engage in plagiarism?

Table 2: Reasons Librarians Engage in Plagiarism

S/N	Reasons Librarians' Engage in Plagiarism	Agree		Disagree		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a.	Increasing and easy access to scholarly publication on	130	63.4	75	36.6	205	100

	the internet						
b.	Laziness	145	70.7	60	29.3	205	100
c.	Inadequate awareness of what constitute plagiarism	120	58.5	85	48.5	205	100
d.	Inadequate skill for expressing another person's ideas in your own words	140	68.3	65	31.7	205	100
e.	Academic pressure to meet up with promotion deadlines	115	56.1	90	43.9	205	100
f.	To get many publications within a short time	140	68.3	65	31.7	205	100
g.	They feel they can do it without sanctions	135	65.9	70	34.1	205	100
h.	Inadequate knowledge of Citation and Referencing	135	65.9	70	34.1	205	100
i.	Inadequate knowledge of what constitute plagiarism	140	68.3	65	31.7	205	100

From the causes of plagiarism by librarians are listed in Table 2, One hundred and forty-five of the 145 respondents (70.7%) agreed that they plagiarize out of laziness, and 140 of the respondents (68.3%) said they plagiarize because they lack the skills to express someone else's ideas in their own words, because they want to publish many articles quickly, and because they don't understand what constitutes plagiarism, respectively. The result shows that 135 respondents (65.9%), admitted to engaging in plagiarism because they believe they can do it without being caught and because they lack knowledge of proper citation and reference, 130 (63.4%) respondents said they plagiarize because it is increasingly simple to access scholarly publications online, 120 (58.5%) said they plagiarize because they are unaware of what constitutes plagiarism, and 115 (56.1%) said they plagiarize because they are under academic pressure to meet deadlines for promotions.

This finding showed that the reasons librarians plagiarize are laziness, a lack of ability to express another person's ideas in their own words, the desire to publish numerous works quickly, a lack of understanding of what constitutes plagiarism, the belief that they can do it without being caught, and, respectively, a lack of knowledge of citation and referencing due to easy access to scholarly publications on the internet, a lack of understanding of citation and referencing. This conclusion supports that of Plagiarism Search (2019) and Cleary (2017) that people commit

plagiarism primarily out of a sense of indifference. This indicates that, when it comes to plagiarism, librarians have a reputation for being lazy all over the world.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between librarians' perception of plagiarism and publication outputs in university libraries in South- South, Nigeria.

Table: Relationship between Librarians' Perception of Plagiarism and Publication Output in university libraries

		Librarians' Perception of Plagiarism	Publication Outputs of Librarians in University Libraries
Librarians' Perception of Plagiarism	Pearson Correlation	1	.865
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	205	205
Publication Output of Librarians in High Impact Journal	Pearson Correlation	.865	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	205	205

Pearson correlation coefficient r is taken from Table 3. It may be concluded that there is a significant relationship between librarians' impression of plagiarism and the publishing output in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria because the significant value (Sig.2-tailed) is 0.000 (which is less than 0.05). As a result, the Pearson Correlation value of .865, or 87%, was discovered. This indicates that a high percentage of observations had a significant correlation. Inferring that a rise or fall in the librarians' perception of plagiarism may result in an equal rise or fall in their publication outputs is implied by the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, how librarians view plagiarism may have an impact on the publications they produce.

The output of publications in university libraries in south-south Nigeria is significantly correlated with librarians' perceptions of plagiarism. This result backs up the claim made by Sibomana et al. (2018) that individuals who employ plagiarism as a method of operation are unable to contribute to knowledge because all they do is copy what others have already done. The academic environment requires creativity and originality, which plagiarism stifles.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. To reduce the likelihood of plagiarism, librarians should be encouraged through training on possible methods to communicate another person's ideas in their own terms.
2. Library administration should purchase plagiarism-testing software (such as Turnitin) so that librarians can check their research papers before submitting them for publication.
3. University administration should create regulations against plagiarism and make them available to all researchers; this would alter their opinion of the practice and deter it.

Conclusion

The study investigates how South African and Nigerian university libraries' librarians perceive plagiarism. There is no denying that plagiarism has severely damaged Nigeria's educational system and decreased the number of publications produced by academics, including librarians. There are many reasons why librarians plagiarize, some of which include laziness, a lack of ability to articulate another person's thoughts in their own words, the ambition to obtain numerous publications quickly, a lack of understanding of what plagiarism is, and many more. To reduce the likelihood of plagiarism, librarians should be encouraged through training on possible methods to communicate another person's ideas in their own terms.

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